



# Conference Report

On

**Science of Consciousness 2024**

**10-11 August 2024, Jadavpur University**



The two-day Science of Consciousness Conference, held on 10-11<sup>th</sup> August 2024, was a significant event organized jointly by the Bhaktivedanta Institute and Bharatiya Vidya Mandir. The event is also part of Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Bhaktivedanta Institute, Kolkata. Hosted at Dr. Triguna Sen Auditorium in Jadavpur University, Kolkata, the conference drew over 300 delegates and guests from premier institutions like IITs, IISERs, AIIMS, and other leading universities and colleges across India, filling the auditorium to capacity. The venue's ambience is enhanced by the addition of the posters on consciousness, featuring the views of the founding fathers of quantum mechanics and other renowned scientists as well as Scientist & Saint Dr. T. D. Singh, the conference visionary and Founder Director of Bhaktivedanta Institute, setting the stage for the conference. Some instances of such quotes are “*Consciousness cannot be accounted for in physical terms. For consciousness is absolutely fundamental....*”- Erwin Schrodinger and “*The laws of quantum mechanics itself cannot be formulated...without recourse to the concept of consciousness*” – Eugene P. Wigner, Nobel Laureate in Physics. Individual book exhibitions by Bharatiya Vidya Mandir and Bhaktivedanta Institute were presented at the conference venue.



Fig1: Conference Venue: Dr. Triguna Sen Auditorium, Jadavpur University (Alumni Association)

The conference commenced with a traditional invocation by a captivating drumming performance by the internationally acclaimed Manipuri Cultural Arts Troupe, Rangniketan along with prayer performed by students, praying to the almighty for blessings. This was followed whose artistry that set a vibrant atmosphere for the subsequent sessions.

Distinguished Chief Guest Dr. Ramji Singh, Executive Director, AIIMS Kalyani, along with other Guests of Honor Mr. Prakash Rao PJVKS, Former director Space Infrastructure Programme office, ISRO, Bangalore & Sri Aditya Kumar Sinha, Director, C-DAC Patna and dignitaries Dr. B.D. Mundhra, Chairman, Bhartiya Vidya Mandir & Bhartiya Samskriti Samsad; Sri Vasudeva Rao, President, Bhaktivedanta Institute and Prof. Manoranjan Sinha, IIT Kharagpur, Conference Convenor were invited onto the stage for addressing the gathering with their insightful words of wisdom. Dr. B.D. Mundhra gave a welcome speech questioning the source of consciousness and emphasized the need for interdisciplinary study of consciousness. Sri Vasudev Rao emphasized on the need for science to account for consciousness and remarked that “*Consciousness is the core of our existence*”. Dr. Ramji Singh and the guests of honor expressed their appreciation to the organizers and shared insightful remarks about the importance of the conference. The dignitaries also released the conference handbook and Tattvajijnasa - Scientific and Spiritual Quest for Ultimate Reality; Volume 4, the Bhaktivedanta Institute’s magazine facilitated by Dr. Ramjee Repaka, Editor-in-Chief, Tattvajijnasa volume 4 magazine and Mr. sushant Sharma, Executive Editor, Tattvajijnasa volume 4 magazine.



Fig2: Inauguration of the Conference: Release of Conference booklets and Tattvajijnasa magazine

Around seventeen thought provoking lectures have been deliberated on the following themes- Physics and Consciousness; Study of Consciousness- EEG Based approaches; Uplifting Consciousness; Mathematics, AI and Consciousness; and Vedanta and Consciousness by the eminent speakers of the conference. The speakers were **Prof. Dipankar Home** (Retired Senior scientist) *Bose Institute, Kolkata*; **Prof. Antione Suarez**, *Founding director, Centre for Quantum Philosophy, Zurich, Switzerland*; **Dr. Federico Faggin**, *Formerly Principal designer and leader at INTEL, California, USA*; **Prof. Dipak Chandra Ghosh**, *Emeritus Professor, Jadavpur University, Kolkata*; **Prof. A.K. Mukhopadhyay**, *Former Prof. and Head at AIIMS, New Delhi*; **Prof. Ramjee Repaka**, *IIT Dharwad*; **Prof. Ramgopal Uppaluri**, *IIT Guwahati*; **Prof. P.K. Singh**, *IIT BHU*; **Dr. Jayanarayan Tudu**, *IIT Tirupati* and **Dr. Hare Krishna Mohanta**, *BITS Pilani*.

Day 1 hosted three technical sessions: The first technical session was entitled “Physics and Consciousness”. The speakers were Prof. Dipankar Home, Sri Varun Agarwal (Director Bhaktivedanta Institute, IIT Kanpur alumnus) and Prof. Antoine Suarez. Prof. Home talked about examining the possible relevance of the quantum measurement problem for studying consciousness. Dr. Antonio Sueraz remarked that consciousness, free will, sleep and death are fundamental facts of physical reality and require a world to be quantum. The session continued with a talk by Sri Varun Agarwal. He presented how the developments in modern science brought to limelight the mystery of consciousness. He also addressed the issue behind understanding consciousness.

Subsequently there was a poster competition session. There was an overwhelming response of around 16 abstract submissions for the posters out of which 15 posters were selected for the competition. The students and professionals coming from all across India and abroad, showcased a range of innovative and thought-provoking posters. These posters addressed various aspects of consciousness, including EEG methods, meditation and music effects, quantum mechanical phenomena in neural systems, Indian Vedantic philosophy etc., fostering dynamic inter-actions among attendees. The first three poster presenters were awarded cash prizes and books worth INR 22,000.



Fig 3: Poster session of the conference



*Fig 4: Cultural performance by Manipuri Cultural Arts Troupe*

The second technical session was entitled “Study of Consciousness - EEG Based approaches”. The speaker was Prof Dipak Chandra Ghosh who talked about different brain waves associated with different states of consciousness.

The day concluded with a keynote lecture by Dr. Federico Faggin, who remarked that physics could not account for feelings. He described his new theory and its profound consequences to know the nature of inner and outer realities. The cultural segment featured a spectacular performance by the Manipuri Arts Troupe, giving a delightful end to the first day.

On Day 2 four technical sessions were conducted. The first session was entitled “Life Sciences, Consciousness & Human Values”. During this session Dr. A. K. Mukhopadhyay in his talk on “Consciousness: On its Source and Operation” shared that the brain is not the source of Consciousness rather it is consciousness which uses the brain for its manifestation. Prof Ramjee Repaka shared his thoughts on knowing the intricacies of human values and their influence on consciousness and vice versa. Sri Sukdeva Das in his talk emphasized on the unknowns regarding the final point for the visual perception.

The second session of Day 2 was entitled “Mathematics, AI and Consciousness”. The speakers were Sri Sushant Sharma, Director Cognitive studies & Performing arts, Bhaktivedanta Institute, Dr. Jayanarayan Tudu, Prof. Ramgopal Uppaluri, & Sri Prabhakar B, Senior Technologist, Western Digital, Bangalore. Sri Sushant Sharma highlighted awareness being the pivotal missing link between Artificial intelligence and Human intelligence using John Searle’s Chinese Room argument. Dr. Jayanarayan stressed to rethink the Turing test and devise a new test that would distinguish the characteristics of machine computation and human consciousness in the era of growing machine learning. Sri Prabhakar B also highlighted the challenges for machines and to have a proper criteria of whether a machine is conscious or not? Prof. Uppaluri talked about consciousness (life) and matter in terms of thermodynamic entropy.

The third session was entitled “Vedanta and consciousness”. During this session, Dr. Mohanta presented consciousness from Vedic perspective. Prof. P.K. Singh presented “One health approach” considering the global vision for health for all including humans, animals, plants and the whole ecosystem and being a good indicator of evolving human consciousness. Shri Vasudeva Rao gave an enlightening talk on Science of Happiness and highlighted that Happiness is a natural inclination for all human beings and education about its science is the right platform to uplift the consciousness and have fulfillment in life.

The conference concluded with a panel discussion, providing a platform for a comprehensive dialogue on the topic “Promoting Consciousness Studies in Schools and Colleges for Uplifting Consciousness”.

The valedictory session marked the end of the conference, with the organizers extending their gratitude to all speakers, guests and all the volunteers.



*Fig 5: Interactive Panel on the topic (Day 2):  
“Promoting Consciousness Studies in Schools and Colleges for Uplifting Consciousness”*



*Fig 7: Audience Day 2*



*Fig 8: Group photo: Cultural Troupe*