

eny during mating. This process goes on and on and the genetic material survives along the evolutionary pathway. In a sense, the genetic material is born again and again and is thus perpetuated. The *atman*, as it enters a new body, carries with it its characteristics, the manifestations of the intellect and senses of the body. This could then lead to astonishing resemblances to our parents or even to some of the distant ancestors. Interestingly, even memory is carried to the progeny⁴. The *genetic material* expresses itself according to the program already present in it. This is heredity. Presumably, even memory is transferred. Francis

Crick and Christol Koch state that brain uses past experiences, either its own or that of the distant ancestor, which is embedded in our genes, to help interpret the information coming into our eyes⁶.

When one considers the above correspondences, one cannot but wonder whether the Vedantic postulates were not the conclusions of the ancient Indian rishis on their everyday observations of the natural events and the relation that men and women have with these events and to each other.

1. Crick, F., *The Astonishing Hypothesis*, Maxwell Macmillan, 1994, p. 3.

2. Ramachandran, V. S., *Phantom in the Brain*, Fourth Estate, London, 1998, p. 256.
3. *Bhagavad Gita*, 3.33.
4. *Patanjali Yogasutra*, pp. 4.15; 4.15a; 4.16; 4.8; 2.9.
5. Boardmann, H. and Ross, S. A., *Biology in Human Affairs*, Voice of America Forum Series, 1974, p. 175.
6. *Sci. Am.*, 1992 September, p. 154.

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Science archives

Science, technology and modern medicine have left their indelible imprint on Indian history for more than a century. From significant contributions in the field of mathematics, physics and modern biology to advancing computer technology and developing vaccines for rabies, drugs for TB, bone marrow transplants and test-tube babies, Indian scientists have pioneered modern research in several fields. Yet, the contemporary scientist in India more often than not remains a 'faceless' entity; his/her contribution, however significant, is forgotten after initial media excitement. Worse, it becomes practically impossible to trace the historical dimensions of any important scientific development for lack of archival resources. Science institutions themselves, with a few exceptions, rarely preserve their history. Bits of history are lost everyday as institutions destroy their old records and documents for lack of storage space, and pioneers retire. In this context, there is an urgent need for the establishment of a centre for archiving the history of modern science in India that would preserve papers, documents, artifacts and pictorial material of scientists and science institutions. Such a centre could play a crucial role not only in locating and ensuring the preservation of these valuable materials, but also in stimulating interest in the records of the scientists. Such records could include

correspondence, notebooks, working papers, manuscripts of published works, lectures and speeches, as well as personal records and photographs. The collection would reflect different phases and periods of the lives of the individual scientists. The collections could be catalogued and indexed by the centre and made available for scholarly purposes as well as to interested members of the general public.

In addition to traditional resources, I would also advocate the creation of oral history resources that could supplement printed documents and correspondence. Over the last forty years, oral history has gained legitimacy internationally as a historical resource among scholars in history, anthropology and sociology. Oral history interviews are particularly useful in reconstructing and documenting the personal networks and informal discussions that remain an intrinsic and inevitable part of doing science in a Third World country like India. Moreover, interesting issues like the interaction of science, technology and medicine with society and culture leave only indirect traces on written documents. In the absence of other biographical material, oral history interviews are often the only way to gather information about values, attitudes, motives and culture of scientific institutions.

The Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Mumbai has recently sta-

rted archiving its activities. Since September 2002, the TIFR Oral History project has started in a modest way by recording, transcribing and editing interviews with scientists who worked at the TIFR. The project has also collected important primary material in the form of correspondence and photographs. Such projects, however, cannot exist in isolation, especially when the collective memory of science institutions in India is so vast and variegated. What we need is a larger repository of historical resources dedicated to science, medicine and technology where institutions, individual and journals can deposit their papers. Apart from engaging scholarly interest, such a centre could also disseminate the material in popular form through educational exhibitions and CD-ROMs. Such a centre is an absolute prerequisite if we wish to foster a serious interest in the history of science in India.

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