EPISTEMOLOGY OF MYSTICISM

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Since the time of William James, two philosophical questions preoccupied the discussion of mysticism : (1) Is there a core mystical experience common to humans irrespective of their cultural and traditional differences? (2) Do mystical experiences give veridical insight into certain aspects of reality and into reality as a whole so that mystical claims can be accepted? In fact, the answer to the first question determines the answer to the second question. These two questions can be dealt with from the point of view of two traditions, *viz.*, (i) perennialism and (ii) constructivism. The perennialists like William James, Evelyn Underhill, Joseph Marechal, William Jonston, James Pratt, Mircea Eliade, and W. T. Stace maintain that mystical experiences represent an immediate direct contact with an absolute principle. According to them, the core experience which is a "pure consciousness event", is the same but when it is made explicit, it appears to be divergent, since it is interpreted according to the language and belief of the tradition. Aldous Huxley and Huston Smith hold that a transcultural perennial philosophy can be grounded on the basis of this experience. In fact, the argument for the existence of God is supported on the basis of similarity in the core experience. C. D. Broad and Huston Smith, who accept a common mystical experience, use this unanimity of mystical experience as a key premise in their argument for the validity of mystical claims. C. D. Broad argues that, if there is unanimity in mystic experience, then there is no reason to think that there is a collective delusion and that it is rational to accept the validity of the claims of the mystics.

The non-constructivism philosophers consider the mystic experiences to be valid on the ground that a certain subject who undergoes mystical experience is itself a justification for the mystical claims and hence, no further argument is necessary. William James is of the view that mystical experience should be accepted as authoritative for an individual, although not for the observer, even if the mystical experience does suggest other modes of knowledge and truth. It should be so because mystical experience, like ordinary perception, involves

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"face to face presentations of what seems immediately to exist" provides evidence no less than that given by the senses.

In recent times, perennialism came into disfavour due to paradigm shift in the humanities and social sciences towards constructivism. According to the constructivists' paradigm, all experiences, whether religious, artistic, or mystical, are in fact shaped and mediated by the terms, categories, beliefs, and language. It seems to us that constructivism has been greatly influenced by Kant's epistemology. There has been an epistemological shift in the West since Kant. According to Kant, there is no direct, unmediated knowledge of the reality. All knowledge and human experience are structured by human categories and forms of sensibilities. He further holds that no mystic experience or metaphysical insight can have any justification since man is not equipped with higher faculties of knowledge. Mystic-claims can never be accepted as a genuine part of human knowledge. "Mediation" has been taken by the constructivists like Steven T. Katz as a starting point for their epistemological enterprise.[1]

Katz makes an important epistemological claim. He asserts that the previously held beliefs and concepts will not come into play in the post-experiential shaping of the descriptions and text, but rather they will play their role in the shaping of the actual mystical experiences themselves. Katz, sometimes, seems to argue for a causal model when he holds that there is a "clear causal connection between the religious and social structure one brings to experience and nature of one's actual religious experience."[2] Robert Gimello seems to hold a similar claim when he says that mysticism results from a psycho-somatic enhancement of one's belief. Here he also seems to suggest that there is a complete constructivism according to which the experience is one hundred per cent shaped, determined, and provided by the set. In denying the common core to mysticism and in upholding constructivist view, Katz brings in his simple epistemology. According to him, all experiences, and hence all knowing, are mediated by a form of life, a cultural situation, and a set of social and historical relations. For Katz, the experience of Brahman is always a Hindu experience, the experience of *nirvāṇa* is always a Buddhist one, and both are fundamentally different from the Christiam experience of God. The constructivists further argue that there may be some similarities among the mystical experiences, but there is no sameness of identical unmediated experience; and hence, it is more appropriate to accept pluralistic conclusions in mysticism.

The constructivists position can be questioned on the ground that in the mystical tradition of Yoga, Buddhism, and Advaita we do come across pure consciousness experience where we find the reconstruction of many of the conditioning factors. Again, when Gimello seems to suggest that there is a complete constructivism according to which the experience is one hundred per cent shaped, we can say that such conservative hypothesis cannot stand up to the data of mysticism. In the history of mysticism we do come across such cases in which previously acquired concepts were deeply and radically disconfirmed.

When we come to the question of the validity of mystic claims, the constructivists radically differ from the many prominent philosophers of mysticism. Katz claims that there cannot be any public and independent grounds for accepting mystical claims and it cannot serve as "evidence" for accepting the validity of mystic claims.[3]

Katz accounts for the diversity of mystic reports on the basis of differences in tradition and belief, which determine the character of experiences. His views are something very close to Thomas Kuhn who is of the view that several factors combine to constitute a paradigm which governs the intellectual inquiry of given time and roughly delineates culture and thus a paradigm determines the data. All data, for Kuhn, are apriorized and ultimately all our observations are "theory-laden". N. Hanson illustrates this position with a story of two biologists. Each of them, though looking at the same slide, yet sees according to a distinct theory held. We can trace this line of thought to Kant who developed the idea that we have the experiences which we have because we are the sort of beings we are. The ultimate position held by Katz-Kuhn will be, as Katz puts it : "No veridical position can be generated on the basis of mystical experience."[4]

According to Israel Sceffler, a foundationalist, scientists demonstrate in practice the possibility of demonstrating rival theories, even the rival paradigms by experience. If this view is accepted, then there remains the possibility that in a mystic experience one could have a test of theory and this will make the Katz-Kuhn objection defunct. Stephen H. Phillips is of the view that there can be diversity in the mystic experiences themselves since the reality is so vast that each one can see the same truth from different angles. So, diversity in mystic experience need not disprove the object of mystic experience. In other words, phenomenological diversity does not undermine the possibility of a mystic

diversity. In this context says Phillips, we refer to the Jastrow figure, made well known to philosophers by Wittgenstein, which is used sometimes to illustrate theoretical relativism. Both the "duck" and the "rabbit" view would be correct and so also "duck-rabbit" view.

Very often the lofty and spiritual experiences are treated invalid on the ground that spiritual experiences are inexpressible and incommunicable. There are a few supporting arguments in this line.

For any kind of possible human knowledge, verifiability and communicability are so closely interrelated that any knowledge which is verbally inexpressible falls outside the pale of verification and thus ceases to be necessarily true. W. M. Urban thus comments :[5]

> The limits of my language are the limits of my world. This does not necessarily mean the dogmatic denial of anything beyond that which we can express, but it does mean - and indeed must mean - that it is only about that which can be expressed that question of truth and falsity can be significantly raised. That being the case, it is in discourse - and discourse alone - that intelligibility and truth alike can *ultimately* be found. The totality of intelligible discourse is the truth.

According to Bergson, reality has to be known by intuition in a form of "pure experience" and this falls outside the circle of verbal expression. But this "intuitional knowledge" of Bergson has not been given the status of knowledge by the philosophers of language who treat this as "knowledge by pure adquaintance". Ernst Cassirer terms it "a mythical phase of knowledge". According to the language philosophers, there is nothing called intuitional knowledge devoid of expression. Urban holds that expression is a constitutive part of the knowing itself. It is the language that creates the world of cognitive meanings.

It is also argued that, if at all there are any valid facts to be reported, it must be through the medium of suitable language. Impossibility of linguistic expression only implies vague and confused awareness. Wittgenstein aptly said: "Everything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly. Everything that can be said can be said clearly."[6] According to the logicians, "the knowability is a clearly defined field governed by the discursive projectibility ... From the ineffable sphere nothing but non-sense can be conveyed."[7]

According to the critics, the mystic states are nothing but unripe psychic states, where we find some sort of logical contradictions in formulating their experiences. A critique of ineffability can be well summed up in the following words of Maurice Mehauden :[8]

> There is no veritable "Ineffable" in the sense of any super-normal, supermental knowledge : there is only some sort of illusion which might be termed the "Ineffable-Pseudo- knowledge", an illusion that blends in the complacent mystic into what might be called the "Ineffable-Fairydom", in order to characterise the soul-state of the subject who because he believes that ∴ he would be able to rise to a supernatural level, or perhaps because he has the actual feeling that he has risen to that level.

But if we go through the history of mysticism, we find that mystics, belonging to different traditions, have declared, again and again, the authenticity or certainty of their supernatural experiences which are as cogent and vivid as any other ordinary experiences. As these mystics were highly evolved beings, can we just say that all their experiences are just pseudo-experiences?

When the mystics say that their experiences are ineffable, it does not mean that their knowledge is obscure or confused. They feel the certitude of their knowledge. The certitude of mystic experience is forcefully expressed in the following words of Sri Aurobindo :[9]

> The Divine must be ... a certitude not only as concrete but more concrete than anything sensed by ear or eye or touch in the world of Matter .... When the peace of God descends on you, when the Divine presence is there within you, when the Ananda rushes on you like a sea, when you are driven like a leaf before the wind by the breath of the Divine force, when Love flowers out from you on all creation, when Divine knowledge floods you with a light which illumines and transforms in a moment all that was dark, sorrowful and obscure, when all that becomes part of the One Reality, when the Reality is all around you, you feel at once by the spiritual contact, by the inner vision, by the illumined and seeing thought, everywhere you see, hear, touch only the Divine. Then you can much less doubt it or deny it than you can deny or doubt day light or air or the sun in heaven forr these physical things you cannot be sure but they are what your senses represent them to be; but in the concrete experience of the Divine, doubt is impossible.

Inspite of their certain experience the mystics feel the difficulty in expressing their experience. But the difficulty is not due to lack of clarity in their knowledge, but because of the limitation of language itself which is mind-made. The critics of mysticism fail to understand the position of the mystics due to the following wrong assumptions like (a) consciousness is synonymous with the mind; (b) mind is the only possible instrument of knowledge; (c) thought must accompany verbal expression.

According to Sri Aurobindo, mind cannot be equated with consciousness. There are different layers of consciousness; and mind is only one of the intermediary stages in the evolutionary process of consciousness; and so it is not the highest state. It means that subtle truths cannot be comprehended by the mind. Mind cannot be regarded as the instrument of knowledge for total knowledge. It is pointed out earlier that essentially mind is not the faculty of knowledge, but it is only an instrument of analysis and synthesis.[10] Hence, it is nonsense to speak that what is unknown by the mind is unknowable. The mystic experiences remain ineffable because of the following reasons.

Reality is such that it is not exhausted by more objective externalities which our mind and senses can grasp. There are different orders of reality of which the objective and physical is only one poise. There are other poises of the reality which are given to our subjective experience. Just because this realm of spiritual reality is beyond the grasp of normal experience, it should not be regarded as illusive imagination. These spiritual experiences go so much beyond mental construction that we cannot give an adequate representation of it through language. It has to be realized.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the mind consciousness by its very nature suffers from intrinsic limitations which make it incapable of comprehending the operations of spiritual perceptions and receptions. As we know, the mind is basically divisive and analytic in nature. Unity and infinity, which are the basic features of spiritual knowledge, cannot be given to the mind consciousness, and hence, remain indescribable and incommunicable.[11]

The reality which is absolute in its nature can be experienced by deepening our consciousness. Mind can see only the relatives. So, naturally it fails to express the absolute through the mind- made language. In the worlds of Sri Aurobindo :[12]

> We see by reason that such an absolute must exist, we become by spiritual experience aware of its existence : but even when we are most aware of it, we cannot describe it because our language and thought can deal only with the relative. The Absolute is for us the Ineffable.

Another difficulty which the mystics experience in expressing their spiritual experiences is that the mental level in which the mystics have to express their experiences is much lower than the level of consciousness in which they have experienced the spiritual truths. There is a kind of incompatibility in the realms, and hence, they find difficulty in communicating their experiences.

One more factor responsible for ineffability is the gap between a mystic and the other ordinary man. Linguistic communication is nothing but a transaction between two parties - speaker and hearer. A meaningful communication is possible only when both are in the same level. In the case of a mystic and an ordinary person, there is a qualitative difference in their understanding, for the non-mystic who is in the ordinary level cannot understand the intentions of a mystic.

The problem of ineffability can be seen in a different angle. The term "ineffable" can be understood in three possible ways. First, mystic experiences said to be ineffable in the sense in which all experiences are ineffable. To hear the word "flower" is not like experiencing "flower". The experience itself is not given through language. So, experience is something different from understanding. If in this sense, mystic experience is ineffable, then one need not have to say that mystic experience is not acceptable because it is ineffable.

Secondly, the word "ineffable" implies some terribly wonderful experience that cannot be fully expressed even by the most sophisticated language. Here, though total experience has not been conveyed, some kind of understanding, though inadequate, regarding the nature of that object or experience, has been conveyed. So, mystic experience does not remain fully incommunicable.

"Ineffable", in the third sense of the term, refers to the uniqueness of the nature of the mystic object and intrinsic limitation of the language which makes an experience ineffable. Some critics point out that mystic language remains incommunicable.

But, argues Phillips, mystic experience does not always remain ineffable, Mystics are human beings sharing human forms of life. When we have a glance at the mystic literature, we find that mystics mostly try to use general terms on the one hand, and figurative speech on the other in order to communicate to the non-mystics. It is also not true that mystic experience cannot be communicated at all except by one's own experience. A non-mystic can understand something about the mystic object and mystic experience.

Sri Aurobindo draws a distinction between true truth of things and practical truth of things. He contends that the former kind of knowledge is knowledge by identity which is different from sense-knowledge and ratiocination. The knowledge by identity is the highest mystic experience which is attained at the supramental consciousness. Sri Autrobindo does not merely say that different modes of knowledge have to be admitted with different orders of reality, but also feels that our knowledge- situation has to be radically revised. He does not agree with the empiricists who say that knowledge is generated newly in the mind. In short, knowledge is not acquired. Like the rationalists he does not say that we possess knowledge as innate ideas. For him, ,knowledge is nothing but opening of our consciousness to the reality, which is already hidden within all of us. If we analyse this way, it seems to us that knowledge for Sri Aurobindo and other Vedāntins implies a *special state*, not only of the mind but also of the total mechanism which is involved in "knowing-process". This fundamental contention of the mystics, revelationists, and intuitionists has been forcefully questioned by the empiricists, analysts, and also logical positivists.

A. J. Ayer, in his analysis of knowledge-situation, does not contend that knowledge implies any special state which is distinguishable from other states of mind, *viz.*, believing, guessing, doubting, etc. He further says that by assuming such "special state" we have created certain pseudoproblems of epistemology and which have given rise to metaphysical nonsense. Of course, Ayer does speak of three conditions for knowledge-claim. They are : (i) what is known must be the case, (ii) one must be sure about it, and (iii) one must have the right to be sure. So, he does not deny the fact that knowledge involves an assurance, a right to be sure, and a claim that what is known must be the case. So, the truth is : a state of knowledge is very much different from provisional supposition, an opinion, and a doubt. A claim to truth is taken for granted by every knower. Of course, it can be said that in spite of initial claim to certainty of knowledge, it

can be replaced by another knowledge having equal status. Even then, the fact remains that till a piece of information is replaced by some other knowledge-claim, there exists infallibility to any knowledge-claim. According to a Mīmāṁsakas and Vedāntins, knowledge is intrinsically valid; it is "self-revelatory"; whether it is sense-knowledge or intellection, intuition or revelation, each has a claim to knowledge.

The epistemologists in their analysis of knowledge-situation, tried to provide sufficient conditions for knowledge-claim. They hold the view that any piece of information, in order to obtain the status of knowledge, must fulfil certain conditions so that knowledge can be distinguished from mere belief. The conditions are : (1) belief condition, (2) truth condition, (3) justification condition, and (4) justification without falsity. In other words, a rational or adequately grounded certitude is required. Is Sri Aurobindo's supramental knowledge-claim rationally justified? Has he got the right to be sure? Sri Aurobindo claims that he has the right to be sure of his knowledge-claims, though they are not based on any usual rational methods of knowledge. He is of the view that our usual rational methods or standards of knowledge have to be replaced by a new dimension of understanding and novel standards, when we deal with the vast domain of possible knowledge. He regards the existing standards of reality and knowledge as false standards as they are based on the axiom that all truths must be referred to the judgement of the personal mind, reason, and experience of every man, or that they must be verified by a common or universal experience. Sri Aurobindo says that this axiom leads to "egoistic illusion", and "a gross and vulgar error". Sri Aurobindo thus comments :[13]

> ... it has been implicitly or explicitly held as an axiom that all truths must be referred to the judgement of the personal mind, reason and experience of everyman or else it must be verified or at any rate verifiable by a common or universal experience in order to be valid. But obviously this is a false standard of reality and of knowledge, since this means the sovereignty of the normal or average mind and its limited capacity and experience, the exclusion of what is supernormal or beyond the average intelligence. In its extreme, whis claim of the individual to be the judge of everything is an egoistic illusion, a superstition of the physical mind, in the mass a gross and vulgar error.

Sri Aurobindo accepts that for a knowledge-claim a man has to think for

himself, know for himself, but he says that one's judgement can be valid only on one condition *viz.*, that he is ready to learn and remains open to a larger knowledge. He says that it is an accepted epistemological principle that, if our knowledge-claims are far from physical standards and principle of personal and universal verification, then it leads to gross delusions and admission of unverified truth and subjective phantasy in the realm of knowledge. But, says Sri Aurobindo, error, delusion, and one's own subjectivity in obtaining knowledge are always present, and these cannot be excluded from physical and objective standards. Just because there are possibilities for error, says Sri Aurobindo, one should not stop subjective method of enquiry in pursuing subjective discovery by applying subjective method of observation and discovry. He says :[14]

> To refuse to enquire upon any general ground preconceived and *a priori* is an obscurantism as prejudicial to the extension of knowledge.

Bringing out the incapability of the common mentality to judge the validity of higher truths of the subjective realm, Sri Aurobindo thus observes :[15]

> The greatest inner discoveries, the experience of self-being, the cosmic consciousness, the inner claim of the liberated spirit, the direct effect of mind upon mind, the knowledge of things by consciousness in direct contact with other consciousness or with its objects, most spiritual experience of any value, cannot be brought before the tribunal of the common mentality which has no experience of these things and takes its own absence or incapacity of experience as a proof of their invalidity or their non-existence.

But it does not mean that Sri Aurobindo wants us to accept the validity of any mystic experience without being critical. He emphatically says that all experiences, in order to be held true, must be capable of verification by a same or similar experience provided one has acquired the capacity or can follow the inner methods by which that experience and verification are made possible. Even the physical truth of formulas, generalizations, discoveries founded upon physical observation can be judged by a person provided he or she has the adequate knowledge in the field.

In the history of philosophy we find that very often the mystic experiences are rejected on the ground that they are subjective experiences. But, according to Sri Aurobindo, subjectivity and objectivity are not independent

realities. In the words of Sri Aurobindo :[16]

> ... they are the Being through consciousness, looking as subject on the object and the same Being offering itself to its owns consciousness as object to the subject.

He further says that our outer senses can obtain reliable evidence only when they refer their version of the object to the consciousness. It is the consciousness which gives meaning to their report and further it gives to its externality its own intuitive interpretation and justifies it by a "reasoned adherence". It does so because the evidence of the senses is always by itself imperfect, not totally reliable and lacks final certainty. The evidence achieved by the sense experience is incomplete and subject to error. In fact, it is through this subjective consciousness that objective universe is known. The physical senses are only the instruments of subjective consciousness. And hence, if we deny reality to the evidence of this universal witness for subjective or supraphysical objectivities, then there is no sufficient reason to concede reality to its evidence for physical objectivities. If we attach unreality to the supraphysical objects of consciousness, then the objective physical universe must also be regarded as unreal. Sri Aurobindo agrees that our information about anything must be subject to verification; but the subjective and supraphysical must have another method of verification rather than the methods used for verifying objective reality.[17]

Sri Aurobindo holds that there are different orders of reality of which the objective and physical is only one order. It is convincing because it is given to our senses. We seem to remain unconvinced about the subjective and supraphysical because mind has no direct access to it except through fragmentary signs and data and inferences which can be erroneous. The subjective events are as real as any other physical events, but while the subject is certain about his inner experiences, they remain dubious to others because of lack of direct accessibility. This is the intrinsic limitation of the physical mind of man and this makes him believe entirely the physical, and challenge and doubt all that do not come into accord with his own experiences and which falls outside his purview.

Sometimes it is said that yogic explorations are unscientific since no scientific methodology is followed. By "scientific" we mean a systematic and methodological study of things. Yoga also is a methodological study since it

follows a methodology of its own. But the methods of yoga are different from those of physical sciences, since yoga deals with inner reality which is very subtle. The validity of yogic experience is determined on the basis of its own standard of judgement, belonging to an inner domain. Our ordinary positive reason cannot test the validity of spiritual experiences. Sri Aurobindo observes:[18]

> Just as scientific enquiry passes beyond that of the physical senses and enters the domain of the infinite and infinitesimal about which the senses can say nothing and test nothing, ... so also spiritual search passes beyond the domain of scientific or rational enquiry and it is impossible by the aids of the ordinary positive reason to test the data of spiritual experience and decide whether those things exist or not or what is their law and nature.

Sri Aurobindo used integral Yoga as a device for his mystic vision. The whole metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo is basically based upon mystic vision. Sri Aurobindo claims that integral Yoga acts as an experimental basis for his mystic vision. In this context it is worth quoting the following words of Sri Aurobindo :[19]

> I must remind you that I have been an intellectual myself and no stranger to doubts - both the Mother and myself nave had one side of the mind as positive and as insistent on practical results and more so than any Russell can be. We would never be contented with the shining ideas and phrases which a Rolland or another takes for gold coin of Truth. We know well what is the difference between a subjective experience and a dynamic outward going and realizing Force. So although we have faith, (and who ever did any thing great in the world without having faith in his mission or the Truth at work behind him?) we do not found ourselves on faith alone, but on a great ground of knowledge which we have been developing and testing all our lives. I think I can say that I have been testing day and night for years upon years more scrupulously than any scientist his theory or his method on the physical plane ... I know that the Supramental Descent is inevitable. I have faith in view of my experience that the time can and should be now and not a later age.

Sri Aurobindo justifies the veridicality of his mystic experience which is parallel to that of sense experience, and this can be termed as parallelism thesis. He holds that sense experience provides the non-linguistic evidence for objective claims; so also his mystic experience. Stephen Phillips describes Sri Aurobindo's

mystic epistemology as mystic empiricism which can be traced back to the Upaniṣadic tradition; for example, the first person, seemingly autobiographical claims made by Uddālaka to his son Śvetaketu in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad.* Again, some of the Upaniṣadic statements conveying the nature of Brahman, seem to be the outcome of mystic experience which is taken to be objectively veridical.

If we glance at Indian mystic tradition, we find that the mystics were compelled to believe certain supernatural things because of their mystic experience. They seem to have exposed implicit mystic empiricism. Śaṅkara uses "*anubhava*" referring both to sense and Brahman-experience. He believes Brahman- experience to be veridical. He clearly expresses the parallelism thesis and this is clear when he draws an explicit analogy between the veridicality of objects based on sence experience and 'knowledge' of Brahman.[20]

> Knowledge of Brahman is dependent on a real thing, just like the knowledge of the real things that are the objects of such means of knowledge as sense perception.

Sri Aurobindo too claims that his own mystic experience of Brahman is supportive of his concept of Brahman, As pointed out earlier, Sri Aurobindo claims that he has special, non-linguistic evidence for his mystic experience.

According to Phillips, pragmatic inter-subjectivity, veridical objectivity, and overall coherence are important criteria for warrant of mystic beliefs. He says that no foundationalist would wish to denigrate the importance of consideration of coherence. Coherence gains its importance on the basis of the following grounds : (1) that no contradiction could be true (2) that some warrant accrues to the logical entailment of well-founded beliefs. A mystic can seem to us reasonable and sensitive to other's views only when he reflects on the coherence of his mystic views with science and with common opinion, or when he refracts simply on the coherence of one mystic belief with another. Phillips is of the view that Sri Aurobindo successfully fulfils these criteria to validate his mystic experience.

Phillips disagrees with William James for whom mystic experiences are only subjective feelings and hence, lack veridicality. But, of course, James who attaches much value to them says that the mystics are the authority of their own experiences, but he disregards the mystics' constant and emphatic insistence on veridicality of their experiences. But Phillips argues that value and veridicality

are so inter-locked that an experience has least value if it is not veridical. In fact, it is the veridicality which attaches value to an experience.

To conclude, it can be said that the whole philosophy or Sri Aurobindo which is ultimately rooted in his mystic vision cannot be verified the way a map is verified. It can be verified, but in an extraordinary sense. If Sri Aurobindo is denied the right to be sure of his knowledge-claim just because he does not take into consideration the usual accredited methods of knowledge, then we will be doing great injustice to his position. One does not have the authority to deny anybody's experience just because one has not experienced it. If one considers the rationalist and empiricist traditions, one finds that certainty is seen in the first-person experience either in the form of the immediately given sense-experience (the empiricist option) or in the form of the apprehension of clear and distinct ideas in a self-evidential intuition (the rationalist option). This exclusive emphasis upon the "knowing subject" makes certainty, a matter of first person possession. "Certainty" is something which is uniquely associated with the "knowing subject". My being certain about my having a particular experience is a unique episode of my life, and whether I am really certain in having those very experiences is to be determined by me and by none else. "Certainty" as a first person possession can be applied in Sri Aurobindo's case also.

Sri Aurobindo challenges the normal assessments of grounds on which we ordinarily formulate knowledge-claim. He thus observes :[23]

> The dialectical intellect is not a sufficient judge of essential or spiritual truths; moreover, very often, but. its propensity to deal with works, and abstract ideas as if they were binding realities, it wears them as chains and does not look freely beyond them to the essential and total facts of our existence. Intellectual statement is an account to our intelligence and justification by reasoning of a seeing of things which pre-exist in our turn of mind or temperament or in some tendency of our nature and secretly predetermines the very reasoning that claims to lead to it. That reasoning itself can be conclusive only if the perception of things on which it rests is both a true and a whole seeing.

Somewhere else Sri. Aubrobindo emphatically declares :[24]

> The final test of truth is not reason but spiritual illumination verified by abiding fact of spirit; a single decisive spiritual experience may undo a

whole edifice of reasoning and conclusions erected by the logical intelligence.

Sri Aurobindo reportedly lays emphasis on expanding one's consciousness or what he calls "reversal of consciousness" which occurs in the supramental level. Here, the standards and forms of mental cognition are not sufficient since supramental consciousness is much higher than mental consciousness, qualitatively and quantitatively. Hence, in order to appreciate the unique metaphysical vision of Sri Aurobindo a new extension of consciousness must be taken into account. Sri Aurobindo's thesis is no doubts verifiable, though it is not subject to verification, testability or falsification *in a definite span of time* as in the case of an empirical hypothesis.

NOTES

1. Quoted form Robert K. C. Forman (Ed.), *The Problem of Pure Consciousness, (Oxford University Press, New Yark), p. 9.*
2. *Ibid.*, p. 14,
3. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
4. Stephen H. Phillips, *Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Brahman* (E. J. Brill, Leiden The Netherlands, 1986), p. 43.
5. Quoted from Jugal Kishore Mukherjee, *From Man Human to Man Divine* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1990), p. 143.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
9. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters On Yoga* (Birth Centenary Library, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry, 1970), p. 168.
10. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine, op. cit.*, p. 648.
11. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Book One, Part I, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 376.
13. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Book One, Part II, *op. cit.*, p. 649.
14. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Book One, Part II, *op. cit.*, p. 650.

15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, p. 648.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Sri Aurobindo, *On Himself* (Birth Centenary Library, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1970), pp. 468-469.
19. Quoted from Stephen H. Phillips, *Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Brahman, op. cit.*, p. 71.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
23. Quoted from, G. C. Nayak, *Philosophical Reflections* (Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi. 1987), p. 102.
24. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Book One, Part I, *op. cit.*, p. 469.