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The Indian Spiritual Tradition Part 2

by Michael Bradford

The following article is part 2 of an excerpt from Chapter 3 of the book "Consciousness: The New Paradigm", now available on Amazon and Smashwords (see below).

Prakriti-Shakti

As described above, *purusha* and *prakriti* are terms used in the Samkhya system to denote the Infinite Unitive Consciousness, beyond time, space, and causality, and 'Nature' or the phenomenal world respectively. The latter has, in this system, 24 stages of manifestation from pure consciousness to physical matter.

According to Woodroffe, the Tantras have an expanded version of this scheme with 36 tattvas. These are subdivided into 3 groups, which he calls Pure, Pure-Impure, and Impure. The Pure tattvas are characterized by unity, but within this unity or Self is an awareness of varying stages of difference between 'I' and 'This'.

In the Pure-Impure categories, the differentiation of the subjective into the objective becomes more advanced, but this sense of difference remains within the unified Self. At the end of this stage, the Self becomes aware of a homogeneous universe other than itself. In the Impure categories, the cleavage between the subjective and the objective becomes complete, and the final stages of mind, senses, and sensible matter evolve.

There are three elements in the 'mind' category. As the ancient explorers of consciousness did not have modern knowledge of anatomy and physiology, they focused their attention on function. There are three functional aspects of the mind, termed in Sanskrit *ahamkara*, *buddhi*, and *manas*. *Ahamkara* literally means 'I-maker'. It is that aspect of our mind that results in self-identification, where we

associate ourselves with the experiences we have and the actions we take. It is similar in some ways to the Western concept of ego.

Buddhi might be described in a general way as awareness, and is said to be that aspect of our mind, which determines, evaluates, and chooses a course of action as a result. It includes such mental functions as logic, reasoning and inference, and corresponds in a general way to the Western concept of the intellect.

Manas might be described as the instinctive emotional mind. It governs our innate likes and dislikes, and our basic responses to sensory stimuli. For instance, if we once burned our hand on a red-hot stove element, we feel a sense of anxiety when we next see something that is red-hot, and instinctively pull away from it. The function of *manas* is to select from the myriad sense impressions coming to the mind those that require attention. If we tried to focus our attention on all sense impressions we receive, the mind would quickly become totally overwhelmed. The selected impressions are referred to as *ahamkara* and *buddhi*.

After the *tattvas* of mind, come the ten senses, called *indriyas*. In addition to the five senses of perception—hearing, touch, sight, taste, and smell, there are five senses of action—hands, feet, mouth (speaking), genitals and anus. The *indriyas* are the five channels of input coming to our mind, and five of output through which we export our intentions to the external world.

Lastly come the five forms of sensible matter—ether or *akasha*, air, fire, water, and earth, corresponding to the five sensory inputs by which we experience matter. *Akasha* corresponds to hearing, and is the space behind which all the other forms of matter exist. Air corresponds to touch and the gaseous state of matter. Fire corresponds to sight and the process of combustion, water to taste and the liquid state, and earth to smell and the solid state.

This final stage of the process of *Prakriti-Shakti* is the manifestation of physical matter, including atoms and molecules, the forces that affect them, and all the laws that govern how matter is organized. Physics has made tremendous strides in its study of matter in the last 200 years, but despite this progress its ultimate nature is still very much a mystery. Although one of its latest attempts at explaining matter, called Superstring Theory, has proposed that matter, at its roots, is made up of almost infinitely small vibrating strings, this theory is still totally theoretical.

As Albert Einstein showed with his famous equation $e=mc^2$, physical matter is actually a form of condensed energy. In a discussion of how our brains perceive this fluctuating energy field that is the physical reality, Gopi Krishna writes in *The Purpose of Yoga*: [\[26\]](#)

“Universal Consciousness (*Brahman*) with its *Maya-Shakti*, existing behind the energy-field of the universe, lies completely beyond the range of our observation, the real source of all creation, yet entirely aloof and unaffected by its constant movement and activity. The Law of Evolution springing from the *Maya-Shakti* of the Creator is operative at the finest levels of our organic structures, subtler than the neurons and their constituents or, in other words, in the invisible energy fields to which they owe their existence, shape and form.”

The ‘Law of Evolution’ referred to here, will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on the Kundalini Mechanism.

Prana-Shakti

The next aspect to come into operation in the process of Creation is *Prana-Shakti*. This term should not be confused with the term *prana*, which is commonly used as a synonym for concepts such as life-energy, chi, bio-energy, or orgone. *Prana-Shakti* is totally non-physical, and its nature is that of consciousness and intelligence.

It might be described as the organizing principle behind all forms of life, taking the insentient atoms and molecules and forming them into discrete, self-contained, self-maintaining and self-replicating units, or life forms. Without *Prana-Shakti*, the universe would be just a vast sea of dead, insentient atoms and molecules. It is said to be super-intelligent, controlling every aspect of biological function in all living beings, from major systems such as digestion and circulation right down to processes at the cellular level. In his autobiography *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man*, Gopi Krishna describes *Prana-Shakti* as follows:

“In order to explain the phenomenon of terrestrial life there is no alternative but to accept the existence of an intelligent vital medium which, using the elements and compounds of the material world as bricks and mortar, acts as the architect of organic structures. All show evidence of extraordinary intelligence and purpose, built with such amazing skill and produced in such profusion and in so many diverse forms as to falsify any idea of spontaneous generation or chance. The existence of this medium cannot be proved empirically; human ingenuity and skill have not yet attained the perfection where one can experiment with media of such subtlety.

In Yoga parlance, *prana* is life and life is *prana*. Life and vitality, in the sense used here, do not mean soul or the spark of the Divine in man. *Prana* is merely the life energy by which divinity brings into existence the organic kingdoms and acts on the organic structures, as it creates and acts on the universe by means of physical energy. It is not the reality, as sunshine is not the sun, and yet is essentially a part of it, assuming different shapes and appearances, entering into countless types of formations, building persistently the units or bricks to create the complicated organic structures in the same way that physical energy starts with electrons, protons, and atoms to raise the mighty edifice of the universe, all its activity governed by eternal laws as rigid and universal as the laws which rule the physical world.

Prana, starting with protoplasm and unicellular organisms, brings into existence the marvelous domain of life, endless in variety, exceedingly rich in shape and color, creating classes, genera, species, subspecies, and groups, using the materials furnished by the physical world and the environment to create diversity, acting intelligently and purposefully with full knowledge of the laws and properties of matter as well as of the multitudinous organic creations it has to bring into being.” [\[27\]](#)

Science, of course, does not recognize any such medium, but holds that life is simply a consequence of strict, predictable, known physical laws that operate on their own, without the need for any controlling medium. Because life is so common, we tend to overlook how amazing, and indeed, how virtually miraculous it is. But once we start to realize how complex the body actually is, and the enormity of the task of

maintaining it, the implausibility of a purely mechanistic approach to life soon becomes evident.

If a medium such as *Prana-Shakti* does exist, then the obvious question that arises is where do we see any evidence for it? Recent discoveries in the fields of microbiology and genetics that reveal in detail the processes occurring inside of individual cells is one area where this controlling principle may be seen to be active. Although science insists that these processes are all totally mechanical in nature, this premise becomes questionable when they are examined in a more critical way. This subject will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on Life.

In a recent documentary on the human body, the British filmmaker Dr. Michael Mosley remarked on this amazing aspect of the human body:

“Just existing for one minute seems like the simplest thing in the world. Yet what goes on inside you every 60 seconds is wonderfully complicated. If you stop and think about it, it is truly remarkable that your body, every minute of every hour, of every day, is doing a million different things to keep you alive. And you are not even aware of it. Your heart will beat 70 times, driving 5 liters of blood around 96,000 kilometers of your circulation. Deep inside your bone marrow, each minute, 150 million red blood cells will be born. And while you are sitting there, the 250 square meters of your gut are busy digesting the meal you’ve just eaten. What’s really impressive is not just that our bodies do all these things all the time, but they respond instantly to any change in our environment. No matter where you go, or what you do. Every minute of your life depends on your body performing countless small miracles.” [\[28\]](#)

As Dr. Mosley stated, there are about 96,000 km of blood vessels and capillaries in an adult human being, although some estimates place this figure as high as 130,000.[\[29\]](#) The capillaries, of which there are about 40 billion, are about 1/3 the width of a human hair and carry blood to all the soft tissues of the body. Depending on what we are doing, the capillaries are dilated or constricted to increase or decrease the flow of blood. For instance, after we have eaten, more blood is diverted to the stomach and intestines to speed up the process of digestion. What agency controls this process in the billions of capillaries in the body? If it is the brain, then where in the brain is it controlled, and how is this control exerted?

Another example of this incredible complexity is the liver. It is the second largest organ in the human body, after the skin, and weighs about 1.5kg. What is amazing about it is that it performs something on the order of 500 separate functions! [\[30\]](#) What controls all these functions and brings them into play when they are needed?

Similar is the case with digestion, healing, and the immune system. These systems are so complex, so dynamic, and so amazing that it is inconceivable that they could function without some kind of overall command and control feature. But as far as science is concerned, the body just seems to run itself!

The most complex machines ever built were NASA’s space shuttles, with about 2.5 million separate parts. Compared to the human body, these machines pale into utter insignificance. If we were to make the statement that machines of this complexity could be constructed without any kind of sophisticated command and control system we would be laughed at. Then how is it that the human body, which has a million times more cells than the space shuttle has parts, could function without a similar controlling factor? The chapter on Life goes into a detailed analysis of this subject,

giving examples of processes in the body, recently revealed by microbiology that cannot be explained without taking into account an agency such as *Prana-Shakti*.

Kundalini-Shakti

The final creative aspect of Shakti to be considered here is *Kundalini-Shakti*. Whereas Prana-Shakti's purpose is primarily to maintain the functioning of the body, Kundalini-Shakti's mode of operation is more creative in nature. There are two spheres of influence in which it operates—in the individual and in the species as a whole. At the individual level, this activity takes two distinct forms.

The first is when a single cell—a fertilized ovum—divides, grows and develops in only nine months into a thinking, breathing, functioning human being. The general view put forward by science holds that it is the coding in the DNA that accomplishes this task. But DNA, in actual fact, is not a blueprint for the construction of the body, but rather a set of instructions for assembling proteins and enzymes that maintain cell function and facilitate cell replication.



Figure 3.2. Fetus in the womb.

If a geneticist were to be asked where in the genetic code does it specify that the human body has two eyes, arms, and legs, ten fingers and toes, etc., they would have no answer. When the fetus is being constructed in the womb, it is done in a very complex and very specific sequence. If we were to ask a geneticist where in the DNA this sequence is specified, again they would have no answer.

The construction of a human body is an unimaginably complex process. There are something on the order of 200 different types of cells that eventually form to make up a complete human body.^[31] The mechanism by which this is accomplished is called cell differentiation, and is achieved by the switching on or off of various genes in the DNA for that particular type of cell. The only difference between a skin cell and a blood cell is the set of genes that are active. This switching is accomplished by a complex set of chemical triggers passing between cells. How these triggers are controlled and coordinated is a process that is currently the focus of much research.

Each stage of development in the fetus must happen at a very specific point in this sequence, only after many other steps have been completed successfully. The construction of a protein or enzyme in a cell occurs in a very exact order specified by what is called the codon sequence in the corresponding gene. Any set of instructions for specifying the sequence of construction of an entire human body must necessarily be vastly more complex than that used to create a protein or enzyme. Where, then, are these instructions located? Assuming that this large volume of instructions exist somewhere in the DNA, then what physical agency, like the machinery in a cell that assembles a protein, reads them and is responsible for translating them into physical activity? So far, no such mechanism has been found, or even postulated.

There can be no doubt that the DNA contains the master plan for how every type of cell in our body is maintained and replicated. Nor can there be any doubt that the constitution of our cells determines many aspects of how our body functions. But the building of a fetus in the womb is a process many orders of magnitude greater in complexity than building a protein or enzyme in a cell. If no physical mechanism can be found that can coordinate and control this process, then the only conclusion that can be reached is that it is being done by a creative intelligence that is totally unknown to science at present.

The average human body is composed of about 10 to 50 trillion cells. In order to help put the construction of a human body into perspective, let us consider what would be required to create a completely new construct with the same general capabilities and complexity as a human body. To do this, we go to a mechanical engineer and give the following specifications:

1. The construct must have more than 10 trillion separate parts, of hundreds of different types.
2. Most of these parts must have the ability to replicate themselves.
3. Each part must have a specific purpose and function, and work together with the other types of parts it is in contact with.
4. This construct must be self-maintaining—able to acquire all the raw materials it needs for it to survive and function.
5. This construct must be self-repairing, at least in the case of non-catastrophic damage.
6. This construct must be self-replicating, able to duplicate and perpetuate itself.

The response we would get from a mechanical engineer for such a request can easily be imagined! A project of this scope is so far beyond our current creative and engineering capabilities that it is difficult to even imagine how far we would have to progress in science and technology to be able to create a construct which rivals a human body. Even leaving aside the complexity issue, we have not even managed to construct a machine of any kind that has self-maintaining, self-repairing, or self-replicating capabilities, let alone all three. At present, we do not even have the skill to manufacture a single cell from constituent elements. As the Nobel Prize-winning physicist Richard Feynman is said to have remarked, “what we can't make, we don't understand.”^[32]

Because the creation of new life is so common, takes so many different forms, and is found in virtually every environment on earth (and possibly on other planets as well), we tend to overlook the scope, the complexity, and the near-miraculous nature of this process. And we do not even find it remarkable that we can initiate life with virtually no skill or effort on our part!

After the process of creation of the body is complete, *Kundalini Shakti* is said to go into a dormant state. But it can become active again later in life as the spiritual process known as a Kundalini awakening. But rather than creating a new life form from a fertilized ovum, it now undertakes a process of renovation of the existing human body, particularly the brain and nervous system, so that a more advanced faculty of mind—cosmic consciousness or enlightenment—can be manifested. This second function of *Kundalini Shakti* will be discussed in more detail in the next Chapter.

The process of spiritual transformation has often been characterized by the term 'rebirth'. Given that it is the very same creative Power that brings about both the development of the fetus in the womb, and the transformation of the brain and nervous system to allow enlightenment, this term takes on a whole new meaning.

The occurrence of a major physical transformation after birth is not an uncommon feature of many species. A caterpillar will build a cocoon and pupate into a butterfly—a creature with a radically different physical form than that from which it started. A tadpole's tail will disintegrate and its body will change into that of a frog. By this standard, the occurrence of a major physical transformation in the human body years after birth should not be considered so strange.

The other major area of Kundalini Shakti's activity is in the overall evolution of the human race. As Gopi Krishna has proposed, evolution is not a random process driven solely by natural selection, but has a pre-determined goal towards which *Kundalini-Shakti* is trying to guide the race. If this theory is correct, it will have a bearing on almost every aspect of human life, including religion, politics, science, education, the environment, and health. Some of these implications will be discussed further in the section on Evolution in the chapter on Life.

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Consciousness: The New Paradigm

by Michael Bradford

Is the 'Big Bang' the real genesis of the universe? What is the origin of life, and how can its amazing properties be explained? Why has evolution proceeded over time from simple to more complex forms of life, and what direction will it take in the future? Is what we perceive with our senses really 'real'. Why is it that the physical universe can be described so well by mathematics, which is a construct of our mind? And what role does consciousness play in all these questions?

This book examines the way that the paradigm of reality has evolved in the past, first through faith, and then through science. Based on these trends, and on the latest discoveries in cosmology, microbiology, quantum biology, mathematics, and consciousness research, the outline of a new paradigm of reality based on consciousness is presented. Not only does this new paradigm help to answer many of the most profound questions facing us today, but presents a clear direction for the resolution of the conflicts within faith, and between faith and science.

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