Sheldrake's Hindu Parallel Theory On Biology and Cosmic Genesis
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When Rupert Sheldrake, now 44, first went to Hyderabad, India, in 1968 as a plant biologist, more than just pollen and dirt rubbed off on him. He began digging into the Vedas and Upanishads, examining Buddhist doctrine and Sufi mysticism. He learned meditation. In 1974, India became this Briton's home, and his views of biology were becoming radically altered by his Eastern musings. Eventually, he would create a science theory so wide that it carried an ethical message of being psychically responsible for our thoughts and actions. It was so deep it receded back through transcendent creation gods to a God state that reads like many Upanishadic passages. He would say in 1987, "My ideas find readier acceptance in the Buddhist and Hindu traditions of the East than in Western culture."

Sheldrake saw how a subtle, trans-physical field was responsible for defining, regulating and advancing biological form and intelligence - like the akashic form-building of the Vedas. He was contemplating, as all biologists do, how species radically change form through several maturation stages, how reptiles can completely regenerate damaged organs or how infants learn faster and on a higher order than adults. The answers that molecular biology was giving - DNA codes, trigger acid bases, neuro-chemical feedback - were simply too machinelike and weren't coming close to providing satisfactory explanations.

In 1978, Sheldrake entered an ashram by the sacred Cauvery River in South India. Here he extended his biological insights to include inorganic matter, formulated a scientifically testable theory and wrote a brilliant book, A New Science of Life. He called his theory "formative causation." It simply stated that the combined form and the learned intelligence/behavior of anything appearing in the universe - from an atom to man-is guided by a single morphogenetic (form-evolving) field: M-field for short. One field per new form, no matter how numerous it appears in our universe. According to Hindu metaphysics, this is precisely how the interior astral universe works.

The fields work in an interior dimension to ours, not bounded by space or time. Learning is greatly accelerated and accumulative. New crystals "know" simultaneously how to grow in laboratories continents apart. Rats in Australia, who have never run any maze before, run one faster than a U.S.-located generation (totally unrelated to Australian rats) of the speediest rats trained in the same maze. Knowledge of the maze was trans-located.

As new intelligence is acquired by a species, it is broadcast and available for psychic access. The theory is scientifically testable because this learning acceleration can be observed. Indeed, it has been successfully tested over the past two years. Put in practical terms, the Vedas and Agamas are easier to learn and understand now than they were at their inception.

But this wasn't all. In his final chapter, he unfolded how a hierarchy of conscious, intelligent non-physical beings (devas), create the original M-fields and interpenetrate into our universe with their intelligence. We interact with them. Our consciousness is embedded within theirs.

Further, he postulated an ultimate transcendent being. He writes: The universe as a whole could have a cause and a purpose only if it were itself created by a conscious agent which transcended it. Unlike the universe, this transcendent consciousness would not be developing towards a goal; it would be its own goal. It would not be striving towards a final form; it would be complete in itself. If this transcendent conscious being were the source of the universe and of everything within it, all created things would in some sense participate in its nature.

Compare that quote to this Svetasvatara Upanishad verse: Greater than all is Brahman, the Supreme, the Infinite. He dwells in the mystery of all beings according to their forms in nature. Those who know Him who knows all, and whose energy all things are, attain immortality.

Sheldrake is just finishing a new book due to be released this spring. But when his first book was published in 1981 a sour chorus rose to accuse him of bringing in religion through the front door while science had just kicked it out the back. Many scientists, however, embraced it. One major implication of the theory is that if our mental and physical creations are influencing M-fields, then we must take

responsibility for them. We are not separate from our thoughts. They influence everybody through time. So if millions of people are watching a violent movie, then much of humanity will be effected by the imagery and feeling.

One of the profound beauties of Sheldrake's theory is its hierarchical structure: like Chinese lacquer boxes, our cosmos is embedded within other universes, invisible to our senses. Ken Wilbur, famous author of East/West connection books and a friend of Sheldrake says, "Rupert and I spent an entire afternoon trying to think up another word for hierarchy, but we couldn't. The best we could do was say 'nested hierarchy.' Absolute spirit manifests itself in steps, in layers or sheaths, or grades or levels. In Vedanta, these are the koshas, the sheaths or layers covering Brahman."

Nobel-laureate physicist Brian Josephson is particularly fond of Sheldrake's theory and has over the past five years been practicing the Samkya philosophy of Sage Kapila. Samkya is an ancient Hindu cosmology that states that energy/matter or prakriti eternally co-exists with and is activated and formed by conscious/intelligent beings: purusha. There is no Supreme Purusha in this dualistic philosophy. But to Josephson it captures a fundamental and, to the West, strange property of quantum mechanics (the predictive study of sub-atomic particles): our consciousness continually creates what we observe in nature. In other words, the split second we perceive through our mind, let's say, the moon, the quantum existence of the moon condenses into physical reality. It is not unreal. It is at another level of reality.

This is natural to Hindu metaphysics as well. Some twenty years ago, H.H. Sivaya Subramuniswami, a Saivite yoga master, expressed this mystic insight in an inspired talk called, Everything is Within You: "The point of conception is the apex of creation." Of course, this gets very complicated when an infinitude of purushas or soul-beings is factored in. A hierarchy of beings would be sustaining existence while others are tuning out, as in sleep.

Finally, most Hindu cosmologies perceive a Supreme Being-the Vedas and Agamas are explicit on this-who is the ultimate creator, sustainer and absorber of form and energy. All other manipulations of space and time, of matter and energy are subordinate to His omnipotent consciousness. So, even if the infinitude of purushas were to shut down their consciousness of form through deep yoga samadhi, it would still be sustained by the Supreme Being. Several physicists are starting to

put together philosophies of this sort.

Cosmic Myth & Reality

There is a myth from Hinduism that demonstrates the reality of God consciousness as the primal substance of form. One day in cosmic time, Siva was looking out upon His infinite creation, His third-eye ablaze with light/consciousness, when Parvati (mythically His wife, in reality His shakti power) snuck up behind Him and clasped her hands over His eyes. Suddenly, all the universes went dark and cold, worlds and galaxies were beginning to fade back into the consciousness of Siva. As soon as Parvati realized what she had done, she removed her hands. Space, time and energy/matter reappeared.

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