



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

March 2017 Contemplation:
Exploring Yoga's Multidimensionality #3
Healing is a Multidimensional Process

By Swami Nirmalananda & Vidyadevi Stillman

A mood ring: you wait with anticipation as it changes color, telling you your mood. Inventors Josh Reynolds and Maris Ambats described it as a “portable biofeedback aid.” It doesn't actually measure your mood; instead it shows your body's physical reaction to your emotional state. It works because your mind has an effect on your body. You can make yourself sick by thinking certain kinds of thoughts — raising your blood pressure, creating a headache or upset stomach, even increasing the pain in your neck by worrying. Can it work the other way, for healing? Yoga's sages explained this relationship thousands of years before mood rings and online stress tests.

sa chaiko dviroopas trimayash chaturaatmaa sapta panchaka svabhaavah.

Though Consciousness is One, She becomes two-fold, three-fold, four-fold and of the nature of seven pentads (7 x 5 = 35). — Pratyabhij~nah.rdayam 7

This sutra refers to several different cosmological maps: the two-fold map, the three-fold map, the four-fold map and the 35-fold map. All these maps are valid. All of them are occurring simultaneously. The “One” being named as “Consciousness” is Shiva, which is your own Self, referred to as “She” when birthing the universe out of Her own Being.

We explored the two-fold map last month, yet there is another way to understand and explore who and what you are. The four-fold map is especially helpful for understanding body-mind dynamics, so we'll explore the four levels of contraction that Shiva takes on: shoonya, prana, puryashtaka and sthula-shareera.

Shoonya — The Void: Shiva is the One, which is all Beingness, all Knowingness and all expansive ecstasy. How does Shiva become more? By becoming less. Shiva hides the fullness and ecstasy of His own Being by taking on the illusion of emptiness, named shoonya by the sages. This is the void, the seeming-emptiness that existed before the Big Bang.

When you experience deep and profound meditative immersion, you are experiencing the void. In the beginning, it seems to be an infinite inner emptiness, but then you realize it is not empty. The void is Shiva's first illusion in manifesting the universe, but when you're delving inward to uncover your essence, it is the final illusion for you to pierce. Experiencing the void is a very profound and deep meditation, called asampraj~nata samadhi. All the Svaroopā® sciences help you dive into that inner depth easily, to pierce the last veil that is blocking your knowing of Self.

Prana — Energy of Aliveness: Within the void, while being the void, Shiva pulsates. The pulsation is prana, the energy of aliveness that brings the universe into being. It's an invisible movement, like when the wind blows through a vast open sky. If there are no telephone wires, trees or clouds, you cannot see that the wind is blowing, but something is truly moving. Prana is the energy that brings life itself into being.

Puryashtaka — Subtle Body (Mind & Senses): Prana, moving through the void, coalesces itself into an energetic template, like clouds coalesce in the sky. Each of these templates is comprised of eight (ashta) capacities: the five senses and three aspects of mind. The eight form the energetic body that is the basis for your individuality.

Sthula-Shareera — Physical Body: Just as energy condenses into matter, puryashtaka condenses into physical form. This is how your body comes to exist (with your parents getting involved too, of course), and how every blade of grass, every monkey and every rock comes into existence. You already know it's all made of energy. The physical form in which you live is merely the densest level of the multiple levels of your being, all going on at the same time.

Vidyadevi describes her experience of the four-fold map in meditation:

I was unconscious in Consciousness, in deep inner immersion for a while. Then I became aware of the void — a velvety black, vast nothingness. Then I became aware of movement through the void, and then of my mind and senses. But I couldn't find my body. My mind asked, “Am I at the Ashram? Am I

at the yoga studio? Where am I?” Then I felt a coalescing into form, the form of my own body. “Oh! Here is where my body is.”

These four dimensions are not sequential, as she experienced it, but are all happening simultaneously. This is what makes everything so compelling. Your mind can tie you up in knots because your mind is made of pure Consciousness, which makes it fascinating. But Consciousness is mixed with prana, which is always moving. Thus, when prana coalesces into puryashtaka, it keeps your mind always moving. Have you noticed?

Your thoughts are so captivating because Consciousness makes everything in Technicolor, plus your prana mixed in makes every thought seem like life itself depends on it. Your mind tells you, “I am my desire! I am my fear! I am my pain!” But yoga says that you are more than your pain. You are more than your mind.

To find the “More” that you are, you must calm and quiet your mind. An easy way to do this is to adjust your pranic levels by doing Ujjayi Pranayama. When your prana is low, everything feels like a threat, making you live on red alert. Having a full reservoir of prana cures this completely. This is why we teach Ujjayi Pranayama at the beginning of every class, and frequently remind you to do it for 20 minutes daily.

Ujjayi Pranayama increases your prana. It’s not just pumping air in and out of your lungs like with aerobic exercise. By pacing your breath slowly, with your focus on the inner sound, you’re balancing your pranic levels. More importantly, Ujjayi quiets your mind. Remember mood rings. They prove that your thoughts affect your body, so quieting your mind is profoundly healing.

Like ice is the solid form of water, your body is the solid form of your mind. Swami Nirmalananda illustrates this, “In airports, I see long-married couples who both have big frowns or matching jawlines. They’ve cultivated a shared mindset for so long that they now look alike. In their wedding photo, 50 years ago, they looked different from each other. Your mind is shaping your face as well. It’s not merely your face, but affecting your whole body. What is a body like when the owner’s mind is steeped in Consciousness?”

This four-fold map explains why yoga’s consciousness practices are so important when you are dealing with physical problems. Meditating, chanting and studying the teachings of the Masters take you directly to Consciousness within. You settle deeply into your own essence, deeper than your physical body (sthula-shareera), deeper than your mind and senses (puryashtaka), and deeper than your energies (prana) and the inner void (shoonya) – all the way into your Self, Shiva.

By having this inner experience, your mind is imprinted with Consciousness. This transformation makes your mind progressively clearer and more expansive, which makes your body change almost instantaneously. You can heal your body with Consciousness faster than with diet, exercise, poses or yogic breathing. Miracle cures come from a shift in Consciousness.

When you are dealing with your body, you are not dealing with your body alone. It’s like how the increased melting of Iceland’s glaciers is now exposing previously hidden layers of black, but not black ice. It’s pollution that was layered in during the 1700’s and 1800’s when coal fueled everything. In the same way, there are hidden layers in your body, issues you haven’t uncovered yet. Yoga calls them “latent diseases.”

As important as Ujjayi Pranayama is, the consciousness practices are your most powerful healing tools. They work from the inside out, changing both prana and puryashtaka, which changes your body. You already know that yogis are not the only ones saying that genuine healing occurs only when you make an inner shift. Even medicine is beginning to agree.

The unique thing about *Svaroopaa*[®] yoga is that even your yoga poses and breathing practices give you access to your own innermost Self, due to the power of opening up your mystical spine. All these practices are already working multidimensionally for you! Plus, you can dive deeper with the consciousness practices, part of the full spectrum of the *Svaroopaa*[®] Sciences. Yoga’s true promise is not merely healing, but much more. Yoga promises you will know and be your own Self, the Source of universe.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES ON “EXPLORING YOGA’S MULTIDIMENSIONALITY,” OUR THEME FOR 2017, CO-AUTHORED BY SWAMI NIRMALANANDA SARASWATI, VIDYADEVI STILLMAN & RUKMINI ABBRUZZI.

To reach our teachers or to learn more about *Svaroopaa*[®] Yoga & Meditation, contact
Svaroopaa[®] Vidya Ashram ♦ www.svaroopaa.org ♦ info@svaroopayoga.org ♦ 610.644.7555