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Highlights of An International Conference on Ancient Science of Non-duality for Modern Times

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Introduction

An international conference on ancient science of non-duality for modern times was held at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), Newark, NJ on August 20th and 21st, 2011. This was the first International conference on Ancient Science, be one of a kind, that was put forward by Dr. Shanmugamurthy Lakshmanan, Founding president of the World Community Service Center (WCSC), USA. The motivation and the need for the conference originated from four key questions:

- (i) Why are the global societies in this scientifically advanced age facing mega problems of environment (climate change, water shortages, massive water pollution due to modern agriculture), mounting health costs, economic recession that are interdependent with no lasting solutions in sight?
- (ii) What can be learnt from old cultures that developed ancient and indigenous wisdom, philosophy and science, which guided the thoughts and actions of the people in the ancient period? How can it help to raise the collective consciousness of humanity now?
- (iii) What are the foundational gaps between the ancient science and the modern science? How can they be bridged to develop a grand unified theoretical framework for solving modern societal problems? What kind of a

“paradigm shift” will it require?

- (iv) What if any relevant opportunity do we have for the world of business by integrating ancient and modern sciences into our models for commerce and economy?

The 20th century witnessed various breakthroughs that shook the reductionist foundation of modern science. In parallel, interest in Eastern philosophy and its practices of yoga, ayurveda, acupuncture grew in USA and other Western countries. Attempts have been made to explore the parallels between modern physics and Eastern philosophy [1]. A large body of literature along this line of thinking has been produced [2]. Lanza and Berman [3] propose “that our current theories of the physical world don’t work, and can never be made to work, until they account for life and consciousness”. These two concepts serve as the foundation of ancient science of non-duality as explained below. It is our hope that an open-minded dialogue through the conference mechanism would serve as a catalyst to close the gap between the modern and the ancient science. The reader is invited to visit the conference web site for various details that cannot be included in this write-up www.skynac.org.

Highlights of the Conference

Professor Vijay Gupta, President, World Community Service Center-USA opened the conference by welcoming all the participants. He requested the audience to observe silence for a minute and pay tribute to all the *rishis* (seers) of ancient and modern periods. Their unique contributions have led to a body of knowledge, both experiential and theoretical, which makes it possible to define the ancient science of non-duality (oneness) in the modern context. President Robert A. Altenkirch of NJIT welcomed the participants and gave a brief overview of NJIT.

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Shri SKM Maeilanandhan, President, World Community Service Center followed by a short welcome address remotely from India. The conference was transmitted, live, throughout the world via Webinar. The audience included participants from Canada, India, Mexico, Middle East, Singapore and the United States.

Professor Vijay Gupta and Mrs. Indira Gupta gave an overview of the ancient science of non-duality and how the conference themes fit into a unified framework that it furnishes. In particular, they explained how the *rishis* obtained deep insights about workings of the universe through meditation, which is defined as the process of reducing mental frequencies. Taimini [4] (pages 55-67) in his commentary on maharishi Patanjali's yoga sutras, dating back to more than 2000 years ago, discussed the philosophical and the scientific basis of the ancient science of yoga. Modern scientific developments have made it possible to measure mental frequencies with electro encephalogram that Hans Berger, a German psychiatrist, developed in 1924. In the modern context, Maharishi Vethathiri [5], during meditation, '*experienced several stages of transcendental states of consciousness*'. His writings offer an axiomatic basis for the ancient science of non-duality. It consists of an *absolute space* that exists in potential with four inherent qualities: *Plenum*, *Self-compressive Force (Gravity)*, *Consciousness* and *Time*. He further hypothesized how the self-compressive force produces 'fundamental particles'. Each particle is nothing but a miniscule volume of space in self-rotation. Each particle generates repulsive waves. The presence of self-attractive force in conjunction with repulsive force gives it the property of repulsion and attraction. Vethathiri named the field of repulsive waves as *universal magnetism*, which binds the entire universe as a net. Along these lines, Taimini, [4] (pages 55-67) explains the foundational role of 'vibration' and 'consciousness' that pervade the cosmos.

The field of fundamental particles constitutes the first element, called *Akash* in the ancient literature. It generates the wave field of *universal magnetism*. Self-aggregation of fundamental particles leads to a further transformation of *absolute space* into four elements namely, *air*, *fire*, *liquid* and *solid*. The universal magnetism transforms into *sound*, *light*, *taste* and *smell* respectively in the four elements. The five elements and the associated waves are necessary for the formation of life and mind [6]. Maharishi Patanjali reported on the existence of five elements and the associated waves in his yoga sutras [4] (page: 269). Maharishi Charak developed the science of Ayurveda based on the existence of five elements more than 3000 years ago [7].

Summary of Talks at the Conference Sessions

On August 20th, 2011, Dr. Jia Gottlieb, opened the first session on-line entitled, *Closing the gap between ancient and modern medical sciences*. His talk reinforced the rapidly growing intellectual and philosophical interest in alternative, holistic medicine that challenges the underlying assumptions of conventional medicine. He used Chinese acupuncture as an exemplary case-in-point to illustrate where conventional and

alternative approaches find common ground and also widely diverge. Dr. M.V. Rabindranath, speaking from India explained that the ancient concept of *three bodies* is necessary to understand *life-force* and *mind*. It gives new dimensions in understanding the human system and in solving many contemporary health problems. Dr. S. Annambhotla, an Ayurvedic physician, explained the scientific principles behind the healing effects of Ayurvedic herbs and spices, and some of the benefits of these herbs and spices through both the Ayurvedic and the Western medical science perspectives. Dr. P. Priyatarissini, an Ayurvedic physician, focused on conversion of food into seven different body tissues that are well known to Ayurveda. She explained how ojas can be recycled through a unique yogic exercise called *Kaya Kalpa* that Vethathiri developed. It involves a synchronization of breath, mind and body.

Mr. Rudy Miick opened the second session entitled, *Conscious Business Models*. He explained and illustrated his highly successful business consulting model with a long track record in a myriad of industries. It is based in blending the sciences of both east and west. Ms. Jennifer Workman spoke on-line and explained her successful business model that is built on the basic principles of Ayurveda and how to combine them with Western Sports and Medical Nutrition. It has enabled her clients to put an end to stressed out eating and learning how to create a daily routine that balances out their food cravings and maximizes health, energy and digestion. Mr. Shankar Balasubramanian and Tom Balemese gave a joint talk linking Vethathiri's world peace, durable peace and economic development perspectives.

A poster session was held after the oral presentations on the Biomedical and Psychological Aspects of Yoga. It was followed by a unique visual presentation of the Sun and the nine planets in our solar system. Mr. Aram Friedman used the latest technology and space observations in this presentation. After each planet presentation, the participants meditated on that planet, which was truly a unique experience.

On August 21st, 2011, Dr. Seetharam Kallidaikurich opened the first session, on-line, from the Singapore National University titled, *Reexamining Sustainability based in Ancient Science*. In the last half-century, national and local governments in India and the South Asian region have been impaired by water management woes. He shared historical and literary information from as early as 10th century India illustrating how societies adored the water element that nurtures life. What can be learnt from the past to ensure sustainability for our future? Mr. Dan Leftwich stressed that the focus of evolved sustainability is not limited to recycling, use of renewable energy, emissions targets and other interim measures. He explained *Evolutionary Law*, which he formulated that works to promote the transformation of laws so that the rights of Nature and Humanity are in balance.

Dr. S. Letchoumanane opened the second session, on-line, from India entitled *Agriculture: Ancient, Biodynamic and Modern*.

He shared results from a preliminary field experiment to study the effect of thought transmission during meditation, and the use of Panchakaviya (an Ayurvedic preparation using five products from cows) on yielding capacity of okra from germination till harvest. Application of Panchakaviya gave significantly higher yield than untreated control, but Panchakaviya alone gave lesser yield than in combination with thought transmission. Dr. N. Selvaraj gave the second talk and mentioned that, for the past three decades, due to intensive chemical farming of modern agriculture, soil and human health have been seriously affected leading to environmental pollution, toxicity, decline in yield and resurgence of pests. He explained how the Horticultural Research Station of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Ooty, India played a key role in redeeming the deteriorated soil through vedic and biodynamic farming study in cultivation of potato, cabbage, carrot, French beans, rosemary, thyme, carnation and gerbera.

Prof. V.S. Elamurugan opened the third and the last session of the conference, on-line, from India entitled *Yoga Practices for Balancing Mind, Body and Life Energy*. His talk stressed that simple, consistent physical exercises are necessary to maintain good health by regulating and streamlining all the circulatory systems in the body. Meditation is necessary for the mind to function in harmony with the body. Dr. Jagdish Kohli explained that the dominant view today, which has taken root along with the materialist and mechanistic developments, is that the use of science and technology is the solution to all our problems. He explored some of the key aspects of bringing balance back and improving the quality of our daily living experience, for example, bringing awareness about worsening human situation, attributes of non-duality science for self nurturing, and the vision of living a virtuous life to mention a few. Mr. Nadi Atalla spoke about a study that aims to quantitatively evaluate the low back condition so its dysfunction can be identified and classified when measurements show a variance from the normal. Mr. Radjendirane Codandaramane gave a talk on understanding and managing desires.

A panel discussion was held at the end to get feedback from the participants in organizing future conferences. Dr. Shanmugamurthy Lakshmanan, concluded the conference with a vote of thanks.

Future Steps and Initiatives

In summary, the conference on ancient science of non-duality for modern times focused on several areas in which ancient science and wisdom can play a major role to bring our world to a better place. This conference shed light on medicine, food production, economic development, managing our scarce water resources, learning to be custodians of our fragile environment, and developing a fuller sense of our indwelling spirit. The conference touched the surface of these areas. Each of them has many facets and needs new ideas and paradigms. An entire conference could be devoted to each. Many other areas, for example, the problem of population growth in a

world with finite resources leading to an unsustainable place, would be included in the future. Up to now Western society has been unable to solve most of the myriad of problems these areas bring to the fore. More often than not solutions carry the seeds for further problems. This is because we live in a world dominated by dualistic thinking. Every concept carries with it its negative. We must move to non-dualistic thinking where there is no ego and action is motivated by the spirit and the need to work together to build a better world that just might work. To this end we are proposing a series of conferences in which fresh ideas are examined in order to imagine ways out of our present global impasses. We feel that within ancient knowledge lie the seeds for modern revival. This is an ambitious undertaking and will require the expertise of many people from diverse disciplines working together in good faith.

The next day after the conference, a steering committee was self-formed that included senior faculty members and WCSC members. It discussed the next steps to take the theme of this unique international conference forward. It was decided to publish the proceedings of this conference as a peer-reviewed book. Steps are being taken to achieve this goal.

The committee discussed the possibility to introduce a two-semester course at the freshmen level at NJIT and other universities in the United States around the theme of the conference. A complementary example at the University of Minnesota is <http://www.csh.umn.edu/programs/Mindfulness_Based_Stress_Reduction_MBSR/home.html>. Another key component of the curriculum would be to introduce students to growing scientific evidence on the hazards of chemical and genetically modified industrial agriculture on human and environmental health. The evidence furnishes a compelling context to localize our food sources that are organic and biodynamic. The concept is slowly gaining momentum in the US and others countries. Establishing a student run organic garden on the campus of NJIT and other universities in the US would be needed to make it effective.

Finally, the committee discussed the urgent need to undertake and enhance research and development towards developing a grand unified science and related technology. The first step will be to understand and articulate where modern science and ancient science find a common ground and where they widely differ.

The committee members briefly discussed the need to hold a series of conferences at NJIT on the science of non-duality for modern times so that they have the broad global impact that is urgently needed. Tentative plans to hold the second conference in 2012 were discussed. The committee members also discussed that potential funding opportunity must be explored for developing a curriculum, and for conducting collaborative research at the interface of modern science and ancient science.

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