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आ नौ भद्राः कर्तवो यन्तु विश्वतोऽर्दब्बासो अर्परीतास उद्भिर्दः । (RgVeda) *Let noble thoughts come to us from every side*

Science-Spirituality Dialogue 'The Mystery of Mind'

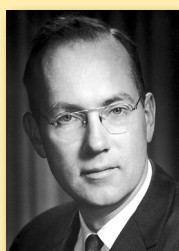


A Discussion with
Prof. Holmes Rolston III (right),
*Templeton Laureate and Professor of Philosophy
at Colorado State University, USA*
and **Dr. T. D. Singh** (left),
*Physical Organic Chemist,
Founding-Director of Bhaktivedanta Institute*

T. D. Singh: It seems to me that we have not come to any understanding about the study of the mind. Some people think that the mind is a product of brain function. So this question remains unsolved, even after having been repeatedly studied in various fields like physics, philosophy, etc. I think it is rather a stumbling block in the study of consciousness and brain.

Holmes Rolston: Yes, it is. It's very much as you put it, a stumbling block. To give an adequate account of the relationship of the mind to the brain or to the body is a very tortured debate. I don't think we have any adequate account. ...Well, the kind of mind which we experience as human beings, I do think is a result of brain function. If you see a dog or if you see a wolf, they have different brains and they have different kinds of experiences ... The thing about the human brain that is different, however, is that we can be scientists, we can be priests or whatever, and then we have in our mind a capacity to get broader or universal truths. So scientists can work out, let's say, the Pythagorean theorem, or Einstein can work out the theory of relativity, relating mass to energy. We do that with a human mind, not every mind is capable of doing that, but at least, there are some human minds that can do those things.

Now it seems to me that humans have an access to more universal or global insights into the way in which the world is rationed or structured/constructed. At that point I would say it may well be that humans with their minds are detecting the mind of God, detecting a deep rationality that is in the nature of things. Then I can begin to connect with a super mind or a cosmic mind. Then I'll begin to be metaphysical and to have religious feelings about a divine mind that is within and under the order of the universe. I am a monotheist, I do think that God created the world, and the attributes of the divine mind are incorporated and embodied in the rationality of the world and its beauty.



"To me God is personal, yet omnipresent — a great source of strength. ... We may sense Him strongly — both at the moment and in reflecting on the events of a lifetime."

— Charles H. Townes
Nobel Laureate in Physics

To Know about Life, Matter, and their Interactions is called Knowledge

INSIDE

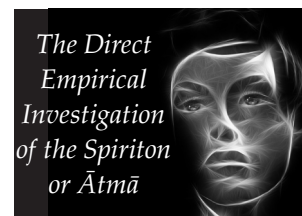


► On the
**SHOULDERS of
GIANTS**



Śrī Godādevī

► **VEDANTA and
SCIENCE**



► **NEWS BIRDS**



Report
*Seminars and Workshop
on
Science and Spirituality
held in November 2109*

T. D. Singh: Vedantic tradition reveals that different living beings such as mammals, birds, insects, etc., have different brain capacity. This is definitely true. Therefore, it's also different for humans; and undeniably, brain is regarded in our tradition as an instrument that actually carries whatever function the mind wants to do. Mind or *manah* is not regarded as a brain function in our Vedantic tradition. Rather, mind is regarded as an element, a separate element. It constitutes the subtle body, along with the other two elements called *buddhi* or intelligence and *ahankara* or false-ego (the identification with this body); these three elements are called the subtle elements. Mind is not regarded as an ordinary element. It has the capacity to switch on either to the spiritual side or to the material side, according to the situation. For example, if I am sick and I like to pray, I'm praying for the blessings of the Lord. When I pray like this, some kind of good feeling relieves me, maybe some blessings are coming from the Lord. Many patients feel better in this way. ...

So our Vedantic tradition says that the mind is a separate element that exists as a part of the nature. This could be an interesting field of research for modern scientists. ... Although, historically philosophers and psychologists have studied the mind, in this present scientific age, it seems it would be very appropriate to study more about this property of the mind in a scientific way.

[Excerpt from the book, *Saivijnanam vol-8— Scientific Exploration for a Spiritual Paradigm*, Bhaktivedanta Institute, Kolkata]

On the Shoulder of Giants

Śrī Godādevī

(The Ninth Ālvār Saint)

Śrī Godādevī was one of the great seers of *Śrīvaiṣṇavism* during the 8th century. She is revered as the greatest savior of humanity and holds a unique place amongst the twelve Ālvārs (Vaiṣṇava Saints) of *Śrī Sampradāya*. Śrī Godādevī is worshiped as the incarnation of Bhū-devī (the personification of Mother Earth), one of the consorts of Supreme Lord Viṣṇu.

Śrī Godādevī appeared in 3005 BC in the temple town of Śrīvilliputhur in Tamil Nadu. She was found as an infant in the sacred Tulasi garden of Śrī Viṣṇucitta (or Periyālvār), who himself was an Ālvār poet. He named her "Kodai," meaning a beautiful garland in the Tamil language (gradually came to be pronounced as Godai or Goda in common usage).

Godai grew up in holy surroundings, worshipping the Deity and listening to devotional hymns from her father. From childhood onwards, she showed a fondness to hear the pastimes of Lord Krishna and developed a deep love towards Him. She assisted her father in weaving flower garland for the presiding Deity there, named, Vaṭa-patraśāyī Bhagavān (Lord Krishna). After preparing the garlands, Godai, in her childish innocence, would adorn herself with the flower garland to see if it is done well to match the beauty of the Lord and placed them back into the basket without being noticed by her father. However, one day, Śrī Viṣṇucitta discovered the wrong-doings of his darling daughter and grieved very much. Repenting deeply, he stayed back at home fasting for the whole day. That night, the Lord appeared in his dream and expressed his eagerness to have the garland worn first by Godai and would not accept otherwise. From then onwards, the practice of Godai wearing the flower garlands as before was continued. Henceforth, she was known as Śūḍikkōḍutha Nāchiyār (The giver of worn garland).

As Godai grew up, her longing for the association of the Lord

increased to such a degree that she could not bear the separation from Him like the Gopi's of Vrindavan. Desiring to become the bride of the Lord and eternally be immersed in unlimited service to the Lord, Godai observed *Pāvai Ṇombu* (a sacred vow of *Margali* Bath rituals) as service to Lord along with offering garlands of classic Tamil divine poems: *Thiruppāvai* and *Nāchiyār Thirumozhi*. When Godai reached the age of marriage, her cherished desire eventually was fulfilled, with the Lord of Srirangam -- Sri Ranganāthā Himself instructing the authorities of the temple to



Śrī Godādevī

bring Godai fully decorated as a bride to His sanctum. The Lord extended his arms to receive and embraced His long-expected bride. To the astonishment and wonder of the people assembled, Godai's physical body merged with the Deity, Lord Ranganāthā. Godai became known as the divine mother of the universe--- "Āṇḍāl" (meaning one who rules the Lord).

Śrī Godādevī's life exemplifies the concept of the absolute surrender of the soul (*śeṣa*) to God (*śeṣī*) to earn His grace. Unlike other Alvars to whom the Lord revealed Himself to awaken the deluded souls, Śrī Godādevī went on to wake up the Supreme Lord and reminded Him of His duty to give shelter to all the conditioned souls though they have no merits. Weaving two kinds of garlands, a garland of songs (*Paa-malai*), and a garland of flowers (*Poo-malai*), Śrī Godādevī not only bound the Supreme Lord and made Him obedient to her, but also shared the grace of God with all the earthly beings. Therefore, she is revered as the greatest savior of humanity.

Śrī Godādevī's poetic works -- *Thiruppāvai* and *Nāchiyār Thirumozhi*, are unique in their literary, philosophical, religious, and artistic content, presenting a profound import about the nature of ultimate reality and the means of attaining the ultimate goal. Amongst these two works, *Thiruppāvai* is held in high esteem by the *Śrīvaiṣṇavas*. It is also known as known as "Goda Upanishad." Herein, she teaches the doctrine of attaining the goal of service to the Lord by taking refuge in Him (*śaraṇāgati*), or surrendering oneself to him (*prapatti*). According to this doctrine, attainment of knowledge and experience of one's dependence on the Lord and of one's proper relation comes only from the Lord Himself, not from any achievement on the part of the individual. The Lord alone is the means for attaining the Lord, and there can be no reliance on one's worthiness or ability to attain Him. The only qualification one needs for the unlimited relation of service to the Supreme Lord is the desire for Him. Besides, she teaches that one cannot gain access to Him alone. Love for the Lord, therefore, is not exclusive or possessive love, but a love that reaches out to other hankering souls and bringing them together in Lord's presence.

Thence, the Vaiṣṇava saints and seers of all ages have loudly declared that in this age of *Kali-yuga*, the simplest path for spiritual upliftment open for the whole humanity is to approach the Supreme Teacher --- Śrī Godādevī.

Vedanta & Science

The Direct Empirical Investigation of the Living Entity, Spiriton or Ātmā

A material entity, such as an electron, is normally studied by taking advantage of its characteristic properties and laws of interaction. Similar considerations apply to the spiriton or *ātmā*. According to Vedanta, the spiriton or *ātmā* interacts with matter through the agency of the *Paramātmā* or the all-pervading conscious aspect of the absolute truth. This interaction depends on higher order, non-mathematical laws relating to psychological principles such as desire and free will. For this reason we should not expect to be able to observe the spiriton or *ātmā* by means of a standard physical apparatus, such as an electron microscope, which employs familiar physical laws. However, since both the spiriton or *ātmā* and the absolute truth, or *Paramātmā* are conscious, there is the possibility of direct conscious interaction between them. It is through this interaction that the *ātmā* can be directly studied, and this study also entails the study of the *Paramātmā*.

Even though this subject matter is unknown in the domain of Western scientific knowledge, systematic and scientific procedures for the study of the spiriton or *ātmā* have existed for a very long time. Thousands of years ago, they were expounded in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and other Sanskrit texts, and more recently, they have been treated in great detail in such works as the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī.

Essentially, the object of study in this investigation is the investigator's personal self. The stringent experimental conditions necessary in ordinary physical experimentation must, therefore, be applied to the mind and senses, rather than to an external experimental apparatus. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (verse 9.2) Lord Krishna says that it is *pratyakṣāvagamān Pratyakṣā* means it can also come also through the sense perception, but this senses are not ordinary senses, these are purified senses. When the senses are purified by discipline then it is eligible for receiving knowledge by direct perception.

The sensory apparatus for the study of the spiriton or *ātmā* resides in the *ātmā* itself. In the materially conditioned state, the *ātmā* normally perceives external arrangements of matter through the gross senses of the physical body. The data for such perception pass through sense organs, nerves, and other physical structures. But in order for perception to take place, these data must ultimately reach the *ātmā* or spiriton. The spiriton must, therefore, possess its own senses, or means of

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direct perception. It is this capacity of direct perception which must be invoked in order for the *ātmā* to study itself, other *ātmās*, and the *Paramātmā*. Perception through the limiting medium of gross material instruments, including the bodily senses, can only give indirect evidence of the *ātmā*, since these instruments make use of an inferior mode of interaction. One of the first steps required for the study of conscious interaction is, therefore, to purify the mind of the materially conditioned *ātmā*.

A materially conditioned *ātmā*, spiriton or soul, is one who, devoid of real knowledge, assumes that he is a product of material interactions. He thinks that everything is within his power, and has a mental attitude characterized by the desire to lord it over nature. He tends to think that he can shape his own destiny, and that there is nothing beyond chance and matter. Unfortunately, this attitude makes progress in the direct study of life extremely difficult.

As we have pointed out, the study of life ultimately involves the interaction between the individual quantum of consciousness (spiriton or *ātmā*) and absolute or universal consciousness, *Paramātmā*. For the minute conscious entity to approach the supreme conscious source of all entities, a reverence for life in all its forms is needed, as well as a desire to cooperate harmoniously with the absolute source from which all life emanates. The study of life thus requires that higher psychological laws must be taken into account, just as the study of gross matter requires an appreciation of the natural laws that predominate in each particular experimental situation.

Excerpt from the book, *Life, Matter and their Interactions*, Bhaktivedanta Institute, Kolkata]

BOOK

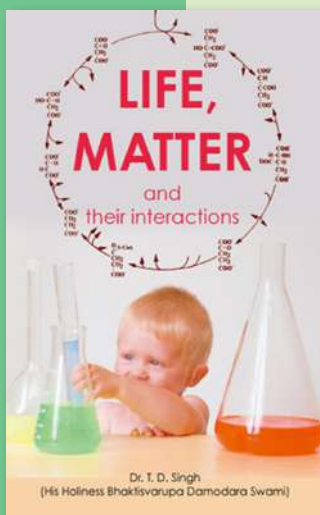
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Half-Day Workshop on Science & Spirituality held on 2nd November 2019 at Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore



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