

# Brahma Cakra: The Cycle of Creation

In all civilizations people have attempted to explain the origin of the world in one way or another. In each cultural group one can find some mythology in which the story of creation is explained. Most of these stories do not, however, agree with what modern science says about creation. In Ananda Marga philosophy one can find a theory of creation which is not only in accord with the present views of modern science, but can also serve to guide scientists in their quest to find the answers to the many cosmological questions which are as yet unresolved.

This Tantric theory of creation, while scientific, is also profoundly spiritual. The wonder of how the stars move precisely in their orbits, the intricacy and beauty of the various living creatures from amoeba to human and other evidence of a profound intelligence and order in the universe are not neglected by the Tantric conception of creation and development of the cosmos. Rather, Ananda Marga cosmology begins by looking to the Infinite Consciousness which is the source of everything. This Consciousness is considered to be the first cause and it is known as Brahma. Thus the cycle of creation in which Brahma transforms itself into this manifested universe is known as Brahmachakra. The word 'cakra' means circle or cycle.

Brahma means "the Entity which is great and has the capacity to make others great." Brahma is composed of Consciousness and Energy. In Sanskrit, Consciousness is known as Purusa and Energy is called Prakrti. (Another name for Consciousness is Shiva, and Energy can also be called Shakti). Although we can say that Brahma is a composite of Consciousness and Energy, it must be emphasized that Brahma is a singular entity. Its two 'parts' are like the two sides of a piece of paper ... they can never be separated. Consciousness never exists independently from the cosmic Energy.

Just what exactly is Consciousness? Purusa or Consciousness can be defined according to the various functions it performs. First of all Consciousness performs the act of witnessing all events of the universe. It is somewhat like a chandelier hanging in a room from the ceiling; many different actions take place under the witnessing light bulb, but the light bulb itself does not undergo change or participate directly in the action it witnesses. It provides the light which makes all the activities possible and 'observes' all the activities. It is the 'cognitive faculty'.

Another function of Consciousness (Purusa) is that it is the 'material' or primary cause of the universe ... it is the basic 'stuff' from which everything else is composed. Scientists have always been searching to find the fundamental matter of the universe. At one time they thought that the atom was the smallest particle, but in recent years they have been dividing and sub-dividing the atom, finding smaller particles with no end in sight. Yogic scientists have long said that the ultimate cause of all existence and the source of all material objects is nothing but pure Consciousness.

Still another way to describe Consciousness is by saying that it is the 'efficient cause' of the universe. It is the fundamental entity controlling all actions in this universe. Consciousness is like the master architect who has made the plan of the universe and acts to carry it out.

However, the architect takes the help of Prakrti, the Operative Principle, in order to carry out its task. Prakrti is the other aspect of Brahma, or the other side of the same piece of paper so to speak. In the cycle of creation the dominant and controlling role belongs to the Consciousness and the Operative Principle is considered to be a characteristic of Consciousness. It is the Consciousness which permits the Operative Principle to work. If the Consciousness does not give the Operative Principle a chance to work, then the pure Consciousness remains without any modification. In this condition the Consciousness is beyond human conception because it does not have attributes such

as form, shape, colour, sound, touch, smell or taste. Ananda Marga philosophy calls this state of pure Consciousness, Nirguna Brahma. It is the non-attributional Consciousness.

If the Operative Principle is given a chance to act, it works according to three fundamental modes. That is, Prakrti creates differences in this world by modifying the original pure Consciousness in three distinctive ways. These three fundamental styles of action are known as gunas in Sanskrit, a term which literally means "binding quality". This term derives from the idea that the Prakrti is like a rope which modifies the Consciousness by binding it. When a particular guna is active there is a modification or bondage of the Consciousness. The three gunas of Prakrti are called sattva (sentient), rajah (mutative), and tamah (static).

Sattva guna creates the most subtle bondage or modification of the Consciousness. It is responsible for the feeling of existence ... 'I exist'. Rajah guna is responsible for the feeling of "I do" and tamah guna creates the feeling of "I have done". Tamah guna works to objectify thought and is responsible for the creation of the solid objects which we observe in the universe, as will be shown below.

What is the process by which Prakrti takes action and begins to modify the Consciousness (Purusa) creating Saguna Brahma or Brahma with qualities? Saguna Brahma is the attributional Consciousness. First, we must try to conceive of a state 'prior' to the creation of the universe. Here the Supreme Consciousness is without any modification. The three gunas of Prakrti exist but they are not acting. If the three forces are represented by countless lines, the intersections of these lines form countless polygons. This is a theoretical way to picture the state in which Consciousness is unmodified.

Diagram 1: Causal Matrix

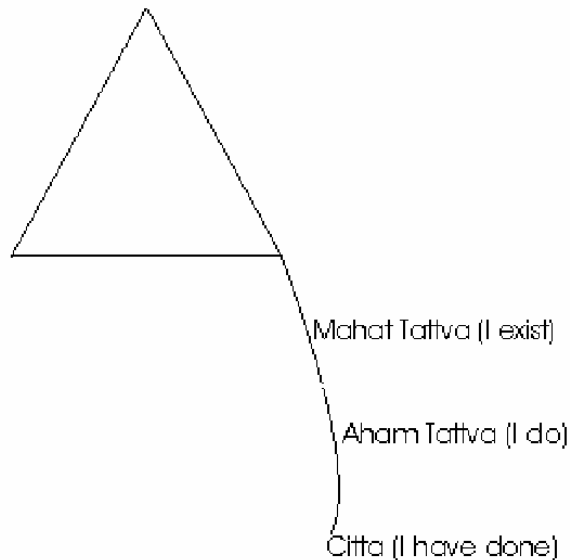


Going further, the most stable figure formed by the three forces is a triangle. In this 'triangle of forces', the three gunas are whirling around, transforming themselves, one into the other. Purusa (Consciousness) becomes 'trapped' inside this triangle. The formation of this triangle signals the beginning of the creation of the universe. The Purusa inside the triangle is the nucleus of the universe, Purusottama, and when the balance of the forces in the triangle breaks down, one force, the sentient force (sattva guna) breaks out of the triangle and modifies the Consciousness.

This first modification of Consciousness is very subtle. The feeling of "I exist" is created and the Consciousness becomes aware of itself. This is the Cosmic I feeling. This 'I exist' is called Mahattattva and is the first portion of the Cosmic Mind. Following the first modification, the next force, rajah guna, becomes active and adds another quality to the Consciousness. The thought "I do" arises in the pure Consciousness and the second part of the Cosmic Mind, Ahamtattva, is created.

This is the Cosmic Doer-I or Cosmic Ego. Finally, the third guna, the static force or tamah guna, becomes active and modifies the Consciousness in another way. It gives the feeling "I have done". It objectifies the Consciousness by creating the third part of the Cosmic Mind which is known as Citta or mind stuff. This is the Cosmic Done-I which is expressed in the universe.

Diagram 2: Formation of the Cosmic Mind



This description of the Cosmic Mind may seem abstract, but if we understand the functioning of our own mind, which is a small version of the Cosmic Mind, we can understand it better. If we see a tall tree, for example, what is actually happening? Our sense organs are receiving reflected light from the tree and this is transmitted to the brain and finally an image is formed in our mind. However, we can also close our eyes and still bring the image of the tree in our mind. The portion of the mind which gives the command to 'create' the tree in the mind is the 'I do' factor or ahamtattva, which is dominated by the mutative principle of rajah guna. The portion of the mind which forms the image of the tree is the citta or 'I have done' factor. The citta is like a screen on which images are formed according to the commands of the 'I do' factor. And in all the operations of the mind, the 'I exist' or mahattattva must be present, because without a sense of 'I' there cannot be any 'I do'.

Thus, the Cosmic Mind functions in the same way as our individual minds, but there is an important difference which should be noted here. As we discussed above, the physical world (such as the tall tree) appears as an external reality to us, but for the Cosmic Mind the entire universe is an internal image on the vast cosmic Citta. Also, in our individual minds if we use our imaginative power to create a green elephant, this image is not a reality for anyone except the one who imagined it. But if there is any image in the Citta of the Cosmic Mind it is a reality and will be perceived as such by the micro-cosmic unit minds.

After the formation of the three parts of the Cosmic Mind, the static force (tamah guna) continues to modify the Citta portion of the Cosmic Mind and adds further attributes to the pure Consciousness. It begins to transform a portion of the Citta into the five fundamental factors.

In different ancient systems of thought there were said to be basic elements out of which all matter is composed. The ancient Greeks talked of earth, air, water and fire and in esoteric systems such as astrology these elements are also mentioned, along with light and ether.

In the Ananda Marga philosophy there are five fundamental factors. The first is known as etherial factor or akasha tattva. Although modern science abandoned the concept of ether after the Michelson-Morley experiments of the 19th century failed to detect it, we can reconcile the yogic system's akasha tattva (ether) with modern science by thinking of it as 'space'. In Tantra this spatial factor is said to be able to carry the subtle primordial vibration known as Omkara or Om. (1)

As the tamah guna continues to modify the Consciousness, a portion of Consciousness is transformed into vayu tattva or gaseous factor. This factor can carry sound and touch vibrations. The next factor is tejas tattva or luminous factor. This factor can carry sound, touch and sight vibrations. Following the luminous factor there is the creation of the liquid factor, apa tattva, which carries taste vibration as well as sound, touch and sight. The last factor, solid or ks'iti tattva is the one which carries the smell vibration, as well as the vibrations carried in the other factors. Thus, all things of this physical world exist in the Citta of the Cosmic Mind and this material world can be considered a thought projection of the Cosmic Consciousness. Modern science is also moving towards this position. Physicist Sir James Jean wrote, "the stream of knowledge is heading towards a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine." (2) Another physicist, Sir Arthur Eddington said:

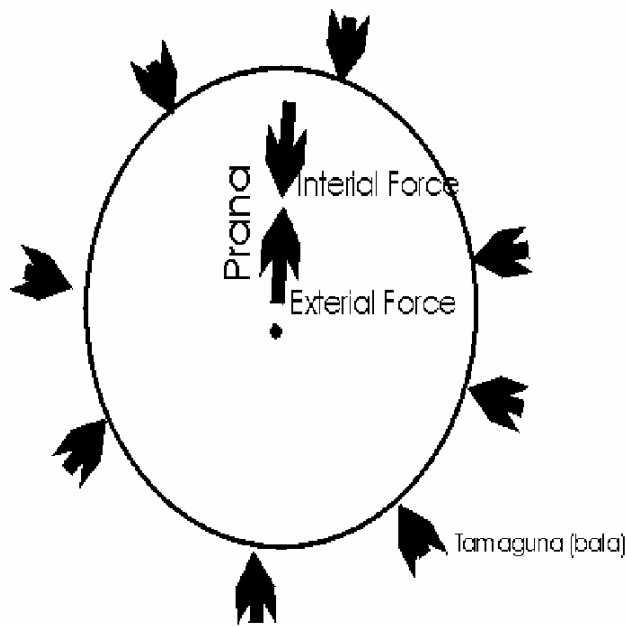
"The final realization that physical science is concerned with a world of shadows is one of the most significant advances. In the world of physics we watch a shadowgraph performance of the drama of familiar life. The shadow of my elbow rests on the shadow table as the shadow ink flows over the shadow paper. It is all symbolic, and as a symbol the physicist leaves it. Then comes the alchemist mind who transmutes the symbols ... to put the conclusion.. The stuff of the world is mind stuff." (3)

When the Consciousness has been transformed into solid factor one half of the cosmic cycle has been completed. The first part of the cosmic cycle in which Consciousness is transformed into Cosmic Mind, and then into the five fundamental factors, is known as saincara, or 'movement away from the cosmic nucleus'. In the second half of the cycle, matter is transformed back into pure Consciousness. This movement towards the nucleus of the universe is known as pratisaincara. Pratisaincara is a counter movement in the cosmic cycle and involves the development of subtle levels of consciousness from the state of solid matter to pure Consciousness.

Previously we saw that through the process of the action of the three gunas or binding principles the Consciousness is transformed into Cosmic Mind and that a portion of the Cosmic Mind is transformed into the basic elements which form the universe. The process of creation does not stop with the transformation of Consciousness into inanimate objects. The binding principles of Prakrti continue to transform the Consciousness and the development of animate beings is accomplished in this process.

It is the static principle of tamah guna of Prakrti which continues the relentless transformation of Consciousness. At the end of the saincara phase we find the creation of solid factor. Tamah guna or the static principle puts pressure on the solid objects attempting to compress them or to lessen the space between the molecules. This compression of the static principle causes the creation of forces within the object. One force in the object is called an 'external' force, as it is moving outward from the centre of the object acting to break up the object. Another force may be termed 'internal' - as it is acting to hold the object together and it moves towards the object's nucleus.

Diagram 3: The Creation of Prana



The collective name of these two forces is 'prana'. If the centre-seeking internal force is stronger, a nucleus is formed in the solid factor and this nucleus controls the pranah or vital force in the object and there is now the possibility for the development of life. Here pranah means vital energy created by the compression of the solid factor, whereas prana is the collection of all the forms of vital energy. However, if the external-seeking force is stronger, then a resultant force bursts the object apart. In Sanskrit this bursting apart of the crude factor is known as jadasphota - the explosions of dying stars known to astronomers as supernova are examples of jadasphota. In jadasphota the solid factor is broken down into liquid, aerial, luminous and etherial factors.

If however, a nucleus is created in the object and the vital forces are controlled by a nucleus, and if there is a congenial atmosphere in which there is a balance of the fundamental factors, then we can witness the first expression of life.

With the creation of life we find an important event in the cosmic cycle. In each living entity there is a mind. The simpler the entity is in physical structure, the simpler will be its mind. Conversely, the more complex an entity's physical structure, the more complex will be its mind.

We may ask what is the origin of the mind in the individual living being? Ananda Marga philosophy says that within the solid objects which are under the pressure of the static force, two forces are created. As a result of friction caused by the conflict of these forces within the object, some portion of the solid is pulverised into something subtler, which is mind stuff or citta of the unit mind. As the solids originated from mind (the Cosmic Mind), it is quite consistent and logical to say that unit or individual minds have come out of matter, because matter has come from Cosmic Mind and thus mental potentiality is inherent in all matter.

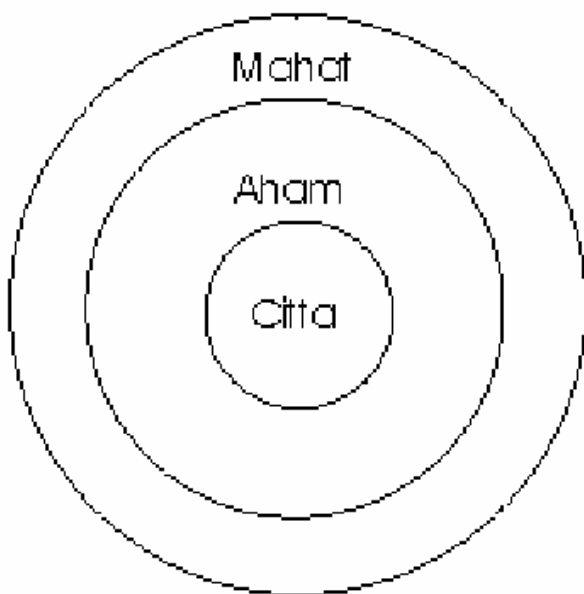
In one-celled living beings the mind which exists is very simple. For example, in a protozoa we can see that its behaviour is reflexive or instinctive. If you put a hot needle next to it, it darts away automatically. This type of reflexive behaviour is controlled by its simple mind which is completely composed of citta. The sense of "I do" and "I exist" does not find expression in unicellular beings.

Life is in a state of evolution. Due to conflict and cohesion, the simple animals and plants become more complex. In Ananda Marga philosophy we also make the observation that the tamah guna, which has dominated the cycle of creation from the point of cosmic Citta up to the point of creation of simple life, loses its dominance at this stage. Rajah guna, or mutative force, now becomes dominant. In this stage, living beings become more and more physically developed and also their minds become more complex. Animals and plants have not only a mind which governs instinctive and reflexive behaviour, but now there is also the existence of the second functional part of the mind - the 'I do' factor (ahamtattva).

When there is a significant portion of 'I do' factor (also known in psychology as 'ego') and it is greater in quantity than the citta portion of the mind which governs instinct, the animal has the capacity for intelligent behaviour. In many animals we can see the beginning of intellect. They can learn by trial and error, for example, to avoid those things which give pain and to seek those things which give pleasure. As ahamtattva gets more developed, the behaviour of the animals becomes more complex.

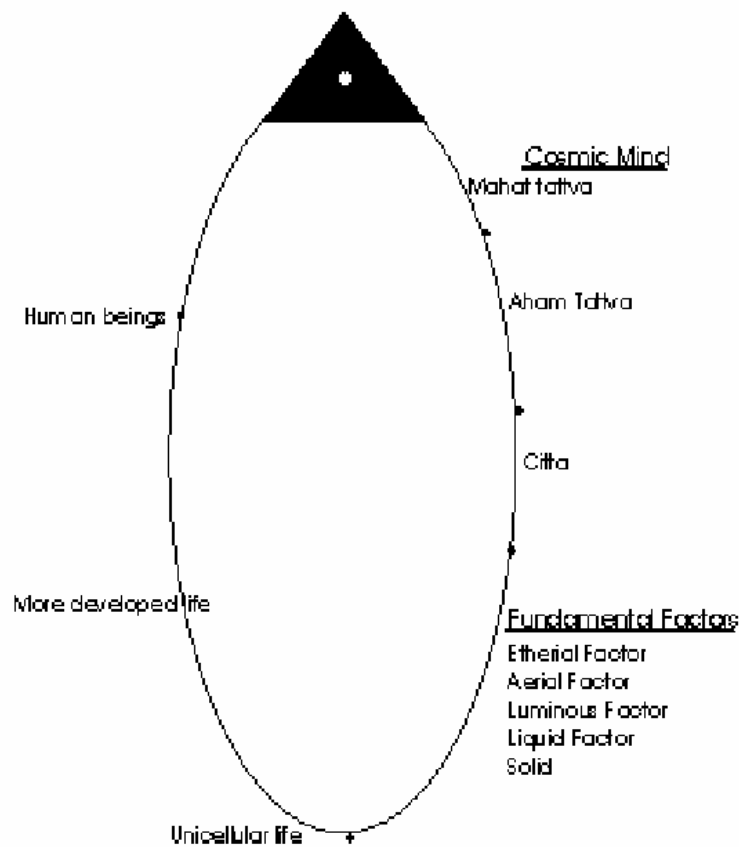
Evolution continues, and in some animals and plants there is also the expression of another part of the mind. This further evolution of the mind is caused by the increasing activity of the most subtle and strongest guna (binding principle), being sattva guna. The influence of sattva guna brings about the creation of the 'I exist' factor (mahattattva). If the amount of mahattattva in a being's mind is greater than the amount of ahamtattva, the surplus portion is responsible for the creation of the intuitive faculty in the living being.

Diagram 4: The Human Mind



Whereas intellect is an analytical faculty, intuition is a synthetic faculty. With intellect we can know something by examining its parts whereas with intuition it is possible to know something in its entirety, in a holistic manner. Human beings who possess much intuition we recognise as sages. Two important characteristics found among people with developed intuition are viveka (discrimination) and vaeragya (renunciation or non-attachment).

Diagram 5: Brahmachakra - The Cosmic Cycle



In the returning phase (pratisaincara) of the cosmic cycle we have seen the evolution of life from simple to complex forms. Looking at diagram 5 of Brahmachakra we can see that the cycle is oval shaped and not circular. This means that the speed of evolution near the upper parts is greater. When the stage of human life is reached a crucial point is attained. Humans have the capacity to increase the speed of their evolution towards the nucleus of the cycle. This can be done through meditation. In meditation there is a process in which the citta (I have done) is merged into the ahamtattva (I do) and the aham (ego) is absorbed into the mahattattva (I exist). Because of this process, the intuition of the person becomes greatly developed and that is why meditation is also known as the intuitional science.

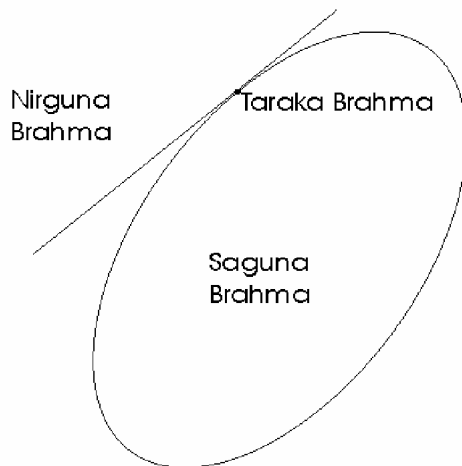
When the mind, in the course of meditation, becomes transformed into this intuitional mahattattva and then merged with the Cosmic Mind there is a state known as savikalpa samadhi. The meditator at this time feels "I am one with the Cosmic Consciousness". But this is not the ultimate state. When the whole mind is dissolved into the witnessing Consciousness there is a state known as nirvikalpa samadhi. In this state there is no feeling of 'I', and hence no self-consciousness, only ecstatic union.

What is the final destiny of life? Yoga is said to be the union of the individual consciousness with the nucleus of the cosmic cycle. In Ananda Marga philosophy, this union is described in another way. Rather than merging with the nucleus of the cosmic cycle, the goal is to merge with the undifferentiated pure Consciousness (Nirguna Brahma) which exists beyond the manifested universe (Saguna Brahma). Permanent union with Nirguna Brahma is known as moksa (salvation).

To attain moksa Shrii Shrii Anandamurti introduces a unique concept - Taraka Brahma. According to Ananda Marga philosophy, Brahma exists as the manifested universe (Saguna) and another

infinite portion of Brahma remains beyond the influence of the Operative Principle and is undifferentiated (Nirguna). The link between the manifested and unmanifested Brahma is Taraka Brahma which means Brahma - the liberator. If a tangent is drawn touching the ellipse which we use to represent Saguna Brahma (see diagram 6) the tangential point is a point which is both inside and outside the ellipse.

Diagram 6: Taraka Brahma



This point is Saguna and at the same time is also Nirguna. This point is Taraka Brahma. The great spiritual teachers who appear from time to time in human history are embodiments of this tangential entity whose role is to guide individuals to complete self-realization and ultimate union with Nirguna Brahma. The concept of Taraka Brahma is a devotional concept and explains the reverence which is given to great spiritual masters.

When individuals merge their unit consciousness with the unmanifested Supreme Consciousness we have the completion of Brahmachakra. However, as one unit is liberated, new matter is constantly being created. Saguna Brahma goes on for infinite time. The thought projection of the Cosmic Mind can never stop. This means that the universe is indestructible and eternal ...

Reviewing Brahmachakra, we can see that points of scientific, religious and even political controversies are enlightened by this view of the universe. For example the Judaeo-Christian religion says that "man was made in the image of God". What does this mean? Is God a man in the sky with a big beard? This is not acceptable to logic, but we can say that the mind of humans, having all of the three functional parts (citta, aham and mahat) is a replica or a reflection of the Cosmic Mind.

Turning to scientific inquiry, Brahmachakra offers interesting perspectives on some questions which contemporary physics is trying to answer. Did the universe begin with a big bang? Is new matter being constantly created? Does the universe have a shape? Studying the universe through the perspective of Brahmachakra we see that matter is being constantly created. In some of his writings Anandamurti has said that the universe, although very vast, is not infinite and it does have a shape, which conforms to the physicists' findings that space does have curvature.

Finally, more and more physicists have seen the difficulty in finding the base of all things and have reached the same conclusions as the ancient philosophers. The atom once thought to be the smallest and ultimate particle has been subdivided into smaller particles and more and more sub-atomic particles are still being discovered. (4) That is why some thinkers have already come to the

conclusion that the base of matter and energy is consciousness itself. Sir James Jeans said that "reality is better described as mental rather than material". (2)

Brahmacakra even sheds light on competing social theories. Many materialists argue that mind is a creation of matter and that matter is the most important element in all considerations of society. Shrii Shrii Anandamurti's theory agrees that the unit minds have come out of matter but contends that this was only possible because matter has come out of Cosmic Mind and mind is thus inherent in matter. Ultimately consciousness is the most important aspect of the universe.

Brahmacakra also gives another perspective on an important philosophical question. Is the universe an illusion or a reality, and what should be our approach to the material world? Some philosophers said that this world is only an illusion and the lack of material advancement in India is in part due to the influence of this kind of philosophy. Anandamurti contends that this manifested universe is a 'relative reality' because it is constantly changing. Nirguna Brahma on the other hand is an absolute unchanging reality. However, we are part of this relative reality and we cannot deny its existence without also denying our own existence. Shrii Shrii Anandamurti thus advises that we should make an 'objective adjustment' with the material world, carrying out our social obligations, but at the same time we should make the Supreme Consciousness the goal of our life ('subjective approach') and move towards union with this blissful Consciousness.

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1. OM is sound, but the word 'sound' is used here in a sense that is wider than the conventional definition in physics. For a more complete explanation see *Subhasita Samgraha III*, pp.58-60 by Shrii Shrii Anandamurti (Calcutta: Ananda Marga Publications).

2. James Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe*, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1980).

3. Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (New York; The Macmillan Company, 1928).

4. P. R. Sarkar's *Microvitum in a Nutshell* (Calcutta: Ananda Marga Publications) sheds new light on the subject by advancing the idea that the microvitum, sub-atomic particles with characteristics of living consciousness, are the first expressions of life.

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