Visibility of Albert Einstein’s Four-Dimensional Plane of Existence in Sri Aurobindo’s Yogic Vision of ‘Space’ in His Epic “Savitri”

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Abstract:
Albert Einstein’s mathematical discovery of the four-dimensional plane of existence, the ‘Spacetime’ or ‘Space-Time Continuum’, as it is called, is an evolutionary breakthrough in the realm of Science. Since the plane of ‘Spacetime’ or ‘Space-Time Continuum’ is a mathematical structure, the most celebrated scientist finds it to be a physical plane of existence. Mysteriously enough, it is not physically visible. Physics is answerless on its invisibility. Transcending Einstein, Sri Aurobindo, a ‘yogi of the unknown eternal heights’ reveals ‘Space’, in his epic Savitri, to be ‘a vast experiment of Soul’, the Divine Consciousness in the being of Man. Furthermore, it is the Soul of the Universe, ‘Vishwatman’, as the Rishis call it. In such a vision of space the mystery of the invisibility of Spacetime disappears. The plane of Spacetime is the plane of integral existence to which mankind is yet to evolve. Man is subject to the divisive principle of Consciousness as a result of which the plane of Spacetime is not visible to him. On account of the subjection to the divisive principle of consciousness Newton could find Space and Time to be two incompatible realities. Man is required to evolve his latent spiritual consciousness to attain the integrality of Consciousness for the vision of the plane of Spacetime. He has to undertake the yoga to attain, first, the silent state of mind to ascend the planes of the spiritual and Supramental Consciousnesses, says Sri Aurobindo. In the silent state of mind, the divisiveness of consciousness ceases to have its hold as a result of which man is able to visualise the plane of Spacetime, the Spacetime which is all the more clearly visible when he continues to ascend the higher planes of the spiritual consciousness. On the plane of the spiritual consciousness there is a movement towards the integrality of consciousness, and consequently ‘Space’ is found to be ‘a vast experiment of Soul’ in this movement, the movement which is, in fact, the ascent of the yogic consciousness.

Keywords: Four-Dimensional Plane of Consciousness, Spacetime, Space-Time Continuum Silent Mind and Supramental Consciousness.

Introduction
“…the theory of relativity underscores the objective character of the laws of nature and not the relativity of knowledge.”
(Ugarav V.A. 1979: 40)

Albert Einstein’s mathematical discovery of the four-dimensional plane of existence in his Special Theory of Relativity is a breakthrough in the evolution of scientific vision. It is for the reason that it reveals the four-dimensional plane of existence, the ‘Spacetime’ or ‘Space-Time Continuum’, as it is called, as the plane of sovereign existence. The four-dimensional plane
of existence, of which, according to Einstein, the three-dimensional plane of existence is the projection in the manner in which shadow is a two-dimensional projection of a three-dimensional object, is the One Sovereign Transcendent Reality, transcendent to the three-dimensional plane of existence. It is the plane of one integral existence in which Space and Time are no more two incompatible realities unlike what Isaac Newton views on the three-dimensional plane of existence. Space and Time are, in fact, the one integral transcendent Reality. Therefore, the four-dimensional plane is termed as ‘Spacetime’ or ‘Space-Time Continuum’. It descends to be two separate incompatible realities on the plane of three-dimensional existence without effacing the sovereign oneness of the Spacetime reminding us of the Primordial Resolve, of which the Rig Veda speaks, ‘Eko-Ham, Bahu-Syam, Praja-Eyam’, ‘I am ‘One’, become ‘Many’, yet remain the Same’. It is evident when Hermann Minkowski says:

“Indeed we shall stop thinking them as a three-dimensional space plus a separate one-dimensional time. Rather they were to be seen as a four-dimensional spacetime in which space and time are indissolubly welded together. The three-dimensional distance we measure (with a ruler, say) is but a three-dimensional projection of the four-dimensional reality. These ruler and clock measurement are but appearances; they are not the real thing.”

(Stannard 2008: 26)

The real is the one sovereign transcendent integral reality. The integral reality of the four-dimensional plane of existence comes to be all the more intellectually intelligible when it is further scientifically revealed:

“One of the disconcerting features about four-dimensional spacetime is that nothing changes. Changes occur in time. But spacetime is not in time; time is in spacetime (as one of its axes). It appears to be saying that all of time—past, present and future—exists on equal footing. In other words, events that we customarily think of as no longer existing because they lie in the past, do exist in spacetime. In the same way, future events which we normally think of as not yet existing, do exist in spacetime. There is nothing in this picture to select out the present instant, labelled ‘now’, as being anything special—separating past from future.”

(2008: 30)

In the aforesaid scientific discoveries, the plane of Spacetime i.e. the four-dimensional plane of existence is the plane of integral existence. It exists a priori. It is the plane of spacelessness and timelessness. The principle of integral, or to say, principle of integrality is found to be in operation on this four-dimensional plane. Mysteriously enough, the plane of Spacetime does not come into our physical vision in spite of Einstein’s assertion that it is the physical plane of existence. Such mystery of the four-dimensional plane of existence, the plane which, as noted earlier, comes to be the world of spacelessness and timelessness, necessitates us to transcend the plane of corporeality and enter into the world of yogic consciousness. The yogic consciousness facilitates the deeper vision of the truth of the existence of the plane of spacelessness and timelessness to the ancient Rishis and the Rishi of the present day Sri Aurobindo. It takes them to the supraphysical, nay, spiritual plane of existence, of which the ‘Spacetime’, as Einstein explains, is the physical manifestation. We are in need of taking the yogic discoveries of the Rishis into account to visualise Einstein’s four-dimensional plane of existence, and, subsequently, enter into its supraphysical, nay, spiritual ambience. In other words, we have to take refuge into the yogic consciousness in which a silent state of mind being the pedestal of the vision of higher truth, to be specific, of the plane of spacelessness and timelessness is discovered to be existing. The mystery disappears here.

Four-Dimensional Plane of Existence and Consciousness

Einstein reaches the plane of the integral principle of existence as a result of the discovery of the truths of time dilation and length contraction. The phenomena of the time dilation and the length contraction are the manifestation
of the movement of the separative principle of existence towards the plane of integral existence, the principle of One as a result of which the state of spacelessness and timelessness is achieved. It is to be noted here that space is a separation between two objects, or two points of an object and time is the separation between two events. On account of the operation of the separative principle of existence, Space and Time come to be two different incompatible realities. In the aforesaid phenomena of time dilation and length contraction, separativity loses its existence and integrality comes to take over, the manifestation of which is found in the mathematical structure of ‘Spacetime’ and Einstein’s assertion of its physical plane of existence. Since it is scientifically admitted that ‘observers in relative motion have different viewpoints and therefore observe different projections of the four-dimensional reality’ (2008: 26), we come to the plane of mental consciousness which is essentially the divisive, or to say separative principle of consciousness. Therefore, we are required to evolve the integral consciousness in our being, the consciousness which, according to Sri Aurobindo, is latent in us. The manifestation of the evolution, or to say, emergence of the latent integral consciousness lies in Einstein’s mathematical discovery of ‘Spacetime’. Such evolution will further enable us to visualise the four-dimensional plane of existence. The separativity of the mental consciousness needs to ascend the plane of the ‘absolute unmoving stillnesses’ (2012: 349) in Mind, the plane which Sri Aurobindo reveals in his epic Savitri and letters on yoga. This is what Sri Aurobindo calls, ‘Silent Mind’. The silent state of Mind is required to be attained, the Mind in which there is no movement of the thought, the movement of thought which is the outcome of the working out of the separative principle of Mind-Consciousness. In one of his letters on yoga he says:

“Silence can be gained by banishing thoughts altogether from the inner mind keeping it voiceless or quite outside; but more easily it is established by a descent from above—one feels it coming down, entering and occupying or surrounding the personal

consciousness which then tends to merge itself in the vast impersonal silence.”

(Sri Aurobindo 1979: 636)

The ‘above’ of which Sri Aurobindo speaks in the aforesaid letter is the transcendent plane of existence, transcendent to the Creation itself. Further, in his another letter on yoga he says that silence implies ‘not only cessation of thoughts but a stillness of the mental and vital substance’ (643). It is ‘a great stillness which no surface movement can pierce or alter’ (642). He further says:

“It is on the Silence behind the cosmos that all the movement of the universe is supported.

It is from the Silence that the peace comes; when the peace deepens and deepens, it becomes more and more the Silence.

In a more outward sense the word Silence is applied to the condition in which there is no movement of thought or feeling etc., only a great stillness of the mind.

But there can be an action in the Silence, undisturbed even as the universal action goes on in the cosmic Silence.”

(647)

Therefore, on this plane of Cosmic Silence, or what Sri Aurobindo calls, ‘impersonal silence’ (636) which is, according to him, the consciousness of Nirvana, and on the planes onwards in the ascending order, we come to be able to visualise the four-dimensional plane of existence, the plane which, too, is based on such Cosmic Silence. In order to arrive at such a cosmic plane of Silence in our being, we are required to undertake yoga, says Sri Aurobindo who is the Soul of the ‘unknown eternal heights’. As revealed by him earlier in the aforesaid letter on yoga that silence is ‘more easily established by a descent from above’ (636), we have to undertake the yoga of, what Sri Aurobindo terms, ‘psychicisation’. In this yoga, Peace from ‘above’, the transcendent plane of existence is brought down into man’s being. Since, in the aforesaid letter, he says that ‘when peace deepens and deepens, it becomes more and more the Silence’ (647), Peace comes to be the most
fundamental need. Consequent upon its establishment, an imperceptible much deeper yogic transformations take place in the being of man. He, further, speaks of the requirement of evolving a witnessing attitude in our being. We have to witness the thoughts entering into our mind and going out of mind since thoughts exist on the plane of timelessness and spacelessness wherefrom they descend into mind. In one of his letters on poetry, literature and art he says:

“…the mind is used as a medium. It might be an understanding transcribing agent or it may be only a passive channel.”

(1988: 9)

Consequent upon being able to witness the thoughts, the thoughts which initially enter into mind, stop entering. Thus, mind comes to be silent as Sri Aurobindo says. In his letters on yoga, he says very categorically:

“...by a quiet mind I mean a mental consciousness within which sees thoughts arrive to it and move about but does not itself feel that it is thinking or identifying itself with the thoughts or call them its own. Thoughts, mental movements may pass through it as wayfarers appear and pass from elsewhere through a silent country — the quiet mind observes them or does not care to observe them, but in either case, does not become active or lose quietude.”

(1979: 636)

Consequent upon it, in the ‘Quiet Mind’, no mental, and, what Sri Aurobindo terms, ‘vital’ and physical vibration take place in it. It comes to be, then, what Sri Aurobindo calls, ‘Silent Mind’. Sri Aurobindo says that ‘Silence is more than quietude’ (636). ‘Silence’ or ‘Silent Mind’ is the realm which is ‘free, wide, without limits, pure, untroubled by the mental, vital and physical movements, empty of ego and limited personality…’ (1102).

The Yoga of Psychicisation

In order to attain and establish the ‘silence’ and ‘peace’ we are required to undertake the yoga of ‘psychicisation’ of body, life and mind which are the three constituent parts of the being of man, and at the centre of these three there exists Soul, the Divine Self. In one of his letters on yoga, he reveals the constitution of the being of man:

“When one speaks of the divine spark, one is thinking of the soul as a portion of the Divine which has descended from above into the manifestation rather than of some thing which has separated itself from the cosmos. It is the nature that has formed itself out of cosmic forces—mind out of cosmic mind, life out of cosmic life, body out of cosmic Matter.”

(1091-92)

Prior to the psychicisation of the body, the life and the mind in the being of man, ‘Soul’, or what Sri Aurobindo terms, ‘psychic being’, remains behind them. Integrality does not exist among them as a result of which they remain at war with one another. Consequent upon undertaking the yoga of psychicisation, the psychic being comes in the front to take over their command. The consciousness of the psychic being, the Divine Consciousness percolates into them and integrality to one another evolves in them resultant. They become receptive to what comes down from the transcendent plane of Divine Existence. This is, what Sri Aurobindo calls, psychicisation, the psychicisation of body, life and mind. Of the coming of the psychic being to the front Sri Aurobindo says:

“What is meant by (the psychic’s) coming to the front is simply this. The psychic ordinarily is deep within. Very few people are aware of their souls — when they speak of their soul, they usually mean the vital+mental being or else the (false) soul of desire. The psychic remains behind and acts only through the mind, vital and physical wherever it can. For this reason the psychic being except where it is very much developed has only a small and partial, concealed and mixed or diluted influence on the life of most men. By coming forward is meant that it comes from behind the veil, its presence is felt already in the waking daily consciousness, its influence fills, dominates, transforms the mind and vital and their movements, even the physical. One is aware of one’s soul, feels the psychic to be one’s true being,
the mind and the rest begin to be only instruments of the inmost within us.”

(1097)

Since ‘psychic being’ is the ‘spark’ (278) of, what Sri Aurobindo terms, ‘Jivatman’, the central being of man, ‘the developed psychic being’, of which he speaks in his aforesaid letter, comes to be the ‘spark’ which grows ‘into Fire’ (278). Both exist simultaneously. The psychic being can be viewed also as the folded state of ‘Jivatman’. Therefore, the developed psychic being comes to be the unfolded state, unfolded to a greater extent, of Jivatman.

In the yoga of psychicisation, as noted earlier, we have to bring down ‘Peace’ which exists beyond the plane of Creation, the plane of Divine Existence having an aspiration for it (Peace) as an essential pre-requisite. It is to be emphasized here that aspiration for peace is the fundamental requirement for the yoga without which it cannot be undertaken and the transcendent ‘Peace’ cannot be brought down from its sovereign plane of existence into our being. It is quite evident when Sri Aurobindo categorically speaks of ‘the full descent of a wide peace from above’ (638). Consequent upon the descent of peace, one comes to be able to visualise the plane of Spacelessness and Timelessness, nay, the plane of the existence of the Consciousness of the One. On penetration, it is found that the yogic consciousness emerges from the being of Soul. With the emergence of yogic consciousness, that is to say, with the unfoldment of Jivatman in the psychic being, one comes to be capable of ascending the higher planes of spiritual consciousness and finally to the plane of the transcendent Supramental Consciousness.

Conclusion

Prior to coming to the spiritual plane of consciousness, Sri Aurobindo reveals Time and Space as creations of Energy. He says:

“A purely physical Space might be regarded as in itself a property of Matter; but Matter is a creation of Energy in movement. Space therefore in the material world could either be a fundamental self-extension of material Energy or its self-formed existence field, its representation of the Inconscient Infinity in which it is acting, a figure in which it accommodates the formulas and movements of its own action and self-creation. Time would be itself the course of that movement or else an impression created by it, an impression of something that presents itself to us as regularly successive in its appearance, —a division or a continuum upholding the continuity of movement and yet marking off its succession, —because the movement itself is regularly successive. Or else Time could be a dimension of Space necessary for the complete action of the Energy, but not understood by us as such because it is seen by our conscious subjectivity as something itself subjective, felt by our mind, not perceived by our senses, and therefore not recognised as a division of Space which has to us the appearance of a sense-created or sense-perceived objective creation.”

(Sri Aurobindo 1990: 360-61)

He further says:

“…there is a different Time and Space for each status of our consciousness and even different movements of Time and Space within each status; but all would be renderings of a fundamental spiritual reality of Time-Space. In fact, when we go behind physical space, we become aware of an extension on which all this movement is based and this extension is spiritual and not material; it is Self or Spirit containing all action of its own Energy. This origin or basic reality of Space begins to become apparent when we draw back from the physical: for then we become aware of a subjective Space-extension in which mind itself lives and moves and which is other than physical Space-Time, and yet there is an interpenetration; for our mind can move in its own space in such a way as to effectuate a movement also in space of Matter or act upon something distant in space of Matter. In a still deeper condition of consciousness we are aware of a pure spiritual Space; in this awareness Time may no longer seem to exist, because all movement ceases, or, if there is a movement or happening, it can take place independent of any observable Time sequence.”

(361)
Sri Aurobindo’s above vision in which all come to be ‘renderings of a fundamental spiritual reality of Time-Space’ (361) and ‘Self or Spirit’ (361) is found to be ‘containing all action of its own Energy’ (361) is intellectually intelligible when the Quantum Theory takes the World of Science into the sub-atomic plane of Matter wherein particle comes to be wave, and wave into particle as a result of the change in the thought of the experimenter. ‘Mind-Stuff’ of A. S. Eddington (Eddington A. S. 1929: 276) or ‘consciousness’ is found to be at base. It is the consciousness which brings the wave, the ‘probability wave’, as it is called, into existence which further comes to be particle. The renowned British scientist Eddington says:

“I do not believe that the activity of matter at a certain point of brain stimulates an activity of mind; my view is that in the activity of matter there is a metrical description of certain aspects of the activity of mind.”

(Eddington 1929: 278)

Having taken Einstein’s vision of Matter as condensed form of Energy into consideration, we have a deeper vision. It is found therein that consciousness comes to be Energy which gives birth to the probability wave, the wave which is a ‘tendency’ to be particle. Sri Aurobindo, too, reveals in one of his letters on yoga:

“Consciousness is a fundamental thing, the fundamental thing in existence — it is the energy, the motion, the movement of consciousness that creates the universe and all that is in it — not only the macrocosm but the microcosm is nothing but consciousness arranging itself. For instance, when consciousness in its movement or rather a certain stress of movement forgets itself in the action it becomes an apparently “unconscious” energy; when it forgets itself in the form it becomes the electron, the atom, the material object. In reality it is still consciousness that works in the energy and determines the form and the evolution of form.”

(Sri Aurobindo 1979: 236-37)

On a deeper penetration, such ‘consciousness’ is found to be essentially integral in nature, not separative which is the characteristic feature of the mental consciousness. The integral nature is intelligible when it is found that consciousness comes to be energy, and further, comes to be the probability wave. The probability wave, then, comes to be particle, or to say, Matter in which electron, proton and neutron with their different characteristic features exist. It is all the more intelligible when the Biological Sciences discover the evolution of Life out of Matter, the Matter which was earlier found to be creation of consciousness. The integral consciousness is essentially the Divine Consciousness, the consciousness of Soul or what Sri Aurobindo terms in his above mentioned words ‘Self or Spirit’. Eddington, too, experiences the spiritual character of Creation. He discovers that ‘the main significance of our environment is of a more spiritual character.’ (Eddington 1929: 276).

Now, the separate and incompatible realities of Space and Time on the three-dimensional plane of existence and the one transcendent integral oneness of Space and Time, ‘Spacetime’ on the four-dimensional plane of existence come to be a matter of consciousness, the two planes of consciousness. We discover a plane of consciousness where the principle of separation reigns and further, transcending it, a plane, where the principle of One reigns, exists. In fact, on a deeper examination, it is found that this higher plane of consciousness poises itself to be separative without effacing its sovereign oneness on account of which Einstein discovers the three-dimensional plane of existence as a projection of the four-dimensional plane of existence as stated earlier.

The invisibility of the plane of Spacetime, the four-dimensional plane of existence in spite of its admitted mathematical discovery leads us to Sri Aurobindo’s yogic vision of Matter, in the inner realm of which evolution is going on. Consequently, we have to come to the conclusion that as a result of the on-going evolution of Matter, the physical manifestation of the four-dimensional plane of existence, Spacetime is destined to take place. Its mental manifestation comes to us in its mathematical structure which, as noted earlier, Einstein erected. Its further manifestation on the physical
plane cannot be denied by any scientific logic as a result of the growth of the psychic being into ‘Fire’.

References