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*Vasudhaiv Kudumbkum: The World is One Family*

We experience the world like we experience a symphony. We are flooded with the sounds of the musicians on stage, conducted by a master of music whose face we, in the audience, cannot see. The world to both you and me is a symphony of senses, conducted in concert with the cosmos by a faceless force. In this way, you are a part of the symphony to me, just as I am one among the musicians on stage to you. You and I are part of a mass choreography, and that is our one essential commonality. It is as though we are only the same in that both of us are unique pieces of a larger whole, and it is from here that the notion of family arises.

In etymology, I have studied the *families* of languages that humankind knows. Beginning with our Proto-Indo-European ancestor, this family expanded into Germanic, Irani-Indo, and Romance parents who gave birth to English, Hindi, and Mandarin children. In math, I have studied the *families* of sets that define all functions and variables, providing notation and identification. In chemistry, I have studied the *families* of elements, each with similar chemical properties. In biology, I have studied how all that is in our world has been classified within an overarching system of taxonomy. All bacteria, protista, fungi, plants, and animals are part of genres that are, in turn, part of larger *families*. In history, I have studied how the dynamic interaction among people forms *families* among them, tied in both blood and humanity. All these approaches to understanding the world in which we are so immersed seem to be divided similarly into interconnected, interdependent families in attempt to understand the inexplicable “oneness” of it all. To that same end, spiritual paths like Sanatan Dharma revolve around “oneness,” something that is intrinsic to all life. Just as science attempts to use undeniable empirical evidence to create laws, the Vedic philosophy uses universal concepts like “dharma,” defined as “that which is essential.” Whether in the sciences, humanities, or spirituality, therefore, it seems that the world and all that is in it must be, at some fundamental level, a family.

Let us begin with the one assumption that both science and spirituality must make: the individual is inherently connected to the universe. Science recognized centuries ago that all matter both within and outside human beings, on both microscopic and macroscopic levels, is composed of the same subatomic particles. This same matter, Einstein later developed, is nothing more than a function of energy, thereby harmonizing Western science with millennia-old Vedic philosophy. Science suggests that energy equals *mass* multiplied by the speed of light squared. Therefore, matter is, at its core, an extraordinary accumulation of energy. At its death, matter eventually returns to its energy state. In other words, the Brahman, an uncreatable and indestructible force of energy, encompasses the Atman, an individual but essential part that eventually returns to the Brahman, just as matter returns to energy. Science and the Sanatan Dharma are parallels in their most basic concepts.

The forces that we experience ultimately combine. For example, just as electricity and magnetism function together as the electromagnetic force, the forces of gravity, the electromagnetic force, the weak force, and the strong nuclear force function together, too. Science proposes the superstring theory, in which forces among eleven dimensions inextricably wrap into an all-powerful M-force. This suggests that there is a whole of which both the inanimate and animate parts of our world are invariably parts. In Vedic philosophy, this parallels the “dharma,” the essence. While quantum physics calls it the “collective conscious,” Sanatan Dharma calls it Universal Knowing.

By virtue of being a part of it, we cause it to change. Here, science offers Chaos Theory: all events, be they motions, sounds, or thoughts, are simultaneously causes and effects of all other events. In turn, there is no event that is not caused by a previous one, and a small seemingly insignificant one here may effectively cause a catastrophe there. With this understanding, Vedic philosophy describes the universal responsibility of each of us to all other life, present and future. We see that the Sanatan Dharma is not a religion at all, but rather a non-dogmatic humanistic implementation of the truths that science continues to provide. For example, Chaos theory suggests that we are the cause for future generations and also for their sustenance. Furthermore, Evolutionary theory suggests that we naturally seek to reproduce. Together, this natural ability and tendency to extend life that science has described is in fact the operative core of the Vedic philosophy describing the “eternal and intrinsic inclination to perform service.” This service sometimes takes the form of protecting the living resources –

animal, plants, other humans – since, they, too, contribute to the energy that circulates so universally.

Other times, this service is natural because human beings are a part of the global ecosystem. Food chains that illustrate our role as consumers whose bodies eventually decay into the fuel that other living beings will use support the idea that the entire world – not just humans – depends on each other. All in it must share the finite resources, for we all have the same fundamental needs. While it's true that humans have over 99% identical genes, making us almost literally equal and quite literally a family, it's also true that no two of us are identical. Logic mandates that as a result, no two of our possible contributions can be identical.

It is as though you and I are only the same in that we are both unique pieces of a larger whole. It is as though we are both musicians in the ballad of brains that our cosmic conductor has meshed with a symphony of senses, meshing modern sciences with the timeless Sanatan Dharma. It is as though our faceless Conductor is in fact an ancestor that our whole musical family both descended from and will ultimately rejoin.