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Paper Abstract:

The scientific and intellectual contents of the Vedantic literatures of India have attracted the attention of some of the world’s finest scientific minds, such as Erwin Schrodinger, Robert Oppenheimer, and Albert Einstein. Vedanta, which is the topmost scientific and spiritual treatise on the cultural heritage of the Indic tradition, states that the Hindu worldviews of reality are composed of the following five features: (a) Iswara (God); (b) Jiva or Atman (living entity); (c) Prakriti (material nature); (d) Kala (time); and (e) Karma (action). These five features will be discussed in the context of the science and religion dialogue.

Author Biography:

T. D. Singh is the International Director of the Bhaktivedanta Institute. He received his Ph.D. in Physical Organic Chemistry from the University of California at Irvine in 1974. Dr. Singh is a scientist and spiritualist known for his pioneering efforts in synthesizing science and religion for a deeper understanding of life and the universe. He has contributed papers in the Journal of American Chemical Society and the Journal of Organic Chemistry in the field of fast proton transfer kinetics in model biological systems using stopped flow technique and NMR spectroscopy. He also worked on gas phase reaction mechanisms using Ion Cyclotron Resonance (ICR) spectroscopy.

He was trained in Vaishnava Vedanta studies from 1970 to 1977 under Srila Prabhupada and was appointed Director of the Bhaktivedanta Institute in 1974. He has organized four International conferences on science and religion - First and Second World Congress for the Synthesis of Science and Religion (1986 & 1997), First International Conference on the Study of Consciousness within Science (1990), and Second International Congress on Life and Its Origin. Collectively thousands of prominent scientists and religious leaders including several Nobel Laureates participated. He has authored and edited several books including *What is Matter and What is Life?* (1977), *Theobiology* (1979), *Synthesis of Science and Religion: Critical Essays and Dialogues* (1987) and *Thoughts on Synthesis of Science and Religion* (2001).

Paper Text:

The scientific and intellectual contents of the Vedantic literatures of India have attracted the attention of some of the world's finest scientific minds such as Erwin Schrodinger, Robert Oppenheimer, and Albert Einstein. Vedanta, which is the topmost scientific and spiritual treatise on the cultural heritage of the Indic tradition, states that the Hindu worldviews of reality are composed of the following five features: (a) *Iswara* (God); (b) *Jiva or Atman* (living entity); (c) *Prakriti* (material nature); (d) *Kala* (time) and (e) *Karma* (action).

(a) *Iswara* (God): According to Vedanta there are three aspects of God Realization. (i) The first aspect of God realization is *Brahman*, the impersonal realization of God, which is similar to Einstein's conception of God. Einstein said, "The most beautiful and most profound religious emotion that we can experience is the sensation of the mystical... In essence, my religion consists of a humble admiration for this illimitable superior spirit that reveals itself in the slight details that we can perceive with our frail and feeble minds. That deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power which is revealed in the comprehensible universe forms my idea of God."

(ii) The second aspect of God is called *Paramatma* realization. *Paramatma* is an indwelling partial expansion of the personality of God. It is localized in all living entities and guides them from within, in every aspect of life. For example, it is the *Paramatma* that guides, inspires and gives creativity to the individual in his scientific discoveries, musical compositions, or fine artistic works. According to the Vedantic tradition, the *Brahman* and the *Paramatama* realizations are a partial understanding of God.

(iii) The third aspect of God realization in the Vedantic tradition is called *Bhagavan* realization. *Bhagavan* is the supreme personality aspect of God, and this realization of Bhagavan can be achieved by the nine processes of devotional practice (*nava vidha bhakti*.) These are: *sravanam* (hearing); *kirtanam* (chanting); *Visnu smaranam* (remembering God), *pada sevnam* (serving the lotus feet); *archanam* (offering worship); *vandanam* (offering prayers); *dasyam* (becoming the servant); *sakhyam* (becoming the friend) and *atma nivedanam* (surrendering everything to the Lord.)

The different aspects of God realization may be referred to as the spiritual dynamics in the scientific study of God. The first two aspects can be referred to as the intermediary aspects – whereas the third aspect is the final stage in the study of the science of God.

(b) *Jiva atma* (the soul or the spiriton): The individual living being, or soul, is called the *Jiva*. It is also called *atman*, or spiriton. Every living being has a soul. All microorganisms, insects, aquatic living beings, plants, reptiles, birds, animals and human beings have souls. This is confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita, 15th chapter, 7th verse. All living beings are eternal and conscious spiritual particles of the Supreme Lord. The difference between God and the living being is that the consciousness of the Supreme Being is universal (all pervasive,) whereas the consciousness of the *jiva*, or spiriton, is localized to the body containing the soul.

(c) *Prakriti* (matter) is the inferior energy of the Supreme Lord, whereas the spiriton, or the life particle is the superior energy of the Supreme. The electron is a fundamental particle of matter, and the difference between an electron and a spiriton is that the former has no consciousness, while the latter does. Thus, spiritual particles are superior to the material particles.

According to Vedanta, consciousness is not a function of the brain. It states that material nature is not independent; it is working under the direction of the Supreme Lord. This is conformed in the 9th chapter, 10th verse of the Bhagavad Gita.

(d) *Kala* (time) is a very important principle in Vedanta. According to Vedanta, time has no beginning. Time is the eternal and impersonal aspect of the Supreme Being. In the Vedantic world view, time has no beginning or end; it has been existing eternally. However, according to the material world view, time has a beginning. Cosmologists say that time started with the Big bang, and according to the so-called Big Bang theory, the universe is 15 billion years old. So therefore, we need to examine these aspects more deeply.

(e) *Karma* (activity): Any activity that the living entity performs is called *Karma*, action. All living entities are engaged in different activities, and these activities have been carried on since time immemorial. Living entities enjoy or suffer the fruits of these activities, and *Karma* is linked closely with the free will of the individual. However, *Karma* is not eternal. One can change the results of *karma* by the right use of free will. The question as to why bad things happen to good people can be answered by the principles of *karma*.

Vedanta describes the evolution of consciousness. The goal of the human life is to actually come to the state of pure consciousness. This can be done by practicing several meditational disciplines. The following metaphor from the Katha Upanishad (1.3.3-4) will give, in a nutshell, the hierarchical relationships of the body, mind, intelligence and the soul (spiriton.)

The individual (soul) is the passenger in the chariot of the material body, the intelligence is the driver, the mind is the driving instrument and the senses are the horses.

The essence of Vedanta, therefore, is as follows: 1) the cosmological cycles of creation and dissolution go on eternally. 2) The living entities (souls or spiritons) are eternal. 3) The *jiva* (soul or spiriton) and matter are distinct categories of reality. 4) Consciousness evolves. 5) Time is also eternal, and has no beginning and completely different form the modern scientific cosmology. 6) In Vedanta there is no conflict between science and religion because science is *apara vidya* (material knowledge) and religion is *para vidya* (spiritual knowledge) and both are aspects of the Ultimate Reality.