

# CONSCIOUSNESS: SCIENTIFIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES



Editor : Dr. K.V. Suresh

**Consciousness:  
Scientific and Philosophical Perspectives**  
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## CONSCIOUSNESS: POSTULATIONS OF MODERN SCIENCE AND GURU'S PHILOSOPHY

Dr. S. Sheeba

Right from the beginning of mankind earnest attempts were made by the Scientists and Philosophers to solve the riddle of the mystery of creation of Universe. The different branches of modern Science -Biology, Zoology, Chemistry, and Geology etc are confined to their respective areas of investigation, while Physics lays attention to almost all aspects of Universe. Hence Universe and its Beings both sentient and non-sentient come under the purview of Physics for objective analysis. The elegance of Physics rests on its affiliation with Philosophy and the influence rendered on other branches of natural sciences. The mystery behind the creation of Universe still remains a haunting question to which the scientists have yet to provide satisfactory explanation.

Three Centuries before, the glorious Vedic hymn on Creation '*Nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate satah*' provided satisfactory explanations to this puzzle. This view is further elaborated with mundane examples and in a more logical manner in the Upaniṣads which are the zenith of Indian wisdom in the following manner-

As the spider creates and withdraws its web, as several plants originates from the earth, as hair and nail grows from the living person so this universe emerges from the Supreme Consciousness. (Mu. U. 1.1.7)

Science also concentrated on the fundamental question - 'Where did all it come from?' Not only physicists but the astronomers also have been working on the problem of the origin of the Universe. With the help of highly sophisticated machines and systematically under taken serious attempts to unravel the mystery of Universe, modern scientists have tried to evolve a consistent picture regarding the origin of the Universe.

An attempt is made here to examine the important postulations of scientific investigations and the main speculations of Narayana Guru's views on consciousness, the ultimate principle behind the mystery of multifarious Universe.



Physicists started their enquiry in to the nature of the building blocks of universe by contemplating on the material world. Here the physical systems are viewed in conformity with mathematical laws. These theories are only provisional and they just provide a model of universe. They followed logical, rational and easily conceivable way based on certain assumptions.

The search for the reality of physical dimension of universe had its origin in the pre historic era, around 1000 B.C. Nicholas Copernicus presented his heliocentric view regarding the nature of universe against the prevailing geocentric notion. Galileo Galilee (1556-1642) observed the sky with his telescope and confirmed the heliocentric view of Copernicus. He introduced experimentation in Science. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries believed in the mechanistic world view based on Newtonian principle. Later John Dalton formulated his atomic hypothesis and applied Newtonian mechanics to micro bodies rather than macro bodies. Some such later discoveries shattered the views of classical Physics and that model was treated as incomplete as it was applicable only in the motion of solid bodies. Michael Faraday and James Clerk Maxwell departed from the Newtonian concept with their electromagnetic theory.

We can witness close relations among the scientific speculations and the teachings of philosophy right from Galileo Galilee, the father of experimentation. Newton, Faraday, Clerks Maxwell, Albert Einstein, Schrodinger etc are more aware of the limitations of science and hence they are also treated as strong advocates of eastern philosophy.

The close parallels between Physics and Metaphysics becomes more evident through the contemplations of Quantum Physics. The incorporation of philosophical thoughts is the hall mark of the teachings of Einstein, Neil Bohr, Schrodinger, Max Born and many other Physicists. While penetrating deeper and deeper into the obscurity of Nature and Reality, scientific thoughts shows greater affinity towards the Philosophy.

From 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Century Newtonian model remained unquestioned. The material particles which move in the absolute space and time are the elements of Newtonian world. He clearly depicted the force acting between the material particles. Here God



is described as the creator of the material particles as well as the fundamental laws of motion. The discovery of Electromagnetism replaced the force by force field. Here field is defined as a condition in space which has the potential of producing force. Michael Faraday discovered the existence of electric and magnetic field. Later he discovered that particles are only expressions of the field. Faraday provided only a mathematical expression of the Field concept. It attained the status of a fully fledged scientific theory with Maxwell's proposal of Electromagnetic theory of light. Hence Quantum Physics is treated as the most successful scientific theory. It functions with the support of Lasers and microchips. It is the leading force instigating several modern scientific investigations. Close affinity towards the teachings of Eastern philosophy is its most noticeable peculiarity. Quantum Theory is powerful enough to elucidate the nature of Consciousness, the notion of freedom, and several non-sensory experiences. No scientific theory is powerful enough to discard the teachings of Quantum Physics till date. It put forth the Universe as an undivided whole. This is by the incorporation of Brain, Mind and Consciousness along with the material objects under the purview of scientific investigations. Quantum Physics believes that the material objects has no existence irrespective of the observer.

### To quote Ranganathananda

'The quantum energy field or the four dimensional space time which 20<sup>th</sup> century physics presents as beyond sensory verification finds its counter parts in its *cidākāśa* - the *ākāśa* the space time continuum of citta or mind. This is what mind in dream reveals. This is the knowledge field or consciousnesses field of which Dr̥k- the seer or subject and all dr̥śyam- the seen or the object as two poles as the observer and the observed'. (Eternal Values for a changing society, P. 443)

He adds 'The Vedantic truth of unity of the consciousness field will become revealed to sub atomic physics when it resolves its present contradiction in viewing its observer in terms of classical physics, while viewing it's observed in terms of quantum field probabilities'.



## The Theory of Expanding Universe

The development of the new cosmological model 'Bing Bang' is on the basis of Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity. Weinberg depicts the birth of the universe as-

'In the beginning there was an explosion. Not an explosion like those familiar on earth, starting from a definite centre and spreading out to engulf more and more of the circumambient air, but an explosion which occurred simultaneously everywhere, filling all space from the beginning, with every particle of matter rushing apart from every other particle. All space in this context may mean either all of an infinite universe, or all of a finite universe which curves back on itself like the surface of a sphere'. (The First Three minutes, Bandon Books, New York, U.S.A, 1980, p.3)

This belief is supported by Gamov G, in his book The Creation of The Universe as-

The Big squeeze which took place in the early history of our universe was the result of a collapse which took place at a still earlier era that the present expansion is simply an elastic rebound which started as soon as the maximum squeezing density was reached. (The Creation of The Universe, Viking Press, New York, 1952, p. 29)

The well known invocatory verse Santi Mantra (sacred verse of peace) which is recited at the commencement of Upaniṣads beautifully depict Brahman, the consciousness principle as the only reality with at most clarity as-

*pūrṇamataḥ pūrṇamidam Pūrnat Pūrṇamudacyate  
pūrvṇasya Pūrṇamadāya Pūrnamevāvaśiṣyate-*

That (transcendent) Supreme Brahman is full; This (immanent Brahman) is also full in essence; The immanent evolves out of the supreme Power; After taking the full from the full the full itself remains.

Science believed that the universe started with an explosion releasing immense energy. As a result the universe expanded slowly and gets cooled. Along with this cooling living and non living entities originated. There remained a balance and co-operation



among the different strata of Universe. All entities remained inter related constituting a well defined ecosystem.

?

Elementary particles

Atoms

Compounds and macromolecules

Organic cells

Tissues

Organs

Populations

Communities

Biosphere. (Kalpana. M. Paranjape, Ancient Indian Insights and Modern Science, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, 1996, p. XI

Modern science through its continuous scientific investigations only says the possibility of primal atom in the beginning which exploded and gave rise to explosion. The nature of this primal atom, the reason behind the explosion etc remained unanswered even in this 21<sup>st</sup> century also.

But our intelligent sages with their intuitive mind try to present satisfactory explanation to this riddle of Universe.

*soakāmayata bahusyām prajāyeyeti*

*sa tapo atapyata sa tapah taptvā*

*idam sarvamajāyata Yādidam kiñca tat*

*śṛṣṭva tadevānupraviśat Tadānupraviśya sacca tyaccābhavavat*

*niruktam ca aniruktam ca nilayanam ca anilayanam ca*

*vijñanam ca avijñanam ca satyam ca anṛtam ca...* (Taittirīya

Brahmānandavalli, Anuvākam 6)

The Ultimate become conscious of creating various objects. Being desirous of creating objects it undergo great penance. As a result the series of objects animate and inanimate developed. The *Nirguṇa Brahman* achieves the status of *saguṇa* through its desire of creating Universe. We can witness close similarity in the scientific theory of the period of origination of the universe through its spontaneous symmetry of breaking. Ancient Indian wisdom tries to solve this riddle by describing this fact as an experience of a sage which cannot be interpreted with words. Upaniṣad delineates this aspect as - '*Yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha*'.



The experience of Ultimate truth behind this multidimensional universe is explicated in the following way-

*aśabdamasparśamarūpamavyayam  
tathārasam nityamagandhavacca tat*

*anādyanantam mahatah param dhruvam  
nicāyya tanmṛtyumukhāt pramucyate* (K. U. 1.3.15)

The state is soundless, touch less, formless imperishable, likewise tasteless, constant, odourless, without end, higher than the great, stable, etc.

The Upaniṣad clearly depicts Brahman, the abstract principle, which is Consciousness as the underlying reality behind the physical world. Aithareyopaniṣad asseverates this idea as:

*prajñānam Brahma*- Consciousness is Brahman.

*prajñānetro lokah* -the universe has Consciousness as its indweller

*Prajñā pratiṣṭhā*- Consciousness is the support of the whole universe

The will of Brahman is described in *Śruti* as the cause of origination of the universe of stars, planets, galaxies, oceans, rivers, mountain, air, heat, light, earth, planets etc. The maxim '*Sarvam khalvidam Brahma*' indubitably declares the underlying multiplicity of the world into Brahman. This Brahman is the illuminating principle. It is not illumined by anything else. The sun glitters by the illumination of the Self luminous Brahman.

### Consciousness Principle in Guru's Philosophy

According to Narayana Guru the primary cause of origination and the basis of the entire universe is the consciousness principle '*Arivu*'. Guru, a true representative of modern scientific era and the saint who whole heartedly accepted Science as a catalyst in human progress also tried to present his philosophical teachings in conformity with the advancements of Science. Guru's celebrated text on Advaitic speculations on the origin of world generally provided a scientific explanation of the origin of Universe. Guru explains this fact with the support of common mundane example that -

*dhānādiva vaṭo yasmāt  
prādurāsīdidam jagat  
sa brahmā sa śivo viṣṇuḥ  
sa paraḥ sarva eva saḥ*



Just as a huge Banyan tree originated from an atom like seed, so the Multi dimensional Universe along with its animate and inanimate being originated from the Ultimate Being, the Supreme Brahman. He equates the Supreme power with *Viṣṇu*, the Lord of Creation, *Brahma* the Lord of sustenance, and Lord *Śiva*. The explanation provided by Narayana Guru is identical with the Upaniṣadic Explanation -

*yathōrnanābhih sṛjate grhṇate ca  
yathā pṛthivyāmoṣadhayaḥ sambhavanti  
yathā sataḥ puruṣāt keśalomāni  
tatha akṣarāt sambhavatiḥa viśvam (Mu.1. 1. 7.)*

Daiva Daśaka the most celebrated prayer of Narayana Guru indubitably presented the will of God as the Creating power behind the origin of Universe. The stanza runs as follows -

*You are the creation, the creator too  
You also is the myriad of created things  
You again oh God, are the substance  
Of which all creation is made. (D. D. 5)*

Here The Supreme Reality, Brahman, which is of the nature of consciousness is treated as the material cause of universe.

In Darśanamāla Guru treated the theme Universe as a desire pertinent in the Reality. Then the creating power with its own magic created the whole Universe as a magician creates his magical world.

*vāsanāmayamevadavasīdadamatha prabhuh  
asṛjanmāyayā svasya mayāvīvākhilam jagat (Adhyāropa  
Darsana - 2)*

This Universe before its creation remained inseparably united with the Brahman.

In his Advaita Dīpika, Guru elaborately depicts the fact that the underlying truth behind any human experience is the principle of Consciousness -

*Cloths are nothing but yarns;  
Yarns are nothing but fibres  
Fibres are nothing but primeval  
Elements clinging together;  
This way of search,  
Extended to its extreme,  
Reveals that everything becomes apparent  
Out of one Consciousness; (verse 3)*



Guru unequivocally establishes the Ultimate reality as the one eternal truth in the 15<sup>th</sup> verse as -

*Ānanda alone manifestly exists (asti)*

*It alone manifestly shines (bhāti)*

*That one alone is oneself*

*Considered as other than oneself*

*What manifestly exists?*

*Would seem not to exist*

*The whole world then would seem*

*Not manifestly shining*

*The mirage-water, the sky-blue*

*The bloom in the sky-all these*

*Are simply non-existent*

*The ultimate reality in them*

*When well thought of*

*Is sky alone. (A.D. 15)*

Ancient Indian wisdom describes the desire of Supreme to become manifold as the cause of origination of this multifarious Universe. Then just as a sprout originated from a seed the power of Reality gave rise to Universe. This analogy of tree and its seed can easily convince a hearer just as the minute seed developed into the huge tree the Ultimate cause Brahman gave rise to this wide world.

The Magnum opus of Narayana Guru the Atmopadeśāsataka, beautifully depicted the relative reality of this manifold world as -

*No death is there*

*No birth is there*

*Nor is there the life-span (in between birth and death)*

*No human No God is there*

*All these are but names and corresponding forms*

*There beingness is an illusory phenomenon*

*Like the flowing water seen*

*In mirages in desert land*

*They have no being of their own*

*This reality is always to be pondered upon. (A.S. 78)*

Here the world of plurality is described only as an appearance of Brahman. The Nobel laureate in Physics Wolfgang Pauli opines thus-'the Consciousness which originates from the heart of atman slowly integrates with the outer objects to create the external world'. (Nitya Caitanya Yati, Ūrjatāndava (2013) Kerala Bhāsa Institute,



p.29). The greatest contribution of Ācārya Śaṅkara to explain the world principle is his theory of super imposition, *adhyāsa*. In the introductory portion of *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* Śaṅkara describes this superimposition as erroneous cognition. It is like the illusory appearance of a snake in a rope. Here the rope is not a snake. When a rope is cognized as a snake or nacre is cognized as silver, such cognition is erroneous.

Both Advaita Metaphysics and Physics are two complimentary manifestations of human mind. Advaita Vedānta the most celebrated among the different systems of Indian philosophy disclosed the secrets of natural phenomena by its own particular method. Physics also tried to explore the mystery behind universe by studying the essential nature of material objects. While penetrating deeper and deeper into the realms of matter such as atoms, sub atomic particles etc they have to share a common platform with the philosophers. They are now forced to accept that Matter, Energy, Field etc were primary and has got only relative and empirical existence. Underneath these Physical entities there is the interplay of an abstract substance. It is the absolute Brahman, which is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss that which is beginning less, timeless and endless. Nārāyaṇa Guru, the master brain behind the making of modern Kerala and a true representative of Scientific and technological era tried to express his philosophical wisdom of oneness of Reality, the Ultimate Consciousness in tune with the modern scientific advancements regarding the mystery of creation.

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