



# SCIENCE & SPIRITUAL QUEST

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आ नौ भद्राः कर्तव्यो यन्तु विश्वतोऽदृग्भासो अपर्रीतास उद्भिदः । (RgVeda) *Let noble thoughts come to us from every side*

## Science-Spirituality Dialogue Can Quantum Theory Explain Life?



**A Discussion with**  
**Sir Roger Penrose** (left),  
*Nobel Laureate in Physics.* and  
**Dr. T. D. Singh** (right);  
*Founding-Director of*  
*Bhaktivedanta Institute*

**Dr. T. D. Singh:** Can we say QM (quantum mechanics), whatever extent of sophistication we may develop in the future, will not be able to describe all the aspects of life?

SRP: Well, I think it wouldn't describe all aspects of life. I am certain about this. It should be noted that people who do biology do not like to think about QM at all. They would have nothing to do at all with QM [all laugh], One of the problems is that you just cannot do QM with biological systems: Maybe QM is not set up in that way. QM is set up where you have an experiment in which you have a quantum system which you study, and then you treat the measuring apparatus in a classical system. That's the way the subject is set up. In biology you do not have that setup. You have systems that are parts of a whole system. There may be a part that is behaving quantum mechanically but that is not measured by a measuring apparatus. It is just part of the bigger system. So the way QM is setup, it is not appropriate for biology. In some way, the modified QM, which is internally consistent, will be a benefit to biology because people will start to use it. But at the moment they do not use QM in Biology. I can understand the situation. QM is unusable in biological systems. So the biologists tend to think that QM is not important.

**Dr. T. D. Singh:** Do you think science will ever be able to discover the Ultimate Reality?

**Sir Roger Penrose:** Perhaps we may never be able to understand the Ultimate Reality through rigorous scientific approach. If perhaps there will eventually

## INSIDE



► *On the*  
**SHOULDERS of**  
**GIANTS**



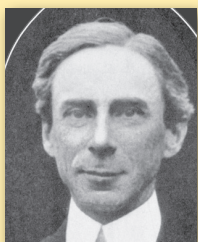
**Sri Ananthavān**

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“

*The loneliness of the human soul is unendurable;  
nothing can penetrate it except the highest intensity of the  
sort of love that religious teachers have preached ...*

— Bertrand Russell  
Mathematician and Philosopher

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

emerge some kind of ultimate theory that may explain part of the reality that theory must differ enormously from what we have seen in physical theories so far. Some fundamentally new insights are certainly needed.

[Excerpt from the book, *Savijnanam* vol-2-3 —*Scientific Exploration for a Spiritual Paradigm*, Bhaktivedanta Institute, Kolkata]

## On the Shoulder of Giants

### Sri Ananthalvan

#### *The Courageous Disciple*

Śrī Ananthalvān is one of the glorious disciple of Śrī Rāmānujācārya of Śrī *Sampradāya*. He is extolled for his *ācārya bhakti* next to Madhurakavi Alwār (known for his unparalleled devotion to his *Ācārya*, Nammalvār). Ananthalvan is remembered for his great work: *Śrī Venkateśa Itihāsa Mālā* (the history of the Tirumala Tirupati temple), *Śrī Rāmānujācārya Catuḥ-śloki* and *Śrī Gode Catuḥ-śloki*.

Śrī Ananthalvān was born as Ananthan in 1053 A.D. at Sriruputtur (presently known as Kirangur) near Melkote, Karnataka. His father Kesavacharya was a pious *Śrī Vaiṣṇavite*. As he grew, Ananthan became well-versed in scriptures and Vedic lore. He then went to Śrīraṅgam and took shelter of Śrī Rāmānujācārya, becoming one of his disciples; under the name Ananthalvān.

One day, during a discourse Śrī Rāmānujācārya was explaining about different ways of worshiping the Supreme; he expressed: “The holy shrine of Venkatācala [Tirumala - Tirupati] is known as *Puṣpa Mandapa* because here Lord is lovingly served with fresh fragrant flowers.” So, he wanted one of his disciples to proceed to Tirumala-Tirupati Hills to maintain a garden and ensure uninterrupted supply of fresh garlands to Lord. During those days, a dense forest teems with ferocious animals, covered Tirumala Hills. Residing in such forest, without living amenities appears almost impossible and so most of the disciples dreaded to go there. Ananthalvān rose from the meeting and submitted to carry out the desire of his teacher. Swami Rāmānujār embraced him and exclaimed, ‘You truly are *Ānpillai*’ (the courageous man in Tamil)! From that moment, Ananthalvan came to be known as Anantanpillai.

Ananthalvān went to Tirumala hills and gradually establish a beautiful garden near the temple. Here, he made lovely garlands every morning and offered to Lord Śrīnivāsa. Foreseeing the shortage of water during summer, he decided to build a large tank. Since his teacher ordains to him maintaining the dooryard, Ananthalvān strongly resisted involvement of any labors to take over the service. So he began this arduous task.

Ananthalvān choose a suitable place for the reservoir on the southern side of the temple and start digging work, while his wife carried the dug soil in a basket and deposited far. Due to her advanced pregnancy, she was grappling to keep pace with her husband. Lord Śrīnivāsa was much moved seeing the dedication and hardship of the couple. Taking the guise of a twelve-year-old boy, He appeared before Ananthalvān and asked him, ‘could I share your effort load?’. However Ananthalvān shoved away the child and strictly warned him never come again with such proposal. But the little boy too stays determined to help him. So he quietly neared the wife and pleaded her so much that she could no longer refuse. The lad carried the mud-filled basket from the midway easing the task of the

pregnant mother. Noticing the sudden speeding work, Ananthalvān inquired his wife. She replied: ‘This same little boy had approached me’. Fuming Ananthalvān came out of the pit and tried to get hold of the boy. But the boy started running away. Intending to stop him, Ananthalvān threw his crowbar right before the boy. Accidentally the boy’s chin struck to crowbar and started to bleed. Although injured, he managed to escape into the temple. Searching him, Ananthalvān too entered inquiring the people if anyone had seen a little child. When he arrived at the main Altar, Ananthalvan saw the deity of Lord Śrīnivāsa



Sri Ananthalvan (1053 –1137 A.D)

was having a ruddy chin. He immediately asked the priest to apply camphor to stop the suffusion. Ananthalvān began sobbing, repenting for his action. Subsequently, Lord Śrīnivāsa was smiling and spoke to him: ‘I honor this injury on my chin as a mark of your loving devotion and dedication. This crude camphor covering the scar will remain as a permanent mark to constantly remind the world about your glories.’ Ever since then, the priests of Tirumala-Tirupati apply white camphor to Lord Śrīnivāsa’s chin as a beauty spot. And above the right side of the entrance main door in the temple, we can see his original crowbar. Moreover, every year the *Bhāg Savāri Utsavam* is observed depicting this incident. Ananthalvan named the water pond as “*Rāmānujā Puṣhkarini*” and the floral garden as ‘*Rāmānujā Nandana Vaṇam*’ (garden).

Once when Ananthalvān was engrossed in making garlands, Lord Śrīnivāsa sent for him to come to the sanctum immediately. But Ananthalvān sat back to complete the garlands then went to see the Lord. Lord Śrīnivāsa appeared, seemingly very displeased with such delay: ‘I would banish you from the Tirumala - Tirupati Hills for such ! Ananthalvān submitted: ‘I was in the Hills only to obey the orders of my *ācārya*. Only to please my Śrī Rāmānujā, am I engaged in making garlands and serving at your shrine. I know only one Supreme loved One — my *ācārya* from Śrīraṅgam. I am just following the footsteps of Śrī Madhurakavi Alvar — the glorious disciple of Nammalvār. So I refuse to move out and will continue to attend You.’ Lord Śrīnivāsa immensely satisfied, applauded Ananthalvan and called him Madhurakavi Dāsa. Since then the descendants and the disciples of Ananthalvān chose to add ‘Madhurakavidasa’ in their name. Due to his staunch *Ācārya bhakti*, Ananthalvān had several such occasions of loving reciprocation of the Lord Śrīnivāsa.

At the ripe age of eighty-four Ananthalvan breathed his last in the garden. The place where his mortal body was laid to rest, there is one *Brindavanam* (tomb). A Makila (Vakula) tree has come up at that place. On his *samadhi* day (*Tiru Adi puram* day) Lord Śrīnivāsa with his Consorts visits this holy place and offers special honor to the tree.

Ananthalvān’s life of simplicity and love teaches us the greatness of *ācārya bhakti* and *bhāgavata sevā* (service to saintly personalities).

## Vedanta & Science

### Role of Free Will in Human Life

According to the Hindu laws of *karma*, there is free will in life and by exercising free will a person performs various actions and is implicated in various reactions. This is the doctrine of *karma*. The *New Britannica-Webster Dictionary & Reference Guide* explains *karma* as, "The force generated by one's actions that is held in Hinduism and Buddhism to sustain the cycle of deaths and rebirths and to determine destiny in one's next existence". In this way free will and *karma* are closely connected. The use of free will either rightly or wrongly will decide the course of life. Charles Townes in his keynote address said that in science there is no room for free will although every scientist feels that he or she has at least some free will.

Free will is not fully manifest in other beings but in human beings it is fully developed. We have the choice of acting rightly or wrongly, morally or immorally. As the dominant species, the human race has an obligation to protect and guide not only mankind but also all lower forms of life. We can either destroy ourselves and other life forms or we can act in a way to uplift and benefit the world, thus making a meaningful use of our human form of life. The future of humanity depends on how we choose to act, either individually/selfishly or collectively/wholistically. Such a choice should be guided by divine wisdom.

In the Vedic literatures the Supreme Being is also called *sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*, the cause of all causes. Free will is an inherent part of human life and is also caused by the Supreme Being. Hence the understanding of causality in connection with the manifestations of living beings, the cosmic children, is of fundamental importance and free will is closely linked with the divine nature of life.

***The future of humanity depends on how we choose to act, either individually/selfishly or collectively /wholistically. Such a choice should be guided by divine wisdom.***

The teachings of the Vedas prescribe that sincere persons should be educated how to use free will so that they can prepare themselves to select the right way in life's journey. If somebody does a wrong action, an honest and sincere person will feel grateful when his mistake is pointed out and he will willingly correct that mistake. It is only for his own welfare. For example, when a child experiences chastisement or suffering, he will not be inclined to repeat the wrong action which brought him that misery. Similarly, putting a criminal in jail is not necessarily a punishment. In a deeper religious understanding, it is a chance given by the mercy of the Lord to correct the knowing or unknowing mistakes committed by the criminal. This is the foundation of *bhakti* in the *Vaiṣṇava* Hindu tradition.

Saint Francis of Assisi was also a symbol of *bhakti* in the Christian tradition. In the school of *bhakti*, the question, "Why bad things happen to good people?" does not arise. In the same way, questions like, "If God is all good, why is there evil in the world?" does not appear in the school of *bhakti*. One needs proper education in the finer principles of life. One should understand, "as a result of certain actions that I have done knowingly or unknowingly, I have been put into this situation. Now the Lord has given me a chance to correct my mistakes". One can come to this realization by the cultivation of spiritual qualities such as humility and introspection, etc.

The study of the science of self-realization is also an important dimension of *bhakti*. Here the subject "I" becomes also the object of study. When the subject is studied as an object, it will be possible to realize one's real nature and in a practical sense one will be able to easily admit one's own follies. In other words, free will should be utilized properly. Thus, spiritual realism which is the foundation of *bhakti*, is a very positive principle which allows one to correct one's mistakes and faults.

[Excerpt from the book, *Thoughts on Synthesis of Science and Religion*, Bhaktivedanta Institute, Kolkata]



## BOOK

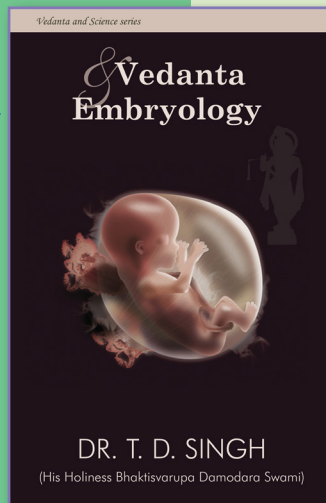
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# Announcement

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