

# **Tanmatras – the Missing Link Between Matter and Consciousness**

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## **Abstract**

By updating a fundamental concept about subtle precursors to matter in India's ancient Sankhya philosophy, Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar has given a scientific explanation for first-person conscious experience of the sensory qualities of matter, that is consistent with modern optics and knowledge of the brain. In Sarkar's new approach, tanmátras (sensory inferences or generic essences of matter) carry sensory qualities emanated from matter to the "gateways to the organs", creating "sympathetic waves" that travel through the sensory nerves and nerve fluid to "appropriative points" in the brain. Here these sympathetic waves enter the mental plate in the brain to create vibrational forms that are consciously experienced as subjective qualities by the ego. An expanded interpretation of perception and the mind based on Sarkar's theory of consciousness and tanmátras, may lead to a revolutionary new scientific paradigm that puts consciousness first rather than last in the scientific world. -- Saint Louis, USA, March 20, 2026

## **Introduction**

For centuries it has been a deep scientific and philosophical mystery how physical vibrations or waves that are emitted from or within physical objects can be consciously perceived as colors, shapes, sounds, heat or cold, pain and other conscious, subjective sensory experiences by human beings. Modern brain research is also at a complete loss to explain the production of conscious subjective experiences of sensory qualities by the brain's activities.

The world's first philosophy, Sankhya<sup>1</sup>, was founded by Kapila (date uncertain). According to Sankhya, tanmátras are the subtle producers of physical matter in the universe. They facilitate the perception of physical objects by the sensory organs and the mind. Sankhya explains the mind's perception of an object by a portion (vritti) of the mind reaching out through the sense organs through space to make a "mold" of the object with its perceptual content. The vritti then brings this mental mold back to the mind, intellect and consciousness so that the object can be perceived. Sankhya's description of physical object perception by the mind's sensory information retrieval process is present in Advaita Vedanta philosophy, probably the most prominent Indian philosophy today.

In Western philosophy since the 17<sup>th</sup> century Galilean scientific revolution, philosophers have described the "primary qualities" of physical objects (mathematical properties such

as mass, motion and geometry) as existing in the physical objects themselves. This mathematical approach has led to remarkable scientific and technological progress. In this approach, "secondary qualities" that are experiential and non-quantifiable, were explained as being created in the mind, in order to be able to create purely quantitative mathematical physics. Later (with the decline of Descartes' mind-matter dualism and the rise of physicalism in philosophy and the progress of neurophysiology in science, conscious subjective experiences of physical objects have mainly been explained as being produced by the brain's physical activities. This has led to the modern "hard problem of consciousness"<sup>2</sup>: how do physical activities in the brain give rise to vivid first-person subjective experiences? So far there are no generally accepted physicalist answers to this question.

### **What Are Tanmátras According to Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar?**

Philosopher Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar<sup>3</sup> (1921-1990) described tanmátras as "sensible or super-sensible inferences or generic essences". "Wherever there is any semblance or sign of existence there is bound to be a corresponding vibration or wave, **and that vibration must be associated with some inferential expression (tanmátra) or the other.**" Inferential vibrations of sensory qualities of sound, form, touch, taste and smell are emitted by physical objects and travel with physical vibrations (such as photons) to sensory gateway organs. There, sympathetic waves are produced. Sympathetic waves are tanmátras at the neural level. They carry sensory inferences from physical objects through sensory nerves and fluids to "appropriative points" in sensory nerves, where the sympathetic waves enter the mind's "mental plate" to create vibrative forms. After taking vibrative forms in the mental plate, they are consciously perceived and responded to as physical objects by the mind's subjective "I do" or ego compartment. The mind's unit consciousness, caused by the reflection of Cosmic Consciousness on the unit mind, brings the "I do" subjectively-perceived objects and their sensory qualities into conscious awareness. In this way, updating Sankhya philosophy and transcending physicalism, Sarkar's tanmátras may be the long-sought missing scientific link between physical matter and conscious qualitative experience of it.

Later in this article (starting on page 5) are seventeen quotes from Sarkar's various discourses that refer to tanmátras and their relation to matter and mind. These quotes form the basis of Sarkar's mechanism of tanmátras in perception. The reader is encouraged to look through or read these quotations before continuing. Before looking at Sarkar's model for the role of tanmátras in perception, it will be useful to briefly summarize his consciousness-first philosophy of mind.

### **Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar's Consciousness-First Philosophy of Mind**

P. R. Sarkar's Ananda Marga ("Path of Bliss") philosophy of consciousness reverses the current materialist or physicalist philosophical paradigm. Rather than claiming that conscious subjective experiences of the physical world emerging from the brain's activities, Sarkar starts with uncaused, non-qualified infinite Supreme Consciousness with its infinite Operative Principle (Prakriti), in a balanced and unexpressed state. A Cosmic Cycle begins when the Operative Principle becomes unbalanced and qualifies an infinite

portion of the Supreme Consciousness. This qualified Supreme Consciousness has infinite Cosmic Consciousness as its Cosmic Nucleus (Purushottoma), and an evolving Cosmic Mind that is a three-level mental structure. It is composed of 1) a feeling of cosmic existence (Cosmic Mahattattva), a feeling of cosmic doership (Cosmic Ahamtattva) and a cosmic objective portion (Cosmic Citta) that includes the universe and all physical matter (as well as all individual minds) within its Cosmic thought projection. Sarkar describes the physical universe as composed of "five fundamental factors" (ethereal, aerial, luminous, liquid, and solid) which are themselves composed of innumerable tanmátras or inferential vibrations of varying degrees of crudification of the Cosmic Mind. Matter is highly qualified (and therefore highly crudified) consciousness, formed within the extroversive phase of the Cosmic Cycle (Saiñcara).

The subsequent introversive phase of the Cosmic Cycle (Pratisaiñcara) marks the origin and evolution of protozoic, metazoic, plant and animal lives and minds and, lastly, human bodies and minds. Each human mind has a three-level mental structure, composed of 1) a sense of individual existence (unit mahattattva), 2) a sense of individual doership (unit ahamtattva or ego), and 3) an individual mental plate (unit simulative citta) that takes the form of sensory inputs carried by sympathetic waves produced in sensory gateway organs by tanmátras emanated from the five fundamental factors. The mental plate also takes the form of completed mental actions of the ego. The Cosmic Consciousness is the Supreme Knower of the Cosmic Mind collectively and of each unit mind individually, and is also called the Supreme Self (Paramatma). When the Supreme Self is "reflected" from an individual mind, this reflection is called the individual self or unit consciousness (jivatma) of the mind. It is this unit consciousness that gives the mind conscious awareness of its activities and perceived objects. A human being's unit consciousness expands with the development and purification of the individual mind, until the fully developed individual mind and consciousness finally merges with the infinite non-qualified Supreme Consciousness from which it originated.

### **Sarkar's Object-Emanated Tanmátras as the Missing Link in Perception**

Unlike in Sankhya, in P. R. Sarkar's philosophy, physical objects emit "outgoing tanmátras" that enter the sensory organs' gateways (like the eyes) and are carried from the gateways by sympathetic waves that travel to "appropriative points" in the sensory nerves and fluids, where the sympathetic waves enter the mind's objective compartment or mental plate (citta). Upon entering the mental plate, they shape a portion of it into the vibratory form and of the object, such as a red flower. The mind's ego or "doer I" then "sees" the red flower by feeling its vibrating form in the citta. According to Sarkar "the fundamental characteristic of the human mind is to receive or absorb something; that is, usually it has a positive tendency to see, to touch, to smell or to taste some object. Thus, when we see numerous fragments of an object in the expressive phase, we integrate them into a whole and then say that we have seen this or that object, that we have touched or smelt this or that thing." (See quote 17 below.)

Tanmátras or inferential waves emanated from physical objects, are therefore the “missing links” in perception. The brain does not create the sensory qualities of objects perceived by the mind, but only transmits previously emanated tanmátras from the objects through the sensory organs, by means of sympathetic waves, to the mind at appropriate points in the sensory nerves. Images of the original physical objects or tanmátra sources take vibratory form in the citta and are consciously subjectively perceived as objects with sensory qualities by the “I do” portion of the mind. Sarkar’s explanation of perception through emanated tanmátras therefore dissolves the ‘Hard Problem of consciousness’, which is explain, according to materialist or physicalist philosophy, how physical activities of the brain produce subjectively perceived physical object’s qualities or qualia. The brain is not the source of the consciously and subjectively perceived qualities that the mind experiences.

### **An Example for a Visual Tanmátra**

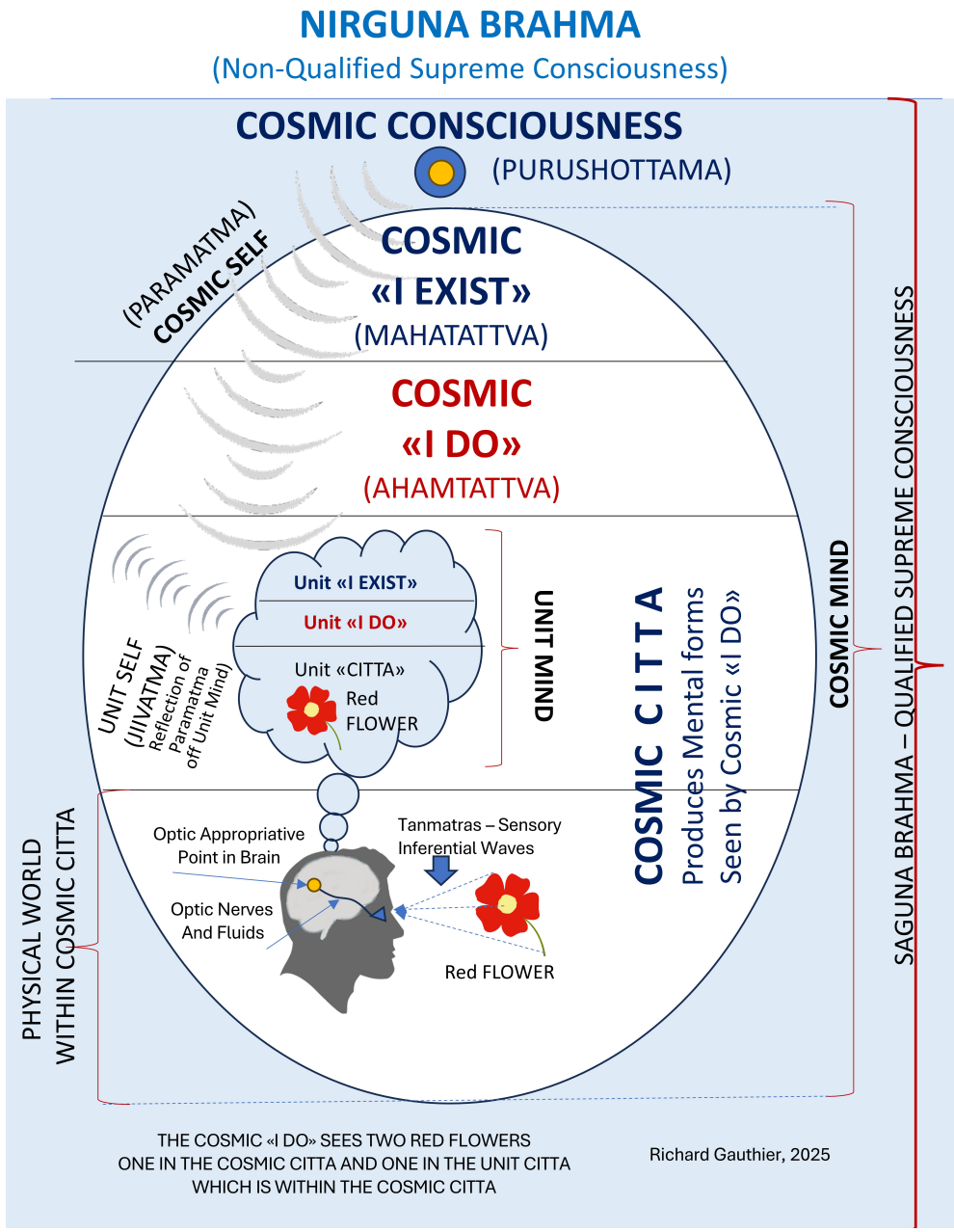
Take, as a simplified example, a single photon of light emitted by a red flower and travelling to the eye at the speed of light. This photon’s wavelength is 700 nanometers (nm) or 7 ten millionths of a meter. Its frequency is about  $4.3 \times 10^{14}$  hertz (4.3 x one hundred million million cycles per second). This photon is associated with a rupa (form) tanmátra (carrying the inference for the color red). When this photon reaches the retina of a human eye, the photon is absorbed by a “red” or L (for long wavelength) cone cell, which stimulates a cell in the optic nerve to fire nerve impulses. (This process actually requires multiple photons to be absorbed for a single L cone cell to discharge, not just a single photon.) A sympathetic wave is created in the optic nerve and nerve fluid that carries the inference for red along the optic nerves to the appropriate point in the nerve, where the sympathetic wave vibrates the mind’s citta or mental plate. This vibration of the sympathetic wave in the mental plate is sensed or seen as the color red by the ahamtattva (“I do”) or ego part of the mind, supported by the mind’s unit consciousness. If this person is you, you will see (if only a few photons are allowed to enter your eye) a small red spot appear and then disappear in your visual field very soon after the photons enter your eye. (This short description simplifies the physical visual system and its processing of photons.)

### **The Bigger Picture**

According to Sarkar, tanmátras can also be formed by the mind’s “I do” or ego and transmitted to the mental plate and then to appropriate points in motor nerves, travelling along motor nerves to motor organs in the body to produce bodily actions. Brain-mind interaction is a two-way street of tanmátras passing through appropriate points in nerves. In this way, Descartes’ mind-body problem of how an “immaterial” mind can control the actions of a material body, and vice versa, is also explained. The mind and the physical body are composed of different degrees of crudified consciousness, where matter is more crudified than the mind. Both matter and mind have their different internal degrees of crudification of the Cosmic Mind also. Tanmátras are “purely psychic” (quote 4 below) according to Sarkar. Tanmátras, which are subtler than physical matter and the sensory organs but cruder than the mental plate or citta (quote 4), easily pass at

appropriate points from body to mind or from mind to body. Please see Figure 1 below, diagramming the tanmátric process of perception, according to P. R. Sarkar.

**THE UNIT MIND WITHIN THE COSMIC MIND**  
(Solving the «Hard problem» of Consciousness)



Graphic by T. Bonotto.

**Figure 1. P. R. Sarkar’s Process of Perception by Means of Tanmátras and Appropriative Points in the Brain**

## Seventeen Quotes<sup>4</sup> from P. R. Sarkar about Tanmátras, Matter, and Mind

The above summary description of P. R. Sarkar's concept of the role of tanmátras in perception was produced by examining various statements he made about tanmátras over several years around 1960 in discourses that also covered many other topics. I recommend that the reader go through Sarkar's own words in the following quotes, to gather further information about tanmátras and his style of presenting them. Many other shorter quotes about tanmátras in his extensive discourses have not been included here. Interested readers can utilize the digital archive<sup>4</sup> of P. R. Sarkar's books and other discourses to search for further quotes about tanmátras and related topics.

**1. Summary: The universe is composed of solid, liquid, luminous, aerial and ethereal factors with their respective inferences or tanmátras. It is a collection of innumerable inferential or tanmátrik vibrations. Without tanmátras, the universe would be a point having a position but no magnitude.**

“As regards the nature of the quinquemental (consisting of five elements) universe, it has been said in the philosophy,

Adarshanádápatitah punashcádarshanam gatah;  
Násao tava na tasya tvam vrthá ká paridevaná.  
(from the *Mahabharata*)

‘Each and every object of creation comes from the world of invisibility and goes back to the world of invisibility. Between the two worlds of invisibility lies the world of visibility. Nothing can be the permanent property of anyone. Everything of this changing world is bound to disappear, hence one should not lament over anything.’

This quinquemental universe is composed of solid, liquid, luminous, aerial and ethereal factors with their respective inferences or tanmátras. This universe is a collection of innumerable inferential or tanmátrik vibrations. This world of visibility has come into being through positive projection. Its tanmátrik vibrations may be withdrawn in a converse way, resulting in tanmátrik samádhi (meditative absorption or unification of mind). In a negative process they may be withdrawn into the world of invisibility.

The vastness of the universe is due to the five fundamental factors. If the liquid factor was withdrawn from this universe, it would be one thousand times smaller than its present size. If the luminous and aerial factors were withdrawn from that universe, it would be a thousand times smaller than a mustard seed. And if the ethereal factor was withdrawn from the remaining portion, a small point would remain having a certain position but no magnitude. So, the vast universe is in reality, nothing but a point. The Supreme Entity, in His imaginative flow, has attached the five fundamental factors to this tiny point to create the vast universe.”

—Source: “Tanmátrik Samádhi”, 1 May 1969, Ranchi Jágri, India

## **2. Summary: All colors, sounds and other inferences emanate from a universal hub that is beyond inferences.**

“Eko avarño bahudhá shakti yogád  
Varñánekán nihitártho dadhāti;  
Vicaeti cánte vishvamádaya sa deva  
Sa no budhyá shubhayá samýunaktu.  
(from the Shvetashvatara Upanishad)

‘The Creator is a singular Entity, and He creates this world of colors, this world of sounds; but He Himself is beyond the scope of colors and sounds.’ Why is He beyond the scope of colors and sounds? Because He is the hub of the Universe. All waves of colors, of sounds, and of other inferences come out from this universal hub. So, He Himself is beyond the scope of all such waves. This circumrotatory Universe is moving around Him, but he is beyond the scope of time, space, and person. He is creating so many things, so many colors, so many sounds, with the help of His Operative Principle. This Operative Principle is doing as per His desires. The Operative Principle, although it has the potentiality to do something or to do anything and everything, cannot do anything without His approval, because He is the hub and all waves emanate from Him. His approval is a must in this respect. That is, if He does not like, not even a blade of grass can move.”  
–Source: “He Knows His Duty”, 12 May 1979 morning, Fiesch, Switzerland

## **3. Summary: The Supreme Entity is colorless and beyond tanmátric influence. Tanmátras or inferential expressions are associated with vibrations or waves and saturate the universe.**

“Wherever there is any semblance or sign of existence there is bound to be a corresponding vibration or wave, and that vibration must be associated with some inferential expression (tanmátra) or the other. Do you understand? A vibration is always dependent on an inferential expression (tanmátra). Different tanmátras are associated with different vibrations. That is how from these vibrations, inferences such as sound, touch, form, taste and smell continue to saturate the universe. Since they are associated with the tanmátras, sound, touch, form, taste and smell emanate from their respective vibrations and permeate the universe.

So, wherever there are vibrations, there must be sound, touch, smell, form, taste, and they all come within the scope of perception. Varña (mental color) is also a kind of tanmátra. Different colors have been created due to the creative excellence of Prakrti (the Supreme Entity’s creative power) and the dexterity of Máya (the same creative power). But He who is the Creator of all these, the Primordial Cause, that Supreme Entity (Parama Puruśa) remains colorless, beyond the bondage of tanmátras, be it positive, negative or any other form of tánmátric influence.”

–Source: “Parama Puruśa – the Primordial Cause”, 12 April 1979, Kolkata

## **4. Summary: The relative subtlety of entities in the spectrum of Consciousness – 1) the five fundamental factors, 2) the sensory and motor organs, 3) the tanmátras (sensory inferences), the three levels of individual mind, 4) citta**

(mental plate), 5) ahamtattva (“doer I” or ego) and 6) mahattattva (your individual “I” feeling), 7) your higher Self or “great I” (qualified Supreme Consciousness or Saguna Brahma), 9) the unmanifest Prakriti or supreme Operative Principle), and 10) Puruśa (the Supreme Entity or supreme rank of Consciousness).

“The tendency of the human (sensory) organs is directed towards the external world, for it is their characteristic to bring the human mind into contact with the external world. As the quinelemental (five elemental) crude factors are the objects of their activity, the organs are necessarily materially inclined.

If we regard the tanmátric entity, whose inferential comprehension takes place only internally, as purely psychic, then we have to term the (sensory and motor) organs, the crude bearers of that pure psychic entity, as psycho-physical. The organs are psycho-physical, hence the amount of crudeness in them is more than in the psychic inferences. So the tanmátras or inferences are subtler than and superior to the organs.

The seat of the tanmátras is in the citta (mental plate) and so the citta is superior to the tanmátras.

The entire functional faculty of material comprehension of the citta and ahamtattva (“I do” feeling) is dependent on the mahattattva, the unit I-feeling and so the mahattattva is superior to both the citta and the ahamtattva.

Superior to this unit I-feeling is your higher Self, your great “I”, whom you know to be Saguña Brahma, the qualified Supreme Consciousness.”

Greater than Saguña Brahma is the unmanifest primordial Prakriti (the Operative Principle in equilibrium), for She contains within her the capacity to qualify Saguña Brahma; that is, the qualification of Saguña Brahma is entirely dependent on her attributional manifestations. But Puruśa (Supreme Consciousness) is still superior to this primordial Prakriti.

Puruśa is the ultimate stage of all evolved objects: He is the supreme rank of Consciousness.”

Source: “The Chariot and the Charioteer”, Jyaeśtha Púrñimá, 1956, DMC, Bhagalpur, India

**5. Summary: The functional relationships within the spectrum of Consciousness: the sensory and motor organs (indriyas), the tanmátras (sensory inferences), the three levels of mind (citta, ahamtattva and mahattattva) and the átman (witnessing entity or unit consciousness, which is beyond but closely associated with the mind.**

“The microcosm (individual mind) possesses ten organs – five sensory and five motor organs. Sensory organs receive tanmátras from the objects which are perceived. These organs or indriyas are, therefore, the knowers of these objects. In the next stage, through the afferent nerves, citta (the mental plate or done “I”) receives the tanmátras and takes the form of the object perceived;

ahañtattva (“doer-I”) feels the subjectivity – “I perceive” – but this subjectivity itself depends upon the existence of “I” because one cannot work unless one feels that one exists. “I” exists first and then the “I” works. This feeling of existence is mahattattva (“I exist”). The combination of ahañtattva and mahattattva is the instrument for the perception of tanmátras which have been brought in by the organs. The mind, the combination of the three (mahat, aham and citta), is thus the knower of the indriyas, that is why the mind is said to be the master of the organs. But is mind the real knower? If not, who is the real knower? “I exist”, “I do” and done “I” are functional forms. There is another entity who is the master of functions and who witnesses that these functions are performed. We thus come to the entity witnessing mahattattva. This witnessing entity is the átman, or the unit consciousness. The knower of the mind itself is the átman. Hence the ultimate knowership (jñátrtva) lies in the átman and not in the mind; the átman, or the reflected consciousness on the unit psychic plate, is not only the active element; the knowership lies in him as witnessing entity. The átman knows because it is an active participant in the function of the mind.”

–Source: “Life, Death and Sañskára”, 1959, Jamalpur, India

## **6. Summary: The origin of the five fundamental factors (Bhutas) in the Cosmic Citta (objective portion of Cosmic Mind).**

“Bhúmáçitte saiñcaradháráyám jađ ábhásah.

[In the flow of saiñcara (the extroversive phase of the Cosmic Cycle), matter takes form in the Cosmic citta.]

Purport: The ákáshatattva [vyomatattva, ethereal factor] is evolved through the greater influence of Prakrti’s static principle over the Cosmic citta. The influence of the static principle over the ákáshatattva begets the maruttattva [aerial factor]. In this way are evolved the tejastattva [luminous factor] from the marut, the apatattva [liquid factor] from the tejas, and the kítitattva [solid factor] from the liquid. These ethereal, aerial, luminous, liquid and solid factors are known as the five mahábhútas [fundamental elements] because all other bhútas [bodies] or evolved objects are begotten out of these elements.”

–Source: *Ananda Sutram*<sup>5</sup> 2-21 Chapter 2, 1962

## **7. Summary: Tanmátras originate from clashes within or between the five fundamental factors and flow through the sensory gateways of the organs, the sensory nerves and their internal secretions to appropriative points in nerves, where they make contact with the citta (mental plate) of the mind.**

“Bhútalakñaátmakarñ bhútabáhitamñ bhútasauñgharásapandanamñ tanmátram.

[Tanmátras (microscopic fractions of bhútas, or fundamental factors) represent the bhútas, are carried by the bhútas, and are created by vibrations from the clash within the bhútas.]

Purport: The stirrings in the object-bodies that are created through internal and external pressures reach the different gates of the indriyas [organs] of the unit-body in the form of waves flowing through the media of subtler bodies. These waves, flowing from those gates of organs through different nerves or with the help of internal secretions thereof, reach particular appropriative points of the brain. Thereafter, according to those waves, the simulative citta [mental plate] adopts the vibrative forms of the external bodies. Those simulative, appropriative waves bring the citta into contact with external bodies such as sound, touch, form, taste or smell. Such waves are called the tanmátras [sensible or super-sensible inferences or generic essences].”

–Source: *Ananda Sutram* 2-22, 1962

## **8. Summary: The five physical element categories are recognized by their corresponding tanmátras.**

“Bhútaṁ tanmátreṇa paricciyate.

[The bhútas are recognized by their corresponding tanmátras.]

Purport: The category of the physical elements an object belongs to is determined by the tanmátra emanating from that object. The ethereal factor has the capacity of imbibing or carrying the sound tanmátra, the aerial factor has the capacity of imbibing or carrying the sound and touch tanmátra, the luminous factor, of the sound, touch, and form tanmátras, and the liquid factor, of the sound, touch, form and taste tanmátras. The solid factor has the capacity of imbibing or carrying all five tanmátras: sound, touch, form, taste and smell.

In order to ascertain the category of the physical elements an object belongs to, we will have to base our findings on the crudest of the tanmátras the particular object carries. The function of the five sensory organs – eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin – is to receive the tanmátras from the external objects or elements. The function of the motor organs – vocal cord, hands, legs, anus and generative organ – is to transmit the inherent tanmátras outside with the help of sam̐jñá [internal sense], and the function of the práñendriya [vital forces] is to conjoin the objectivity with the mind-stuff, as well as to create in the citta a sense of lightness, heaviness, warmth or coldness.”

–Source: *Ananda Sutram* 2-23, 1962

## **9. Summary: The different components of the sensory organs (indriyas)**

“Dvárah nád iirasah piith átmakáni indriyáni

[The indriyas (organs) are the composite of: the gateways of the organs, the nerves, the nerve fluid, and the appropriative piithas (seats) of the organs (in the brain).]

Purport: The gates of organs (i.e., the gates of the living bodies where tanmátras first bring the objectivity), the nerve fibers, which react to the waves of the tanmátras, the nerve secretions, which get vibrated by the tanmátrik vibrations, and the points of the nerve-cells, whereat the tanmátrik waves are conjoined with the citta, are collectively called the indriyas [organs]. That is to say, the

optical nerve, the optical fluid and the optic point of the nerve cell that are active behind what we commonly call the eyes are collectively called the eye indriya.”

–Source: *Ananda Sutram* 2-24, 1962

## **10. Summary: Ectoplasmic particles are evolved when matter is pulverized.**

“Tiivrasaungharseña cūrñiibhútáni jad áni cittánu mánasadhátuh vá.

[Due to excessive clash, some crude matter is pulverized, and cittánu (ectoplasmic particles), or mind-stuff, is evolved.]”

Purport: If the manifestation of energy be too great in the object-body, some portion of the crude entity gets pulverized as the result of excessive friction in the object-body and gets metamorphosed into cittánu [mind-stuff], which is subtler than ether. That is to say, mind is born out of matter.”

–Source: *Ananda Sutram* 1-12, 1962

## **11. Summary: Citta (objective mind) is evolved as the combination of ectoplasmic particles.**

“Vyaśtí dehe cittánuśamaváyena cittabodhah.

[Through the combination of ectoplasmic particles in the unit structure, the feeling of citta (objective mind) evolves.]

Purport: The coordinated totality of all the cittánuś [ectoplasmic particles] that remain in the individual object-body centering round its totality constitute the sense of citta of that body.”

This citta is the done “I”, or objective “I”, of the unit mind. Unperceived shall remain all the perceptions, whether seen or heard, of an individual, unless the citta identifies itself with their reflections on itself.”

–Source: *Ananda Sutram* 1-13, 1962

## **12. Summary: When tanmátras meet sensory organs, the sensory waves get reflected on your mental plate and that is your perception. The refracted portion is memorized.**

“When your organs see something, or hear something, those waves of hearing or seeing get reflected on your mental plate, and the reflection portion is your perception, and the refracted portion is your memorized portion.”

–Source: “Parama Puruśa the Great”, 23 September 1979 DMC, Kingston

**13. Summary: The cardinal point of a sensory organ is where it makes contact with the mind. This point is what deserves the name “organ”.**

“The characteristic of the sensory organs is to run after external objects. Whenever any inferential vibration or tanmátra emanates from an object, the sensory organs immediately receive that vibration at the gates of the sensory organs and transmit it to the sthirabhúmi or apperceptive plate of the citta, the site of the mind’s saṁskáras (reactive momenta of deeds). The point where the organs come directly in contact with the mind is the cardinal point of the organs, and it is this point which deserves the name of ‘organ’.”

–Source: “The Chariot and the Charioteer”, Jyaeśtha Púrñimá 1956 DMC, Bhagalpur, India

**14. Summary: The mind is linked to external objects through the tanmátras or inferences**

“The association of mind with external objects is established through tanmátras or inferences. Tanmátras are of five kinds: sound, touch, form, taste and smell. The tanmátras are actually the expressions of material objects. The tanmátras in the form of vibrations come in contact with the mind through the five sensory organs. The mind establishes its link with external objects through the inferences.”

–Source: “Our Philosophical Treatise”, 24 February 1970, Ranchi, India

**15. Summary: The process of perception—Tanmtric vibrations radiated from a physical object strike the sensory organ gateways, creating similar or sympathetic vibrations traveling in the nerves and nerve fluid to the sites of the particular organs in the brain, and from there to the citta (mental plate), where the citta in the brain takes the form of the vibrations and the ego feels that it is seeing the object. Defective sensory nerves produce defective perceptions.**

“Let us examine the process of actual perception and see how it occurs. It has been shown earlier that the existence of a physical structure is nothing but a state of continuous vibration. The very existence demands eternal movement. This vibration creates waves which strike the gateways of the organs. A sympathetic vibration within the sensory nerve occurs which is conveyed to the site of the actual organ in the brain. In the brain the unit citta takes the form of the vibration, and the ego (ahamtattva) feels that it is perceiving its object. For example, when the light waves coming from an object strike the retina of the eye, the optical nerve creates a similar vibration in the optical fluid and conveys the vibration to a point in the brain known as cakśu (eye) indriya. Citta takes the form of the object and ahamtattva or ego feels – “I am seeing the particular object.” Thus, actual perception is made through a process in the different nerves carrying vibrations from the gateways of the organs to the sites of the particular organs in the brain. This is the case with taste perception and other sensory activities. If any of the sensory nerves be defective, that type of perception will not be experienced by the ego. In other words, the objective perception is always attributed with the merits and demerits of the sensory nerves. The type of vibration radiated by an object may be

termed the “out-going tanmátra”, and the particular wave received by the sensory nerves is known as the ‘incoming tanmátra’.”

–Source: Bhútatattva, Tanmátratattva and Indriyatattva, 29 May 1959

**16. Summary: Perception with tanmátras for all the senses requires sympathetic vibrations or waves that are formed in the afferent nerves at sensory organ gateways when tanmátras emitted by physical objects reach these sensory organ gateways. These sympathetic waves travel through these nerves to the actual organ sites. Here they create forms of the vibrations in the mental plate, that are seen by the ego (“doer I” or ahamtattva.)**

“There is a sweet smell in the flower but it would have appeared odorless to you, had not the smell-tanmátras or waves been carried to the gates of your nose by the aerial vibrations. Then again you could not have sensed the existence of the airborne fragrance, had not sympathetic waves been created in your afferent nerves upon their contact with the fragrance-carrying breeze. Similarly, you would not have sensed the sweetness of a delicious sweet, in spite of its contact with a particular region of your tongue, had not that contact created a particular type of vibration or sensation in your afferent nerves by means of your taste-organ.

All that is comprehensible and graspable in the world is but a vibrational play. Just as the tanmátras of sound, touch, form, taste and smell are creating vibrations in our nerves by coming in contact with the gates of our sensory and motor organs, so our mind, being also similarly vibrated by these vibrations or waves, goes on transmuting the citta (mental plate) into the same forms of these waves. As a result, we “see” elephants and horses, “hear” Puravi and Bhaeravii rágas, “touch” hot and cold, “taste” bitter and sweet and “smell” shiulii and rajaniigandhá flowers.”

–Source: Vibration, Form and Color, Jyaesthá Púrñimá 1956 DMC, Bhagalpur, India

**17. Summary: Perception is systaltic—due to wave motion, objects are intermittently appearing and disappearing. We see the total effect.**

“To human beings, reality is that which they can perceive with their sensory organs. What I can see with my eyes I call reality. How does a person perceive an object? The tanmátras of sound, touch, form, taste and smell of an object reach the gateways of the sense organs as vibrations of different wavelengths. These vibrational expressions, these movements, are not linear, but are of systaltic order. In every phase there is pulsation, there is systalsis. Every vibrational expression is pulsative. Whatever we receive (or emanate) through our sensory or motor organs follows a systaltic movement. Waves appear for a fraction of a second and again disappear in the next moment. So when a wave appears, we can perceive it. When the action is there, we observe the object, we absorb it; in the pause phase we neither observe it nor absorb it. For example, when we say that we are seeing an elephant or a camel, we do not see them incessantly – now they appear, and the next moment they disappear. From the total of all these appearances and disappearances, we know what we are seeing.

The fundamental characteristic of the human mind is to receive or absorb something; that is, usually it has a positive tendency to see, to touch, to smell or to taste some object. Thus, when we see numerous fragments of an object in the expressive phase, we integrate them into a whole and then say that we have seen this or that object, that we have touched or smelt this or that thing.”

–Source: Reality and Intellectuality, 17 May 1980, Varanasi, India

## **A New Direction for Scientific Research**

Neuropsychological research is needed to establish the existence of appropriative points in the brain. Here, sympathetic waves, created by tanmátras arriving at the gateways to the sensory organs, and then travelling through sensory nerves to appropriative points, pass into the mind’s mental plate. Here they create vibratory forms that are consciously experienced as sensory qualities by the mind’s ego, supported by the mind’s individual consciousness. Positive experimental findings of appropriative points in the brain would be indirect evidence for the existence of tanmátras. This research can be done by analyzing the effects of local anesthesia on different areas the brain, in selectively reducing conscious sensory experience, or stimulating the brain in ways that increase or change conscious experience. A deeper understanding of consciousness, perception and first-person conscious qualitative experience could result from such research.

## **Broader Implications of P. R. Sarkar’s Theories of Tanmátras and Consciousness**

According to Sarkar, the universe was formed within a Cosmic Mind, which was itself evolved from a non-caused, infinite non-qualified Supreme Consciousness using its own infinite creative power Prakriti to give itself mental and physical qualities during a Cosmic Cycle. Every vibration in the universe is associated with sensory qualities of sound, touch, form, taste or smell, carried by inferential waves called tanmátras. Individual minds are evolved from matter, while matter is evolved from and within the Cosmic Mind. Matter is composed of five fundamental factors whose sensory qualities are spread by their emanated tanmátras. The minds of developed living beings are linked to the physical world through appropriative points in their nervous systems. Individual minds utilize tanmátras to be consciously aware of the physical world and other living beings.

Every living being has a mind that is conscious or aware to some extent, according to Sarkar. This is because the Cosmic Consciousness, which is the consciousness of the Cosmic Mind, reflects off of each individual mind in the universe. That reflection of Cosmic Consciousness is the consciousness of that individual mind. It is that individual consciousness that gives human minds first-person subjective experience of the physical world outside of their minds, as well as conscious experience of other thoughts, emotions and sensations within their minds. Sarkar’s theory of tanmátras may be tested by neuropsychological experiments that search for the existence of appropriative points in brains that link conscious minds with the physical world through the exchange of hypothesized tanmátras. Positive research results would indirectly give strong support to P. R. Sarkar’s theory of consciousness as primary in the universe. Physicalism, dualism and panpsychism will be superseded by the fundamental monism implied by a Supreme Consciousness that qualifies itself by its own infinite creative power to create the Cosmic Mind and the universe.

Since the time of Galileo many scientists have tried to describe and explain the physical universe and then living beings in terms of purely physical processes described by mathematics. This has resulted in much scientific and technological progress. But it has come in part by excluding or reducing the role of consciousness and conscious experience in the domains of physical and biological science and even psychological science, since the subjective nature of conscious qualities does not lend itself to quantitative analysis. In the last few decades, with more scientific and philosophical attention being paid to understanding the nature of consciousness, it has now become clear that science could not have advanced a single step without the use of conscious scientific minds that could observe and study the physical world through their senses, combined with the use of their rational (mental) faculties. Yet even the most advanced theories of physics today have nothing to say about the nature of consciousness, since conscious subjective qualities have been excluded from the mathematical description of all of these theories. Not surprisingly, brain researchers are at a complete loss for any theories about how subjective conscious experiences of the physical world can arise from mathematically described physical processes in the brain.

Human values and beliefs are deeply affected by ideas about human origins, the meaning of human existence, and the possible future existence of minds in the universe and beyond. Breakthroughs in consciousness research could lead to a new scientific paradigm based on the primacy of consciousness. This could have major effects on human beliefs, values and behaviors in societies that have understood the deeper implications for individuals and society of an experimentally validated consciousness-first paradigm of science. In short, P. R. Sarkar's Ananda Marga ("Path of Bliss") philosophy modernizes and clarifies the ancient Sankhya philosophy of consciousness and perception in a way that could help usher in a synthesis between Eastern introversial philosophy and Western extroversial science, which could have profound effects on human society as a whole.

## **Closing Quotation**

"Certainly the mind-body problem is difficult enough that we should be suspicious of attempts to solve it with the concepts and methods developed to account for very different kinds of things. Instead, we should expect theoretical progress in this area to require a major conceptual revolution at least as radical as relativity theory, the introduction of electromagnetic fields into physics—or the original scientific revolution itself, which, because of its built-in restrictions, can't result in a "theory of everything," but must be seen as a stage on the way to a more general form of understanding. We ourselves are large-scale, complex instances of something both objectively physical from outside and subjectively mental from inside. Perhaps the basis for this identity pervades the world." –Thomas Nagel, in *Mind and Cosmos*, 2012, p. 42, author of the essay "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?"

## **Conclusions**

P. R. Sarkar has broken new ground in the philosophy of consciousness and perception by applying the ancient Sankhya concept of tanmātras in a new way to help explain the first-person conscious subjective experience and perception of the physical world by individual minds. In Sarkar's view,

tanmátras are emitted by physical objects and travel to the sensory organ gateways. Here sympathetic waves, which are neurally-conducted tanmátras carrying the sensory inferences of the previous tanmátras, are produced that travel through sensory nerves and fluids to specific “appropriative points”. Here these sympathetic waves contact the mind’s mental plate and produce vibrational forms that are consciously perceived as sensory qualities and objects by the “I do” compartment of the mind. The first-person conscious experience of sensory qualities or qualia by the “I do” or ego compartment of the mind, supported by the “I exist” compartment of the mind, is produced by the mind’s unit consciousness, which in Sarkar’s philosophy is the reflection of infinite Cosmic Consciousness off of each individual mind. The brain’s activities do not cause, although they highly correlate with, the conscious experience of sensory qualia during perception. Philosophically, and perhaps soon experimentally as well, tanmátras will be recognized as the missing link for explaining matter-mind interactions, leading to our conscious qualitative experiences and perceptions of the physical world.

## Footnotes

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