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***TITLE: PRIMACY OF MIND OVER MATTER : VEDANTA TO QUANTUM MECHANICS**

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PROLOGUE :

Similarities of views of Vedic scholars and quantum physicists, vis a vis the status of neuroscience on consciousness and reality.

ABSTRACT:

The mind matter problem is an age old philosophical one which engaged the minds of scholars from the Vedic period through those of neuroscience of modern age and the quantum physicists in the 20th century. The vedic sages considered consciousness not only as primordial, but also universal and ubiquitous, causative of matter (reality in its various aspects).

According to neuroscience consciousness is a result of functions of the brain, the neural networks and hence the search for the locality of origin of qualia, the building blocks of conscious experience. The search is still on for the Holy Grail of neuroscience along with the explanation for the mechanism of origin of the nonmaterial, abstract, phenomenon such as consciousness from the material brain, “the hard problem of David Chalmers, 1997”.

Physics entered philosophy (W. Heisenberg, 1958) and the physicists began the quest for the site of origin of consciousness. Interestingly, contrary to the view of neuroscientists the quantum physicists viewed consciousness as a primary phenomenon and matter as secondary, (derivative) of consciousness, similar to that of the Vedic seers!.

A comparative study of views of Vedanta and quantum physicists makes it interesting. One also finds that the terms consciousness, self, matter and reality have been used synonymously and will be dealt with likewise.

KEY WORDS:

Consciousness, Vedas, Neuroscience, Quantum Physics, Mind/Matter Problem.

VIEWS OF VEDAS

The subject of consciousness was treated extensively in the ancient Indian literature, though with a wide range of definitions.

Consciousness was considered the ultimate reality, Brahman.

Prajnanam Brahma (Ai U: III 1.3))

Consciousness was also the central tenet of Advaita vedanta-Advayam Jnanam.

The Vedic seers were concerned with a direct experience of Reality which transcends not only intellect but also sensory perception.(KenaU:3. ; Katha U:3;15)

Drishya dhi urthayah sakshi drg eva naatu drsyate (DDV1). All senses before us are projections of our intellect activated by the presence of consciousness. The only seer is the self within us (akin to neural correlates of consciousness NCC?)

The Gita describes the infinite Consciousness within the brain mind complex as the knower of the field-kshetrajna-which directs and runs the field of experience-kshetra, a direction coloured by the level of awareness/Consciousness that the person has attained. BG chapter XIII.)

“ Having established that chinmatra or awareness only as the only reality(Sat) in advaita doctrine, pure Consciousness identified as Brahman is understood as the true nature of awareness itself. This C is equated with the terms upalabधि or anubhuti, both meaning experience in itself”. (S.Timalsina.)

Consciousness is classified in Mandukya upanishad as follows.

1. Jagrita/conscious/ aware
2. Prajna/dream state.
3. Sushupti /deep sleep

4. Thuriya/a state in which all phenomena cease. It is shantam, shivam, non dual state.

The first three levels of consciousness are the same as those of Neuroscience. The fourth, turiya, may correspond to the meditative state'.

Sankara says in Atma Bodha:

Atma chaitanyam-aasritya

Dehendriya manodhiyah

Swakriyartheshu vartante

Suryalokam yadha janah.

Depending on the energy or vitality of Consciousness the body, senses, mind and intellect engage themselves in their respective activities as men work in the light of the sun. Atma Bodha

Vedanta asserts that the one Consciousness manifests thro' myriads of entities within the universe: Sarvam khalvidam Brahma.(Ch. U, 3);.

Bhashayati ekada chitih: Consciousness

illumines all that is perceived and experienced. Drik Drishya viveka.

Greek Atomism and the seeds of Atomic physics

At the beginning of 6th century BC, Thales and his pupil Anaximander established their school at Miletus, which ushered in the dawn of scientific thought. Thales was also the first person to consider the idea of a fundamental substance of matter which is indivisible and the ultimate reality. Rovelli, C. and Heisenberg, W

Leucippes and his pupil Democritus founded a scientific and philosophical school in 450 BC in Abdera, According to Democritus atoms are indivisible and have no

qualities.and the universe is made up of a borderless space in which innumerable atoms run'

Plato and Aristotle were against this idea and propagated other views which were an obstacle for the growth of knowledge and science for about 2000 years. It was again at the time of Italian renaissance that a change in the human mind towards scientific temper with a revival of interest in the study of nature and the human body{.Rovelli,C}

Similarities of views on fundamental particle/atman/reality/consciousness

Oppenheimer's words on electron: if we ask whether the position of the electron remains the same, we must say "no". If we ask if the electron's position changes with time, we must say "no". If we ask if the electron is at rest we will so "no". If we ask whether it is in motion we must say"no"(F. Capra, 2010)

See what the Isa upanishad has to say:

"Tadejati tannai jati, taddure, tadvantike.

Tadantarasya sanasya, tadu sarvasyasya, bahyatah:"

It moves , it moves not. It is far and it is near. It is within all this and it is outside all this.(Esa U:5)

Similarly the Bhagavadgita declared

"....Achalam chalamevacha—unmoving and also moving.

....Durastam chantike chatat: It is far and also near(BG, 13:15)

"Anoraniyam mahato mahiyan": Smaller than the atom wider than the universe.

Atmasya janto nihito guhayam: The atma is hidden in the hearts of all creatures(Katha U 1,2,20)

I am an atom in the universe and a universe of atoms. . Dyson, F

Ekastam anupasyati: Everything is centered in the one as one sees.

The ultimate indivisible infinite reality which manifests in all things is called Brahman: Sarvam kalvidam Brahman. (Ch. U 3:14:1)

“When the nondual atma is realized the heart’s knots of ignorance are destroyed

Bhidyante hridaya grandhih, chidyante sarva samsayah(M U 2/2/8)

Manah prasute vishayanaseshan stulatmanah, sushmatayachabhoktuh. Sariravarnashrama jatibhedat gunatraya hetuphalani nityam: The mind continuously delivers for the experiencer (the consciousness within) all sense objects. Distinctions based on the body, caste, creed and order of life are differences of actions, qualities and motives only (Sankara).

In deep sleep we experience the bliss of the atman/self, independent of sense objects. Therefore consciousness is not necessary.

Yovijanati sakalam jagrotha swalpastha buddhitadvritti sadbhavamabhava mahamityayam. (Sankara)

That which knows everything that happens in waking, dreams and deep sleep states, that which is aware of presence or absence of the mind and its functions, that which is the essence behind the ego, that is this.(Sankara)

PHYSICS ENTERS PHILOSOPHY

W. HEISENBERG

Atomic physics turned science away from the materialistic trend which dominated upto the 20th century. The quantum realism is a stance that proposes that the quantum world is real, and the physical world that we experience is a virtual reality generated by it as opposed to the classical view that the physical world perceived by man is real and the quantum world is a mathematical abstraction. So the quantum world is a fundamental reality and the perceived phenomenal world is a simulation or a manifestation of it. This view agrees with the interpretation of reality by Hindu, Tao and Buddhist sages, their basic elements of the world view being the same. The same elements are recognized to be the fundamental picture of reality emerging from modern physics. Capra, 2010.

Ch Koch(2012) in his book on consciousness noted that if one accepts consciousness as a real phenomenon which is not dependent on any particular material basis, that it is substrate independent, then it is a simple step to conclude that the entire cosmos is suffused with sentience. (Wholeness of reality/consciousness—Sarvam khalvidam brahman of Upanishads and Bohm-Pibram's Holonomic brain.

"I like to think that I am this whole universe" as the initial postulates of quantum thinking. F A Wolf.

Matter is not inert. It is alive and active. I. Prigogene in "order out of chaos" .

Dyson, F. Physicist: Electrons seem possessing of information. So mind is already inherent in the electron and the process of human consciousness defers only in degree but not in kind.

All through the physical world runs that unknown "content" which must surely be the stuff of our consciousness. A. Eddington, 1920. .

The fields that govern consciousness are those that govern matter are part of a continuum, a spectrum of fields within fields. Talbot, M. 1981

I regard consciousness as fundamental and matter as derivative of consciousness. Everything that we regard as existing postulates consciousness. Max Plank.

Consciousness pervades the universe is a central tenet of panpsychism, a philosophical theory suggesting that consciousness is a fundamental and ubiquitous feature of reality, thus sharing the views of Vedic seers as well as quantum physicists.

If physics leads us today to a world view which is essentially "mystical", it returns in a way to its beginnings 2500 years ago. (Capra 2010)

NEUROSCIENCE: QUO VADIS?

Mind is a process based on its physical substratum, the brain. The latter is an information processing organ and is a physical basis of consciousness and other mental functions. Technical advances during the later part of the 20th century enabled neuroscientists to explore and localize many functions of the brain. However the origin of raw feels of consciousness, qualia, and their locality, the neural correlates of consciousness (NCC) remains elusive. Also, it is still not understood how the entirely

abstract nonmaterial phenomenon like consciousness arose from the material neural networks. Recent developments in quantum physics echo the vedic concepts which envisage the primacy of mind/consciousness and the secondary nature of matter (brain). These changes are challenging to the neuroscientists trained in scientific reductionism. Neuroscience has already compromised its stance regarding the illusory nature of reality, in consonance with Vedanta, according to which our perceptual experience of the phenomenal world is an illusion of the material reality.

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