

# What is Life? Scientific and Indian Spiritual Perspectives on the Nature, Purpose, Meaning, and Origin of Life

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## Abstract

We human beings are very curious about the life. What is life? Who created us? Who created this whole universe? Where shall we go after death? Such questions keeps coming to our mind. The essay tries to answer the queries commonly arises to our mind. It starts with a brief introductory section, brings a clear idea about the existence of life, it's inter-relationship with other living and so called non-living beings. We explained the true nature of life, how the cycle of life gets repeated and where does it end. It highlights the ultimate truth of life, the consciousness. We also tried to enlighten vedantic aspect about the God and it's true form. Correlation between scientific and spiritual views about the life is illuminated in depth with some examples. An attempt is made to illustrate reincarnation of life with some logical explanation and evidences.

## 1 Introduction

Life is the most beautiful gift of god. In this technical era, we human being are trying to create so many amazing things with many sophisticated technology. The technical evolution is taking us ahead day by day. Technology brought computers, robots, etc.. It happens to be like that, we are trying to mimic the creation of god. Trying the machine to work like human brain. Experimenting on many animals like monkey, gorilla etc.. But could we ever be able to bring life to anything? How wonderful the life is!! So many hidden treasures are there in this world. If we see carefully, we can notice that every living thing is created so tactfully. Just look into a leaf of a plant. Observe carefully each and every part of it. Have a look at the birds feather, for example the feather of Indian national bird, the peacock. What a marvelous design is that!

Have a look at a small creature like house fly. How greatly the fly is designed. The existing technology can ever develop such an optimized design? Don't those designs make you feel like how difficult and wonderful these are! The view of such things simply shut our mouth. There comes a question in our mind, who designed those? As it is quite obvious that if there is a design, then there much be a designer also. But who is that designer? Again no one knows! From thousands of year we are seeking the question. Still it is unknown to us. Some believe that it is just a natural evolution. If it is so, then how it evolved naturally? According to the Darwin's theory of Evolution [5] "As time goes on, complex creatures evolve from simplistic ancestors naturally." This theory, gives us a clue about the evolution of life. But still there are many controversy in that [4], [8], [13].

Our mind can't accept that, it is simply a natural evolution. How can that be possible? It seems we are just trying to escape from this question. So far there is no clear evidence. We human being are perceiving the world in our own way. We have limited senses. Even though our brain is much better developed than other living organism which makes us to think, to have more intelligence, but that doesn't prove that we have every power that all other living beings carries. Our



Figure 1: peacock feather and a house fly

senses are different from other living being. We think that there is a superpower, the god who is ruling this universe. We imagine in our own way, like we create an image in our mind that the God looks like a human being. But, let say, if an elephant would perceive the world, how would it think? It might think that there is a super power looks like a big elephant which is ruling this universe. Swami Vivekananda, in his lecture at Chicago, told a story of a frog. Once a frog came from an ocean and fell into an well. In that well another frog was staying. After some conversation the frog in the well asked the new one, how big is the ocean? Second one replied it is too big. In response the first frog jumped from one side of the well to other side and asked is it bigger than this! [12]. The moral is very clear to us. Even though we try to explain everything with our own capability, it is not always possible to sense, visualize or express. We are bounded, have limited sensing capability, in fact our thinking is also bounded. There are some other living organisms which have more senses than us. Some animals, birds can sense the natural disastrous long before it actually happens.

In 373 B.C, historians recorded that, animals including rats, snakes, and weasels deserted the Greek city of helice in droves just days before a quake devastated the place [10]. It is shown in National Geographic news on Thursday, October 28, 2010. Many plants, fishes, animals have various types of senses which we human don't have. Some of the examples are: Eco location (like a radar usually some fishes have this), infrared vision, electric sense, and magnetic sense etc [7].

We human being, try to create our own definition of God. Fight with each other with different views. Try to generalize our own definition of God and say the other one is wrong! But, it never solves the actual problem. In fact it gives rise to various problems and such things have been carried away from centuries. Our brain cells are continuously modifying through constant practice. Our ancestors, who were saints and great personalities, gifted us with wide knowledge, like Gita,Vedas, Koran, Bible etc., They could able to perceive in much greater extend than a normal human does. Unfortunately, sometime we human begin are extracting informations wrongly and creating havoc in the world!

This essay brings an overview about the spiritual aspect of life and it's correlation with that of science. In the reminder of this essay first we give an over view of the life all round us, it's interaction with other living and non-living things. Next part gives a brief description about the existence of god and everything around us with some pictorial descriptions. It clearly shows the inter-relationship between scientific and spiritual aspect of life. Thereafter inner conscience of the life is briefly explained. Finally, the conclusion is drawn.

## 2 The Outer Conscience

Mesmerizing flavor of beautiful flowers, the pleasing vision of sun rise in the morning, nature dressed with so many colored plants, all such things compel us to ask questions, what are those, how those things came into existence? We can see in Vedas [3] that, from last thousands years people are asking such questions. When the universe was dark, who created all these! Millions of time people tried to answer the same question. It's not like that, all the answers are doubtful. In every answer, there is some truth. It is getting energized with time as people are gaining more and more knowledge. There are some queries which are already been cleared earlier, like there was a time when there was no human, no animals, no plant even no water. There was no earth also. These facts are now known to us. We have no doubt in that. But how people came to this conclusion! Lets have a look into that. Let's take a small plant. We can observe that how it is growing out of the mud and gradually taking a shape of a big tree. As time goes on, it dies away, just leaves the seed behind. It is like a cycle shown in figure 2. Let see a bird, it take birth from an egg, grows up, lives for some days and later dies away, keeping only some eggs behind. The seed for future birds. It starts from a small

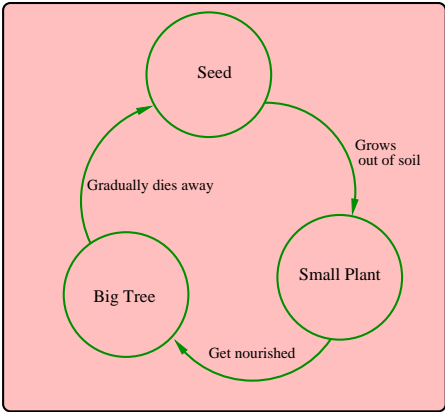


Figure 2: Life cycle of a tree

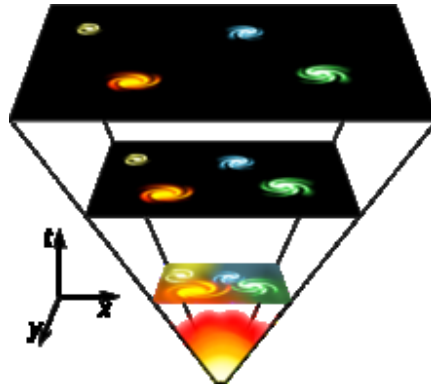


Figure 3: Big bang theory

thing, grows up and ultimately goes back to the same small thing. The process is same for all living beings.

The big bang theory [9] had a cause. This universe evolved from an extremely hot state. From a small molecular level it multiplied and became more and more dense. Figure 3 shows the evolution of big bang theory. At a point when it became extremely dense and hot, it blast out. As a result the universe came into existence.

Like wise the whole thing will go back to the smallest state. There won't be any sun, moon, earth etc.. Everything will extinct. It will go back to it's original smallest state. For every existence, there is a cause. Nothing can happen without cause. We saw, how a small seed give rise to a big tree, and ultimately goes back to its original smaller form. In the same way the whole universe existed form a small molecular level and ultimately will again goes back to it's own form. It is a cycle and will keep on repeating. There is no beginning and no end. It is, it was and it will be. That's why, in many religion it is said that, the soul neither dies nor take birth. It is always there and it will be always there. The big bang theory also matches with the great saying in Bhagavad gita [14], i.e, Sri Krishna said, "Whatever is there in this world came from me and ultimately will go back to me." This Krishna is the tiny molecular level thing in which all the energy is concentrated.

Similar explanation we can get in other religion also. May be somewhat twisted, but the message is same. Darwin's evolution connects non-living thing and living things. How a small single cell organism came into existence from non-living things. Then gradually, multi-cellular organisms came into existence, finally to a complex human being. So far we saw that every thing has a cause. Nothing can evolve automatically from empty. There must be something behind. May be it is in unconscious state or in potential state, in which whole energy is concentrated. This thing has already been proved by the laws of conservation of energy, i.e, energy can neither be created, nor destroyed, it can change from one form to another [2]. We still don't know the end of this evolution. If we can know the beginning of that, certainly we can also come to know the end. We saw, the tree grows out of seed, like wise, seed also takes its form from the tree. That very seed is responsible for that specific tree. A seed can't be formed from empty. Also another type of tree will never grow out of that tree until it is hybridized. We human begin also grow from a cell. It multiplies from that cell. Like wise the whole universe came out of some thing very small and the process is repeatable. We human are just a part of that cycle. The religious mythology says, those who are pure soul, saintly personalities, they are free. They need not have to go into that cycle [1].

We came to a point where we can say that, human view about the universe is nothing but the consciousness. To obtain the similarity between one part with that of another part, which builds the intelligence. Each thing has consciousness. It is active in living beings and passive in non-living beings. But it is always there. This very conscious is what we call 'God' or the Ishwar. We living beings are the manifestation of that god or consciousness which was like a seed. We came to this cycle, and the process continue to repeat until we reach to the goal. i.e, the complete manifestation to the level of god. Once we can do so, we are free (achieved the moksh), free from this cycle of birth and death. That's why every religion says, we came from God, we will finally go back to the god.

We observed that what ever we see, the living, no-living things, everything is the expression of that consciousness. Everything came from that god. He is the sun, he is the earth, the moon, he is ocean, he is in all living and non-living beings. This thing we heard number of times, but could not really able to understand it. Every religion brings this message to us. That consciousness is the ultimate truth.

### 3 The Inner Conscience

Many times we come across the question, who are you? We say, I am a doctor, I am an engineer, a student, blah, blah. Just think, from your childhood how many times you came across this question. If you recall, you will notice that many

times your answer was not the same. It was different when you were a child, and gradually changing as you are growing. That means, who are you is not a constant. It is just a function of time or you can say a random variable. Is not it sounds funny? How can I be a random variable? If it is not so then who am I! Am I just a body, made up of blood and flashes? Blood and flashes are also subjected to change with times. Blood cells are gradually dying and new cells are developing, like-wise the flashes do. I can say that, I belong to a specifically designed living creature so called human. Here comes question. What makes an individual different from another individual?

There is an instinct within us which remind us of our true self. We can feel it but can't exactly express with our few man made scripts. Some say that it is a soul, the conscience. We living being take breath. We are alive till we continue to do so. Once we stop breathing, we are no more. Where we go then? What makes a soul different from another soul? Such questions are yet to be answered. We human being are the greatest creation of god. We are blessed with a wonderful and well developed organ called brain that makes us super power compared to other living species in this universe.

Human's tendency is to look outside. As we have already discussed in the section 2, we try to analyze everything outside ourself. Like wise, we also keep on searching god outside us. We create temples, Masjid, Church etc., But as time goes on, we start searching the same god within our self. Just imagine, how much you know about yourself. We say that 'I will be happy if I achieve this, that etc.', but are you really happy if you achieve that for what you have been trying so long. Momentary pleasure you may get, but it doesn't last for long. If we judge carefully, we will observe that, we hardly know about ourself. Our mind says something to do, our intellect says something else. Sometime we are just driven and can't help ourself not going what we actually don't want to do. We can't control our anger. It is so spontaneous that our intellect doesn't get time to work on it. Many times we get too emotional. We keep on blaming others for some wrong happening, consider ourself good, without even having a look at our own self.



Figure 4: Pointing at each other

Those who does like this, they are unfortunate weak mentality people [3]. They came to this situation because of their own fate and just blaming others for that. But by doing so, the problem is not going to solve, infact it keeps on building weakness within themselves. Swami vivekananda says, "Stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny."

In Mahabharat, there is a story. Yaksha asked Yudhisthira, "what is the most amazing thing in this world"? In reply Yudhisthira said, "The most wondering thing is that even though every day one sees countless living entities dying, he still acts and thinks as if he will live forever." We are far away from the reality. The ultimate truth. We are not only just a body. Let's explore something about our own self: we have been seeing many things around us. Firstly, to visualize something, we need eyes, second we need cornea behind the eyes which will create the image, but most importantly we need some visual organ in the brain which actually makes us to visualize. If that organ in brain damages, then even though eyes are there in well condition, we can't see anything. Eyes, ears, nose etc., are just machines. Some time it happens like that, we are just sitting and reading a book with concentration. At that time bell rang, we didn't hear. though our ear is all right as well as brain organ for the ear is also fine, then why we didn't hear the bell? Here comes the mind. If proper interconnection of mind and brain is not there, then we can't sense. Like wise, there is intellect, which is superior to the mind. Intellect also dominated by that conscience or what we call soul. If our consciousness says to do something, we do, else we leave. Figure 5 gives an illustration of the above description.

The question comes to our mind. How we came to a conclusion that there is something behind our mind. Why mind is not supreme power? We see that all time our mind is not the same. Some time it is having strong will and sometime it is weak. Also if our body is health, our mind also remains health. Here we see that mind is not constant. It doesn't have a constant energy. If it is so then how the mind can be the supreme power. Because the conscience or the soul can't be eroded or damaged. When we die, our body destroy. The conscience can't never be destroyed. It just transforms from one body to another. At every step it is enlighting itself, marching forward from lower level to the higher level. One body is just a means or can be said a media. This again gives rise to a question about rebirth. Many people are scared of rebirth. Some people says that it is just a blind faith or superstition. Some people will show with nice argument that, we are build up from empty and we will go back to the empty. But see, neither you, nor I came from empty. That means we won't go back to empty. There is no power in the universe which can make something out of nothing. Did any scientist

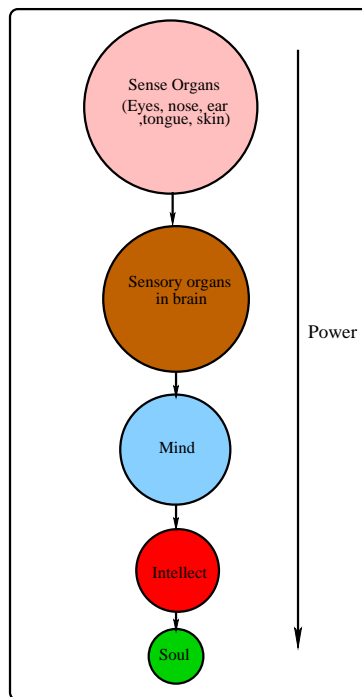


Figure 5: Depth of soul

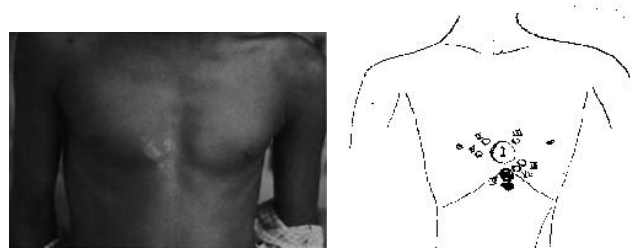


Figure 6: Some evidences of rebirth

ever could be able to create something out of empty? We are there always and we will be always there. Some time in active form i.e in living being, some time in passive form. But, here is a common question, if we get rebirth, then why don't we remember those memories? People say that, we will believe about rebirth only if we remember our past life. Vedanta gives a nice explanation to this [6]. Do we remember about ourselves when we were a very small baby? We don't. But that doesn't tell us that we did not exist at that time. If we can't even remember everything about our this life. How can we remember everything about our past life!

The early Buddhist texts tell that there is no permanent consciousness that moves from one life to another. Buddha says, "there is no irreducible atman or "self" tying these lives together, and anicca, that all compounded things are subject to dissolution, including all the components of the human person and personality. At the death of one personality, a new one comes into being, much as the flame of a dying candle can serve to light the flame of another. The consciousness in the new person is neither identical to nor entirely different from that in the deceased but the two form a causal continuum or stream. Transmigration is the effect of karma (kamma) or volitional action. The basic cause is the abiding of consciousness in ignorance. when ignorance is uprooted rebirth ceases." This is already explained earlier in section 2, that when the ultimate manifestation of the soul is done, it stops going back to the cycle. Some of you might be aware that, there are some evidences about the memories of past life. In the journal of scientific exploration [11], stated about the birth marks corresponding to the defects of the past life. He investigated with 210 such children who have birth marks and found that about 35% are claiming to remember about their past life. Hypo-pigmented mark on chest of an Indian youth who, as a child, said he remembered the life of a man, named Maha Ram, who was killed with a shotgun fired at close range. Figure 6 shows the images of above evidence. The circles in the 2nd part of the figure, show the principal shotgun wounds on Maha Ram, for comparison with first part of the figure. This drawing is found from the autopsy report of the deceased.

It is not always necessary to remember about the past life to come to a conclusion about rebirth. It is true that there

are some evidences of past life as shown in one of the example above. Some scientists says that, a new born baby doesn't carry any culture with it. It learns everything after the birth. But let's think logically, Just look into a new born chick (young hen). Whenever it will see a crow or vulture, it will rush. Who taught them to fear about the vulture? Just look into a new born calf. After few hours of their birth they starts taking milk from their mother. No one taught them about that. How did it know about that? How it know about all this? We human being also like that. Many things we need not have to be taught. We called it just an instinct or a common sense. But from where this common sense came into existence. Take an example of a type writer. At the beginning he will have to look into each and every letter he typed. As he is practicing, after some years of practice, no more he need to look into each and every letters. It just comes from instinct. Say a sitarist, how nicely he is playing the sitar, he need not have to look into each and every node of the sitar while playing. It just comes out automatically.

Swami Vivekananda says, "Every instinct comes from the previous knowledge, previous practice. There are few people who can have the memory of that. As you all are gradually manifestation yourself. you all will be achieving the ultimate manifestation. Then you will remember everything. Only then you will realize, what all about this life is. The world is nothing but like a dream. We all are just players. The world is a field of war. when you will realize that, you will get detached from this worldly things, this materialistic life, all the lust, want of pleasure will go away from you. Then only you will see clearly, how many times you came into life. how many times you became father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife etc., When the memory will bring all these things to you, you will simply smile. Then only you can say bravely that, I am no more scared of death and you can win the death. When you can do that, no more you will be in the cycle. you will be free".

## 4 Conclusion

So much wonder is there in this life, in the living and so called "non-living things". We observed that, how life is expressing it's existance from one form to another. A clear illustration is given in the essay to show that nothing can be created from empty. The energy was always there and it will always remain so. Some time in active form or some time in passive form. It just takes a medium to manifest itself. The full conscience is the ultimate form of a living being. We have been taking birth and dying millions of time until we get completely aware of ourself. Once we achieve that consciousness, we will be no more bounded into the cycle of life and death. We will be a free soul, enlightened, full of happiness, what we so call God.

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