



THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION INSTITUTE OF CULTURE

(A branch centre of Ramakrishna Mission)

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SPIRITUALITY AND SCIENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The urge to solve the mystery of Consciousness has generated tremendous scientific and philosophic quest throughout the world. In order to solve the riddle of consciousness the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture had organized Seminars on Consciousness in 2002, 2004, 2006 & 2008, bringing natural scientists, cognitive scientists, philosophers, psychologists and mystics together for exploring and understanding the nature of Consciousness through exchange of ideas and dialogues. The proceedings of the Seminars have been published by the RMIC and they have been received with remarkable enthusiasm.

In order to explore further the nature, experience and expressions of Consciousness, the RMIC proposes to organize another International Seminar in January 2010. The theme of the Seminar is *Spirituality and Science of Consciousness*. In the forthcoming seminar, as it is evident from the theme, our aim is to analyze the notion of spirituality and to ascertain its place in the science of Consciousness.

It is undeniable that spirituality is an important means for exploring Consciousness but its relation with science of Consciousness is still not known to us. Just as we all experience consciousness but do not know exactly what it is or where it is, similarly spirituality is something of which we have some idea but perhaps no clear conception. Like Consciousness spirituality is some subtle, human phenomenon and is not so easily specifiable awareness. That spirituality is indefinable and ineffable reveal the richness of the concept, that it is not a delimited concept and can be found all over the world. Although there is a general tendency to identify spirituality with mysticism and 'religious attitude' (as John Dewey described it), yet spirituality is a much broader concept and is not confined to organized religions only. Just as spirituality is present in most of the God-centric religions, yet it can be found in those who do not believe in God, such as, Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism, Confucianism and the like. Though some have described spirituality as trans-empirical, others would seek to naturalize it. Spirituality is a mode of being, thinking and feeling which requires action and experience. Along with speculation it requires realization and practice.

Since spirituality is akin to Consciousness, it would be interesting to know how those who are pursuing the study and research on consciousness, either through subjective or through



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objective methods, understand and explain spirituality. It is well known that currently many important Neuro-scientists, Brain-scientists, Physicists etc. are trying to solve the riddle of Consciousness along with philosophers, psychologists and other human scientists. With the advent of quantum physics we find a paradigm shift in scientific community and a trend towards admitting the importance of Consciousness. We even notice that some thinkers, who are committed to materialism, physicalism or naturalism liberally employ the word 'spirituality'. Such examples encourage us to open up a dialogue between the thinkers, who are dealing with the science of Consciousness and those who are engaged in their quest for spirituality. We have not yet sufficiently explored if the spiritual quest could lead to better understanding of the nature of Consciousness. Therefore, we would like to focus our attention in the forthcoming Seminar on spirituality vis-à-vis Consciousness.

Such interdisciplinary and cross-cultural dialogue would enable us to have better understanding of the nature of both spirituality and Consciousness.