

Consciousness in Western and Indian Philosophy

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Abstract: *While science attempts to explain consciousness in terms of the electrochemical properties of the brain cells or neurons, philosophy, both oriental and occidental, assert that consciousness is the ultimate reality and that the external reality is constructed by and exists only in consciousness. Different systems of philosophy deal with the subject of consciousness differently, but all concur in the primacy of mind over matter. The paper discusses the exploration of the subject of consciousness by prominent western thinkers during eighteenth to twentieth centuries including Rudolf Steiner, Jean Gebser and Immanuel Kant. It then goes on to describe the treatment of consciousness in ancient Indian philosophical systems like Advaita Vedanta, Samkhya, Yoga and Buddhism, before attempting a synthesis between the ideas propounded by science and philosophy.*

Keywords: *Consciousness, Phenomenology, Atman, Advaita Vedanta, Samkhya, Yoga, Buddhism*

The Universe can be best pictured as consisting of pure thought, the thought of what, for want of wider word, we must describe as a mathematical thinker.

Mysterious Universe, Sir James Jeans

The whole world is merely ideal. It does not exist except in thought. It arises and exists in the mind. The whole universe is the expansion of mind. It is a huge dream that arises within the mind. It is imagination alone that has assumed the forms of time, space and movement.

Yoga Vasishtha

(1)

Science strives to explain the origin of consciousness in terms of the electro-chemical impulses passing between brain cells or neurons. Consciousness, according to this narrative, has emerged as a property of the neurons in the brain. Though we have learnt a great deal about the working of our minds through scientific investigations, there remains many unanswered questions, including the hard problem of consciousness about how objective experiences of the world acquire subjective meaning and become associated with *qualia* in our minds. It is difficult to believe that the unbelievably rich internal world of our dreams and imageries, hopes and aspirations, feelings and emotions, fears and beliefs, can in the ultimate analysis be reduced to the interplay of some neurons in our brains and the electrical impulses travelling between them. There is an alternative narrative offered by philosophy and religion which asserts that consciousness is central to our existence as human beings and reality is constructed by and exists only in our consciousness. If science attempts to explain consciousness in terms of neurons and synapses,

philosophy asserts that consciousness itself is responsible for these neurons and synapses. Even thinkers like Descartes, considered as father of modern western philosophy, and Locke believed that the secondary qualities of material objects, such as colour, sound, taste and smell, did not really belong to the objects, but were subjective, existing only in the mind. These ideas are not fundamentally different from the nature of reality as revealed by quantum mechanics.

Indian philosophy also support the primacy of mind over matter. As one of the *Upanishads*, the *Aitareya Upanishad* says: “Creatures, plants, horses, cows, men, elephants, whatever breathes, whether moving or flying and in addition, whatever is immovable – all this is led by mind and is supported on mind. Mind is the final reality.” An earlier treatise, the *Yoga Vasishtha*, which is based on a dialogue between Rama and the sage Vasishtha, also asserts that the world is mental in character, “The reality of things consists in their being thought. The objective world is potentially inherent in the subject as seeds of a lotus exist in the flower.....” According to this view, things have no independent existence outside of the mind, without its perception of the phenomenal world: “this universe is nothing but consciousness; you are consciousness; I am consciousness; the worlds are consciousness”. As another treatise, the *Ashtavakra Samhita* says: “In me the limitless ocean, diverse waves of worlds are produced forthwith on the rising of the wind of the mind.” The entire world is nothing but a construction of the mind. Matter is nothing but the ‘mere phantasmal play of man’s mind’. *Buddha* had also said, “the objective world rises from the mind itself: the whole mind system rises from the mind itself”.ⁱⁱ

In Indian thought, consciousness is the supreme, all-pervading reality, realizing whose nature leads to liberation from the unending cycles of birth and death. It is the pure self, *Atman*, which is without body or shape, whole, pure, wise, all-knowing, all transcending, formless and deathless, and is also united with the ultimate reality, *Brahman*. Different systems of philosophy describe it differently, at the same time recognizing and accepting that this supreme entity is not attainable or perceptible through pure reason and intellect. All intellect in fact shines only in its everlasting light.ⁱⁱⁱ Buddhist thoughts, especially of its *Madhyamika* school, also hold that mental and non-mental phenomena are all illusory and unreal, and the world in reality is empty (*sunya*). Another Buddhist school, *Yogacara*, believes that what appears as external are in fact created in the mind only.

From the evolutionary viewpoint, the study and exploration of consciousness as a serious philosophical and scientific pursuit had started only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Since the 1960s, ideas about ‘higher’ and ‘expanded’ consciousness have entered the lexicon of modern psychology and philosophy. Henry Bergson (1859-1941), one of the most famous and influential French philosophers of those times, believed that psychological ‘facts’ were qualitatively different from physical ones, and hence consciousness was irreducible by nature and not amenable to scientific determinism, there being “infinitely more in a human consciousness than in a corresponding brain”. According to him, consciousness uses the brain and is not a product of it. In “Creative Evolution” (1907), his most widely known work, he put forth his radical ideas about a creative impulse –“the *elan vital* or the life force-penetrating matter and driving evolution to higher forms of complexity and freedom.”^{iv}

Bergson's theories, though against all established scientific currents of thought, are nevertheless interesting. He believed that the evolution of consciousness, and hence advances in life- depends upon the ability to transcend the necessities of life just for staying alive.^v Thus plants lost their mobility by developing the capability to transform an easily available form of energy – sunlight – into food. Insects like ants inculcated the ability to survive against all odds through social organization, collectivisation and robot-like cooperation and in the process losing their individual independence and initiative. Only with humans, evolution reached a higher level of freedom and produced beings “in which the life force has most successfully organized matter to its own end of increasing its knowledge of itself and its freedom. What is achieved in humankind is a release of life's creative impulse, substantially free of the restrictions of the medium of its expression, namely matter.” Here “consciousness invaded matter to harness it to its own purpose, which is to increase consciousness” only.^{vi} This idea has been reiterated again and again by poets, philosophers, thinkers and scientists in times ancient and modern.

Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) was an Austrian philosopher who devoted much of his life in the investigation and exploration of how human consciousness had evolved to the present stage. He began his book “The Philosophy of Freedom” (1894) with the fundamental philosophical question of whether a human being is spiritually free, or subject to the iron necessity of natural law, and came to the conclusion that human beings are indeed free and aware of themselves as conscious, spiritual entities. It is only through consciousness that we can observe the external world, and the “content of reality is only the reflection of the content of our minds”, which again echoes the thoughts of ancient Indian sages.^{vii} One can find similar thoughts in the works of the German poet Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), and philosophers Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) as well.

Another philosopher, or rather a ‘cultural philosopher’ who did seminal work in the domain of consciousness was Jean Gebser (1905-1973). Gebser was born in Prussia (now Poland) in 1905, the year Einstein discovered his famous Special Theory of Relativity, and five years after Freud had published his “Interpretation of Dreams”. It was a fertile intellectual time that saw the birth of quantum mechanics as well the Edmund Husserl's philosophical discipline of phenomenology that would lay the groundwork for later theories like existentialism. Gebser grew up in this exciting atmosphere, spending his life in many countries including Germany, Italy, Spain, France and Switzerland. He was influenced by the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke. *The Ever- Present Origin* was his seminal work, first published in 1949 in which he extensively dealt with his idea of consciousness, describing it as a progression that would ultimately return us to our original ‘spiritual sources of being’. Gebser believed that human consciousness was always in transition, and that these transitions result in discrete ‘mutations’ leading to structural changes; hence there were distinct structures of consciousness. He described four such mutations that have occurred in the history so far, each bringing a new structure of consciousness which in turn ushered in a fundamentally new way of experiencing reality. Gebser identified these structures as the Archaic, Magical, Mythical and Mental-Rational. He believed that humanity was on the threshold of a new structure which he called the “Integral Structure of Consciousness”.

The first of these structures, the Archaic, had emerged at the earliest times in the history of humanity, before the development of language, about which little can be known, when human consciousness had

not yet differentiated from the world inhabited by man, “a time where the soul is yet dormant, a time of complete non-differentiation of man and the universe”, when the world had no separate existence from the self. Ken Wilber, another philosopher who was deeply influenced by Gebser identifies the beginning of this period from three to six million years ago till about 200,000 years ago - the vast stretch of time covering our pre-sapiens ancestors from *Australopithecus africanus* to the early *Homo erectus*. This was followed by the Magical structure, beginning 50,000 to 100,000 years ago, when humans were living in groups, and consciousness still remained deeply intertwined with the environment. The idea of man’s ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ worlds was yet to crystallise, and man lived in the “consciousness of the group, which was still very much united with nature”, but a rudimentary concept of self, different from the world outside or what Gebser called the ‘soul’ was just beginning to emerge. Development of a proper language was still far away. Mythical structure was the next one to appear, at the onset of the agricultural revolution around 12,000 years ago, when humankind first became aware of their inner world and developed what Gebser called the “sentient soul”. By now, man had developed a proper language, capable of expressing his feelings and thoughts about the world outside. He was searching for the meaning of life and death, the origin and destiny of the world and his place in it, and invented mythology and religion in seeking answers to these questions.^{viii}

The next consciousness structure to emerge was what Gebser called the “Mental-Rational”, which according to him began in Greece around 1225 B.C. which marked “the first intimation of the emergence of directed or discursive thought”, which was fundamentally different from the mythical thinking which was largely based on shaping or designing of images and symbols we have described earlier in Chapter 1. With the emergence of mental-rational structure, man came of age breaking from his Mythical past, searching for the truth through a process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. He has developed conscious ego and learnt to take rational decisions with full awareness and knowledge. In that sense, the last 2500 years in the history of human civilization has been more significant than in all the preceding millennia. Evolution is an unending process of cycles of differentiation following by integration at a higher level. Gebser believes that human consciousness is poised to make yet another transition to a new structure – the Integral structure, characterized by the integration of the previous structures to evolve into a higher form of consciousness based on collective intelligence and sentience, and emergence of new thinking and new philosophy that will impart a new meaning to our concept of time, just as the previous structures were characterized by their relationship to space.^{ix} We have already seen evidence of this in the last century beginning with Einstein’s theories based on the concept of a space-time continuum.

Both the Oriental and the Occidental philosophical systems share one common strand of thought about consciousness, that is, the reality of the external world depends on how it is perceived by the mind of the observer. Kant used the term ‘noumenon’ or the thing-in-itself (*das Ding an sich*) as opposed to ‘phenomenon’ —the thing as it appears to an observer. Though the noumenal has the contents of the intelligible world, our logic, according to Kant, can never explore and penetrate it, and has to remain content with the knowledge of the phenomena only; in other words, knowledge of a mind-independent world is impossible.^x Kant argued that the reality of space and time, treated as fundamental dimensions of the physical world and hence entirely independent of the mind, was in fact mind-dependent, that space and time were not fundamental dimensions of the underlying reality but the fundamental dimensions of

consciousness. Buddhism also believes that phenomena are nothing but the activities of the mind. As an ancient text of the *Madhyamika* school of Mahayana Buddhism, the *Lankavatara Sutra*, says, “*Mind exists, not the objects perceptible by sight.... By appearance is meant that which reveals itself to the senses and to the discriminating mind and is perceived as form, sound, odour, taste and touch. Out of terse appearances ideas are formed, such as clay, water, jar etc. Things thus named are said to be discriminated.....When appearances and names are put away and all discriminations cease, that which remains is the true and essential nature of things.*”^{xi}

The duality of mind-body, consciousness-matter and subject-object is fundamental to both science and philosophy. The philosophical movement known as Idealism during 1780-1840 in Germany which derived from Kant’s ideas had attempted to combine these into a transcendental unity. A follower of Kant, the Austrian philosopher Karl Reinhold (1757-1823) believed in a ‘Principle of Consciousness’ as being fundamental to all cognition. Idealism stressed upon the central role played by consciousness while interpreting experience, holding that “reality exists essentially as spirit or consciousness, that abstractions and laws are more fundamental in reality than sensory things” .^{xii}

During the 20th Century, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) introduced Phenomenology – the study of structures of experience or consciousness. Phenomena only represent how things would appear to our subjective experience while phenomenology strives to uncover the primal meaning of those experiences. This it tries to do through two methods, *epoché* and reduction. While *epoché* seeks to free the mind of all preconceived notions, judgments and knowledge about the external world, leading to *ataraxia*, or a state of unperturbed tranquility, which then becomes a starting point for consciousness. Only in that tranquil state of the mind, reduction of the empirical experience of an external phenomenon to their primordial meaning giving us phenomenal insights is possible. As the *Vivek Chudamani*, an ancient 8th Century Indian text containing 580 verses composed by *Adi Shankaracharya*, says, “*That in which something is imagined to exist through delusion, is, when rightly discriminated, that thing itself, and not distinct from it. When the delusion is gone, the reality about the snake falsely perceived, becomes the rope.....In the One Entity (Brahman), the conception of the universe is a mere phantom. Whence can there be diversity in that which is changeless, formless and absolute?*”^{xiii}

Thus both the eastern and the western philosophical systems recognize mind as the ultimate reality while the physical reality remains mind-dependent. The phenomenological experience is not fundamentally different from the concept of non-duality (*Advaita*), the absolute indivisible underlying reality (*Brahman*) or emptiness (*Shunyata*) in Indian philosophical systems. While the scientific approach limits itself to examine consciousness only in relation to the different aspects of cognition, the philosophical approach transcends any such limitation and deals with consciousness in a much more broader and holistic manner.

(II)

In the ancient Indian philosophy, the concepts of the Self or *Atman* and the Absolute or *Brahman*, the source of everything in the Universe, are pivotal to the understanding of consciousness (*Chit* or *Chaitanya*). To know the true nature of our own self is the ultimate pursuit of human life, and it cannot

be easily explained or expressed through ordinary linguistic aphorisms. Thus *Vivek Chudamani* reflects upon the nature of *Atman* and *Brahman* through enigmatic allegories:

“That which clearly manifests Itself in the states of wakefulness, dream and profound sleep; which is inwardly perceived in the mind in various forms, as an unbroken series of egoistic impressions; which witnesses the egoism, the Buddhi (intellect) etc., which are of diverse forms and modifications; and which makes Itself felt as the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss^{xiv} Absolute; know thou this Atman, thy own Self within thy heart.”^{xv}

“That which is the substratum of the universe with its various subdivisions, which are all creations of delusion; which Itself has no other support; which is distinct from the gross and subtle; which has no parts; and has verily no exemplar; that Brahman art thou, meditate on this in thy mind.

“That which is free from birth, growth, development, waste, disease and death; which is indestructible; which is the cause of the projection, maintenance and dissolution of the universe;—that Brahman art thou, meditate on this in thy mind.”^{xvi}

Advaita Vedanta, a school of Indian philosophy based on the Upanishads, believes that consciousness is unique and all pervading, and is the ultimate reality. This consciousness is not knowable through logic or reason,^{xvii} but through a deductive process of negation (*Neti*), by describing what it is not. *Brahman* who is one with the *Atman*, is this pure consciousness. The *Aitareya Upanisad* declares “*Prajnanam Brahma*” – that the ultimate reality, *Brahman*, is one undivided consciousness. Even a hardcore physicist like Erwin Schrodinger echoed these thoughts, “In all the world, there is no kind of framework within which we find consciousness in the plural. This is simply something we construct because of the spatio-temporal plurality of the individuals. But it is a false construction”.^{xviii} *Vedanta* describes pure consciousness as *cit* and man as *citsvarupa*, or embodiment of pure consciousness, not merely possessing a physical body. *Cit* is our true nature along with *sat* (existence) and *ananda* (bliss). These three are the properties of pure consciousness.

The *Kathopanishad* describes self (*atman*) as the rider of the chariot of the body, which is driven by sense organs that are the horses and intellect (*buddhi*) acting as the driver of the chariot, mind (*manas*) being the bridle:

*“Atmanam rathinam viddhi sariram ratham eva ca
Buddhim tu sarathim viddhi manah pragraham eva ca”^{xix}*

The self, or *Atman*, is thus different from the body, senses, intellect or mind – it is beyond all these and even beyond life. *Atman* is the seeker and seer, knower and known, doer and the witness, way and the wayfarer. *Atman*, the Self, is also the same as *Brahman*, the ultimate reality, at a higher level of realization.^{xx} Consciousness is equated with *Brahman*, the eternal principle as realized in the world as a whole, or *Atman*, the inmost essence of one's own self. “They mean that the principal underlying the world as a whole, and that which forms the essence of man, are ultimately the same. Here ended the long Indian quest for the pervasive cause of all things- the search, as the Upanishads express it, for “that by knowing which all will be known”.^{xxi} *Brahman* is all-pervading, and undifferentiated from *Atman*. The ‘spiritual and unitary character of this absolute reality’ is expressed by *satcitananda* - *sat*, *cit* and *ananda*- existence or being, sentience or thought and bliss or peace- all combined into one. This is the truth

underlying the nature of the ultimate reality which is only one (*ekam sat*), but the true character of this reality is concealed from us by our ignorance (*avidya*) or *Maya* – the power or the principle that conceals from us the true character of the reality. The ultimate pursuit of life is to overcome this ignorance through “enlightenment or *jnana*. The enlightened state is called release or *moksa*. It is attaining one's true selfhood in *Brahman*.”^{xxii}

This enlightenment can be attained through *sravana* (formal study), *manana* (reflection) and *dhyana* (meditation). Ultimately we get beyond both reason and revelation, relying on direct intuitive experience or *anubhava* for realisation of the self. As the *Mandukya Upanishad*, describes, “The Self is the lord of all; inhabitant of the hearts of all. He is the source of all; creator and dissolver of beings. There is nothing He does not know. He is not knowable by perception, turned inward or outward, nor by both combined. He is neither that which is known, nor that which is not known, nor is He the sum of all that might be known. He cannot be seen, grasped, bargained with. He is undefinable, unthinkable, indescribable.”

The activities of the self are assigned to the three states - waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep; these three states in fact represent the three alphabets of the sacred word ‘AUM’ of the Hindus. While in dream, the world dreamt appears as real, in waking we find it unreal. But even the waking reality could be relative. “It has no permanent existence, being only a correlate of the waking state. It disappears in dream and sleep. The waking consciousness and the world disclosed to it are related to each other; depend on each other as the dream consciousness and the dream-world are. They are not absolutely real.”^{xxiii} In dreamless sleep, even though our empirical consciousness ceases to exist, it cannot be said to be a complete state of non-being as we can recollect ‘the happy repose of sleep’. The self also obviously exists in sleep. “The self which persists unchanged and is one throughout all the changes is different from them all. The conditions change, not the self.... It is the self which is the unaffected spectator of the whole drama of ideas related to the changing moods of waking, dreaming and sleeping. We are convinced that there is something in us beyond joy and misery, virtue and vice, good and bad. The self ‘never dies, is never born – unborn, eternal, everlasting, this ancient one can never be destroyed with the destruction of the body’.”^{xxiv} It is permanent and immutable, independent of all objects which are ever changing. Only the ‘self-luminous consciousness’ is real and permanent.

The experiential world which is bound in space, time and cause are composed of opposites and contradictory characteristics like light and darkness, joy and sorrow, etc. and is unreal, even though this world is not non-existent. Its incomprehensible existence is signified by *Maya*. “To ask what is the relation between the absolute self and the empirical flux, to ask why and how it happens, that there are two, is to assume that everything has a why and a how. To say that the infinite becomes the finite or manifests itself as finite is on this view utter nonsense. The limited cannot express or manifest the unlimited. The moment the unlimited manifests itself in the limited, it itself becomes limited.... We cannot admit that the supreme, which is changeless, becomes limited by changing.... The absolute can never become an object of knowledge, for what is known is finite and relative. Our limited mind cannot go beyond the bounds of time, space and cause, nor can we explain these.....”^{xxv}

The self is the 'inmost and deepest reality'. The self, however, lives in lots of ambiguity, being involved with the senses and dwells at different layers or sheaths of existence (*Kosha*), rising progressively from the gross to the subtlest layers - from *Annamaya* (anatomical), through *Pranamaya* (physiological), *Manamaya* (mental), *Vijnanamaya* (*intellectual*) and finally to *Ananadamaya* (blissful) *Kosha*. The philosophical quest terminates once we realise our true nature and merge into the supreme consciousness – in *sat-chit-ananda*. "The knowledge of the self reveals the fact that all our passions and antipathies, all our limitations of experience, all that is ignoble and small in us, all that is transient and finite in us is false. We "do not know" but are "pure knowledge" ourselves. We are not limited by anything, for we are the infinite; we do not suffer death, for we are immortal. Emancipation thus is not a new acquisition, product, an effect, or result of any action, but it always exists as the Truth of our nature. We are always emancipated and always free."^{xxvi} We suffer only so long as we do not realise our true nature. Once the veil of ignorance is removed, we get a glimpse of the true nature of the underlying all-pervasive reality, subjectless an objectless, which is pure consciousness.

Underlying the ever-changing, external world, where the flotsam and jetsam of events, thoughts and concepts rise and vanish continuously, "there is an unchangeable reality which is identical with that which underlies the essence in man." This is the *Brahman*, who is inconceivable because he cannot be conceived, unchangeable for he cannot be changed, untouchable for he cannot be touched. From *Brahman* we all emerge, to merge into him again at the end of all the cycles of birth and death, by attaining liberation through the realisation of supreme consciousness. Positive definitions for *Brahman* is impossible, and his character can only be described through a process of negation, *neti, neti*, not this, nor this. By this process, one arrives at the ultimate equation which is at the root of *Advaita Vedanta*: *Brahman = Atman* and realises his non-dual nature.^{xxvii} Both are undefinable, as the benediction in *Ishopanishad* articulates,

Purnamidam purnamadah purnat purnamudachyate

Purnasya purnamadaya purnamevavashishyate

Om shantih, shantih, shantih.^{xxviii}

(This is perfect. That is perfect. Perfect comes from perfect. Take perfect from perfect, the remainder is also perfect. May peace and peace and peace reign everywhere.)

(III)

Among the six schools of Indian philosophy, Nyaya and the Vaisesika do not address consciousness as such, they use the word *jnana* or knowledge in which the idea of consciousness is implicit. The Nyaya and the Vaisesika respectively deal with the world within and the world without.^{xxix} While Nyaya describes the mechanism of attainment of knowledge through perception (*pratyaksha*), inference (*anumana*), comparison (*upamana*) and testimony (*sabda*), Vaisesika analyses experience. Both aim at the liberation of the individual self. The self, when embodied, is subject to pleasure and pain, but the pleasure and pain do not affect the true self which is independent of the body and transmigrates when the body decays. It is the deathless, unchangeable essence of everything in the universe, the 'subject-object-less consciousness, the reality and the bliss'.^{xxx}

The idea of consciousness projected by the schools of Samkhya and Yoga represents another step in the evolution of this concept by giving consciousness an independent and eternal existence. By rationally analysing the method for understanding the world phenomena, Samkhya and Yoga identify two major components therein, “one sentient or conscious element and the other insentient or material element which, though distinct in nature, are seen inseparably mixed up in the world we observe.” They are called *Purusa* (the transcendental Self), the principle of spirit or consciousness and *Prakrti*, the principle of matter. Both are supposed to be eternal and to have independent existences, and to possess mutually opposite characteristics. Samkhya and Yoga are thus dualistic in nature as opposed to the non-dualist concept of *Brahman* as in *Advaita Vedanta*. They hold that the essential characteristics of consciousness are existence (*sat*) and illumination (*prakasa*). Consciousness is not simply a characteristic but the very essence of *Purusa*. The illuminating nature of consciousness plays a role in our cognition, enabling us to distinguish between subjects and objects, the perceiver and the perceived. It is beyond the body, senses and mind (*manasa*) or the world of objects. It witnesses all changes but is itself immutable.

According to the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, and also other systems of Indian philosophy including Buddhism and Jainism, atoms of earth, water, light and air are the material causes of the objects of the world. The Samkhya holds that material atoms cannot explain the origin of the subtle products of nature like mind, intellect or ego, which must therefore be caused by some ‘unintelligent or unconscious principle which is uncaused, eternal and all-pervading’. This is the *Prakrti*, the first cause of all things and, being the first cause cannot itself have any cause, for if there was a cause of *Prakrti*, then there must be a cause of that cause, and so on. Similarly, when objects disintegrate or are destroyed, their constituent physical elements must be dissolved into atoms, the atoms into energies and so on, till everything returns into the unmanifested, unlimited, unconditioned and eternal *Prakrti*, the ultimate cause of the Universe including everything but the self.^{xxx} The *Purusa* or Self is different from the body, senses, mind (*manas*) and intellect (*buddhi*). It is a conscious spirit - not merely with an attribute of consciousness but being pure consciousness itself. Consciousness (*jnana*, as compared to *Vedantic caitanya*) is its very essence.^{xxxii}

Prakrti itself is constituted by the three elements or *gunas* - *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, respectively signifying purity or luminosity, activity or vibrancy and passivity or inertia. *Gunas* are not qualities but elements of *Prakrti* and it is the unity of the *gunas* that holds it in a state of equilibrium. The objects arise only through the combination of *gunas*, and breaking of their equilibrium, when one of the *gunas* starts predominating over the others. *Gunas* impart property to the objects. All objects of the world, whether ordinary objects of perception or the mind and intellect, possess three characteristics - those of producing pleasure, pain and indifference, and they possess a tendency to be manifested in our consciousness through senses. Manifestation of objects in consciousness (*jnana*) is caused by *sattva*, while *rajas* and *tamas* respectively signifies the activity and passivity in objects and things of the world.

Prakrti is an eternal unconscious principle (*jada*) that is ever changing and is the ultimate cause of the world which comes into existence through the association (*samyoga*) of *Purusa* and *Prakrti*, causing the appearance of objects and intellect (*mahat* or *buddhi*), which transforms gradually into various mental feelings and functions beginning with the ego (*ahamkara*). The *purusa* identifies itself with the acts of *prakrti* through *ahamkara*. When *ahamkara* becomes dominated by “the aspect of *sattva*, we do good

work; when by rajas, evil ones; and when by *tamas*, indifferent ones.” *Ahamkara* can be predominated by one of *gunas*; when the *sattva* aspect (*vaikarika*) becomes predominant in *ahamkara*, the *manas*, the five sense organs of perception and the five motor organs of action are derived, while a preponderance of *tamasa* aspect (*bhutadi*) yields the five subtle elements (*tanmatras*)^{xxxiii}. The *rajasa* aspect (*taijasa*) plays its part in activating *sattva* and then conquering the inertia of *tamas*.^{xxxiv}

Manas is different from *mahat* or *buddhi*, but together with *Purusa*, they produce knowledge. Through the sense-organs, *manas* receives impressions from the external object and transforms these impressions into perceptions which are conveyed to the *mahat*, which then transforms and takes the form of the particular object. But lacking in consciousness, it is incapable of generating any knowledge of the object; like a mirror, *mahat* needs light to reflect and reveal an object. This light comes from the consciousness of the Self (*Purusa*). It is only through our ignorance (*avidya*) that we associate our true self with the body, senses and mind (*manas*). Only through spiritual training and mediation as prescribed by the Yoga, we can transcend the illusion of this mind-body complex and understand the true nature of our self which is eternal and unchanging, through the cessation of all mental functions (*ctittavrittinirodha*).^{xxxv}

However, Samkhya is not without its inherent contradictions and ambiguities, concerning its concept of *Prakrti* and *buddhi*, and runs into serious problems while discussing the nature and evolution of the world, a world with sentient beings that according to it had evolved from unconscious primal matter (*prakrti*). It also implies the existence of multiple selves, each connected to a body, in place of the one universal self pervading all bodies, as in *Advaita Vedanta*, which causes problems of logical consistency.

(IV)

Buddhism, like the Upanishads, rejects Vedic ritualism, upholds the oneness of all life, emphasises a transcendental reality beyond our everyday experiences and believes that the absolute reality is incomprehensible by intellect alone. Buddhism in a way democratised the philosophy of the Upanishads by ignoring their philosophical truths that carried deeper meanings that could not be appreciated by common people to whom its aphorisms were incomprehensible.^{xxxvi} While believing in the Vedic notions of *karma*, *samsara*, and *moksa* (*nirvana*), Buddhists rejects the *Brahmanical* and *Upanishadic* belief in a permanent, unchanging soul (*Atman*). To Buddhists, the central reality of all existence is change. All phenomena come into being as a result of causes and conditions which continually change every moment and eventually pass away. A disembodied, unchanging entity, would have no relation to anything and being beyond the world of the senses, it could never be perceived. This doctrine of momentariness is one of the cardinal principles of Buddhist thought. It introduces the idea of a ‘perennial flux’ in the ‘formulation of the nature of consciousness, replacing the idea of eternal existence of consciousness’ postulated in Samkhya and yoga philosophies by ‘momentary and discrete consciousness.’^{xxxvii}

This doctrine of momentariness influenced both the *Madhyamika* and the *Yogacara* schools of Mahayana Buddhism. The former developed the concept of emptiness (*sunyata*) since this reality could not be described either in the affirmative or negative senses, or in both or in neither, while Yogacara Buddhists described this consciousness as a stream of momentary, discrete, ontological reality (*vijnana-santana*), a continuum of transient states. Each such state has three phases: genesis (*uppada*), development (*thiti*),

and dissolution (*bhanga*), each occupying an infinitesimal division of time (*cittaksana*) during which a state of consciousness becomes, exists and vanishes. As the *Vissuddhi-Magga* says: “The being of a past moment of thought has lived, but does not live nor will it live. The being of a future moment will live, but has not lived nor does it live. The being of the present moment of thought does live, but has not lived nor will it live.”^{xxxviii}

Buddha did not believe in the existence of the soul as in Upanishads. Man is merely a collection (*skandha*) of body, mind and consciousness, expressed as an aggregate of five elements: a material body or form (*kaya* or *rupa*), immaterial sensations or feelings received from the form (*vedana*), perceptions of the mind (*samjna*), mental activity (*sankhara*), and a formless consciousness (*vijnana*).^{xxxix} His existence depends on this combination, and dissolves when this breaks up. The soul has no place in it. Rebirth is therefore, not the migration of the same soul into another body, instead, it is the causation of the next life by the present. Thus the past continues in the present through its effects, and “the present state of consciousness inherits its characters from the previous ones”. The conception of the soul (*atman*) is thus replaced an unbroken stream of consciousness (*vijnana santana*).^{xl}

Our knowledge about Buddha's teachings are derived mainly from the *Tripitakas* – the three canonical works respectively called *Vinayapitaka*, *Suttapitaka* and *Abhidhammapitaka*. His doctrine rests on some simple logical precepts that are easy to understand and follow. Buddha renounced his life as a prince to find a solution to the sufferings of life brought about by old age, death, despair, grief etc. (*jaramarana*). His entire teaching is focused on the redemption from suffering. All these sufferings are caused only by birth (*jati*) that brings beings into this world. Birth is caused by the will to become (*bhava*), which in turn is caused by our attachment to the objects of the world (*upadana*). *Upadana* arises from our desire and craving (*trsna*), which in turn is caused by our previous sensual experiences or feeling (*vedana*). Since sense experiences are caused only by contact (*sparsa*), which is not possible without the six organs of cognition, the five senses and the mind (*sadayatana*), which in turn depend on the mind-body organism (*nama-rupa*). This organism could not have come into existence, if it were dead or devoid of consciousness (*vijnana*) and this consciousness could only be the result of the impressions and misconceptions (*samskara*) of our past existence, a residue from the past life and all our past deeds. These are carried forth from the past life due to ignorance of truth (*avidya*).^{xli}

These twelve links cover our past, present and future lives all of which are causally connected, so that the present life can be conveniently explained with reference to its past conditions and its future effects. Thus ignorance (*avidya*) and impressions (*samskara*) relate to the past life, while consciousness of self (*vijnana*), mind-body complex (*nama-rupa*), six organs of knowledge (*sadayatana*), sense contact (*sparsa*), sense-experience (*vedana*), thirst (*trsna*) and clinging (*upadana*) belong to the present life. Tendency to be born (*bhava*), rebirth (*jati*) and old age and death etc. (*jara-marana*) relate to the future life.^{xlii}

Thus the coming into being of life which is suffering, as well as its cessation, is explained by “The Doctrine of Dependent Origination” or *Pratityasamutpada*:

“Then the Blessed One, during the first watch of the night, fixed his mind upon the chain of causation, in direct and in reverse order: ‘From ignorance spring the samskaras (conformations),

from the samskaras springs consciousness, from consciousness spring name and form, from name and form spring the six provinces (of the six senses, eye, ear, nose, tongue, body or touch and mind), from the six provinces springs contact, from contact springs sensation, from sensation springs thirst (or desire), from thirst springs attachment, from attachment springs becoming, from becoming springs birth, from birth spring old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.

Again, by the destruction of ignorance, which consists in the complete absence of lust, the samskaras are destroyed ; by the destruction of the samskaras, consciousness is destroyed; by the destruction of consciousness, name and form are destroyed; by the destruction of name and form, the six provinces are destroyed ; by the destruction of the six provinces, contact is destroyed ; by the destruction of contact, sensation is destroyed ; by the destruction of sensation, thirst is destroyed; by the destruction of thirst, attachment is destroyed; by the destruction of attachment, becoming is destroyed; by the destruction of becoming, birth is destroyed; by the destruction of birth, old, age, and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair are destroyed. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.”^{xliii}

Thus there is a cause for every human suffering and everything that happens in the world is a result of a vast succession, accumulation and concurrence of causes and conditions. Everything changes or disappears when these causes and conditions change or pass away. Misery and suffering also depend on some conditions, which once removed, would lead to the cessation of the misery and suffering. Nothing is permanent in the world. Same is true for our birth and being. The existence of everything is conditional, dependent upon a cause. Nothing ever happens fortuitously or by chance. This is the theory of dependent origination, which takes the middle course between the extremes of ‘Being’ and ‘Non-Being’, absolute reality and absolute unreality, between an eternally existing reality independent of any cause or condition, and complete annihilation of something existing without leaving any effect.^{xliv}

Thus Buddha arrived to the four noble truths (*catvari aryasatyani*): *dukkha*, *dukkha -samudaya*, *dukkhanirodha*, and *dukkha-nirodha-marga*, that is, (i) Life is full of suffering (ii) There is a cause of this suffering (iii) It is possible to end this suffering and (iv) There is a path which leads to the cessation of suffering.^{xlv} This path suggested by him is the famous Eightfold Path (*Astangika Marg*): right faith, right resolve, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right thought and right concentration.

The eightfold path is sometimes divided into four stages, where each is marked by the breaking of the fetters, which are ten in number, which bind mortal man. The first of these fetters is the delusion of a personal self (*satkaya-drsti*) which is the source of ego. The second is scepticism (*vicikitsa*), which leads to idleness or vice. One must also free oneself from the obligation of performing ceremonies and rituals which in no way helps us. Freedom from these three fetters leads one to the first stage in the noble path, he is then called the *Srotapanna*, or he who has got into the stream.

The next two obstacles are sensuality (*kama*) and malevolence (*pratigha*), overcoming which the seeker of enlightenment attains the second stage of the noble path, when he becomes a *Sakrdagamin*, or he who will only once be re-born before his final release from the chain of birth and death. At this stage, the

“deficiencies are minimised though not abolished. Those who have reduced the cardinal errors of lust, resentment and glamour return to the world once before they attain final release. When these two impediments are completely destroyed he becomes *Anagamin*.”^{xlvi} He is not yet completely free, but there is no falling back. But he has to conquer craving for material and immaterial pleasures, pride, self-righteousness (*auddhatya*), and ignorance about the true nature of things. On breaking these last fetters, the seeker then becomes an *arhat* (worthy), and “attains the blessedness of nirvana”, a state of “blissful sanctification” when he is no more subjected to rebirth.

The *Arhat* is still living and does not withdraw from life, rather he devotes his life to helping others on the way to *Nirvana*. His existence is one of peace and enlightenment, beyond pleasure and pain and free from all suffering. Upon his death, he enters the ultimate stage of *Parinirvana*, “the annihilation of the elements of being”. *Nirvana* literally means ‘blowing out’, an unmaking of the being, but does not mean a total extinction of existence. In fact, ordinary experiences may not be capable of describing this enlightened state of existence.

Different schools of Buddhism deal with the nature of reality in different ways. *Madhyamika* school of Mahayana Buddhism believes that Universe is totally devoid of reality, that everything is *sunya* or void. Asvaghosa, and Nagarjuna, men of great scholarship and dialectical skill, are the pioneers of this school. Another scholar of this school was Madhavacarya, who in his *Sarvadarsana-sangraha*, had used the following argument: the self (or the knower), the object (or the known) and knowledge being mutually interdependent, the reality of one depends on each of the other two, and if one be false, the others also must be so. It is only through the mind that the self knows whether an object is false (like a rope perceived as snake), and its knowledge then also becomes false. It follows that what we perceive within or without, along with the content of such perception and the percipient mind, are all illusory. There is, therefore, nothing, mental or non-mental, which is real. The universe is *sunya* or void of reality.

But this denial of reality is only in relation to the apparent phenomenal world perceived by us, behind which there is a reality which is not describable being devoid of phenomenal characters to describe it with. This is called *sunya*, but this is only the negative aspect of the ultimate reality, a description of what it is not. The *Lankavatara sutra* says that the real nature of objects cannot be ascertained by the intellect and hence cannot be described. But anything real must be independent and must not depend on anything else for its existence, which goes against the theory of dependent origination. Hence there is nothing real. Again, it cannot be said to be unreal, because an unreal thing can never come into existence in the first place. To say that it is both real and unreal or that it is neither real nor unreal, would make no sense. “*Sunyata* or voidness is the name for this indeterminable, indescribable real nature of things. Things appear to exist, but when we try to understand the real nature of their existence, our intellect is baffled.”^{xlvii}

In contrast, the *Yogacara* school propounds *Vijnana-vada* (idealism) of only one kind of reality which is of the nature of consciousness (*vijnana*). “Objects which appear to be material or external to consciousness are really ideas or states of consciousness. This theory may be described further as subjective idealism,

because according to it the existence of an object perceived is not different from the subject or the perceiving mind.”^{xlviii}

Every conscious state is a disturbance in the “stream of being” (*bhavanga* : *bhava* - being, *anga* – part). *Bhavanga* is subconscious existence below the threshold of consciousness. Buddhist philosophy recognises the distinction between conscious existence (*vidhicitta*, or waking consciousness) and unconscious life (*vidhimutta*) which is free from process, the two being divided by the threshold of consciousness (*monodvara*, or door of the mind), where the stream of being (*Bhavanga*) is detached. Buddhist philosophy identifies nineteen types of *Bhavanga*, of which ten belong to *Kama Loka* (or *Kama Dhatu*, realm of desire), five in the *Rupa Loka* (realm of form) and four in *Arupa Loka* (realm of the formless).^{xlix}



At the three-tiered Borobudur Temple, the largest Buddhist Temple in the world dating from the 8th and 9th century AD, located at Yogyakarta in Central Java, Indonesia, the *Kamadhatu* is represented by the base, the *Rupadhatu* by the five square terraces, and the *Arupadhatu* by the three circular platforms and a monumental stupa. The whole structure shows a unique blending of the very central ideas of ancestor worship, related to the idea of a terraced mountain, combined with the Buddhist concept of attaining Nirvana. (Photograph by author.)

Delusion and enlightenment both originate within the mind, just as the existence of all phenomena also arises from the functions of the mind through the associations of the mental factors. Life’s surroundings are created by the activities of the mind as the mind conjures up forms and images from its memories, fears and lamentations, the vast complexity of coordinating causes and conditions exists only within the mind and nowhere else. An unenlightened life arises from a mind that is bewildered in its self-created world of delusion. The world of life and death is created and exists only within the mind, is ruled by the mind and brings a world of suffering. Mind is the ultimate cause of everything. Enlightenment comes only when we realise that there is no world outside the mind. Then it ceases to create form and surroundings and enlightenment is attained.¹ As the Buddha had said, “What you think, you become. What you feel, you attract. What you imagine, you create.”

(V)

“*Anor aniyam mahato mahiyan / Atmasya jantor nihito guhayam*” -Subtler than the atom, greater than the greatest, the Atman resides in the hearts of living beings, declares the Kathopanishad. “*Tameva*

viditvati mrutyumeti/ Nanya pantha vidyateyanaya", Svetasvetara Upanishad asserts - It is only by knowing him that one can transcend death and be liberated. Yoga system of philosophy prescribes the way to attain this liberation, through direct knowledge (*vivekajnana*) of the self's distinction from the externalities of the world which including our body, mind and the ego. The *Patanjala Sutra* or *Yoga Sutra*, the basis of the Yoga philosophy and written by Patanjali is divided into four parts (*padas*): *Samadhipada* (on contemplation), *Sadhanapada* (on practice), *Vibhutipada* (on powers) and *Kaivalypada* (on emancipation).

Yoga is a discipline and for the purification and enlightenment of *citta* (mind), *Sadhanapada* prescribes the eightfold disciplines of (a) *yama* or restraint, which includes *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (abstention and control of passions) and *aparigraha* (non-receipt of gifts), (b) *niyama* or culture, (c) *asana* or posture, (d) *pranayama* or breath control, (e) *pratyahara* or withdrawal of the sense, (f) *dharana* or attention, (g) *dhyana* or meditation, and (h) *Samadhi* or concentration. These are known as aids to yoga (*yoganga*). The first six of these prepare the mind for the last two.

Dhyana or meditation is the steady and unbroken contemplation of the object of meditation, when the mind loses itself in the object of contemplation. Contemplation of an object steadies the mind. The usual mental chatter about events and feelings, past and present slowly begins to fade, breathing becomes slow and mental activities becomes fainter till they fall completely silent. "People travel to wonder at the height of mountains", St. Augustine had said four centuries before the birth of Christ, "at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars; and they pass by themselves without wondering." In meditation, mind has stopped by itself and then fallen silent wondering at its own beauty. There is no change and nothing to mark the passage of time.

While the act and the object of meditation remain distinct in *dhyana*, in *Samadhi* they merge into one are not cognized separately, meaning and content blend together, and the mind is free from the process of thought. The seeker comes to "experience his own soul with crystal clarity, free from the relative attributes of nature and actions. This state of purity is *Samadhi*."^{li} *Samadhi* is attained through the practice and detachment developed through self- analysis, synthesis, bliss and the experience of pure being - *vitarka vicara ananda asmitarupa anugamat samparjnatah (Samadhipada, sloka 1.17)*. *Samadhi* is neither a state of waking, nor dreaming nor dreamless sleep. Mind is perfectly still and nothing stirs. There is only awareness but no object of awareness. There is no thought but only pure, unqualified consciousness. "When the mind is silent, when all the thoughts, feelings, perceptions and memories with which we habitually identify have fallen away, then what remains is the essence of self, the pure subject without an object. What we then find is not a sense of "I am this" or "I am that;" but just "I am"."^{lii}

While *Mahat* is the universal consciousness, *citta* is its counterpart within the individual. *Chitta* has three aspects: mind (*manas*), intelligence (*buddhi*) and ego (*ahamkara*). *Cinta* - disturbed or anxious thoughts, and *cintana* - deliberate thinking are the two facets of *Chitta*. Both must be restrained through the discipline or yoga for ultimate realisation of the consciousness, hence Yoga is defined as *citta vrtti nirodhah* (cessation of all thoughts and disturbances).^{liii} "Mind acquires knowledge objectively, whereas

intelligence learns through subjective experience, which becomes wisdom. As cosmic intelligence is the first principle of nature, so consciousness is the first principle of man.”^{liv}

When consciousness dwells in wisdom, a truth-bearing state of direct spiritual perception dawns (*rtambhara tatra prajna: Samadhipada, Sloka 1.48*). When mind, intelligence and ego are all surpassed through deep contemplation, spiritual light of the self is kindled and *sattva* or luminosity flows undisturbed, *chitta* attains a pure and enlightened state and merges into supreme consciousness. “When the mind is silent, when all the thoughts, feelings, perceptions and memories with which we habitually identify have fallen away, then what remains is the essence of self, the pure subject without an object. What we then find is not a sense of "I am this" or "I am that;" but just "I am". In this state, you know the essence of self, and you know that essence to be pure consciousness. You know this to be what you really are. You know this to be your true identity. You are not a being who is conscious. You are consciousness. Period.”^{lv}

Thus we see that the mind (*manas*), which is the seat of cognition, feeling, emotion, will, imagination, and has the faculty of seeing things within and without, is not the same as consciousness but subordinate to it. There is a clear distinction between the two, unlike in scientific treatment of consciousness. Consciousness is attained through deep contemplation by the mind, beyond intellect and ego.

One object of contemplation is light – “inner stability is gained by contemplating a luminous, sorrowless, effulgent light” (*visoka va jyotismati: Samadhipada, Sloka 1.36*). Light is what probably connects the realms of the physical and the spiritual, our outer and inner worlds, as the British author Peter Russell suggests. Light has a speed ($c = 3 \times 10^{10}$ cms per second) which is a universal constant in any frame of reference and is also the ultimate speed limit for anything in the Universe. At speeds close to that of light, reality starts getting very different, time slows and space contracts, and all our mental constructs based on ordinary ‘common-sense’ experiences within the framework bound by time and space start getting topsy-turvy. In other words, physical reality gets altered completely. At the speed of light, time stops and space disappears completely. In *Samadhi* also, one loses sense of time and space, when mind becomes perfectly still, and time stops flowing for that mind in *Samadhi*. There is only the light of consciousness, which illuminates the mind of every sentient being.

Light is nothing but a pure form of energy, it cannot be created or destroyed, but can transform into another form of energy. We do not see light, but perceive objects as they are only when light falls on them– *tameva vantam anubhati sarvam*, as we have mentioned earlier. Light is mysterious, what it is actually we do not know; it is perhaps unknowable. We perceive light only through the energy it releases in our eyes, which translates into visual images in the mind. “Although the image appears to be composed of light, the light we see is a quality appearing in consciousness.... Light seems to lie beyond reason and common sense understanding.... With light we may have reached the threshold of knowability.”^{lvi} It is no wonder that seeking to know the ultimate truth is compared to illumination and that those who have attained realisation are called “Enlightened”. Light removes darkness just as consciousness (*caitanya*) removes ignorance (*avidya*). Light is one of the ultimate realities of the world, physical or spiritual.

Georg Cantor (1845-1918) was an outstanding mathematician who revolutionized the foundation of mathematics with his set theory. But Cantor's most fundamental and revolutionary contribution was in relation to the concept of infinity. Before him, one could only speak of finite sets that could be compared and infinity as a set of values of a variable that tended to increase or decrease without bounds and which otherwise did not make much sense. Cantor proved that there is not just one infinite size but that there are infinities of different sizes. By applying a well-known logical principle called *reductio ad absurdum* (*reducing to absurdity*), he proved that the infinite set of natural numbers is of smaller size than the infinite set of real numbers. He proved that there are infinities of different sizes that can be compared.

Consciousness is also an infinity, with undefinable, unbound attributes. "A set is a Many that allows itself to be thought of as a One", Cantor had said. It has close parallel to individual and universal mind or consciousness. Like his infinities, maybe consciousness of individual minds can acquire different dimensions and magnitudes, growing bigger and bigger with increased realisation and understanding of the nature of self and reality, till they merge into the universal consciousness, the largest of infinities, the *Brahman*, from which everything came into existence and into which everything will dissolve.

Genesis started with "Let there be light", or the creation of light. Light that makes the objective, physical world appear the way it is. In the subjective realm of the mind, it is the light of consciousness that leads to the nature of our true self. The yearning for this realization had made the ancient Indian sages articulate the eternal prayer of mankind, "*Tamasa ma jyotirgamayah*"^{lvii} – lead us from darkness to the light everlasting.

Both science and philosophy use analysis and synthesis as their tools to explain the world and to seek a meaning behind everything including our existence. Both strive for a unified worldview, seeking a fundamental unity into everything, from the infinitesimal to infinity, from the miniscule to the immense, from the quarks to the cosmos, in their respective ways. We perceive and understand things only with the help of our consciousness, and both science and philosophy agree that the reality of the world lies within our consciousness, and in that sense, consciousness itself becomes a fundamental attribute of our reality. It is equally fundamental to our being, because without it, our existence loses all meaning and nothing much is left in life. It may be argued that our entire evolution has only been a gradual and progressive ascent towards consciousness. It thus stands to logic to say that looking at consciousness only as an outcome of the neurochemical interaction and co-operation between some billions of cells within our brain gives us a rather limited and narrow perspective which does not do justice to the idea of consciousness as constituting a fundamental quality of the reality surrounding us.

We are now on the threshold of a new paradigm, a new synthesis between all the different branches of knowledge to evolve further in consciousness, and this process must culminate into a higher form of consciousness than can perhaps be explained only by the working of the brain. That would be the highest degree of perfection that humanity can attain, in which the entire mankind must cooperate and create unprecedented synergy and harmony. When billions of people connected through the internet start putting their ideas, energy and resources towards a common goal that benefits all and lifts all life from the tragedy of mundaneness which today envelops it, then a new sense of fulfilment will overwhelm

humanity, adding new meaning, dimension, life and vigour to our existence. Perhaps then we shall realise, “Anandaddhyeva khalvimani bhutani jayante, Anandena jatani jivanti, Anandam prayantya abhisamvisanti”^{viii} - From bliss we came into existence, in bliss we grow and at the end of our journey, into bliss we dissolve. Only then shall we perceive and appreciate the true significance of the Universe, life, our role and our evolution spanning more than the last three billion years.

But arrival at the doorstep of this supreme consciousness would not mark the end to our journey. For the human mind is mirrored in infinity, and no satisfaction or fulfilment can be final: “Bhumaiba sukham, nalpe sukhamasti”^{lix} – happiness lies only in the plenum of completeness, and infinity. There is no happiness in the realm of the finite and temporal, “Yenaham namrta syam kimaham tena kuryam?”^{lx} - What use do I have of things that cannot take me beyond mortality?

ⁱ Author is grateful to Prof. Sukhamoy Ghosh for offering many valuable suggestions and advises on this paper.

ⁱⁱ Brunton, Paul, *Indian Philosophy and Modern Culture*, Bharatiya Book Corporation, Delhi, 1981, 52-3.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Tameva vantam anubhati sarvam tasya vasa sarvam idam vibhati: Kathopnishad, II.2.15.*

^{iv} Lachman, Gary, *A Secret History of Consciousness*, Lindisfarne Books, 2003, 21-22.

^v Bergson’s idea that the living body is the manifestation of an internal urge resembles the Buddhist doctrine of impermanence and his cycle of causation.

^{vi} *Ibid*, 26.

^{vii} *Ibid*, 75-78.

^{viii} *Ibid*, 238-45.

^{ix} *Ibid*, 248-61.

^x Kant believed in the externality of *noumena*, but said this was unknown and unknowable, while Hegel believed that the absolute or the ultimate reality is thought of the highest form, and not related to any external object.

^{xi} Brunton, Paul, *Indian Philosophy and Modern Culture*, *Ibid*, 59-60.

^{xii} Robinson, Daniel Sommer, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/idealism>, accessed 09/06/2017.

^{xiii} Madhavananda, Swami, *Vivkachudamani of Sri Sankaracharya, Verse 387, 399*, The Advaita Ashram, Mayavati, 1921, 170, 176.

^{xiv} *Sat-Chit-Ananda*

^{xv} Madhavananda, Swami, *Vivkachudamani of Sri Sankaracharya, Verse 217*, *Ibid*, 97-98.

^{xvi} *Ibid*, Verses 257-8, *Ibid*, 116.

^{xvii} “*Nayamatma prabacanen lavya na medhaya na bahuna shruten*”- *Mundaka Upanishad, III.2.3.*

^{xviii} Schrodinger, Erwin, *My View of the World*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, 31.

^{xix} *Kathopnishad, III.3.4.*

^{xx} *tat tvam asi*- That thou art – *Chandogya Upanishad; Aham Brahmasmi -I am Brahma- Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.*

^{xxi} Hiriyanana, M, *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1995, 21-23.

^{xxii} *Ibid*, 25-27.

^{xxiii} Radhakrishnan, S, *Indian Philosophy, Volume I*, Oxford, New Delhi, 1929, 32.

^{xxiv} *Ibid*, 33.

^{xxv} *Ibid*, 34.

^{xxvi} Dasgupta, Surendranath, *A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol 1*, Cambridge, 1922, 58.

^{xxvii} Dasgupta, Surendranath, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1922, 32-45.

^{xxviii} *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad V.1.1.*

^{xxix} Radhakrishnan, S, *Indian Philosophy, Volume I*, Oxford, New Delhi, 1929, 30.

^{xxx} Dasgupta, Surendranath, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1922, 47.

^{xxxi} Chatterjee, S & Datta, D, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, Rupa, New Delhi, 2007, 241-3.

^{xxxii} *Ibid*, 247.

xxxiii The five organs of perception are the functions of sight, hearing, smell taste and touch. The five organs of action are the functions of the tongue, feet, hands, and the organs of evacuation and reproduction. These are the ten external organs (*bahyakarana*). *Mahat*, *ahamkara* and *manas* are internal organs (*antahkarana*). The five *tanmatras* correspond to the essences of the five sense-organs conceived as physical principles: *shabda*, *sparsha*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha* respectively. Combination of these give rise to the five gross elements (*Mahabhuta*): *akasa* (space), water, air, fire and earth, thus *shabda* and *sparsha* together produce *marut* (air). The five gross elements combine in different ways to form all objects of the world.

xxxiv Radhakrishnan, S, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume 2, Oxford, 1930, 268-271.

xxxv Chatterjee, S & Datta, D, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, Rupa, New Delhi, 2007, 38-42.

xxxvi Radhakrishnan, S, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume 1, *Ibid*, 471.

xxxvii Sarma, Debabrata Sen, "Consciousness in Indian Philosophical Thought", *Ibid*, 210-15.

xxxviii Radhakrishnan, S, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume 1, *Ibid*, 406.

xxxix The last four are together called *Nama*.

xl Chatterjee, S & Datta, D, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, Rupa, New Delhi, 2007, 128 -129.

xli Dasgupta, Surendranath, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, 82-6; also Chatterjee, S & Datta, D, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, Rupa, New Delhi, 2007, 111-113.

xlii Radhakrishnan, S, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume 1, *Ibid*, 410, footnote 3.

xliii Radhakrishnan, S, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume 1, *Ibid*, 410-11, footnote 1, quoting from *Mahavagga*.

xliv "There are two extremes, O monks, from which he who leads a religious life must abstain..... One is a life of pleasure, devoted to desire and enjoyment: that is base, ignoble, unspiritual, unworthy, unreal. The other is a life of mortification: it is gloomy, unworthy, unreal. The perfect one, O monks, is removed from both these extremes and has discovered the way which lies between them, the middle way which enlightens the eyes, enlightens the mind, which leads to rest, to knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nirvana." Hiriyanana M, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1993, 151, from the first sermon of Buddha at Sarnath.

xlv A view similar to this theory of the wheel of causation (*Brahmachakra*) is suggested in the Svetasvatara Upanishad. The idea of dependent origination may be drawn from the eight fetters mentioned in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (*Ibid*, 411, footnote 1).

xlvi Radhakrishnan, S, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume 1, *Ibid*, 427-8.

xlvii Chatterjee, S & Datta, D, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, Rupa, New Delhi, 2007, 133-4.

xlviii *Ibid*, 138.

xlix Radhakrishnan, S, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume 1, *Ibid*, 407-8.

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