

AN EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF ANANDAMURTI'S PHILOSOPHY

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Prologue

The mystery of the conception of Consciousness remains in an embryonic stage. With time, the penetrative human mind is increasingly aware of the subsequent cosmological theory to resolve their perennial quest; where are we? Where do we come from? What are the fundamental constituents of the universe? How did mind, matter, and life emerge? What is the origin of the universe? However, these questions are common to philosophy, religion, and higher poetry" (Iqbal 2008). Along with philosophers, brain and neuroscientists acknowledge a plethora of problems regarding the confusing nature of Consciousness as it is regarded only as a byproduct of the nerve impulses of our brains (Pepperell 2018). Moreover, we have confronted a number of perplexing issues concerning the essence of Consciousness and its nature (Chalmers 1996; Baars 1997; Block 1996). On the other hand, our ancient Indian traditions boast a solid ontological, cosmological and soteriological perspective since Vedic and Upanishadic ages (Raju 2008). Brahman is "the infinite source, fabric, core and destiny of all existence, the formless infinite substratum from which the universe has grown". According to Paul Deussen (Deussen 1906), Brahman in Hinduism signifies the "creative principle which lies realized in the whole world". Thus Vedic and Upanishadic revelations teach us that Consciousness is the all-encompassing, all-knowing, luminous, transcendental, ultimate reality. By realizing it, every individual can be free from the unending cycle of birth and death. The same sound echoed in the Indian philosophical system.

The Past decade has witnessed a paradigm shift with the emergence of the conception of Consciousness as it is characterized as the rudimental cause of the phenomenal world (Sarkar 1955). In this regard, *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Vedanta*, *Sāṃkhya-Yoga*, *Nyaya-Vaisheshika* philosophy, and *Tantra* have contributed uniquely and abundantly to understand the nature, scope and significance of the ultimate supreme entity. From the Vedas and Upanisads to contemporary eastern and western thoughts, we find an alternative paradigm including nihilism, agnosticism, positivism, materialism, idealism, neutralism (Bhatta 2015). Epistemological nihilism is a form of "philosophical skepticism". The American Heritage Medical Dictionary defines "one form of nihilism as an extreme form of skepticism that denies all

existence". In terms of agnosticism, both theists and atheists may (and often do) maintain that agnosticism is a cowardly and unstable middle ground position not worthy of serious consideration regarding the existence of God or cosmic entity (Yoder 2013). Besides this, there has been advocacy of celebrated scientists and materialists of the eighteenth century viz., Ludwig, Feurbach, Diihring, Karl Marx, and Engel. Karl Marx advocated that all reality lies on matter (Sica 2019). This matter and its motion constitute all the things, living beings, and minds in the world. Contrarily, Descartes professed that mind and matter are relative substances which are created and owe their existence to God (Hassing 2011). In terms of occidental views, Sāṃkhya's dualistic approach made a magnificent attempt to emphasise the importance of matter instead of Consciousness (Larson 2011; Potter 1970). Challenging Sankhya's dualistic approach, Sankara strongly adheres to the non-dual nature of *Brahman* which is highly appreciated by intellectuals, academicians and scholars in modern society (Indich 1995). Aurobindo re-frames Sankara's cosmological and ontological structure emphasizing the involution and evolution movements of *Sachidananda* (Aurobindo 1969). The sheer amount of empirical studies associated with the exploration of Consciousness helps to actualise the true notion of Consciousness (Deutsch 1965; Dasgupta 1975; Indich 1995; Towsey 2011; Govind Bhattacharjee 2018; Kalita 2019).

Alternatively, an eminent Indian philosopher of the 20th century Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (P. R. Sarkar, spiritual name Shrii Shrii Anandamurti), in his Ānanda Mārga Philosophy explained a synthetic view with more significant logical and practical dimensions to grasp the essence of occidental and oriental cosmological and ontological considerations to envisage Consciousness as the ultimate substratum and final desideratum of the entire cosmos. Sarkar's bipolar conception of *Śiva* and *Śakti* can resolve the most perplexing enigma of the essence of Consciousness and its significance. Emphasizing the interplay of *Śiva* and *Śakti*, Sarkar explained threefold conceptions of Consciousness, which is the combining state of *Nirguna Brahman*, *Saguna Brahman* and *Tāraka Brahman*. Sarkar took great initiative to conclude the enigma relating to the nature, scope, and functionality of Consciousness. Sarkar's spiritual philosophy is concerned with the practical synthesis of Veda and Tantra. Phenomenologically, Sarkar's philosophy belongs to the Tantra (fifth century AD) and Kashmiri Saivism (after 850 CE). His most fundamental spiritual discourse

Ananda Sutram or "aphorisms leading to *Ānanda* or divine bliss" is a core text of his spiritual philosophy, among others. The present paper is as follows: The second section emphasizes the true notion of Consciousness. The third section will provide a revealing insight regarding tri-aspects of Consciousness. The fourth section will focus on a preliminary attempt to identify the importance of the concept of Consciousness in the present scenario.

True Notion of Consciousness: In delineating the essence of Consciousness, Sarkar, with his *tantric* and mystic standpoint, explicitly emphasizes that Consciousness is nothing but the conglomeration of *Śiva* and *Śakti* (*Ānandamūrti* 1996)¹. For Sarkar, Infinite Consciousness is the source of everything, and in Sanskrit, it is called *Brahman*. *Brahman* means "The entity which is infinite and has the ability to make others infinite". *Brahman* is composed of Consciousness and energy. In Sanskrit, Consciousness is known as *Śiva* or *Puruṣa* (*pure śete yah sah Puruṣah*) and energy as *Śakti* or *Prakṛti*. Both *Śiva*, the sense of cognitive faculty and *Śakti*, the sense of operative principle, are combinedly known as Consciousness or *Brahman*. Therefore, both the existence of *Śiva* and *Śakti* remain intrinsically in Consciousness. The term *Śiva* is often used in the sense of 'Citi-Śakti' as pure Consciousness, *Ātman* as 'Prati bodhasattā or omni telepathic entity' (Sarkar, 1958), 'Causal Matrix' as the material and efficient cause of the universe (Sarkar, 1978). While *Śakti* is the divine force of *Śiva*² and frequently equates with *Prakṛti* (operative principle) (Sarkar 1967) and *Māyā* (cosmic creative principle) (Sarkar 1964). Basically, *Śakti*, composed of three *gunas*, namely *sattva guna* or 'sentient force', *raja guna* or 'mutative force' and *tama guna* or 'static force', is a qualifying agent. Sarkar defines *guna* as the 'cosmic force whereby the universal Consciousness is bound to create various shapes or ideas'.

With the help of its three qualities, *Śakti* qualifies *Śiva* to create this phenomenal world so that *Śakti* is regarded as a 'force creating object'. Though *Śakti* is primordial energy (Sarkar 1956) but *Śakti* itself is a blind force³ always acts under the supervision of *Śiva*. Consequently, *Śakti* remains dependent on Consciousness. In

¹ *śivaśaktyātmakam brahma* (Brahma is the composite of Shiva and Shakti) A.S.1-1.

² *Śaktih Śa Śivasya Śaktih* (*Śakti* (the Operative Principle) is the (force) of *Śiva*). A.S.1-2

³ "Fundamentally, energy is a blind force. What is to be done or what should not be done, this sort of conscience is lacking in energy"

terms of the subtle relationship between *Śiva* and *Śakti*, Sarkar holds *tantric* opinion that the pre-eminence of *Śiva* over *Śakti*. Thus *Śiva* and *Śakti* are two poles of the same singular entity viz. Consciousness. The principle of polarity is the foundation stone of Sarkar's perception of Consciousness. Instead of their bi-polarity in nature both these principles can not be separated; rather *Śiva* and *Śakti* inevitably exist in every object from the minimal to optimal expression. In this regard, Sarkar explained implicitly that it is entirely impossible to separate from each other like milk and its whiteness, as two sides of a piece of paper. Therefore Sarkar argued that "though both these elements are two for the sake of argument, they can under no circumstances be separated. . . None of them can stand without the other". Thus Sarkar's *Śiva-Śakti* unification is the credible corroboration of the true notion of Consciousness.

Tri-Aspects of Consciousness: It is a formidable task to identify whether the nature of Consciousness is completely *Nirguna* or *Saguna*. The true nature of Consciousness is not merely *Nirguna Brahman* (non-qualified aspect of consciousness) as admitted by Sankara, or, not exclusively *Saguna Brahman* (qualified state of consciousness) as advocated by Ramanuja. Sarkar was the first interpreter, who tried to resolve several ontological discrepancies by providing threefold conceptions of Consciousness which is the combination of *Nirguna* (attributeless), *Saguna* (with-attributes) and *Tāraka Brahman* (liberating).

Nirguna Brahman: In consequence with *Śiva-Śakti* unification, Ānandamūrti explicitly states that though Consciousness is singular in essence but the varied expressions of Consciousness in the different phases of evolution can not be negated. Fundamentally *Nirguna* is the state of Consciousness where the operative principle of Consciousness remains unexpressed or *anuchhunya* so that Consciousness is free from the qualifying impact of his operative principle. Accordingly this state of Consciousness is regarded as *gunatita* or beyond the scope of *gunas*. As a result of mutual harmony among three *gunas* this state of Consciousness exists beyond the realm of subject object distinction and differentiation. This Objectless Consciousness is completely non-qualified, attributeless. Anandamurti explicitly states that Non-qualified Consciousness is the ultimate witnessing and controlling entity of all actions and reactions which is the ultimate source of creation and dissolution. In this regard, J.C Chatterjee also argued that "He is logical first principle" (Chatterjee, 1962). In his interview German physicist Max-plunk argued that "I regard Consciousness as

fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness."

Saguna Brahman: On the other hand, *Saguna (gunayukta)* or qualified aspect of Consciousness is nothing but the metamorphosed form of Consciousness. Due to the qualifying influence of operative principle Consciousness gets qualified and metamorphosed in the different names, forms, and shapes to create this phenomenal world. Basically, in this state of *saguna*, the balance among three forces of *prakrti* get lost and thus *prakrti* has scope to induce its influence on Consciousness (Sarkar 1959). As a result of ever increasing influence of *prakrti*, a part of Consciousness gets converted and metamorphosed into a world in the different names, forms, and shapes and is known as *Saguna Brahman* or Qualified Consciousness. This state where Consciousness reveals as qualified, attributed, and manifested world in the form of different names, shapes, and colours while *Prakrti* remains as *uchhunya*, expressed, and exhausted. For Sarkar, *Saguna Brahma* is regarded as the material and efficient cause of the universe while *Prakrti* is the secondary efficient cause and linking force between the efficient and the material cause.

Tāraka Brahmn: The conception of *Tāraka Brahman* is utterly an innovative formulation of Sarkar's philosophy as it is more soteriological and ontological perspectives than philosophical. For Sarkar, *Tāraka Brahman* is a tangential point between two states of *Nirguna* and *Saguna Brahman*. Therefore, *Tāraka Brahman* is regarded as the common point bridging together the empirical state of *Saguna Brahman* and metempirical state of *Nirguna Brahman*. Sarkar explicitly states that *Tāraka Brahman* is the ultimate sole liberator whose ultimate mission is to emancipate from the bondage of his/her own actions which is the ultimate goal of each being (Sarkar 1959). *Tāraka Brahman* as 'the great appearance' (*Mahasambhuti*) (Sarkar 1969) comes into reality to elevate the souls unto the path of self liberation who can wholeheartedly sacrifice their utmost self reverence and devotion onto its holy feet. In *Ānanda Mārga* Philosophy, the advent of *Lord Śiva* and the advent of *Lord Krisna* are considered to be *Tāraka Brahman* in the entire human civilization.

Importance of the concept of Consciousness in the present scenario: Human beings are confronting an increasing number of complexities including

environmental, socio-economic, psycho-social, and psycho-spiritual identity crises. Global psycho-socio-spiritual problems engulf entire modern society and force people to assimilate the experience of malpractice in every sphere of life. In this regard Peter Russell asserts that "At its root, the crisis of our times is not so much an environmental crisis, an economic crisis, a population crisis or a political crisis; It is in essence a Consciousness crisis - a mismatch between our psychological development and our technological development". He raised the perennial questions "can we realize that the ego-mode is not only mode and certainly no longer the most appropriate. And can we then release ourselves from its grip, and allow our true intelligence to shine into the world. The root of our environmental crisis is an inner spiritual aridity. We need not only to conduct research in the physical and biological sciences but also need to explore the psychological and more sacred sciences". The Buddhist writer also states that "we must be willing to create a radical internal climate change. To address the external symptoms without changing the internal mindset achieves nothing". To lessen these social and environmental scenarios, Sarkar stresses the feeling of interconnectedness with Cosmic Consciousness. That helps to elevate universal love, ecology, and devotional sentiment. The practice of oneness helps to step against all sorts of anti-human emotions like geo sentiments and national sentiments by inculcating the broadest feeling of universalism. Sarkar strictly adheres to universalism and regards that "No 'ism' except universalism can be tolerated." Universalism suggests love for all without manipulating other forms of life. The broad aspect of universalism embraces all the entities of the cosmos, including plants, animals, and the inanimate world into one cosmic family. Thus the revolutionary change in every sphere of individual and collective life depends on the propagation of universal love through the practice of interconnectedness. Sarkar explicitly expresses that "golden day is sure to come..... when human intuition will realize that the essence in the subatomic world is pure Consciousness". Therefore Sarkar's new hypothesis regarding Consciousness may be vital in resolving the current global crisis.

Conclusion:

The deliberation on Consciousness is one of the most controversial and widely discussed central issues in the history of Indian philosophy and world philosophy. Unfortunately, the task of re-interpretation or re-valuation of the concept

of Consciousness has not yet been undertaken on a comprehensive scale. In this regard, we can conclude that Sarkar's new hypothesis on Consciousness as *Śiva- Śakti* unification may shed light on the traditional interpretation concerning the dichotomy of transcendental and empirical; spirit and matter; subject and object; body and mind; and so on.

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