

Adhibuta, adhidaiva and adhyatma.

An Introduction.

What is striking from the first glance, comparing the Western and Eastern Metaphysics, especially Vedic that the two considerably differ in their approach to knowledge. If Western metaphysics from Plato onwards is described as logocentric by Derrida, then the Vedic approach can be described as anthropo-[morpho]-centric (centered around man and all the complexity of his faculties of consciousness).

In the West the approach to knowledge and cognition was defined on the basis of what and how the mind can think; and in India it was founded on all the faculties of consciousness: senses, mind, life and even body, etc., and how they represent one being.

Since the mind in the West was recognized as the only instrument of knowledge, it eventually reduced and excluded everyone else from the possibility of influencing its own pure process of knowing; and having become the sovereign lord, it created its own logocentric reality, the reality based on thoughts, worshipping thoughts and ideas, trusting them more than reality itself.

In India, though mind was considered to be a leading power and the very characteristic of man (cp. manas, manu, manushya) the full trust was shared among all the faculties of consciousness: Sight as faculty of Revelation, Hearing as Inspiration, Word as Mantra, Mind as Power of Concentration and Comprehension, Heart with its perception of Beatitude, Body as a temple of the Soul. Such anthropomorphism saved ancient India from falling into a purely mental approach to knowledge, whereas in the West the mind dominated the rest of the faculties of consciousness, and considered itself to be true by the very virtue of being self-critical (Hegel).

Sri Aurobindo writes in the Synthesis of Yoga:

“The thought, since it is not the highest or strongest part of Nature, not even the sole or deepest index to Truth, ought not to follow its own exclusive satisfaction or take that for the sign of its attainment to the supreme Knowledge. It is here as the guide, up to a certain point, of the heart, the life and the other members, but it cannot be a substitute for them; it has to see not only what is its own ultimate satisfaction but whether there is not an ultimate satisfaction intended also for these other members. An exclusive path of abstract thought would be justified, only if the object of the Supreme Will in the universe has been nothing more than a descent into the activity of the ignorance operated by the mind as blinding instrument and jailor through false idea and sensation and an ascent into the quiescence of knowledge equally operated by the mind through correct thought as enlightening instrument and saviour. But the chances are that there is an aim in the world less absurd and aimless, an impulse towards the Absolute less dry and abstract, a truth of the world more large and complex, a more richly infinite height of the Infinite. Certainly, an abstract logic must always arrive, as the old systems arrived, at an infinite empty Negation or an infinite equally vacant Affirmation; for, abstract it moves towards an absolute abstraction and these are the only two abstractions that are absolutely absolute. But a concrete ever deepening wisdom waiting on more and more riches of infinite experience and not the confident abstract logic of the narrow and incompetent human mind is likely to be the key to a divine suprahuman knowledge. The heart, the will, the life and even the body, no less than the thought, are forms of a divine Conscious-Being and indices of

great significance. These too have powers by which the soul can return to its complete self-awareness or means by which it can enjoy it. The object of the Supreme Will may well be a culmination in which the whole being is intended to receive its divine satisfaction, the heights enlightening the depths, the material Inconscient revealed to itself as the Divine by the touch of the supreme Superconscience.”

Vedic approach to Knowledge.

“In the ancient conception of the universe our material existence is formed from the five elemental states of Matter, the ethereal, aerial, fiery, liquid and solid; everything that has to do with our material existence is called the elemental, **adhibhūta**.

In this material there move non-material powers manifesting through the Mind-Force and Life-Force that work upon Matter, and these are called Gods or Devas; everything that has to do with the working of the non-material in us is called **adhidaiva**, that which pertains to the Gods.

But above the non-material powers, containing them, greater than they is the Self or Spirit, ātman, and everything that has to do with this highest existence in us is called the spiritual, **adhyātma**.” (The Upanishads, p.114)

“The central aim of Knowledge is the recovery of the Self, of our true self-existence” (The Synthesis of Yoga, p.335)

So, adhidaivic education of the mind, life, senses and body should work for the adhyatmic realization of Knowledge of the Self and our true self-existence.

The idea that everything which exists outside man (adhibhuta) is the object of studies (because the senses are naturally turned outside) and that the truth is to be found outside is an occidental idea, where the mind is fully preoccupied with everything existing externally to it. It looks even at other members of consciousness objectively, as it were, excluding them from the process of knowing, making them finally the subject of its own opinion. But in the ancient oriental metaphysics such division was not made, for the cognitive consciousness (adhidaiva) included all the members into the process of knowing: mind, heart, senses, life and body, where every faculty has its own domain and its own knowledge to contribute to the One Knowledge. The Knowledge was a synthetic phenomenon, for behind all of these members there was one Spirit, one Self, which was the main target of the Vedic education. It is only when the Self is discovered that adhibhuta can be truly perceived and understood,¹ because it is essentially of the same nature of the Self, only fallen unconscious.

This division on the three levels is fundamental in approach to reality and therefore to education. Learning about the world as such in all its aspects and varieties belongs to a particular mode or approach of consciousness, called adhibhuta; learning about the tools of learning: mind, vital, senses and body as a part of an inner consciousness is radically another poise of consciousness, called adhidaiva; and learning about consciousness as such is altogether another state of consciousness, called adhyatma.

¹ But of course it does not mean that there was no meaning in moving outside to the periphery of consciousness. The whole western civilization is about this move. In the divine utility it has its hidden purpose: to mould the matter, to globalize the communication, and to bridge the inner levels of consciousness with the outer.

