CHAPTER – V

A COMPARISON OF AUROBINDO’S CONCEPT OF ABSOLUTE WITH CONTEMPORARY INDIAN PHILOSOPHERS (S.RADHAKRISHNAN, K.C. BHATTACHARYYA)

5.1 Introduction:

The contemporary Indian philosophy may be considered as a restoration of the past and makes it enrich by bringing an evolution of thought. In so many respects contemporary Indian philosophy shares with the ancient Indian philosophy. It is true that the roots of contemporary philosophy lie in the traditional philosophy. Therefore some philosophers criticize the contemporary Indian philosophy as a old wine in a new bottle. But the positive outlook, cosmic view, integralism, reconciliation of theism and absolutism, monism of matter and spirit, emergence of Gnostic being, new concept of salvation, dynamism, humanism all these elements give its own significance to contemporary Indian philosophy.

Aurobindo, K.C. Bhattacharyya and S. Radhakrishnan all the outstanding figure of contemporary Indian Idealism treat the reality of spirit as the primary principle. These are absolutist philosopher. These vedantic philosophers stand for spiritual unity and synthetic vision. Indian soil has been fertile for idealistic growth. Vedanta is in the blood of Aurobindo, S. Radhakrishnan and K.C. Bhattacharyya. It is the innate aspiration of Vedanta philosophy to realize the unity of things. They have sound knowledge about the Western philosophy also, so philosophy gets the form of assimilation of East and West in their hands. The outlook of contemporary Indian thinkers is wider than the Western philosophers in respect of philosophizing their concept, because they are well acquainted with both Indian and Western philosophy and formed their concept by keeping in mind both these thought.

Here in this chapter an attempt is made to deal plainly with the concept of Absolute according to Radhakrishnan and K.C. Bhattacharyya and a critical and comparative account of their views with that of Aurobindo.
5.2 Concept of Absolute in Radhakrishnan’s Philosophy:-

Radhakrishnan is an eminent expositor and interpreter of Indian traditional Philosophy, which carries with it the actual reflection of Indian culture. He is highly influenced by the vedantic Absolute idealism. Radhakrishnan was fascinated by the deep philosophical insight of Sankara, and his commentary on Brahma-Sutra took the rule of guide in the early life of Radhakrishnan. His philosophy is an assimilation of Eastern spiritualism and the Western humanism. The impact of the East as well as the West philosophers is seen in his philosophy. He admits himself that

“Among the western thinkers, the writings of Plato, Plotinus and Kant, and those of Bradley and Bergson influenced me a great deal. My relation with my great Indian contemporaries, Tagore and Gandhi, were most friendly for nearly thirty years, and I realize the tremendous significance they had for me”1

As a creative thinker his contribution is immeasurable. Though he follows the footsteps of the philosophers of East and West, his philosophy is not a sum-total of the ideas of these thinkers. He is not only a bridge builder between East and West bearing the ideas of philosophers from all parts of the world but also different from all by some of its peculiar stresses and appeal to the modern mind which is very much confused by conflicting concepts.

Radhakrishnan’s philosophy can be considered as a synthesis of Hegelian theism and vedantic Absolutism. Radhakrishnan emphasizes, inspired by Sankara the monistic character of Brahman. The multiplicity of the world does not affect the essential oneness of Brahman, from which everything is born, in which everything lives and into which everything enters at the end. Brahman is the logical ground of the universe, but transcends everything finite. The Brahman which by nature does not admit even of internal differentiation, the svagata-bheda as the vedantist calls it. The affirmation of one Reality is a pre-condition for the unity of the world process.

“The same Absolute reveals itself in all these but differently in each. The Ultimate Reality sleeps in the stone breathes in the plants, feels in the animals, and awakens to self-consciousness in man”.2

So Radhakrishnan’s monism has its roots in teleology.
Absolute according to Radhakrishnan is pure Consciousness, pure freedom and infinite possibility. Brahman is pure consciousness, as because Brahman is full of perfection and the existence of any perfect thing is impossible without consciousness. So the consciousness is indispensable for Brahman which has infinite possibilities. The universe is an actualization of infinite possibilities of Brahman. This self-proved infinite Absolute is the foundation of everything.

The Absolute has the archetypes, the potentialities and powers and get manifested in the world, and its act of manifesting is unlimited, free from any type of hindrance. This shows that the Absolute is itself the sole determiner in its expression. If one power is projected and another is denied, it is due to the freedom of the Absolute. The world came into existence or any world at all because it is an expression of the freedom of the Absolute. Without any feeling of expression the world is expressed, it is a free act of the Absolute.

The Absolute is spiritual in nature; Radhakrishnan conceives this spirit as a life not as a substance. And Hegel’s philosophy is the basis for the concept of spirit. He says spirit is life. It is not thing or energy. Spirit is real in itself and by itself, and cannot be compared to any substance subjective or objective. The Absolute is eternal because for Radhakrishnan Absolute transcends the space time universe. This changeless Absolute cannot be reduced to the personal and finite reality. The Absolute must be spiritual, because spiritual being can lead us beyond the known. Like Sankara, Radhakrishnan also admit that the fertility of the Absolute is immense and boundless, and we can hardly explain the possibility of the Absolute.

Radhakrishnan, like the Upanishads conceives the four poises of Reality. These are the Absolute or Brahman, the creative spirit or Ishvara, the world-spirit or Hiranyagarbha and the world or virat-svarupa. Brahman is the primordial existence. Radhakrishnan agrees with Sankara in maintaining that this aspect of Reality is unconditional, indeterminate, infinite and transcendent reality. It is free from activity. Ishvara is immanent, omniscient, omnipotent, creator, destroyer and maintainer of the world. God assumes the subject-object distinctions. In this respect Radhakrishnan’s
concept comes close to Ramanuja's God. Hiranyagarbha is the world-spirit in subtle form and virat is the world-spirit in its gross form. This four-fold distinction of the Reality is only a logical succession and not a temporal one. They are the four sides of one spirit. The transcendental universal Being is the cause of all differentiation, inner essence of the world.

5.3 Absolute and God:-

Radhakrishnan introduces the concept of God in order to explain the order and harmony of the world. The Ultimate Reality as Absolute is pure Existence, pure Consciousness, pure Bliss an indeterminate, formless and impersonal being. Such an infinite pure being is without activity. His activity is possible only when He is limited and finite by an environment. So as a creator of this world the same Reality is personal God.

"We call the supreme the Absolute, when we view it apart from the cosmos, God in relation to the cosmos. The Absolute is the pre-cosmic nature of God, and God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view." ³

The Absolute is full of infinite possibilities. The God, world, self etc are different forms of actualization, which are potentialities of the absolute. God and creation are inter-dependent. God is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of this world. The world is the field for the activity of God. Regarding the relation between the God and the world Radhakrishnan's conception is more close to Whitehead, as he says that if the world is a body then God is an organ of that and not possible to separate God from the world. The creator of this dynamic and creative world must be itself creative. God is definite aspect of the Absolute in reference to the world. Radhakrishnan says

"While the Absolute is the transcendent divine, God is the cosmic divine. While the Absolute is the total reality, God is the Absolute from the cosmic end, the consciousness that informs and sustains the world."

Again he adds with this that

"Even as the world is a definite manifestation of one specific possibility of the Absolute, God with whom the worshipper stands in personal relation is the very Absolute in the world context and is not a mere appearance of the Absolute". ⁴
Radhakrishnan agrees with Sankara in distinguishing between two principles - ontological or transcendental (paramarthika), and empirical (vyavaharika). From the transcendental standpoint Brahman is ontological reality, pure existence. From the empirical standpoint, from the relative world of space and time, it is subject to causality, the particular and changing objects which form the basis of our ordinary life and practice but which are contradicted by the dawn of the intuitive knowledge of Brahman. Reality appears as God. But like Sankara, Radhakrishnan does not admit that God is empirically real and only an illusion from the point of view of Ultimate Reality. Radhakrishnan defines Ishvara as Brahman and casts itself in the form of world experience. The meaning of this definition is that Brahman with the limiting adjuncts, such as space - time, cause - effect, substance - attribute appear as God. But Brahman - in - itself and Brahman - in - relation - to the - world or Nirguna and Saguna Brahman are not two separate independent Brahmans but it is the same Brahman viewed from two different standpoints.

God is a personal being with qualities such as wisdom, love and goodness. God is the primordial mind, home of the possibilities of the universe. Souls and the world are imperfect though they are derived from God. But God’s existence is possible only in relation to an environment. If God has no environment on which He acts, he cannot be personal. The cosmos and God exist in the Absolute. Though matter, selves and God form parts of the Absolute it is beyond all these expressions. God is distinct from matter, selves, from lesser spirits though these are derived from him and also distinct from the all – inclusive Absolute. The Absolute is absolutely divine, absolutely perfect whereas God is one of its limited powers, engaged in the work of cosmic divinization.

5.4. World and the Absolute:

The Absolute is infinite in its possibility. The world is an expression of the Absolute. The Absolute is the basis of all existence, full of possibilities. The world is the actualization of one of these. God is the creator of the world. If God is nothing but the Absolute viewed from the cosmic end, the creation of the God is not unreal. The world is an evolution of Absolute, not the Absolute itself. We describe the world as Maya to make a distinction between Absolute being and dependent being. The existence of the world depends on Brahman, while Brahman is independent. The
Absolute is free, eternal, whereas the world is transitory. The Absolute is absolutely free to realize any one of the possibility. It is both Being and Freedom. The world is a result of a free will of God. The world is a particular manifestation of God and it is an accident of the Absolute. It is not essential for the creator to have this very world; it is solely the free will of God that it can realize any of the possibilities. The world is dependent on Brahman, but Brahman is independent. Brahman does not require world for its existence. This is logically inconceivable. Such one sided relation between the Ultimate Reality and the world are brought out by the word Maya. The world is neither being nor non being, because world is not essential being like Brahman; or it is mere non- being. Like Sankara, Radhakrishnan also believes that the world is not necessary to the Brahman.

The empirical world is the manifestation of Brahman. The universe is the outcome of the evolutionary process of the spirit so the world is not an illusion, it is real. Reality of the world is affirmed in Hegel’s Absolute Idealism also. World is both real and accidental. The world is real because the Absolute is the basis of world existence and it accidentally chooses one possibilities of the Absolute for expression. So world is accidental.

Two questions are unanswered till now regarding to the world. These are ‘why’ of creation and ‘How’ creation. Creation, according to Radhakrishnan is an expression of joy. Like Upanishads, Radhakrishnan also conceives the creation as Lila. Lila does not mean that creation is unreal, the world is real.

“The analogy of play (Lila) is employed to suggest the free overflow of the divine into the universe. It does not mean that there is nothing real or significant going on all the time. The world is the profoundest expression of the divine nature.......... The analogy is not intended to suggest that the universe is a meaningless show made in a jest. The world is created by God out of the abundance of His joy.”

God created the world. Absolute is God in relation to the world. Maya is the creative power of God. The Absolute and God are not exclusive of each other. The Absolute is pure being and God is an active aspect of the supreme. Maya presents a picturesque account of human actions performed in relation to the world; and due to avidya or ignorance we do not get rid of it.
"Maya is a term employed also to indicate the tendency to identify ourselves with our apparent selves and become exiled from our spiritual consciousness with its maximum of clarity and certainty. This tendency is the expression of the working of self-conscious reason. Intellectual activities are a derivation, a selection, and, so long as they are cut off from the truth which is their secret source, a deformation of true knowledge (avidya) which has its natural result in selfishness."6

5.5. The nature of soul: -

Radhakrishnan believes that man is potentially divine. The spirit is in everyone as a part of one’s self. It is very difficult to describe the nature of the self. We have knowledge about it, but we fail to explain it. It is an object of feeling. We cannot perceive it by the eyes. It is neither physical body nor the will, but something which underlies them all and sustains them. The self is not the body nor the mind, nor the intellect. The self is different from these.

Radhakrishnan conceives of the double self in man viz., the transcendental self and the empirical self. The former is a spark of Divine and the latter is a mind – body organism.

The empirical self is an organized whole and is determined by the empirical conditions. It is an aggregate of mental states and constantly interacts with the environment. The empirical self organizes different experiences into a meaningful whole. So Radhakrishnan says, the spirit is not unrelated to the realm of life. Outer desire (empirical self) and inner quality (transcendental self) are integrated in human life. To separate the transcendent and empirical self from each other is to violate the order of reality.

The particular mental states in an organized form constitute the uniqueness of a finite man. The mere comprehensive combined experiences are, the richer becomes the content of personality, and more fully is the personality realized. Personality brings a matter of degree. It is logical to think of a highest personality which is the culmination of the endeavour of realizing true selfhood. Individuals differ from one another because of the difference in the degree of integration. So all selves are not alike. There is a hierarchy in the selves. The human self is higher than the animal in respect of integration. The lower animals have instinctive unity, while there is self-conscious unity in the human self.
The organization of the self, however, is a matter of degree. The lower animals which are tied to immediate situations do not have the unity and organization characteristic of the human self, though they also have an instinctive unity. By the ability to use symbols and reflect on experience, a higher synthesis is rendered possible at the human level.\textsuperscript{7}

The empirical self is a dynamic principle and ever changing. The contents of the empirical self-thoughts, emotions, consciousness, and body are ever mobile. This empirical self is not all. Behind this there is the infinite self which is the subject, pure spirit. Each individual is a spark from a great flame (spirit). The divine has infinite potentialities and individuals are manifested form of this divine. In the empirical world each individual is an unfoldment form of spirit and it possesses the mental, emotional and physical bodies. These are collectively called the person. These are not permanent. Behind this changing personality the spirit works and used these as a tool to collect experience. The intension of all these is the growth of the soul.

The transcendental self is always the subject of knowledge, and can never become the object of any knowledge. It is different from the constituents of empirical self. The real self is the substratum of all existence. From this point of view the self is beyond all change and movement. The self has truth, consciousness and bliss. This soul is eternal, underived and indestructible concept of Plato and in Kant's terminology it is the “synthetic unity of apperception”.

The double soul in us does not mean that we have two souls – the empirical and transcendental. This simply means that our inmost being is infinite, subject of knowledge, real and connected with Brahman; and the empirical self is that which participates in the activities of life. The empirical self and the real self are not separable, but only distinguishable. Radhakrishnan emphasizes that we are one with Brahman but he tries to preserve the individuality of human being by the concept of empirical self. The Upanishads identify jiva with Brahman. The great sayings of the Upanishads are ‘That thou art’ and ‘I am Brahman’. Radhakrishnan also proclaim the identity of jiva and Brahman as there is no negation of empirical self in his philosophy. Man is essentially a spiritual being. Man is identical with the Absolute to some extent. Man is also spirit. Man is essentially united with God. It belongs to the infinite and finite, the divine and the human. In this way Radhakrishnan justifies both man’s craving for his transformation into the divine and the significance of his ethical conduct in the empirical world.

184
5.6 Karma and freedom:

Man is the manifestation of the Infinite self. Individuality of human beings is preserved in the philosophy of Radhakrishnan. To have a better view of the status of the individual, it is necessary to understand his position in relation to the Law of Karma. Karma literally means action or deed. All actions produce their proper effects or consciousness, which form the character of the self. A good action brings about a good consequence and bad action brings about bad consequence. Good and bad action produces good and evil character respectively. An individual’s present character has been formed by the past karmas and is continuous with the time. An individual has a history and is also accompanied by the creation of the future. Karma has two aspects—retrospective and prospective. Retrospective means continuity of karma with the past and prospective means creative freedom of the self in the field of karma.

It is commonly believed that, the Law of Karma is a general moral law. It governs the life and destiny of all beings which guarantees reward in the form of virtue for good deeds and punishments in the form of vice for the bad deeds. But Radhakrishnan removes this misconception. The reward of virtue is not pleasure because sometimes love also produce suffering. On the other hand it is seen that, there is satisfaction in hatred to others.

"The law of karma is not to be confused with either a hedonistic or a juridical theory of rewards and punishments. The reward for virtue is not a life of pleasure nor is the punishment for sin pain. Pleasure and pain may govern the animal nature of man but not his human. Love which is a joy in itself suffers: hatred too often means a perverse kind of satisfaction. Good and evil are not to be confused with material well-being and physical suffering."

The past karmas play an important role in the formation of the character of an individual self. The present life of an individual is standing in organic relation with his past. In other words the present life has been determined by the past ones. The Law of Karma determines the destiny of the soul. Our actions are merely an effect of the past ones, so there is no room for human freedom. Such criticism is usually leveled against the doctrine of karma by Western critics. But Radhakrishnan shows that such criticisms are unsound and the Law of Karma is compatible with human freedom. We are both determined and free, according to Radhakrishnan. The soul is determined by the karma performed in the past. But still we are free to choose our
course of life and action. It means that there is a wide scope for fresh activity. So the future of man depends to a very great extent on man himself. The self is not completely free from the chain of determination. But the self is free to change its direction and has the capacity to subjugate past to a certain extent. An individual can perform his actions in his own choice; can choose his actions accordingly to fulfill his necessity.

Free will does not mean absence of any determining factors. Freedom is action done by self determination. Freedom is self-determination, determination of an act without any external pressure. The inherent spirit of an individual allows him to act freely within the limits of his nature. Man has the capacity to triumph over the automatic forces that try to enslave him. Man is not merely a machine controlled by instincts, but spirit itself. It is contended that self-determination is no freedom at all. Against this objection Radhakrishnan holds that self-determination means action done by the whole of the self’s nature. It does not mean the determination by any fragment of the self’s nature. The act is free when the individual employs his whole nature to search the different possibilities and to select one of them which commands itself to his whole self. Human freedoms are a matter of degree. We are more free when our whole self is active than a fragment of it. It is only God who is absolutely free. Human beings are relatively free. But when the individual self realizes his whole being then the self becomes absolutely free.

Human actions are determined by purpose and past actions. There is continuity in nature. The present actions are determined by the past karmas and the present conditions will determine the future. Though we may not cancel the past but we can utilize it for the betterment of future. The past may become either an opportunity or an obstacle – it depends on our utilization.

“The theory of karma allows man the freedom to use the material in the light of his knowledge. Man controls the uniformities in nature, his own mind and society”

Again Radhakrishnan says

“The law of karma encourages the sinner that it is never too late to mend. It does not shut the gates of hope against despair and suffering, guilt and peril. It persuades us to adopt a charitable view towards the sinner, for men are more often weak than vicious.”

186
Radhakrishnan says that while we act, we are also conscious that we are doing it deliberately and intentionally. We are conscious that we are not doing it under pressure of the circumstances. We can develop ourselves in the process of evolution.

Radhakrishnan holds that freedom and karma are not incompatible. Though the past karmas determine our present a lot, one can subjugate them and turn it into a new course. Life is like a game of cards. The cards are distributed to us. A good player can handle and manipulate his cards in a best manner for his victory. A bad player may have good cards but due to lack of skill he may not be able to utilize them in the play. So the skill in the game decides who is a better player. So Radhakrishnan is against the view of Determinism. We are free to make ourselves as we wish. We can choose any card whatever we like from the life game which is like a bridge. We have the power to become what we want to be.

5.7. Rebirth: -

Rebirth is a result of the Law of Karma. If the Law of Karma is a fact, rebirth is a certainty. Development of individuality is the aim of self. In one life it is impossible for man to exercise all powers of his life and to exhaust all the values he strives for. We cannot in one life exercise all the powers we possess or exhaust all the values we strain after. The capacity of the self for endless improvement, and the pervasive facts of continuance point to a future, where the self’s withheld completions obtain a chance. In order to realize all the possibilities of one’s life series of births are required. Radhakrishnan’s main attempt is to present a philosophy of spirit in which the individual selves are evolving till there is complete realization of union with God.

The concept of rebirth was accepted both in the East as well as in the West. Among the Western philosophers it was supported mainly by Pythagoras, Plato, Empedocles, Plotinus and Schopenhauer. It is almost an unquestionable theory in India and it is taken as an axiom in all the systems of Indian philosophy.

Radhakrishnan disagrees with materialistic theory which denies future life. There is no consistency between the denial of future life and the emergent view of the self. Everything in the world, according to the emergent theory emerges out of its own past, and transmits into another thing in future.
“The emergent view of the self makes the hypothesis of rebirth a reasonable one. Throughout nature life is preserved and continued through incessant renewal. Life is a perpetual going on, never resting; always straining forward for something that has not been but should be.”

There is continuity in the process of evolution. There is preservation and continuity of past characters in an object, as the world — process goes from one level to another level of existence. If there is continuity in everything else in nature, the self can be no exception to this general scheme. Rebirth is a fact and it is certain and it implies that the self had a past to it and has also future existence.

In the rebirth of an individual, the soul assumes another body. The soul is eternal and dynamic in nature. The disintegration of the body does not mean an essential change in the nature of the self. The unitary character of the self is preserved in rebirths. The gross outer form i.e. body perishes at death but it cannot change the character of the self. It will continue to be of the same character after death. It carries the past with it and develops in the future maintaining its unity though many changes take place. The preservation and continuity of all experience is possible through the self. Rebirth, which is continuity of the soul is a change within a general structural progression. Death is a part of our continuous progress not a unique event. It is an event when the self discarded the old conditions and new set of conditions are assumed. The death of the gross outer form does not mean dissipation of the self. The same soul continues through different births. The soul survives after death of the present body. So death need not mean discontinuity.

Radhakrishnan conceives that the self after death of the physical body continues to have some subtle ethereal body. Death does not bring a complete dissociation of the self from the body.

“It is invested in a finer vehicle, the subtle body (Sukṣમасارिरा) when it leaves the gross one. The necessary physical basis is secured by the subtle body. The linga-sariya or subtle body which is said to accompany one throughout one’s empirical existence is the form on which the physical body is moulded. It is this which assumes the body necessary for its efficiency at its next birth by attracting physical elements to itself.”

Radhakrishnan believes that transmigration of soul takes place with the subtle body. The soul with the subtle body assumes another body after death or dissolution of the present body. The inmost self remains in its own serenity from one existence to
another. The evolution of the universe is characterized by its return to God. So rebirth is not meaningless. It has some purpose. The self evolves ceaselessly from birth to birth for its fulfillment and perfection.

5.8 Salvation: -

Man is potentially divine, according to Radhakrishnan. The meaning of liberation lies in his unity with the absolute of spirit. Liberation is the freedom of the soul from the bondage of the body and the transfiguration of the whole man. Radhakrishnan believes in jivanmukti. Liberation can be attained in life. It is not a new mode of being which gets transformation to attain release from rebirth, means to transcend us from mere individualism and rise to an impersonal universalism. Man is bound to evolve and to actualize his potentiality. The behaviour and experience of a liberated individual are completely transformed and he feels unity of wisdom, love and action. It is a state of new birth as a Divine being.

The liberation is not a passive state. Salvation and life of activity are not contradictory. The liberated individuals ever engage himself for the transformation of the other people. Buddha, Gandhi, Aurobindo all of them devoted their life to intense social and cultural work after liberation. The destiny of man is the realization of the spirit through kinship with all.

"All men are the children of the immortal, amrtasya putrah. The spirit is in everyone as a part of one's self, as a part of the very substratum of one's being. It may be buried in some like a hidden treasure beneath barren debris of brutality and violence but it is there all the same, operative and alive, ready to come to the surface at the first suitable opportunity."12

The perfected soul takes birth and rebirth till all the bondage souls are divinized. The liberated soul participates in the cosmic process for the sake of the world.

Man can realize his real and creative self and enjoy its freedom in the process of cosmic evolution by adopting ethical life and meditation. When the numbers of individuals have attained liberation, when they are capable of infinite divine power and consciousness, they co-operate each other for the perfection of a large body of man. The degree of perfection is not same in respect of the divinized soul. There are
souls which acquire great divine consciousness and power but some are still in the process of divinization.

The absolute identification with God in an individual’s life always falls short of the supreme perfection. There is no such thing, according to Radhakrishnan as individual salvation, for it presupposes the cosmic salvation. The spiritual beings ascend to higher and higher status till they attain complete union with the Absolute. The identification of the individuals with the Absolute is not possible till the entire cosmos is divinized and the Saccidananda is explicitly manifest in the universe. True liberation implies the harmony within the self, and also harmony with the environment. The individual is bound to act to correct the error, as long as there are unredeemed elements in the environment.

"Coherence within the individual and harmony with the environment are both essential for salvation. If we establish harmony within ourselves, overcome the struggle between the flesh and the spirit, we fulfill the first requirement. But harmony with the environment is not possible so long as there are unredeemed elements in it. We are not truly saved until the warring elements of our nature and the rivalries of individuals are both subdued into unity of life and spiritual fellowship. Perfect freedom is impossible in an imperfect world, and so those who have secured a vision of spirit work in the world so long as there is wrong to be set right, error to be corrected and ugliness to be banished from life. The individual who achieves unity within himself sets other men forward in desiring the same good. In a true sense the ideal individual and the perfect community arise together."\(^{13}\)

The life of the reborn is ever engaged for the liberation of all. But it may be argued that the world is an endless process and so there will be no cessation of work. In other words, there will never come a time when all individuals will attain their perfection. But Radhakrishnan is quite optimistic about the destiny of the world and individual. The cosmic life is not infinite, nor the identity of individual with the Absolute is a mere elusive goal. So long as the dualism exists, man cannot realize oneness with God. When the ‘non-being’ is somehow converted into ‘being’ man is bound to become one with God and God will lapse into the Absolute. Liberation is dynamic cosmic life and complete union with the Absolute. The individual and the cosmic salvation do not take place successively but simultaneously.
5.9 A comparative analysis of Aurobindo and S. Radhakrishnan's concept of Absolute: -

The outlook of the contemporary Indian philosophers is integral and synthetic. Aurobindo and S. Radhakrishnan's philosophy is a reconciliation of matter and spirit, theism and Absolutism and also can be ascribed as bridge builder between East and West.

The Ultimate Reality is, conceived by the 'Absolute idealists' as one, non-dual and spiritual in nature. The Upanishads refer to the supreme reality by the terms Brahman and Atman. Nothing can be predicated to the Ultimate Reality. Brahman is the essence of all things. The Upanishads describe Brahman as having two aspects—one without any attribute, Nirguna Brahman and the other with characteristics, Saguna Brahman.

The thoughts of Radhakrishnan and Aurobindo are quite similar. Both of them clearly affirm the two aspects of Brahman as transcendent and immanent. In its transcendent aspect Brahman is pure Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, and eternal Truth. Brahman is impersonal, Nirguna, changeless, universal consciousness. So in order to explain the cosmic existence both of them take the help of the creative aspect of Absolute. From the side of the relative world, the Absolute is personal, omnipotent, creator, maintainer and destroyer. This Saguna Brahman is the immanent aspect of Ultimate Reality. But, even though there are significant difference in the ways that Radhakrishnan and Aurobindo elucidate the problem of creation, both of them conceives that Brahman is personal and impersonal, immanent and transcendent, determinate and indeterminate, dynamic and static. Again both Radhakrishnan and Aurobindo believe that there is nothing but Brahman who is the Supreme Reality, the world of phenomena must ultimately be traced to Brahman's integral nature. So the question of immanence and transcendence does not arise with reference to the Absolute. For the existence of an other implies the limitation of the Absolute. The Absolute is not an immanent of another because it is the totality of being and there is nothing other than it. The world is only one manifestation of infinite possibilities of the Absolute. Absolute has many more possibilities beyond this world, which is in process of realization. Though from the empirical point of view the Absolute has two
poises – immanent and transcendent, but from transcendental point of view the Absolute is an all-inclusive whole.

The Ultimate Reality is the Brahman – the Absolute, which is the logical ground of everything real and existent. Both the Upanishads and Sankara undertake negative descriptions to express its nature. Though Brahman is described positively as Saccidananda (Existence-Consciousness-Force and Bliss), these words are used in the negative sense. Sat means not non-being, cit means not non-consciousness and ananda means that Brahman is not mere absence of pain. Intuition or suprarational knowledge is the only way to know the nature of Brahman. Radhakrishnan apprehends danger in such negative description as they may lead to an abstract Absolute.

"There is danger in these negative descriptions. By denying all attributes and relations we expose ourselves to the charge of reducing the ultimate being to bare existence which is absolute vacuity." 14

But Aurobindo not only denies the negative description of Brahman but positive also and he says that Brahman is not describable either by iti-iti or by neti-neti. At the same time Aurobindo says that it does not mean that Brahman is unknowable to us because the spiritual being which is within us, the spirit itself. Though the Absolute is self evident its knowledge is possible through the process of identity. The psychic being is always in direct touch with the Divine self which is not other than the supreme Existence. Brahman, according to Radhakrishnan is the supreme spiritual Reality. Brahman is pure perfect and transcendent all of its finite expressions. So the Absolute cannot be fully comprehended by the human mind. Absolute is unknown and unknowable for intellect. But knowledge of the Absolute can be apprehended by intuition which is a state of consciousness in which the self gets completely identified with the Reality.

In the philosophy of many thinkers in the East as well as in the West has dispensed either the Absolute or God. Sankara’s Brahman is an attributeless, indeterminate, Nirguna Brahman. Sankara’s doctrine leads him to a void. When he is unable to explain the world, which abounds in qualities by attributeless Brahman, says that Brahman alone is real and the world is illusion produced by Maya. Like Sankara, Bradley’s Absolute is an abstract principle which is impossible. And in Ramanuja and Hegel’s philosophy Absolute is identified with God. But Aurobindo and S.
Radhakrishnan reconcile Absolute with God. Aurobindo conceives Supermind as a creative aspect of Sachchidananda. Supermind selects some of the potentialities of Brahman and actualizes them. The Supermind has complete knowledge of the unity of Sachchidananda and serves as a link between this world and the Absolute. It is always conscious of the integral reality of the Absolute, and also has the capacity to make differentiations within the primal unity. In the same tune Radhakrishnan also says that God is the projected and creative aspect of the Absolute. God creates the universe. But when the non-being is reduced fully to being by cosmic salvation, the difference between God and the universe comes to an end and God merges into the Brahman. Both Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan conceive that impersonal Brahman is more than the personal God. After cosmic salvation, according to Radhakrishnan God lapses into the Absolute, but Brahman again manifests in another type of universe, which is unknown and inconceivable to man. Aurobindo asserts that Absolute is not a mere sum of indeterminate and determinate, Saguna and Nirguna aspect of Brahman. Absolute not only unifies these two aspects but also exceeds these both, so Absolute is ineffable. The Gita admits that if the immobile self and the mobile self are put together they do not represent the supreme; it exceeds both.

Modern Indian philosophy is essentially monotheistic and monistic. Monism of spirit and matter is the dominant feature of recent Indian philosophy. The world of things is a modes of God. World is an accident of the Absolute and it is not necessary to the Brahman, according to Radhakrishnan. The world, which is a revealed aspect of God, is real. In this respect Radhakrishnan and Aurobindo find themselves quite close to each other. The Absolute contains an infinite number of possibilities. The active or creative power what Radhakrishnan calls Ishvara or God, Aurobindo calls Divine Shakti or Mother – which selects one of these possibilities and actualizes it as a world. The specific manifestation, is carried out by what Radhakrishnan terms the “world spirit” (Hiranyagarbha) and Aurobindo the “Supermind”. These two principles act as a link between the infinite one and the finite many. Both of them explain the world-process with the help of involution and evolution. The involution is necessary for the evolution. Both Radhakrishnan and Aurobindo state that lower levels are taken up and integrated into the higher levels. For Radhakrishnan evolution takes the form of a Hegelian type dialectic where opposites are raised up into a integral unity of identity-in-difference. Aurobindo’s idea of evolution is that; matter, life and mind are not
superseded but transformed or divinized in the process of triple transformation. But complete transformation, according to each thinker, can only take place when Ishvara or the Mother descends into the lower spheres. And this way the world of ignorance and limitation is transformed into integral knowledge and the world become divinized. The divinized individual what Radhakrishnan terms “jivanmuktas” and Aurobindo as “Gnostic beings”.

Aurobindo as well as Radhakrishnan sustained effort to preserve the individuality of human being and at the same time maintain an identical relation between Brahman and jiva. Both of them conceive double soul in man. The psychic being of Aurobindo is termed as empirical self in Radhakrishnan’s terminology and the central being of Aurobindo is known as transcendental self in Radhakrishnan’s philosophy. The psychic being or empirical self and the central being or transcendental self are distinguishable but not separable. Jivatman or transcendental self is a spark of the Divine. This eternal, immutable, omniscient, omnipotent central being is an undivided centre within an individual being. It is changeless as it is untouched by the changing movements of the world. The transcendental self has oneness and unity with Brahman. The empirical self or psychic being inhabits our mind, life and body. It is the principle of individuality in us. It participates secretly in the daily activities of man. It is a mind-body organism. Self realization is to identify the empirical self with his transcendental self.

The Law of Karma is the one important characteristics of Indian philosophy. Like the traditional philosophers, contemporary philosophers also believe in the conservation of moral values. To strengthen the position of human beings both Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan examine in detail the problem of karma. The Indian philosophers have bound the past, present and future into one with the help of the Law of Karma. The past actions have laid the foundation of our present state, which again determines our future. Against this conception Aurobindo believes that the Law of Karma cannot be the sole determinant. He is not in favour of fatalism. He says it is not the Law of Karma which determines the destiny of life but rather the soul which uses the law as one of its instruments. Radhakrishnan also conceives that we are both determined and free. Though the soul is determined by the karma performed in the past, it can subjugate the past to a certain extent and turn it into a new course.
The problem of rebirth is an unavoidable part of cosmic evolution, according to Aurobindo. In involution the Ultimate Reality takes the form of man and world. The recovery of the self is possible in man by the process of evolution. But one life is not sufficient for this business. So, repeated births are necessary for the complete realization of the self. Radhakrishnan holds that human body has the capacity of spiritual realization. Man proceeds on the way to this end and takes repeated births to attain this goal. As Radhakrishnan puts it,

"Rebirth is not an eternal recurrence leading nowhere but a movement from man the animal to man the divine, a unique beginning to a unique end, from wild life in the jungle to a future Kingdom of God. The soul is constantly performing the miracle of self-embodiment which is a means for self-renewal, a growth into light."\textsuperscript{15}

The conception of salvation has taken altogether a different turn in the philosophy of Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan. Aurobindo conceives that salvation means the spiritual birth of the soul. Individuals are potentially divine. In the state of liberation the individual is transformed by the process of psychic, spiritual and supramental. This triple transformation brings a radical change in the terrestrial principles and due to this; mind, life, body and soul get divinely transformed. It is the perfected state in which the body, life and mind become spiritualized and divinized. The soul gets divinely transformed in this perfect state and becomes in union with the Supermind. Salvation does not mean the cessation of rebirth or freedom from the world nature. The Divine being takes repeated births in order to purify the world and make it divine. Almost the same conception we find regarding salvation in the philosophy of Radhakrishnan. Radhakrishnan also conceives that an individual can realize salvation in his own life-time. He also denies the concept of escapism. Radhakrishnan admits that the individual and cosmic salvation take place simultaneously.

But even though there are significant resemblances in the ways that Radhakrishnan and Aurobindo elucidate the nature of Absolute, in addition they disagree regarding the point whether the Ultimate Reality is a substance or life. Though many philosophers in the East as well as in the West conceive reality as a substance, Radhakrishnan on the contrary consider it as a life. The Ultimate Reality is spirit which exists in itself is life. But Aurobindo like Spinoza conceives the Absolute as a substance. This Absolute is the reality of all things. The universe constituted by
matter, life and mind are divine in existence. So the reality of the world is wholly consistent with the Absolute.

5.10 Absolute in K.C. Bhattacharyya’s philosophy.

Concept of philosophy: -

K.C. Bhattacharyya is one of the great synthetic personalities of modern Indian philosophy. He has his roots in the ancient Indian philosophy particularly of the Advaita Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga and Jaina philosophies but he also assimilates the Western thought particularly the philosophy of Kant and Whitehead in him. Though K.C. Bhattacharyya’s writings are extremely few, it is difficult to understand for the ordinary reader due to his very concise and condense style of writings. Bhattacharyya’s philosophy is

“A living organism of thought into which new material is assimilated, never raw but digested by interpretation, and in which the same form becomes ever different as it develops under the impetus of an intellectual vital force.”

Philosophy is theoretic thinking which is neither actual knowledge nor a literal thought. Philosophy deals with the self-subsistence of objects. It does not concern with facts which is an awareness of a content that is either perceived or imagined to be perceived. Philosophy deals with self-subsistent objects, the real subject and the truth being. The contents of philosophy are pure objective or contemplative thought, spiritual thought and transcendental thought. The contents of philosophy are not literally thinkable like empirical knowledge. The philosophical thought, therefore, is not literal but symbolical.

Philosophy elaborates the symbolic thought, not the actual knowledge nor a literal thought. It is concerned only with contents that are contemplated as true with the faith that it would give the knowledge of the Absolute. To speak is to formulate a belief. The speakable does not have a meaning content, it is only believed. A square circle, sky lotus, son of a barren woman, horns of the hare, etc are neither believed nor disbelieved. These do not have even a spoken content. Therefore, these do not come under the province of philosophical study.
The subject matter of philosophy is systematic symbolism. The metaphysical reasoning depends on symbolism. It is an elaboration of symbolic concepts. K.C. Bhattacharyya states that

"Metaphysics or more generally, philosophy including logic and epistemology, is not only not actual knowledge, but is not even literal thought; and yet its contents are contemplated as true in the faith that it is only by such contemplation that absolute truth can be known."17

5.11 Branches of Philosophy: -

Both science and philosophy are expressions of Theoretic consciousness. Theoretic consciousness has just a ‘believed content’ and not a ‘meant-content’. All forms of theoretic consciousness are sometimes called thought. Bhattacharyya distinguishes four grades of thought. The four forms of theoretic consciousness are the following: -

1) Empirical Thought.
2) Pure Objective Thought.
3) Spiritual Thought.
4) Transcendental Thought.

Empirical thought is the realm of sciences. Philosophy does not study the empirical thought. Empirical thought has always a reference to the objective. The reference is the awareness of a content that is either perceived or imagined to be perceived. Science deals with facts, evolution, the results of scientific investigation etc. In science, the facts are studied, in which there is no reference to the subject or the ‘speaking function’. But in philosophy everything is studied with reference to the subject.

So out of the four grades of thought, empirical thought is the realm of the sciences, whereas pure objective, spiritual and transcendental thought are the realms of philosophy. Accordingly we have three branches of philosophy; philosophy of the object, i.e. metaphysics and logic; philosophy of subject, i.e. epistemology; and philosophy of truth i.e. the consciousness of the transcendent.
5.11 (a) Philosophy of Object: -

Science deals with the object which is called fact in which there is no reference to the subject. The subject of philosophy is self – subsistent, it has a necessary reference to the subject. Metaphysics is the philosophy of object. Metaphysics investigates the nature of the object. The subject matter of logic is the forms of objects. Metaphysics deals with the self – subsistence of objects, that what is contemplated in the objective attitude. On the other hand logic deals with the forms of objects. Metaphysics and logic are mutually dependent on each other. Logical forms may have reference to some pure objects. These pure objects are supplemented by metaphysics, which are objective in nature. Logic and metaphysics are two branches of philosophy of the objects. A comparison of the object with the subject is essential to understand object clearly. The subjective or spiritual level of consciousness gives us the actual knowledge of the object. Logic and metaphysics constitute the philosophy.

Metaphysics deals with the self-subsistent objects. There is, therefore, no metaphysics of the subject. The contents of objective, subjective and transcendental thoughts are self-subsistent.

"The so-called grades of thought are really grades of speaking. Fact in science is spoken of as information and understood without reference to the spoken form. It is what need not be spoken to be believed. Speakability is a contingent character of the content of empirical thought, but it is a necessary character of the content of pure philosophic thought."

Pure thought is not intelligible except as spoken. Speakability is, therefore a necessary character of philosophical thought. But this does not imply that philosophy is a disease of speech, philosophical contents are self-evident and are independent of individual mind.

Philosophy does not study the objects objectively as science do. The object of philosophy is not factual; it is not a ‘thing’ to be known. It emphasizes the subjective experience of the objective. Fact of science is expressible in a judgment like ‘A is thus related to B’. But the form of philosophical judgment is like ‘X is’. Fact is always a fact related to facts in proper judgments. The judgments of philosophy are approval judgments in the form of “I am” or ‘the Absolute is’. The judgment ‘It is’ asserts that
X is self-substinent, real and true. It also asserts that the subject presupposes the predicate. The pure object is enjoyed in contemplation, which has necessary reference to the subject. So K.C. Bhattacharyya says,

"Truth is only symbolically spoken, reality is literally spoken as symbolized and the self-substinent is literally spoken as meant. None of these are spoken of as information, while fact is spoken of as information." 19

5.11 (b) Philosophy of Spirit: -

Metaphysical reasoning is the systematic exposition of symbolic concepts in relation to the subject. Logic deals with pure forms, which constitute the subject matter of metaphysics. Thus logic presupposes metaphysics. Logic symbolizes the contents of metaphysics. Metaphysical concepts are self-substinent. Thus, they can be symbols only of contents that are enjoyingly believed. The enjoyingly understood contents are the subject-matter of the philosophy of spirit.

This enjoying consciousness has always a reference to ‘I’. The experience of the subject ‘I’ never comes to us in normal consciousness. The ‘enjoying’ understanding is introspection. It has three grades. At the initial stage, the self is experienced as-embodied. The second grade of experience is consciousness of the personal relation of the self with other selves. The third and the highest grade of experience is the consciousness of the over-personal self.

"The study of the contents of these three types of enjoyment is the philosophy of the spirit. The object in the first is conceived as a shadow or a symbol of ‘I’; in the second, ‘I’ and the other person are contradictorily the symbol of the other; and in the third case, there is a consciousness of the over personal reality as symbolized by ‘I’″ 20

The self negates its own existence in the successive stages of spiritual realization. In the last grade, what can be called, the religious form of spiritual, the self realizes identification with the Absolute.

5.11 (c) Philosophy of Truth: -

There is a theoretic consciousness of “I am nought”. The content of this consciousness is Truth. Though the Absolute is a positively believed entity, its positive character is expressible only by the negation of ‘I’. The negation of the self implies the existence of the Absolute. Negatively the Absolute is understood as Truth.
But the Absolute cannot be equated with Truth. The Absolute may be truth, may be freedom or it may be value. The Absolute is each of them. The consciousness of truth is neither subjective nor objective. It is transcendental consciousness. Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya says, the consciousness of truth is a subject of belief. It can be understood neither by objective nor by subjective attitude. It is a transcendental consciousness and describable by a symbolic way. The consciousness of truth is not literally speakable. Thus the Absolute as transcending the subjective and the objective – which is believed as self-revealing constitute the subject matter of the philosophy of truth.

5.12 The Subject and realization of its freedom: -

Bhattacharyya conceives the self as the subject. The subject and object are inter-related and one presupposes the other. The subject is freeing from object, in every stage of subjectivity by negating it. Subjectivity is an awareness of the distinction of the subject from the object. There are three stages of subjectivity. The stages of subjectivity are the bodily subjectivity, psychic subjectivity and spiritual subjectivity.

5.12 (a) Bodily Subjectivity: -

The process of subjectivity starts in body-awareness. At the initial stage we consider the physical body as the subject. The body as a perceived object is taken to be the subject. The perception of one’s own body is not done from outside, one is sensuously aware of it from within. With the realization of this the subject identifies himself with the body as internally felt. The ‘felt body’ cannot be distinguished from the ‘perceived body’ which can be distinguished from the ‘felt body’. The ‘felt body’ is a detachment from the perceived object other than the perceived body. There is also a third stage in which there is no experience of the body. Subjectivity involves an awareness of its distinction from “perceived body” and ‘felt body’. In this stage the subject does not remain identified with the body as a present fact. It is a transitional stage, which is free from space but not from the present. K.C. Bhattacharyya says that the awareness of the felt body is the pre-condition of all spiritual activity.
5.12 (b) Psychic Subjectivity: -

At this stage there is an awareness of psychic subjectivity. Psychic facts include images and thoughts and subject remains identified with the image or thought. In this stage, though the subject is quite detached from the body, the psychic facts somehow retain their relation with the object. And on the other hand the subjects as expressed in the spoken word ‘I’ cannot be identified with the psychic facts like images and thoughts.

5.12 (c) Spiritual Subjectivity: -

The third is the spiritual stage of subjectivity. There are three spiritual stages. First is that in which the subject identifies with its feeling.

"Thought is still presented as meaning, as the unobjective something about the object, being characterisable only in reference to the object as what the object is not."²¹

Feeling has an advantage over psychic facts because feeling is completely free from the meaning content. There is no reference to any object, but still has the awareness that it is unmeaning.

The second stage is subject’s identification with its own introspection. Introspection is awareness of the subject through the spoken word ‘I’. It does not understand the meaning of the word ‘I’, and free from object, it is the enjoying understanding of the subject ‘I’. But subjectivity is complete uniqueness, so any attempt to determine its nature will disturb its uniqueness. So the subject realizes its subjectivity, for which it must transcends the level of spiritual introspection also.

Bhattacharyya enumerates the notion of subjectivity in three broad stages viz, the bodily subjectivity, the psychical subjectivity and the spiritual subjectivity. The bodily subjectivity consists of:-

A).

1. The body as perceived.
2. The body as felt.
3. The absence of body known as a present fact.

B). The psychical stages have two broad following divisions:
4. The subject's identification with his image.

5. The subject's identification with his thought.

C). The spiritual stages of subject's identification are as follows:

6. The subject identified with feeling.

7. The subject identified with introspection.

8. The subject identified with the stage beyond introspection.

   The subject can comprehend fully its subjectivity or its freedom by realizing the above stages. The subject has the first cognition of freedom when it negates to identify himself with the gross physical body and maintains a distinction between himself and body, K.C.Bhattacharyya makes a distinction between 'perceived body' and 'felt body'. In the process of realization of subjectivity the subject first makes free from the perceived body. In the next stage the subject separates it from the 'felt body' i.e. the body felt from within. The realization is the precondition of all spiritual activity. Freedom from the felt body is unavoidable for the subject to comprehend its full subjectivity. There is also a third stage in which the subject identifies itself with the 'body as absent'. 'Body as absent' means the awareness of the body having the capacity, to acquire 'knowledge of absence'. According to K.C. Bhattacharyya 'knowledge of absence' can be of two kinds – knowledge of absence through imaginative perception or through conscious non-perception. This leads to the second stage of the subject, namely, the psychical stage. Conscious non-perception is a transitional stage. It is in between body feeling and imagination. Psychic fact begins in this stage.

   The subject identifies itself with image or thought in the psychic fact and gradually tries to achieve freedom from them. The subject soon comes to realize that image is not completely distinct from the object. And on the other hand thought maintains a distinction between 'content' and 'consciousness'. The pure subjective is above this distinction. The subject dissociates from psychic facts at a higher stage and enters into the realm of spiritual. There are three spiritual stages, according to K.C. Bhattacharyya. Identification with feeling is the first expression of spiritual subjectivity. So in the process of self – realization the subject dissociates itself from feeling. This leads to the next stage, which is introspection. The process of dissociation from the objective and from meaning content is complete when the
subject makes free himself from introspection and finally from its attachment beyond introspection. In this stage of complete freedom the experience of freedom also lapses or disappears. Actually the 'I' is a symbol of the Absolute. There can be no relation of the self with the Absolute, nor can the self be distinguished from the Absolute because self does not exist. It is a stage in which all distinctions between I and all, subject and object, Atman and Brahman disappears. The knowledge of identification between self and Brahman is attained. This identity of Atman and Brahman cannot be attained as a philosopher. But philosopher can come closer to the realization of moksa by considering philosophy as sadhana. Philosophy as a discipline of theoretic consciousness cannot be directed towards the attainment of liberation. One can procure and realize the identity of Atman and Brahman only through spiritual performance.

5.13 Absolute in K.C. Bhattacharyya's Philosophy:-

The Absolute, according to K.C. Bhattacharyya is indefinite. The Absolute is free from all determinations. The Absolute cannot be described either subjectively or objectively. Objects and subjects are limited realities, so definite. Definite realities are either inferior to the Absolute or are unreal. So Absolute transcends both subject and object. The Absolute is not even thinkable. The Absolute can only be believed in terms of symbols. It is purely indefinite.

The starting point of philosophy according to K.C. Bhattacharyya is reflective consciousness.

"Reflection is an awareness of content as to a mode of consciousness". It means that content and consciousness are mutually related and imply each other. This relation between content and consciousness as described by K.C. Bhattacharyya is "implicational dualism". And the Absolute can be understood in reference to this relation.

The content and consciousness are related indefinitely. This indefinite relation neither can be defied as a distinction nor as an identity, because it is evident that the content is somehow distinct from consciousness but it is not clear that the content and consciousness are identical. So, this indefinite stage of implicational dualism demands
a consciousness which is supra-reflective and in which the relation between content and consciousness stand as a distinction.

The implicational dualism is of threefold, because consciousness is of three kinds, viz, knowing, feeling and willing. K.C. Bhattacharyya describes this implicational dualism as unconstituted by consciousness or as constituted by consciousness or as along with consciousness constituting some kind of unity. This implies that in knowing, the content is not constituted by consciousness; in willing, the content is constituted by consciousness and in feeling; the content constitutes some kind of unity with consciousness. There are triple ways to understand the Absolute which are free from implicatory distinction. From the standpoint of reflection, according to K. C. Bhattacharyya, Absolute is free from the implicational dualism of content and consciousness.

In knowing, as the content is unconstituted with the consciousness, so the content is freed from any reference to consciousness so we have truth as the Absolute for knowing, that is free from subject. In this respect K.C. Bhattacharyya is in agreement with the realistic philosophers to some extent that an object may exist even when it is not known. The character of truth as an Absolute for knowing is a believed matter. It is not understood either in objective or in subjective attitude. The truth is speakable. It is extra religious or transcendental consciousness and is speakable through symbolic way only. The Absolute of willing is freedom. In willing, consciousness may be freed from content, so we have freedom of will. Freedom is understood as negation of being because the willed content without being constituted with willing is nothing at all. In the words of K.C. Bhattacharyya

"We will an act in order to get rid of the being of the act, get rid of the self complacent will to continue in this being-what may be called the will to indolence".  

In feeling, the implicational relation of content and consciousness may be freed from their distinction as a constituted unity, so we have value and is the Absolute for feeling. In reflective feeling according to K.C. Bhattacharyya there is a definite consciousness of an indefinite distinction of content felt and the feeling of it. Reflection demands a definite self subsistent unity, where this indefinite distinction can be resolved. And K.C. Bhattacharyya meets this problem by saying that
"To feel two contents at once then is to feel this unity and to feel them otherwise than the unity".24

There are therefore three forms of Absolute. The Absolute is truth, freedom and value. Though these threefold forms of Absolute cannot be avoided but it would be wrong to conceive the Absolute as one or three. In the words of K.C. Bhattacharyya the Absolute is not a known content. So the question of one or many is meaningless about Absolute. Each is Absolute by what are here understood. Truth, freedom and value are only their verbal symbols. They themselves being understood together but they are not as together. So the Absolute is not a unity of truth, freedom and value. It is not possible to conceive the Absolute as a synthesis of the triple forms, because these are incompatible with each other. In his "the concept of Philosophy" K.C. Bhattacharyya described these mutual relation in this way that it is nonsense to say that the Absolute is a unity of truth, freedom and value. It is each of them. These are neither separate nor one. We speak only separately about them.

There are three types of philosophical system based on the three kinds of experiences of the Absolute. The Advaita Vedanta conceives the Absolute as truth (positive being), for Buddhism Absolute is freedom (positive non-being) and according to Hegel Absolute is value (positive indetermination). For K.C. Bhattacharyya

"This triple absolute is apparently the prototype of the three subjective functions knowing, willing and feeling".25

In the supra-reflective stage these formulations of the Absolute as truth, as freedom and as value, are is a sort of alternation. In the first phase and in the second phase K.C. Bhattacharyya defines the Absolute as indefinite and as subject in accordance with the Upanishadic doctrine neti-neti and tat tvam asi respectively. But in the third phase by the influence of Jaina Anekantavada he defines Absolute as alternation. And this is the original contribution of K.C. Bhattacharyya to the field of Philosophy.

5.14 A comparative analysis of Aurobindo’s concept of Absolute with K.C. Bhattacharyya’s Absolute:-

Aurobindo and K.C. Bhattacharyya are the philosophers of the age of renaissance. Their philosophy is a revival of ancient philosophical thought and an
evolution of new concepts. The Supreme Reality according to the Upanishads is Saccidananda, Existence Consciousness – Bliss. The Supreme Reality or Brahman does not admit of any positive description. So indefinite Brahman has been explained with the help of negatory method neti-neti meaning ‘it is not this, ‘it is not this’. In this respect these two philosophers of Indian renaissance find themselves quite close to the indefinite nature of Brahman represented by the Upanishads. K.C. Bhattacharyya asserts that Absolute is indefinite. Its nature is indefinable in terms of subjective and objective because it transcends both subject and object. The indefinite Absolute is free from subject (truth) free from object (freedom) and also free from both subject and object (value).

“A consciousness of truth as what is believed in but not understood either in the objective or in the subjective attitude, as not literally speakable at all but speakable only in the purely symbolistic way, is extra-religious or transcendental consciousness”. 26

Aurobindo also conceives Absolute as complete indefinite. Absolute is indescribable either by neti-neti or by iti-iti. The Absolute is indefinite and free from all determinations, so it is indefinable and ineffable.

Immanuel Kant, the great German Philosopher says that we cannot know anything except through sense intuition and the categories. Therefore we can never know Reality or things in-themselves. The Ultimate Reality (Synthetic-unity of apperception) is never an object of knowledge. Our knowledge is limited to the world of phenomena or appearances. The noumena or things-in-themselves are unknown and unknowable. But a unity without plurality, a noumenan apart from phenomenon is an empty abstraction. On the other hand the experiences which according to Kant are the manifestations of the transcendent reality form a part of Ultimate Reality. So we can hope to know the Supreme Truth, at least partially, through the knowledge of its experiences. The thoughts of Aurobindo and K.C. Bhattacharyya bear directly on this topic. Since both of them clearly affirm that Absolute is knowable. K.C. Bhattacharyya says, like Kant, Sankara Vedanta also affirms the unknowbility of the Absolute. In another words it can be described “Known as unknown”. And according to K.C. Bhattacharyya, for that very reason demanding to be known, for him the basis of metaphysical knowledge is the actualization of the faith for this demand. And this true demand makes the Absolute knowledge. The unknowable cannot be considered as reality; it can never be taken as a subject of thinking. But the Absolute is not a
subject of reason; it can be realized through the intuition only. Aurobindo in his "The Life Divine" stated that the Absolute is not altogether and in everyway unknowable. Though it is inexpressible, yet it is knowable by the knowledge of identity, because the spiritual being is in us is Brahman itself. And for Aurobindo also the knowledge of Absolute can be attained by intuition only.

Most of the Indian Philosophers recognize the transcendent character of the Absolute with the reality of the world. For Aurobindo in its transcendental aspect the Absolute is Sachchidananda and throughout the process of evolution Sachchidananda is present in the world, but is partially hidden behind the scenes. The world is real because it is nothing but only a manifestation of the Absolute. The evolutionary movement of the world is started from self-concealment to self-revelation of the one ever-present reality. But K.C. Bhattacharyya’s assertion regarding the reality of the world brings him close to Sankara’s Advaita Vedanta. K.C. Bhattacharyya’s view in this regard is that the indeterminate Absolute breaks forth into the determinate by the self-revelation. All the contents of our thoughts are the determinate form of the Absolute. Bhattacharyya renders the world vivarta as “emanation” as opposed to parinama or evolution which is accepted by Aurobindo. He says

“It is true that the empirical world is ‘given’, but because it is ‘given’ it does not follow that it is real”.27

The Vedantic doctrine of illusion according to K.C. Bhattacharyya has two sides. On the one hand it implies the unreality of the world apart from Brahman and on the other hand it is real in the reality of Brahman. The latter side granted the revelation as necessary. Though the world is indescribable it cannot be ignored.

There are three branches of philosophy, according to K.C. Bhattacharyya which are based on three kinds of theoretic thinking viz, (a) the philosophy of the object (b) the philosophy of the subject and (c) the Philosophy of truth. Corresponding to the three modes of the subjective mind, knowing, willing and feeling, the self-evident Brahman can be described as truth, freedom and value. K.C. Bhattacharyya’s Absolute is an assimilation of the truth of advaita Vedanta, freedom of nihilistic Buddhism and the value of Hegel’s philosophy.

“The absolute as transcending the enjoyed reality of religion is positive being (truth) or positive non-being (freedom) or their positive indetermination (value)”28
But his Absolute is not a synthesis of these three forms but a totality of them because these triple forms of the Absolute cannot be brought into a unity in a higher synthesis. But Aurobindo's Absolute is an integral union of Existence- Consciousness Force and Bliss. The eternal nature of the Absolute is identified as Sachchidananda of Vedanta which is a combination of three words, sat, cit and ananda. These three terms do not introduce any distinction in Brahman.

The 'I', according to K.C. Bhattacharyya is a symbol of the Absolute. Like Sankara, Bhattacharyya accepts that the Absolute alone exists. The subject realizes its freedom by following three broad stages. In the final stage, the experience of freedom also disappears and the self negates itself. So the subject is not a real entity. The 'I' is a symbol and is nothing in itself. It is neither Absolute nor has anything which can be distinguished from the Absolute. But Aurobindo believes in the integral nature of Brahman. The world is a manifestation of Brahman. The manifestation of Sachchidananda into different realities is not unreal. The expressions of Brahman are as real as Brahman. The soul in man is nothing but the Brahman itself. The soul has two aspects – Jivatman and psychic being. The Jivatman is a portion of Parmatman and is transcendent to individuality. The other i.e. psychic being is the representative of the Jivatman and participates in the activities of life. Soul becomes united with the Supermind and becomes a divine being on earth in the process of salvation. So Aurobindo successfully maintains the individuality of man and the integral relation between Brahman and individual.

Though the thoughts of K.C. Bhattacharyya and Aurobindo have agreement and difference in many respect regarding the nature of Absolute but their originality in own respect cannot be denied. K.C. Bhattacharyya's three forms of Absolute and their relation with three subjective functions knowing, willing and feeling and the acceptance of the Absolute as an alternation of truth, value and freedom are completely new add to the field of philosophy. Aurobindo's concept of Absolute is that in which matter and spirit are synthesized, when he says matter is Brahman. His reconciliation of theism and absolutism, East and West, matter and spirit, personal and impersonal Brahman, acceptance of Supermind as a creative aspect of transcendental Brahman, reality of the world, ascent and descent of Absolute, heightening, widening and integration and the manifestation of the Absolute, all these
give him the chair of an outstanding philosopher and his contribution brings the richness of Indian philosophy.

5.15 Conclusion

Aurobindo the greatest mystic Philosopher and is perhaps the most important living exponent of the traditional idealism of India in the present world today, gives a comprehensive view regarding the concept of Ultimate Reality which brings a synthesis of various diverse doctrines in his integral non-dualism. Aurobindo is the true believer of fundamental oneness of Brahman, though he conceives the two aspects of Absolute – transcendent and immanent. All the three philosophers agree in adopting that from the transcendent point of view Brahman is pure, attributeless, static, passive, non – creative and immutable. From the empirical point of view Brahman is the creator of the world. As a creator of the world Brahman is God, Ishvara. But this does not mean that there are two Brahman; immanent and transcendent, Saguna and Nirguna, personal and impersonal are two poises of same one Brahman. All the three philosophers are advaitin in nature in one form or another.

K.C. Bhattacharyya's Absolute is an alternation of truth, freedom and value. The Absolute is not a synthesis of these three forms, because all are independent forms of Absolute. But the world of unity is difficult to explain with these incompatible independent forms of Absolute. Radhakrishnan’s conception is an improvement in this respect. Radhakrishnan says Absolute, God, Hiranyagarbha are different aspect of the Reality. These are the simultaneous and not successive poises of reality. Radhakrishnan conceives four poises of reality-Brahman, Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha and viratsvarupa. It is an order of arrangement; these do not succeed each other in time. So far the unity of the world is concerned Aurobindo successfully maintains this in his integral view of the Absolute. He assumes the fact that this world too is Absolute in the sense that the Cit- Shakti of Brahman manifests in the form of world. He says that the Brahman is one. All are in it because reality of everything is Brahman. Brahman by the power of his Consciousness Force manifests himself in different selves and in nature. He is the soul of all things by his nature of conscious self existence. The Brahman as Ishvara by his conscious power manifests himself in different forms and governs the universe.
K.C. Bhattacharyya has made negation the basis of his philosophy, and for him negation is the only way to arrive at the Absolute itself. He says, negation is the region of the Indefinite. Subject can realize its basic nature by rejection and supersession of each preceding stage. But Aurobindo’s philosophy is integral in nature. Aurobindo conceives of Divine evolutionism. The purpose of evolution is the divinization of the individual and the universe. The world is rushing for its union with God. Evolution brings transformation of the lower realities by the force of the higher emergent principle, when life emerges in matter, the latter is transformed, and when consciousness descends in body and life, both of them get transformed. Evolution is not growing from the lower ones as they are crossed on the contrary, it implies that the lower ones are uplifted and transformed in Aurobindo’s process of integration which means ascent through descent.

Evolution originated from Sachchidananda. The evolution cannot stop until the whole universe reach to Sachchidananda itself. The goal of evolution is the realization of a kingdom of ends, a perfection of organism which is Kant’s social ideal. Radhakrishnan like Aurobindo says that the supreme purpose of the self is the realization of man’s unity with the spirit. The Gnostic beings do not reject their lower elements which get transformed by the power of Divine Consciousness and Force. With the experience of God, the human personality as a whole gets illumined, purified and spiritualised. Aurobindo’s chief objection is against Radhakrishnan’s insistence that the final salvation of an individual is dependent on the cosmic salvation. Radhakrishnan denies the possibility of an individual salvation prior to cosmic salvation. On the contrary Aurobindo holds that it is not possible for nature to achieve union with the Sachchidananda so long as the superman is not born on earth. The emergence of the superman starts cosmic salvation and also divinizes the earth.

The philosophy of Indian renaissance is more or less a synthesis of different systems. But there are significant systematizations. Aurobindo may be called to be the most exalted thinker among these three philosophers who has built up an integral Advaitism, who maintains that the existence of the Absolute is fully consistent with the reality of the world. The Absolute is one but contains itself infinite multiplicity. The infinite spirit is not only an essential Existence but an All-existence.
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