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Never the twain shall meet

The government-TNA talks on devolution have been dragging on for months. Whether anything will ever come of them is anybody's guess. Even the shadow of a doomed marriage is crooked as a local saying goes.

Why they have failed to agree on devolution as a solution is not difficult to understand. The TNA is no longer under the gun but it has placed itself at the beck and call of the revengeful LTTE rump which is trying to win diplomatically and politically what Prabhakaran failed to achieve militarily. It is only wishful thinking that the overseas Tigers will allow the TNA to agree to anything that will not serve as a stepping stone to Eelam.

Similarly, the government which wiped out Prabhakaran's *de facto* separate state militarily and gained a great deal of political mileage from the country's victory over terrorism does not want to make any concessions as it is wary of being seen to be buckling under pressure from the LTTE rump and the western bloc. It is also resentful that the TNA has lent its voice to the overseas Tigers' call for an international war crimes probe. Therefore, the government is not amenable to the TNA's key demands such as land and police powers. Never the twain shall meet!

UNP MP Dr. Jayalath Jayawardena has said in an interview with this newspaper yesterday that unless the government is prepared to devolve powers in keeping with the Constitutional provisions, it might as well scrap the 13th Amendment the way it abolished the 17th Amendment. The UNP is for land and police powers being devolved, Jayawardena has said. The question is whether he is authorised to speak for the UNP. Chairman of the UNP Gamini Jayawickrema Perera, MP, has taken exception to Jayawardena's statement. He has told this newspaper that it is up to the UNP and not individuals to decide on such issues of national importance.

MP Jayawardena seems to be cranking up pressure on the government to make its position known on the land and police powers to the provinces. Rhetoric serves no purpose in addressing a vexed problem.

What is of concern to us is the government's failure to make discussions on devolution etc an inclusive process. There has been no Muslim representation at talks successive governments had with the LTTE. Muslim politicians are against any move to reduce the strength of the Muslims of the Eastern Province by re-emerging that area with the Tamil dominated Northern Province. They have even asked for a separate South-Eastern Council. Interests of the Tamils in the hills are also different from those of their northern counterparts. The government says that CWC leader A. Thondaman is opposed to police powers being devolved to the provinces as his party cannot form an administration in the Central Province to have control over the police; he, therefore, prefers to have the police under the government which he is in a position to influence thanks to his bargaining power at the national level, we are told. So, a one-size-fits-all approach to devolution should be avoided and the rights of all stakeholders to participate in talks and have their voice heard, recognised. That is the most democratic way of setting about the task of addressing the root causes of the conflict and devolving State power.

All previous attempts at devolution etc came a cropper because they were limited to only two parties—the government in power and the LTTE—and aimed at appeasing intransigent terrorists who used to up the ante. Other stakeholders were kept in the dark and devolution was forced on them as a *fait accompli*. The rest is history.

Past mistakes must not be repeated.

The eternal universe

Unravelling The Secrets Technologically

BY SWAMI SUNIRMALANANDA

SCIENTISTS have recently told lay people around the globe that there is a crisis in physics: that a particle called neutrino travelled some 60 nanoseconds faster than light, questioning the equation $E=mc^2$. Repeated experiments have confirmed in mid-November that neutrinos really travel faster than light. Scientists may now have to rewrite the books on physics. They had once concluded that the highest speed limit for any object or wave is 186,282 miles (299,792.5 km) per second – the speed of light. Conventional theories are set for a change.

When and how did the universe originate? Who or what was its cause? What is its ultimate building block? These and other questions have attracted philosophers and scientists alike since ages. Initially metaphysics and physics were one and the same. Physics branched out recently. Today, qualified physicists and scientists are struggling to uncover the secrets of the universe technologically. They use terse mathematical equations, just as they used geometry before. Scientists may soon use some other language, with the advance in computer technology.

Philosophers, since the time of the Vedas through the Greeks to Descartes, have done good work in this field, but their language is non-technical. Referring to their contribution, Vivekananda had said: "Today we find wonderful discoveries of modern science coming upon us like bolts from the blue. But many of these are only re-discoveries of what had been found ages ago. ... It [science] has just discovered that what it calls heat, magnetism, electricity and so forth are all convertible into one unit force. ... But this has been done even in the Samhita (3:399).

Swami Vivekananda presents a worldview, non-technically, based on his own insight and on the Vedic tradition, through his talks and writings delivered between 1893 and 1897. That was a decade before Albert Einstein's Special Relativity (1905) and two decades before General Relativity (1916).

Vivekananda's worldview calls for reflection. As regards creation, Vivekananda affirms: "Creation is eternal" (8:30). "The Vedas teach us that creation is without beginning or end. ... There never was a time when there was no creation" (1:7). Is this universe eternal? Vivekananda explains: "The word *srishti* expresses the universe. Mark that the word does not mean creation. I have to translate the Sanskrit words as best as I can. It is *srishti*, projection. At the end of a cycle, everything becomes finer and finer and is resolved back into the primal state from which it sprang, and there it remains for a time quiescent, ready to spring forth again".

How does this projection happen? It is rooted in the vibration of prana. To quote Vivekananda: "The different pranas are resolved back into the primal prana, and this prana becomes almost motionless – not entirely motionless; and that is what is described in the Vedic sukta. It vibrated with vibrations" – *ānidāvātam*. We read again [in the Katha Upanishad], "Everything in this universe has been projected, prana vibrating" [3:400].

What is this prana? Vivekananda answers: "Prana is *spandana* or vibration. Prana means force [energy] – all that is manifesting itself as movement or possible movement, force, or attraction. Electricity, magnetism, all the movements in the body, all [the movements] in the mind – all these are various manifestations of one thing called prana" (1:503).

So this eternal universe is a vibration of



Physics begins with motion. To quote Vivekananda: "Every little bit, every atom inside the universe, is in a constant state of change and motion, but the universe as a whole is unchangeable, because motion or change is a relative thing; we can only think of something in motion in comparison with something which is not moving. There must be two things in order to understand motion. The whole mass of the universe, taken as a unit, cannot move. In regard to what will it move? It cannot be said to change. With regard to what will it change?" (2:275). What about the time-space-causation? "Time depends on two events, just as space has to be related to outside objects. And the idea of causation is inseparable from time and space" (2:135).

prana. What about matter that we experience? Vivekananda says: "All matter throughout the universe is the outcome of one primal matter called akasha; and all force, whether gravitation, attraction or repulsion, or life, is the outcome of one primal force called prana. Prana acting on akasha is creating or projecting the universe. At the beginning of a cycle, akasha is motionless, unmanifested. Then prana begins to act, more and more, creating

grosser and grosser forms out of akasha – plants, animals, men, stars, and so on. After an incalculable time this evolution ceases and involution begins, everything being resolved back through finer and finer forms into the original akasha and prana. So, 'Mind becomes matter, and matter in its turn becomes mind, it is simply a question of vibration (6:34). 'The same [fact] looked at from one standpoint becomes matter. The same one from another standpoint becomes mind" (1:406).

About 'empty' space, Vivekananda says: "Is there any break between you and the sun? It is a continuous mass of matter, the sun being one part, and you another. Is there a break between one part of a river and another?" [1:154]

Regarding the connection between matter and energy, Vivekananda says: "We have resolved the whole universe into two components, into what are called matter and energy, or what the ancient philosophers of India called akasha and prana. The next step is to resolve this akasha and the prana into their origin" (2:265). "Now there is something beyond akasha and prana. Both can be resolved into a third thing called mahat – the Cosmic Mind. This Cosmic Mind does not create akasha and prana, but changes itself into them" (1:360).

Vivekananda had approached Nicholas Tesla, seeking a formula that energy and matter can be reduced to potential energy (mahat). Tesla invited him to his lab to demonstrate the equation, but failed. Tesla heard Vivekananda's lectures and began to use akasha and prana subsequently.

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Finally, the electro-magnetic wave called light. There was no telecommunication during Vivekananda's time. Yet he says: "The vibration of light is everywhere. The owl sees it in the dark. That shows it is there, though man cannot see it. To man, that vibration is only visible in the lamp, in the sun, in the moon, etc" (2:42). Again, "The vibration of light is everywhere in this room: why cannot you see it everywhere? You have to see it only in that lamp" [4:101]. So with sound.

This, in brief, is Vivekananda's worldview. Why is it important? The physicist, Prof Hans Peter Durr's 'Inanimate and Animate Matter' in *What is Life* (2002) declares: "Modern quantum physics reveals that matter is not composed of matter, but reality is merely potentiality" (p. 145). Further, Prof Lothar Schäfer of Arkansas University writes in *Lou Massa's Science and the Written Word*, 2011, "The quantum phenomena show that reality is a trans-material, trans-empirical, and trans-personal wholeness". (The Statesman/ANN)

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