



International Seminar on Science and Religion

July 8, 2013



"THE UNKNOWNABLE AND THE COUNTERINTUITIVE"

Venue: Xavier Hall **Time:** 9.30 am to 4.30 pm

Organized by
Physics and EVS Departments, St. Xavier's College, Kolkata



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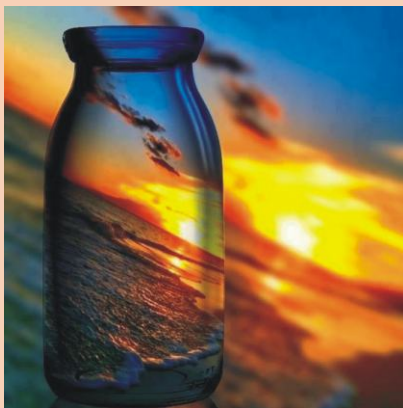


“THE UNKNOWABLE AND THE COUNTERINTUITIVE”

“The Surprising Insights of Modern Science”

In the developed world, regular seminar/conference/workshops are held round the year on topics related to Science, Religion and Society. It is evident from the activities of a number of organizations like The Metanexus Institute, the Zygon Center for Religion and Science, The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion at the University of Cambridge etc.

Although India, a land of spirituality, is ushering in as a new center of superpower (military, economic and science & Technology), it has the utmost need of a synergy of Religious & Scientific strengths. In an age of religious intolerance and extreme spread of consumerism, the country should have active centers of interdisciplinary research centers catering to the society through the apparently diversified paths of Religion and Science & Technology. They should be dedicated to relating religious traditions and the best scientific knowledge in order to gain insight into the origins, nature, and destiny of humans and their environment and to realize the common goal of a world in which love, justice, and responsible patterns of living prevail.



The primary interest behind organizing the seminar is to examine how individuals with a technical background should approach the conversation between science and religion. The contention of the experts in this field is that any such dialogue naturally begins with science, and the realization that what we have learned about physical reality is highly

counterintuitive and often remarkably beautiful. This suggests that a better understanding of science can open the door to a broader conversation about the existence of a "Cosmic Mystery" and about the compatibility of science and religion. This could be an extremely effective approach, since all religious traditions and even atheists can agree on scientifically

established facts. Once they recognize how "strange" these facts can be, technically educated individuals tend to be much more receptive to religious interpretations.

Most of the talks would therefore be devoted to the idea that scientific knowledge can often be helpful in initiating interreligious and intercultural conversations towards "The Unknowable and The Counterintuitive".



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Programme Schedule

10.00 am - 11.30 am: Inauguration : Session I

Inaugural address: **Rev. Dr. Felix Raj, SJ**
Principal, Sr. Xavier's College, Kolkata

Keynote address: **Prof. Aleksandar Zecevic**
School of Engineering, Santa Clara University,
California, USA.

11.30 am - 12.00 pm: Tea Break

12.00 pm - 1.00 pm: Interactive Session

1.00 pm - 2.00 pm: Lunch

2.00 pm - 4.00 pm: Session- II

2.00 pm - 3.00 pm: Lecture 2:
Quest and Questioning of Science and Religion:
Rev. Dr. Xavier Savarimuthu, SJ
Head, Dept. of Env. Studies, SXC, Kolkata

3.00 pm - 4.00 pm: Lecture 3:
Swami Atmapriyananda
Vice Chancellor, R K Mission Vivekananda
University, Belur, Howrah.

4.00 pm - 4.30 pm:
Planning the future sessions and collaboration.

Supporting Organisation:

The Goethals Indian Library and Research Society (GILRC)
St. Xavier's College, Kolkata.
<http://www.goethals.in>



Dr. Aleksandar Zecevic is a Professor of Electrical Engineering at Santa Clara University, and the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies. His technical research interests include graph theoretic decomposition algorithms, electric power systems, Boolean networks and the control of complex dynamic systems. He has published more than 40 papers in the leading journals in these fields, and some of his most important results are summarized in his book: *Control of Complex Systems: Structural Constraints and Uncertainty* (2010).

<http://www.engr.scu.edu/~azecevic/>

Over the past 15 years, Dr. Zecevic has also done a considerable amount of work in the area of science and religion. He has recently published two books on this subject: *Truth, Beauty and the Limits of Knowledge: A Path from Science to Religion* (which is aimed at a broad audience), and *The Unknowable and the Counterintuitive: The Surprising Insights of Modern Science* (which provides an advanced treatment of technical topics such as chaos theory, metamathematics, quantum mechanics and relativity).

In 2005, Dr. Zecevic developed a unique new course entitled: *Chaos Theory, Metamathematics and the Limits of Knowledge: A Scientific Perspective on Religion*. What makes this course unusual is the fact that it counts both as a technical elective for engineering students, and satisfies the third religious studies requirement in Santa Clara University's Core Curriculum. This may well be the only religious studies course in the world that has differential equations as a prerequisite, and requires extensive programming and simulation.

Rev. Dr. Xavier Savarimuthu, SJ, is a Jesuit priest, heading the department of Environmental studies at St. Xavier's college, Kolkata. He teaches in the departments of environmental science and microbiology with a Ph.D. in the epidemiological research on arsenic poisoning and its health impacts on the affected population of North and South 24 Parganas districts in West Bengal. He is involved in a dugwell program in India to provide arsenic-safe water to the poor villagers in the arsenic affected blocks of Degonga and Habra(I) in North 24 Parganas district. He has presented and published valuable papers on his work in arsenic both in India and abroad. His latest article is on "The Earth we want requires reconciliation with creation".

(<http://www.sjweb.info/sjs/headlines/newsShow.cfm?PubTextID=13034&pubid=14371>).

He conducted courses on "environment and public health in South Asia" at Santa Clara University, California. He is also a consultant in the arsenic research taking place at the bioengineering department of Santa Clara University and the Institute of Catholic Bioethics, Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Swami Atmapriyananda is the Vice Chancellor of Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Madras, India, in Theoretical Physics for his work in particle theory and has a number of research publications in reputed international journals. Inspired by Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideology, he joined the Ramakrishna Order of monks in 1978 and was posted at Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, a premier college of Ramakrishna Mission at Belur Math, where he taught Physics for nearly 25 years besides serving as Vice-Principal and Principal for 19 years before taking charge as Vice Chancellor of Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University in July 2005.

As a monk and an educationist, his present interests are: (i) Swami Vivekananda's educational vision education for character building in the youth (ii) Yoga-Vedanta vis-à-vis modern science, (iii) Ramakrishna-Vivekananda thought in the context of present day challenges, (iv) Consciousness Studies as taught in the Upanishads, (v) Synthesis of the four yogas as taught by Swami Vivekananda and Bhagavad-Gita, and (vi) Harmony of religions as lived and taught by Sri Ramakrishna. He has a good number of publications on the above subjects in the journals of Ramakrishna Order and of various organizations.