CHAPTER–I
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction to the study: -

The common goal of Philosophers is to provide methods or theories for solving philosophical problems. Theories in philosophy, whether good or bad, aim to explain something, to answer certain explanation seeking questions, like why is there something rather than nothing? Why does experience exist? What is being? What is truth or knowledge? Virtually there is no end to all this. It is impossible to think of a philosopher without any philosophy. In fact there is not a single theory or method, which can solve all philosophical problems and sustain itself forever.

The notion of absolute truth is one of the important philosophical concepts. The basic idea of absolutistic philosophy is that there is a universal notion of truth. Philosophers of all ages have searched for an absolutistic concept of truth. It has been with us right from the moment of the origin of philosophy.

The intellectual necessity of explaining and understanding the significance of the relative and finite world-process leads the idealistic philosophers to the conception of the absolute experience which is absolute comprehensive universal ground of the world order.

In this work there is an attempt to discuss the concept of Absolute of Aurobindo. The robust intellectualist Aurobindo occupies a unique place of honour and reverence as a great mystic and dynamic thinker of the Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Aurobindo was the one who most explicitly and systematically developed his social, political, educational, ethical, religious and metaphysical ideas in his extensive English writings. He interpreted human history as a part of the evolutionary process towards a higher spiritual life.

"His many faceted personality, as it casts its lambent flame on his poems and his letters and his luminous essays and his massive treatises, attracts us and fascinates us, and at times even awes us". 

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Aurobindo was born in Calcutta in 1872 and was educated mainly in England at St. Paul's School, London and at King's college Cambridge. After his return to India in 1893 and a few years of college and university teaching, he became involved in nationalist politics, which led to his imprisonment in 1908. While under detention, he had a powerful religious experience and in 1910 he settled in Pondicherry, where his Ashram was established. His work constantly expanded from his Ashram of Integral Yoga to the Aurobindo international centre of Education.

1.2 General philosophy of Aurobindo

The ultimate Reality, according to Aurobindo is Brahman. Brahman is all inclusive, eternal, and divine. Brahman, in itself, is indeterminable and unknowable. It cannot be completely described either by affirmation or negation. So, Aurobindo says,

"The absolute reality of the Absolute must be, not a rigid indeterminable oneness, not an infinity vacant of all that is not a pure self-existence attainable only by the exclusion of the many and the finite, but something which is beyond these definitions, beyond indeed any description either positive or negative. All affirmations and negations are expressive of its aspects, and it is through both a supreme affirmation and a supreme negation that we can arrive at the Absolute."2

The Absolute is not altogether unknowable, because psychic being which is in us is Brahman itself. Brahman is Sachchidananda; Existence, Consciousness-Force and Bliss. This does not mean that Sachchidananda is constituted by three different principles. The Absolute is an indivisible reality-Existence, Consciousness-Force and Bliss. Absolute is the substratum of all things. Though the Absolute is one, it has multiplicity in it. Multiplicity of the world is made of Divine Existence. The Absolute manifests itself in the infinite names and forms through His Consciousness-Force. And it is out of Bliss the Ultimate Reality manifests Himself as this world. Bliss sustains the world and it is the goal of the world.

Supermind is the creative aspect of Sachchidananda. Self-illuminating Supermind expresses the real truth of being. The Divine knowledge and will are blended in perfect union in the concept of Supermind. Supermind selects some of the infinite possibilities of Brahman and actualizes them in explicit manifestation. Sachchidananda is transcendental and pure being, so manifestation is possible through Supermind, which is the immanent aspect of Brahman. The Supermind is the Divine law, the principle of evolution, manifestation and all the activities of the world are
governed by him. The Supermind is the intermediary principle between Sachchidananda and the world. The triune principle of Sachchidananda and Supermind together constitute the upper hemisphere. The Sachchidananda is extended in time and space through Supermind. This results in the lower hemisphere, consisting of Matter, Life, Mind and Psyche. Matter is the subordinate principle of Existence; Life, that of Consciousness-Force, Psyche that of Bliss; and Mind that of Supermind. Aurobindo’s Ultimate Reality consists of these eight principles of the two hemispheres.

The Sachchidananda, out of ananda, plays a joyful game of self-limitation and self-realisation. The universe is an expression of consciousness in the multiplicity and is all the time conscious of its basic unity. The eternal selves are Divine and are not involved in the world of ignorance. The true self sends down a ray, a spark of Divinity into the world. This is the ‘psyche’ which is inherent even in matter. ‘Psychic Being’ of man is the Divine self. But man is unaware of his soul because soul has to work in and through mind, life and matter which are by nature defective. The soul must attain to Supermind in order to realize its essence.

The Absolute descends into mind to create the world through the medium of Supermind. The Absolute moves on downward into the mind, psyche, life and matter, through the instrumentality of Supermind. The universe of life and matter which results from the plunge of spirit is real. Matter is not opposed to consciousness, but is one of the lowest forms of Absolute. Similarly, we should not regard ignorance as the negation of knowledge.

"The reality of the individual is Brahman the Absolute; the reality of the cosmos is Brahman the Absolute: the individual is a phenomenon, a temporal appearance in the cosmos; the cosmos itself is a phenomenon, a larger and more complex temporal appearance. The two terms, knowledge and ignorance, belong only to this appearance; in order to reach an absolute super consciousness both have to be transcended: ego-consciousness and cosmic consciousness are extinguished in that supreme transcendence and there remains only the Absolute."³

The next phase is evolution in which consciousness begins to climb the steps it descended. Aurobindo’s evolution is preceded by involution. The matter can evolve to spirit because spirit lies within the matter. Aurobindo conceives that evolution is a triple process of ‘widening’, ‘heightening’ and ‘integration’. Integration is a
completely new idea introduced by Aurobindo and gives a different outlook as it is not found in any system, either ancient or modern. Evolution is not only an ascent from a lower to a higher but an integration of the higher with the lower ones also. The process of “widening” means differentiation, organization and adaption. By “heightening” Aurobindo means ascent from one grade to some higher grade, from matter to life, from life to mind, from mind to Supermind etc. In the ascending process the lower is uplifted and transformed. When life evolves from matter, matter is not rejected, and life is not destroyed when the mind emerges from it. Aurobindo synthesizes the spiritualistic theory of the East and the mechanical theory of the West in his concept of evolution. He has accepted the cosmic view of the West and the spiritual outlook of the East. But he has rejected the mechanical nature of the West and the cyclical view of the universe and the individualistic outlook of the East. The result is an altogether new theory of evolution. The process of evolution cannot stop until the whole world is wholly divinized, as the Absolute is inherent in nature. Evolution starts with matter because Brahman has descended into matter. Life is born from matter as a result of the forces of Consciousness to ascend upwards. Life rises to animal level and then to the mind because of the dissatisfaction with its own state. But evolution does not stop here. It is yet to enter into the supramental stage which is the final stage of evolution. The consciousness in mind feels an urge to evolve into Supermind.

With the descent of the Supermind, the terrestrial principles will be radically transformed and man finally achieves identity with Sachchidananda. The human evolution takes place from one grade to another grade of existence. The first vital transformation is called the psychic transformation then the transformation in which the body becomes luminous, mind omniscient and life immortal. The soul, body, life, mind of an individual become purified and spiritualized and converted into a perfect divine personality which is called the Gnostic Being. The consciousness of a Gnostic Being becomes one and united with the Supermind as well as earth-consciousness. Gnostic Being transmutes and divinizes the earth and earth ascends in her union with God. The ultimate destiny of the evolutionary process is Divine life, a perfect life on earth.

Yoga, according to Aurobindo can expedite the goal of evolution. Aurobindo subscribes the integral yoga. The integral yoga of Aurobindo does not only aim at the
attainment of individual salvation but also an active participation for the divinization of the empirical world and of the whole embodied life here and now. The aim of yoga is to bring down the power of absolute in order to establish a divine world. Our mind cannot give the complete description of Divine life through its category. The aim of Aurobindo’s life-long sadhana has been to bring down the Supermind to the world, as the world has originated from Sachchidananda, so its goal is to return to Him, and by that establish a Divine life on earth.

1.3 Aurobindo’s Absolute

The Absolute, according to Aurobindo, is all inclusive. All is Brahman. In its transcendental aspect, the Absolute is Existence-Consciousness-Force and Bliss. Supermind is the immanent and creative aspect of the Absolute. Creation, evolution, manifestation all are depends on Supermind. But the Absolute and Supermind are not two different realities, only two poises of the same Ultimate Reality. Supermind is not an entity having a different status of its own from the Existence, Consciousness Force and Bliss. So the best way to describe reality, according to Aurobindo, is Sachchidananda. Sachchidananda is the common name for these triune principles. Aurobindo says,

"We start, then with the conception of an omnipresent Reality of which neither the Non-Being at the one end nor the universe at the other are negations that annul; they are rather different states of the Reality, obverse and reverse affirmations. The highest experience of this Reality in the universe shows it to be not only a conscious Existence, but a supreme Intelligence and Force and a self-existent Bliss."4

Let us try to explain the nature of Existence, Consciousness-Force and Bliss.

Existence

The Existence is both Being and Becoming, Absolute is the dynamic Reality. The Absolute is the substratum of Becoming, world is made of Divine Existence. The multiplicity is the creation of the Absolute. Existence reveals itself in different ways. World is an involved form of Divine Existence. World is an unmanifest form of Absolute, so it is not an illusion. The world is real as Brahman.

Being and Becoming are two modes of same Ultimate Reality. Absolute is not only beyond becoming but is also the basis of manifestation and movement. Reality is
not a Pure Being like Sankara Vedanta or Pure Becoming like Buddha and Heraclitus. Pure Being and Pure Becoming make the Absolute passive and reduce it to a flow respectively. Being is the supra-cosmic Reality but it does not deny the reality of the world. Knowledge of the Pure Being is possible through the knowledge of the cosmic world. Being and Becoming are the two aspects of the same Truth. Being has three poises – the supra-cosmic existence, the cosmic spirit and the individual self. The selves lose their identity with the Divine Being. But recover their oneness with the self-existent one when the individual selves realize omniscience, omnipotence and all the powers of Divine. The mind, body and soul get divinely transformed during the time of salvation and the individual become a superman. Pantheist philosophers fail to find the supra cosmic Reality as they conceive that Brahman and world are identical. But Brahman is transcendental Reality, and is beyond unity and multiplicity of individual and cosmic existence.

Sachchidananda is the universal indwelling presence, all existence, the origin and the foundation of all multiplicity but also the transcendental conscious Being.

**Consciousness -Force**

The Absolute for Aurobindo is Consciousness -- Force. Aurobindo admits an inseparable relation between Brahman and Shakti, Shiva and Kali. Consciousness without Force is passive and Force without Consciousness is blind, Consciousness-Force is the principle of creation. It is Divine mother which is behind all creations, manifestation and evolution; and also present in the world in a latent form, consciousness takes the form of matter, life and mind. The ascent and descent, evolution, manifestation all these process are possible, as because the Absolute is both Consciousness and Force.

Aurobindo uses the word (Consciousness) not in the sense of human consciousness, but in a very broad sense as eternal Consciousness. Mental consciousness is an involved form of it. Everything is of the existence of Consciousness. It is implicit in matter, works in animal and implicit as a self aware force of existence in human beings. It is the one and same Consciousness Force which is in different forms.
Bliss

Absolute, according to Aurobindo, is not only Existence and Consciousness Force but also Bliss. The knowledge of Brahman as Bliss is not new to Aurobindo. We find in the Taittiriya Upanishad that,

“The Brahman is bliss. Because out of bliss, indeed, these beings originate, through bliss, they, having originated, live and into the bliss, they, departing from here, enter again.”

Delight is the cause of creation, evolution and manifestation. Creation is an ecstatic dance of Shiva, and so joy of dancing is the purpose of creation. There is no limit to the bliss of Sachchidananda. It is expressed in each aspect of existence and consciousness and therefore is capable of infinite variety.

1.4 Importance of Aurobindo as a philosopher

Today’s world is in a stage of spiritual crisis. This general breakdown in standards and values is the climax of the one-sided growth of our materialistic scientific civilization, which is exploitative. A theoretical understanding of this decisive moment and to find out the causes and remedies of this crisis is a precondition to all future progress of man. It requires an examination of the whole social process and methods of its development, so that it meets all the crying needs of the time. Philosophy has not remained confined to some idle arm-chair but must serve for the regeneration of human race. In order to the survival of philosophy, renewed interest in the synthetic generalizing function is now an indispensable condition. Man, today, needs an integral philosophy to find a harmonious synthesis of the relation of individual and society, which will bring an integral evolution of entire human being into a new spiritual era.

A spiritualist, a mystic Aurobindo seriously made a lifelong attempt to arrive at an integral philosophy. He immensely contributed by his work and ideas, to the growth of national consciousness in modern India. He analyzed the processes and presented new methods of development and wanted to build up a new India through a spiritual upheaval.

Aurobindo was a great humanist. Humanism is the most characteristic philosophy of the age of renaissance. Modern philosophers lay more stress upon
improvement and development of life on earth. The end of all human activity is the well-being of society. A humanist thinker is a social reformer who concentrated his attention on social, political, educational and cultural problems and has given immense emphasis on selfless action, the niskama karma of Bhagavad Gita, the ‘duty for duty’s sake’ of Kant. The Humanist philosophers lay stress on the revival of these old teachings for the welfare of human beings. Aurobindo has given immense emphasis to the life on the earth and the spiritual integration of the world on the basis of universal brotherhood. Aurobindo says,

"The indwelling deity who presides over the race has raised in man’s mind and heart the idea, the hope of a new order which will replace the old unsatisfactory order, and substitute for it conditions of the world’s life which will in the end have reasonable chance of establishing permanent peace and well-being."^6

Aurobindo lays stress upon the values of life and their realization through ‘karma yoga’ which is nothing but a system of ethics. Aurobindo’s philosophy emanates from his deep sense of humanism. So his philosophy does not suffer from narrowness and exclusiveness, but is marked by universalistic fervor and intense desire for effecting welfare of mankind.

Aurobindo is a true lover of his motherland. Unlike Western nationalism, which is secular and purely materialistic in nature, Aurobindo’s nationalism is based on religion, which is spiritual in nature. Emphasizing on spirituality as the secret of all strength of our national life, Aurobindo considered nationalism as a spiritual sadhana. To him nationalism is the concomitant of spiritualism. India is a spiritual entity and nationalism is a religion that has come from God. Emancipation of India was essential for fulfilling her spiritual mission, i.e., the expansion of spiritual knowledge to other parts of the world. His nationalism emanated from his deep sense of humanism. Freedom of India was a spiritual necessity without which humanity would lose a spiritual guide. India cannot perish or extinct. India’s rebirth is demanded by the future of the world because it is India which reserved the most splendid destiny of the human race. India must be reborn, as the highest and the most essential for mankind is kept here. The perception of the implication of Advaita, the underlying unity beneath the surface of differences, which is the backbone of Indian culture, brings peace and contentment. The realization of the divine life on earth is the ultimate end of human race. The perfection of the individual life and national life is
the pre-condition for divine life on earth. Yoga can perfects an individual and national emancipation demands the freedom from foreign domination. Thus the political freedom for India and Humanism, i.e. spiritual integration of the world on the basis of universal brotherhood are complementary to each other.

Humanism and a profound moral appeal lie at the core of Aurobindo’s philosophy. Aurobindo’s deep and intense humanism is based on his vision of the all oneness in the Supreme Reality. He has made the most valuable contribution by meeting the great challenge of the present age through integration of East and West. Aurobindo’s philosophy is a real synthesis of the thought of East and West. Their views got a fulfillment of what each of them aims at but has not been able to accomplish. Aurobindo’s philosophy is integral and synthetic. Though Aurobindo was born in India he had grown up in the environment of the West. His philosophy has roots in the past but he also assimilates the modern western thought in him. Aurobindo denied the view that West was purely materialistic and the East exclusively spiritualistic. Both are materialistic as well as spiritualistic, according to Aurobindo. West is not different from the East; both of these are two sections of the one human family. The safety of West rests upon not in denial of spirit but in the recognition of the spiritual aim of human existence. The creative function of mind is not deniable. The safety of East lies in the recognition of the physical world, not in one-sided affirmation of the spirit. Aurobindo was equally concerned with both and his integral method depends on a balancing and a constant tendency of harmony between the two, for the development of human family. Aurobindo is a revolutionary-like the Buddha. Buddha led a revolt not only against ritualism but also against all sorts of stereotyped modes of thinking by denying the existence of God, hell, heaven, soul etc. and by accepting everything as impermanent.

Aurobindo takes a new approach to man. Aurobindo’s philosophy gets the merit in which for the first time man has received full recognition. He is the first to declare that it is possible for man to attain complete Divinity, in this physical body by spiritualizing the mind, body and life. There are several views of existence but in broad sense these may be classified into three categories. The first one is the terrestrial view which denies the Absolute Reality altogether. Whatever exists in the universe is concrete and certain. Matter is the only reality and our motto should be pleasure. But human life is a mixture of pleasure and pain. What we should do is to
avoid pain as far as possible which inevitably accompanies pleasure. There is no reality beyond this perceptible world. All talk of God, hell, heaven, past life, future life is futile.

Opposed to this is the cosmic view which asserts that the Reality is behind the world of many objects. Acosmism reduces the world to mere illusion. The Reality is described differently as Bliss, as indescribable and sometimes as void. The body, life, mind and world all are false formation and serve as cage and soul’s escape or freedom from these is the best deliberation. The suppression of all desires and quiescence in the Absolute i.e., asceticism is the inevitable result of this approach.

There is another view which is promoted by the religious faith, i.e. supra-terrestrial view. This theory believes that the highest goal of human life is heaven, which is an abode of unalloyed bliss. This world is a preparation place to enter there after dissolution of the present body. This world is a moral stage in which the individual selves play their respective roles in order to achieve the kingdom of joy.

Aurobindo reconciles all these three in his integral view. The plurality of things i.e., the facts of our experience is not unreal. Aurobindo denies the absolute reality of becoming and holds that there are other planes of existence with their own worlds forming a whole with the earth. All these are interrelated. Aurobindo maintains that Pure Existence or Sachchidananda is the ground of all existences. The Reality is transcendent but not unrelated to the world, becoming is only the movement of Pure Existence.

The world and the individual are real and made out of Divine existence. The world is a game of joy in which Sachchidananda manifests himself. Jivatman is the supreme self in us. The Sachchidananda itself descends in the finite. The individual is neither a mere appearance of Brahman as Sankara states nor something existing apart from the Divine as Buddhists affirm. The movement alone is real, so the Ultimate Reality is pure becoming according to the philosophy of Bergson, Heraclitus and the Buddhists. On the other hand Brahman is pure existence and that is the only reality according to Sankara. Aurobindo’s approach steers clear of both these extreme views. The integral philosophy of Aurobindo conceives that individual is true, eternal as the Absolute and existent in and through Him. But man’s sense experience and thought are limited and imperfect. It fails to comprehend the Ultimate Reality and its working.
It does not have the capacity to understand the things which are divine. But the Absolute can be known when the supramental consciousness emerges in us. Man can become omniscient and perfect when he transcends his limitations.

The destiny of human being is to universalize and impersonalize himself, not an escape from life. Gnostic being is the goal of individual effort. Aurobindo conceives of divine evolutionism. The very purpose of evolution is to attain a complete and perfect individual which is the result of integration both within and without. The aim of Aurobindo's yoga is to bring down the power of the Absolute for a total development of all the aspects of being so that it can attain divine status.

The human evolution takes place from one grade to another grade of existence. The first vital transformation is called psychic transformation. It consists in removing the veil which conceals our psyche. The psychic transformation brings about changes in the self and matter. Life and mind are purified in this stage. This transformation is to be completed by spiritual and supramental transformation. The spiritual transformation is the descent of a higher light, knowledge, power into the whole being. It increases the identity with Sachchidananda. The soul is lifted upward towards the realization of Absolute in the psychic and spiritual transformation. But even with spiritual consciousness, man lives with some amount of ignorance. The spiritual consciousnesses have yet to be converted to the divine consciousness. The supramental change brings a total transformation of our personality. The ascent to the Supermind and the corresponding descent of the Supermind in us takes place in this stage. The descent of the Supermind into the terrestrial existence makes a radical change in our entire being and nature. The soul, body, life and mind will be purified and spiritualized and an individual will be transformed into a completely divinized spirit. Such a perfect individual would feel divine everywhere. Everywhere he sees his own self, in beings as well as in nature. Such an integrated feeling will bring a new world order and there will be a spirit of oneness between personal and collective well-being.

The concept of salvation has taken altogether a different turn in Aurobindo's philosophy. M.P. Pondit states that,

"If I speak of Sri Aurobindo's relevance to the modern world today it is because he has pioneered a new tradition in the present century and that is, he does not preach salvation, he says: you have to perfect your life, you have not to escape from life, life is
For Aurobindo salvation is a divine birth as superman. Almost all systems of Indian philosophy believe in the cessation of rebirth in the state of liberation. But Aurobindo believes that Gnostic being takes rebirth again and again. Salvation is not freedom from rebirth. Salvation means perfection of all the elements of an individual. Liberation does not mean the total destruction of terrestrial existence, but in it the body, life, mind, soul etc are spiritualized. The individual is spiritually transformed and realizes all the power of the Divine. Liberation does not mean that the liberated souls merge in the universal Brahman and lose their individuality. It is not a state of escape from the world. To be a superman is to be a God on earth. Aurobindo does not conceive nature as a cage for soul, like the traditional systems. The nature is divine, and salvation means a divine birth in the cosmos.

Aurobindo conceives of cosmic salvation. The liberated souls do active service to humanity and spiritualize the universe. Aurobindo says that it is a crime to neglect even the smallest object. All the things of the world are the revealed aspects of Brahman. The realized soul does great service to awake the existence of Brahman. So he disregards the notion of individual salvation. In his “Human circle’s” Aurobindo states that the law of the spiritual beings is not only to see and find Divine in oneself, but to see and find the Divine in all, not only to seek one’s own individual liberation or perfection, but to seek the liberation and perfection of others. So Aurobindo’s concept of cosmic salvation, which puts interest on universalization, is an improvement upon individual salvation. The evolutionary process goes in its reversal process from matter to Brahman and again from divine to matter. The Gnostic being is a divine descent on earth and acts for the spiritualization of whole humanity. The highest objective of a Gnostic being is to uplift the ignorant masses
The salvation of an individual, for Aurobindo is a very low ideal. Aurobindo rejects the notion of an individual salvation in heaven. Gnostic being exercises his divine powers for the complete perfection of the whole universe. This extension of individual salvation gradually to the cosmic perfection is a distinctive contribution of Aurobindo.

The question is raised, as to whether or not the Gnostic being is jivanmukta. Jivanmukta in Indian philosophy is an individual who attains liberation here in this life. It is a state of perfection of one, while one is alive. When the body perishes, the jivanmukta attains videhamukti. Although there are similarities between Gnostic being and the jivanmukta, the state of jivanmukta is not fully like that of the Gnostic being. For Aurobindo, the Gnostic being is a transformation of man into God. The terrestrial existence of an individual and soul are perfected and divinized at this stage. But in the state of jivanmukta only spirit becomes free from bondage of ignorance. The body of a jivanmukta runs its natural course under the governance of prarabdha karmas. So it can be said that all Gnostic beings are jivanmuktas, but all jivanmuktas are not superman. Aurobindo's conception of Gnostic being is far superior than the concept of jivanmukta. The remedy for the present crisis in human civilization, which he suggests is the transition of man to superman. This concept is a strong contribution of Aurobindo's philosophy for human society for which he dedicates his entire life. Against the pessimistic outlook of the traditional philosophy, Aurobindo's optimism presents a future hope for a solution of the problems that are being faced by human beings in this critical time.

Aurobindo conceives Sachchidananda as the highest reality, and the reality is supremely spiritual. Yet he manages to assign to matter a place in it. He neither accepts matter as the only Reality as the materialist does, nor accepts the spirit as the only Reality as the spiritualist does. It is self contradictory to say that an unconscious principle could evolve into life and consciousness from it. So the materialistic philosophers fail to explain the truth of evolution. Spiritualism does not conceive the world to be divine. He accepts both matter and spirit. The world, according to Aurobindo is a manifestation of Brahman, all are divine. The world is Brahman. Aurobindo conceives no fundamental opposition between Brahman and cosmos. The world is a creation of Force; it is the result of the multiple concentration of Divine
Consciousness. The Sachchidananda plays the game of self-concealment and self-realization through the universe. Aurobindo says that

"It is immortal and infinite Spirit that has veiled itself in the dense rope of material substance and works there by the supreme creative power of supermind, permitting the divisions of Mind and the reign of the lowest or material principle only as initial conditions for a certain evolutionary play of the One in the Many. If, in other words, it is not merely a mental being who is hidden in the forms of the universe, but the infinite Being, Knowledge, Will which emerges out of Matter first as life, than as mind, with the rest of it still unrevealed, then the emergence of consciousness out of the apparently Inconscient must have another and completer term, the appearance of a supramental spiritual being who shall impose on his mental, vital, bodily workings a higher law than that of the dividing Mind is longer impossible. On the contrary, it is the natural and inevitable conclusion of the nature of cosmic existence." 

The apparent opposition between the terrestrial existence and Absolute disappear in course of evolution.

Aurobindo conceives that the world is real and spiritual. Aurobindo shows a positive attitude towards the world and therefore rejects asceticism. For thousands of years our interests have been other worldly. The seers teach us that everything is impermanent, changing in this world. So everything is suffering. They conceive the world not to be divine. The universe is either illusory or material. So they lay stress on the rejection of the world, and ask us to prepare ourselves for the extinction of this suffering.

Aurobindo points out that in the early ages also the emphasis was on the world. In the Isa Upanishad it is said that all the things of this world revolves round to the same one eternal truth. World is not different from God. The world is pervaded by the Ultimate Reality and therefore is not viewed as the Absolute Brahman, but as the cosmic Lord. The Upanishads and the Gita had an integral view of spirit, but it was Aurobindo, who for the first time discovered gradation of spirit and said that integral yoga is the way for its achievement. The world with matter, life and mind are involved form of Brahman. Aurobindo had the courage to refute the theory of Mayavada and the negative outlook towards the world. Aurobindo’s philosophy was based on the vision of all oneness in the Supreme Reality. The world is a manifestation of Brahman and is as real as the spirit. Aurobindo establishes the
monism of spirit and matter. Matter is an involved form of Brahman and it is the 
lowest manifestation of God. Traditional Indian philosopher, like Sankara denies the 
reality of the world. The world is empirically real, but transcendentally unreal. It is a 
mere product of Maya. When right knowledge dawns, the reality of the world is 
vanishes away. So world is not true for all times. But Aurobindo states that if the 
world is a game of self- manifestation of Brahman, then it cannot be an illusion. 
While phenomenal reality cuts at the very root of the world and its evolution in 
Sankara's philosophy, Aurobindo has given a deep significance of the world. 
Individual self and the world are different modes of the Divine Existence. Aurobindo 
finds a harmonious synthesis of the relation of individual and society in Divine. The 
liberation of an individual presupposes universal perfection. A realization in isolation 
of social self is a one- sided vision. Individualism and collectivism failed to meet the 
conflict between the individual and those of society. The individual and the universal 
are the expression of the Ultimate Reality. So in one self both meet and find their 
unity. Psychological climate of oneness and a global outlook is necessary to create 
human unity. 

The world and the individual, according to Aurobindo are only different form 
of the Absolute. Man and world are nothing but Brahman in a covered form. But the 
question arises why then there is pain and suffering if the God is the creator, the 
source of entire beings. In this regard we can say that undoubtedly Aurobindo has 
contributed in this aspect which gives a new and fresh outlook. Aurobindo conceives 
evil as impermanent and says that evil will disappear in the process of evolution. 
Aurobindo has made an improvement on the two extreme views of evil of both East 
and West. Indian philosophers looked upon evil as unreal. The ignorance of reality is 
the root cause of suffering. In order to acquire freedom from evil, a true knowledge of 
the real nature of the world and self is essential. Evil cannot be removed without 
dispelling ignorance, because evil is a product of the operation of ignorance in 
individual consciousness. Ignorance can be uprooted by true knowledge and the 
knowledge is always connected with yoga. The mere theoretical knowledge is not 
sufficient to dispel ignorance. Prolonged meditation on this truth is instilling them 
into our life. This concept of Indian philosophy we find in the Upanishads. The 
Chandogya Upanishad states that he, who acquires knowledge, becomes indifferent of 
death, illness and any type of suffering. He who overcomes from ignorance sees
everything everywhere. Liberated human can understand that though Brahman is one, He is able to manifest as world and finite forms.

The Upanishads affirm the reality of world. In many verses of the Upanishads, we find their concept which is opposed to the view that the world is unreal. The God is immanent in the world.

"At the bidding of this imperishable one, O Gargi, the sun and the moon exist apart; at the bidding of this imperishable one, O Gargi, heavens and earth exist apart; at the behest of this imperishable one, O Gargi, the minutes and hours exist apart as also the day and the night, the fortnight, the month, the seasons and the year; at the behest of this imperishable one, O Gargi the rivers flow from the snowy mountains -some of them towards the east, others towards the west and wherever each one goes, at the behest of this imperishable one,O Gargi, men extol the liberal givers, the gods go after the sacrifice, the manes (go after) the libations to the dead."

The position of earth and heaven are maintained by the guidance of an intelligent transcendent ruler. Individual ignorance is the root cause of evil and true knowledge of reality cannot be attained without dispelling ignorance. The standpoint of the Western view is that the veil is a permanent feature of the world. Evil is as real as good. But it is considered that good is identical with God and evil is just opposite of God. The question is how God allows evil to exist which is His opposite by nature. This idea of evil raises the question regarding his qualities like omniscience, omnipotence and benevolence.

Aurobindo tries to solve the problem of evil with the help of evolution. Both Indian and Western philosophers fail to handle the problem of evil. Indian philosophers give importance on the production of a few released souls and not to the general uplift of the whole world.

According to Aurobindo the Brahman, takes the form of individual and nature through a process of self-concentration in order to manifest itself in the world of Prakrti. The spirit involves itself in matter. This is the descending process of evolution. And in ascending the spirit is gradually revealed, the individual souls and the entire world unite with God. The purpose of evolution, according to Aurobindo is the divinization of the individual and the universe. From this general nature of evolution it is clear that, if evolution is a fact then evil must be impermanent. To Aurobindo evil
persists due to the individual ignorance and when knowledge dawns there remains nothing like evil. Aurobindo takes evil and falsehood as relative, they are not absolute. They have their roots in inconscience. As Aurobindo says

"Falsehood and Evil are unlike Truth and Good, very clearly results of the Ignorance and can not exist where there is no Ignorance: they can have no self-existence in the Divine Being, they can not be native elements of the Supreme Nature. If then, the limited Knowledge which is the nature of Ignorance renounces its limitations, if Ignorance disappears into Knowledge, evil and falsehood can no longer endure! for both are fruits of unconsciousness and wrong consciousness and, if true or whole consciousness is there replacing Ignorance, they have no longer any basis for their existence. There can therefore be no absolute of falsehood, no absolute of evil, these things are a by-product of the world-movement: the sombre flowers of falsehood and suffering and evil have their root in the black soil of the Inconscient. On the other hand, there is no such intrinsic obstacle to the absoluteness of Truth and Good: the relativity of truth and error, good and evil is a fact of our experience, but it is similarly a by-product, it is not a permanent factor native to existence; for it is true only of the valuations made by the human consciousness, true only of our partial knowledge and partial ignorance."\(^10\)

The dominant feature of Aurobindo’s philosophy is the spiritual evolution. The Indian and Western thought have met in Aurobindo’s concept of evolution which is by nature spiritualistic and cosmic. Aurobindo tries to solve all the problems of evolution in the light of his double process of ascent and descent. The descent is a downward movement from spirit to matter and ascent is an upward movement from matter to spirit up to the reach of Sachchidananda. The spirit descends in matter or involves itself in matter. The origin, the Ultimate Reality of all that is in the world, according to Aurobindo is Brahman. Matter is a form of Ultimate Reality. In evolution, the spirit is gradually unfolded. Matter ascends to life, man into the superman. So evolution means manifestation of the involved and implicit realities. Here we find a difference between Aurobindo’s view and the creative theory of evolution propounded by Henri Bergson. Evolution, for Henry Bergson means creation of realities which were non-existent before. His 'elan vital' from which all evolution takes place is unconscious. Samuel Alexander tries to meet this problem and conceives space–time as a conscious principle. But space-time is a very low principle and Kant argues that it is not a reality at all. So it is absurd to say that God or nisus, life, consciousness, deity, angels, etc are evolving from it which did not exist in it before. But Aurobindo is able to save his theory of evolution from this problem
because he assumes that the world too is Absolute in the sense that the Cit-Shakti of Brahman manifest in the form of world. The Sachchidananda, through the Supermind, descends into terrestrial existence. The descent of the Divine is the result of the self-concealment of the Divine. So in evolution the Brahmans return to itself.

Evolution, according to Aurobindo is not without purpose. Divinization of the individual and the universe is the goal of evolution. But the unconsciousness élan vital of Bergson’s has no purpose. Aurobindo’s conception of evolution touches the spirit of Upanishadic teachings. In a verse of the Taittiriya Upanishad Brahman is described as bliss. Bliss is the source of birth, secret of life and cause of death. Aurobindo wants to see not only the souls but the entire universe to unite with God. Aurobindo says, yoga is the necessary technique for translating man into superman. The final goal of evolution is to bring a Divine life on earth. The evolutionary process does not stop with the emergence of few supermen. Aurobindo’s effort is to extend the spiritual individual into the spiritual universal. One can expedite this purpose of evolution by yoga. The aim of Aurobindo’s integral yoga is not only the attainment of individual salvation but it moves to turn nature into super nature. Vaikuntha is here on earth, the kingdom of heaven on earth is richer than the vaikuntha in heaven. In consistency with his theory of spiritual evolution, Aurobindo expounds an integral religion and he admits the claims of both philosophy and religion for the regeneration of man. India is known as a spiritual nation. But the general deterioration in standards is observed now. So it is time that we wake up to our own heritage, and re-educate ourselves. Aurobindo’s philosophy can play an important part to enlighten our mind, to make ourselves better citizens of the world; can give a new dimension to life, in the midst of this world, not a life away from it.

The crisis of human civilization, all the present ills and evils of mankind, breakdown of standards and values are due to the “evolutionary crisis”. Today, people suffer in a perplexing state of life, creating by the puzzling mind for which they have lost the sense of direction to life. Aurobindo’s Absolute is a fundamental principle, shining with its full brightness in the midst of all development of science and technology. The confused people are benefited by the realization of the nature of Aurobindo’s Absolute, and they will be able to guide their life against the evil and will understand how life is to be led.
References


3. Ibid pp. 634-35

4. Ibid. p.32


