



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

July 2017 Contemplation:
Exploring Yoga's Multidimensionality #7

The Ultimate Map

By Swami Nirmalananda & Vidyadevi Stillman

The ultimate map of existence is Kashmiri Shaivism's 36 tattvas. It explains the universe, its source, your life and the purpose of your life. Encompassing the other maps, it adds deeply mystical dimensions. It describes Consciousness (Shiva) contracting through discernable levels (tattvas), to become you as well as everyone and everything. It is the most comprehensive of the many maps listed in this sutra:

Sa chaiko dviroopas trimayash chaturaatmaa sapta panchaka svabhaavah — Pratyabhijñānaḥ. rdayam 7

Though consciousness is one, She becomes 2-fold, 3-fold, 4-fold, and of the nature of 7 pentads ($7 \times 5 = 35$).¹

Let's explore the "7 pentads," the 35 tattvas (principles of manifestation) that Shiva takes on to hide Himself. Shiva is the One who makes it all happen, the 36th tattva, technically the First and Only.

Cosmic Delight (1-5): ▼ Shiva ▼ Shakti ▼ Sadashiva ▼ Ishvara ▼ Shuddhavidya

(1) Shiva is ultimate beingness, primordial existence, pure essence. In order to manifest the universe, Shiva settles into absolute stillness, then (2) dances within His own being. Shiva-in-movement is called Shakti, the cosmic creative energy.

The two, who really are only One, play and cavort together in varying proportions: As Sadashiva (3), stillness predominates. As Ishvara (4), movement predominates. "Ishvara" means God, explored more fully below, but the Sanskrit is telling us that Shiva and Shakti (1 & 2) are beyond what most people mean when they talk about "God."

Shuddhavidya (5) means "pure knowing," where stillness and movement present themselves equally. This level is "pure knowing" because the next level is "impure knowing," which is the loss of Self by the veiling of Reality. Throughout the above five levels, Shiva still knows his own Shivaness.

Concealment (6-11): ▼ Maayaa ▼ Kalaa ▼ Vidya ▼ Raaga ▼ Kaala ▼ Niyati

Shiva becomes Maayaa (6), the Shakti or energy that hides Ultimate Reality. Maayaa is the illusion that makes you feel separate from Shiva. Thus you feel that you are a small, limited human being, unique and different from everyone and everything else. This is illusion, better described as delusion. The Truth is that you are Shiva, being all.

The next five levels are called the kanchukas, the ways in which Maayaa limits Shiva's omni's or five cosmic powers: omnipotence, omniscience, ecstasy, eternity and omnipresence. Maayaa contracts in five nearly-simultaneous ways to become you. Thus you have the feeling that:

- (7) you are able to do some things but not everything — kalaa (authorship limits omnipotence);
- (8) you know some things but not everything — vidya (learning limits omniscience);
- (9) you desire many things but never feel fulfilled — raaga (desire limits ecstasy);
- (10) you are rushing, hurrying, striving but never fitting it all in — kaala (time limits eternity);
- (11) you live in or you are from a certain place — niyati (location limits omnipresence).

Tattvas 1-11 are not delineated in maps from other yogic and meditative traditions. The Kashmiri Shaivite sages perceived these subtleties that lead to individuality, which is next on the list. The sages named the many levels, like a physicist finding and naming energies, so your mind can understand it.

Individuality (12): ▼ Purusha – Individual Soul

Soul is the deepest level of your individual existence, reincarnating from lifetime to lifetime, bringing your sense of separation and pain with you, along with all your karmas. Soul needs a way to reach toward the Ultimate Reality that you feel separate from. Kashmiri Shaivism defines religion as the

¹ Rendered by Swami Nirmalananda

relationship between purusha (12) and ishvara (4 - God). In this way religion is included in yoga, even though yoga is not a religion.

Yoga recognizes and respects all religions, as they meet an essential human need — to experience the Divine. This is a real human experience. Since yoga is the science of maximizing human experience, religion is included in yoga. It doesn't matter which religion.

Yet yoga differs from religion as well, pointing you beyond merely the soul level. Yoga takes you deeper within, where you find that you are already Shiva. Even when your Divine Essence is hidden by Maayaa and Her kanchukas, you are still Shiva.

Quantum Soup (13): ▼ Prakrti – the energy which becomes everything

Prakrti is the next level of contraction: becoming everything that is denser than the soul. Dr. Deepak Chopra translates prakrti as “quantum soup,” meaning it is the energy that becomes atoms. Though yoga's sages described this thousands of years ago; only in the last hundred years have physicists recognized it.

Prakrti is the energy that becomes your body and your mind. Thus, you have a body and a mind, but you are not your body, nor your mind. You are purusha; your body and mind are prakrti.

Prakrti comes from the separateness that Maayaa creates above, becoming everything that is not you. This is duality, the classic split between you and God, even the split between you and “them,” a kinetic tension that is layered into everyone and everything.

Mind (14-16): ▼ Buddhi ▼ Ahamkara ▼ Manas

Your mind is a multi-dimensional reality. The highest function is buddhi (14): discernment. This is your ability to analyze, classify and categorize things, perform theoretical functions and understand things.

(15) Ahamkara creates the “me-ness” of individual identity. This mental process constructs a superficial sense of self from life's externals: who you are in relationship with, what you do, where you are or where you are from. When you are doing well, you feel you're a good person. When other people like you, you feel good about yourself. Swami Nirmalananda calls this the “small-s self,” the superficial identities that your mind has to work to maintain, yet they always let you down.

(16) Manas is your outward-turning mind, which is always busy. It wants to be entertained and gets bored, precisely because it doesn't look inward to find your capital-S Self.

The Ten Senses (17-26): Organs of Perception & Organs of Action

The jñanendriyas are five organs of perception (17-21), called your five senses by science. By these energies, you perceive external things. Animals and plants also perceive by these energies:

▼ Hearing ▼ Feeling ▼ Seeing ▼ Tasting ▼ Smelling

Karmendriyas (22-26) are organs of action, providing the ability to initiate action in the world:

▼ Speaking ▼ Handling ▼ Locomotion ▼ Sexuality ▼ Excretion

Yoga names these as your ten senses, with each organ of perception being related to an organ of action. For example, speaking is the active form of hearing, thus one who cannot hear has difficulty learning to speak. You can also see this with the power of locomotion. If you see a chocolate chip cookie, you locomote yourself right over to it.

Materiality (27-31): Energy Becoming Matter

Shiva and Shakti are dancing the world into existence, contracting through progressively denser levels, now almost all the way to tangible physical existence. Everything they become will be imbued with all five principles of materiality, tanmatras:

▼ Sound-as-such ▼ Touch-as-such ▼ Form ▼ Flavor-as-such ▼ Scent-as-such

Every object has its own sound, feel (smooth, soft, etc.), form (including shape and color), flavor and scent. A newspaper has a particular sound when you turn the pages as well as a particular feel, including color and shape. It even has a distinct flavor and smell.

The Five Elements (32-36): ▼ Akasha (space) ▼ Air ▼ Water ▼ Fire ▼ Earth

These five elements combine to become every object. For example, a handful of dirt has akasha (space) in it, depending on how densely packed it is. In that empty space, there is air. Fire provides temperature and color, with red earth being hotter. Water is the dampness. Earth is the solidity.

Everything contains all five elements, yet one predominates. In your body, your bones have earth predominating, while your blood has more water, your lungs have air predominating, etc.

These five elements do not replace the Periodic Table of Elements; they explain it. For example, in scientific terminology, air (sparsha in Sanskrit) is gas, while water (jal in Sanskrit) is liquidity and earth (prthvi in Sanskrit) is solidity. Yoga's five elements are properties of being that Shiva-Shakti take on in order to become the world and everything in it.

A few scientists have come out of the closet as yogis, saying they are reading and studying this map of consciousness. In 1945, at the test of the first atom bomb, J. Robert Oppenheimer, the head scientist, quoted a verse from the Bhagavadgita. He knew it by heart.

For a yogi, the importance of the 36 tattvas is found in your own life, outside and inside. You begin by focusing on different parts of this map, chasing beautiful sights or sounds, pursuing taste or sexuality, or simply getting lost in your mind. As a yogi, you can get trapped at the elevated levels of the kanchukas: owned by your desires, fighting with time or depending on a specific location to create your inner experience. The point of yoga is to pierce even the highest levels, to go beyond Maayaa, even beyond Ishvara. You may have already had a taste of this.

Have you ever opened your eyes after Shavasana or meditation, and didn't know if it you had been in there for a minute or an hour? You pierced kaala (time), to experience the timelessness of your own Self. Vidyadevi says, "For me, niyati (location) is easy to pierce in meditation. When I go deep, I am no longer sitting in my room on my meditation seat. I am all pervasive."

Because everything that exists is Shiva-Shakti in a contracted form, you have the capacity to unravel it. Yoga's exalted goal is that, while you live in this world, you experience who you really are, being Shiva and seeing Shiva everywhere, as everything. You recognize the Divine in the mundane without being lost, caught or trapped in it. This is freedom!

When you begin with poses and breathing, you are working your way from the outside-in. Since you live outside of yourself too much of the time, you start where you're at. This is why our Guided Awareness in Shavasana leads you from outside your body to inside. Every yogic system shares this exalted purpose, even when their practices are misunderstood as mere exercise or stress relief. Yoga poses, breathing practices, chanting and meditation make you able to delve inward, to explore who you are and what you are made of.

But *Svaroopa*® yoga is different. Not only are the poses targeting inner openings for you, but this is a Shaktipat tradition. What Swami Nirmalananda gives, she got by receiving a transmission from her Guru, who got the same from His Guru, who got it from His Guru, and so on. When you do these practices, you will get this same inner awakening. Shaktipat is the awakening of your own Self. Consciousness arises within, the bliss of Consciousness opening you to the Consciousness that you are. Once you've received this gift, the process is working from the inside-out. Divine energy climbs your spine, often when you are in poses and especially in meditation, unraveling the contraction and revealing your own Divinity to you. You don't have to do poses for 20 years or more, hoping for an inner revelation. Shaktipat gives it to you right away.

Your poses, breathing practices, chanting and mantra repetition continue to be very important. They invoke this inner arising, blossoming you into your Self. Through this process, you expand through the multiple dimensions within, to abide in the bliss of your own being. Do more yoga. Discover your Self.

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