

Mystical Experience

Werner Heisenberg & the Samadhi

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Abstract

The realization of the illusory nature of physical world represented for Heisenberg the most defining achievement in his entire distinguished scientific career. This realization was even more meaningful to Heisenberg than the Nobel Prize. If it were possible for more men and women dedicated to science to experience the sublime Samadhi, they would learn that the spirituality is fundamental to the study of the Universe.

Keywords: Werner Heisenberg, Kevala Samadhi, Paul Brunton, mystical experience.

1. Maya & the Scientists

Maya denotes the transient character, and, in consequence, the unreality of the phenomenal world.

This is expressed by Sri Aurobindo [1]: "... then I saw the intense activities in Bombay as though performed on film, everything became unreal!" or in Nobel Prize winner Max Planck's words [2]: "We must assume that behind the world of phenomena exists a Superior Mind. This Mind is the Creator of the Universe".

According to Luis Pasteur [3], "[i]n those supreme moments, in the deep of our soul, we have the feeling that the world should be more than a mere combination of facts due to a mechanical equilibrium".

From these statements, it would appear that science might provide a great leap forward should experimental research probe the underlying reality of existence. As Paul Brunton wrote, this reality was experienced by Nobel Laureate, Werner Heisenberg [4]:

Without learning, studying or practicing yoga, Heisenberg, famed nuclear physicist, formulator of the law of indeterminacy, unwittingly entered what is considered a high spiritual level to yogis, called Nirvikalpa Samadhi. This periodically happened at the end of the deepest abstract thinking about his subject. Thoughts themselves ceased activity and he found himself in the 'stillness of the void' wherein he developed an awareness of his existence as a spiritual being.

In 1929 Heisenberg visited India to attend a conference on quantum mechanics. Probably that magic and mysterious country left a deep imprint on the soul of this German scientist, which

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some time later, guided him to experience Samadhi. Heisenberg died in 1976 at his home in Munich, a victim of cancer. Paul Brunton informs that [5]:

When he was dying, Heisenberg said to von Weizsäcker, 'It is very easy, I did not know this before'. In another moment he said, 'I see now that Physics is of no importance; that the world is an illusion'. He passed away peacefully.

The realization of the illusory nature of physical world represented for Heisenberg the most defining achievement in his entire distinguished scientific career. This realization was even more meaningful to Heisenberg than the Nobel Prize. If it were possible for more men and women dedicated to science to experience the sublime Samadhi, they would learn that the spirituality is fundamental to the study of the Universe.

2. Werner Heisenberg & the Kevala Samadhi

Werner Heisenberg was one of the founders of quantum mechanics which is the study of the dynamic laws that govern the microcosm. This theory and its association with respect to the 'reality' of physical world represented a great shock for Heisenberg. He had to accept that things are determined by how we measure them. In other words, it is necessary for an observer to interacting with a system in order for the system to acquire reality. These statements are totally compatible with Emptiness (Buddhist) and Maya (Hindu) teachings, where the phenomenal kingdom lacks integrity since it is just a mental construct.

Therefore, if there is no mind, then there is no world. Albert Einstein disagreed with this interpretation because he always insisted that Nature has its own reality independent of any observer. In 1939 Rabindranath Tagore talked to Einstein at New York and tried to explain to him that the world depends on the human factor and that the beauty and the truth are not independent of humanity. But Einstein never changed his deterministic perception of the Universe.

Now we would like to mention Heisenberg's second shock. Heisenberg had a spontaneous experience of Kevala Samadhi [6]. It is not surprising that C. F. von Weizsäcker (We may remember that this important German scientist had, in the 1950s, a deep inner experience during his visit to Ramanasraman at Tiruvannamalai [7, 8]). Heisenberg had invited several yogis to Germany, including Gopi Krishna who explained to them how to awake the Kundalini Shakti. The readers can find in [9] a beautiful poem in which the mystical experience of Samadhi is described.

The essential point is that in Kevala Samadhi, the mind is turned off and the physical world disappears along with its conception of space and time. The Universe is perceived as an illusion without intrinsic reality. The ego is dissolved and the Oneness of Creation and the existence of a Cosmic Mind are revealed. When somebody experiences Samadhi at least once, a deep internal transformation takes place that annihilates all patterns and 'reality' of the world. Then, it is not difficult to imagine the impact that the great experience of Kevala Samadhi had on Heisenberg. Surely this experience reinforced his concept of 'reality' that was introduced in the 20th century as fundamental aspect of quantum physics.

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