International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)
ISSN: 2319-7064
Impact Factor 2025: 7.089

Human Consciousness and Contemporary Science: A Critical Review of Nine Fields in the Light of Vethathiri Maharishi's Philosophy

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Abstract: ***Human consciousness remains a central interdisciplinary question involving neuroscience, psychology, cognitive science, biology, physics and philosophy. Although contemporary research has advanced the understanding of neural correlates, cognitive processes, physiological regulation and theories of subjective experience, no single scientific framework has conclusively explained the full nature of consciousness. This critical narrative review examines nine contemporary scientific fields in the light of Vethathiri Maharishi's philosophy, which considers the human being through the interconnected dimensions of the physical body, life force, mind and consciousness. Simplified Kundalini Yoga (SKY), as taught by Vethathiri Maharishi, provides the practical context for understanding self-awareness, mental refinement and human development. The review explores conceptual connections with neuroscience, cognitive science, psychophysiology, psychology, complexity science, epigenetics, quantum physics, bioelectromagnetism and contemporary consciousness theories. It distinguishes empirical findings from theoretical interpretations and philosophical propositions. The analysis identifies areas of conceptual correspondence while emphasising that similarity does not establish scientific equivalence or proof. The review proposes an interdisciplinary perspective for future research on human consciousness and highlights the need for direct, methodologically rigorous investigations of SKY practices.***

Keywords: Human consciousness; Vethathiri Maharishi; Simplified Kundalini Yoga; neuroscience; interdisciplinary research

1. Introduction

Human consciousness is among the most complex and debated subjects in contemporary knowledge. It concerns subjective experience, awareness, perception, attention, self-recognition and the relationship between the mind and the physical body. Despite substantial advances in brain imaging, cognitive neuroscience and theoretical models, the relationship between physical processes and subjective experience remains unresolved [1–4].

Contemporary research approaches consciousness from different disciplinary perspectives. Neuroscience investigates neural activity associated with conscious experience; cognitive science examines attention, perception and information processing; psychology explores awareness and behaviour; and physiology studies the relationship between bodily processes and mental states. Other fields, including complexity science, epigenetics, quantum physics and bioelectromagnetism, contribute additional perspectives, although their relevance to consciousness varies in evidential strength.

Vethathiri Maharishi's philosophy offers an integrated conceptual perspective on human existence. It considers the physical body, life force, mind and consciousness as interconnected dimensions rather than isolated entities. His teachings also emphasise the refinement of human awareness through Simplified Kundalini Yoga (SKY), introspection and disciplined living [15–17].

The present review brings these perspectives into a critical dialogue. It does not attempt to establish that contemporary science has proved Vethathiri Maharishi's philosophical concepts. Instead, it examines where scientific findings may provide useful explanatory parallels, where conceptual differences remain, and where further investigation is required.

1.1 Aim

To critically examine nine contemporary scientific fields in the light of Vethathiri Maharishi's conceptual understanding of human consciousness.

1.2 Objectives

1) To present Vethathiri Maharishi's philosophy as the conceptual foundation for examining human consciousness.
2) To review relevant developments across nine contemporary scientific fields.
3) To identify conceptual correspondences and distinctions between scientific explanations and Vethathiri's framework.
4) To distinguish empirical findings, theoretical interpretations and philosophical propositions.
5) To identify research gaps and possible directions for future interdisciplinary study of consciousness through SKY.

1.3 Research Question

How do contemporary scientific perspectives across nine fields relate to, differ from and potentially contribute to an interdisciplinary examination of human consciousness through Vethathiri Maharishi's philosophy?

2. Vethathiri Maharishi's Conceptual Framework of Human Consciousness

Vethathiri Maharishi's philosophy provides the conceptual foundation for this review. His understanding of human

existence connects the physical body, life force, mind and consciousness within an integrated view of the human being. Rather than treating these as isolated components, his teachings describe them as interconnected dimensions of human existence and development [15–17].

2.1 Physical body

The physical body represents the material and biological dimension of human life. It functions through interconnected physiological systems, including the nervous, endocrine, circulatory and other regulatory systems. Contemporary biology and neuroscience provide methods for investigating these bodily processes and their relationship with perception, behaviour and awareness.

2.2 Life force

Life force is a central concept in Vethathiri Maharishi's philosophical explanation of life processes and the relationship between the body and mind. It belongs to his conceptual framework and should not automatically be equated with any single measurable physiological or electromagnetic variable. Scientific measurements of electrical, chemical and magnetic activity in living systems may provide relevant areas of comparison, but they do not independently establish the philosophical concept of life force.

2.3 Mind

The mind is associated in this framework with awareness, thought, perception, desire, memory and the capacity for self-regulation. Contemporary cognitive science and psychology investigate several of these functions through attention, information processing, emotion, memory and behaviour. Such research can illuminate particular functions of the mind without necessarily accounting for its complete philosophical meaning.

2.4 Consciousness

Consciousness represents the deeper dimension of awareness through which individuals may progressively understand themselves, their relationship with the universe and the principles governing life. Contemporary consciousness studies investigate subjective experience and its possible neural, cognitive and physical correlates. However, the scientific explanation of subjective experience remains an open question [1–4].

2.5 Simplified Kundalini Yoga and human refinement

Simplified Kundalini Yoga, as taught by Vethathiri Maharishi, provides a practical pathway for self-development through systematic practices and introspection. These practices are intended to support physical well-being, mental refinement, emotional balance and the expansion of awareness.

In this review, SKY is considered within its own philosophical and practical context. Findings from studies of other meditation or yoga practices are not treated as direct evidence for SKY. Direct empirical research is necessary to establish the specific effects and mechanisms of SKY practices.

The framework is used as a philosophical and interpretive lens for examining contemporary scientific literature. It is not presented as an experimentally validated scientific model.

3. Contemporary Scientific Perspectives Across Nine Fields

3.1 Neuroscience

Neuroscience investigates the neural mechanisms associated with conscious experience. Research on neural correlates of consciousness examines the minimum neural mechanisms associated with particular conscious experiences, while contemporary theories explore the role of different brain networks and patterns of neural integration [4].

Recent work has compared major theories, including Global Neuronal Workspace Theory and Integrated Information Theory, through adversarial experimental testing [2]. Other reviews discuss the diversity of current theories and the challenges involved in distinguishing their explanations [1,3].

- **Connection with Vethathiri's framework:** Neuroscience provides an empirical perspective on the biological functioning of the physical body and neural processes associated with attention, awareness and mental activity.
- **Critical distinction:** Neural correlates of consciousness do not by themselves provide a complete explanation of subjective experience. Nor do they establish the philosophical concept of life force or universal consciousness.

3.2 Cognitive and computational science

Cognitive science examines mental functions such as perception, attention, memory, learning, reasoning and decision-making. Predictive processing and active inference are influential approaches that describe how the brain may use predictions and sensory information to guide perception and action [5].

These approaches contribute to understanding how individuals interpret their environment and regulate behaviour. They also provide theoretical tools for studying attention and conscious access.

- **Connection with Vethathiri's framework:** Cognitive science offers a way to examine selected functions associated with the mind, particularly perception, attention and thought.
- **Critical distinction:** Computational explanations of cognitive functions should not be treated as complete explanations of consciousness. Models of information processing do not necessarily resolve the subjective character of experience.

3.3 Psychophysiology and embodied cognition

Psychophysiology investigates relationships between psychological processes and physiological responses. Interoception, the sensing and interpretation of internal bodily

signals, is an important area connecting bodily regulation with subjective feelings and self-awareness [6,12].

Research on interoceptive systems examines how information from internal organs and physiological processes is represented and integrated. Such processes contribute to homeostasis, motivation, emotion and bodily awareness.

- **Connection with Vethathiri's framework:** This field provides a scientific perspective on the relationship between the physical body and mental processes. It is relevant to examining how awareness of bodily states may contribute to self-regulation.
- **Critical distinction:** Physiological measurements and interoceptive processes cannot independently establish the existence or nature of a philosophical life force.

3.4 Psychology and contemplative science

Psychology investigates mental processes, emotions, behaviour, self-regulation and well-being. Contemplative science examines practices such as meditation and mindfulness using psychological, behavioural and physiological methods.

Research has explored associations between meditation and the complexity of brain activity, although the evidence varies across practices, methods and study designs [7]. Such research can contribute to understanding attention, emotional regulation and changes in subjective experience.

- **Connection with Vethathiri's framework:** Psychological research provides relevant perspectives on mental refinement, self-awareness and emotional balance, which are important aims within the SKY approach.
- **Critical distinction:** Findings from mindfulness or other contemplative practices cannot automatically be generalised to SKY. Direct studies of SKY practices are needed to establish their specific outcomes.

3.5 Complexity and systems science

Complexity science examines systems composed of interacting elements whose collective behaviour may produce properties not easily explained by studying individual components alone. Biological systems, neural networks and human behaviour can be examined through systems-level approaches.

Research connecting meditation and complexity has considered whether changes in the complexity of physiological or neural signals may be associated with contemplative practices [7].

- **Connection with Vethathiri's framework:** Systems science provides a useful perspective for examining the interconnectedness of bodily, mental and environmental processes.
- **Critical distinction:** Interconnectedness and emergent behaviour do not automatically demonstrate consciousness. Complexity measures are indicators of particular system properties, not direct proof of universal awareness.

3.6 Epigenetics and stress biology

Epigenetics examines molecular processes that influence gene expression without changing the underlying DNA sequence. Research has investigated relationships between psychological stress, behavioural interventions and DNA methylation. A scoping review reported emerging evidence of DNA methylation changes associated with psychobehavioural interventions, including yoga and mindfulness-related approaches [8]. A subsequent systematic review and meta-analysis examined nonpharmacological interventions and DNA methylation in common mental disorders [9].

- **Connection with Vethathiri's framework:** This field provides a biological perspective for investigating whether sustained behavioural and mental practices are associated with measurable changes in stress-related biological processes.
- **Critical distinction:** Epigenetic findings do not establish a genetic centre, prove a consciousness mechanism or validate the philosophical concept of life force. The specific biological effects of SKY require direct investigation.

3.7 Quantum physics

Quantum physics describes matter and energy at microscopic scales and has prompted philosophical discussions about the relationship between physical reality, observation and consciousness. Some theories propose possible connections between quantum processes and conscious experience.

A recent critical review of quantum theories of consciousness evaluates their physical feasibility, philosophical sufficiency and empirical testability [10].

- **Connection with Vethathiri's framework:** Quantum physics may provide a broader context for philosophical discussions about matter, nature and the universe.
- **Critical distinction:** Quantum phenomena do not establish that consciousness is a universal field or prove Vethathiri Maharishi's philosophical explanations. A conceptual resemblance between philosophical statements and quantum terminology is not scientific validation.

3.8 Bioelectromagnetism

Bioelectromagnetism concerns electrical and magnetic phenomena associated with living systems. Electrical activity in the nervous system, heart and other tissues can be measured using established scientific instruments. Research into biofield therapies has also mapped the clinical research landscape and the evidence available for different interventions [11].

- **Connection with Vethathiri's framework:** This field offers a scientific context for examining measurable electrical and magnetic processes in living organisms and considering their relationship with physiological regulation.
- **Critical distinction:** Measurable bioelectromagnetic activity should not be equated with Vethathiri's philosophical concept of biomagnetism or life force without direct evidence. Research on biofield therapies also does not establish a universal life-energy mechanism.

3.9 Contemporary consciousness theories and philosophy

Contemporary consciousness research includes several theoretical approaches, such as Global Neuronal Workspace Theory, Integrated Information Theory, higher-order theories and predictive-processing approaches [1,3]. These theories differ in their explanations of conscious access, subjective experience and the relationship between neural activity and awareness.

Experimental comparison of major theories has become an important direction in the field. The adversarial collaboration between proponents of Global Neuronal Workspace Theory and Integrated Information Theory illustrates the effort to develop testable predictions and compare competing explanations [2].

- **Connection with Vethathiri's framework:** Contemporary consciousness theories provide conceptual and scientific perspectives for examining awareness, subjective experience and the relationship between physical processes and consciousness.
- **Critical distinction:** No single contemporary theory has conclusively resolved the nature of subjective experience or established Vethathiri Maharishi's philosophical position. Philosophical interpretations and empirical findings must remain clearly distinguished.

4. Comparative Synthesis

The nine fields provide different forms of knowledge relevant to human consciousness. Their contributions are not interchangeable. Some fields provide direct empirical measurements of physiological or neural processes, while others offer theoretical models or philosophical interpretations.

The following table summarises their relationship with the conceptual dimensions of Vethathiri Maharishi's framework.

Table 1: Comparative relationship between nine scientific fields and Vethathiri Maharishi's conceptual framework

Scientific field	Relevant conceptual dimension	Potential contribution	Principal limitation
Neuroscience	Physical body, mind	Neural correlates and brain processes	Neural activity does not fully explain subjective experience
Cognitive and computational science	Mind	Attention, perception and information processing	Cognitive models do not necessarily explain consciousness itself
Psychophysiology and embodied cognition	Body–mind relationship	Interoception and physiological regulation	Physiological measures do not establish life force
Psychology and contemplative science	Mind, self-awareness	Emotion, attention and self-regulation	Findings from other practices cannot be assumed to apply to SKY
Complexity and systems science	Interconnected dimensions	System-level relationships and emergent behaviour	Complexity is not equivalent to consciousness
Epigenetics and stress biology	Physical body, behavioural influence	Biological associations of sustained interventions	Epigenetic changes do not prove a consciousness mechanism
Quantum physics	Philosophical understanding of nature	Physical and philosophical questions	Quantum theory does not validate universal consciousness
Bioelectromagnetism	Physical body, life processes	Measurable electrical and magnetic activity	Measured fields are not proof of philosophical biomagnetism
Consciousness theories and philosophy	Mind, consciousness	Competing explanations of subjective experience	No single theory provides a conclusive explanation

The comparison indicates that neuroscience, cognitive science, psychophysiology and psychology offer relatively direct methods for studying selected biological and mental processes. Complexity science and epigenetics provide additional system-level and molecular perspectives. Quantum physics and bioelectromagnetism may contribute to specific discussions, but claims linking them to universal consciousness or life force require particular caution. Contemporary consciousness theories continue to debate the relationship between physical processes and subjective experience.

For analytical clarity, the literature can be considered through five broad evidence categories:

- **E1- Direct empirical evidence:** findings based on observations or measurements of specific biological, psychological or behavioural variables.
- **E2- Experimental or intervention-related evidence:** findings from studies examining changes associated with defined interventions.
- **E3- Theoretical scientific explanations:** models or hypotheses that offer explanations but may not be conclusively established.
- **T- Theoretical interpretation:** conceptual explanations developed within a scientific discipline.
- **P- Philosophical proposition:** claims concerning the fundamental nature of life, mind or consciousness that are not directly established by the cited empirical evidence.
- **Open research question:** an issue requiring further investigation.

These categories are descriptive aids for organising the discussion. They are not a validated evidence-grading instrument and should not be interpreted as a formal systematic-review quality assessment.

5. Problem Definition

Human consciousness is examined through multiple disciplines, yet their explanations often remain separated by differences in terminology, research methods and underlying assumptions. Neuroscience and cognitive science investigate measurable processes, psychology examines mental and behavioural dimensions, and philosophy considers broader

questions about subjective experience and the nature of consciousness.

Vethathiri Maharishi's integrated framework presents the physical body, life force, mind and consciousness as interconnected dimensions of human existence. However, the relationship between this philosophical framework and contemporary scientific explanations requires careful interdisciplinary examination.

The central research problem is therefore not whether contemporary science has already proved Vethathiri Maharishi's philosophy, but how scientific knowledge across different fields can be critically compared with the framework, while preserving the distinction between empirical evidence, scientific theory and philosophical understanding.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research design

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive and critical narrative review approach. It examines selected scientific literature and conceptual works relevant to human consciousness and compares them with Vethathiri Maharishi's philosophical framework.
The review is interdisciplinary and interpretive in nature. It does not involve experiments, human-participant recruitment, clinical intervention, manipulation of variables or primary data collection.

6.2 Literature selection and scope

The literature considered includes peer-reviewed review articles, research publications and theoretical discussions relevant to the nine selected fields. The selection is guided by conceptual relevance to consciousness, the body–mind relationship, awareness, physiological regulation and the philosophical framework of Vethathiri Maharishi.

The cited literature represents selected contributions rather than an exhaustive account of all publications in each discipline. This study does not claim to be a systematic review, meta-analysis or comprehensive evidence synthesis. No exhaustive database search, formal screening process or quantitative study selection is claimed.

6.3 Analytical approach

The literature is examined through three analytical steps:

1) Identify the principal scientific concept or finding discussed in each field.
2) Examine its possible conceptual relationship with the physical body, life force, mind and consciousness in Vethathiri Maharishi's framework.
3) Identify differences, limitations and questions that remain unresolved by the available evidence.

The analysis distinguishes empirical findings from theoretical explanations and philosophical propositions. Conceptual similarities are not treated as proof of equivalence.

6.4 Methodological limitations

As a critical narrative review, the study does not provide exhaustive literature coverage or systematic screening. The selected publications represent relevant contributions rather than all available research. The interpretation is also limited by differences in terminology and methodology across disciplines.

The review does not establish the efficacy or biological mechanism of SKY practices. Such conclusions require direct empirical studies using clearly defined SKY interventions and appropriate research designs.

7. Discussion

The interdisciplinary examination indicates that contemporary science provides valuable methods for studying several dimensions associated with human consciousness. Neuroscience investigates neural processes, cognitive science examines mental functions, and psychophysiology explores the relationship between internal bodily signals and subjective states. Psychology and contemplative science contribute to understanding self-awareness, attention and emotional regulation.

These areas offer relevant points of comparison with Vethathiri Maharishi's integrated view of human existence. In particular, the relationship between the physical body and mind can be examined through interoception, neural regulation and psychophysiological research. Similarly, studies of meditation and behavioural interventions may provide useful research directions for examining the aims of mental refinement and self-regulation associated with SKY.

However, the comparison must remain critical. Scientific findings concerning brain activity, DNA methylation or bioelectromagnetic signals cannot be used as direct proof of philosophical concepts such as life force or universal consciousness. Likewise, theoretical discussions in quantum physics should not be used to establish claims about consciousness without testable mechanisms and supporting evidence.

An important contribution of Vethathiri Maharishi's framework is its integrated perspective. It encourages the examination of human development through interconnected physical, mental and consciousness-related dimensions. Contemporary science, meanwhile, offers specialised methods for investigating measurable processes within these dimensions. An interdisciplinary dialogue may therefore be productive when each perspective is interpreted within its appropriate scope.

The review also highlights the importance of direct research on SKY. Studies of other contemplative practices may inform research questions, but they cannot establish the specific effects of SKY. Future studies should clearly describe the practices, participant characteristics, duration, outcome measures and limitations. Appropriate physiological, psychological and behavioural measures may help examine selected outcomes without assuming in advance that they validate the entire philosophical framework.

8. Limitations of the Review

This review has several limitations. First, it is a critical narrative review and does not claim exhaustive literature coverage or systematic screening. Second, the nine selected fields represent a focused interdisciplinary selection rather than every scientific discipline relevant to consciousness. Third, the comparison is conceptual and interpretive; it does not establish causal relationships or scientific equivalence between Vethathiri Maharishi's philosophy and contemporary scientific theories.

Fourth, direct empirical evidence specifically examining SKY is not established by the selected literature. Findings from other meditation, yoga or contemplative interventions cannot automatically be generalised to SKY. Finally, philosophical concepts such as life force and universal consciousness require careful treatment and should not be presented as experimentally established scientific entities.

9. Conclusion

Human consciousness remains an interdisciplinary subject that cannot yet be fully explained through a single scientific theory. The nine fields examined in this review contribute different perspectives on neural activity, cognition, bodily awareness, psychological processes, biological regulation, physical theory and subjective experience.

Vethathiri Maharishi's philosophy provides an integrated conceptual foundation connecting the physical body, life force, mind and consciousness. When examined alongside contemporary science, this framework offers opportunities for critical dialogue and the development of research questions. However, conceptual correspondence must not be confused with scientific proof.

The review concludes that a balanced interdisciplinary approach should recognise the contributions and limitations of both scientific investigation and philosophical interpretation. Direct, methodologically rigorous research on SKY is necessary to investigate its specific effects and possible mechanisms. Such research may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of human consciousness while maintaining appropriate distinctions between empirical evidence, scientific theory and philosophical knowledge.

10. Future Scope

Future research may focus on the following directions:

1) Developing clearly defined research protocols for investigating SKY practices.
2) Examining the relationship between SKY and attention, self-awareness, emotional regulation and psychological well-being.
3) Exploring measurable physiological and neurocognitive changes associated with defined SKY practices.
4) Investigating possible relationships between sustained practice, stress-related biological indicators and behavioural outcomes.
5) Developing an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that distinguishes empirical, theoretical and philosophical dimensions of consciousness.
6) Encouraging collaboration among researchers in neuroscience, psychology, physiology, yoga studies and philosophy.

Such research should use transparent methods, appropriate controls where relevant, clearly defined outcome measures and cautious interpretation of findings.

Acknowledgement
The author acknowledges the guidance and academic support of the research supervisor and the institutional research environment that supports interdisciplinary study of human consciousness.

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