

Revisiting the Harmony of Dualities inherent in the Upaniṣadic notion of Brahman in light of Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy

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Abstract

Sri Aurobindo believes that it is the destiny of mankind to achieve the divine life because nature is evolving and there is no limit to its development. As far as Indian tradition is concerned, the developed state that Sri Aurobindo refers in his commentary on Iṣa Upaniṣad is the state of harmony between opposing elements or dualities. Our mind sees things in a divided manner, so there appears to be a contradiction in things. We are dependent on Brahman and we also have an identity relationship with Him. These two things appear to each other. At the superconscious level, they are not contradictory. In fact, dependence is the door to the realization of identity. Similarly, the Ātman and Maya, Puruṣa and Prakṛiti and Ishwara and Shakti may appear to each other, but there is no contradiction between them. If we look at these conflicts or dualities, it is clear that the aim of Indian thought has been to establish Harmony in the opposing elements. This paper tries to establish the harmony in the different contradictory genre involved in the Upaniṣadic notion of Brahman in the view of Sri Aurobindo.

Keywords: Brahman, Ātman, Duality, Infinity, Sachchidananda, Logic, Contradiction

Introduction: The Nature of Brahman

Sri Aurobindo with this statement of Brahmasūtra that Brahman is the origin of the world and its basis. That Brahman is beyond the reach of the human mind. It is self-existent and self-evident. It cannot be known as an object but can be known only by establishing a relation of identity with it. When we establish a relation of identity with the world, we will know that this world is the manifestation of Brahman. The world is self-established in the form of Sat, Chit and Anand. Whatever is visible has come from the eternal and is not an illusion. In the words of the Vedas, Abhu is the fundamental truth and Abhva is the truth that arises from it. Abhu is stable but Abhva is the blissful dance of Shiva which manifests God in innumerable bodies. The secret is that pure Sat remains pure and the dance of Abhva also continues." Thus Abhva is the result of the creative nature of Abhu. Sachchidananda is both transcendental and universal. The basis of Abhva is Abhu. This Abhu is one. Its unity is infinite. In which diversity is included. There is unity in many and from unity multiplicity emerges. In the form of Sat he is the source of the infinite manifestations that are inherent in him, in the form of Chit he is the controller of the world and in the form of Anand he is the motivator of creation. He is manifested in three forms— Ātman, Puruṣa and Ishwara. These three powers are called Maya, Prakṛiti and Shakti respectively. These are three forms of the same truth— the transcendental to the world. From the point of view of logic, the transcendental and the world seem to each other. In superconscious knowledge they both together indicate perfection. Sri Aurobindo says that the Maya which appears to our limited reasoning is the reasoning of the Infinite. Sachchidananda is both Nirguna and Saguna. It is impersonal because it is the basis of truth, power, strength and existence and it is personal because all living beings have originated from it.

Aabhu and Abhva

Brahman itself as Aabhu and Abhva. Aabhu is its immutable aspect, Abhva is its manifestation as the universe which

can be called the dance of Shiva. Aabhu contains diversity, it is one, it is personal and pure being it is impersonal, but all beings are its form and therefore it is personal. Sachchidananda is its form. Sachchidananda is the first manifested form of the . It can be called Purusha in the Vedic *Evedam Sarvam*. It is both universal and universal - *Tripādhurdhvamudait Purusha Padomsyehabhavatpunah*. This 'Sahasrashirsha' is 'Sahasrapad'. It is the origin of the world, its basis and is present in everything. In the words of Paratpar Sri Aurobindo, Para-Brahman and Sachchidananda Brahman. Para-Brahman is beyond the universe and beyond words. Brahman is both transcendent and omnipresent.

Vedic Form of Being and Becoming

In the terminology of Vedas, Abhva (Becoming) is a form of Aabhu, which is name and form (Shatapath Brahman, 11.2.3.3-4). In practice, the coordination of these two makes divine life possible. Man's desire will be fulfilled only when he will be able to achieve Abhva along with Aabhu. It is true that this has not yet, but in the course of development, such a state of supermind will be created when this will become possible. According to Sri Aurobindo, the concept of calm, silent and immutable Ātman found in the path of Sannyas of Shankara Vedanta is not the last peak of spirituality. Also in the journey of spirituality. It is clearly mentioned in Purushasukta that it the earth from all sides and is situated above the earth as well. According to Sri Aurobindo, these are the two aspects of Brahman - Saguna and Nirguna. It is from silence that Shabda Brahman appears which is mentioned in the Vak-sukta of Veda. Silence does not mean the elimination of the world; is the basis of the world. Sri Aurobindo interprets the statement of the Taittiriya Upaniṣad that 'Sat was born from Asat' to mean that Asat is immeasurable while Sat is universal and Asat is its basis. The realization of the peaceful Ātman alone is not real Advaita because in it the existence has been divided into two parts - one true Brahman and one false Maya. If the Ātman is the only truth then everything must be the soul and at the same time there must be some reason for the soul to express itself as the world. Sri Aurobindo that if gold is truth then even a vessel made of gold cannot be an illusion. In fact the world is the embodied form of truth.

The Logic of Infinity: The Way to Avoid Duality

Relationship between Ātman and world

When it is said in Vedanta that 'everything is Brahman' which is 'one and unique', by putting both of these together it becomes clear that matter is also Brahman and we cannot call matter false. Shankara Vedanta, who believed the world to be 'Mithya', by calling matter false, neglected practical life. According to Sri Aurobindo, both Asat and Sat are two forms of the same truth. is why Sri Krishna has described him as both Sat and Asat in the Gita. According to Sri Aurobindo, the word Sachchidananda is indicative of this state. He has called his philosophy 'Samagra Advaita'. According to him, to reach the state of superconsciousness, we will have to go beyond the experience of the peaceful Ātman and at that time we will the truth not only of the Ātman but also of the world. According to Sri Aurobindo, Shankaracharya could not clarify the relationship between the Ātman and the world. Therefore, his philosophy is incomplete. He believes that this philosophy does not answer the question of existence and thus does not even acknowledge it. Therefore, we must find a philosophy where the of the Ātman with the world can also be explained. In other words, the of many with one reality can also be established.

Ātman, Purusha and Ishwar

As far as the origin of creation from Sachchidananda is concerned, Sachchidananda manifests itself in three forms - Ātman, Purusha and Ishwar. These three perform their functions in the of Maya, Prakriti and Shakti respectively. Maya is the power of the soul which imagines things; Prakriti is the power of Purusha which brings motion the witness of Purusha and Shakti is the force of the consciousness of Ishwar which imagines as well as creates. Sachchidananda is the basis of these three. These three form the bridge between the individual and the whole.

Ātman

Apart from the individual and the whole, the soul can also be experienced in form beyond the world. As an individual, it is Mumukshu, as a whole, it is Kutastha and as a world-transcending form, it is beyond Prakriti. The first experience

of the Ātman is in the immutable form, where there is neither sound nor movement. It is beyond Maya, this is the Nirguna Brahman, but the Saguna Brahman is dynamic. Thus, Brahman is both Nirguna and Saguna. In both forms, he is impersonal. Therefore, despite being dynamic, he does not come under , he remains independent.

In the form of Sachchidananda Purusha, he is the doer and enjoyer of all the actions of nature. According to Sri Aurobindo, the soul is impersonal, but Purusha, being connected to Prakriti, is personal as well as impersonal. Purusha gives consciousness to Prakriti and the actions of Prakriti are reflected in Purusha. Only through the relationship between Purusha and Prakriti can living beings play. When Purusha takes a body, he becomes subordinate to Prakriti. This is a state of ignorance. when Purusha comes into the state of witness, this is his first step towards independence. Only by being detached from Prakriti, can know himself. Then he is no longer subject to his actions but becomes the master of his actions. At that time he has three options: either he lets Prakriti do its work, or he goes into silence or he transforms Prakriti by entering the superconscious state. In any case, he becomes the master of Prakriti instead of being its slave.

Purush and Prakriti

According to Sri Aurobindo, the Purush and Prakriti of Sankhya are divisions made from practical point of view. These divisions are not fundamental. As consciousness , the difference between Purush and Prakriti disappears. The meaning is that the difference between Purush and Prakriti is only an illusion. In reality, Prakriti is the power of Purush. In the state of duality, Purush is the controller of Prakriti. The Ātman takes the form of matter at the physical level, takes the form of life at the biological level, becomes mind at the mental level becomes supermind at the superconscious level and becomes pure truth or Sachchidananda in the form of Para-prakriti. In the physical form, the Purusha is a living being who cannot recognize his true nature due to ego or desire, but inspired by desire, he provides basis .

In the state of complete mastery Prakriti, the Purusha is called Ishwar. He is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. He creates the universe, he is the controller of all energies, he knows both matter and consciousness, he is situated in the heart as Antaryami, he is the master of all actions. He enjoys all the pleasures, all living beings are his different forms, he is everyone's mother, father and friend. Sri Aurobindo says that God is seen in a limited form but God has a combination of both Saguna and Nirguna.

Personal and Impersonal

In reality, personality and impersonality are divisions made by our . It appears that the material world is impersonal. Similarly, being, consciousness, bliss, and power also appear to us as impersonal. , finite powers appear to us as personal. in reality, behind both of these is Sachchidananda. Existence has no meaning unless there is a being, consciousness has meaning unless there is a sentient being, and even bliss has no meaning without a feeler. Thus the impersonal appears personal. is no fundamental difference between the two.

Sachchidananda is the ruler of the world in the form of God, but he does not use his power through the mind like man. He knows the truth of all things. He can even transcend the laws of nature; therefore, he is not mechanical. He acts according to his infinite consciousness. His logic is the logic of the infinite, not the logic of the finite. We should try to understand his functioning on this basis.

Ishwar and the Ātman

As far as the mutual relationship between the Ishwar and Ātman is concerned, there is identity between them because the Ātman is also divine like Ishwar. The Ātman depends on Ishwar because Ishwar is the original form of Sachchidananda. this dependence is not apparent to us because we consider ourselves to be independent. In spirituality, this dependence can be understood at the superconscious level.

The Logic of Infinity

In the form of Sat, Atma, Purusha and Ishwar are the three aspects of Sat and in the form of Chit, Chit has three forms of Maya, Prakriti and Shakti. In the state of superconsciousness, it can be understood that everything is Brahman but at the level of logic, these contradictory things how the perfect becomes imperfect or how the immutable becomes dynamic, how one becomes many, how the impersonal becomes individual, how the present gives birth to the present, how the

nirguna become saguna, how the conscious power be dynamic while being immutable. All this is beyond the understanding of logic. according to Sri Aurobindo, since Sachchidananda is infinite, its functioning is also in accordance with . It would be illogical to believe that the finite can measure the infinite or the ignorant can understand the omniscient. Our logic is based on the experiences of the body, the soul and the mind. On the basis of these incomplete experiences, we make some rules and consider them universal. We consider those are against those rules inconsistent. the standards are suitable for one level of existence are not suitable for all levels. Even at one level, rules apply only in a limited form. Therefore, the rules are made within the limits of space and time do not apply to space and timeless. In fact, they cannot be applied everywhere even infinite time and infinite space. Therefore, we cannot even life which is above logic.

To understand , insight is which the intellect does not have. It is even more difficult to understand that which is beyond logic. The Ātman is beyond logic, hence it is not possible for the intellect to understand it, insight is , where the intellect and the mind become silent and come to the state of supermind. Only the supermind can see the expression of many in one. To understand this situation, a logic greater than ordinary logic is . It is more vast, subtle and complex. It can see all those facts our intellect cannot see. Logic is the tool of our superficial consciousness which little knowledge of the higher level and limited vision. Apart from this, logic cannot give us direct experience. What is not clear through logic is self-evident for Sachchidananda. He has the knowledge of the complete truth. Therefore, it is not true that all the activities of Sachchidananda are according to our limited logic. He is not always in accordance with moral concepts either. What seems to us to be against logic and immoral, the Chit-Shakti of Sachchidananda can do considering it to be beneficial for the whole. A decision on the basis of a few facts has no meaning in front of decisions on the basis of more facts. The logic of the infinite works according to the occasion, so it is not determined in a narrow and limited sense. Therefore, we cannot understand the activities of Sachchidananda on the basis of our logic. What is impossible for us is normal for Sachchidananda. The form and actions of Sachchidananda will not stand true to the law of contradiction. Elements the infinite and the finite, the constant and the moving, the one and the many, the transcendental and the universal are contradictory to each other. for Sachchidananda to express itself, it be dynamic, multiple, possessed and universal. So they are not impossible for Sachchidananda. opposites are contained in each other and instead of hindering each other, they help each other.

When we negate, it shows the incompleteness of the predicates, not the denial of the predicates. Thus, when we say what, it means that all possibilities are inherent in it. Thus a statement is not cut off by its opposite statement but is explained. Therefore, in reality, we can know a thing properly only when we know the two opposite i.e. dual qualities present in it simultaneously.

The meaning is that while trying to the functioning of Sachchidananda through our limited mind or pure logic, we should not say how can that which is indescribable be expressible or how can the infinite be finite and hence the limited world is a dream or illusion. If we are unable to understand the manifestation of the Supreme Being in the form of the world, it does not mean that the Supreme Being cannot be manifested in the form of the world. The consciousness of Sachchidananda is different from our mental consciousness and we have to understand its dynamicity on the basis of the logic of the supermind and not on the basis of our logic. There is no difficulty in the 'logic of the infinite' that the transcendent remains transcendent and manifests in the form of the world. It can be conditional even while being unconditional. Sri Aurobindo repeatedly stressed that the consciousness of the infinite is different from our consciousness. Our intellectual logic is based on words and thoughts the logic of the infinite is based on facts. For this reason, the intellect cannot grasp the whole. , the parts remain connected to each other and complement each other. The intellect cannot even understand the relationship between the whole and the parts because the whole and the parts are separate from each other. In other words, it cannot understand the as limited. All its efforts the in which blind people touch one part of an elephant and consider it to be the whole elephant. of a part can also be useful from practical point of view, but the part cannot be considered as a whole. Even considering the whole as a group of parts is not complete

knowledge because the whole can be more than the group of parts, because it is connected to the universe; knowing only the whole is also incomplete knowledge because the parts also have their own importance.

The Law of Contradiction and Logic

The law of contradiction does not work in spirituality, but even in practical life, it is not right to accept one of the opposing sides and reject the other. In fact, all substances have both particular and general. The particular separates it from others and the general connects it with others. Beyond both the particular and the general, there is also an essence of things. In fact, all substances in the world are different forms of the same energy. If we understand that energy, then we can convert any substance into another substance. In the Vedic tradition, this has been called Suryavigyan.

Plants, animals and mind from practical point of view. If we go deeper, the plant is in the process of becoming an animal, the animal is in the process of becoming a human and the human is in the process of becoming a god. The reason for this is that although they are different, they are basically different expressions of the same truth.

practice objects have opposing qualities. No object is completely beautiful, completely ugly. Its beauty is relative and ugliness is also relative. Existence is made up of such opposites. The contradiction only means that the object is of its substance, area, time and feeling, no other object can be of the same substance, area, time and feeling. In this sense, the pot is of its substance, area, time and feeling and the cloth is of its substance, area, time and feeling. Therefore, both of them are different. Both of them are earthly, that is, the cloth is made of the same type of atoms as the pot. Therefore, both can change into each other. From the point of view of practice, a distinction at one level is necessary, the basis of which is place and time. As we get subtler, the difference dissolves. In practical life, from the viewpoint of difference, the work of one thing cannot be done by another thing. From the viewpoint of the ultimate, two things that are the same, are not opposed to each other but are complementary. All opposites dissolve in the Supreme - *Parevyaye Sarva Ekibhavanti*, but in the expressed form they remain relatively different from each other and inseparable. This view is close to the Anekant of Jains. Purva Mimamsa, which considers the world to be true, is also Anekantavadi.

The use of this view in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is that we can understand the relationship between immutable Brahman and the dynamic world. If we analyze from the viewpoint of contradiction, then either we consider the immutable to be true and the dynamic to be false or an illusion as has been done in Shankar Vedanta, or we consider the dynamic to be true and the immutable to be false as has been done in Buddhist philosophy. According to Sri Aurobindo, the contradiction that these two philosophies talk about is verbal and conceptual, not real.

Nirguna and Saguna

According to our logic, the Supreme Being is indescribable and Nirguna. Therefore, it cannot go into name and form. The reality is that if everything is Brahman, then name and form are also Brahman. There is nothing other than Brahman; they arise from Brahman and are sustained by Brahman. When we look at this contradiction between Nirguna and Saguna, we have either of these meanings it is free to become Saguna in any form; there is no limitation it will become Saguna only in a certain form; Nirguna contains all qualities. Nirakar contains all forms. Similarly, being formless means that it can assume any form; there is no limit to the types of forms it can assume. Omnipotence means that there is no limit to its power, it is completely independent. When we consider the Supreme Being or Sachchidananda incapable of assuming a form, we in a way deny its infinite power.

One and Many

Sri Aurobindo has avoided the contradiction between one and many. He says that we think of 'one' in the language of mathematics, to which by adding something or dividing which something can be made two. The oneness of the Supreme Being is not the limited unity of mathematics. He is the infinite and fundamental unity in which hundreds, thousands, billions, trillions of things can exist. No number can limit that unity. Thus there is no limit to the unity of the Supreme. The Infinite can become 'many'. His infinity means that He can have many different forms. Sometimes we call a group of many 'One', but the unity of the Supreme is more than a group of parts. Thus there is no conflict between the unity of the One and multiplicity.

The remains even though it is many. The difference between the finites is not real. The Infinite remains Infinite even though it manifests as finite. Nothing is added to the Infinite by creation. He remains the same even after creation, because He is not a group of finites. He is everything and more than that. He is the many forms of the One. If He actually becomes many, His unity will end. Therefore, the opposition between the one and the many is only verbal, not real.

Silence and Mobility

Similarly, the silence of the is the basis of the mobility of the . From the point of view of our limited logic, there is a conflict between silence and mobility. from the point of view of the , both of these are inseparable complements of each other.

The concept gets more perplexing in Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad 5:

That moves that moves not, That is far, that is near,

That is inside of everything, And also outside of everything.

(तदेजति तन्नेजति तद् दूरे तद्वन्तिके।

तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तद् सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः॥)

And, Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad 1.5.20 also emphasizes that:

This is the greatest among us that, when it moves or does not move, feels no pain nor is injured.

(स वै देवः प्राणो यः सञ्चरश्चासञ्चरश्च न व्यथतेऽथो न रिष्यति।)

If the Supreme Being is only silent and indifferent, then it would mean that He is powerless. Such a Supreme Being cannot even be thought of. power must have infinite mobility. its basis is indifferent mobility. silence emanates many but remains indifferent itself. Because it is not subject to those energies.

Formless and Corporeal

Similarly, being formless does not mean that there is no power to assume a form, but from formlessness, the possibility of assuming infinite forms appears. If this is not so, then either there will be only one form or there will be a group of all forms. In fact, formlessness is an essential part of spirituality. All finite objects are His power, His forms. Because He is formless and nameless, infinite names and forms can be generated from Him. The formless manifests itself in form and shape. It is the form manifests the power and qualities of the in name and form.

The Infinite and the Finite

Similarly, there is no contradiction between Infinite and Finite. Both of them are manifestations of . Both are not situated as opposites to each other. just as light and heat both exist together in the sun, both exist together. The Finite is a side of the Infinite. No Finite can exist in itself; it exists in the Infinite because it is identical the Infinite. The Finite is not a part of the Infinite. Just as the cloud space is not fundamentally different from the great space, appears different because it is surrounded by the walls of the cloud. All the cloud spaces are inseparable from the great space. When we look at the objects, all those substances, despite being different, appear to be the results of the same process. This is called *Avibhaktam Vibhakteshu* in the Gita. This is called *Poornamadah Poornamidam* in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad.

Uniformity and Diversity

When the Supreme Being assumes many forms, His Uniformity does not end. His Uniformity is not so uniform that it cannot produce diversity. The same Ātman manifests itself in the form of insects, birds, animals and humans but it remains the same Ātman. If not so, all the manifestations in nature would be to remain connected with each other and would become fragmented in a chaotic form because there would be no element to connect them all in one thread. Thus we see that one becomes many and unity keeps the multiplicity together. Because one and many are the two basic aspects of the Infinite.

Maya is the power of Sachchidananda which is not bound by any one action. Despite being one, it is multifaceted and has no limits. It can assume many forms. In this way, Sri Aurobindo has overcome the contradictions on the basis of the logic of infinity and on this basis we can understand the nature of Sachchidananda. origin of this concept is also in Gaudapada and Shankara, but the credit of analyzing it in detail goes to Sri Aurobindo.

just as Jains matter to be true despite contradictions on the basis of Anekant, Sri Aurobindo also considers the world to be true despite contradictions, but Shankaracharya also refutes Anekant and on the same basis denies the truth of the world; he considers the world to be only a practical existence, not a Parmarthika existence.

Conclusion: Acceptance and Negation, Mutually Complementary

The basis of the universe is 'Para-Brahman', which is sometimes called Sat, sometimes beyond Sat and Asat, and sometimes immeasurable. Being complete and infinite, it is inconceivable. Although it cannot be known as an object, it is self-illuminating. We see the Absolute on the level of the mind sometimes as universal or beyond the universe, sometimes as personal or impersonal, sometimes as Sat or Asat, sometimes as Saguna or Nirguna, sometimes as conscious or unconscious, sometimes as blissful or blissless, sometimes as Purusha or Prakriti. none of these can fully identify the Absolute. It is known only through silence. Hence the scriptures have expressed it sometimes as *neti -neti* and sometimes as *iti-iti*. According to Sri Aurobindo, Nirguna and Saguna, finite and infinite, conditional and immutable are not contradictory but complementary to each other. Shunya does not mean emptiness but potency. Similarly, Nirguna also does not mean emptiness but 'everything'. Asat is also not unreal. In fact, negation reveals the incompleteness of the method. Both of them are supportive of each other. superconscious knowledge, they become of each other. The opposition that appears suddenly disappears when one deeper. For example, both aabhu and abhva are necessary to know the Absolute. When we negate, it is as if we point towards the limits of the truth propounded through the conditional sentences.

When we describe the Absolute as immeasurable, one of its meanings is that it cannot be known by the senses or the intellect; it can be known only by insight. On the other hand, the depth of its dynamicity cannot be measured even by insight. The reason is that although whatever is the Supreme Brahman, the Supreme Brahman is present before the instruments we have and therefore cannot be known by them. Therefore we cannot know the Infinite but we can be Infinite ourselves. Hence the Upaniṣad says - *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati*. In this sense Brahman cannot be known while being in the duality of knower and known.

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