

Essay

Samapatti as a Fundamental Process

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ABSTRACT

It seems there is only one process which is replicated at each level of Consciousness and, at the mental level, the process interacts with the brain. The process is Samapatti.

Key Words: Consciousness, Samapatti, Vedanta, fundamental process.

While doing physically demanding as well as mentally challenging chores recently, I was persistently nagged by thoughts about Samapatti; the thoughts all pointed to Samapatti as a process. From my experiences in Samapatti I have concluded that consciousness begins and ends through a process which is replicated at each level of consciousness and, at the mental level, the process interacts with the brain; in the brain we call that process mind and conclude that the brain is conscious.

The process of Samapatti, illustrated as follows by my experiences:

I observe the subject and that observation has an effect on the subject's awareness, interpreted first of all as stillness and later as a healing. My observation of my awareness as distinct from my awareness of the subject's viewpoint is a first person viewpoint. This happens because I have been in Samadhi, which is buddhi as the seer and I as the subject. This happens because Purusha is in an Absolute Samadhi and initiates Samapatti with buddhi as the subject.

In prespacetime, aka before the Big Bang, Purusha is in Samapatti with nonlocal space/time (nothing) as the subject, and creation (the physical reality) is the result. Purusha's Samapatti on creation sets in train the evolution of elements, chemical reactions, and living forms. And one day a person was born in the state of Samadhi, so there was the first appearance of Sattva in its highest form, some time before the Hindu Schools of science and philosophy, the forerunners of their western counterparts.

It is not all that surprising that this began within Indian culture, since it had to happen somewhere if Purusha was ever going to know itself, and at that time the Indian culture was the only one available intellectually. Even today, that remains true, since the Western and Middle Eastern cultures have become too constrained by their beliefs and science to see the process. Moreover, the philosophies and science as we know them probably developed first of all through the process of Samapatti in Samadhi, and eventually entered the West through the existing trade routes or collected by Alexander the Macedonian and Aristotle.

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One could say, while science is enjoying looking for a bird in the hand, Vedanta and Yoga are metaphorically holding two birds in bush. The bush is the non-local state, which is prespacetime. The two birds are Consciousness and Life. From this shorthand model of the process of Samapatti I have concluded that Consciousness is the one fundamental force, an axiom if you prefer the technical word. Life is the result of Consciousness in matter. I can already hear the cries of protest from both the religious and scientific fraternities asking for the evidence so I will take this a bit further.

The evidence does exist, not in the form of belief but in the painfully real practical sense. Both the Vedanta and the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali have applied the same model of reality, albeit in slightly varied terminology; what is common is the observation that Consciousness is a fundamental force which enters into the physical reality through a series of steps, each with a particular set of parameters. For simplicity, I will use Patanjali's first explanatory book, Samadhi Pada¹, which describes the process as it applies to, and is observed by, the adept observer. Rather than take the reader through the whole book point by point I will simply note the parts relative to the universal search to understand Consciousness as experienced in the human species.

The steps in the process obviously begin with what is referred to as Pure Consciousness, that is, Consciousness in prespacetime prior to what is called creation. Patanjali tells us that Pure Consciousness, aka Purusha in Sanskrit. Taking an independent or free thinker viewpoint, I am assuming that this non-created or pre-created state is, or is similar to, what science calls the non-local state, which for a free thinker would have to also be a non-time state. It is reasonable to also assume that as Consciousness, in even a general sense of the word, it would have awareness of that state, and as experience shows, observing that non-local non-time state, Consciousness would also be aware of any potential that state would possess. In a religious context, Purusha is called God, or its equivalent term depending who you bat for. In that same context, Purusha is obviously all-knowing because this would have been the first instance of knowing anything. Furthermore, it should be obvious that prior to knowing anything, Purusha would have known nothing, and its first observation would also be of nothing, therefore Purusha would have no cognition by which it, Consciousness, could be distinguished. As Patanjali says, Purusha has no distinguishing mark. Strangely enough, in the 12th century or thereabouts, in his book, "A guide for the Perplexed", Moses Maimonides stated that God has no attributes. That observation is a startling one when we consider that that same God in his particular religion also have a vengeful God. It must have come in from some travelling salesman.

At this point we have creation of nothing via Samapatti. Patanjali also tells us about two kinds of memory; one which has the intelligence gained from an observation, where the observation is the process without a subject. And as this first observation has given us non-local space and non-time there is really no 'object' of observation. The second kind of memory is more familiar for most of us because the object of the observation is primary, together with the unnoticed process and the instrument of apprehension. Here is where Patanjali's first kind of memory is a critical factor in understanding the entry of Consciousness into the non-local/time state because he is saying that the intelligence gained through the observation is present in that special space. And, just as Purusha is unchanged by this observation, this first level of this non-physical state, which as something observed by Purusha, remains as an aspect of that non-physical state in exactly the same way that the seer is aware of the state of the subject in Samapatti while her/his memory of

the experience is a narrative rather than a physical or emotional memory. He/she has no distinguishing mark on this particular memory.

In the discourse on Samadhi, Patanjali makes no mention of the Siddhis (skills) a student or practitioner of the Samadhi state can attain through the application of the process of Samapatti, despite the fact that the process is the same. I can only conclude that Patanjali makes this distinction to highlight the importance of Samapatti as the way Consciousness comes to permeate the whole reality at both the physical and non-physical levels of available awareness. The awareness of Consciousness observing the non-local state has that non-local state retain the experience of that awareness, and since this state is outside of, or before time, it follows that the non-local state carried awareness as a fundamental presence or attribute which stems from the process of Samapatti. Thus, at that level Purusha becomes known as purusha (in lower case, the reflection of Purusha in the non-local state) and carries with it the capacity to observe and retain that observation as intelligence rather than a self-distinction. This capacity is called Mahat or Buddhi at that level and is the first appearance of intellection and the discrimination of this and not that.

As matter takes on forms the matter-in-form carries that same capacity for observation; living forms are able to interact with the environment and with other living forms to have experience and develop a memory of these experiences. With the evolution of a nervous system in higher orders of life, such as cellular entities, the retention of their interactions with the environment and other forms, a rudimentary self-identity develops. In the human form this accumulation of interactions (memory) and the latent observations from the senses available (awareness) is called mind. A better explanation was given by Dr Hari² in ... Since mind carries an identified self (the organism) it does all of its information processing (data from memory) by relating all inputs against past experience. It is this processing we call thinking and consciousness. This limited context has been the main impediment in our search for Consciousness as well as Life.

The original way to get evidence for what Patanjali and Vedanta have said about Consciousness was to practice Samadhi. I think Patanjali would say correlation does not mean causation. One needs to note that what we call mental memory requires living matter for retention of the information in question. In the human context, that information is first apprehended by the non-local potential state traditionally called Atman (the potential for the form we call human). This Atman potential is presented to matter in the form of human through Samapatti and in that form it becomes Mind. The individual identity the mind has identified as self will be based on the experiences in memory as well as the parameters of the human form present at conception. The process by which mind apprehends that experience for that individual is what is currently measured by science as the neural correlate(s) which are taken to be evidence that Consciousness arises in the brain. Yet exactly the same would be true if the mind followed the traditional Hindu model, which, through its capacity for replicating the results should be respected as a valid scientific method.

In what might be accepted as at least speaking with the same or similar language from this simple layman, if we apply the same model of Consciousness in more science-familiar matter as two entangled photons, (entanglement having arisen from whatever means applied as part of an experiment) I would say that up to the moment of their entanglement we could liken these entities

as matter without experience. In Patanjali's terms they are at that point without distinguishing mark.

They both become entangled and therefore have the same identity; thus, a measurement on one results in an effect on the other one, and according to Bell's theorem the effect is not affected by the distance that may exist between the two photons. Another way of describing the two entangled entities is that they have had the same experience and that experience has been recorded as the same quantum of information in each of their non-local memories. In other words, the experience was observed by their non-local potential. In the case of the seer and the subject, Samapatti can be likened to an entanglement of the two minds, but up to a point, and that is in the sense that each of the two minds will have recorded the same experience but from two individual first person viewpoints. For the subject, the memory of that experience can include psychosomatic experience which can be re-experienced when remembered. For the seer, the narrative of the experience is what is retained in physical memory; even in events where the seer is in an intense state of bliss during a Samapatti, that bliss is not re-experienced when the event is remembered. Therefore, as was the case for the entangled photons, the information relating to the experience is recorded at the level of Buddhi, and since there is no physical structure at that level there are no physical aspects of the memory and so it becomes a narrative.

From this description of the Samapatti experience, and particularly from the last paragraph, it is obvious that the non-local state (Akasha in Sanskrit) retains information which can be accessed through Samapatti. It also shows (or suggests for the benefit of the skeptics) that Samapatti as a process involves information as an observation both to and from the non-local state.

As for the statement that one can be born in the Samadhi state I can only offer myself as an example. I was not brought up in the Hindu traditional culture and did not spend a lifetime meditating with an accredited teacher and yet I have somehow fallen into this semi-permanent Samadhi state. But if the non-local state retains information gained at that level of consciousness then it would be possible for that information, the narrative of an earlier person who was in Samadhi to be born with that narrative at her/his Buddhi level. I do know that around the age of three I suffered from prolonged convulsions and was not expected to survive. It is possible that being in that almost dead state for some time has given me an atypical empty mind, the same condition others seek through meditation. Irrespective of which path produced my empty mind and its subsequent Samadhi, my experiences and the information I have been able to deduce from them, in my opinion, supports the view from Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and those from the Vedanta. In respect of the principle of reincarnation from those views I would also add that the retention of information in the non-local state as described here would infer that what reincarnates is not a personality or individual, but the narratives contained in that state. It is my opinion that in my near death state as an infant it would have been possible for my empty mind to inherit some of that narrative of an earlier practitioner of Samadhi and possible Samapatti as well.

And for all of these reasons, I believe the fact of Samapatti, and the evidence from it available to those who take the trouble to seek it, should be taken seriously by science in any project related to an understanding of Consciousness.

References

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