

Consciousness and Science in Indian Philosophy – An Analysis



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Abstract

Consciousness is the sum of thoughts, memories, desires, feelings, ideas, and opinions arising from perception, experience, imagination, reason, or belief. It has been defined variously in terms of sentience, awareness, subjectivity, the ability to experience or to feel, wakefulness, having a sense of selfhood or self. In the Indian tradition, the identification of pure consciousness as an independent monistic principle identical with Being can be traced back to the earliest Upanishadic speculation. Rig Vedic speculation about the ultimate Reality was left uncharacterized. But the Upanishadic philosophy to the Idealistic thought of the world had great impacts. It is the state or quality of awareness, or, of being aware of an external object or something within oneself. We can see that various schools of Indian philosophy approach the subject of consciousness from different perspectives and present different views. The world is only a manifestation of name and form, never actually separate from that Consciousness. But clearly Consciousness itself can never be investigated by the mind at the level of the world. What is gained from science is information rather than knowledge, and the aim of this article is to make a detail view about these.

Keywords: Consciousness, Indian Tradition, Being, Rig Vedic, Upanishadic, Science, World, Monistic, Ultimate Reality, Mind, Self, Experience, Awareness, Manifestation

Introduction

Consciousness is the state of being conscious awareness of one's own existence, sensation, thought, surroundings etc. It is the state or quality of awareness, or, of being aware of an external object or something within oneself. It has been defined variously in terms of sentience, awareness, subjectivity, the ability to experience or to feel, wakefulness, having a sense of selfhood or self, the fact that there is something "that it is like" to "have" or "be" it, and the executive control system of the mind. Physicalism holds that consciousness is entirely physical, the identity theorists holds that mental is nothing else than certain physical situation that obtains given certain arrangements of atoms. The functionalism holds that mental states are constituted by the function or role they play in a given system. Under this view mental states exist as causal relation to others mental states. In contemporary philosophy its definition is often hinted at via the logical possibility of its absence, the philosophical zombie, which is defined as a being whose behaviour and function are identical to one's own yet there is "no-one in there" experiencing it. The concept of consciousness is an ambiguous term. It is important first to make several distinctions and to define related terms, it is originally derived from the Latin word *con*(with) and *scire* (to know). Thus, "consciousness" has etymological ties to one's ability to know and perceive, and should not be confused with conscience, which has the much more specific moral connotation of knowing when one has done or is doing something wrong. Through consciousness, one can have knowledge of the external world or one's own mental states.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to give a comprehensive view on the nature of consciousness found in Indian philosophy. A detail review of Upanishadic and Vedic speculation of consciousness is mentioned in the article, and considered scientific view on same concept by mentioning some famous scientists.

Review of Literature

In order to complete this article I followed Upanishads such as *Aitareya Mandukya*, *Chandogya*, *Kena Upanishads*. They contain some of the central philosophical ideas about the concept of *Brahman* mentioned in

the article. Rig Veda also gives us *Brahmajnana*, which is knowledge independent of time, place and person which is also reflected in the article. Amaury de Riencourt's, *The Eye of Shiva: Eastern Mysticism and Science*, mentions that the hidden levels of existence are becoming available to all of us through the new physics and pursuit of higher state of consciousness. A scientific look at Eastern Mysticism and how people achieve a higher state of being is mentioned also in the article. Schrodinger's *My World View* summarises his philosophical view on the nature of the world, which derived from Vedanta and admits that there is only a single consciousness of which we are all different aspects. In *What is Life?* Schrodinger admits the inability of physics to comprehend the living organism, the need for extra physical laws to explain life as it is, which is also tried to relate in the article. *Bhamati* of Vascaspati and *Shankara Bhashya* of Adi Sankara are also books gives information about the topic.

Discussion

In the Indian tradition, the identification of pure consciousness as an independent monistic principle identical with Being can be traced back to the earliest Upanishadic speculation. Consciousness is the sum of thoughts, memories, desires, feelings, ideas, and opinions arising from perception, experience, imagination, reason, or belief. Human consciousness is amorphous, indefinable, changeable, intangible, and subject to state. According to the Upanishads, the four main states of human consciousness are the wakeful state, the dream state, the deep sleep state and the transcendental state. There can be further states within each of them. Just like any other part in the body, human consciousness is also subject to wear and tear, change, destruction, and modifications. People who suffer from head injuries experience partial or complete loss of memory and consciousness, which shows that human consciousness, has a physical dimension and depends upon the body for its existence. Regarding the philosophy of consciousness, we can say that there is not much of strictly metaphysical speculation in the Vedas except the concept of an immanent and universal reality, which is emerging as the unitary principle underlying the forces of cosmos, and which contains latent potentialities of giving rise to fundamental philosophical problems later on. From an interpretation of the famous *Rg Vedic* hymn of creation, we can have some idea of the earliest philosophical legacy over which was constructed later on the vast super-structure of the Upanishadic and later systematic reflection on the nature of consciousness. The hymn declares '*na asat asit no sat asit tadanim*'.¹ 'Then there was neither Being nor non-Being', and again '*kamas tadagre samavartatadhi manaso retah prathamam yad asit,kato bandhum asati niravidam hedi pratisya kavayo manisa*' i.e, then for the first time there arose *kamas* which had the primeval germ of '*manas*' within it. It adds significantly that 'the sages searching in their hearts discovered in 'non-being', the connecting bond of 'being' '.Rig Vedic speculation about the ultimate Reality was left

uncharacterized. But the Upanishadic philosophy to the Idealistic thought of the world had great impacts. Their two declarations, firstly, that the ultimate Reality is an eternally conscious principle composed of pure Intelligence and Bliss, and secondly, that this ultimate Reality is no other than one's ownself ,(Atman) distinguish the Upanishadic thought from Vedic speculation, the later had left the ultimate Reality uncharacterized both with regards to its essence '*svarupa* 'and with regard to its relation to man. We find in *Rig Veda* ,² a casual introspection, 'what thing I truly am I know not'. (*na va janam yad iva idam asmi*) which may be the earliest instance of man's reflection upon his ownself. This casual reflection of the Vedas may be considered as a strenuous meditation of the Upanishads on the nature of the self. 'Who am I ('*Ko'ham*) and 'which is the *Atman*?' are the insistent questions which Upanishads wants to answer.

The world is the province of the knower-known duality. From the standpoint of absolute reality, there is only Consciousness. The world is only a manifestation of name and form, never actually separate from that Consciousness. But clearly Consciousness itself can never be investigated by the mind at the level of the world. What is gained from science is information rather than knowledge. There is no end to it—the more you find out, the more there is to find out. And any given theory is good only until more information comes along to discredit it. "I am" is not information. It is absolute and irrevocable. Scientific method looks into objects and mechanisms in the apparent world. Its ingenuity in the most unpromising of circumstances is seemingly endless. And some of these investigations are of value in the investigation into what we are not; i.e., the *neti-neti* practice of traditional Advaita. But even though science is good at investigating objects, even there it is doomed to fail because the essence of objects is ultimately the same nondual reality. As Atmananda Krishna Menon puts it in Notes on Spiritual Discourses (1386): "As long as the least trace of subjectivity remains, objectivity cannot disappear. And until objectivity disappears completely, the real nature of the object can never be visualized. This is the fundamental error committed by science as well as philosophy, both in India and outside, in trying to approach the Truth through the medium of the mind."³ The scientific method is also bound up with the notion of causality; it is constantly looking for causes to explain the observed effects. But, as Gaudapada points out in his *karika* on the *Mandukya Upanishad*, *turiya*, the nondual reality, is *karya karana vilakshana*—it has nothing to do with cause and effect. It is beyond, or prior to, space, time, and causality. Consequently, a scientifically based inquiry into reality is a contradiction in terms.

The findings of science will always be subject to modification in the light of further observation. This is the nature of the method. But the recognition of the Self as nondual is not objective knowledge. It is directly known, not through the medium of any sense, not requiring any reasoning process, and not subject to correction. It is final and absolute. Science is irredeemably limited to the realm

of objective investigation. This is its strength, and if some scientists wish to provide useful input to the spiritual search, they can focus their endeavors on the *neti-neti* stage of the path. Heisenberg's uncertainty principle clearly demonstrated that there comes a point in one's investigation into the increasingly subtle behavior of matter when the irreconcilable conflict between subject and object prevents any further data from being gathered. This is the terminus of scientific investigation. The famous Danish physicist and Nobel Prize winner, Laureate Niels Bohr, was a follower of the Vedas. He said, "I go into the Upanishads to ask questions." Both Bohr and Schrödinger, the founders of quantum physics, were readers of the Vedic texts and observed that their experiments in quantum physics were consistent with what they had read in the Vedas. Heisenberg formulated his famous uncertainty principal, ie, to observe something that is subatomic in size one must use a device that projects photons at the particle being observed. This is because the reception of photons by our retina is what we call vision. Basically, to observe something, we must bounce photons off it. The problem is that the photons disturb the subatomic particles because they are of the same size. Thus, there is no way to observe subatomic particles without altering their paths.

Schrodinger wrote in his book *My World View (Meine Weltansicht)*: "This life of yours which you are living is not merely a piece of this entire existence, but in a certain sense the whole; only this whole is not so constituted that it can be surveyed in one single glance. This, as we know, is what the Brahmins [wise men or priests in the Vedic tradition] express in that sacred, mystic formula which is yet really so simple and so clear; *tat tvam asi*, this is you. Or, again, in such words as "I am in the east and the west, I am above and below, I am this entire world."⁴ Schrödinger, in speaking of a universe in which particles are represented by wave functions, said, "The unity and continuity of Vedanta are reflected in the unity and continuity of wave mechanics. This is entirely consistent with the Vedanta concept of All in One."⁵ "The multiplicity is only apparent. This is the doctrine of the Upanishads, and not of the Upanishads only. The mystical experience of the union with God regularly leads to this view, unless strong prejudices stand in the West."⁶ "There is no kind of framework within which we can find consciousness in the plural; this is simply something we construct because of the temporal plurality of individuals, but it is a false construction... The only solution to this conflict insofar as any is available to us at all lies in the ancient wisdom of the Upanishad."⁷

In Schrödinger's famous essay on determinism and free will, he expressed very clearly the sense that consciousness is a unity, arguing that this "insight is not new...From the early great Upanishads the recognition Atman = Brahman (the personal self equals the omnipresent, all-comprehending eternal self) was in Indian thought considered, far from being blasphemous, to represent, the quintessence of deepest insight into the happenings of the world. The striving of all the scholars of Vedanta was, after having learnt to

pronounce with their lips, really to assimilate in their minds this grandest of all thoughts."⁸ Schrödinger wrote in his book *My View of the World*: "In all the world, there is no kind of framework within which we can find consciousness in the plural; this is simply something we construct because of the temporal plurality of individuals, but it is a false construction...The only solution to this conflict in so far as any is available to us at all lies in the ancient wisdom of the Upanishad."⁹

The Vedas teach that we are more than physical bodies operating according to the laws of physics and chemistry. We, the eternal conscious self (*Atma*), are inherently connected to the greater whole (*ParamAtma*), and this eternal inherent connection is totally transcendental to matter. All living entities (*Atmas*), having free will, are able to ignore this connection or recognize it. The Vedas teach us how to do both. When we act as scientists and look for facts and accept them and then go on to use and act according to our new realizations we can make great progress. Similarly, as living entities, we must scientifically study the great work of the evidential books of the Vedas in order to help us realize the facts of this universe and beyond, and our natural position in it. Schrödinger explicitly affirmed his conviction that *Vedantic jnana* (knowledge) represents the only true view of reality, a view for which he was prepared to offer empirical proof.¹⁰ Regarding mystical insights, Schrödinger tells us: "The multiplicity is only apparent. This is the doctrine of the Upanishads, and not of the Upanishads only. The mystical experience of the union with God regularly leads to this view, unless strong prejudices stand in the West."¹¹ Schrödinger wrote an interestingly personal account of his philosophy of life called *Mein Weltansicht – My World View*. In chapter 5 of this book he gives his understanding of the basic view of Vedanta. He writes, "Vedanta teaches that consciousness is singular, all happenings are played out in one universal consciousness and there is no multiplicity of selves."¹²

Consciousness itself is the subtlest of the subtle, beyond even observation, when the subject-object dichotomy itself disappears. By definition, no one goes there. Physicists were forced to change their view of nature drastically as a result. Initially, there was immense reluctance to give up classical ideas. They were forced into quantum theory and relativity theory. First of all, it was found that the world is not made out of rigid firm objects like billiard balls or bricks. At the atomic and sub-atomic level it consists of fuzzy wavelike objects and lot of empty space. So the solid nature of objects we see around is only apparent. As one goes deeper and deeper, one keeps on finding vacuum all the way. This reminds one of the ideas of *sunyata* and *Maya* or illusion covering the whole universe, as Adi Shankaracharya said "*Brahma Satyam, Jagat Mithya*". Brahman is the only truth; the world is a false illusion. Now, just like us, he must have seen solid bodies, rigid walls and trees. He realized that all of this disintegrates and thus cannot be fundamental reality. Thus, because of the covering of *Maya*, one does not see the underlying real

Brahman. Similarly, in physics, one sees only the material objects around and does not see strange quantum fuzzy world underlying all the matter. Moreover, the particles of modern physics are believed to be in some kind of suspended state devoid of any specific properties until they are measured. They are in some sense both here and there at the same time and are described by a wave function, a superposition of seemingly contradictory properties. Such a description is very similar to the description of Brahman e.g. in *Ishopanishad*: "It moves and it moves not; it is far and it is near; it is within all this and it is also outside all this." Then the ultimate shock of quantum theory came when Bell's theorem and subsequent experiments proved the so called entanglements to be right. In such cases, two or more atoms, electrons or photons demonstrate correlated properties even at distances where no communication is possible between them during the given time. These developments are the most important developments in the history of physics and perhaps in the whole of science. They give rise to the idea of the interconnected wholeness of the world and non-local interactions in contrast to the separate identities with local interactions. Thus atoms also exhibit holistic like properties and perhaps some primitive relationship to consciousness. So it is not proper to say that any analysis starting with atoms is reductionist and not holistic. The four Mahavakyas express similar concept about individual and Brahman. –*Prajnam Brahman* "Consciousness is Brahman"¹³ *Ayam Atma Brahman* – "This Self (Atman) is Brahman"¹⁴ *Tat tvam Asi* – "That Thou art "¹⁵ *Aham Brahmasmi*– "I am Brahman"¹⁶. Thus Brahman is present in everything. This matches very well with the concept of modern physics that everything is made out of the same fundamental particles. Another basic finding of quantum theory is the involvement of the observer in the observed things. It is impossible to separate the effect of the measuring apparatus from the object measured. Detachment of the two is just not possible. Such an idea about the observer and the object of observation is also emphasized in Upanishads. It is behind the holistic philosophy about mind and body.

A leading current model of origin of universe assumes that there was total vacuum in the beginning and the universe arose from a quantum fluctuation. In this way something came out of nothing. At that time it was totally dark since light had not emerged from vacuum. Compare this model with the following quotation from *Vayupuran* about origin of universe. "In the beginning, there was nothing in the universe. The Brahman (the divine essence) alone was everywhere. The Brahman had neither color nor scent; it could not be felt or touched. It had no origin, no beginning or no end. The Brahman was constant and it was the origin of everything that was destined to be in the universe and the universe was shrouded in darkness." *Nasadiya Sukta* also mentions that there was total darkness before creation.

There are strange facts in the theory of relativity also: It requires that measurement of time depends on observer's motion and also the strength

of gravitational field he/she is in. An often recurring mention in Hindu scriptures is that Brahma's time is different from ours. When one hears about Arjun looking at the past, present and future in the mouth of Lord Krishna in *Vishwaroop Darshan*¹⁷, one is reminded of collapse of the space time coordinate system near singularities of general theory of relativity. Also, it is well known that Hindu scriptures came up with the correct order of magnitude of the age of universe of several billion years, when other religious systems insisted on the age to be a few thousand years. Thus, it does not appear surprising that when one tries to put mathematical ideas of modern physics in human languages, they look similar to the philosophical ideas of ancient sages obtained after deep meditations. In fact it would be shocking if they did not agree. This would be true if e.g. the world was described by classical physics. The nature of reality is such that both parties were forced to adopt these ideas. As for sages, it is not clear when that classical to quantum transition took place or indeed if there was a sharp transition like modern physics. Some parts of Vedas are full of worship of natural elements like wind, water, fire etc and also picture Gods to look like human beings in the form of avatars. In some parts of Vedas and many Upanishads, we see clearly concept of abstract, omnipresent, invisible, eternal, transcendent and immanent Brahman who has qualities unfamiliar in our everyday life. Just as many things in everyday world are described by classical physics, concept of deities would correspond to classical concepts in our scriptures. Concept of Brahman would also correspond to quantum concept.

The Vedas seers can be considered as one of the earliest in the history of human civilization to probe into the nature of consciousness. They internalized the Vedic rituals and devised many Yogic meditative practices to study consciousness both subjectively and objectively to explore the hidden powers and potencies of the mind and use them for human welfare and self-transformation. Their methods and knowledge were subsequently refined further by numerous schools of philosophy, and ascetic and monastic traditions such as Buddhism and Jainism. Their main emphasis, in doing so, was to look beyond the mind to see whether reality was a product of the mind, or existed on its own without the mind and the senses. They also tried to overcome the limitations of the mind to see the world with better clarity and awareness. There may be various questions relating to consciousness in Indian philosophy, they are -Is consciousness a product of the brain, the body and senses only, or is there something more to it? Can consciousness exist without the body? Does it survive death? Can it be recreated or transferred into another mind or body? We do not have exact answers to these questions. However, the Hindu scriptures, such as the *Vedas*, the *Tantras*, the *Sutras* and the *Gitas*, concludes that consciousness has numerous forms and states, and each of the states may represent a world in itself or a specific deity of the macrocosm. We cannot know all the states without corresponding purity and prior preparation. The nature of consciousness can be known only in a state of

detachment where all the senses are fully withdrawn, and when the mind itself is under control. Hindu scriptures suggest that consciousness has two universal states and both of them exist not only in humans but all creation. One is universal, passive, eternal, stateless, without modifications, indivisible, and pure. The other is with qualities, dualities, states, conditions, modes, modifications, and dynamism. The source of the first one is *Brahman* (God) himself in his highest state. The source of the second is Nature (*Prakriti*) in its dynamic and differentiated state. The former gives rise to soul consciousness or pure consciousness, whereas the latter results in individualized ego consciousness. Since it arises due to the activity of ego (*aham*), which is an aspect of Nature, we may also call it ego consciousness. The ego consciousness is also referred in the scriptures as *chitta*, which is not just the mind consciousness, but the whole body and mind consciousness, which is subject to modifications (*vrittis*) and responsible for several mental afflictions (*klesas*), restlessness and instability. The consciousness that inhabits the body and creates body awareness is infused with the power and dynamism of Nature. Hence, it is known as *chit-shakti* (consciousness + power or dynamic consciousness). Because of that, human consciousness has dynamism, duality, movements and modifications. In contrast, pure consciousness is without the qualities and modes of Nature. Hence, it is the center of peace and stability. Pure consciousness is infused with the power of truth or purity (*sat*), and bliss (*ananda*). Hence, it is also known as *sacchidananda* (*sat+chit+ananda*)

The Upanishads propose the existence of Atman in individuals and the Upanishads are source books of *Atma Jnana*. *Atma Jnana* consists of the theory of the origin, structure, function, cessation and control of mind in the four conscious states or phases of mind in which it works and ceases to work. *Atma Jnana* also provides us with the details of the source of psychic or mental energy whose changes and transformations enable us to know, perceive, reason, intuit, understand, experience and be aware of all these processes. The *Upanishads* are also treasure-houses of Indian spirituality and wisdom. They together with The *Brahma Sutras* and The *Bhagavadgita* are traditionally commented upon theologically linking to God and religion. The *Upanishads* together with *Vedanta* and *advaita* philosophy can be viewed and understood from modern psychological and scientific points of view also. Such a view reveals the psychological and scientific content of the *Upanishadic* awareness. This view can be applied beneficially to the fields of mind-machine modeling, physiological psychology and natural language comprehension branch of artificial intelligence.

Consciousness is Brahman, the Self; the ultimate subject. As the Kena Upanishad¹⁸ tells us: "It is That which speech does not illumine; That which cannot be thought by the mind, seen by the eye or heard by the ear. He who thinks he knows It, knows It not." And as Shankara's disciple, Sureshvara, wrote in Naishkarmya Siddhi, "The Self cannot be known

through the empirical means of knowledge such as perception, etc., which are but phlegm coughed up by the thirst for life. Indeed, it is not a possible object of empirical cognition, since it is the innermost Self and is part-less and not accessible to the senses."¹⁹

Vedic science is based on a theory of *bandhu* (equivalences) between the *adhidaivika*, the *adhibhautika*, and the *adhyatmika*, or the astronomical, the terrestrial, and the cognitive. The modern field of biological cycles has established that the astronomical periods get expressed in a variety of biological processes. What is remarkable about Vedic science is that it goes beyond an examination of the outer reality (*apara*) and examines the cognitive process and consciousness on *para*, or the knowledge of the self. However, *para* knowledge, by its very nature, lies beyond ordinary discourse and so symbols and metaphors (*pratika*) were used for it. The overarching entity was named *brahman*. Chandogya Upanishad speaks of *prana*, *manas*, *aditya*, *akasa* and so on as symbols of *brahman*. Kaustaki Upanishad says that *brahman* is to be sought in consciousness (*prajna*) and presents the equation: *prana = prajna*. Chandogya Upanishad 4.10.5 presents *prana = ka (ananda) = kha (akasa)*. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad presents two forms of *brahman*: One material and the other immaterial.²⁰ In the outer world, the sky and the (cosmic) wind are immaterial whereas in the body *prana* and *akasa* (luminous space) are immaterial. The essence of what is immaterial in the space is the *purusa* whereas what is immaterial in the body is the *purusa* in the right eye. *Brahman* is defined as *neti neti*, not this nor that, and as *satyasya satyam*, the essence of existence. *Brahman* is also defined as truth, knowledge, and bliss (*satyam, prajna, ananda*) or as *saccidananda* (*sat, cit, ananda*), meaning existence, consciousness, and bliss. *Brahman* is also defined in terms of opposites such as *sat* and *asat*, or existence and non-existence and so on, or in negatives as being time free, space free, and independent of causality. In other words, the principle of *brahman* is used to denote an essential unity of things. Since the physical universe is apprehended by consciousness the latter is rooted in unity. *Mundaka Upanishad* says that the *atman* is that with the knowledge of which the entire universe becomes known²¹. Further on *brahman* is defined as being beyond all descriptions, as that which cannot be seen, nor seized, which has no family and no class, no eyes no ears, no hands no feet, the eternal, the omnipresent and imperishable." This provides justification for the axiom: '*aham brahma asmi*'.²²

Beyond such a broad identification of *purusha* or *brahman* as the essence of reality, one needs to look at *Tantra* to provide us a structural framework for cognition. For example, the Vedic gods are cognitive centres and Vedic myths define relationships between these centres. *Tantra* in Vedic Texts may be viewed as a theory of the structure of consciousness. We encounter details of such a theory only in the literature from the medieval times. These medieval texts speak of a continuity with early traditions and we find evidence for the existence

of *Tantra* in the Vedic books, if the earliest interpretations of the *Brahmanas* and of *Yaska* are used. The theory of the equivalences *bandhu* implies that the structure of consciousness is synchronised with the outer reality. It appears certain that Vedic *Tantra* used planets, the sun, and the moon as internal categories to describe the nature of the mind. The *Rig Veda* places great emphasis on *Vac*, the Word. Thus hymn 10.71 is dedicated to *Brihaspati*, the lord of the sacred mantra, where the knowledge of the origin and secrets of *Vac* is described. What is significant here is the comparison with *Brihaspati* who likewise guides the planets and the sun and the moon on their divine courses. In hymn 10.125 *Vac* is glorified as the supreme power that supports *Varuna* and *Mitra*, bears *Indra* and *Agni*, and pervades heaven and earth. Elsewhere "the gods created *Vac*, which all kinds of animals speak"²³; "*Brahman* expanded as large as the Word"²⁴. *Aitareya Brahmana* 4.21.1 proclaims: *brahmavai vak, brahman* is the Word. *Atharvaveda* 4.1.5 divinises *Vac* as *Brihaspati*; in 19.9.3 *Vac* is called "most exalted goddess, sharpened by *brahman*." *Chandogya Upanishad* 2.23 says: *Prajapati* brooded over the worlds. From the worlds issued forth the three-fold knowledge. Brooding on it arose the syllables: *bhur, bhuvah, svar..* He brooded over them; therefrom arose the name *om*, (*omkara*). As leaves are held together by the stalk, so all the words merge into *omkara*. The sound *om* is the whole universe. *Chandogya Upanishad* 2.22 says that the inner nature of the vowels (*svara*) is *Indra*, that of sibilants (*usman*) is *Prajapati*, and that of the consonants (*sparsa*) is *Mṛtyu*. *Taittiriya Upanishad* 1.8 says that "*om* is *brahman*." *Mandukya Upanishad* begins by saying: "*Hari* is *om*. This syllable is this whole. The past, the present, the future, everything is just the phoneme *om*." *Maitrayana Upanishad* speaks of a six-limbed *sadanga* yoga. In 6.18 these are called *pranayama, pratyahara, dhyana, dharana, tarka* and *samadhi*. In 6.21 is explained how *susumna*, going upward from the heart to the *brahmarandhra*, serving as the passage of the *prana*, is divided at the palate. *Saunaka's Rigvidhana* describes *tapas* and *yoga*. Thus during Upanishadic times, not only was an equivalence of the universe and the body, in its structural forms, proclaimed but that the details of the structural equivalence were also described.

Conclusion

Consciousness in common consent, entitled to our most rational consideration, is evidenced by the growing interest taken in such questions even by eminent scientists, who had till now claims only to non-philosophical speculations. But there is difference in the view point or the results of their enquiry. Consciousness has come to be regarded as a subject matter not only of the metaphysicians and the psychologists, but also of the physicist and the biologist, for the simple reason that it is *prima facie* the most direct and nearest reality of which anyone who had ever introspected is most immediately aware. In other words it is an *inexpugnable datum* and the source of all our thoughts regarding all our objects of different interests. All the objects with which the

various non-philosophical sciences deal are objects principally in the consciousness of the scientists. Absolute consciousness is logically and empirically uncharacterisable, it is yet unknown and its nature is pure consciousness as opposed to unintelligence. Its nature is not that of the variable moulds of intelligence of which we have an experience in our daily life of mediated consciousness but its nature is of the constant, unchanging and basic consciousness, which is the presupposition of all by distinctions and manifoldedness. Consciousness, by the very nature of case '*vastusvabhavyat*', cannot be presented to itself like other objects; it should not therefore be dismissed. *Vasaspati Misra* puts that no one even doubts the fact of his existence²⁵ ('*na kasit samdigdhe aham va naham veti*'). "Even if we declare the whole world to be void, this void presupposes a cognizer of itself"²⁶ ("*sunyasyapti svasaksitvat*"). This '*Atman* is known to exist on account of its immediate presentation'.²⁷ Consciousness is prior to everything, and is affirmed in the affirmation of that very thing (*Sarvo hi Atmastitvam pratyeti no naham asmiti*)²⁸. It is in this sense epistemologically *apriori* and undeniable²⁹. No one has ever experienced the absence or the destruction of consciousness, for if one has experienced it, then has the consciousness of it.³⁰

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