

To me, there is absolutely no conflict between the scientifically-backed origin of life and my spiritual views on the origin of life; rather, I find that they support each other quite well.

I have been a Hindu since I was born and as a child, there was nothing I loved to do more than digest the stories that made up the Hindu theology. I was absolutely fascinated with trying to figure out how they could have actually happened. As I grew older, it dawned on me that it didn't really matter if the stories had ever happened or not; at the end of the day, they were just ways to describe the scientific phenomena that humans have always experienced. One of these phenomena is evolution. From a scientific perspective, evolution is the theory that all life on earth originated from one form of life, also known as LUCA, or the last universal common ancestor. Since the LUCA, life has modified itself and adapted to new environments in ways that created the biodiversity we see today.

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, the most widely accepted one, says that over time species change and branch off into new species, but they all inherit similar traits and features. It is also typically believed that humans evolved from fish that existed nearly 400 million years ago. After ancestors that existed purely underwater came the ones that could travel on land and underwater. Their descendants were the early mammals, living on land, and after that arrived the first bipeds - creatures that were essentially midway between animal and human. Then came the hominids, starting with dwarfs and then Homo Erectus. And then we arrive at Homo Sapiens, the currently existing descendants of LUCA.

The reason I find all of this worth mentioning is because it actually very closely parallels an essential aspect of Hindu beliefs. Hinduism upholds the belief that there is one shared source, called Brahman, from which all universal matter originates, biological specimens included. This is similar to the concept of all life sharing a LUCA. Furthermore, Hindu theology asserts that Lord Vishnu has taken or will take, in total, 10 manifestations on Earth to protect the

world's citizens. What is interesting about these 10 avatars is that their sequence aligns very neatly with the aforementioned progression of life evolving. The first avatar is a huge fish, followed by a turtle. The third is a boar, marking the start of creatures that exist entirely on land. The next avatar is described as half-lion and half-man, a being that could walk on two feet but was not fully a hominid. The fifth avatar is a dwarf, and the one after that was an ax-wielding man. The next three avatars are all human, but as time goes on, the caliber of their tools and the breadth of their knowledge increases, portraying how even within the realm of homo sapiens, our species has been evolving to be smarter and craftier. The tenth avatar is said to not have appeared yet, but from the descriptions we have of it, he seems to be genetically modified, perhaps even partly cyber.

With a spiritual belief that corresponds so well with the scientific beliefs, it seems to me that there is no conflict between the two at all. In fact, it is very easy for me to conclude that my spiritual beliefs are simply science surrounded by interesting stories.