

Which Theory of Consciousness is the Best?

Richard Gauthier

Abstract

This article, titled “Sarkar’s Infinite Supreme Consciousness” was recently published at the website Landscape of Consciousness at <https://loc.closetotruth.com/map>, which summarizes about 230 theories of consciousness, including Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar’s theory of Supreme Consciousness and the Cosmic Cycle, accessed under “Sarkar” in the Idealisms category. Please take a look at the website and share it. One of these theories is closer to the truth than the others about consciousness and its relationship to matter and mind than the others, but which one? I think that theory is P.R. Sarkar’s theory. Below this article is P. R. Sarkar’s discourse “Our Philosophical Treatise”, which summarizes his theory of Supreme Consciousness and also adds two new sections to philosophy that can help philosophers and scientists decide which current consciousness theory is closer to the truth. First, he adds psychology, including a new philosophy of mind—where minds evolve from matter, but matter first evolves from a Cosmic Mind. Second, he adds spiritual cult, which will provide philosophers and others with spiritual practices for experiencing and merging with the Supreme Consciousness, which may be the ultimate goal of human life.—Saint Louis, USA, August 13, 2025.

Sarkar’s Infinite Supreme Consciousness

Richard Gauthier

Spiritual guru and philosopher Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar’s monistic philosophy of infinite Supreme Consciousness is summarized in his 1962 book *Ananda Sutram*¹ (“Bliss Sutras”). The book includes translations of its 85 Sanskrit sutras and brief explanatory purports that elaborate the spiritual and social philosophy of Ananda Marga (“Path of Bliss”), which is a rational synthesis of Vedic intuitional knowledge and Yogic intuitional practices.

According to physicist-psychologist Richard Gauthier, an expert in Sarkar's thought, Sarkar’s philosophy of Infinite Consciousness, absolute reality, consists of uncaused, infinite, non-qualified Supreme Consciousness (Nirguna Brahma). This is composed of a Supreme Cognitive Principle—Shiva or Purusha—and an unexpressed Supreme Operative Principle or creative power—Shakti, Prakriti, or Maya. Prakriti is the creative power of Purusha. They are never separate, just like two sides of a piece of paper. Prakriti is the combination of three attributional forces—sattvaguna (sentient force), rajoguna (mutative force), and tamoguna (static force).

A portion of the infinite Non-Qualified Supreme Consciousness becomes infinite Qualified Supreme Consciousness (Saguna Brahma) when, in a portion of Purusha and with the approval of Purusha, the three forces of Prakriti become unbalanced and activated. As Gauthier explains it, Prakriti then qualifies this portion of Purusha by giving Purusha many sentient, mutative, and static attributes. The Qualified Supreme Consciousness evolves an infinite Cosmic Mind, or Macrocosm, whose controlling nucleus is infinite Cosmic Consciousness. The Cosmic Mind consists of seven

levels, or lokas (Sattvaloka, Taparloka, Janarloka, Maharloka, Svarloka, Bhuvanloka, Bhurloka) of decreasing degrees of subtlety. Within Bhurloka are evolved five fundamental levels of physical matter—ethereal factor (space), aerial factor, luminous factor, liquid factor, and solid factor—leading to a stage of maximum crudification of solid matter. The five fundamental factors emit inferential waves (tanmatras) which at a later stage can be apprehended by the sensory organs of living beings.

This completes the first, or extroversive (Saincara) phase—from Non-Qualified Supreme Consciousness to the crudest matter—of the two phases of a Cosmic Cycle.

Then, Gauthier continues, begins the introversive (Pratisaincara) phase of the Cosmic Cycle—the phase of evolution of individual minds or microcosms. Individual minds can evolve from matter because matter is Qualified Supreme Consciousness. Primitive minds evolve that are associated with living physical bodies, starting with single-celled organisms having rudimental awareness. Metazoic minds evolve through plants and animals. Individual minds pass through many successive physical embodiments through reincarnation, leading to human beings with highly developed minds and bodies. Developing minds gradually evolve five levels (koshas) of subtlety—crude mind (kāmamaya kosha), subtle mind (manomaya kosha) and three levels of causal mind (atīmanasa kosha, vijñānamaya kosha and hīranyamaya kosha). Each individual mind has an associated individual self, soul or unit consciousness (jīvatma) that is neither material nor mental, but is a unique reflection of the Cosmic Consciousness from each individual mind. Each self travels with its mind after death to a new physical embodiment, if needed. They give individual minds, more or less clearly, the conscious knowledge of their own existence.

According to Gauthier’s understanding of Sarkar, human beings are distinguished from other living beings by their essential human characteristic (human or manava dharma)—their thirst for limitless happiness. Their dharma leads human beings to the path of intuitional practices, whose final attainment—merger into the Non-Qualified Supreme Consciousness—brings the permanent fulfillment of human beings’ desire for unlimited happiness and peace.

Intuitional practices cannot be successful without the intuitional practitioner (sadhaka) following a balanced life of “subjective approach with objective adjustment.” This means performing regular intuitional practices while living a moral life in society by following the ten universal moral principles of Yama and Niyama—ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, aparigraha, shaoca, santosha, tapah, svadhyaya, and Ishvara pranidhana. (See P. R. Sarkar’s *A Guide to Human Conduct*.²)

According to P. R. Sarkar, who Gauthier says “seems to know,” despite describing himself as a “VIP”—very insignificant person—the Supreme Consciousness or Parama Purusha (Supreme Love Personified), has only two limitations: He cannot hate anyone or anything in His creation, and He cannot create a second Supreme Consciousness. Everything in the universe will ultimately evolve to become a human being and, through intuitional practices, will merge into the Non-Qualified Supreme Consciousness, its original source.

P. R. Sarkar’s monistic theory of infinite Non-Qualified Supreme Consciousness with its Cosmic Cycle (Brahmachakra) through Qualified Supreme Consciousness with its relative cause-and-

effect universe of time, space, and persons, Gauthier concludes, provides rational and actionable answers to human beings' perennial questions: "Who am I?", "Where do I come from?", "Where am I going?", and "What is my purpose in life?"

Our Philosophical Treatise

Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

24 February 1970, Ranchi, India

The recognized book on Ananda Marga ("Path of Bliss") Philosophy is *Ánanda Sútram*¹. Usually a philosophical treatise has four main sections – (1) ontology, (2) metaphysics, (3) ethics, (4) epistemology. But in Ananda Marga philosophy two more sections, in addition to the above-mentioned four, have been added. They are (5) psychology and (6) spiritual cult (system of spiritual practices). In Western philosophy there is no mention of spiritual cult, because Western philosophers had no opportunity to learn such a cult. The main reason is that in the theology prevalent in the West there is no concrete spiritual cult.

According to general belief, psychology is a part of general science, and should therefore not be included as a part of philosophy. Thus, psychology has been accepted as a branch of science in the West. But in Ananda Marga, psychology has been included as a part of philosophy. Moreover, according to *Ánanda Marga* the scope of psychology is wider than what is usually accepted by psychologists.

Ontology: Ananda Marga believes in monotheism. In common parlance Ishvara, Bhagaván and Brahma are accepted as synonymous. But according to Ananda Marga, they are not synonymous, they represent the different aspects of Parama Puruśa (Supreme Consciousness). Brahma is the philosophical term, and Bhagaván and Ishvara are the attributional expressions of Brahma. Regarding Brahma it has been said, "*Ánandaṁ Brahma*", i.e. *Ánanda* and Brahma are identical. In Ananda Marga philosophy, a subtle line of demarcation between sukha (happiness) and ananda (bliss) has been drawn. Sukha denotes a congenial mental state whereas *Ánanda* is a metempirical state of bliss which overflows the mind – a state which should be called neither congenial nor uncongenial. The state of bliss is always above the scope of mind because it is limitless. The experience of bliss transcends the scope of mind and is concerned with the Macrocosm. Brahma is the name given to the ultimate quality of happiness.

Two aspects of Brahma – Saguña and Nirguña – have been mentioned. "*Shivashaktyátmakaṁ Brahma*", i.e. Brahma is the composite of Shiva and Shakti. The derivative meaning of Puruśa is one who lies covert in the unit being – one who is devoid of any action. Where there is no expression, that aspect of Brahma is called Nirguña Brahma and where there is expression, it is called Saguña Brahma.

Nirguña and Saguña are two aspects of one and the same Brahma. They are not two different Brahmas. It should be clearly mentioned that Ananda Marga is absolute monism – it is not dualism. A question may arise: How can Ananda Marga be called monism when it declares that Shiva and

Shakti are separate entities. The answer is that in Ananda Marga philosophy, Shiva, or Cognitive Force, is both the material and the efficient cause, whereas Shakti, or Operative Force, is only the efficient cause. Shakti is merely subservient to Shiva, Shakti has no existence separate from Shiva. So we can safely conclude that Ananda Marga philosophy is based on monism.

The Supreme Entity, playing the role of the controller of the quinquemental (composed of five physical factors: ether, air, luminous, liquid and solid) universe is called Puruśottama (Nucleus Consciousness). He controls all created beings and entities by virtue of His centripetal and centrifugal forces. In the Cosmic Cycle, the inanimate objects are called saṁsthá, the living beings haṁsa. Each and every haṁsa and saṁsthá is moving around Puruśottama on its respective axis.

The closer the microcosm feels to Parama Puruśa, the less the radius between Parama Puruśa and the microcosm will be. In addition to Nirguṇa, Saguṇa and Puruśa, a new concept of Táraka Brahma has been added to Ananda Marga ideology. The philosophical interpretation of Táraka Brahma is found only in Tantra – nowhere else. Táraka Brahma is a link between Saguṇa and Nirguṇa Brahma. Táraka Brahma is more a devotional concept than a philosophical one.

Metaphysics: Ananda Marga metaphysics is really unique and revolutionary. Metaphysics as explained in the West is not supported by modern physics. Modern science, while attempting to trace the prime cause of creation, has been upgraded to idealism above materialism. But the facts of metaphysics as presented by modern philosophers are supported by materialism or extreme idealism. Both views are equally one-sided and unscientific.

As the first cause of creation, Ananda Marga philosophy conceives of the guṇayantraka, the triangle of forces. We have already discussed that Brahma is the composite of Shiva and Shakti. Shakti means the sentient, mutative and static forces. The expression resulting from the triangle of forces is the cause of a great bondage on Consciousness. In the first phase of movement of the Cosmic Cycle, the Macrocosmic Mind emerges. Due to the increasing static pressure on Cosmic Citta (the objective portion of Macrocosmic Mind), the five fundamental factors gradually emerge – ether, air, luminous, liquid and solid. Thus, out of the Cosmic Mind arises matter. This aspect of the Cosmic Cycle is called Saiṅcara. Due to the further static pressure on the solid factor, there ensues an internal physical clash within the material structure which gives rise to unit mind and life. As a sequence to the origin of life and mind, there arise the living beings – the birds and animals, plants and trees – and in the final stage of evolution come the humans, having a developed mind and complex body. This introversive phase of the Cosmic Cycle is called Pratisaiṅcara.

Thus, Ananda Marga can legitimately claim to have solved many riddles of metaphysics. It has clearly stated that matter originates from Macrocosmic Mind and the microcosm evolves from matter.

Spiritual Cult: Thus far all philosophers have remained completely unaware of spiritual cult. Although new ideas in the domain of philosophy have been added, philosophy has failed to establish its link with the dusty earth. And a philosophy which has no relation with the dusty earth nor with the children of the soil has no practical value. Philosophy is meant for the benefit of the human race.

Ananda Marga philosophy is unique in this respect. Ananda Marga stands to implement its ideology. In order to establish a coordination between philosophy and practical life, Ananda Marga has evolved a spiritual cult on the basis of Tantra.

Epistemology: According to Ananda Marga, epistemology has two branches – pará and apará. Pará jñána means knowing the Supreme reality beyond the scope of time, space and person. Apará jñána means the knowledge within the scope of time, space and person – which is ever changing. The means to attain pará jñána, or absolute knowledge, is through the application of pinnacled intellect (agryábuddhi), and the means to attain apará jñána, or relative knowledge, is the pinnacled intellect plus circular approach.

Psychology: We have discussed earlier that psychology and manovijñána (science of mind) are not the same thing. Manovijñána deals with the origin and development of mind – its actions and reactions, its influences, its consummation, etc. This novel addition of Ananda Marga regarding the origin of mind is that the unit mind has evolved out of matter through clash and cohesion. Mind is the composite of citta (objective portion of mind), aham (“I exist” feeling) and mahat (“I do” feeling) – its different functional chambers. It has four mental states – jágrat (wakeful), svapna (dream), suśupti (sleep) and turiya (transcendental). From a practical point of view, the mind is divided into conscious, subconscious and unconscious portions.

Mind has five layers (kośas) of existence – kámamaya, manomaya, atimánas, vijñánamaya and hirańmaya. The expression of mind, whether crude or subtle, depends upon the different kośas. 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.

Ethics: Ananda Marga ethics is rudimental and universalistic. There are five kinds of yama and five kinds of niyama whose very purpose is to regulate the external and internal behavior of human beings according to the highest principles.

In Western philosophy observance of ethical principles is considered the primary goal in life, but Ananda Marga philosophy considers that ethical observance is the primary step towards the higher life. Niiti or moral principles is not the goal of human life, rather it is a starting point of life’s journey.

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Source: Our Philosophical Treatise

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Further Reading

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