



# SCIENCE & SPIRITUAL QUEST

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आ नौ भद्राः कर्तवो यन्तु विश्वतोऽर्दब्धासो अर्परीतास उद्भिर्दः । (RgVeda) *Let noble thoughts come to us from every side*

## Science-Spirituality Dialogue "Clones are People Too"



A Discussion between  
Prof. Arthur L. Caplan (left),  
Director of the Center for Bioethics at  
the University of Pennsylvania  
and  
Dr. T. D. Singh (right), Founding-Director  
of Bhaktivedanta Institute

**Dr. T. D. Singh:** I am also interested to discuss with you about cloning, and about abortion.

**Arthur L. Caplan:** Sure. My view on abortion is, it should be legal. But you shouldn't be using abortion as birth control, because it is immoral to irresponsibly begin a life and then end it. It is not because I think embryos have features of a full person. But they are potential persons; they have real value.

So I think I would keep abortion legal, but I would argue that ethically you don't want to use it. Sometimes it is used as a form of birth control, in Japan, in Russia for example. I don't think that's the right approach to abortion; it should be there as a last resort, when you try to act in a sexually responsible way.

Cloning, you may be surprised, I think that cloning is unlikely to work to make people. If you look at the biology, using old DNA which has all kinds of problems in the genetic composition, putting it in the eggs which have what I will call hatching problem, the chemicals in the eggs are looking for new DNA and are finding the old DNA... the failure rates on the animals are enormous, because of this problem, and I don't really see that we are going to get better at this, it is impaired in biology. No one has cloned a monkey, a primate, and most species have not turned out to be cloneable, so to use cloning to make people, I am not sure it will work. I know that everybody is running around and talking as if it does, or if it's going to happen, or somebody did it. I don't believe it. I think that the chances of getting a healthy human being out of cloning are pretty poor. ...So if you could make people by cloning, I would not

## INSIDE



► On the  
**SHOULDERS of**  
— **GIANTS** —



**King Kulasekhara**

► **VEDANTA and**  
— **SCIENCE** —



*The Humble  
Approach to  
Reality*

► **NEWS BIRDS**



*2018 Summer School  
"Space and Time in Science and  
Spiritual Traditions"  
28th June - 1 July 2018  
IIT-BHU, Varanasi*



*"Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much;  
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more."*

— William Cowper  
Poet

**To Know about Life, Matter, and their Interactions is called Knowledge**

be opposed, if it could be safe. I actually think it's like making people by in-vitro fertilization, it's just another way to make them. If the clones are made that way, and if they move next to you, nothing would happen; people assume they would be monsters or some terrible thing would happen, I don't believe that's true. If you want to put it this way, I think clones have souls, they have spirit, and why not make a bumper sticker that says, "Clones are people too, they are just made in a different way". But I don't think that's going to happen. I actually believe the biology from animals is telling us, this is trouble to do on people!

[Excerpt from the book, *Savijnanam vol-9— Scientific Exploration for a Spiritual Paradigm*, Bhaktivedanta Institute, Kolkata]

## On the Shoulder of Giants

### King Kulasekhara

(The Seventh Alvar)

King Kulasekhara was the second known ruler of the Chera kingdom (c. 800—1124 AD ), whose capital was Travancore, presently known as Thiruvananthapuram. Though a ruler, King Kulasekhara is worshipped and revered as one of the greatest saints of South India. Amongst the twelve alvars (Vaishnava Saints) of Sri Sampradaya, King Kulasekhara is known as the seventh alvar and an embodiment of love, devotion and surrender to Lord Vishnu.

King Kulasekhara took birth in the Chera dynasty to the king Drdhavrata and queen Nadhanayaki. The couple were childless for a long time and fervently prayed to Lord Vishnu. His birth is recorded as the blessings of the divine, and an incarnation of Kaustubha gem worn by Lord Vishnu. Growing up as a prince, Kulasekhara learned all the martial arts besides becoming proficient in Sanskrit and Tamil. In due course of time, Kulasekhara ascended the throne and ruled his kingdom in accordance to the religious principles. It is said that his rule was so good that people compared it to the rule of Lord Rama in Ayodhya. Following the family tradition, the king would visit every day the Lord Ananta-Padmanabha Swami, the Deity of Lord Vishnu situated at Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum), to offer obeisances and present his reports about the daily administration. This tradition of the King of Travancore visiting Lord Ananta-Padmanabha Swami continues to this day.

On seeing the greatness and the character of Kulasekhara, Pandiyan king married his daughter to King Kulasekhara. While he was leading a life of a monarch, engrossed in state affairs and extending his kingdom by capturing the various empires, one day he was blessed with the divine vision of Lord Sriman Narayana in his dream. This incident brought a drastic change in his life. The king began to contemplate about the higher purpose of life beyond royal comforts and material acquisition. He would invite the saintly personalities and submissively inquire about the nature of reality and the highest goal of life. Thus, he dovetailed his life towards the service of the divine and His devotees. Attending the discourse of *Sriman Ramayana*, *Mahabharatha* and *Srimad bhagavatam* was a daily routine. His mind was so much absorbed in the pastimes of Lord Rama, that he felt Lord Rama's joy and sorrow was his. One day while hearing the narration about the war between Lord Rama and Ravan, King Kulasekhara immediately got up and ordered his



King Kulasekhara

Image credit: Creative Commons Attribution

army to immediately proceed to help Lord Rama. The ministers could not calm down the king until the victory of Lord Rama was narrated. This explains the great attraction and devotion of King Kulasekhara towards Lord Rama who was therefore known as 'Kulasekhara Perumal'.

Gradually, he learnt about the holy town of Sri Ranganam and yearned to reside there rendering service to Lord Ranganatha. Thus he renounced the worldly life and handed over the kingdom to his son. He went on pilgrimage visiting various holy shrines and finally settled at Srirangam. Here, he built the corridor around the temple that to this day is known as *Kulasekaran thiru-surru* (the Kulasekhara passage). He composed several verses in the glorification of the Supreme Lord. His outpourings of love and devotion to Lord Rama is evident in his poetic compilation called "*Perumal thirumozhi*". In the last ten verses he describes the entire *Ramayana*. In his verses on Lord Srinivasa of Thiruvinkatam, he expresses his utmost desire to become the door step at the entrance of the Lord's sanctum enabling him to have the constant uninterrupted vision of the Lord's lotus feet. To honor the desire of the alvar, in Thirupathi, the door step at the inner sanctum of the Lord is called "*Kulasekhara-padi*" (the step of Kulasekhara). The beautiful stotra in Sanskrit – *Mukunda Mala* (a garland of priceless pearls of love and devotion to Lord Mukunda) is also attributed to this Alvar. Herein, Kulasekhara alvar says that one should utilize every opportunity of human life to remember and meditate on the Supreme Lord, and not to reserve such spiritual practices for old age. He wrote: *krishna tvadiya-pada-pankaja-panjarantam adyaiva me visatu manasa-raja-hamsah prana-prayana-samayе kapha-vata-pittaih kanthavarodhana-vidhau smaranam kutas te*. Meaning: "O Lord Krishna, now at this moment let the royal swan of my mind enter the tangled stems of the lotus of Your feet. At the time of death, when my throat will be choked up with mucus, bile, and air, how will it be possible for me to remember You?"

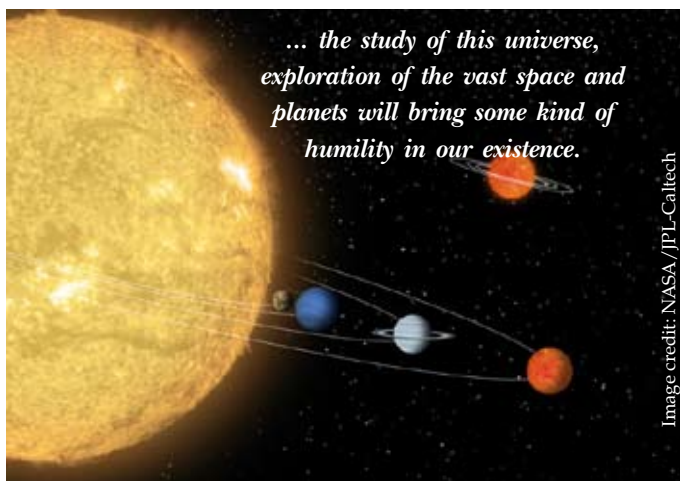
Kulasekhara Alvar spent his last days at Mannarkovil in Tamil Nadu offering services to deity of Lord Rajagopala Swamy and departed to the spiritual abode at the age of 77. In honour of this great saint the temple is named as *Kulasekhara Alvar Koyil*.

## Vedanta & Science

### The Humble Approach to Reality

To have a glimpse of this cosmic creation is a fundamental part of the journey into the inquiry into nature of reality; why I have come here, why are there different universes, what is the purpose of creation and also to get a glimpse of the meaning and purpose of life. Even if you say that it is inconceivable, that is good enough; you become more humble thinking that you are small, we are very tiny in our intelligence and in our ability to comprehend, therefore one becomes humbler. Therefore one develops the qualification, suitable to enter into inquiry of spiritual nature.

Today in the scientific world, there is Big bang theory, string theory ; all these are going on in different parts of the world. Many discussions are going on about the origin of universe and these are the important topics of study in the field of science. There are innumerable young students and scholars in science who are involved in trying to find out what was the origin of the universe and then so many theories are coming out. These theories are sometimes changing because they discover some new things and that's how there is no conclusion; and there will never be conclusion.



In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Sri Sukadeva Gosvami explains that, even if we have a large life time, it will never be possible to comprehend fully about the details of cosmic creation. This is not discouragement, rather this is an indication that the Lord and his energies and creative forces are inconceivable. It is called *acintya* which means inconceivable. So from these

descriptions one can have the glimpse of the conception about the inconceivable nature of the Lord's creation". And this is useful just like Einstein's conception of God. One aspect of his conception of God is that he saw in the universe one quality that the universe is very orderly. Therefore this is one aspect of trying to show that God exists. Second aspect that he was focusing on was, the laws of nature of this universe are inconceivable. These laws of nature if you try to understand just to have a glimpse of it, he comes to a conclusion that, it is inconceivable and in that conception there is beauty. It is the beauty of the wonderful inconceivable nature of this creation, of this material manifestation. ... In this conception he gives description for one to realize that this whole universe is inconceivable and therefore it is possible that one can have at least a glimpse of the existence of God.

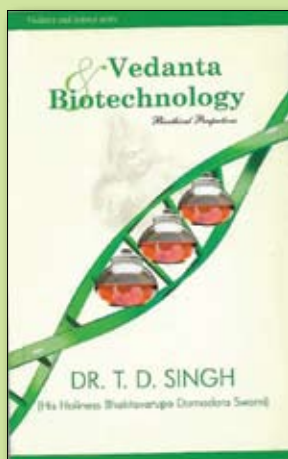
There is another Einstein's saying that "Science without religion is lame and religion without science is blind." In other words we acknowledge that the scientific knowledge can give us some glimpse of a portion or some aspects of knowledge, but it is not going to be full spectrum of knowledge. On the other hand in the realm of spiritual conception we speak about the existence of God and science of God. Therefore when combined together, one can have a holistic approach or holistic look into the scriptural knowledge and this way it will be very useful.

Humility means that when we know our relation to the Lord, then automatically we become humble, just by that knowledge. Because we know there are so many things that we cannot do and it is inconceivable how we are walking, how we are opening our eyes, and so many things, inconceivable things, we cannot know. By accumulation of all these facts, a sincere soul develops this quality naturally. One cannot say that he can know all these things, at least it is very clear that we don't even know how we are walking, how the muscles are in a nice cooperation; every step that we make is something inconceivable. So, knowing all these inconceivable things, one can realize his or her insignificant position. That is the symptom of sages and saintly people. Thus, in the spiritual journey one needs to be submissive and orient one's thoughts towards the understanding that, it is not possible to get the knowledge without the blessings and the mercy of the Lord. Therefore one begins to mould one's life to have the culture of humility. Thus the study of this universe, exploration of the vast space and planets will bring some kind of humility in our existence.

[Excerpt from the book, *Srila Sripada in Switzerland*, Bhaktivedanta Institute, Kolkata]

## BOOK

Online Store: <http://www.binstitute.org/bookstore/>



## VEDANTA AND BIOTECHNOLOGY

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28<sup>th</sup> June -1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018

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*For further details, please contact : [sushant@binstitute.org](mailto:sushant@binstitute.org)*

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