



# ProVisions

One who is on the Quest needs provisions for the journey; such are these. We hope some are also visions-forward.

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## Science and Vedanta

*This issue of ProVisions is devoted to the topic of Science and Vedanta – where they intersect, converge, diverge and run parallel to each other. We begin with observations by our own **Bhagirath Majmudar, M.D.**, professor of pathology and associate professor of gynecology and obstetric at Emory School of Medicine. He and his wife **Dr. Uma Majmudar** are charter devotees of the Vedanta Center of Atlanta.*

### Will Science and Vedanta Greet When They Meet?

The importance of both Science and Vedanta is so well understood and discussed that there is no point in chopping another tree (or take up computer disk space, as the case may be!) on the subject. The question remains however, whether we are keeping an ideal balance between the two, and if not, what comes in the way.

**Science:** Science and technology are really not synonymous. Science, like Vedanta, should be thoughtful and disciplined. But Technology, a product of science, can leap without bounds, ruthlessly engulf cultures, and force radical changes in human minds and behavior. By baiting with luring toys, it can digress humans from even looking at the aftermath of its creations. “If you stop to think, you will be behind in the race,” threatens Technology. Its irresistible rewards, however, can sweep away a significant part of our self-hood. The giant has to be tamed to serve us, not to rule over us. “Perfection of technology and confusion of its goals marks our civilization, warned Bertrand Russell several decades ago.

My idea, however, is not to depict Technology as a monster. We cannot live our current lives anymore without it. But keeping an eye on it, let us take an inventory of its inventions and the end results.



Bhagirath Majmudar, M.D.

Technology gave us so many time-saving gadgets and still we are experiencing an unprecedented shortage of time. It opened a countless number of channels to communicate, but we are virtually excommunicated from each other. It has offered an infinite varieties of ways to relax, but we are in a perpetual state of “disquiet desperation”. Information on any topic is available at the tip of our fingers but our “think tank” is rapidly drying up. “Where is knowledge, lost in information: Where is wisdom, lost in knowledge,” says T.S. Elliott.

Amongst several reasons for this paradoxical catastrophe, one reason seems to stand out the most: Science and Technology became inseparable companions undertaking a solitary journey leaving the essence of humanity behind. Can Vedanta mend that deficiency? We as Vedantists are ready to jump with joy to give a “yes” answer. In the true tradition of Vedanta, however, let us take a close and critical look at ourselves.

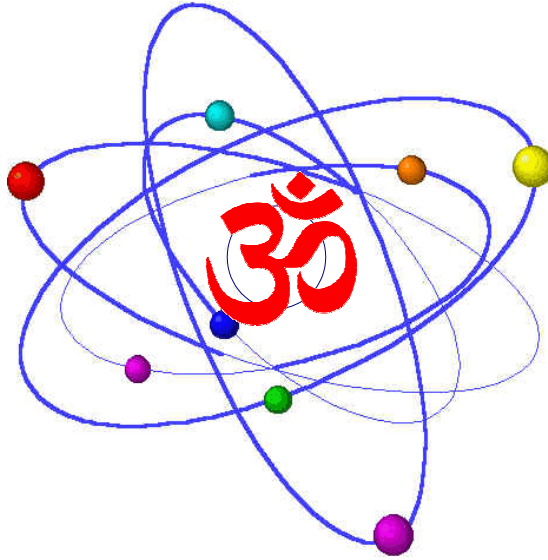
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## Science and Vedanta Greet . . .

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### Vedanta:

Just in the way Science carries its counterpart of Technology, Vedanta may carry with it a controversial companion called "Religion". Like Technology, religion was born with the best and benevolent intentions of helping humanity and nurturing spirituality. Religions all across, however, became structured institutions, Hindu religion being no exception to this. Vedanta kept its integrity by its disembodied structure. An institution, when it becomes a body, needs regular health check ups. When neglected, its bio-degradability and "disease" patterns creep in. Vedanta takes no sides when facing any religion. "Truth is one, sages call it by various names.," is not a statement of self-protection but it emanates from deep, visionary wisdom and understanding. But let us turn back to Vedanta.



### Old Wine in New Bottles

Vedanta is an ideal antidote for the anguish of today. It can connect many religions because it is a science of spirituality, a nucleus of our spiritual self. It teaches us how to reach immortality through a mortal body, how to muffle the disturbing notes of multifocal agitations by "Shanti" or peace that passeth understanding (as translated by T.S. Elliott). It provides a fulcrum for the universe, with considerations for all living and even non-living beings, nurturing an unlimited eco-system. It has the discipline of a Science carried out with compassion. It provides a close and comforting companionship at a personal level while undertaking an impersonal and thorough dissection of facts to lead us from "unreal to the real." It epitomizes both the Science and Art of life.

All the aforementioned qualities are contained within the warehouse of Vedanta. Have they all, however, made their way to our home? All warehouses need an inventory and a rearrangement. Are we doing it? The old wine of wisdom has now to be poured over the milieu of modern life. Time continues to be eternal

but different clocks in different parts of the world will show different times, and we have to accept all of them. Following are my viewpoints that I am prepared to change, if proven wrong.

(1) Vedanta is more global than Indian. This change has been taking place for more than a century but now it has gathered a significant momentum. Having lived in the United States for more than forty years, I have gratefully observed this oncoming change. As Swami Vivekananda experienced, American soil is

perfect for the transplant of Vedanta to occur and flourish. The growing literature of Vedanta in the West has been palpably profitable. A series of "American Swamis" visiting or staying in our Atlanta Center have contributed copiously to our growth. Swami Yogeshananda in particular opened so many new doors to look at the warehouse of Vedanta. In India, the meeting of two rivers is considered a sacred place. Now I truly perceive the wisdom behind this ancient belief. Each river brings its fresh flow of ingredients to enrich the soil. I would say unhesitatingly that one does not have to be born in India or know Sanskrit to be a Vedantist. Vedanta is a Science of perception and practice, continuing to amalgamate without engulfment a variety of western and global thoughts, history, religions, and culture.

(2) Vedanta is not all about information and knowledge. It should be an ongoing pathway to lead to Knowledge and Wisdom. If it is studied as a science without its practice, it turns into a dead science. Vedanta is a pure and applied science. It should be luciferous and fructiferous, giving light and fruit. Incorporation of Vedantic wisdom into daily life is its non-negotiable requirement. As in university

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campuses, so also in Vedantic center, devotees do not want just lectures and sermons, but also desire inter-active group discussion to put their collected valuables in pocket rather than hoard them in banks. An observant teacher teaches an observing student how to become self-observant.

(3) We are too much in the past and not enough in the present or facing towards future. It is like a Floo-Floo bird that flies backward to see the distance covered rather than the future path to be discovered. Vedanta is too dynamic to be a static science. Science gets rid of the old and outdated concepts and nomenclature. The snake and rope analogy, for example, must give way to create some new analogies relevant to our time. Our text may remain the same but the context has to change. Similarly we cannot remain complacent with our past spiritual leaders and teachers but should be actively engaged in creating new ones. The torch has to change hands to continue burning.

### In a nutshell

Science has lengthened life span. Now Vedanta has to help deepen it. Science has changed the health demoting diet. Vedanta has to open its kitchen for thought and spirit-enhancing diet. When these two pieces meet, greet and fit symbiotically, the Vedantic prayer of “Peace, Peace, Peace” will be blissfully granted to us.

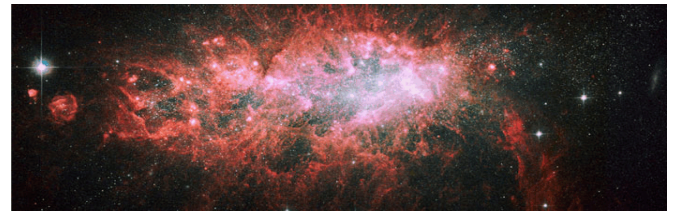
– *Bhagirath Majmudar, M.D.*

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This year, the Templeton Foundation announced it was awarding its annual prize to Bernard d'Espagnat, a French physicist at the University of Paris-Sud, for his work using theoretical physics to predict the reality of a hypercosmic god, who exists outside of the physical universe. Dr. D'Espagnat received the recognition specifically for his work in “concept reality,” an off-shoot from his decades of work in quantum mechanics. Events in one dimension are able to simultaneously affect events in another dimension. D'Espagnat's current hypothesis is that some unknowable divine entity operates in this underlying realm/dimension, or in other words, is “hypercosmic”.

## Finding the Udder Truth

Vedanta is the search for unity and freedom with results ultimately guaranteed. Its axiom is that there *is* only one entity: anything else is Its shadow, and with this underlying point of view, unity is found everywhere: If man is in essence divine, then psychology = theology; history = cosmology; and since the universe itself is the “evolution of the Deity,” cosmology = philosophy; physics and metaphysics are inseparable. The perfection of the human being with all his arts and sciences is not basically different from the perfection we attribute to Divinity.



Science is also a search for unity and freedom. Do science and Vedanta then differ in ways other than the field of investigation? Yes, they differ in their interpretations of the same field. Ramana Maharshi made this clear when he told inquirers, “Seek the science of the Maker, not the science of the made.” In her book *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Annie Dillard unveils the “science of the made,” telling us how temporal it is and how little it tells us about the Scientist behind it. Vedanta is nothing if not “finding the meaning” – discovery of the transcendent in nature through discovery of the transcendent in the human being. The essence of Vedanta is inner transformation, or yoga. As Swamiji said, “Doctrines are methods, not religion.” And Sri Ramakrishna said: “Milk you get only at the udder of the cow.” Vedanta, then, is the finding of the udder of the cow of Truth. And this, I think, is Swamiji's best summary of the commonality of science and Vedanta: “The eternal, infinite, omnipresent, omniscient is a principle, not a person. You and I and everyone are but embodiments of that principle, and the more of this infinite principle is embodied in a person, the greater is that person, and all, in the end, will be the perfect embodiment of that and then all will be one, as they are now essentially. This is all there is of religion.”

– *Swami Yogeshananda*

## Love the Planet Into Peace

Love the planet into peace.  
 Smile into the eyes of your unknown brother  
 and tuck a piece of his heart into yours.  
 Embrace the planet with your love.  
 Cherish the wisdom of the trees  
 and know that the beauty of the flowers  
 will never be excelled.  
 Pray for the healing of the earth.  
 Strive toward the cleansing of the water  
 and the sweetening of the air.  
 Allow the children to be spared by your caring.  
 Swallow the pearl of immortality.  
 Unlike the mystical dragon, allow not  
 the glitter of your existence  
 to dim the radiance of your spirit.  
 Show your father the questing of your soul.

– Lexie Ross



Famous "Blue Marble" photograph of Earth, taken from Apollo 17  
 Courtesy of NASA

## Four Colorado Haiku

### *Dust Devils Rising*

Dust devils rising  
 recalled by pebbled red earth,  
 fade back into path.

### *Living Faith*

The scouring wind cleans,  
 cleaving dead from living earth~  
 new hope its redeposits!

### *Inside the Sky*

Inside the sky  
 there's a feeling of blue~  
 feeling me and feeling you.

### *Hunter's Moon*

Lionhearted grasses cloak  
 a black-foot furrier's lope~  
 tail, ears, eyes tipped,  
 ~fox!

– Judith, Hermit of Sarada



Photo: Abhijit Sengupta, Flower in his Garden, Kolkata, India



*Featuring News and Information About Your  
Vedanta Center*

## Directors' Corner

In an effort to communicate with our general membership and to keep all informed of our current activities and our vision for the future, it has been suggested that I write an column to be included in all subsequent *ProVisions*. I think this is a good idea, so here is the first installment:

It's been three months since our beloved Swami Yogeshananda retired to the monastery in Trabuco Canyon, and there is not a day I do not think about him and the work he did in Atlanta. Through Swami Yogeshananda's loving effort, he guided and helped us establish a home for Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother in Atlanta, for all of us to worship and learn from the master.

During Swami Yogeshanada's time with us, a mission statement was developed and published in a small pamphlet entitled "Aims and Purposes," which can be found on our website at [www.vedanta-atlanta.org](http://www.vedanta-atlanta.org). At our April meeting, we reaffirmed this as our mission statement with some minor verbiage corrections. The Board's goal is to stay true to this mission, the gist of which is to provide and maintain a home in Atlanta for Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Brahmavidyananda is our leader in all spiritual matters, however he asked the Board to take over most of the organizational responsibility of the Center, which we have done. He also recommended we start a bookstore and a Sunday Koffee Klatch. Both projects are proving to be very successful. Thank you, Swami!

The Board meets four times a year, and works through committees to accomplish this objective.

**Garden and Cleaning Committee** – Revathi's area of responsibility is to devotionally maintain the shrine, keeping fresh flowers and assuring a respectful presence in the shrine room. She also has responsibility of coordinating the many volunteers who help maintain the grounds and clean the Chapel and the monestary building. She welcomes anyone to help with the care of the Center. Thank you Revathi!

**Finance Committee** – Sham and Ted handle the finances. They are working on the budget for 2009-2010, which will be discussed at our September Board meeting and voted on at the General Meeting in January 2010. With the new Swami, we have to recalibrate expenses, and as always, taxes and utilities go up, but they are doing an excellent job of monitoring our expenses. Thank you Sham and Ted!

**Maintenance Committee** – Ted is our handyman. He installed the new dishwasher without electrocuting himself or burning the building down! There are many maintenance needs he takes care of, saving the Center extensive labor costs. Thank you Ted!

**Program Committee** – Gillian, our recently elected Vice-President, is responsible for creating the schedule of events. One of the first people to step forward was Uma. She has volunteered to give lectures on the Gita one Sunday a month for six months. Thank you, Uma!

Gillian is also asking outside speakers to come to share with us their faith journey and experience. As our spiritual leader, Swami picks the topics for his Sunday talks and Thursday classes. He has asked the Board, however, to schedule an average of two guest speakers each month, which we are endeavoring to do. If you have any suggestions, please let us know.

Gillian and I are just beginning our work on advertising and promoting the Center and considering the need for future fundraising. We are doing everything we can to put the Vedanta Center of Atlanta on the map. Thank you Gillian!

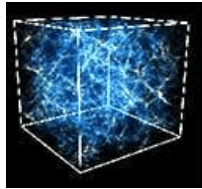
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## ***around the Center (cont).***

**Special Events and Newsletter** – Katherine is publishing *ProVisions* on a bi-monthly basis (we tried once a month and decided it was too much). This is our primary means of advancing ourselves to the general public. She also creates, with Swami's input, the programs for our special celebrations, such as Buddha's birthday. Thank you Katherine!

**Library, Bookstore, Annual Retreat** – Our former Board member Jerry has taken on the task of running the library. Thank you Jerry! Gillian and Nina are organizing the Annual Retreat and helping with the Bookstore by ordering books and incense.

Pranab Lahiri is the Historian and Anchor of our Board. His wisdom guides our every step, and we love him and are indebted to him for his strong guidance.



*I am interested in the laws of physics. Why are they mathematical? Why are they suited to life? I'm also interested in the idea of a multiverse. There could be multiple universes with different natural laws.*

PAUL DAVIES

The other responsibility of the Board is to assist Swami Brahmavidyananda in his life-long effort to carry Swami Vivekananda's message to the West. We provide him a home base out of which to work. I encourage all members to get to know the new Swami on a personal basis. You will be richer for it.

I want to thank all of you for sticking with this mission. We cannot do it without your help and participation, and I encourage you to communicate your concerns and questions to me. I will answer them all through this column or otherwise.

Finally, we thank each of you who responded to our recent request for feedback. We are in the process of reviewing each of your suggestions. If you have other ideas or inquiries, please feel free to email me at [tomcouch@comcast.net](mailto:tomcouch@comcast.net).

Thank you for all that you do to make our mission a success!

– Tom Couch, President, Board of Directors

## **The Mind of God**

*The following passage is from **The Mind of God: The Scientific Basis for a Rational World** by well-known British physicist and science popularizer **Paul Davies**.*

**I**t is important to understand that the regularities of nature are real. Sometimes it is argued that laws of nature, which are attempts to capture these regularities systematically, are imposed on the world by our minds in order to make sense of it. It is certainly true that the human mind does have a tendency to spot patterns, and even to imagine them where none exist. Our ancestors saw animals and gods amid the stars, and invented the constellations. And we have all looked for faces in clouds and rocks and flames. Nevertheless, I believe any suggestion that the laws of nature are similar projections of the human

mind is absurd. The existence of regularities in nature is an objective mathematical fact. On the other hand, the statements called laws that are found in textbooks clearly are

human inventions, but inventions designed to reflect, albeit imperfectly, actually existing properties of nature. Without this assumption that the regularities are real, science is reduced to a meaningless charade.

Another reason why I don't think the laws of nature are simply made up by us is that they help us uncover new things about the world, sometimes things we never suspected. The mark of a powerful law is that it goes beyond a faithful description of the original phenomenon it was invoked to explain, and links up with other phenomena too. . . Maxwell's electromagnetic theory went far beyond a description of electricity and magnetism, by explaining the nature of light waves and predicting the existence of radio waves. The truly basic laws of nature thus establish deep connections between different physical processes. The history of science shows that, once a new law is accepted, its consequences are rapidly worked out, and the law is tested in many novel contexts, often leading to the discovery of new, unexpected, and important phenomena. This leads me to believe that in conducting science we are uncovering real regularities and linkages, that we are reading these regularities out of nature, not writing them into nature.

## REGULARLY SCHEDULED EVENTS

Sunday	10:30 AM 11:00 AM	Chant Service. Discourse.
Thursday	8 PM	We are reading <i>Way of the Mystic Part II – The Lectures of Swami Vivekananda On a Universal Approach to Mysticism</i> . The book is available for sale from the Vedanta Center of Atlanta. A half-hour's meditation in the Chapel follows the one hour class.
3rd Fridays	7:30 PM	RAM NAM will be held on July 17 <sup>th</sup> and Aug. 21 <sup>st</sup> , 993 Walker Ave., Atlanta, GA 30316.
Daily**	6 PM	Vespers/Arati – A short period of prayer is followed by silent meditation. ** <i>Except Sundays</i> .

## JULY 2009 DISCOURSE TOPICS &amp; SPECIAL EVENTS

4	NOON (SAT.)	<b>INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION.</b> ☼
5	11 AM	<b>NO SERVICE</b>
12	11 AM	THE MESSAGE OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA, Uma Majmudar – Talk followed by discussion. ♀
19	11 AM	EVOLUTION - TAKING A STAND – Talk followed by discussion. †
26	11 AM	EVOLUTION - IT'S ALL AROUND US! – Talk followed by discussion. †

## AUGUST 2009 DISCOURSE TOPICS &amp; SPECIAL EVENTS

2	11 AM	BECOMING BELOVED COMMUNITY – Talk followed by discussion. <b>Special Guest:</b> The Rev. Theophus “Thee” Smith.*
9	11 AM	VIPASSANA MEDITATION WORKSHOP, Part I, Gillian Renault – Talk followed by discussion. ■
16	11 AM	THE MESSAGE OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA, Uma Majmudar – Talk followed by discussion. ♀
23	11 AM	VIPASSANA MEDITATION WORKSHOP, Part II, Gillian Renault – Talk followed by discussion. ■
30	11 AM	OPEN FORUM – Topic TBA

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

☼ All are welcome to our **4th of July Celebration** to honor our country's independence and the *mahasamadhi* of **Swami Vivekananda**. Festivities begin at our Center Saturday, July 4, at noon and will last until about 3:00 p.m. Please bring a vegetarian dish to share. Come enjoy the music, food, movies, fellowship, program, and a raffle for prizes! Note that there will be **NO SUNDAY SERVICE** on **Sunday, July 5**.

♀ **Dr. Uma Majmudar** continues her monthly lecture series on the *Bhagavad Gita* on **July 12** and **August 16**. The text she is using is *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*, translated by Barbara Stoler Miller, which is available in our bookstore, or you may bring any version you have. Uma's enthusiasm and scholarship produce a lively class.

† During July, **Swami Brahmagvidyananda** will continue his discourse series relating to **Evolution**. Swami will be taking an “in-town” Sabbatical for the month of August. In September, he will resume his discourse series on Evolution.

\* **The Rev. Theophus “Thee” Smith, Ph.D.**, a native Atlantan, associate professor in the Religion Department at Emory University, and a priest associate at the Cathedral of St. Philip (Episcopal) in Atlanta, will join us on **August 2**, to discuss **“Becoming Beloved Community, or Creating Nonviolent Eucharists Everywhere.”** More on Thee and his topic by email as this date approaches.

■ Our own **Gillian Renault** will lead a two-part workshop on **Vipassana Meditation**, August 9 and 23. More information on this Workshop will also be forthcoming.

## Swamiji's Observations on Science and Vedanta

Science has proved to me that physical individuality is a delusion, that really my body is one little continuously changing body in an unbroken ocean of matter; and Advaita (unity) is the necessary conclusion with my other counterpart, soul.

Science is nothing but the finding of unity. As soon as science would reach perfect unity, it would stop from further progress, because it would reach the goal. Thus Chemistry could not progress farther when it would discover one element out of which all others could be made. Physics would stop when it would be able to fulfil its services in discovering one energy of which all the others are but manifestations, and the science of religion becomes perfect when it would discover Him who is the one life in a universe of death, Him who is the constant basis of an ever-changing world. One who is the only Soul of which all souls are but delusive manifestations. Thus is it, through multiplicity and duality, that the ultimate unity is reached. Religion can go no farther. This is the goal of all science. (*Vol. I, Paper on Hinduism*)

There is no end to the power a man can obtain. This is the peculiarity of the Indian mind, that when anything interests it, it gets absorbed in it and other things are neglected. You know how many sciences had their origin in India. Mathematics began there. You are

even today counting 1,2,3, etc. to zero, after Sanskrit figures, and you all know that algebra also originated in India, and that gravitation was known to the Indian thousands of years before Newton was born. (*Vol. II, The Powers of the Mind*)

All science must be based on facts, and these facts must be observed and generalised. Until you have some facts to generalise upon, what are you going to do? So all these attempts at generalising are based upon knowing the things we generalise. A man proposes a theory, and adds theory to theory, until the whole book is patchwork of theories, not one of them with the least meaning. The science of Raja-Yoga says, first you must gather facts about your own mind, and that can be done by analysing your mind, developing its finer powers of perception and seeing for yourselves what is happening inside; and when you have got these facts, then generalise; and then alone you will have the real science of psychology. (*Vol. 8, Prana Yama*)

But Vedanta offers you nothing that is impracticable. Every science must have its own matter to work upon. Everyone needs certain conditions and much of training and learning; but any Jack in the street can tell you all about religion. You may want to follow religion and follow an expert, but you may only care to converse with Jack, for he can talk it.

You must do with religion as with science, come in direct contact with facts, and on that foundation build a marvellous structure. (*The Claims of Vedanta on the World*)



**Vedanta Center of Atlanta**

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