CHAPTER-IV

The Concept of consciousness in Indian Perspective
Actually there is no philosophical system, which can be called Indian Philosophy, yet we use to keep the philosophical thinking, or system developed in Indian geographical boundary under the heading of Indian Philosophy. In fact, philosophy cannot have geographical boundary because any development made by the philosophers, whether Indian or Western, belongs to philosophy as a whole. But if we use the term "Indian Philosophy" we seem to understand what the term refers and therefore, this is so named.

The study on the Concept of Consciousness cannot be completed if we do not discuss about the Concept of Consciousness in Indian perspective. So many important discussions about consciousness have been made in Indian Philosophical Systems. Starting from the Vedas and Upanishads up to the contemporary Indian thinkers we have so many things to discuss about the concept of consciousness in Indian perspective. But in order to make a limited area of study I will try to discuss only the main points regarding the concept of consciousness from the various Indian Philosophical Systems.

Before going to discuss about the various systems of Indian philosophy it is better to enquire the root of the concept of consciousness inherent in the Vedas, for Vedas are the earliest works
of Indian thought. So, let us see to what extent pre- Upāniṣadic thinking can disclose the mystery of the concept of consciousness. We do not find much of strictly metaphysical speculations in the Vedas except the concept of an immanent and universal reality, which is emerging as the basic unitary principle underlying the forces of the cosmos, and which contains latent potentialities of giving rise to fundamental philosophical problems later on. The famous Rgveda hymn declares: "na asat asit na sat asit tadānim, kāmas tadāgre samavartatadhi manaso ātah prathamam yad asit. Kato bandhum asati niravidān hṛdi pratisya kavayo manisā." ("Then there was neither being nor non-being. Then for the first time there arose 'kāmas' which had the primeval germ of 'manas' within it. It adds significantly that 'the sages searching in their hearts discovered in 'non-being', the connecting bond of 'being'.")

Here the meaning of 'Kāma' is not clear which is declared as the foremost germ of mind; yet reading the verse we can find here an embryonic suggestion for a future philosophy of consciousness. Kāma here certainly does not mean desire in the ordinary empirical sense. It rather refers to a cosmic, central and a unitary principle of productivity, or a fecundating power which is as yet neither mind nor non-mind, but is only an indiscriminate fullness of potentiality throbbing to become
something definite and finite and fermenting to manifest itself later on as 'mind' or consciousness. It is to be noticed that the sages had to reach it in their hearts and not outside suggests that the ultimate reality might be finally an inner reality, or be processed of mind or consciousness as its essential nature. It is because later on, the Ātman is declared as ‘hrdyāntar jyotih’ in the Upaniṣads and later still a pure consciousness (cit) is regarded as the essential nature of ‘Brahman’ in the Vedanta and ‘Pūrūṣa’ in the Sāṅkhya yoga. Moreover, this highest reality contained within it the seed of mind, which later on became the source of differentiation might also suggest that, in the last resort, this ultimate root reality has something of the nature of primeval consciousness of which it cannot be divested, though it cannot in anyway be equated with what is known to us as empirical consciousness. But the Vedic thought remained silent about the fundament and universal reality, the Being. In Rgveda 1.164, 37, we observe: “na va jānami yad iva idam asmi” (‘what thing I truly I know not’). On this casual reflection of the Vedas, the Upaniṣadic concept developed. For R. Safaya, in the pre-upaniṣadic period, mind generally denotes consciousness and is used for certain powers, which form ideas and decisions.

S. K. Saxena observes a determined effort to reflect systematically on the different stages of the development of
consciousness in Aitareya Aranyaka. Here a beginning is made in the successive gradation of reality on the basis of degrees of sensibility and intelligence discovered in plants, beasts and man. It represents the earliest metaphysics of consciousness in Hindu thought. We read: “There are herbs and trees and all that is animal, and he knows the Ätman gradually developing in them. For in herbs and trees, Sap only is seen but ‘citta’ is seen in animated beings. Among animated beings again, the Ätman develops gradually; and in man, again, the Ätman develops gradually, for he is the most endowed with prajñā. He says what has known, he sees what he has known, he knows what is to happen tomorrow, he knows the visible and the in visible world, and by means of the mortal he desires the immortal. Thus he is endowed with regard to other animals, hunger and thirst are a kind of understanding, but they do not say what they have known, they do not know what is to happen tomorrow, etc. they go so far and no further.” (Aitareya Aranyaka – 2. 3. 2)

Upaniṣadic sages tried to find out the true nature of Ätman which is seen to develop from plants to man, and to disclose the rahasya of Ätman. In Chhāndyoga Upaniṣad, Prajāpati unfolds successively this ‘Rahasyam’ when Indra and Virocana approach him for knowledge of the immortal self. The Ätman is progressively, and step-by-step identified with the body consciousness, the dream consciousness and the deep sleep unconsciousness till finally it is
declared to be the one, which persists unaffected through all these conditions of the empirical existence. A similar physico-psychological method is adopted in the Taittiriya, and here too, the successive unfolding of the essence of the Ātman reaching the ‘Yājnavalkya’s Vijñānamaya, finally ends in its characterization as ‘Ānandamaya’.

According to Upaniṣadic sages, consciousness (caitanya) vests not in the body or the mind but in the self. Consciousness is an attribute of the pure self, or the ultimate reality. Māndūkya Upaniṣad explains four states of the soul, viz. (1) visva, the waking state, (2) taijasa, the dream state, (3) the prajñā, the state of dreamless sleep and the (4) state of spiritual consciousness.

Upaniṣadic psychology starts with four states of consciousness, the wakeful, the dream, the sleep and the super-consciousness corresponding to the four such states of cosmic consciousness namely the Virāt, the Hiranyakṣubha, the Isvara and Brahman. Again, consciousness is not an attribute of mind but of the self, which illuminates both mind and body. Ātman and Brahman being identical, consciousness (cit) being one of the attributes of the ultimate Reality, it pervades the entire universe, in the animate and the inanimate beings, differing only in degree. The same consciousness acts at the individual level and is responsible for four marked states of cosmos and of individuality. Actually according to Upaniṣads, Brahman is consciousness Absolute (cit). The Upaniṣads identify the self with the
Absolute, the Ātman with Brahman; the Ātman is not an object of knowledge. The Ātman is beyond the categories of space, time and causality. The Kathā Upaniṣads declares: “The self conjoined with the sense-organs and mind (manas) is the experience (bhoktā). The self is like a person seated in a chariot; the body is the chariot; intellectual (buddhi) is the driver; mind (manas) is the bridle; and the sense organs are the horses.” (Atmānam rathinam viddhi sariram ratham eva ca. Buddhim tu sārathim viddhi manah pragnaham eva ca. Indriyāni hayān aihu. 1, 3, 3-4)

The self acquires consciousness in conjunction with the sense organs. The mind is unconscious but active. The self is conscious and becomes active, though ubiquitous, in conjunction with the manas. The mind acts when the self guides it. It is the knower of all entities. It is supersensible. The later Upaniṣads mention six bases of meditation or Cakras. The Hamsa Upaniṣad mentions seven Cakras: 1) ādhāra, 2) svādhīsthāna, 3) manipuraka, 4) anāhata, 5) visuddha, 6) ājñā, and 7) brahmarandhra. Brahma randhra is described as the seat of Brahman.

The Saubhāgyalakṣmi Upaniṣad mentions 8) tālucakra and 9) ākāsacakra, in addition to the seven cakras mentioned above. The Tantras speak of the cakras as centers of meditations. They are extremely subtle vital forces and centers of consciousness existing in susumṇā in the Spinal cord. The Māndūkya Upaniṣad describes four conditions of the self, which are different degrees of consciousness –
1) the waking state, 2) the dream state, 3) deep sleep and 4) super consciousness.

The Aitareya Upaniṣad advocates intellectualism and recognizes the primacy of intellect or cognition. The Chhandogya Upaniṣad also emphatically declares the primacy of cognition. "Intellectual is better than will for only when a person thinks he wills. Intellect is the sole support of all these." (cittam va va Samkalpād bhuyo ya da vai cetāyati tha samkalpaṃyate. Cittam hyesam ekāyanam. Vi, 5, 1-2). Upaniṣads characterizes consciousness as svayamprakāsa or self luminous. Bṛhadāranyaka declares: ‘Atrāyam Pūrūsah svayam jyotir bhavati. (4.3.14). The Kathā also has it, ‘it shining, everything else shines, this universe shines in consequence of His light, (5. 15). The Chhāndogya says ‘his form is Light, ‘Bharūpah’ (3.14.2). Upaniṣads regarded Ātman as the subject of consciousness.

The Cārvākas are a vigorous school of thinkers in India who repudiated the concept of mind and consciousness and asserted that all our experiences are due to the coming together of the elements of nature. Started by Bṛhaspati, Cārvākas advocated the materialistic view of the concept of consciousness. According to Cārvākas, consciousness arises out of the combination of material elements. It is mere product of matter. Consciousness is produced when the four elements earth, water, fire and air combine in a certain proportion. It is
found always associated with the body and vanishes when the body disintegrates. Consciousness is supposed to arise in the same way as the red colour is produced by the combination of betel leaf, nut and lime, or is the result of mixing up of the white with yellow or again as the power of intoxications is generated in molasses. “Prithvyāptejo vāyur iti tattvāni, tatsamūdaye sarirendriyā-visāya samjñā, tebhyāh caitanyam, kinvādibhyo madasaktivād vijñānam.” (Barhaspatyāni sutrānī) Given the four elements, the self-conscious life mysteriously springs forth, just as the genius makes its appearance when Aladdin rubs his lamp. Thought is a function of matter we have no evidence of the separate existence of soul and body. We do not see the self without a body, consciousness is invariably found in connection with the body. Therefore, it is the body. Man is what he eats.

According to Cārvākas, consciousness is the result of an emergent and dialectical evolution. It is an epi-phenomenon, a by-product of matter given the four elements and their particular combination. Consciousness manifests itself in the living body, matter secretes mind as liver secretes bile. The so-called soul is simply the conscious living body. Cārvākas do not regard consciousness as the essence of mind or soul; on the contrary, they regard consciousness to be a product of the body. Sadananda in his Vedāntasāra mentions four different materialistic schools. One identifies the soul with the gross body (sthula sarira); another with the senses (indriya); another with
vital breaths (prāna) and the last with the mental organ (manas). All the schools agree in regarding the soul as a product of matter. Santaraksita says that the materialist Kanbatashvatara maintains the view the consciousness arises out of the material body associated with vital breaths.

Indian Philosophers made severe and contemptuous criticism against Cārvāka concept of consciousness. If consciousness means self-consciousness as it means in the human beings, then it cannot be identified with the living body. The animals also possess the living body, but not rational consciousness. If consciousness is an essential property of the human body it should be inseparable from it as the Cārvāka claims. But it is not. In swoons, fits, epilepsy, and dreamless sleep etc. the living body is seen without consciousness. On the other hand, in dreams, consciousness is seen without the living body. Consciousness persists through the three stages of waking life, dream life and deep sleep life and is much superior to material body which is its instrument and not its cause.

Again, the mere fact that consciousness is not experienced without the material body is no argument to prove that it is a mere product of matter. For, the eye cannot see darkness; sight is not possible without light, yet light cannot be regarded as the cause of sight. Mere co-existence is not causation. Moreover, if consciousness is a property of the body, it must be perceived like other material
properties. But it is neither smelt nor tasted nor seen nor touched nor heard. Further, if it is a property of matter, then like other material properties it should be known by all in the same manner and should not be private. But we find that consciousness is intimately private and others cannot share consciousness of an individual.

The Concept of Consciousness has played an important role in Buddhism. In his essay "An Evaluation of the Nature of consciousness in Vījñānavāda philosophy", O. P. Jaiswal says that consciousness is the corner stone of Vījñānavāda philosophy. Vījñānavādins talk of everything as illusory except consciousness. Buddha does not believe in the existence of a permanent self, but a stream of consciousness. Early Buddhism defines consciousness as the relation between subject (ārammanika) and object (ārammana). Uniformity is the primary state of mind, while surface consciousness or consciousness, in the ordinary sense of the word, can be defined as a phenomenon of resistance – an obstruction of the stream of being, comparable to the arising of heat and light as phenomenon of resistance of the electric current. According to Vījñānavāda, object is not different from the consciousness of the object. It is only a series of moments of consciousness that they assume the various forms of subject and object.

According to fundamental conception of Buddhist philosophers, everything is in a state of universal flux. Now, consciousness also is
not immune from this constant variation and defunctions. It is also equally momentary. So in the ever-flowing continuum of consciousness the preceding unit of consciousness — moment produces the succeeding unit of conscious moment. The preceding moment of consciousness is the basic element of the next moment of consciousness. Thus there are six sense organs including consciousness. Consciousness is the faculty of intellect, which apprehends non-sensuous objects. It is called mind. It is immaterial and invisible.

Buddhism does not admit a permanent soul as a subject of consciousness; on the contrary it believes in the conception of a soul as an unbroken stream of consciousness. In Buddhism man is only a conventional name for a collection of different constituents — the material body (kāya), the immaterial mind (manas or citta), the formless consciousness (vijñāna), just as a chariot is a collection of wheels, axles, shafts, etc. The existence of man depends on this collection and it dissolves when the collection breaks up. The soul or ego denotes nothing more than this collection. From a psychological point of view, man may be regarded as a combination of five kinds of changing states — panca — skandhas, namely, 1) form (rūpa) consisting of the different factors which are perceived in this body having form, 2) feelings (vedanā) of pleasure, pain and indifference, 3) perception including understanding and naming (sanjñā), 4) predisposition or tendencies
generated by the impressions of past experience (samskras), and 5) consciousness itself (vijnäna).

According to Buddhism, the self is purely a dynamic series without any substrate that changes. Men's life is a series of states of consciousness, which changes as causes and effects. The Doctrine of Patichcha-samuppäda gives us the series of causes and effects developing under the influence of Avijjä in twelve stages 1) Avijjä, 2) sankhära, 3) vijnäna (palisandhi), 4) namarüpa, 5) salâyatana, 6) phässa 7) vedanä, 8) tanhä, 9) upädåna, 10) (kämma) bhava, 11) jåti, 12) jarä marana. But the chain of these causes does not give us the relation between the different states of consciousness any more than the cause of it.

Vijnänaväda admits that there is only one kind of reality, which is of the nature of consciousness (vijnäna). The Lanka Vatära declares that all dharmas, except consciousness are unreal. Consciousness only is the established truth preached by the Buddha. Consciousness is nothing but a series of consciousness. It is like the flame of a lamp which through appearing the same is never such for any two consecutive smallest fractions of time, for it is always created a fresh from moment to moment. Consciousness dies at each moment and is created afresh from its ashes like the phoenix, but the content is transferred from the one to the other. According to P. V. Pathak, a single state of consciousness is a complex whole a part of which is
made up of the contents of the state lying in immediate contiguity to it in the past. Two terms of such an ego series can only be equated thus:

$$s_n = a_{n-1} \{s_{n-1}\}, \ldots s_5 = a_5 \{s_4\}; s_4 = a_4 \{s_3\}; s_3 = a_3 \{s_2\} \text{ etc.}$$

Where $a_{n-1}, a_5, a_4, a_3$ etc are functional free co-efficient of consciousness making original contributions to the series. These coefficients give a new meaning to the fruitions of past actions.\(^5\)

The sum total of our conscious states is called Ālaya-vijñāna. Our personal consciousness knows just a small fraction of Ālayavijñāna. The Yogāchāras maintain that all things and their qualities are nothing but constitutes of consciousness. Sūnyavāda or Mādhyamikas maintain that all consciousness arise in Avidyā, and next arises the distinction of subject and object. So, cosmic process is the product of Avidyā. There is no such thing as consciousness. The mind itself is an illusion. For them, reality is consciousness. Ashvaghosa says, "Just as calm water of the ocean, on account of wind, appears as waves, similarly consciousness, on account of ignorance, appears as finite intellectuals." Vijnānavāda regards consciousness to be the only reality and objects, which appear to be material or external to consciousness, are regarded as really ideas or states of consciousness. As Dharmakirti states, the blue colour and the consciousness of the blue colour are identical, because they are never perceived to exist separately. The Lankāvatāra declares that no external object exists in reality. All that is, is consciousness. The
external world is the creation, not of individual consciousness or mind, but of the Absolute Consciousness. Consciousness is first divided into Individual consciousness (pravrttivijñāna) and Absolute consciousness (Ālaya-vijñāna).

The Sautrāntika School believes in the reality of the external objects as well as consciousness. These objects give particular forms to the different states of consciousness. From these forms or representations of the objects in the mind we can infer the existence of their causes i.e., the objects outside the mind. The Vaibhāsikas admit the reality of both mind and the external objects. They hold that external objects are directly known in perception and not inferred.

Yogāchāra School gives emphasis on sub-consciousness. It states that we are not fully aware of the larger portion of our consciousness. Our personal consciousness or awareness is just a fraction of total consciousness. The greatest contribution of Yogāchāra is its emphasis on super consciousness and yoga. Through yogic exercises mind becomes clear of all illusion and impurities, and so it reflects the truth, and Nirvana is attained.

According to Buddhism, the essential nature of consciousness is such that it is always self-intuited. There is absolutely no need for an extras organ for its cognition. It is an obvious fact that light does not stand in need for its reflection to another light. As light is a self-revealed entity, analogous is the case with consciousness also. The
Buddhist recognizes six varieties of consciousness: visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile and purely mental. Buddha explains various levels of consciousness. Sub-liminal consciousness is the sub-consciousness, kāma-citta is the normal consciousness and Mahāggata Citta is the super conscious state. The sub liminal consciousness is the sub-consciousness below the threshold of consciousness, while the super-liminal is above it. Kāma-citta is the consciousness confined to the mundane world. It is normal consciousness. The super normal consciousness, higher than this level has three phases. Rūpa citta is the consciousness concerned with visible objects, Arūpa with invisible, and Lokottara is the transcendental, over and above both. Rūpa citta roughly corresponds to Dhyāna, and Lokottara to samādhi of yoga. Anirudha gives a detailed account of the levels of consciousness illustrated by the following diagram:6

![Levels of Consciousness Diagram](image-url)
Kāma Citta

Rūpa citta  Arupacitta  Lokottara citta

The concept of Consciousness is an important concept of Jainism. Consciousness has been regarded as the essence of the soul (cetanālaksano jivah). Raghunath Safaya says, “According to Jaina, consciousness is the essential characteristics of the self. It is the very essence of the self and not an adventitious quality. The substratum of consciousness is neither the brain, nor the body, its substratum is only the self.”

Jainism maintains that the whole Universe can be brought under two everlasting, uncreated, external and co-existing categories, which are called Jiva and Ajiva. Jiva is the conscious spirit and Ajiva is the un-consciousness non-spirit. The Jainas regard jiva or soul as a conscious substance. Consciousness is always present in the soul, though its nature and degree may vary. Every soul from the lowest to the highest possesses consciousness. The lowest souls, which inhabit material atoms, appear to be lifeless and unconsciousness, but in fact life and consciousness are present in them though in a dormant form. Purest consciousness is found in the emancipated souls where there is no shred of karma. All souls are really alike. The degrees of
consciousness are due merely to the Karma obstacles. The soul is like a light that illuminates or renders conscious the body wherein it lives. Consciousness is not present everywhere but only in the body.

According to Jainism, consciousness is the essence of the soul or jiva but it is not the essence of mind. For, mind is only the internal sense organ, which is composed of group of atoms. The Jainas regard soul as the subject of consciousness and maintains that consciousness is present only in the body. So, consciousness cannot be present without the body.

It is to be noticed that Jaina concept of consciousness is different from the concept of consciousness in Descartes. Descartes regards consciousness as the essence of mind. While the Jainas regard it as the essence of the soul which is a living being. Descartes' mind or soul is the "thinking thing."

The concept of consciousness in Sāńkhya system paves the way to interpret consciousness in a particular direction. Sāńkhya philosophers regard consciousness as the essence of Pūrūsa, the self. Consciousness is not a product of the elements, since it is not present in them separately, and so cannot be present in them all together. According to Sāńkhya, consciousness is the essence of Pūrūsa, the self but not the essence of mind or manas. Pūrūsa is itself the pure and transcendental consciousness. Consciousness is self's...
very essence and not a mere quality of it. For Sāṅkhya, the self or Purūsa is not the brain, nor mind (manas) nor ego (ahamkāra) nor intellect (buddhi) nor the aggregate of conscious states. It is a conscious spirit, which is the knower, the subject. The self is not a substance whose attribute is consciousness, but it is the pure consciousness as such.

The Sāṅkhya regards the self to be the subject of consciousness. The self is a steady constant consciousness in which there is neither change nor activity. All change and activity, all pleasure and pains belong really to Prakṛti or matter and its products like the body, mind and intellect. As S. Radhakrishnan observes, "consciousness though physically mediated, is not physically explained. Buddhi, manas, and the like, are the instruments or the means; they cannot explain the end of consciousness which they sub serve." Sāṅkhya philosophers are in the opinion that consciousness is an independent entity that arises out of interaction between Purūsa and Prakṛti. Rene Descartes admits the interaction between mind and body, consciousness and matter. But it differs from the Sāṅkhya view, for Sāṅkhya does not regard mind to be conscious and Prakṛti or matter to be inactive. According to Sāṅkhya, mind is a product of matter or Prakṛti and it is not conscious as Descartes thought of. Moreover, the difference between mind and self is not clear in Descartes; on the contrary, he seems to be taken them to the same substance. But in
Sāńkhya mind or manas is different from the self. It is sheer ignorance to think that the self is the body or the senses or the mind or the intellect.

The Sāńkhya regards the self as a conscious spirit and an inactive knower. Only Prakṛti is active. The interaction of Purūsa with Prakṛti makes the conscious Purūsa active. It is to be noted that the interaction between inactive Purūsa and unconsciousness Prakṛti is not out of criticism. Later philosophers criticized this theory and the nature of interaction remains a riddle.

We observe the repetition of the same account of various states of consciousness, as given in Upaniṣads, in the Sāńkhya Philosophy. Like Upaniṣads, Sāńkhya mentions four states of consciousness, namely, the waking, the dreaming, the sleeping and the death. Thus, Sāńkhya seems to be aware of the conscious, sub conscious, preconscious and unconscious states of modern psychology.

The concept of consciousness in Yoga system is similar to Sāńkhya philosophy; in other words, the basic concept is accepted in yoga as described by Sāńkhya. Philosophers regarded yoga system as a part of Sāńkhya and called this system as Sāńkhya-yoga. According to Patanjala, the founder of yoga system, consciousness is the essence of the self, which is self-luminous. But the self cannot know its essential nature, so long as it illusorily identifies itself with the
unconscious buddhi on which it casts its reflection and gives it an appearance of a conscious self.

Yoga system regards consciousness as the svarūpa of Pūrūsa or self and the self is free from the limitations of the body. Consciousness is not the essence of mind or citta. Citta is the first evolutes of Prakṛti and therefore, it is unconscious. The self wrongly identifies itself with its reflection in the citta and appears to be undergoing changes and modification. So, citta is the physical medium for the manifestation of the spirit. It is due to reflection of Pūrūsa, citta appears to be conscious.

Yoga does not regard mind to be the subject of consciousness but the Pūrūsa is the pure and transcendental consciousness. The Pūrūsa or self as reflected in citta or mind is the subject of all conscious experiences. In other words, the experiences belong to citta but not to the self that is the subject of consciousness. The consciousness (caitanya) of the Pūrūsa is reflected in citta, and only then is knowledge produced. Citta is not self-luminous for it is perceptible by another i.e., the Pūrūsa. Yoga system follows the same order of the states of consciousness as mentioned in the Upaniṣads and Sāṅkhya. The states of consciousness are – The wakeful state, the dream state, the deep sleep and the super conscious state. The first three states are regarded as the normal states for every human being. The fourth, the super conscious or Samadhi state is the privilege
of the yogin only. In other words, the yoga recognizes conscious, subconscious, unconscious and super consciousness.

The Nyāya System advocates a theory of consciousness that is different from the interpretations of the other systems of Indian philosophy. We observe a realistic concept of consciousness in Nyāya system. Raghunath Safaya says that Nyāya offers unique view as regards consciousness. According to Nyāya, consciousness is a stream of awareness. Consciousness is an accidental property of the soul. The individual soul is the substratum of the quality of consciousness. Consciousness is not essential property of the soul. Here Nyāya differs from the other systems of Indian Philosophy. Nyāya regards the soul as a real knower, a real enjoyer and a real active agent and an eternal substance. But the soul is not transcendental consciousness.

Nyāya admits that through the self's connection with the mind and body that consciousness results. Consciousness is an accidental attribute of the self, the accident being its relation to the body. Consciousness has been considered as an essential attribute of the soul in other systems, and it is said that without consciousness, the soul cannot be distinguished from matter. Nyāya clearly asserts that the stream of consciousness is separate from the self and it is just
embedded on the self. The self is the witness, but not involved in the stream of consciousness. Consciousness cannot subsist without a certain locus. Therefore, the self is not consciousness as such, but a substance having consciousness as its attributes. The soul that is the substratum of consciousness need not always be conscious. In fact, it is an unconscious principle capable of being qualified by states of consciousness.¹²

Gautama, the founder of Nyāya system, categorically remarks that consciousness is not a quality of the body, for consciousness is absent in a dead body. Consciousness is not also a quality of the manas or mind, because mind or manas is under the control of the soul. Hence, consciousness is a quality of the soul. But consciousness exists without the body; mind or soul for it is present in the transcendental consciousness of god.

The Nyāya advocates the theory of interaction between the self and the body. The gross body is regarded as the vehicle of experience and the self as the experienced, and the sense organs as the organs of experience, and objects as objects of experience. It is different from the interaction of mind and body in Descartes for, Descartes has not made any difference between soul and mind. But like Descartes the Nyaya system seems to accept the existence of consciousness without a body.
The Vaisheṣika system has given an important interpretation of the concept of consciousness in Indian Philosophy. We observe a theory of consciousness in Vaisheṣika philosophy. S. K. Saxena regards Vaisheṣika view as a spiritual realistic interpretation of consciousness in his book 'Nature of Consciousness in Hindu Philosophy'.

According to Vaisheṣika, consciousness is 'awareness' found in all animate beings, consciousness has no independent existence of its own. It inheres in something else. Inanimate atoms have no such property. A jar has no consciousness. Consciousness is not a quality of mind or body, but it is the property of the soul. Kanāda refutes that consciousness resides in the body of the animated beings. For him, consciousness does not inhere in any parts of the body; on the contrary it inheres in the soul. Consciousness necessitates—subject and object and body are the object of consciousness, and consciousness inheres in the subject, the self. Again, consciousness does not inhere in the senses for; consciousness is the mother of all perceptions. Moreover, mind or manas is not the subject of consciousness, for, the ideas of mind is objects of consciousness but not consciousness itself. The thinker is not mind but the soul is the thinker of ideas and therefore, the soul is the substratum of consciousness. Consciousness inheres in the soul, as the sound inheres in Ākāsa.
The Vaishešika regards the self as the subject of consciousness. The existence of the self is inferred from the fact that consciousness cannot be a property of the body, sense organs or the manas. Consciousness sustained by the Ātman, though it is not an essential or inalienable characteristic of it. Consciousness is not the essence of the soul. It is not even an inseparable quality of the self. Consciousness is an adventitious (aupādhika) quality of the soul. But Vaishešika does not regard mind to be the subject of consciousness, although mind is regarded as a dravya or substance. The Vaishešika philosophers are in the opinion that the soul is an external and all pervading substance and it is the substratum of the phenomenon of consciousness.

Regarding the states of consciousness, the Vaishešika accepted the upaniṣadic description as such. Vaishešika agrees with nyāya in postulating that consciousness appears only when the self is in special relationship with something. According to Raghunath Safaya, the Vaishešika theory of consciousness is a significant theory for, it solves a number of riddles regarding the nature of consciousness as remain unsolved in western psychology.

The Mimāmsā system advocates a theory of consciousness, which agrees with the concept of other systems of Indian philosophy. It is to be noted that all the systems of Indian Philosophy depends upon
one another. The Mimāṃsā uses the word “Samvit” to mean consciousness. Being agreed with Nyāya-Vaisheśika, Pravākara, an advocate of Mimāṃsā, holds that consciousness is a quality of the self but not of the mind. On the other hand, Kumarila Bhatta holds that consciousness is an action (karma) of the self, because it is the result of its cognitive activity (jñānakarma), and because the cognitive activity and its result, viz. consciousness, should be regarded as one.

According to Mimāṃsā, the soul is the substratum of consciousness. Consciousness cannot reside in the body or in the senses, as even at the death of the body and cessation of sense, the permanent entity persists and takes another birth, Pravākara regards the permanent entity, the self, as mere consciousness. Pravākara admits that consciousness is self-luminous or it manifests itself; and in manifesting itself it manifests both its knowing self and known object. Pravākara describes samvit or consciousness, as the knower, and sometimes as cognition.¹⁸ (samvid ut pattikāranaṃ ātmāmanassānāṁ kārṣākhyam). Kumarila holds that the self is not revealed as the subject by consciousness together with itself. Consciousness can reveal neither it nor the subject. It can reveal only the object. Consciousness is not self luminous. It is not known directly. Consciousness is a dynamic mode of the self and its result is seen only in the object, which becomes illuminated by it.
According to Pravākara, in every act of consciousness there are three factors: 1) the consciousness of an object or object consciousness (visayavitti), 2) the consciousness of the subject or the self (ahamvitti), and 3) the self-conscious awareness or consciousness of consciousness (svāsamvitti). For him, there is no 'I' consciousness (ahamvitti) apart from the consciousness of objects (ghatādivitti). On the other hand, Kumarila Bhatta holds that the self is the object of internal perception or 'I' consciousness. For him, the self is a conscious substance; as conscious it is the subject or cognizer; as a substance it is the object cognized. But Pravākara argues that the self cannot be the subject as well as the object of consciousness; that it is self-contradictory to suppose that the self is the object of perception, in as much as the self cannot be both the percipient and the perceived.

According to Kumarila, the self is of the nature of the 'I' and it is apprehended by itself and by nothing else. It is an object of the I-consciousness. The self is both the subject and object. There is no contradiction in maintaining this because the self becomes an object only to itself and to nothing else.

Many discussions have been made in Vedānta system regarding the concept of consciousness. The Vedanta system is classified into two groups viz. Advaita Vedanta and Visistadvaita Vedanta. Vedānta concept of consciousness is based on the
Upaniṣads. Among the Advaitins, Gaudapāda and Sankarāchārya are well-known philosophers who regard consciousness as the only reality. The self-alone is consciousness. The mind is just a totality of conscious states and processes. The self, which is neither mind nor matter, is the ground of both mental and physical states of existences. Consciousness is the basis of all experience whether it is psychic or physical. Denial of consciousness means denial of everything else. Gaurapāda regards the Reality as pure consciousness, which manifests itself as, and ultimately transcends, the subject-object duality. The world is unreal, only consciousness is real. The world exists only in the mind of man. Gaudapāda reduces all reality to mental impressions, and declares that the latter have no objective causes. Sankarāchārya also puts the same view and says that – consciousness is the essence of the self in which ever form it may appear.

Advaitin holds, after Upaniṣads, that the self is non-different from Brahman, which is of the nature of existence, consciousness and bliss (Sachchidānanda). The inner self is self-luminous. It partakes of the consciousness of Brahman. In fact, it is pure consciousness, which illuminates the whole human personality – body and mind. Consciousness differs according to different modifications of the mind super imposed on it like the jewel, which differs in colour owing to the proximity of coloured things. According to Sankara, Brahman is pure consciousness. Consciousness and Brahman are identical. Ātman or
self is nothing but Brahman or pure consciousness. Consciousness constitutes the essential nature of self; it is natural or essential to the self, and not an adventitious or accidental property of it. Sankara holds that consciousness is neither a substance, nor a quality, nor an action of the self. The self is mere consciousness. Though there is no difference between the self and consciousness yet we draw a distinction between the two and speak of "consciousness" when we wish to emphasize the relation of the self to objects, and we speak of the 'self' simply when we do not want to emphasize that relation.

Advaita Vedânta follows the Upaniṣads in enumerating four states of consciousness, viz., 1) The wakeful (jāgrat), 2) the dream state (svapna), 3) the sleep (sūśūpti), and 4) the super consciousness (tūriya). If we combine dream and sleep into one and identify the same with the sub-consciousness state, there remain three distinct states viz., sub-consciousness, conscious, and super-conscious. The super conscious is the highest state, the state of self-realization, identification of self and Brahman, the state of Absolute consciousness. Advaitins classified consciousness into three kinds: -

1. Content consciousness (visaya caitanya), i.e., the consciousness defined by the object such as the pot.

2. Cognitive consciousness (pramāna caitanya), i.e., the consciousness defined by psychosis of the internal organ (antahkarana – vṛttyavacchinna).
3. Cognizer consciousness (pramatr caitanya), i.e., the consciousness defined by internal organ.

Consciousness is again, two fold viz., Jiva Sāksin and Isvara Sāksin. The former is the consciousness defined by the Antahkarana. It is different for every individual. Higher than this is the Absolute consciousness, the cosmic consciousness, ground for the whole universe. It is called Isvara Sāksin, Svarūpajñāna or pure consciousness.

Visistādvaitavāda of Rāmānuja offers a separate interpretation of consciousness from the Advaita concept of consciousness. Rāmānuja holds the most common sense view regarding the nature of consciousness. For him, consciousness is an attribute of the conscious, a reality and not an abstraction. There cannot be such a thing as pure consciousness. Consciousness is an attribute of Isvara.

According to Rāmānuja, consciousness is not a substance and is independent of sense object contact. Consciousness is continuous and eternal. It is present in present – perception, reasoning and memory. It is inseparable from the subject in all his cognitive activities. Rāmānuja regards consciousness as an act of cognizing the object by the subject. For him, consciousness is a function of the subject, whether soul or Isvara. He maintains that consciousness is a quality (visesana) of the self or Isvara.
Rāmānuja is in the opinion that though consciousness is not an object it can and frequently become an object. For, common observation shows that the consciousness of one person becomes the object of the cognition of another. Even one’s past states of consciousness becomes the objects of his present cognition. Consciousness does not lose its nature simply because it becomes an object of consciousness.25 For Rāmānuja, the essential nature of consciousness consists in its manifesting itself a present moment through its own being to its substrate, or in being instrumental in proving its own object by its own being (Anūbhūtitām nama vartamānādasayām svasttayaiva svasttayaiva - svavisayasadhānatvam va).

Regarding the states of consciousness Rāmānuja says that there is a real character in all the states. Even the dreams are not unreal. In dream state mind works with the experiences in memory, which were experienced in the waking state. According to Rāmānuja, the three states are continuous like the growth of man from childhood to old age. Continuity persists in all the states. There is a particular cyclic order in which the states function viz., waking to dream to sleep to waking again, and so on, as explained in the Upaniṣads.

Rāmānuja accepts the degrees of consciousness and says that in the subconscious and in the dream state, consciousness is dim and confused. In the waking state consciousness is clear and distinct. In
the mukta stage, consciousness is divine and perfect. Raghunath Safaya quoted Rāmānuja accepting the following definition of Yamunāchārya regarding the nature of consciousness.

\textsuperscript{26} The essential nature of consciousness consists that it shines forth or manifests itself through its own being to its own substrate at the present moment or that it is instrumental in proving its own object to its substrate." (Vārdācāri, Rāmānuja's theory of Knowledge, P-21)

Before concluding the study on the concept of consciousness in Indian perspective it would be better to mention the views of some contemporary Indian Philosophers. To be brief in the discussion preference would be given to some of the prominent contemporary philosophers only. It is to be noted that contemporary Indian thinkers have developed and re-interpreted the traditional Indian thought. The Contemporary Indian philosophers have generally not tried to create new and novel metaphysical systems. They have largely concentrated their attention in giving a new meaning and reorientation to the classical Indian thought. Hence they have interpreted the concept of consciousness following the Upaniṣadīc view of the nature and states of consciousness.

Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, the great philosopher of contemporary philosophy, has given emphasis on the concept of consciousness in his work "An Idealist View of Life". According to him,
consciousness is the essence of mind. Mind alone is the principle of consciousness. Consciousness makes a real distinction in the behavior of an organism. The activities with consciousness possess unity and coordination. A conscious organism acts as a whole and not as a part. There is a direction in his activity. The adaptive and selective actions are not possible in a mindless organism like plant. The emergence of consciousness gives a new turn to the organism. The activities in a conscious animal are self-directed, novel, unique and distinctive.

Dr. Radhakrishnan is in the opinion that man's consciousness makes it different from other living and non-living organisms of the world. For him, the study of a mindless living organism cannot explain consciousness. He was against the behaviouristic concept of consciousness. Mental activities cannot be inferred from the brain. Consciousness cannot be explained in terms of brain activity. As he says: "Even the greatest extension of physiological knowledge will not help us to infer mental activity from brain structure. Just as a living organism is a whole with a far higher degree of internal relatedness than any non-living system, the mental represents a higher degree of self-regulation and control than the body. It cannot be understood by a study of the living organisms."  

According to Radhakrishnan, consciousness emerges from life just as life emerges from matter. He finds a difference between consciousness and material body. He also believes in the gradation of
consciousness. For him, plants are unconscious; in animals and child we observe lower consciousness; and in man self-consciousness is observed. Self-consciousness is the higher principle of consciousness, which is characterized by reflective and discursive knowledge and capacity for invention. Radhakrishnan rightly observes: “The reflective capacity of the human mind and its power of free invention are not mere complication of lower instincts. It is the essence of self-conscious intelligence to look before and after and vary actions according to circumstances.”

Some similarities are observed, regarding the concept of consciousness, between Descrates and Radhakrishnan. For, both of them regards consciousness as the essence of mind and that consciousness is not material but mental. But Descartes fails to characterize the lower grades of consciousness, which is present in animal and child, as observed by Radhakrishnan. Moreover, Radhakrishnan believes in a dynamic reality, which gradually manifests the physical, vital, conscious and self-conscious principles. It seemed that Descartes had recognized the self-consciousness only (cogito – ergo –sum).

Sri Aurobindo, the prophet of Life Divine, is the great mystic philosopher of twentieth century. He has demonstrated the concept of consciousness in a different way where he recognized it as the essence of the Absolute Brahman. His theory of consciousness can be
understood with the help of his evolutionary process. He believes in the evolution of consciousness. For him, Brahman is infinite consciousness who involves into the matter through the process of involution.

According to Aurobindo, consciousness is the essence of mind but this consciousness is finite and a part of divine consciousness. As he says, "Mind in its essence is a consciousness which measures, limits and cuts out forms of things from the indivisible whole." Although consciousness is the essence of mind, its consciousness is limited and finite. Mind is evolutes of the evolutionary process of the Divine. For Aurobindo, consciousness involves in matter and life but in matter it is in unconscious level and in life it is in semiconscious; and in mind consciousness reveals in distinct manner. The finite mind can transform into infinite consciousness of the Sachchidananda. The consciousness of the Absolute is immediate and integral consciousness, which lies beyond our mind and can be called supramental consciousness.

Aurobindo regards consciousness to be a force or power. Consciousness force is inherent in the matter and therefore it can ascend and transform into higher forms of reality. "There are many grades of consciousness higher than mind. Mind is the lowest principle of consciousness. The higher grades of consciousness gradually dispel ignorance and provide knowledge. Aurobindo holds that the
consciousness of mind passes towards infinite consciousness through higher mind, illumined mind, and intuition and over mind.

Sri Aurobindo admits that mind has self-consciousness and through self-consciousness, human mind can apprehend the eternal being, the reality. It seems that Descartes has realized this self-consciousness, which is free from his universal doubt. In 'cogito-ergo-sum', Descartes proved his existence through universal doubt. It is the existence, in Aurobindo, which is also consciousness force and bliss. Existence is not devoid of consciousness. But Descartes failed to conceive matter that is having consciousness in implicit manner and, in point Descartes' concept of consciousness differs from Sri Aurobindo. Moreover Descrates has talked about the finite consciousness of mind as described by Aurobindo.

K. C. Bhattacharya has not admitted any clear-cut theory of consciousness but, from his concept of philosophy, his concept of consciousness can be derived. His concept of consciousness is different from other Indian or Western philosophers. For him, consciousness is "awareness" in wider sense of the term. According to Bhattacharya, philosophy is a form of theoretic consciousness. He uses the world 'thought' to mean consciousness. For him, there are four grades of theoretic consciousness. Thus:

a) Empirical thought.
b) Pure objective thought

c) Spiritual thought.

d) Transcendental thought.

Empirical thought is an awareness of a content that is either perceived or imagined to be perceived. Here the object is understood as fact. By fact is meant what is perceivable or has necessary reference to the perceivable, is speakable in the form of a literal judgment and is believed without reference to the speaking of it. Empirical thought is the subject matter of science. Pure objective thought is objective consciousness where there is the reference of object as related to subject. It understands the object as self-subsistence. Spiritual thought is purely subjective consciousness; it is an enjoying consciousness. Transcendental thought has no reference to subject or object; it somehow transcends their distinction. K. C. Bhattacharya is not trying to give a theory of consciousness; on the contrary, he is busy in giving a concept of philosophy. Therefore, it is better to accept that he believes in the presence of consciousness in human mind and he speaks of the subjectivity. It is to be noted that Descartes' concept of consciousness is not the subjectivity of K. C. Bhattacharya, which reveals in the enjoying consciousness i.e., in the awareness of super personal reality.
Our exposition of the concept of consciousness in Indian perspective has made it clear that Indian philosophers have deeply emphasized the problem and tried to offer every possible solution to the same. Except the Carvāka, all the systems of Indian philosophy are agree in various points regarding the nature of consciousness and have given a thoughtful appreciation of the concept of consciousness. In short, Indian philosophers are not standing behind regarding the most outstanding problem of mind and consciousness in comparison to the western philosophers. S. K. Saxena rightly maintains that in the rich nursery of Indian philosophy one can have enough plants to form a new garden of philosophical knowledge. As he says: “Hindu philosophy is a rich nursery of philosophical knowledge, which may be source of valuable small gardens, for in this vast jungle of Indian Philosophical systems, many a thick plant is overgrown in the restricted place.”

Rene Descartes has given importance on the concept of consciousness as the essence of mind and, such an importance is found in the Vedas when vedic seers urges to look inside the heart. Like Descartes, vedic sages tried to know the inner reality and it is revealed when Rgveda declares “what thing I truly I know not.” In the Upaniṣads we observe similar views of consciousness where consciousness is not regarded as the essence of the body. But Descartes maintains that consciousness is the essence of mind and Upaniṣadic concept does not agree with him. The Upaniṣadic view
regards consciousness as the essence of the self. It is to be noted that Descartes did not separate mind from the self or soul. It may be that he has used the word mind to mean the soul or self. Moreover, we do not observe different states of consciousness in Descartes, which is available in the Upaniṣads.

The materialistic view of Cārvāka goes against Descartes' conception of consciousness. According to Cārvāka, mind is nothing but a body with consciousness but Descartes holds that there is a grave difference between mind and body although they interacts. But the Cārvāka concept is criticized by Indian Philosophers and it is decided that consciousness cannot be the essence of the material body. For, the intimately private consciousness cannot be the property of a material body, which is publicly observable.

Buddhism believes in the continuity of consciousness as the only reality and the soul as an unbroken stream of consciousness. Like Descartes, Buddhism also admits that mind is immaterial and body is extended, and they regarded man's life as a series of states of consciousness which changes as causes and effects. Perhaps Descartes also has realized the consciousness or thinking as indispensable and the only reality of life and later he discovered the reality of body as a real substance. Descartes differs from Buddhism when he maintained that mind is the subject of consciousness.
Jainism regards consciousness as the essence of the soul or jiva and believed in two different substances – jiva and ajiva. Jainas does not regard mind to be the subject of consciousness like Descartes. But, we observe similarity between Jainas and Descartes in maintaining the existence of two different substances – one is having consciousness and the other the without having consciousness. Jainas regard other living beings as souls but Descartes did not allow the other living being to be having consciousness like mind.

The Śāṅkhya concept of dualism can be compared with Descartes but there are some differences between the two. For, Śāṅkhya Pūrūsa is inactive while Descartes’ mind seems to be active and body is inactive. But Śāṅkhya maintains that Prakṛti or matter is active but unconsciousness while Pūrūsa is conscious. Moreover, Śāṅkhya did not regard consciousness as the essence of mind; on the contrary, it regards consciousness as the essence of the self or Pūrūsa and mind is only a sense organ. The Śāṅkhya analyses mind, intellect, ego as separate entity but it seems that Descartes has included ego, intellect etc. in the mind. It is better to point out that Śāṅkhya fails to interpret the interaction between Pūrūsa and Prakṛti, which is made by Descartes.

The Nyāya does not regard consciousness as the essence of mind like Descartes; on the contrary, it regards consciousness as an accidental property of the soul. Consciousness is believed to be the
result of the self's connection with the mind and body. Nyāya speaks of interaction between soul and the body and believes in the existence of the soul without a body.

Like Nyāya, Vaisheṣika regards consciousness as an adventitious quality of the soul and regards the soul as the subject of consciousness. Descartes maintained that mind is the thinker in "I think, therefore, I exist," but Vaisheṣika holds that the thinker is not the mind but the soul is the thinker. Perhaps Descartes fails to recognize the soul, which is completely separate from mind. The Vaisheṣika recognized the soul as the all pervading and external substance which is different from other substances. Nyāya Vaisheṣika admits a fact that consciousness appears only when the self is in special relationship with body, which is not reflected in Descartes.

The Mimāmsā system agrees with Descartes in maintaining that consciousness exists even without a body but unlike him Mimāmsāadmits that mind is not the subject of consciousness. They also agree in proving the existence of consciousness by self-analysis or consciousness is realized only through subjective experience. The Advaita Vedānta believes only in the reality of consciousness and nothing else. Rene Descartes also proved that only the reality of consciousness could be established as indubitable. But the Advaitins do not regards consciousness as the essence of mind, and maintain that mind is only a totality of conscious states. Advaita Vedānta regards
the self as pure consciousness and consciousness is not a quality of it. 
Visistādvaita of Rāmānuja admits that consciousness is a quality of self 
or Isvara. It is an act of cognizing the object by the subject. It seems 
that Descartes also was aware of the active character of 
consciousness for, in "I think", thinking is an act of mind. Among the 
contemporary Indian philosophers we have already mentioned that Dr. 
S. Radhakrishnan’s concept of consciousness has some similarities 
with Descartes and to some extent Sri Aurobindo and 
K.C.Bhattacharya.

The study on the Concept of consciousness in Indian 
perspective reveals that Descartes has some support in his concept of 
consciousness from the Indian philosophy. Descartes’ conception of 
consciousness is acceptable if some of his standpoints is changed or 
replaced. Descartes is right in advocating that “cogito-ergo-sum” 
proves the existence of thought as an experience and that there is no 
evidence to prove that thoughts can exists by themselves. In this point 
he gets supports from Indian philosophers who always maintain the 
self as the experienced (subject).

Descartes concept of the relation between consciousness and 
the body can be solved with the help of Indian view, which accepts a 
self over and above mind and matter. As Sarasvati Chennkesavam 
oberves: "The trouble generally with Western thinkers is that not only 
do they view mind and matter as distinctively capable of mutual
exclusion, but they imagine that these alternatives alone exhaust the field. Until this attitude is modified and the recognition of a self over and above mind and matter is made there can be no satisfactory solution for the mind-body problem."31

Indian philosophers have given proper interpretation of various states of consciousness, which is not reflected in Descartes. If Descartes could have mentioned these later psychologist from Freudian point of view might not criticize him. For, once we accept the Atman or soul, the problem is solved. But Descartes could not distinguish between mind and the subject of experience, which is called the spiritual substance.

It seems that Descartes’ concept of consciousness can be transformed into Indian view by saying consciousness is the essence of the self. As Saraswati Chennkesavan observes, “Mind is only a subtle matter, hence the qualities of matter such as origination and destruction also characterize mind. The self-alone is not only metaphysical but also meta-psychical. That the experience of deep sleeps is an evidence for the existence of such a self. It is this self alone what is finally real. Mind and matter are only appearances."32

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