

# The Creation Story and *Maya*

## A viewpoint of how we came to be

### I. Introduction:

We've begun a discussion of the metaphysical aspects of Supreme Consciousness, *Paramshiva*. We discussed the energies of *Paramshiva* known as *Shiva* and *Shakti* to help us understand the true nature of this Ultimate Reality. Through the interacting, vibratory energies of *Shiva* and *Shakti*, the process of creation begins.

We've also looked at key attributes of *Paramshiva*, or Spirit: *Sat* (truth), *Chit* (self-awareness), *Ananda* (creative joy), *Purnatva* (fullness), *Sri* (Prosperity), *Svatantrya* (freedom), and *Spanda* (vibration/pulsation). From the viewpoint of the non-dual Tantra traditions we are focusing on, we share these attributes because we are each a unique manifestation of the Divine. Spirit experiences the world as each of us, through our own unique perspective.

Using the Kashmir Shaivite 36-*Tattva* chart (at the end of this outline), we now continue with the story of creation, discussing how this interaction between *Shiva* and *Shakti* ultimately manifests as our material world. The subjects of today's talk are the three energies near the top of the *Tattva* chart: *Sadashiva*, *Ishvara*, and *Suddhavidya*, as well as *Maya*, the *Kanchukas*, and the energies known as the *Malas*.<sup>1</sup>

### II. The initial spark of creation.

As part of our study of *Shiva* and *Shakti*, we discussed the vibratory energies of *Prakasha* and *Vimarsha*. *Shiva* radiates (*Prakasha*) as a bright light, full of potential. *Shakti* reflects the light back (*Vimarsha*), revealing a never-ending array of potential forms capable of manifestation into a material world.

A. When a particular form is illuminated within this vibratory process of *Prakasha* and *Vimarsha*, the form appears suddenly, in a flash. This flash is known as an

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of how classical yoga perhaps viewed the role of God in creation at the time of Patanjali, somewhere between 300 B.C.E. and 100 C.E., see Dr. Edwin Bryant's 2009 commentary *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*: Bryant, Dr. Edwin (2009). *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. New York, NY: North Point Press, at xxxiv; 87–89. This commentary, while not the only excellent resource for studying these sutras, is a particular treasure trove of information and analysis for those interested in the possible underlying meanings and historical context of each sutra. Dr. Bryant discusses two alternative viewpoints regarding God's role in creation prevalent at that time: 1) God creates the material world, or; 2) God is the "efficient cause" of creation by manipulating the matter by which the world is created. (This matter, the *Gun*as, will be the subject of later talks). While naming God as "*Ishvara*" – e.g., Yoga Sutra 1.23, Dr. Bryant notes that Patanjali is silent on the issue of the role of a God in creation. Bryant suggests that the context of the sutras indicates Patanjali likely considered *Ishvara* to be, at a minimum, the efficient cause of the world.

*Abhasa*, which can also be translated to mean something that “illuminates, appears, or manifests.”<sup>2</sup> It can mean a “Shining out.”<sup>3</sup>

- B. An *Abhasa* is commonly thought of as an object of perception, something perceived by Supreme Consciousness as a reflected form in its illuminating light.
1. Those forms perceived by Supreme Consciousness are what can become the forms created and manifested in this world if, out of creative joy, *Ananda*, *Shiva* and *Shakti* choose to do so.<sup>4</sup>
  2. We experience the world through *Abhasa*. We create our own particular world through our perceptions, the things we observe, and our thoughts.<sup>5</sup> They are our projections of what we perceive to be true. Thus, doing an inventory of our patterns of thought and behavior; i.e., our bias, judgments, fears, angers, resentments, ways we gather news and information, and then refining those patterns is essential for creation of the richest life of well-being possible.
  3. In our talk “Yoga as a Path to a Life of Well-Being,” we learned that what we perceive and thus project as real may not be truly real. While some traditions, such as Vedanta, view the entire material world as an illusion, Kashmir Shaivism, Srividya, and Rajanaka view the material world as quite real.<sup>6</sup>
  4. Patanjali teaches in Yoga Sutras 1.7 to 1.11 that our perceptions can often be mistaken.<sup>7</sup> Our patterns of thought and behavior can cause us to jump to conclusions, resulting in an innocent misconception of the facts. If we can catch ourselves perceiving persons and things through the lens of ill-serving patterns—such as bias, or fear, by way of example—this is a red

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<sup>2</sup> Shantananda, Swami (2003). *The Splendor of Recognition*. South Fallsburg, NY: The SYDA Foundation, at 73.

<sup>3</sup> Chatterji, J.C. Dr. (1986). *Kashmir Shaivism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, at 14.

<sup>4</sup> The role of the Goddess in creation, in this course referred to as *Shakti*, as distinguished from the role of *Shiva*, depends on the particular school of non-dual Tantra. See, e.g., Hughes, John (1994). *Self Realization in Kashmir Shaivism. The Oral Teachings of Swami Lakshmanjoo*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, at 59–61; 67–69. See also *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 94–95.

<sup>5</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 76–77.

<sup>6</sup> See posted outline in this course: “Yoga as a Path to a Life of Well-Being.” Dorigan, William (2016). [www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html](http://www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html)

<sup>7</sup> See posted outline in this course: “Yoga as a Path to a Life of Well-Being.” Dorigan, William (2016). [www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html](http://www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html)

flag that we have yet to develop the emotional resiliency necessary to accurately view the world around us.<sup>8</sup>

- C. Out of the vibratory process of *Prakasha* and *Vimarsha*, *Shiva* and *Shakti* choose to create as many or as few of these objects of perception as they wish. We might consider each such choice as an initial spark of creation. As yet, however, nothing has actually manifested in the material world. All we have is intent.<sup>9</sup>

We now turn to the next phase of creation, the Pure *Tattvas*.<sup>10</sup> This is where the flashes of potential creation evolve and become ready for manifestation in the material world.

### III. The Pure *Tattvas* of *Sadashiva*, *Isvara*, and *Suddhavidya*.

The “Pure *Tattvas*” are *Sadashiva Tattva*, *Isvara Tattva*, and *Suddhavidya Tattva*. The reason these particular *Tattvas* are called “pure” is this: As a perception of a material object to create starts to come into focus, *Shiva* and *Shakti* never lose sight of the fact that any such object is nothing but Supreme Consciousness. This is true regardless of the diverse appearance and nature of the form arising from their perception. The intent of creation is for Supreme Consciousness to experience itself in as many ways as it can think up. Diversity at this stage is not to be feared or a cause for concern, it is intentional, desired.

At the stage just before the vibratory interaction of *Shiva* and *Shakti* produces an *Abhasa*—the perception of a potential form—*Paramshiva*, as *Shiva* and *Shakti*, experiences a self-awareness (*Chit*), acknowledging that it exists. This acknowledgement is summarized by the phrase: *Aham*, meaning, “I am.” This is an acknowledgement of pure existence, a subject without any object. There is no: “I am this,” “I am that,” “I am here,” or “I am there.” This is pure “I-ness” (*Ahamta*),<sup>11</sup> the eternal *Aham*; I am.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See posted outline in this course: “What is Success?” Dorigan, William (2016). [www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html](http://www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html)

<sup>9</sup> In describing the cosmology of the *Tattvas*, I use a Kashmir Shaivite perspective to explain its *Tattva* system. Even within the Kashmir Shaivite traditions there are differing viewpoints on the role of *Shiva* and *Shakti*. See, e.g. *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 94–95. And Goddess-oriented traditions may differ from certain of the Kashmir Shaivite perspectives. In this course I sometimes refer to *Paramshiva* as the instigator of creation and sometimes *Shiva* and *Shakti*. In doing so I am not suggesting any personal preference or “correct” viewpoint.

<sup>10</sup> For a clear, enjoyable and detailed explanation of this creation process from a Kashmir Shaivite point of view, through the Siddha Yoga tradition, I refer you to the book, *The Splendor of Recognition* by Swami Shantananda, cited in Footnote 2. I also refer you to another great resource—a set of audiotapes by my teacher, Dr. Douglas Brooks, the man who ignited the spark of my curiosity about yoga philosophy. Brooks, Dr. Douglas R.(2010). *The Tattvas: Understanding The Principles of Reality* (Audio Tapes). Berkeley, CA: Brooks and YogaKula. ([www.yogakula.com](http://www.yogakula.com) - store link – cd link).

<sup>11</sup> Feuerstein, Georg Dr. *Tantra The Path of Ecstasy*. (1998). Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, Inc. at 77.

With this self-acknowledgement, the stage is set for an expansion of that Consciousness, creation.

A. *Sadashiva Tattva* and *Ichha Shakti*.

As *Paramshiva* becomes aware of itself, there is a surge of power, a feeling of “divine wonder,” as well as a fierce resolve to know “what to do or create” with this power.<sup>13</sup> *Paramshiva* hungers to totally know itself, to fully experience its potential.<sup>14</sup>

This burning desire to fully explore and experience its full potency is the energy of *Ichha Shakti*, will power and an intention to create.<sup>15</sup> This stage is represented on the *Tattva* chart as *Sadashiva Tattva*.

1. *Sadashiva* means “always *Shiva*,” referring to the eternal nature of *Paramshiva* as the always-present object that both creates and then experiences the objects of its creation in the material world.<sup>16</sup>
2. When this desire to know itself arises, *Paramshiva* begins to vaguely recognize objects as it wills them into its consciousness. This willpower is an expression of its hunger to manifest its full potential. These objects are initially perceived as ambiguous, cloudy images of potential forms through which it might express itself. These vague images are on their way to becoming our universe.
3. This process is summarized by the phrase: *Aham idam* – “I am this.” For the first time we have a concept of something “other” than Supreme Consciousness—an object (objects; the universe) as well as a subject (*Paramshiva*.)” To *Aham*, “I am,” we add *Idam*, “this,” represents the things to be created.<sup>17</sup>
4. When I use the term “other” to refer to an object, something “other than” *Paramshiva*, I do so only to point out this first appearance of an object of

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<sup>12</sup> Mishra, Kamalakar (1993). *Kashmir Shaivism. The Central Philosophy of Tantrism*. Cambridge, MA: Rudra Press, at 138; 142–143.

<sup>13</sup> *Kashmir Shaivism* (Chatterji), at 4.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Dorigan, William (2013). *Finding the Midline*, Winter Park, CO: LuHen Publications, LLC, at 97–99.

<sup>15</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 94–96.

<sup>16</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 95.

<sup>17</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 94–96.

perception to be discerned by *Paramshiva*. When *Paramshiva* perceives this object, it recognizes that this object is nothing but him, hence the term “I am this.” There is no duality, no separation at this point in the *Tattvas*. The object, to the Kashmir Shaivites, is “always *Shiva*.”<sup>18</sup>

B. *Ishvara Tattva and Jnana Shakti.*

*Ishvara* means “Lord,” referring to a clear recognition by *Paramshiva* of the objects it perceives. These objects are the manifestations of its creative power, products of its will to fully know itself.

1. Where in the preceding *Tattva*, *Sadashiva Tattva*, the objects of perception were vague (the initial impulse of the desire to manifest), here the objects take on a sharper focus. *Paramshiva* turns its attention to these objects it perceives.
2. Like a lord surveying his kingdom, at this stage *Paramshiva* acknowledges all the objects summoned into perception through its willpower.<sup>19</sup> This process is summarized by the phrase *Idam Aham*—“This I am.”
3. The objects of perception, the “this” about to be created, are now clear instead of cloudy. Even as these objects come into focus and attention shifts from “I” to “this,” *Paramshiva* recognizes that each is nothing but Supreme Consciousness, despite the diversity of forms. For this reason the energy of this *Tattva* is *Jnana Shakti*, the power of knowledge.<sup>20</sup>

C. *Suddhavidya Tattva and Kriya Shakti.*

*Suddhavidya* means “pure knowledge,” referring to the awareness by Supreme Consciousness that it and the objects of its perception are nothing but the same; everything is *Paramshiva*.<sup>21</sup>

1. At this point we have diversity, the “other” which are the objects of *Paramshiva*’s perceptions. However, we also have unity because *Paramshiva* recognizes that each object is an equal expression of itself, distinguishable in form only but not separate.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 97; *Self Realization in Kashmir Shaivism*, at 60–61.

<sup>19</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 96.

<sup>20</sup> *Kashmir Shaivism* (Chatterji), at 4–5; *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 96.

<sup>21</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 96–97.

<sup>22</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 97.

2. Because *Paramshiva* views each object of manifestation as equal to each other, and nothing but Supreme Consciousness, there is a perfect balance of relationship between “I” and “this.” In *Sadashiva Tattva*, the focus was on the “I” of “I am this.” In *Isvara Tattva* the focus shifted to the “this” of “This am I.” The focus in *Suddhavidya Tattva* moves into a balance of those two, summarized as “*Aham-idam Idam-aham*” or “I am this—this am I.”<sup>23</sup>
  3. At this point, the conceptual process of creation is now complete and actual manifestation in our world can occur. Thus, the energy associated with this *Tattva* is *Kriya Shakti*, the power of action.<sup>24</sup>
- D. This process occurs within each of us in every moment with our choices of what to think, say, or do. In Chapters 25–27 of my book, *Finding the Midline*, I show how my son created the foundation for his career through this very process.<sup>25</sup> He started college with a vague notion of wanting to “be somebody” but had no real idea what that would look like. How could he? He was just out of high school. However, as he studied and began to visualize different career paths, the “this” that he could create became clear. He then put that vision into action and carved out a fine career for himself.
- E. Similarly, once we wake up to the fact that we have the power to create a life of well-being (*Aham*), we can then go about the task of doing so. The first step is to acknowledge that we want and deserve a life of positive emotions, engagement, meaning, accomplishment, and nurturing relationships. At first we may not quite see what structure that life will take, the vision may be blurry. But, with commitment, practice, and interaction in the world, the vision becomes clear and eventually a reality.

#### IV. The Psychological *Tattvas* of *Maya* and the *Kanchukas*, and the influence of the *Malas*.

From the Pure *Tattvas* we move to the next set of *Tattvas* on the chart, the “*Psychical Tattvas*,” *Maya* and the *Kanchukas*. We also learn about the influence of the energy of the *Malas*.

This term “*Psychical Tattvas*” is used to describe the cosmology of how all forms in our world must necessarily exist in a limited form, even though each is a manifestation of Supreme Consciousness. Unlike *Paramshiva*, no human being is all knowing, although they might think they are. No one is all-powerful; even the rich and famous have limits to

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<sup>23</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 96–97.

<sup>24</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 96–97.

<sup>25</sup> Dorigan, William (2013). *Finding the Midline*. Winter Park, CO: LuHen Publications, LLC., at 97–104.

their power. No one lives forever. This subset of *Tattvas* explains how the Divine limits itself so that it can exist in the endless diversity of forms in our world.

This process of going from unlimited to limited is described by the term *Maya*. *Maya* is typically translated as meaning “illusion.” Depending on the particular school of yoga, this can mean a literal illusion; i.e., nothing is real. It can also mean that even though the world is real, it offers us nothing and in fact is a distraction from union with the Divine. For those who share that viewpoint, the goal is to attain liberation from the material world so that such union can be possible.

In other schools, however, including some non-dualist tantric schools of philosophy such as Kashmir Shaivism, *Maya* is an illusion only in the sense that it serves as a concealing or cloaking energy. This means that concealed in each limited, manifested form in this world is none other than *Paramshiva*. *Maya* is a differentiating energy through which *Paramshiva* creates an “infinite diversity of objects” in order to experience the world through this diversity.<sup>26</sup>

*Maya* can be considered spiritual ignorance by which we confuse our human form as being the ultimate reality.<sup>27</sup> Forgetting that there is something bigger than just ourselves, Supreme Consciousness, we mistake ourselves as the focal point of the universe.

#### A. The implications of *Maya*.

Our embodiment makes us prone to look at the rest of the world as separate from us. That is, of course, an illusion. We are simply each a different, unique form of Divine expression. By becoming human, we lose *Paramshiva*'s vision of unity between subject and object, the pure knowledge of *Suddhavidya*. While God sees unity in diversity, we as humans struggle with that concept, usually forgetting this connection entirely.

The pure knowledge of the preceding *Tattva* is now hidden or cloaked. That is the illusion of *Maya*. For this reason, *Maya* is also called the “Obscuring Force,” because through embodiment we forget our true nature. It is obscured by the problems inherent in living in a limited human form: a form with limited power, limited knowledge, limited time on the planet, and other limitations.<sup>28</sup>

1. We can see how *Maya* operates to limit our ability to create a life of well-being. As a result of *Maya* we don't appreciate the opportunities inherent in exploring and celebrating diversity. We don't become curious about differences, asking ourselves what another person might have to offer to us in terms of a contribution to our own life experience. We don't pause

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<sup>26</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 97.

<sup>27</sup> Bryant, Dr. Edwin (2009). *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. New York, NY: North Point Press, at 569.

<sup>28</sup> *Kasmhir Shaivism* (Chatterji), at 43.

and contemplate the potency of a situation that is new to us. We don't consider that what is new and different to us is nothing more than an invitation to know the Divine, and ourselves, more fully.

2. Instead, many of us distrust, perhaps even fear, difference. Often we become envious or resentful of something new. As a result, we learn to avoid exploring diversity. Instead of experiencing the positive emotions of curiosity, joy, wonder, and others, we quash any invitation to experience them. Forgetting that Supreme Consciousness is present wherever we are, as everyone and everything, we miss opportunities to watch Spirit revealing itself. We miss opportunities for connection. This makes it far more difficult to identify a chance to do something meaningful for others and it certainly has a chilling effect on establishing or deepening relationships with others.

Following is the explanation for how *Paramshiva* employs the differentiating energy of *Maya* to become each of us. The explanation involves the five *Tattvas* known as the *Kanchukas*, or cloaks.

#### B. The *Kanchukas*.

In order to better understand how *Paramshiva* accomplishes the task of existing as an all-powerful, all-knowing, eternal, free, full, expansive, life-giving God, to the limited forms and souls in this world, consider this example.

Think of a bright shining, beautiful white beam of light. Now visualize an amazing, pure diamond. As the beam of light pierces the diamond, the white light splits into an endless array of colors; all beautiful and all different: there is red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, violet, and on and on, with each color having endless shades and nuances.

Each of those beautiful colors that exit the diamond are different from each other, but each is part of the original brilliant white light, different from the white light but not separate from it. Each color is the white light, fractalized into these diverse expressions of the white light.

The beautiful white light isn't gone; it is now hidden within each color, a part of that color not obvious to the eyes.

This helps us to understand the *Kanchukas*, often translated as meaning "cloaks," "coverings," or "veils."<sup>29</sup> They are considered the powers through which the Divine hides the brilliant light of its true nature and creates the circumstances

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<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 99; *Self Realization in Kashmir Shaivism*, at 64, and *Kashmir Shaivism* (Mishra), at 171–172.

required for our limited existence in diverse forms.<sup>30</sup> Just like the white light is seemingly hidden after it moves through the diamond and emerges as all the different color combinations, *Paramshiva* is cloaked or obscured by the *Kanchukas* as the many diverse forms on the planet, each of us, hidden in plain view.

The *Kanchukas* are like the diamond in this example, with *Paramshiva* fractalizing like the white light to become all of the “colors” (manifested forms) of the universe. Once we understand all of the *Tattvas*, we’ll see that they are a tool to teach us how to find the brilliant white light in each and every hue (interaction) we experience. *Paramshiva* is hidden in those hues, waiting to be revealed through the work of our yoga.<sup>31</sup>

Following is a discussion of each of the five *Kanchukas*.

1. *Kala Kanchuka*.<sup>32</sup>

Here *Paramshiva* limits its omnipotence, the power to do anything (*Kriya-Shakti*).<sup>33</sup>

- a. As individuals we can only do so much. Think of the basketball player LeBron James. Can you play basketball like that? Now think of the late opera tenor, Luciano Pavarotti. Can you sing like that? For that matter, do you think LeBron sings like that? Think of any skill and you’ll easily understand how the cloak of *Kala* appears in our world.
- b. Each of us has our own signature strengths, those things we are good at. We also have things we aren’t able to do very well or at all. My law partner Scott has extraordinary skills in front of a jury, skills I can only dream of having. Yet, when it came to an ability to find factual connections hidden within thousands of pages of documents, Scott turned to me to find them. I have an ability to see connections in seemingly disparate settings. We were a good team in that way.

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<sup>30</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 99.

<sup>31</sup> For a real world example of finding the brilliant white light of *Paramshiva* hidden in the hues of my good friend Bill, read *Finding the Midline*, at 113–116.

<sup>32</sup> I omit diacritical marks when I use Sanskrit terms. Diacritical marks are used in some words to distinguish punctuation, pronunciation, and even meaning of a particular word. For example, the two words *Kala* in this discussion of the *Kanchukas*, have differing diacritical marks which tell us that they are really separate words, appearing to be the same when the marks aren’t used. I’ve made this decision to omit them after many false starts and hours spent without accurate results. The footnotes will lead you to texts accurately using these markings, should that be of interest.

<sup>33</sup> *Kashmir Shaivism* (Mishra), at 172–173; *The Splendor of Recognition* at 99.

- c. Being limited in our power to do things isn't the end of the line. We don't have to give up. Through connection we can combine our differing powers and, united, become all-powerful like *Paramshiva*. Think of the protestors to the Viet Nam War who, by joining together, created a powerful force that ended a war that seemingly had no end.
- d. In yoga, when we forget that we are Supreme Consciousness in a deliberately limited form, we tend to view ourselves as incompetent, leading to feelings of resentment and a desire to do things to prove our worth.<sup>34</sup> Part of being emotionally resilient is discovering what we can and cannot do and becoming comfortable with our limits. With that comfort we are less likely to react with envy or resentment when we observe somebody else taking center stage because of his or her unique package of talents.
- e. At the same time, knowing our strengths, we are better able to spot those opportunities when we can offer something meaningful to a situation. This encourages positive emotions, such as interest, joy, or pride. This increases the experience of being in flow in some helpful way, and the reward of having accomplished something. These results, in turn, heighten the likelihood of enhancing our significant relationships, in number and in quality.

## 2. *Vidya Kanchuka*.

Here *Paramshiva* limits its omniscience, the power of knowing everything. Our knowledge that everything is a manifestation of *Paramshiva (Jnana-Shakti)* becomes hidden.<sup>35</sup>

- a. We can't know everything. There is a wealth of knowledge out there we know nothing about. Simply by recognizing that we can't know everything we become free to pursue learning and discovery. We can be curious and explore, deepening our experiences as individuals, becoming more interesting partners, spouses, parents, and friends.
- b. Being aware that we don't know everything can prompt us to engage in more meaningful endeavors. For example, in 1895 a German physicist accidentally discovered X-rays while working on something else, winning the Nobel Prize. Another scientist discovered the life-saving antibiotic penicillin, again by accident.

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<sup>34</sup> *Kashmir Shaivism* (Mishra), at 172–173.

<sup>35</sup> *Kashmir Shaivism* (Mishra), at 172–173; *The Splendor of Recognition* at 99.

- c. In yoga, when we forget that we are Supreme Consciousness in a limited form, we tend to view the world through the eyes of duality. We see the world as “other,” with everyone else being not only different but also separate from us.<sup>36</sup> When we recognize this limitation we can give up being jealous or envious about what others know that we don’t. We can stop avoiding people, conversations, and subjects we view as “beyond us” and, instead, learn and possibly contribute something. We learn to honor ourselves for what we do know.
- d. We learn not to put our foot in our mouths because we stop jumping to conclusions, thinking we know the answers. Sometimes, perhaps often, there are facts we aren’t aware of that would change our opinion and judgment. This is another example of becoming more emotionally resilient.

### 3. *Raga Kanchuka.*

Here *Paramshiva* limits its fullness (*Purnatva*) and freedom (*Svatantrya*), becoming entrapped in the pursuit of material desire.<sup>37</sup> This preoccupation with material objects becomes a distraction that limits our willpower, our burning desire to fully know ourselves (*Ichha-Shakti*).

- a. The term “*Raga*” means attachment or the desire to cling to something. The converse feeling is *Dvesa*, aversion. We forget that we are part of something bigger than just ourselves. Our tendencies to see separation combine with our feelings of inadequacy, leading to a sense of emptiness. We then try to resolve that sense; “fill the emptiness,” by attaching ourselves to things that make us feel good. At the same time, we necessarily avoid those things that are uncomfortable. In this process we completely lose track of our goal of connection with others, with our own true nature, and with the Divine. We abandon our search for ways to meaningfully contribute to our community; such is our obsession with satisfying material desire.<sup>38</sup>
- b. We end up constantly striving to satisfy material desires on the one hand, while avoiding people and things we find on first blush to be unappealing. There is nothing about this approach to life that fits

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<sup>36</sup> See, generally, *Kashmir Shaivism* (Mishra), at 172.

<sup>37</sup> *Kashmir Shaivism* (Mishra), at 173; *The Splendor of Recognition* at 99.

<sup>38</sup> See, generally, *Kashmir Shaivism* (Mishra), at 173–174.

within our goal of creating a life of well-being. For example, when we view everything from the limited perspective of whether it makes us feel better or not, we are never truly attuned to opportunities for positive emotion, engagement, ways to use our skills in service, fun tasks to accomplish for the fun of it, or potential new nurturing relationships. We are never even fully available to take care of whatever positive relationships we already have.

- c. Over time, we cease to laugh. We stay home alone, not bothering to create or maintain friendships. We feel nothing we do is meaningful because we've forgotten our own special strengths. We fail to see what we have to offer. We say goodbye to our dreams. In fact, we forget to dream. We become bogged down in the daily grind of pursuing fulfillment through temporary, unsatisfying interactions, while avoiding anything that might feed our soul.
- d. We can use these feelings as a red flag that it is time to do some self-study and dig into ourselves: What are our gifts and talents? What do we love to do? What feels meaningful to us? What is holding us back? We can volunteer our time in service to others, reconnecting to that feeling of personal pride and satisfaction that comes from helping others. At the same time we can also recognize this malaise in others and help them to wake up to their own potential. We remove the cloak of *Raga* and live out of our true nature.

#### 4. *Niyati Kanchuka*.

Here *Paramshiva* limits its creative power (*Shakti*).

- a. As individual, limited forms we are bound by the laws of cause and effect.<sup>39</sup> We can't just wish something into existence. We have to work for it, usually having to make choices as to which goals we have the time and resources to pursue, and which goals we must abandon.
- b. Also, we can't see all the ramifications of choices we make, situations we "create." We may think we've limited the damage of something we've said or done, but we can't really know that. The rumor we spread, in passing and in order to fit in to our gossipy group, could cost somebody a job, a marriage, a career, or worse.
- b. However, knowing that we must take care in all we say and do is really a blessing. Once we acknowledge that we can't possibly

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<sup>39</sup> *Kashmir Shaivism* (Mishra), at 174–175 *The Splendor of Recognition* at 99.

know the results of everything we do or say, we become more thoughtful about our possible impact on others. We become more careful about our actions because we are aware that we don't know how they will affect others. We begin to be artful, auspicious, in our words and deeds. And, who doesn't want an auspicious person as a friend?

5. *Kala Kanchuka.*

Here *Paramshiva* limits its timelessness, its eternal presence (*Shiva*).

- a. We in our human form feel controlled by time. This is because our time on the planet is in fact limited. We tend to view things linearly. As a result, we tend to judge events from that viewpoint; how does what is happening now fit into my view of the future?
- b. When we think this way, we are likely to be significantly affected by problems that arise. For example, if we lose a job or a relationship, we are devastated. We think that the future looks empty. In reality, these feelings often only last a few days, maybe longer, until we are offered a new job that far better fits our strengths, or we meet another delightful person to date.
- c. In Chapter 36 of *Finding the Midline* I tell the story about how my wonderful father-in-law used to tell me after every lousy event that: "fifty years from now you'll never know the difference." He was absolutely correct.<sup>40</sup>

Knowing about the cloaks of the *Kanchukas* helps us build the emotional resiliency needed to work through life's challenges on our way to a life of well-being. We literally turn "lemons into lemonade" by searching for ways to accomplish important tasks seemingly beyond our individual power to accomplish. We study about things that make us curious, increasing our knowledge. We learn to balance our natural desires and aversions so that they don't interfere with the process of refining ourselves. We learn how to see the connections between people, events, and circumstances, so we can better gauge the potential ramifications of our words and actions. We make optimal use of our time, keeping the ups and downs of life in perspective.

C. The *Malas*.

As if the five cloaks of the *Kanchukas* weren't enough, there are additional energies we should be aware of. These energies are called the *Malas* and, while not *Tattvas*, are discussed here because they are energies that arise out of the

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<sup>40</sup> *Finding the Midline*, at 126.

limitations imposed on us as we manifest in the world as unique, diverse manifestations of *Paramshiva*.

The *Malas* are mentioned in the *Pratyabhijnahrdyam* (loosely: “recognition of our Divine essence”), an 11<sup>th</sup> Century Kashmir Shaivite sacred text. Sutra 9 states: “*cidvat tac chakt-samkocat malavrtah samsari*” (“That which is full of Consciousness, due to contraction of its powers, becomes a transmigratory soul, covered by impurities.”)<sup>41</sup> This sutra introduces us to the concept of the *Malas*. The text tells us that the *Malas* are like a dust or film covering our hearts; preventing us from seeing the connection we all share as Spirit.

As we study the *Malas*, notice how they are like computer programs installed in us when we are born and which run patterns of thought and behavior that can interfere with the emotional resilience we must have in order to maximize our ability to create a life of well-being.

1. *Anava Mala*.

The first of the three *Malas* is *Anava Mala*. This *Mala* gets its name from the word *Anu*, a particle. This represents how the Divine creates particles of itself – us.<sup>42</sup> In this process we become a “limited soul.”<sup>43</sup>

- a. Sensing this limitation, we live with a tendency towards feeling inadequate, incomplete, unworthy, imperfect, and incapable. These ways of seeing ourselves arise out of the illusion that we are separate from others and from Supreme Consciousness. This feeling is necessary in order for Supreme Consciousness to “step down” into the many diverse forms in our world.<sup>44</sup> These feelings of inadequacy prevent us from feeling the Divine impulse to fully know ourselves, *Ichha Shakti*.<sup>45</sup>
- b. *Anava Mala* causes us to identify with our own individual self, instead of Supreme Consciousness. While it is critical to creating a life of well-being that we identify and embrace our particular strengths and other attributes, we make the mistake of thinking that these are all we are. We forget that there is a bigger picture; that we are all connected to each other’s well-being by virtue of being

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<sup>41</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 179.

<sup>42</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 98.

<sup>43</sup> *Kashmir Shaivism* (Mishra), at 284.

<sup>44</sup> *Kashmir Shaivism* (Mishra), at 284–285.

<sup>45</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 182.

nothing other than manifestations of the Divine in intentionally diverse forms. We are each a vital component of “the bigger picture.” These feelings generate anxiety because concealed within us is the knowledge that we are a manifestation of Spirit, desiring to reconnect, or merge, with Supreme Consciousness once again.<sup>46</sup>

- c. In my book *Finding the Midline* I describe how this *Mala* can appear as a lack of self-esteem that gets in the way of creating a life of well-being. I give an example of being invited to a party of yoga teachers. I felt a lack of confidence around the people who would be attending and so I almost said “no” to the invitation. Just in time I realized that whatever feelings of inadequacy I felt, this was a group of people I enjoyed and who seemed to enjoy me. I had forgotten about how *Anava Mala* can tempt us into all sorts of feelings such as I describe here, forming patterns of thought and behavior that prevent us from creating the type of life we want.<sup>47</sup>
- d. When we act under the influence of *Anava Mala*, our feelings of inadequacy can block us from recognizing and experiencing positive emotion and nurturing relationships. We won’t be as attuned to opportunities to engage in meaningful pursuits because we don’t think our efforts are of any worth. Fortunately, meditation is a wonderful way for our mind to slow down and allow us to reconnect to our sense of worth, leading us back on the path to a life of well-being.

## 2. *Mayiya Mala*.

The second *Mala* is *Mayiya Mala*. This name refers to the illusion of difference. We look at diversity not as an expression of Supreme Consciousness in other forms, but as something “other,” not us.

- a. This feeling of difference arises because as manifested human beings we are in fact different from each other in many ways. We are different in terms of appearance, strengths, gifts, talents, and abilities. We are different in terms of personalities, upbringing, race, creed, gender preferences, and in so many other ways. This is the consequence of Supreme Consciousness choosing to experience the world differently through each of us.
- b. While *Anava Mala* gives rise to feelings of separation because of our sense of inadequacy or lack of self-worth, *Mayiya Mala* gives

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<sup>46</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 182–183.

<sup>47</sup> *Finding the Midline*, at 130–132.

rise to separation because we become distracted by difference. We forget that the reason we have differences in the first place is so that God can experience itself fully. We forget our attribute of *Jnana Shakti*—the power of knowledge; the knowledge that it is this very diversity in our world that offers us connection to Supreme Consciousness.

- c. We begin to view the world from this viewpoint of difference, using ourselves as the measuring stick. We only see difference and develop habits of focusing only on difference. We think the world is defined by us, and we then view the world solely on how each person, object, or situation compares to us.<sup>48</sup> For example, as this *Mala* relates to relationships, instead of looking at others with interest and as part of a greater whole to which we seek to contribute, we instead spend our energy evaluating how we stack up with each person in comparison. We live in a constant state of competition, judging others and ourselves in terms of whatever set of standards we've developed.<sup>49</sup>
- d. With such an attitude we end up labeling everything “good” or “bad,” “pro” or con,” “right” or “wrong,” and other similar conclusions, all based on how we measure persons or events in comparison to us. We can become jealous, envious, and even angry.
- e. It doesn't take much imagination to see how this attitude of viewing the world as if it revolved around us can cause havoc in terms of creating a life of well-being. Who wants to spend time with such a judging person? This viewpoint distracts our attention from the potential for experiencing positive emotions, finding flow, identifying opportunities for doing something meaningful, or even taking time to undertake interesting tasks.

Meditation and other mindfulness practices give our mind the opportunity to remember our connection to each other. We then remember that diversity is an opportunity to explore potential new opportunities for a rich life experience.

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<sup>48</sup> See, generally, *Kashmir Shaivism* (Mishra), at 288.

<sup>49</sup> *Finding the Midline*, at 130–132.

3. *Karma Mala*.

The third *Mala* is *Karma Mala*. *Karma* in this context refers to action or doing that arises from motivations that are self-centered as opposed to benevolent.

- a. We voluntarily choose to act in order to satisfy our sense of inadequacy (*Anava Mala*), or from a sense of ego associated with our notion of difference (*Mayiya Mala*). Because this type of action is motivated by our desire to serve ourselves, this *Mala* is a limitation on our power of *Kriya Shakti*, action taken in furtherance of something other than just ourselves.<sup>50</sup>
- e. This *Mala* limits our ability to recognize opportunities to provide meaning in the world. It does this by causing us to withdraw from contact with society or, conversely, engage in actions seeking to force our will upon others. Our drive to act blinds us to whatever needs and desires others might have.
- f. Patterns of thought and behavior caused by influence of the *Malas* limit our ability to fully appreciate the wonder of the diversity in our world. We miss opportunities to experience positive emotions, engage in meaningful activities, and develop nurturing relationships. These objectives require a focus outward for connection as opposed to feeding an internal need to compete and judge.

In *Finding the Midline* I write about how knowledge of these *Malas* and their effect on us can be channeled and useful. Feelings of unworthiness can inspire us to engage in meaningful activities if for no other reason than to prove we are worthy. This is a form of “fake it until you make it.” Feeling different from others can cause us to look for ways to connect, increasing the depth and number of nurturing relationships in our lives.<sup>51</sup>

## V. Conclusion

Knowledge of the *Kanchukas* helps us remember that part of the gift of life is the opportunity to explore the world and seek out where Spirit is concealed. We learn to better accept ourselves, recognizing we can't do everything, or know everything. We are aware that our feelings of envy or jealousy are red flags indicating we've forgotten our own particular strengths. They are reminders that we've forgotten the fullness of heart that arises when we offer our strengths in service, or simply for the fun of it. We are more

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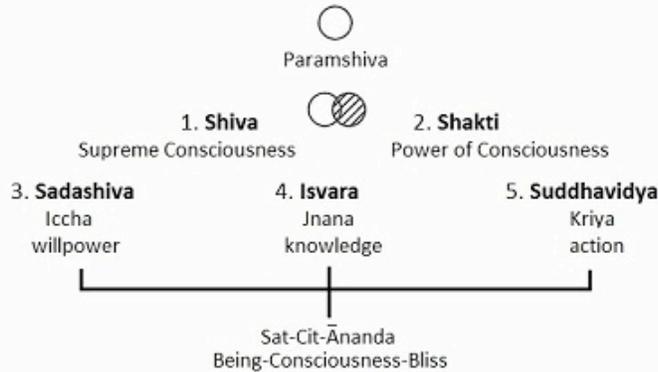
<sup>50</sup> *The Splendor of Recognition*, at 186; *Kashmir Shaivism* (Mishra), at 289.

<sup>51</sup> *Finding the Midline*, at 130–132.

mindful about the implications of what we do or don't say or do. We begin to look at events with a long-term perspective.

We now turn to the *Tattvas* of the material or “Physical” world. This is our world.

## The 36 Tattvas of Tantric Cosmology Chart



Psychical Tattvas

### Microcosmic Consciousness

6. **Māyā** - differentiating power of the universe

5 Kanchukas - Cloaks

7. **Kalā** - limits omnipotence (Kriya), creates limited agency or the capacity to act

8. **Vidya** - limits omniscience (Jnana) creates limited knowledge

9. **Raga** - limits fullness of heart; (Iccha) creates desire and longing to be full again

10. **Niyati** - limits omnipresence freedom of creative power and expression (Shakti) creates fabric of space, and the energetic tapestry of causality

11. **Kāla** - limits eternal awareness (Shiva) creates time, and the sense of sequential awareness

Physical Tattvas

### The Relative World

