

Current issues in Science of Consciousness and Yoga

Dr Kamakhya Kumar*

*Dept. of Yoga and Health, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya, Haridwar, India

Email: kamakhya.kumar@gmail.com

Abstract

The science of Consciousness and Yoga is a vast subject to be discussed. Number of studies has been done in the area of Consciousness and Yoga, but the issues which should be radiated in present scenario is a subject of research. One can say that a lot have been written in the area of Yoga, so Consciousness is the important subject to be discussed first or vice a versa but can someone say that nothing can be added now? Science deals with investigations and enters into new dimension of research, thus Science of Consciousness and Yoga today is a subject of interest. To radiate the issues in this reference the study needed a systematic review of the past studies as well as the contemporary researches.

While going through the review, a tremendous surge of interest in the problem of consciousness has been seen. Though it has always lurked in the vicinity, for years there was little or no mention of consciousness as such in either the philosophical or scientific literature. Now books and articles are flowing in an ever widening stream. According to some of the authors the mind–body problem *is* the problem of consciousness. According to the findings of the study, it is consciousness that sits square across the advancing path of the scientific world view. Scientists are agree to accept the key role of Yoga in relation to body – mind coordination.

Yoga is one of the most powerful and time tested spiritual technique to go beyond the body consciousness and experience the subconscious and later on the super-conscious states of the self. In this stage, the individual consciousness enters the subtlest, the innermost and the divine core of life - the sheath of ultimate bliss.

Introduction

The concept ‘consciousness’ is widely ambiguous. The abstract noun ‘consciousness’ is not frequently used by itself in the contemporary literature, but it originally derives from the Latin *con* (with) and *scire* (to know) i.e. through which we know. Consciousness is the property / faculty of some (possibly all) living beings incorporating the ability to have some or all of the following perceptions, emotions, thoughts, willed action and a sense of self – with an awareness of having them.

Rocco J. Gennaro (2007) the literature on consciousness is enormous with many important books and anthologies published

in just the last decade or so. Once again, however, with very few exceptions, those who write on consciousness rarely draw *extensive* connections between their theories of consciousness and the literature on concepts.

Consciousness can be understood through the word existence; where there is existence there is consciousness. An alert cognitive state in which one is aware of him or her and the situation; can be defined as consciousness. It is the continuous stream of perceptions of which we are aware from moment to moment - our various cognitive processes, such as sleeping, dreaming, concentrating and making decisions. Consciousness may be

defined as an awareness of the self and/or the environment.

There are also other well-known theories that attempt to articulate the structure of concepts, such as the prototype theory, theory theory, conceptual atomism, and Jesse Prinz's more recent 'proxy type' theory (Prinz, 2002). My main point, however, is that despite the recent explosion in work on concepts, one finds very little explicitly connecting concepts to the philosophical problem of consciousness. There is often no attempt at all to shed light on the nature of conscious experience in these works (e.g. Fodor, 1998; Peacocke, 1992).

Awareness, attention, cognition, discrimination, memory, responsiveness, volition are at least some of the definable constituents of the unitary state of consciousness. Consciousness is not attention or memory or any one of the some individual (including awareness). It is a combination of all of those.

Human consciousness may include consciousness of the self as conscious being. Human consciousness may also include higher levels of organized thinking. Human consciousness may be limited by time and space. Human consciousness may seek the unity of universal consciousness, which may not be limited by time and space. Human consciousness may also seek to universalize itself as the mode of consciousness for all conscious being.

Consciousness may include self-consciousness, i.e. awareness of an individual's own existence as a conscious being. Self-consciousness may include the awareness which individuals have of their own thoughts and feelings.

Einstein's investigations into the 'Four Dimensional Curved Space' — Time, have given pioneering directions to future scientists for deeper elucidation of various

aspects of universal subtle forces and their grand source in the eternal Consciousness Force. In this respect Einstein deserves a place in modern sciences equivalent to the revered positions of the sages like Vishwamitra, Patanjali and Vyas in the spiritual science of vital energy and consciousness force as described in the vedic treatises.

There is still very little explicit discussion of consciousness in the psychological literature. In my view, the problem of concept acquisition may in fact be the real 'hard problem' of consciousness (Chalmers, 1995).

Issues in the Science of Consciousness and Yoga:

The first issue in this context is levels of Consciousness. Colin Wilson (2009) suggests at least eight degrees of consciousness, from Level 0 to 7. They are: Level 0. deep sleep; Level 1. dreaming or hypnagogic; Level 2. mere awareness or unresponsive waking state; Level 3. self awareness that is dull and meaningless; Level 4. passive and reactive, normal consciousness that regards life 'as a grim battle'; Level 5. an active, spontaneous, happy consciousness in which life is exciting and interesting; Level 6. a transcendent level where time ceases to exist. Wilson does take note of further levels of consciousness as experienced by mystics but gives no details.

Indian yogis and mystics classify the seven states of consciousness differently. They point out that human beings normally experience only three states: sleeping, dreaming and waking. In meditation, fleetingly one can experience *turya*, literally the fourth state, or transcendental consciousness, commonly known as *Samadhi*. When this state coexists and stabilizes with the other three, which is the fifth state, where I-consciousness expands to become cosmic consciousness. The sixth state is God consciousness whereby

individual sees God everywhere, in everything. The last is unity consciousness: what is within is also outside— pure consciousness and nothing else is.

Next issue in this science which should be radiated is Physiological correlation and consciousness. Cyril Burt (1975) states that the brain is not an organ that generates consciousness, but rather an instrument evolved to transmit and limit the processes of consciousness; and of conscious attention so as to restrict them to those aspects of the material environment which at any moment are crucial for the terrestrial success of the individual. In that case such phenomena as telepathy and clairvoyance would be merely instances in which some of the limitations were removed. Consciousness is a property of the human brain, a highly evolved system. It therefore must have a useful *function* to perform. Crick and Koch (1998) assume that the function of the neuronal correlate of consciousness is to produce the best current interpretation of the environment--in the light of past experiences---and to make it available, for a sufficient time, to the parts of the brain which contemplate, plan and execute voluntary motor outputs (including language). This needs to be contrasted with the on-line systems that bypass consciousness but that can generate stereotyped behaviors.

Another issue which can be raised is neural correlates of consciousnesses. The search for neural correlates of consciousness (or NCCs) is arguably the cornerstone in the recent resurgence of the science of consciousness. David J. Chalmers (2000) concludes in his study that states of consciousness depend systematically in some way on overall states of the brain. In the case of neural correlates of the content of consciousness, things are more constrained, since a neural correlate is required not just to map to a corresponding state of consciousness, but

to match it in *content*. This rules out the whole brain as even a non-minimal neural correlate, for example, since representing a content in the brain does not suffice to represent that content in consciousness (much of the brain's representational content is unconscious). Of course we may hope that there will be more constrained neural systems whose content systematically matches the contents of some aspect of consciousness. But one might argue that it is not obvious that such a system *must* exist. It might be held, for example, that the contents of consciousness are an emergent product of the contents of various neural systems, which together suffice for conscious content in question, but none of which precisely mirrors the conscious content.

Alva Noë and Evan Thompson (2004) there are no known examples of neuralperceptual content matches but there are reasons to doubt that any subpersonal-level, neural representational system could match a personal level, perceptual experience in content, and hence reasons to doubt the truth of the matching-content doctrine—not simply as a philosophical thesis, but as a methodological one guiding neuroscientific research.

Next issue may be raised here is Mind reading abilities and Consciousness. One might also examine how self-concepts and the ability to mind read play a role in consciousness on several other related fronts. In some abnormal cases, one's self-consciousness seems deficient and, in turn, one's self-concepts do not operate properly. Two psychopathologies frequently mentioned along these lines are autism and schizophrenia. For example, it has been argued that autistic people are 'mindblind' (Baron-Cohen 1995) in the sense that their 'mindreading' abilities are deficient.

Several more issues can be raised in this area. Now the point comes though a

review is Para-psychological abilities of consciousness. Throughout written history, the greatest philosophical thinkers have pondered this matter. However, outside of the field of parapsychology, there has been very little experimental research exploring whether consciousness can interact with its environment independently of the physical body. Deborah L. Delaney (1995) mind or consciousness can interact directly with its environment without mediation by known physical mechanisms, e.g. senses, motor activity, physiological output. If the patterns emerging from this experimental work are as they appear, they may help shed some light on the ability of consciousness to act independently of the physical body.

The most important issue may be the unity of Consciousness: What does it mean to say that different states of consciousness are unified with each other, or that they are part of a single encompassing state? The idea of unity is multifaceted, and has been understood in many different ways by different thinkers. In some senses of “unity”, the claim that consciousness is unified may be obvious or trivial. In other senses, the claim may be obviously false. Tim Bayne and David J. Chalmers (2003) states: we can say that two states of consciousness are *objectually unified* when they are directed at the same object. We can also say that two conscious states are *spatially unified* when they represent objects as being part of the same space. But when we go beyond the lower states of Consciousness and enter into the higher states, the unity of Consciousness may be understood as Transcendental Consciousness. Yoga is on the level of our mind which is beyond all thoughts. It is on that level of our mind, where it has transcended (gone beyond) all activity, even beyond the finest level of thinking. When there are no thoughts whatsoever, what is left is consciousness itself. This pure consciousness is Transcendental Consciousness.

Discussion:

The science of Consciousness and Yoga is a never-ending subject to be discussed and to be studied. Consciousness is a non-physical entity, which is essentially different from the four basic entities of space, time, energy and matter of the conventional science. Consciousness does not have any physical attribute or property or action, but is endowed with autonomous will power of creation, retention and annihilation of the knowledge of an individual or that of the universe.

Without Consciousness, nothing can be known. But Consciousness itself cannot be an object of knowledge, just as in a totally dark room, a torch may illuminate everything but itself. Knowing requires both knower and known. For Consciousness to be known, it would have to be a knowable object, but it is the knowing subject. We “know” Consciousness because we are Consciousness. Consciousness is our true nature. The ultimate observer (which is who you essentially are) is simply not amenable to any type of objective investigation: who could there be beyond the ultimate observer to do the investigating?

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.

The importance of Yoga is in its amenability to rendering the entire content of the human psychology in terms of consciousness. Vedic yoga since its entire structure is based on consciousness as the basic stuff of creation in all its forms and varieties. Vedic seers by means of deep

meditation were able to see through everything, howsoever gross and mightily tangible it may be, as a formation of consciousness.

Yoga has become a buzz word now all over. Whole globe is now accepting Yoga.

The Indian Scientists of the Vedic Age had devised the Sadhana of Yoga, which serve the purpose of self-analysis and self-development simultaneously. Realization of the soul and the absolute linkage with the cosmic consciousness can be attained through Yoga.

References:

1. Alva Noë and Evan Thompson (2004) Are There Neural Correlates of Consciousness? *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, **11**, No. 1, pp. 3–28
2. Baron-Cohen, S. (1995), *Mindblindness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).
3. Chalmers, D.J. (1995), 'Facing up to the problem of consciousness', *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, **2** (3), pp. 200–19.
4. Colin Wilson (2009) *Super Consciousness: The quest for the Peak experience*, Watkins Publishing, 2009, 272 pp
5. Crick F C, Koch C 1998 Consciousness and neuroscience. *Cerebral Cortex* **8**: 97-107
6. Cyril Burt, 1975, p. 60.
7. Deborah L. Delanoy, (1995) *Experimental Evidence Suggestive of Anomalous Consciousness Interactions* Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland, U.K.
8. David J. Chalmers (2000) *Neural Correlates of Consciousness: Empirical and Conceptual Questions* (T. Metzinger, ed), published with MIT Press
9. Fodor, J. (1998), *Concepts: Where Cognitive Science Went Wrong* (New York: Oxford University Press).
10. Peacocke, C. (1992), *A Study of Concepts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).
11. Prinz, J. (2002), *Furnishing theMind: Concepts and Their Perceptual Basis* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).
12. Rocco J. Gennaro (2007) *Consciousness and Concepts An Introductory Essay*; *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, **14**, (9–10) pp. 1–19.
13. Tim Bayne and David J. Chalmers (2003) *The Unity of Consciousness: Binding, Integration, Dissociation* (Oxford,2003).