

Our True Nature

Who are we?

I. Introduction.

We've defined well-being as a life rich in positive emotions, engagement, meaning, accomplishment, and nurturing relationships. We've discussed the necessity of developing emotional resilience, the capacity to avoid patterns of thought and behavior that can sabotage our efforts to create such a life.

In addition, we've very briefly outlined some of the reasons why yoga is an excellent pathway for creating a life of well-being and building emotional resilience.

Today we begin our more detailed exploration of yoga. We start at a most fundamental point: Who are we? What does yoga tell us about our own true nature?

II. Background.

Well over a thousand years ago certain Indian philosophical schools, such as Kashmir Shaivism and the goddess-centered school of Shri Vidya (“Goddess Wisdom”), articulated a version of non-dual Tantric philosophy based on the premise that God is alive in the world, not separate from it. According to this viewpoint Supreme Consciousness lives in the world as each of us, and every other form of the material world, including nature.

This viewpoint contrasts to the view held by dualist schools of philosophy, including classical yoga and the school known as *Sankhya*, each of which view the material world (*Prakriti*) as completely separate from Divine Consciousness, *Purusha*. *Sankhya* (to enumerate or categorize) created a 25-category outline of the material world called the *Tattvas* (meaning “thatness,” “principles,” or “reality”), in order to study the nature of the world and human existence.¹

To explain and practice their non-dual viewpoint, Kashmir Shaivism uses a 36-category list of *Tattvas* instead of *Sankhya*'s 25 categories. The 36 *Tattvas* include all 25 categories of the material world, and an additional 11 that describe the nature of Consciousness and how Consciousness manifests as you and me – as everything. Through this expanded set of *Tattvas*, Kashmir Shaivism offers a story of creation. This mythological story explains the nature of the Divine and of us, and our connection to each other and with the entire world.

Using the 36 *Tattva* model (See chart at the end of this outline), we will now explore the identity and nature of Supreme Consciousness, Spirit: Who is Spirit? Is Spirit a He, a She, or both? Why does Spirit choose to create a world of endless diverse manifestations of itself? What is Spirit's true nature?

III. *Paramshiva*.

¹ See posted outline in this course: “Yoga as a Path to a Life Of Well-Being.” Dorigan, William (2014). www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html

We begin by looking at the very top of the *Tattva* chart where we see the name “*Paramshiva*.”

- A. *Paramshiva* is the name for Spirit or Supreme Consciousness. The name literally means “Ultimate Reality” or “Supreme Lord” (“*Parama*” means “supreme” and “*Shiva*” means “the Lord; the Auspicious One”).²
1. The word “auspicious” generally means conducive to or characterized by success.³ Used in the context of *Paramshiva* the word also means “prosperity,” “well-being,” “power,” and “life-giving.”⁴ As such, *Paramshiva* is traditionally associated with benevolence, giving life to all of creation.⁵
 2. *Paramshiva* has the unlimited capacity to act, is all knowing, full or complete in each moment, and beyond the laws of cause and effect, and eternal.⁶
- B. Because we are each a manifestation of *Paramshiva*, living in the world in our own particular, limited form, our foundational nature is also to seek success, be creative, benevolent, and live a life of well-being. As with *Paramshiva*, this fundamental nature to create is expansive; our true nature is to manifest our potential, to continually create, and to bring more life to each moment.
1. When we remember that we are a manifestation of *Paramshiva*, we remember our true nature. The Kashmir Shaivites call this awareness *Pratyabhijna*. Through remembering our true nature as a manifestation of *Paramshiva*, we thus recall our ongoing drive to generate more and more well-being. We remember that the entire material world is part of the same manifestation of the Divine, meaning we each have a connection to all things, including each other.
 - a. This remembering necessarily inspires us to desire harmony and prosperity for everyone because our nature is to create success, and give “life.”
 - b. Already, we can see how adopting this view of ourselves as auspicious is so conducive to creating a life of well-being. When we invest in the prosperity of others we create an environment ripe for creating more positive emotion, meaningful engagement and accomplishments, and

² Shantananda, Swami (2003). *The Splendor of Recognition*. South Fallsburg, NY: SYDA Foundation, at 16.

³ “Auspicious.” Def. 1 and 1.2. en.oxforddictionaries.com. 2016 Oxford University Press. October 29, 2016.

⁴ Brooks, Dr. Douglas Renfrew (1992). *Auspicious Wisdom*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, at 64, 70.

⁵ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 16.

⁶ See generally, Feuerstein, Dr. Georg (2001 ed). *The Yoga Tradition*. Prescott, AZ: Hohm Press, at 83-84; see also Kempton, Sally (2011). *Meditation for the Love of It*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True, Inc., at 36.

nurturing relationships. Who doesn't want to spend time with such a person?

2. It is the nature of human beings, however, to forget our true nature as Spirit. Instead of seeing the connection of all of us, we instead see separation. We see diversity as a threat, not as a necessary result of Supreme Consciousness manifesting in the world in countless diverse forms. This forgetfulness is called spiritual ignorance, *Avidya*.⁷ Seeing separation rather than connection can be attributed to our lack of emotional resilience, our inability to overcome negative patterns of thought and behavior. Yoga helps build that resilience, paving the way to *Pratyabhijna*, the awakening to our true nature as benevolent, auspicious people seeking to create more and more well-being, being curious about and in fact celebrating diversity for what it is – a chance to know God more deeply through each diverse form on the planet.
3. Questions arise as to how supposedly “bad” or violent and destructive things happen if all forms of the universe are manifestations of an auspicious Supreme Being. All manifested forms on the planet have a natural, inherent drive for life, for success, and for their own well-being. To prosper, a lion must hunt prey and kill it. A hurricane or tornado thrives as a violent and destructive force. What is “auspicious” in these situations is that each such “expression of Consciousness” is behaving consistently with whatever particular essential nature is required to further their particular prosperity.
 - a. Human beings, however, have choices on how to behave, with an ability to make choices that expand their potential and are benevolent and meaningful. A human can choose to embrace his or her essential nature of kindness and benevolence, but doesn't have to do so.
 - b. As we will see in this course, yoga provides an understanding and direction as to how to rid ourselves of habits that get in our way, as well as practices to develop the discipline to maintain those habits in the face of adversity and stress. Yoga moves us to *Vidya*, clarity or wisdom.
4. Remember that benevolence and auspiciousness also includes acts necessary to restore or sustain order in the world to allow prosperity and well-being to continue and flourish.⁸

⁷ *Auspicious Wisdom*, at 91. See also, Bryan, Dr. Edwin F. (2009). *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. New York, NY: North Point Press, at 175-185 (commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras 2.3-2.5; describing such ignorance as the foundational impediment to joyous connection).

⁸ *Auspicious Wisdom*, at 67.

- a. We need only think back to the United States entry into World War II, an entry resulting in significant violence but deemed necessary to stabilize a world at war.
 - b. If you're a parent and have ever given your child a "time out" or withheld dessert as a way of teaching proper manners, this behavior might not have felt good or kind at the time, but the motive was in fact auspicious, a desire to create a life of success and well-being for your child (as well as restore some semblance of order to the dinner table!).
- C. A purpose of this course is to learn how to utilize yoga as a way to create auspiciousness in our own life by building a life rich in positive emotion, engagement, meaning, accomplishment, and nurturing relationships.⁹

IV. *Prakasha and Vimarsha.*

We now turn to another aspect of *Paramshiva*, the concepts of *Prakasha* and *Vimarsha*.

- A. *Paramshiva* is a radiating light of revelation, illuminating all the potential forms that might potentially manifest in the world and then do so.¹⁰
1. The name for this radiating light that gives form and existence in the world is called *Prakasha*, the light of Pure Consciousness.¹¹ The Sanskrit word *Prakasha* is derived from words meaning, "to go forth," "brilliantly shine," and "to see clearly."¹² Every person and every thing that exists in the world is a manifestation from this light.¹³
 2. Accompanying this vital aspect *Prakasha* is that *Paramshiva* is not only illuminative, but also self-aware, or self-reflective.¹⁴ This self-awareness arises from the reflection of the light back on itself, which gives Consciousness the ability to perceive and know itself.¹⁵ This power to self-reflect is called *Vimarsha*.

⁹ See posted outline in this course: "What is Success?" Dorigan, William (2014). www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html

¹⁰ *Splendor of Recognition*, at 16.

¹¹ *Splendor of Recognition*, at 27-33; Muller-Ortega, Dr. Paul (1989). *The Triadic Heart of Siva*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, at 95.

¹² *Splendor of Recognition*, at 27-28.

¹³ Wallis, Christopher D. (2012). *Tantra Illuminated..* The Woodlands, TX: Anusara Press, at 61.

¹⁴ *The Triadic Heart of Siva*, at 95.

¹⁵ *Splendor of Recognition*, at 28.

3. The Sanskrit word *Vimarsha* literally means, “to touch,” “be aware,” “consider,” “reflect,” or “examine.”¹⁶ This reflective capacity is a power of self-apprehension, the ability of Consciousness to see the potential of all forms, the possibilities of unlimited creation inherent within the light. For example, it is the power of *Vimarsha*, which allows *Paramshiva* to discern or perceive what a particular form is; i.e., a particular piece of fruit, an apple, as opposed to a pear.¹⁷
4. This process of self-reflection is a pure reflection of the light back on itself, with no distortion.¹⁸ Sometimes in yoga we use the metaphor of a pond and a mountain. When the waters of the pond are perfectly still, with no breezes or anything to disrupt that stillness, we can clearly see the neighboring mountain peak reflecting perfectly in the pond. However, if there is even the slightest ripple in the pond, the reflection becomes distorted. And in a major storm, with wind and rain pounding the pond’s surface, the mountain peak may fully disappear, or, conversely, we might see a number of mountain peaks. The reflection has either ceased to exist or become so distorted as to give us a false impression of what we are seeing.

Think of this metaphor when we talk about emotional resilience and the problems our minds face in thinking clearly when we are under stress or operating with preconceived notions, bias, anger, or fears, by way of example.

5. For each of us, the power of *Vimarsha*, like the pond or a mirror, shows us our own greatness reflecting back at us.¹⁹
 - a. Perhaps we glimpse our untapped potential while walking quietly in the woods, or even down a noisy street in the middle of a busy city. Maybe we sense the spark of our potency in meditation, a prime vehicle for finding a clear reflection.
 - b. Or, quite often we catch a hint of what we are capable of through feedback from a friend or observing somebody else doing something we admire. We taste somebody’s cooking and decide to become a great cook ourselves.
- B. Understanding this process of *Prakasha-Vimarsha* is vital for creating a life of well-being. We learn to become a mirror for each other’s greatness. In yoga we often talk about how we can’t see our nose without a mirror. We use that example to explain how we often cannot see our full array of strengths and potential without the mirroring from somebody who has taken the time to know what lies inside us.

¹⁶ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 28.

¹⁷ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 28-29.

¹⁸ See, generally, *Auspicious Wisdom*, at 91.

¹⁹ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 31.

1. This mirroring of each other is exactly what noted psychologist Viktor Frankl described when discussing how to create meaning. He wrote that we find meaning by experiencing someone in their very uniqueness. He said that to do so requires we become fully aware of that person's essence or potential, and then make that person aware of the potential.²⁰ This creates meaning in part because we are unlocking that person's potential so that, by manifesting, that heretofore hidden potential can serve the world and create a sense of well-being in that person and others who benefit from this newly radiating array of talents.
2. "Mirroring" another person's emotions is the very type of "positivity resonance" Dr. Barbara Fredrickson identifies as love, the "Supreme" positive emotion, one of the attributes of a life of well-being.²¹
3. In Chapter 7 of my book *Finding the Midline* I describe how *Prakasha* and *Vimarsha* work every day in our personal relationships. I never saw myself as a lawyer until one day my friend Bruce told me he thought I could be a great lawyer and gave me reasons why he thought so. He caused me to see myself in a new "light" and out of that vision I became a good attorney who has done a great deal of good over a long career. Just as Bruce reflected my own potential back to me, we can all do this for each other.

This reflective, creative process is continual and ever-present. We create our lives as influenced by our daily experiences. We inspire and coax the greatness out of each other. Collectively, this is how we truly become meaningful, expanding auspiciousness in the world.

V. *Shiva and Shakti.*

Paramshiva is both Masculine and Feminine, two parts of a whole. The masculine aspect of *Paramshiva* is *Shiva* (*Siva*) and the feminine aspect is *Shakti* (*Sakti*). *Shiva* is the great light of possibility we've described as *Prakasha*, and *Shakti* is the creative, energetic and reflective energy we've identified as *Vimarsha*.²²

- A. Swami Shantananda of the Siddha Yoga tradition calls the two energies of *Shiva* and *Shakti* "The Primordial Couple."²³ He points out that *Shiva* and *Shakti* are always united, with each having the essence of the other. They are described separately for ease of describing the subtle powers of *Paramshiva*. Together, they constitute the full power of *Paramshiva*, Supreme Consciousness.²⁴

²⁰ Frankl, Dr. Viktor (2006 ed). *Man's Search for Meaning*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, at 115-116.

²¹ Fredrickson, Dr. Barbara (2014). *Love 2.0*. New York, NY: Penguin Group (USA) LLC., at 10-17.

²² See generally, *The Triadic Heart of Siva*, at 95-99; *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 31.

²³ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 32.

²⁴ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 33.

- B. It is through the interplay of *Prakasha* and *Vimarsha*, *Shiva* and *Shakti*, that the entire world is created.
1. The power of *Prakasha* (*Shiva*) illuminates all potential forms in the world. But, this power must be joined with the creative and reflective power of *Vimarsha* (*Shakti*) in order for these forms to become distinguishable from each other. This combination of powers constitutes an initial vibration or pulsation of intent to create the entire world.²⁵
 2. This intention to manifest arises out the sheer joy (*Ananda*) this Primordial Couple feels in their recognition that they have the power to create whatever they wish.²⁶
 3. Swami Gurumayi Chidvilasananda (“Gurumayi”) of the Siddha Yoga tradition writes that *Shakti*, out of pure blissful enthusiasm, is the “Mother who weaves the entire universe of names and forms from her own being.”²⁷
 4. This process of creation is ongoing and is a joyous act of self-expression “done entirely for its own sake.”²⁸ This means there is no goal, no objective for creation, other than the ecstasy of manifestation.

VI. The Attributes of Supreme Consciousness.

For at least 3,500 years, at least as far back as the *Rg Veda* (around 1500 BCE), we have evidence of people’s thoughts about creation and the nature of Supreme Consciousness.²⁹ From these discussions, non-dual Tantra ascribed a number of attributes to God, Consciousness, or Spirit. We now turn to a discussion of the most commonly recognized attributes of Spirit.

These attributes of Supreme Consciousness directly pertain to our goal of creating a life of well-being. This is because, using non-dual Tantric philosophy as a guide, we are each a manifestation of God in our own unique, limited form. As such, we share these attributes – and so does your neighbor and the stranger you will meet walking down the street. Not surprisingly, these attributes of Supreme Consciousness directly correlate with Dr. Seligman’s attributes of a life of well-being.

²⁵ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 32; see also, *The Triadic Heart of Shiva*, at 96.

²⁶ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 32.

²⁷ Swami Chidvilasananda (1997). *Enthusiasm*. South Fallsburg, NY: SYDA Foundation, at 28.

²⁸ *Tantra Illuminated*, at 62.

²⁹ See, e.g., Doniger, Dr. Wendy (1981). *The Rig Veda*. London, England: The Penquin Group, at 25-26 (Creation Hymn; 10-129).

A. *Sat*. *Sat* means “Being,”³⁰ the ultimate Reality,³¹ and “Truth.”³²

1. As such, *Sat* is the attribute of Supreme Consciousness representing God’s eternal, timeless nature, with the Divine serving as the foundation for all beings.³³
2. *Sat* represents our true Self, the existence of the Divine that is always present within us.³⁴ When we remember that our true nature is that of Supreme Consciousness, *Paramshiva*, that awakening or recognition is called *Pratyabhijna*.³⁵
3. Even though we as humans are not eternal, we nonetheless have our own personal “eternal truth.” This truth consists of our life experiences, our education and knowledge, and our memories. Collectively, these make up our personal history and never leave us, although we might forget some of it from time to time. This personal truth serves as a wellspring that is timeless within the context of our time on earth.³⁶ As we age our wellspring becomes deeper as, over the course of our life, we learn more from any number of sources, including experience. This wellspring is available for us to tap whenever we are faced with challenges so as to formulate the best response.
4. In order to build our wellspring of knowledge and experiences, our own truth, we continue to be curious about the world. We explore getting to know people different from us so that we can learn more about people. We become curious as a matter of course, so that we can learn more about our world. We try new things and visit new places. We study and accumulate more knowledge. We cultivate a deeper wellspring from which we can draw as we seek to build a life of well-being. The deeper our wellspring, the more potential exists to recognize opportunities for positive emotion, engagement meaning, accomplishment, and nurturing relationships.³⁷
4. Hopefully, as we make our way in the world, learn more, and experience more, we increase our emotional resilience. We develop a greater capacity to withstand the

³⁰ *Auspicious Wisdom*, at 115.

³¹ *The Yoga Tradition* at 459.

³² Mahony, Dr. William K. (2010). *Exquisite Love*. The Woodlands, TX: Anusara Press, at 20.

³³ *Exquisite Love*, at 20.

³⁴ *Meditation for the Love of It*, at 36-37.

³⁵ *The Sendor of Recognition*, at 16.

³⁶ *Meditation for the Love of It*, at 36-37.

³⁷ See posted outline in this course: “What is Success?” Dorigan, William (2014). www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html

tendency to rush to judgment based on anger, fear, bias, and all the other stimuli that can interfere with creating a life of well-being.

- B. *Chit*. A second attribute of Supreme Consciousness is *Chit (Cit)*. The word *Chit* means God’s power to “understand,” “perceive,” or “know,”³⁸ and refers to Spirit’s attribute of self-awareness.
1. Supreme Consciousness fully knows itself and its powers. For *Paramshiva*, this knowing constitutes ultimate awareness, an absolute intelligence with an unbounded ability to create out of that knowledge;³⁹ aware of its power to make things appear.⁴⁰
 2. Part of our ultimate awareness, our *Chit*, is to fully awaken to our Divine nature. Kashmir Shaivism teaches that in order for this awakening to happen, we must first fully know ourselves; that self-study is the “doorway” to connection with Supreme Consciousness.⁴¹ In fact, Swami Muktananda, wrote that self-discovery is the “root” of a spiritual practice seeking to connect with God, and that the first step in that process is answering the question of “who am I?”⁴²
 3. When viewed together, *Sat* and *Chit* correlate with the two foundational pillars for creating a life of well-being: discovering our personal strengths and engaging in the self-analysis and practices necessary to develop emotional resilience. I call these “foundational pillars” because, without them, our progress towards creating a life rich with the five attributes of a life of well-being will be substantially limited.
 - a. First, Swami Muktananda’s comments about self-discovery echo Dr. Seligman’s admonition that in order to maximize meaningful engagement in our lives we must become aware of our unique package of strengths and virtues – who we are.⁴³ As humans, we each have a set of gifts and talents about which we must become aware in order to optimize our potential to be a meaningful person. This self-awareness is *Chit*. When combined with our lifetime of knowledge and experiences (*Sat*), the two attributes constitute “who we are.”

³⁸ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 25.

³⁹ *Meditation for the Love of It*, at 143-144.

⁴⁰ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 25.

⁴¹ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 25-26.

⁴² *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 26-27; quoting from Swami Muktananda (1994). *From the Finite to the Infinite*. South Fallsburg, NY: SYDA Foundation, at 28.

⁴³ Seligman, Dr. Martin (2011). *Flourish*. New York, NY: The Free Press, at 24; see also, posted outline in this course: “Yoga as a Path to a Life Of Well-Being. An Overview.” Dorigan, William (2014). www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html.

- b. Like *Paramshiva*, when we have the power of self-reflection, the ability to be self-aware of our particular capabilities we are then poised to create our own special offering to the world. In humans, this consciousness is called *Chitta* or *Citta*, a term used to describe the human mind.
 - c. This self-awareness, though, is insufficient unless we develop sufficient emotional resilience to combat patterns of thought and behavior that can block or minimize opportunities for positive emotion, engagement, meaning, accomplishment, and nurturing relationships. Self-study increases our awareness of the pitfalls of judgment, doubt, anger, fear, and other unhelpful emotions and how they operate to sabotage us. There are many ways to engage in self-study, including reading, feedback from friends, meditation, group work, and therapy.
- C. *Ananda*. A third attribute of Supreme Consciousness is *Ananda*, the joy of creation.⁴⁴ This exquisite joy, or bliss, arises in Spirit from an impulse to create for the pure delight of it.⁴⁵ It is out of this impulse that our world was created, according to the Kashmir Shaivite mythology of creation.⁴⁶
- 1. *Shakti*, aware of her power to create whatever she wants, spontaneously and blissfully launches into the creation of the world, choosing to take the form of each person and thing she creates.⁴⁷ Supreme Consciousness takes delight in existing in all manifested forms, giving each of us the possibility of delighting in our own existence.⁴⁸ This bliss is *Ananda*.
 - a. *Ananda* is often considered in yoga to be our “deepest, truest nature.”⁴⁹
 - b. Later, we will study the *koshas*, the layers of our existence as humans. The deepest layer, *Ananda-maya kosha*, the layer of Bliss, is considered our deepest layer, the “core” of our being.⁵⁰
 - 2. The joy and delight of *Ananda* is the source of all creativity, and is an innate desire in each of us to make something.⁵¹ Like *Shakti*, we long to experience the

⁴⁴ *Meditation for the Love of It*, at 42-45.

⁴⁵ *Meditation for the Love of It*, at 42-43.

⁴⁶ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 32-33.

⁴⁷ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 32-33.

⁴⁸ *Exquisite Love*, at 127.

⁴⁹ *Exquisite Love*, at 219.

⁵⁰ *Exquisite Love*, at 219.

⁵¹ *Meditation for the Love of It*, at 42-43.

delight of imaginatively expressing ourselves and manifesting our particular strengths in the world.

3. *Ananda* also means love, ecstasy, and happiness. It can refer to enjoyment and sensual pleasure. Notice how this attribute of Consciousness correlates with Dr. Seligman's attribute of "positive emotions."
 - a. Let's refer again to Dr. Viktor Frankl's definition of love. He discussed how, out of love, we seek to discover somebody's deepest essence and then, having done so, coax him or her to share it with the world.⁵² When we do this we in fact engage in a beautiful, loving act of creation. We have created something new: the manifestation in the world of another human's potency that had been hidden until we became that person's mirror.
 - b. Similarly, we engage in a joyful act of creation every time we participate in sharing the experience of a positive emotion, such as wonder, with another. This sharing constitutes a positivity resonance.⁵³
4. The joy of creation that marks *Ananda* is not tied to any result. Rather, creative joy arises simply from creating something for its own sake.⁵⁴

D. *Satchitananda*. This word or phrase, combining *Sat*, *Chit*, and *Ananda*, is often used in yoga to describe Supreme Consciousness. It also describes our nature. The phrase can be used as a reminder for remembering how to make connection, to do yoga: 1) we first awaken to our own essence (our truth and our strengths); 2) we then joyously and creatively embrace and manifest our truth and strengths in service of something bigger than just us; and 3) we do so, ultimately, for the sake of service as opposed to a primary objective of personal gain.

1. The deeper our wellspring of knowledge and experience, the better able we are to see opportunities for service. The depth of our wellspring depends in large part on the level of our curiosity to know the Divine, as She exists in the world in all forms. Put another way, the more we explore diversity and make connections, the greater will be our capacity to serve. This is the case because our knowledge and experience inform us in each moment of what the world is asking for; what is it about the situation that could use some refinement?
2. We meditate daily as a way to assimilate all of this work and make awakening to our essence our default way of being in the world.

⁵² *Man's Search for Meaning*, at 115-116.

⁵³ *Love 2.0*, at 10-17.

⁵⁴ *Tantra Illuminated*, at 74-75.

3. For us, *Satchitananda* is the experience of joy arising when we offer our experience and gifts in meaningful service to others.
 - a. Seligman and his group suggest ways of experiencing *Satchitananda*. They point out that society has created any number of institutions to help in this regard; i.e., religious organizations, scouts, family, serving the environment, and other options.⁵⁵
 - b. As an example, I have a good friend who is a retired military officer. From that experience he accumulated a number of skills. Now, even though he is very busy with a number of things, including parenting, he uses those skills in service. He is a volunteer on our rural fire department. He is a first responder, trained as an EMT. He still works with the local Boy Scout chapter even though his sons are older and out of scouting. He appears to thrive on this volunteer work while at the same time giving family attention.

E. *Purnatva*. The next attribute of Supreme Consciousness is *Purnatva*, perfection or fullness. “Perfection” in this case means that Spirit wants nothing. This is a state of complete fulfillment, a state with no desire.⁵⁶ *Shiva* and *Shakti* create the world out of the sheer joy of doing so, and not to satisfy any particular desire for anything other than the joy of creating.⁵⁷ Each creation is a perfect expression of the creative joy that spawned it.

1. In our creation metaphor we are each a unique, distinct manifestation of that creation. As such, we also have the potential to choose to feel whole or complete in our daily lives. We accomplish this sense of perfection when we remember that we are a manifestation of the Divine, and we are complete as we are, without the need to prove anything to anyone.⁵⁸
2. We can feel complete even in the face of our own less than admirable behavior. You may have heard the phrase: “our dark (or shadow) sides are the portals to our soul.” Most of us have such dark sides. Maybe we get angry easier than some. Perhaps we can be envious or jealous. Even so, rather than just feeling bad or guilty about such attitudes and the behavior they bring, we can choose to study and appreciate these dark or shadow sides. When we do so we can usually trace these attitudes to their “flip side,” our deep drives that actually help account for our greatness, those feelings that drive us to succeed and create meaning in the world. Rather than wallow in guilt or shame we instead use this self-study to refine our behavior in order to make more meaningful connections.

⁵⁵ *Flourish*, at 12.

⁵⁶ Mishra, Kamalakar (1993). *Kashmir Saivism*. Portland, OR: Rudra Press, at 124.

⁵⁷ *Kashmir Saivism*, at 124.

⁵⁸ *See, generally, Tantra Illuminated*, at 155-156.

- a. I tell a story in *Finding the Midline* about spending the day taking depositions in a high-stress lawsuit and then racing to meet a blind date for a drink. I sat down and took a deep breath, only to have her tell me after a bit that I seemed really uptight. I felt bad and it took a while to realize that the “dark” side of me she saw, the “stressed-out” guy, was attributable to my passion for taking care of my clients. It had taken a large emotional toll earlier that day to take charge over obstructive lawyers and witnesses and press them to give us the information my client needed.⁵⁹
 - b. When we awaken to our experience, strengths, and nature of joyous creativity in service of something meaningful, we are able to overcome guilt and sadness over our “foux pas.” We learn to let go of the envy and jealousy that often causes us to feel incomplete as persons. We become, in that moment, full or whole; we become engaged in the pleasure of creating something meaningful just for the pleasure of doing so.
3. Arriving in this state of wholeness while engaged in meaningful activity correlates with Dr. Seligman’s attribute of engagement, one of the five attributes of a life of well-being. We get wrapped up in the delight of the moment, being in flow with our activity, with time seemingly stopped while we are merged with the object of our attention. We aren’t thinking of outcomes; we are simply enjoying the activity of creation. This is fullness, the achievement of *Purnatva*.⁶⁰
- F. *Sri*. Another attribute of Supreme Consciousness is *Sri (Shri)*. *Sri* is auspiciousness, meaning “prosperity,” “well-being,” “power,” and “life-giving.”⁶¹
1. *Sri* is God’s power of abundance, beauty, sacredness, and dignity.⁶²
 2. Like Spirit, we have these qualities as well. We can be generous and kind (life-giving). These are precisely the types of character traits we must develop if we wish to attract into our lives positive emotion, engagement, meaning, accomplishment, and nurturing relationships.

⁵⁹ Dorigan, William (2013). *Finding the Midline*. Winter Park, CO: LuHen Publications, LLC, at 64-66.

⁶⁰ See posted outline in this course: “What is Success?” Dorigan, William (2014). www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html

⁶¹ *Auspicious Wisdom*, at 64, 70, 81.

⁶² Swami Chidvilasananda (2006). *Sadhana of the Heart. nthusiasm*. South Fallsburg, NY: SYDA Foundation, at 38.

3. Gurumayi tells us that we are *Sri* when we use our particular strengths to guide us in our choices that seek to create more gratitude and abundance.⁶³ This is how we thrive, looking for ways to meaningfully contribute to others.
 4. In *Finding the Midline* I give examples of people who exemplify *Sri* through attitude and actions, behaving with dignity and class, and treating others that way. These people view the world as abundant and that viewpoint governs their choices to create more opportunity for others.⁶⁴
 5. The expansive, life-giving, power of abundance we refer to as *Sri* correlates with Dr. Seligman's attribute of meaning. When we do something meaningful, we are being expansive, creating more abundance in the world through our service.⁶⁵
- G. *Svatantrya*. The next attribute of Supreme Consciousness is *Svatantrya*, autonomy. By autonomy I mean that the Divine has the power of complete freedom to choose to manifest as any form She wishes.⁶⁶ Consciousness is not compelled to do anything.⁶⁷ This power of free will is called *Svatantrya-sakti*, as Consciousness freely "projects her light" in countless diverse forms through the ongoing act of creation.⁶⁸
1. In this philosophy God has no motive for creation, other than the joy or happiness of its own manifestation in endless diverse forms.⁶⁹
 2. We, too, have the freedom to create our world in any way we wish, one thought at a time, one action at a time. We can choose how we think, how we view each other, and how we view ourselves.
 3. We have opportunities to eliminate harmful patterns of thought and behavior that block our pursuit of a life of well-being.
 - a. We can choose in each moment to experience a positive emotion or, instead, allow a negative thought to fester.

⁶³ *Sadhana of the Heart*, at 38-39.

⁶⁴ *Finding the Midline*, at 57-61.

⁶⁵ See posted outline in this course: "What is Success?" Dorigan, William (2014). www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html

⁶⁶ *Triadic Heart of Siva*, at 50; 82; *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 35.

⁶⁷ *Kashmir Saivism*, at 130.

⁶⁸ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 41.

⁶⁹ *Kashmir Saivism*, at 125, 142-43.

- b. We can choose to let go and enjoy being in the flow of a meaningful activity or, instead, we can waste time with our phone, social media, or any number of other things that leave us feeling a bit empty.
 - c. We can choose to undertake something of value to others and, in the process, create more meaning in our lives. Alternatively, we can squander our talent.
 - d. We can choose to undertake tasks that catch our interest and enjoy the feeling of accomplishment that comes with the completion of that task. Or, we can watch more television.
 - e. We can choose to pursue potential new nurturing relationships and further cultivate existing ones. Alternatively, we can elect to avoid intimacy with others or opt only to spend time with people who don't serve us.
4. *Svatantrya*, the power to create something with our time without any particular motive other than the joy of doing so, is like Dr. Seligman's attribute of accomplishment. In both cases we undertake to do something just for the sake of doing it.⁷⁰

H. *Spanda*. The next attribute of Supreme Consciousness we discuss is *Spanda*. *Spanda* means "pulsation" or "vibration" and refers to the pulsation by which Consciousness creates the world.⁷¹

- 1. From an initial pulsation, *Spanda* becomes an ongoing, constant vibration, an expansive energy and a contractive energy, a "universal rhythm of the Divine responsible for all creative activity in the world."⁷²
- 2. In order to put *Spanda* into a context that helps us create a life of well-being, let's look at the nature of *Spanda* from the perspective of *Prakasha* and *Vimarsha*.
- 3. This pulsation or vibration of *Spanda* arises in the very heart of *Paramshiva* and is "extraordinarily subtle."⁷³ Consider it this way: *Shiva*'s light of Consciousness (*Prakasha*) shines out expansively (*unmesa*; an opening or expansion). Through the power of self-awareness (*Vimarsha*), this light illuminates a potential (yet-to-

⁷⁰ See posted outline in this course: "What is Success?" Dorigan, William (2014). www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html

⁷¹ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 42.

⁷² Dyczkowski, Dr. Mark (1987). *The Doctrine of Vibration*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, at 20-21.

⁷³ *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 42.

be-created) form in the universe; let's say an apple. This contemplation or perception of an apple illuminated within the light of potential is a contractive or inward-directed energy (*nimesa*; a closing or contraction). In this vibratory process an apple is on its way to being created. In this fashion, through *Spanda*, a world is created through an uninterrupted series of expansions and contractions.

74

4. This vibratory rhythm has often been described by the metaphor of a “dance” of the energies of *Shiva* and *Shakti* that creates the world in every moment. Since we are Consciousness, we also have the attribute of *Spanda*.
 - a. We see this dance in nature, with the rise and setting of the sun, the tides, and the breath, by way of example.
 - b. We are constantly engaged in the ebb and flow of experiences, constantly aware, if we choose, of the opportunities to learn something new, offer something of value; to see what is possible.
 - c. Our curiosity causes us to expand our attention (our light) outward as we seek to experience and learn new things. We draw this new information inward (contracting) in order to assimilate it. Having assimilated the new information we then emerge as a newly created version of ourselves, perhaps very subtly, or perhaps quite profoundly, depending on the lesson learned and assimilated.
5. We use *Spanda*, through the energies of *Prakasha* and *Vimarsha*, to help bring about change in others, creating a new world as we do so. We do this by serving as mirrors for each other's potential. We shine our light into another's deepest essence; discovering and then coaxing from them some newly discovered strength. This is an expansive act of creation. The recipient of our attention (light) assimilates our inspiring revelations about them that we've shared with them, perceiving themselves in this new light. This vibratory process between two people is *Spanda*, and it results in the creation of a new version of that person in the world as they embrace and manifest their newly revealed potential.
6. We create our world anew as often as we choose. We have the power to use this energy of *Spanda* to create new, positive patterns of thought and behavior. For example, we can do this by observing or learning appropriate alternative viewpoints. This makes us a more refined person.
 - a. This is one reason that we celebrate diversity, striving to get to know people of different races, religions, nationalities, and viewpoints. In each such encounter we have the opportunity to assimilate new information about the world and how people operate within it. This increases our wellspring of experiences, which in turn informs our patterns of thought

⁷⁴ See, generally, *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 42-43; see also, *The Triadic Heart of Siva*, at 120-121.

and behavior as we go forward. We have more understanding. We have a greater sense of how the world works. These experiences allow us to better connect and better serve the world. As a result, our lives become richer.

- b. Similarly, through meditation we look inside ourselves and allow our mind to be both the light and the self-reflection, as memories and experiences can be considered through the lucid opening we've created in the meditation.
7. As we make our way in the world, our days are filled with moments offering us what I call a "Midline" in my book, *Finding the Midline*. Midlines are those times when Spirit whispers to us an invitation to a rich experience, an opportunity for connection. The process of awakening to that invitation, the Midline, and then assimilating the invitation is *Spanda*. The acceptance of the invitation is our way of creating a bit more richness in our life.
- a. At any moment, for example, we have the choice to direct our mind towards the experience of a positive emotion. In addition to curiosity (interest), does the moment offer an invitation to feel joy, serenity, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, or love (connection with another while sharing any of these emotions)? At a minimum there is always the opportunity to remind ourselves of something we are grateful for (gratitude). When we accept the invitation to experience a positive emotion, we've stepped into Midline. The process is *Spanda*.
 - b. As we direct our awareness towards opportunities for engaging or meaningful activity, we are like *Shiva* shining His light of possibility. Seeking, recognizing and accepting the invitation (the Midline) to such activity is *Spanda*. We've created engagement and meaning through our choice to look for the opportunities to do so.
 - c. Similarly, looking for tasks worthy of our attention, and then accomplishing those tasks, is *Spanda*. We've identified, embraced, and manifested something for the pure sake of doing so.
 - d. And, as already discussed, the process of *Spanda* is how we create and enhance nurturing relationships. In fact, it is the template for how to do so. As such, it correlates nicely with Dr. Seligman's attribute of nurturing relationships.

V. Conclusion.

We've looked at Spirit's true nature because to do so is to understand our own true nature as well. This is the case because, under this non-dualist Tantric philosophy, we are Consciousness (Spirit) experiencing the world as us.

We've now seen how well these Divine attributes parallel the attributes for creating a life of well-being, as identified by leading behavioral psychologists. Yoga philosophy is an extraordinary resource for showing us how to connect to our true nature as humans. Then, having awakened to that true nature, we use our knowledge of that true nature to create a life of well-being.

We now turn to a further analysis of the creation story, using the *Tattvas* to understand the “how” of creation: how *Paramshiva* (*Shiva* and *Shakti*) actually create the world. The creation story invites us to use our curiosity and imagination to create our own world of well-being.

The 36 Tattvas of Tantric Cosmology Chart

