

The Prajapati (butterfly) symbology of creation, as it applies to Nimbarka Philosophy

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Abstract

Cosmology teaches us that everything is connected – from the deeply infinitesimal to the full grandeur of the Universe. In this paper we will explore the startling symmetry between the radiant spiritual side of existence, and the majestic material reality that we see around us. Going from the deepest to the grandest dimensions, we will discover that our human presence is like a seed that has been planted in a very fertile germination zone, with tremendous headroom to grow through multiple levels of Divinity.

The deep symmetry of the material and spiritual sides reminds us of the Prajapati, or butterfly, another name for Brahma – the creator. The left wing of the butterfly represents the quantum threshold, below which no quantum of energy (typically a photon) can exist continuously in this universe. This is the domain of Purusha, extremely low energy densities, with extraordinarily high degrees of freedom. The right wing is the domain of Prakriti, where we have much higher energy densities, and the macro level properties of matter dominate our perceptions.

The deep significance of Nimbarka philosophy is reflected threefold in this cosmic depiction of the Prajapati. For one, the Purusha and the Prakriti, the Krishna and the Radha – are shown in stable symmetric configuration. Each one is incomplete without the other, and between them they hold together the reality that we know. Secondly, we see a continuum from the highly spiritual to the intensely material – suggesting a deep unifying principle that binds the totality of our existence – in spite of the many differences of locality and expression. The third, Sri Nimbarka himself is thought to be the embodiment of the Sudarshan Chakra, and the cyclic nature of the motion between spiritual and material existence takes on a whole new meaning in the context of the Prajapati symbology.

A Cosmic Depiction

Figure 1 depicts the universe (as we know it) along two axes. The horizontal axis is energy contained within a particle or system – measured in Electron Volts (or eV). From Einstein's famous equation ($E=mc^2$) we know that mass can be measured in terms of energy, and vice versa. The energy is expressed in a geometric (log) scale, ranging from as small as 10^{-30} eV to as high as 10^{130} eV. On the vertical axis, also using a log scale, we find the dimension of distance, expressed in meters. Here too we have a very large range, going from 10^{-35} meters to as high as 10^{26} meters – estimated to be about the size of our universe. In this scale, we can map atoms, human beings, planets, stars, and even the entire universe. In this two dimensional depictions, there is a distinct pattern within which all of creation seems to unfold.

To discern the pattern, we need to plug in the fundamental unit of quantum mechanics, the Planck's constant, in terms of the Plank length ($\sim 10^{-35}$ m) and the Planck Energy ($\sim 10^{28}$ eV). The heavy line leaning left, and going towards the top left corner, is the Quantum (Photonic) threshold. What it means is that for a given dimension, this is the smallest amount (quantum) of radiant energy for a single photon of

electromagnetic radiation that will fit within the given dimension. Setting up the symmetry on the other side is the Holographic Bound, the energy concentration beyond which relativistic effects cause regions of space to separate from the rest of the Universe and form black holes. In between these two lines, the two wings of the butterfly, plays out the evolution of our universe, and the story of our human existence within this universe.

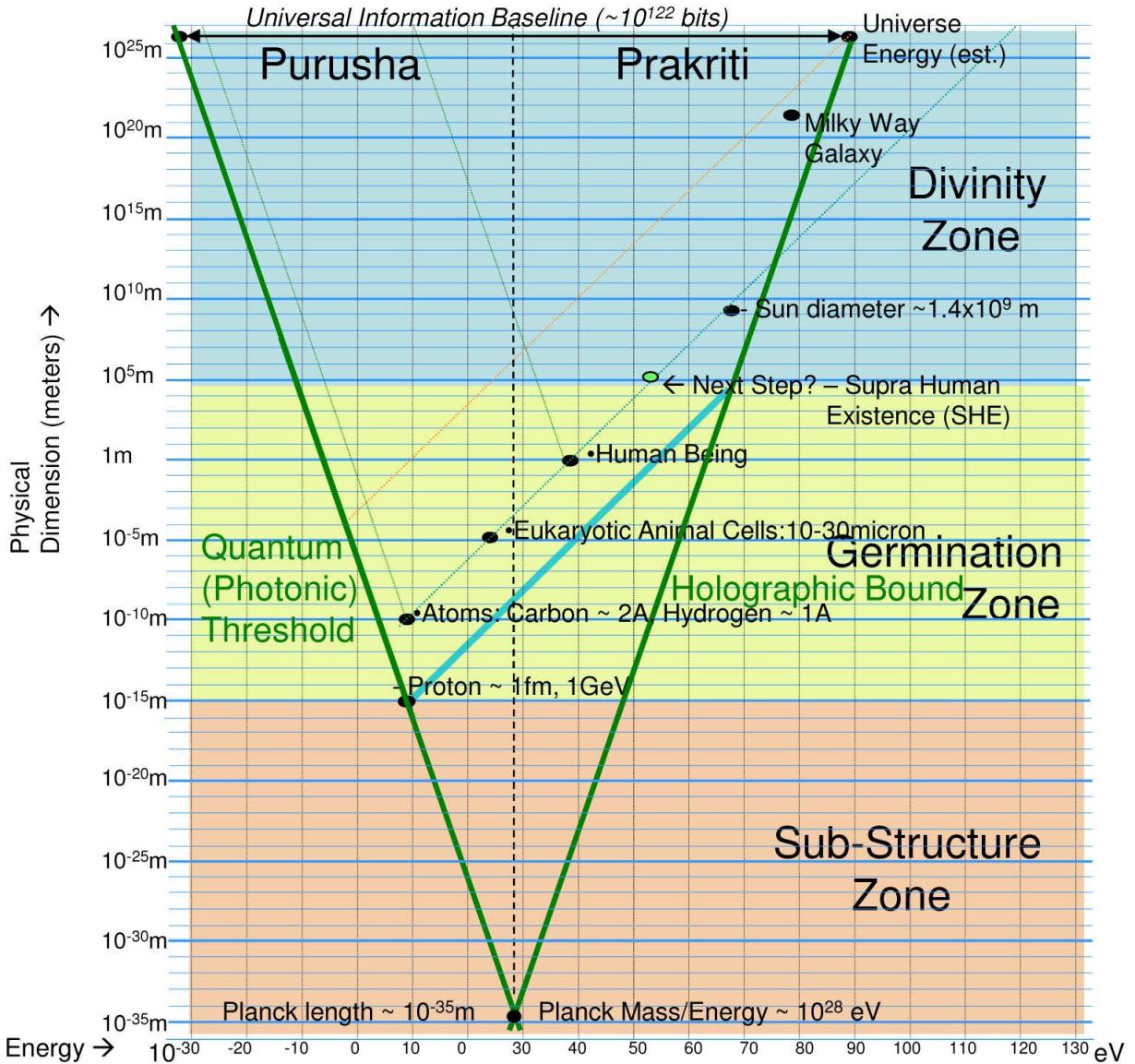


Figure 1: The three zones of the Prajapati (butterfly) – schematic depiction of the Universe

The bottom third of Figure 1 is sub-nuclear, or the sub-structure zone for all the matter that we observe around us. The science of today does not permit us to delve too far into this zone. The middle third of the diagram represents the germination zone, where atoms can come together to form molecules, then living cells, and then on to intelligent creatures like us. Giving life an easy gradient to scale is the density of water – which is why the atoms, cells, etc. seem to line up so cleanly. Perhaps a more fundamental limit in this zone is the density of atomic nuclei – which represents the right leaning heavy line slanting

away from the Proton at the very edge of the sub-structure zone. Where it hits the holographic bound at the top edge of the germination zone, we have the first appearance of black holes at about the 50Km range.

If we follow the regular cadence from atoms to cells to human beings, we see that the next level of organization puts us at the threshold of the zone of Divinity. This level of organization has two meanings in the human context. One is the historical biological carrying capacity of planet earth. The second is the complexity of the global human civilization that we can hope to become. The full experience of this potential human beach-head into divinity is indeed transformative. To get a feel for this jump in experience level - It is as big a jump from the individual consciousness within the cells within our body, to the full consciousness of a sentient human being. Subsequently, also in the zone of Divinity, we can map the astronomical objects like moon, the sun, the planets, the Milky Way galaxy, and even the full Universe.

We can see from this depiction that our human existence is more on the right hand material side, the side of Prakriti. The amount of matter represented by the dotted line (Planck energy) across the middle demarcating the two symmetries, is but a speck (bindu) to our material perception. This positioning is neither good nor bad – it is just a depiction of the reality we find ourselves in, and something we need to recognize as we seek to find balances within our lives.

The nexus to Nimbarka Philosophy

The deep symmetry of the two edges of existence, cradling between them the Germination Zone for humanity – reflects a deep, enduring, loving and nurturing presence of both Krishna (Purusha) and Radha (Prakriti). Yes, the games and dalliances (leela) still happens between the two, but they are dedicated to bringing the best out of our human existence in the germination zone.

Secondly, we see that even with the differences in locality and expression, the experience of the universal reality is deeply unifying. Quantum mechanics teaches us that the physical states of particles can remain connected (entangled) even across vast distances. Even a quick look at a quantum equation tells us that the quantum probabilities may fade away greatly with distance, but they never quite go down to a mathematical zero even over vast distances and time. If we look deeply enough, we can find the unifying threads of our shared consciousness.

Expanding our consciousness until we can find these unifying threads is a measure of our own growth towards universality. For humanity to achieve the next step in conscious evolution, the Supra Human Existence, we must first learn to find our own common thread of shared human civilizational identity. Being able to do so in the midst of all the differences in locality and expression is perhaps the biggest challenge facing us individually, and humanity collectively, in the present age.

Finally, I'd like to note the cyclic nature of reality as depicted in the Germination zone. Humans start of life (on the material side) as little more than the genetic and chemical information carried within the individual germinal cell. We are born and grow up, building up our own identity and competitiveness. Over time, we live the life of the Grihastha, growing a family and engaging on economic productivity. At

a later time, according to the Ashrama system, we lose ourselves in Service and Nature and find our Universality (Vanaprastha). Finally we live the life of a Sanyasi with few material needs, and prepare to leave our material existence altogether. Life comes around full cycle. All these changes can be reflected by a circular trajectory drawn on Figure 1, within the Germinal zone.

The cyclic nature of life has been written about by many great proponents of Nimbarka philosophy. Sri Nimbarka himself is said to have had a deep connection to the Sudarshan Chakra of the lord Vishnu – by some accounts he is the human expression of the same Chakra. To me, the Chakra is not only the circle that cuts, it is also the cycle that builds. Is it possible that for many humans caught up in the material reality, the Chakra has stopped turning? For many of us, has the path to Universality become obscured by material prosperity? If yes, the answer to humanity's aspirations towards divinity might be as simple as getting the full cycle of existence flowing again...

A brief perspective from Information Science

With the advances in information theory, the information content of an object can now also be mapped on to Figure 1. Measured horizontally, the theoretical information capacity of an object is equal to the relative distance of the body from the Quantum (Photonic) threshold. Thus, the Universal Information Baseline (at the very top of Figure 1) measures out to about 10^{122} bits. By comparison, our human information capacity is about 10^{45} bits. Another way to look at it is – there are about as many atoms in the Universe (10^{79}) as there are equivalent human intelligences in the Universal Information Baseline ($\sim 10^{77}$). Thus, we humans have tremendous headroom to grow our information capacity and conscious awareness. The entire domain of Divinity, the top third of Figure 1, is the space available for our continued growth and discovery. Such is the nature of the potential that has been placed before us...

References:

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About the Author:

Debashis was born in Shillong, India. He inherited a strong sense of spirituality from his mother, as well as a hands-on practicality from his engineer father. Debashis has a master's degree in Electrical Engineering, and is also an MBA. He was with Intel Corporation for 22 years, in positions that spanned the gamut from chip design to investments and acquisitions. This gave him a unique vantage point as to two waves of technology – one the Personal Computer revolution and the second, the coming of the

Internet Age.

He published his first book: 'IN OUR OWN IMAGE: Humanity's Quest for Divinity via Technology' in 2007 – followed soon after by a workbook on the same topic. He also holds a deep passion for communicating about his subject: the common challenges we face in our lives - and how to overcome them in the context of the greater opportunity placed before all of humanity. In addition to his writing and speaking, he and his family are avid travelers and also enjoy community service. For 2008-2009, Debashis is serving as president of the Bengali Cultural Association of Arizona.

Brought up in a family tradition steeped in Eastern spiritualism, Debashis also had the privilege to be educated in a school run by the Christian Brothers. This gave him early exposure to both Eastern and Western spiritual philosophies. An enduring aspect of his work is the appeal to people from diverse backgrounds to partake in a greater vision of humanity's success. In doing so, we do not need to give up our individuality, but to grow it in stages which then ultimately merge into universality. Debashis makes his home in Chandler, Arizona, with his wife Sarbari, daughter Shilpika, son Abhik (and dog Shilo).
