

## Working Paper/Introductory Paper

(a) Brief introduction, approach and objectives of selecting the topic/theme

### Brief Introduction

The topmost wealth of India is its timeless wisdom contained in the form of Upanishads. The timeless wisdom of Upanishads is eternal. But due to the mercy and foresight of Srimad Badarayana Vedavyasa, they have been existing in India since more than 5 millennia in their written form. All the Main acharyas have developed the concepts given in the Vedanta for the benefit of mankind and all beings. These acharyas include (i) the teacher of kevala advaitavaada system of Vedanta, Sripad Adi Sankaracharya and (ii) The main vaishnava acharyas like Sripad Ramanujacharya, Sripad Madhvacharya, Sripad Vishnuswami (and Sripad Sridhar Swami), Sripad Nimbarka Swami as well as Srila Baladeva Bidyabhusana Prabhu who have all given explanations and thereby have developed the Vedantic concept of Reality according to various needs in different installments.

Additionally the Upanishads have been a source of attraction for the Western scholars as well such as Heisenberg, Schrödinger and others. Schrödinger wrote a monograph entitled 'What is life?' in which he made some reference to the Upanishads. Oppenheimer also referred to the *Bhagavad-Gita* after witnessing the power of the atomic explosion which was conducted at Los Alamos. These and several other scientists have considered topics from the Upanishads such as *atman*, *Brahman*, *prana*, *akasha*. Carl Sagan considered the vedantic understanding that the cosmos itself undergoes cyclical nature of the creation of universe. He also expressed that the time scales mentioned in the Vedantic concepts correspond to that of modern cosmology. The need of the modern times is that the times upanisadic/vedantic wisdom must be presented in the language of modern science and philosophy. There is a great need felt in the West about contribution of Indian Thought in the deeper exploration of the phenomenon of biology, cognitive processes as well as Cosmology and Science of Reality. The feeling for the truth for itself inspires men of deeper thoughts and beyond the limits of the finite capacities of subjective thoughts, the guidance of Vedanta must be re-assimilated to enlighten the Frontiers of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Science.

The frontiers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century science are witnessing the need for a more systemic, integrated and wholistic concept of Reality behind the phenomena. Moreover the call is for a systematic concept/idea which can fulfill philosophical as well as scientific needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Vedantic concept has always been wholistic. The well known invocation to Isavasyam Upanishad (“ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते । पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥) establishes that there can be many real wholes such as this universe, the different living forms etc. But it also establishes that there is an Original Whole which is the source of all other wholes, in which their essence is constituted. In this the part whole relationship is raised to the concept of the dynamicity of the Organic Whole. It provides the most foundational concept which can provide solutions to the problems of evolutionary biology as well as problems of explaining the deeper realities of the Universe (Cosmology). This type of wholism provides a room not only for the mechanistic wholes and wholes concerning chemistry but also the higher order wholes in nature belonging to the category of life in terms of the deeper concepts of Organic Wholism. By considering the need for the realization of a comprehensive and a concrete development of the Vedantic Concepts in modern contexts, i.e. the age of advanced scientific developments, a seminar on the well known aphorism of Chandogya Upanishad (3.14.1) 'सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म' will be most inclusive and beneficial. It is firmly a Vedantic realization of the sages that Science and Religion (*apara vidya* and *para vidya*) need not be exclusive to each other. Rather they can be inclusive to each other according to the

progressive realization of a sincere aspirant from both Science as well as Religion. The epistemology of Vedanta will also be discussed in relation to the ontology of the Upanishads.

The Seminar on ‘*Sarvam khalvidam Brahma – Knowing the Absolute as Subject as Much as Substance*’ is mostly timely need which will witness many philosophers, scholars of different Vedantic traditions as well as the thoughtful Philosophers of Science. The outcomes of this seminar will be aimed at creating a set of guiding principles and resources for the more inquisitive and rational thinking section of society.

Even the great philosophical systems of West, including those of Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, and further the modern and post modern philosophies stand to benefit and enriched with the contribution of Vedanta. As already explained one of the primary focus will be to be inclusive of the scientific progress in the 21st century which must be taken to a more humble position to solve the more difficult problems of Reality which Vedanta and philosophy has always understood. The problems of philosophy cannot be solved by ignoring them. A culture of mutual harmony, understanding, reason and thought exchange will benefit science, philosophy and Vedanta.

### **Approach**

Our approach is to extract, distill and harmonize the essence from the advanced scientific and technological knowledge with the Vedantic wisdom within a background of the phenomenon of a multi religious, multi-philosophical culture and create a wonderful basis for dialogue between different classes of Vedantists as well as between Vedantists and Scientists.

The seminar entitled ‘*Sarvam khalvidam Brahma – Knowing the Absolute as Subject as Much as Substance*’ will explore the ontological role of the Original Organic Whole in developing the Reality. According to Vedanta, the Original Conscious Self is primordial and matter is only a symbol of undeveloped consciousness of misconceived beings. None of the scientific enterprises have been able to deduce how the conscious selves arise. For example the conscious scientist in the scientific enterprise is a topic that is rarely, if ever addressed in any of the theoretical fields of science. Yet this is the most glaring failure that science suffers and is leading to its contemporary crises.

Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Institute raises awareness about these aspects and presents some of the ways cutting-edge scientists are dealing with this problem in various fields of scientific research. To this end the institute has already organized five annual international conferences under the banner of Science and Scientist annual conference series. In these scientists from all backgrounds are invited. The ‘*Sarvam khalvidam Brahma – Knowing the Absolute as Subject as Much as Substance*’ seminar being proposed here aims at focusing the attention of all such scientists and philosophers to the question of Original Organic whole and its significance in the emerging areas of science and technology in Biology, Physics, and cognitive sciences in an attempt to make them inclusive to the Vedantic concept of reality. Cognitive science and philosophy has made many advances over the past few decades, of which only a few scientists may have studied or may be aware. The scientific endeavor requires thinking which is in itself a subjective act. Yet there is no concept in conventional science that explains the subject. Twentieth century quantum mechanics brought back the subjective paradigm within the scientific compass due to the well known problems in measurement and today in biology, the concept of a sentient-organic-system is redefining all our concepts in that field. This is bringing in a sea change in the western world and leading institutions like Harvard, Cambridge, MIT, and so on, are already taking the study of cognition, sentience, systems approach and wholistic concepts and their role in biology in earnest.

Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja a great authority in the modern day Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition explains about the Western World and explains, “Aristotle did not presume that thinking was the activity of a finite subject. He conceived thinking as the pure self-activity of the Absolute, *noesis noeseous noesis*,

thought thinking thought. The modern dogmatic presumption that a finite subjective thinker is needed for the activity of thinking is not the basis for the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies. In order to rise above that perspective presumption to the absolute platform requires a completely revolutionary shift. As it is sometimes said of Plato, "Philosophy is learning to die." One has to transcend their present first person conception of the finite self as a starting point, and understand it is something to be arrived at or derived from the absolute perspective. This means that philosophy acknowledges that there is a First Person or absolute thinking that is not oneself. In the Vedic tradition this is called *Adi Purusha*. Religion understands this as God. Aristotle also called it *theos*. Hegel shows that starting from the most basic thought, Being, all the other categories or concepts such as the finite subjective thinker and consciousness or mind can be understood. Consciousness is a derived subordinate concept to the self-thinking Idea or Absolute.”

Hence our approach is to bring together the leading scientists with qualified Vedantists and facilitate the process of disseminating the knowledge of Vedanta by providing a basis for harmony with Science.

### **Objectives**

The seminar seeks to seek a harmony between different schools of Vedanta and also offer workable solutions to the scientific community of the modern age.

Another important objective is to discuss and present the Vedantic concept of Brahman, which is the Original Organic Whole. Our institute offers two workable and perfect axiomatic structures of Vedanta (i) Life comes from Life and (ii) Matter comes from Life. These two axioms cover the entire scope of Vedanta as a summary and once scientists can verify and accept these as scientific principles, there will be a harmony between science and philosophy. That will open further avenues for dialogue and progress. *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* explains means that everything exists or has apparent being, but its truth or essence is in Brahman. This aphorism of *Chandogya Upanishad* implies that Brahman is the origin of all reality and is *sarva karana karanam*, or the original cause - the cause of all causes. Brahman is the fully independent reality and all other realities depend upon Brahman for their being and becoming.

Another objective is to discuss that progressive realization of great sages that Brahman is not only the substantial truth of reality but is ultimately realized as the Original Person. The Absolute is realized in three phases by the sages or the learned: (1) *Brahman*, which is the all accommodating aspect, when everything is within Him, the *Brihattama*, or the all comprehensive aspect of the Absolute Truth, (2) *Paramatma*, which is the all-pervading aspect of the Absolute Truth, and (3) *Bhagavan*, which is the all attractive personal conception of the Absolute Truth.

Moreover, scientists have been applying the laws of physics and chemistry to understand the origin of life and biodiversity. But these laws are impersonal aspects of scientific knowing and focus merely on the substance. This has led to failure in addressing Biology. Biology must conceive sentience, mind, intelligence and consciousness or the personal subjective aspect of its investigated objective. This is not captured in Scientific materialism. Therefore we will also cover the topics of personality including ego, intelligence, thinking etc.

Another important objective will be to emphasize that scientists and others should begin search in the direction of *Brahman*, or Spirit. Consciousness is the immediate appearance or experience of spirit. The Absolute Truth as the origin and foundation of everything is the Original Person, or *adi-purusha*. He is the Origin of all sentient and insentient existences. The essence of matter is deterministic necessity or gravity, and the essence of Spirit is freedom or self-determination. We must work towards awakening our consciousness of the divine nature.

Moreover, we would like to discuss how India can contribute in all, areas of science. The main vision for the institute has been given by Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja, Ph.D., who is also the founder of the Institute. We focus on the harmony between Science and Religion for establishing dedication towards the Absolute and inculcate the sense of lasting peace, universal brotherhood, co-operation, mutual harmony, unity, love and affection in the universe amongst the general public irrespective of cast, color or creed.

(b)

**Sub-title or allied aspects of the theme/area in which papers from contributors will be invited**

*Thematics of the Seminar*

- (i) *Pancha Kosha Concept of Vedanta*
- (ii) Ontology and epistemology of Vedanta
- (iii) Organic Whole
- (v) The different schools of Vedanta including Achintya Bheda Abheda Vada
- (vi) Brahman and the Science of Happiness
- (vii) Personal and Impersonal schools

(c)

**Justificational grounds of selecting the theme/topic**

**(i) Pancha Kosha Concept of Vedanta**

The pancha kosha concept has been given in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* and has also been referred to in other vedic literatures in various ways. Pancha kosha means five sheaths. The *shruti* scriptures emphasize that a thoughtful person must strive to know the *atman*. This leads to realization of the higher and higher stages of liberation and finally he realizes his relation with Brahman and attains eternal life of love of Godhead.

The species categorization in Vedanta is based on the consciousness that a particular soul is attached with. The different species are categorized as constituted by five koshas or stages of consciousness, (1) *annamaya*, (2) *pranamaya*, (3) *manomaya*, (4) *vijnanamaya* and, (5) *anandamaya koshas*. These five stages are hierarchical and are nested. The *annamaya* stage is the feeding stage and is common to all life forms in the world. This was also understood by Aristotle, when he explained that the nutritive stage is common to all life. The suffix 'maya' indicates prapancha or sense of profusion in relation to Brahman or Spirit w.r.t. terms like *anna*, *prana*, *manah*, *vijnana* and *ananda* in the Upanisads. All these five manifestations of Brahman are to be taught as immanent in different *koshas*. *Anna* (food) is defined as "that which eats the creature and is eaten by them." This becomes clear when we get the knowledge that all living entities are dependent on Brahman or Spirit. Similar analysis of *pranamaya* will signify *Mahaprana* etc. This is clear from the statements of Brahman, "Know *annam* to be Brahman ..." etc. *Pranamaya* stage is the immediacy of living symptoms, it is found in the vitality of living organisms. Plants, animals and humans have the potential for self-recognition to different degrees. *Manomaya* stage is the mental stage. Human stage is more advanced than plants and animals although all contain in degrees some mental or cognitive quality. It produces mental speculations among human beings leading to different cultural identities. *Vijnanamaya* stage of consciousness is the stage of reason. Aristotle said, "Man is a rational animal". Soul has the potential either to go down in different stages of material consciousness like plants, insects, animals or human being, or become situated in its true unmixed spiritual identity, or a serving member of the Absolute reality. All living entities, from the simplest on up, are immanently covered by the *anandamaya kosa*, the tendency of enjoyment. Only the sincere aspirant knows the proper process for establishing that fulfillment perfectly. Here he contributes by proper knowledge received from proper source. The gradation presented in upanishads has reference to the stage of material bondage, or release and ultimately to the degree of dedication to the Absolute Center. The dedicated stage is the plane of unalloyed happiness and is characterized by different *rasas* or grades and themes of ecstasy.

**(ii) Ontology and epistemology of Vedanta**

The topics under ontology include Brahman, *atman*, *chetana* (consciousness), *svatantrata*, part-whole relation, etc. Under the theme of Ontology (the nature of being) there is first a delineation of substantial truth of reality along with their proofs. According to Vedanta the concepts of *atman*, Brahman, *chetana*

etc. are real. Moreover these are all cinmaya tattvas. Therefore Vedanta strongly advocates that it will not be possible to produce matter from only chemical permutations and combinations. Recently also it is being recognized increasingly by the scientists that all species of life are cognitive phenomenon. In this way Vedanta quite clearly takes the position that consciousness cannot be explained merely from material basis. This has significance for cosmology also. For, if consciousness preexisted matter, then we must investigate its role in the manifestation of the universe.

According to Vedanta developmental biology observed in all living organisms is a wholistic process. The wholistic process can be traced to the Original Whole by a process of dialectical reasoning which has been well articulated by great Vedantic Acharyas.

Science based upon reductionism is unable to grasp developmental biology as well as cosmology because of neglecting the wholistic nature of these processes. Today a lot of research is going on in the world about the origin of consciousness. Vedanta will be able to help the scientists because it is based upon the foundations of consciousness as the immediate existential concept of life. Without consciousness there is no development of the organism. Moreover consciousness is present from the very inception of the life process. This is confirmed by medical practitioners as well as cell biology. The Katha Upanishad states, *nityo nityanam chetanas chetananam, eko yo bahunam vidadhati kaman*. There is one person amongst us who is super conscious. There is a supreme person whose super consciousness pervades everyone's body and who is conscious of what goes on in everyone's body. All acts of consciousness (*pramiti*) by the dependent selves (*Cetana*) are ultimately dependent on God (*pramitau paradhinam*). This rich ontology of Vedanta is the source of great inspiration for many great scientists like Schrödinger and others and therefore it is a very important need to take ideas from Vedanta because we are failing to account for it in any other way to explain the undeniable realities of consciousness as observed even by the Cambridge declaration.

### (iii) Organic Whole

The invocation to isopnishad Upanishad says:

om̐ pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idaṁ pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate  
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate

which is translated as, "The Personality of Godhead is perfect and complete, and because He is completely perfect, all emanations from Him, such as this phenomenal world, are perfectly equipped as complete wholes. Whatever is produced of the Complete Whole is also complete in itself. Because He is the Complete Whole, even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance."

This is a very important topic which must be discussed. Today in biology it has become a major research topic as to how a cell is formed. How its parts are integrated. Von Neumann agreed that living organism display enormous complexity. Unfortunately many scientists attempted to examine a reductionistic route to examine living organisms as well as nature. Because of this scientists have pushed a mechanical and chemical concept of reality. However, now due to many scientific reasons the concept of the organic whole is again becoming a subject of discussion. The concept of organic whole is that of Vedantic literature as mentioned in the invocation to isopnishad. But this concept can also be found in the leading western philosophers works such as that of Plato, Aristotle and Hegel. According to Plato since an organism is an organic whole, beauty, virtue, wisdom, and health must occur together.

According to the Vedantic concept our present conception of local, provincial interest has caused the difference between a proper conception of reality and misconception. We have gone away from the central conception. From universal consciousness we have come to this provincial plane. A loss of consciousness of the center is the root of this entire material existence. One who is conscious of the organic whole, on the other hand, is in the most healthy position. Our aversion to the universal interest is the cause of our

detachment from the conception of the whole and from happiness and health. We have been deprived of the happiness of our healthy position, and the cause is selfish interest.

This topic will cover the concept of Organic whole as applied to Brahman, living beings and cosmos.

**(v) The different schools of Vedanta including *Achintya Bheda Abheda Vaada***

Achintya Bhedabheda vaada is the harmonizing principle of Gaudiya Vaishnavism as given by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and was articulated by Sripad Baladeba Vidyabhushana in his commentaru on Vedanta Sutra. Previously the commentaries on the Vedanta Sutra have been provided by great Acaryas like Sripad Adi Sankaracharya, Sripad Ramanujacharya, Sripad Madhvacharya, Sripad Vishnuswami and Sripad Nimbarkacharya. They and others like Sripad Sridhar Swami have also given to mankind many works on different Vedantic literature. Sriman Mahaprabhu who is known as the Great Harmonizer synthesized these various concepts in terms of achintya-bheda-abheda-vaada. It is the philosophy of Simultaneous and Inconceivable identity in identity and difference. Adi Sankaracharya work on Sariraka bhasya is an impersonal and monistic conception of reality. However the vaishnava schools are a personal conception of reality.

It was felt during the times of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, that a synthesized conception was necessary. A harmony between all the different existing concepts into common and progressively gradational degrees of realization was explained. This theme is relevant today also. We need a harmony between science and religion. Science itself is now a source of vast technological and research outcomes with its limitations. Especially the subjective and spiritual aspects remain outside the mainstream purview. Yet many of the great leaders of Science such as Schroedinger, Heisenberg and Bohr have expressed a more philosophical bent of thinking. Therefore we need a higher grasp of what we have achieved in Science through Philosophy and Religion. Similarly the misconceptions in the common understanding of man about religion must also be evaluated and adjusted with the true and refined conception which are actually given by great personalities such Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Hence this section gives a scope to review the full fledged theistic view and seek higher and higher harmony from our different perspectives.

**(vi) Brahman and the Science of Happiness**

The science of happiness should also be discussed under *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*. If Brahman is the source of everything, then surely Brahman is the original source of happiness also. The United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network has also published a world happiness report in which it has given a measure of happiness. Bhutan has adopted a measure called gross national happiness as their main development indicator. The report highlights several deeper issues relating to happiness such as mental health as well as the objective benefits of happiness. It includes ethics, policy implications, and approaches to measure subjective well-being and human development.

According to Vedanta we live within an organic whole. In the stage of material consciousness our aversion to the universal interest is the cause of our detachment from the conception of the whole and from happiness and health. And so we cannot get any lasting happiness or healthy position due to our separate provincial interests. But we are represented in the Original organic whole and He is our friend. So our real interests are well-represented in the Original whole more than we can even conceive.

In this theme papers are invited such that there will be a comparative analysis of the different kinds of happiness beginning from the material plane to the spiritual planes as discussed in different schools and traditions.

**(vii) Personal and Impersonal schools**

Sripad Badarayana Vedavyasa is the author of the Upanishads, Vedanta Sutra, the Puranas and Mahabharata. The great work of Sripad Adi Sankaracharya and the Main vaisnava Acharyas has brought back the timeless jewels of the works of Vedavyasa within the reach of scholars and common man as witness in past 2000 years. Sripad Adi Sankara Acharya established that Upanishads and Vedanta Sutra in the mainstream intelligentsia of his contemporary society. Later the vaisnava acharyas established the higher personal conception among the intelligentsia of Bharatavarsha. Brahman is Nirguna tattva. Therefore the personal conceptions of Brahman are also nirguna.

Since this is a very important question in the Vedantic traditions, this theme will bring out the different facets of both personal and impersonal conception. Progress means elimination of the lower and acceptance of the higher. In this way both the impersonal and personal schools help sincere aspirants to more progressively towards a deeper realization and fulfillment of life.