

# **PERFECT NONDUALISM:**

**The Philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism**

**(from *The Mystic's Vision*, Vol. I**

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## Perfect Nondualism—Part One

The people of India call their indigenous religion, ‘the eternal religion’ (*Sanatana Dharma*). It existed even before the Aryan incursion, before the Vedas. From the Vedas came the philosophy of *Vedanta*, ‘the end of the Vedas’, embodied in the *Upanishads*. The philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, or Nondual Vedanta, was beautifully expressed in the *Upanishads*, written by some nameless sages perhaps a thousand years before the Current Era. Buddhist seers of later centuries wrote their own scriptural texts explaining an identical vision. Then, the great medieval revitalizer of Nondual philosophy, Shankaracharya (6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E.), following in the *Upanishadic* tradition, set forth in very explicit terms the nature of the One without a second.

Using the ancient terminology, Shankara spoke of the ultimate reality as *Brahman*. *Brahman* is ‘the One’ of Platonism, ‘the Godhead’ of Christian theology. *Ishvara* is Platonism’s *Nous* (the Divine Mind), and Christian theology’s ‘God’. *Brahman* and *Ishvara* are not the same; they differ in exactly the same ways that ‘the One’ and ‘*Nous*’ differ in Platonism, and as ‘the Godhead’ and ‘God’ differ in Christian theology. In the Advaita Vedanta of the *Upanishads* as well as in the philosophy of Shankara, *Ishvara* is regarded as the Lord and ruler of Maya and its world-appearance, including all souls. *Brahman* is the conscious Ground and Source, while *Ishvara* serves an executive and creative function. *Ishvara* can be prayed to, worshipped, envisualized, and realized; *Brahman*, however, is formless and absolute, far beyond human relationship, though It is the transcendent Source and Foundation of all.

Shankara asserted that the phenomenal world produced by *Ishvara*’s *maya* was *mithya*, “illusory” or “unreal”. The phenomenal universe, said Shankaracharya, is an *adhyasa*, a “superimposition”, upon *Brahman*. This statement is not extraordinary in itself, but what is extraordinary about Shankara’s philosophy is that he stated that the superimposition of the world upon *Brahman* was an act of *Ishvara*’s *Maya* produced through the individual minds of those perceiving the world. For Shankara, “*Brahman* remains eternally infinite and unchanged. It is not transformed into this universe. It simply *appears* as this universe to us, in our ignorance. We superimpose the apparent world upon *Brahman*, just as we sometimes superimpose a snake upon a coil of rope.”<sup>1</sup> According to Shankara, “There is no reality independent of our knowing minds.” “The apparent world,” he said, “is caused by our imagination, our ignorance. It is not real. It is like seeing the snake in the rope. It is like a passing dream.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, according to

Shankara, there is no objective world; there is only the world that exists in our minds and that we individually invent.<sup>3</sup>

Shankara, following in the tradition of his *paramguru* (his guru's guru), Gaudapada, taught that only Brahman exists, and that the universally perceived phenomena of 'the world' appear, not because they are 'created' by God, but rather because we humans, while actually perceiving only *Brahman*, project, or "superimpose" names and forms upon that invisible substratum by the power of *maya*. He interpreted God's power of *Maya* (illusion) to be, not God's power to 'create' an illusory objective universe, but a power placed by God within the human soul to project, or imagine, a phenomenal world where there is truly only Brahman, much as one might imagine a snake where there is actually a rope, or a body of water where there is only a dry desert.

Thus, while in the traditional philosophy of Vedanta, supported by the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the world is represented as an illusory, but objective, phenomenon produced by God, Shankara's 'doctrine of superimposition' asserts that the perceived universe is merely an imaginary projection by the individual mind or soul of a world of objects superimposed upon the substrate of *Brahman*—in other words, that it is a subjective illusion that takes place solely in the human mind, or individual *jiva*.

It is clear, however, that Shankara could not have anticipated the eventual development of evolutionary theory, which put a serious crimp in his theory of superimposition. In Shankara's time no one even imagined that humanity had *evolved* over time from more primitive species. Insofar as Shankara and his contemporaries knew, humans had existed forever; and had always been around to imagine a world. Like the author of *Genesis*, he was ignorant of the fact that, prior to around two and a half million years ago, there were no humans. And if the world could only be 'imagined' by a human being, then not even an imaginary world existed prior to the time empirically determined to be the time when the lower animal species evolved to the human species. If the present evidence for the evolutionary history of the universe—from its beginning to the development of *homo sapiens*, including astronomical observations, geological strata, fossils, etc.—indicates an actual historical reality, then it tells of a world that never existed, since there was no one (a human) around at that time to imagine it.

If Shankara's theory were correct, it would mean that we, as well as the first humans, imagined a world whose past stretched far beyond its original imagining. We imagined the geological strata that told of a more ancient past, and we

imagined a universe where the light from galaxies distant in time told, not of an objective reality, but of a merely imagined past. The history of our universe, according to Shankara, never occurred—except in the minds of the first humans, i.e., all the empirical evidence for the antiquity of the world was simply deceptive and illusory.

In recent years, a similar misconception arose when a group of Jews and Christians banding together under the label “Young Earth Creationism”, professed to believe in a literal interpretation of the Biblical book of *Genesis*, asserting that the universe, earth, and all life was actually created by God between 5700 and 10,000 years ago in six 24-hour days, despite the empirically based evidence that the universe began some 13.7 billion years ago, the earth about 4.5 billion years ago, and intelligent life on earth around 2.5 million years ago. They interpreted the account given in the Bible as literal, believing that it was infallibly and necessarily true. In fact, prior to around 1800 A.D., when the empirical method of science first began to be regarded respectfully, nearly everyone interpreted the Bible literally, like these “Young Earth Creationists”. And a 2011 Gallup survey reports that 30% of U.S. adults still do.

When these ‘Young Earth Creationists’ were confronted with the cosmological and geological evidence for a much more ancient past, they countered that the universe and the earth were created around 6000 years ago with all the false indications of an older cosmological and geological past built into it, even though that past never actually occurred! In other words, the evidence for a more ancient universe and planet earth was divinely fabricated. However, this implied a devious and deceitful Creator God, which ultimately could not be considered as acceptable.

And so, as it turns out, it is not so easy to explain away empirical evidence. We are forced to choose between a speculative metaphysical theory and the evidence of our reason and senses. Is there really a world out there or does it exist only in our consciousness of it? Another way of thinking about this question is to ask: ‘Did the one Divine Mind create this illusory universe around 14 billion years ago, or is it created independently by each of us daily in our own conscious minds?’ This is a question which each of us must answer for ourselves. What do *you* think?

A second objection to Shankara’s theory arose as well. His terminology was regarded as unfortunate by many, as it seemed to imply a *real* duality between God and the world. If there is something superimposed, some reasoned, it must be something *other* than Brahman.

Shankara, in his many writings, frequently differentiated between Brahman, the eternal Self, and Maya's product, the world, simply in order to guide the earnest seeker away from attention to the transient appearance (the phenomenal world), and toward the eternal Reality (the Self). He never intended to imply, however, that the transient appearance was anything but Brahman. Here, let him explain in his own words:

Brahman is the Reality, the one Existence. Because of the ignorance of our human minds, the universe seems to be composed of diverse forms; but it is Brahman alone. ... Apart from Brahman, the universe does not exist. There is nothing beside Him. It has no separate existence, apart from its Ground.

And again:

The universe is truly Brahman, for that which is superimposed has no separate existence from its substratum. Whatever a deluded person perceives through mistake is Brahman and Brahman alone. The silver imagined in mother-of-pearl is really mother-of-pearl. The name, "universe", is superimposed on Brahman; what we call "the universe" is [really] nothing but Brahman.<sup>4</sup>

While Shankara never intended to imply by the use of his word, "superimposition", that there was something other than Brahman superimposed on Brahman, that unfortunately, is what arises in the minds of some when they hear this word, "superimposition". Some objected vigorously to his terminology. For example, a 13<sup>th</sup> century Maharashtrian saint, by the name of Jnaneshvar, objected to the notion of superimposition as an implication of duality, and attempted to clarify the doctrine of Nonduality in the following passage from his book, *Amritanubhav*, "The Nectar of Mystical Experience":

When it is always only the one pure Consciousness seeing itself, why postulate the necessity of a superimposition? Does one superimpose the sparkle on a jewel? Does gold need to superimpose shininess on itself?<sup>5</sup> A lamp that is lit does not need the superimposition of light; it is resplendent with light. Likewise, the one pure Consciousness is resplendent with radiance. Therefore, without obligation to anything else, He easily perceives Himself.<sup>6</sup>

... Whatever form appears, appears because of Him. There is nothing here but the Self. It is the gold itself which shines in the form of a necklace or a coin; they, themselves, are nothing but gold. In the current of the river or the waves of the sea, there is nothing but water. Similarly, in the universe, nothing exists or is brought into existence that is other than the Self. Whether appearing as the seen, or perceiving as the seer, nothing else exists besides the Self.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps it is impossible to adequately express in words the differentiation between the eternal Consciousness and its creative Energy without making it appear that they are two separate things. This would seem to be the case, since every time one mystic gives expression to his vision, another mystic takes exception to the way it is described, and tries his own hand at it, only to have another mystic come along somewhere down the line who takes issue with *his* terminology. In any case, Shankara's writings gave rise to many misunderstandings, and to clear up some of these misunderstandings of terminology, some mystics living in the northern state of Kashmir, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E., including a seer named Vasugupta (ca. 950 C.E.), devised their own interpretation of the philosophy of Nondualism, which they called *Kashmir Shaivism*.

Legend tells that Vasugupta had a dream in which Lord Shiva told him the whereabouts of a large rock on which Shiva himself had inscribed some teachings in the form of brief aphorisms regarding the nature of God, the soul, and the universe. The inscriptions were copied from the rock by Vasugupta and later became known as the *Shiva Sutras*. Thus, like many other religious traditions, Kashmir Shaivism claims Divine revelation as its source. Such revealed scriptures are called *agamas* by those who embrace this tradition. Other *agamas*, besides the *Shiva Sutras*, are the *Malini-vijaya*, the *Vijnana-bhairava*, and the *Rudra-yamala*. There are also some subsidiary scriptures which explain the *agamas*; these are called *spandas*, or *spanda-karikas*, which formulate doctrine. Then there are the philosophical works which attempt to present the teachings in a logical and ordered form; these are the *Pratyabijna shastras*. Some of these are *Shiva-drshti* by Somananda (ca. 875-925 C.E.), *Ishvara-pratyabijna* and *Shivastotravali* by Utpaladeva (ca. 900-950 C.E.), and *Pratyabijna-hridayam* by Kshemaraj (10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> centuries). The philosophy expressed in these scriptures of Kashmir Shaivism also came to be known as *Pratyabijna Darshana*, “The Philosophy of Recognition”; and also as *Purna Advaita*, or “Perfect Nondualism”.

The ultimate Reality, according to Kashmir Shaivism, is *Paramashiva*, “the Supreme Shiva”. This is, of course, synonymous with *Parabrahman*, “The

Supreme Brahman” of Vedanta. Indeed, in all cases, there is no difference whatever between the vision of Vedanta and that of Kashmir Shaivism, except for the differences in terminology. For example, the Advaita Vedanta of Shankara holds that it is Brahman’s Power of Illusion (*Maya*) that produces the world-appearance; and Kashmir Shaivism says that Paramashiva “appears” as the world through His Creative Power (*Shakti*). Shankara says the universe is a “superimposition” upon Brahman; Kashmir Shaivism says the universe is simply Paramashiva appearing as form. There is not the slightest difference between them except for their distinct individual terminologies. It is commonly found in this world that isolated groups of people with a common religious tradition tend to regard their own way of saying things to be more correct than the way some other people of another tradition may say it. The reality is that language, by its very nature, is imprecise; and it is only the sage who knows the Truth by experiencing It directly who may really be said to know the Truth.

The sages of Kashmir Shaivism say that Paramashiva is the one Reality; all is taking place within Him. But He remains unchanged and unmoved by all this multiplicity and apparent change. He is the transcendent Totality, and so He remains the same, no matter what. To Him, there is only the pure sky of Consciousness and Bliss. He remains awake to His oneness always, while the “creation” comes and goes. It is breathed out by Him and breathed in again, in an ever-recurring cycle. It is manifested, and then re-absorbed back into Him. This emanation is called *abhasa*, a “shining forth”. Then, when it is withdrawn again, that is called *pralaya*. The complete cycle is a *kalpa*—which amounts to 4 billion, 320 million years of Earth-time. This, however, would seem to be contradicted by the empirical fact that the last cycle of universal manifestation, known as ‘the Big Bang’, occurred nearly fourteen billion years ago.

According to the sages of Kashmir Shaivism, a *kalpa* begins with a *spanda* (what in more recent times is regarded as the impetus to “the Big Bang”). *Spanda* is the first movement of will, the initial flutter or throb of movement in the Divine Will, or *Shakti*. As for the question, “Why does He create at all?” the answer given by the Kashmir Shaivites is the same as that given by the Vedantists: “It is simply His nature to do so.” It is His innate nature to breathe forth the universe of multiplicity; and yet, at the same time, it is asserted that He manifests the universe of His own free will, as a play, or sport. In fact, the very first Sutra of the *Pratyabijna-hridayam* says that “It is the divine Consciousness alone, luminous, absolute, and free-willed, that flashes forth in the form of the numerous worlds.”

The Pratyabijna philosophers say that, from *spanda* comes the bifurcation into *aham* and *idam*, subject and object. While Kapila's Sankhya spoke of these two aspects of the One as Purusha and Prakrti, and Vedanta speaks of these two as Brahman and Maya, Kashmir Shaivism speaks of them as *prakasha* and *vimarsha*. *Prakasha* is the conscious light, the witness-Consciousness, the "subject" aspect of Paramashiva. *Vimarsha* is Its power of self-manifestation, i.e., the "object" aspect of Paramashiva. Thus, inherent in the process of manifestation is this Self-division of Paramashiva into conscious subject and phenomenal object; from this initial polarity, all other dualities, including manifold souls, come into being. And, according to the Kashmir Shaivite philosophy, while there is never anything but Paramashiva, the souls thus created by this Self-division experience a limitation of their originally unlimited powers. As stated in the *Pratyabijna-hridayam* of Kshemaraj, "Consciousness Itself, descending from Its universal state, becomes the limited consciousness of man, through the process of contraction. Then, because of this contraction, the universal Consciousness becomes an ordinary human being, subject to limitations."

The truth, of course, is that the Lord, the one Supreme Consciousness, is never subject to limitations. He lives in absolute freedom. He is all-pervading and all-knowing. By His Power, He can do whatever He likes. And so, in order to become many and play within the (imaginary) multiplicity, which is the universe, He sheds His undifferentiated state of Unity, becomes divided as subject and object, and accepts the subsequent differences. His various powers of will, knowledge and action then appear to have shrunk, though this is not really so. This limited state is the state of ordinary people, subject to limitations, such as you and me.

When Shiva's *Shakti* manifests as individual conscious entities, the one Consciousness *appears* to be bound by Its own Self-imposed limitations; Its primal powers of omniscience, perfection, everlastingness and all-pervasiveness are then experienced in a reduced condition. Although omniscient, He knows only a few things; though omnipotent, He feels helpless and acts effectively only in a small sphere. The master of perfect Bliss, He is ensnared in pleasure and pain, attachment and aversion. The eternal Being cries aloud from fear of death, regarding Himself as mortal. Pervading all space and form, He grieves because He is tied to a particular place and a particular form. This is the condition of all creatures whose *Shakti* is reduced, and who are caught in the transmigratory cycle. Again, quoting from the *Pratyabijna-hridayam*: "To be a transmigratory being, one needs only to be deluded by one's own *Shakti*."

It is because Shiva, the Self, has become involved in His own Shakti—that is, manifested in form—that He finds Himself in the state of “an ordinary being, subject to limitations.” But we must see that it is His sport to do so. Without such an “involution”, there could be no evolution. The evolution, or unwinding, of a watch spring could not occur unless there is first an involution of the watch spring created by the winding of the watch. A log burns, i.e., evolves into energy, only because energy, in the form of sunlight, water, and soil, has become involuted in the form of the log of wood. Evolution is the reverse transmutation of an effect into its cause. Paramashiva, or Brahman, or Chit-Shakti, has “involved” Himself in the form of gross matter, and through the human form, must “evolve” back to Himself.

It is only in the human form that one is able to choose to take the evolutionary path back to the Source, because of the development of mind. It is the mind that is capable of development toward intelligence, concentration, meditation, and, finally absorption in pure Consciousness. This is evolution. It is also known as “Liberation”, as it is the freeing of oneself from identification with the body and the activity of the mind, and thus from rebirth. Liberation, or *moksha*, is freedom from the vicious cycle of births and deaths which from the beginning of creation are whirling a soul around. In fact, life is not worthy of the name, “life”, as it is really no more than a series of limitations, the very nature of which pinches the soul and makes it hanker after something real, something permanent, beyond the pale of sensual pleasures and pains, something not clouded with the gloomy, lusty, desires, which are never quenched and are never satiable. Real “life” is that for which the soul yearns with an incessant longing, though not knowing where and how it is to be obtained. Still, it feels with an inborn conviction the existence of a greater life, a greater Self, as a tangible reality. Everyone yearns for it, because life, eternal life, is the soul’s very nature.

The astute student will recognize the aforementioned doctrines of Kashmir Shaivism as quite consistent with the precepts of Vedanta. The ultimate goal of the “bound” soul is the knowledge of the Self, which constitutes “liberation” from the wheel of transmigration. This is the teaching of both Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism (and Buddhism as well), revealing once again their undeviatingly common perspective. But it is only natural that all philosophies stemming from real “mystical” experience will find agreement in nearly all their conceptual elements. Listen, for example, to what is said in the *Ishvara Pratyabijna-vimarshini* of Abhinavagupta (ca. 950-1000 C.E.):

The knowledge of the identity of the soul (*jiva*) and God (*Shiva*), which has been proclaimed in the scriptures, constitutes liberation; lack of this knowledge constitutes bondage.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, it is ignorance of our true nature that binds us, and nothing else. In fact, it is clear that we have never been actually bound. This is brought out in the *Tripura rahasya*, attributed to Dattatreya, which states:

Though, in reality, there is no bondage, the individual is in bondage as long as there exists the feeling of limitation in him. ... In fact, there has never been any veiling or covering anywhere in Reality. No one has ever been in bondage. Please show me where such a bondage could be. Besides these two false beliefs—that there is such a thing as bondage, and that there is such a thing as mind—there is no bondage for anyone anywhere.<sup>9</sup>

Both Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism recognize the possibility of *jivanmukta*, liberation from the wheel of transmigration while still living in the body. However, it is not merely the mystical experience of Unity which constitutes this self-liberation; one must also assimilate the knowledge thus acquired into one's everyday consciousness and make the knowledge of the Self an ever-present awareness. Here is the statement of this ultimate liberation from the *Pratyabijna-hridayam*:

Final realization is possible only when the complete nature of the Self is realized. Though there might be release after death, there can be no release in life unless the universal Self is grasped through the intellect. Indeed, the equanimity in the experience of worldly enjoyment and in the experience of Unity is what truly constitutes the liberation of the soul, while living. ... The individual who identifies with the Self and regards the universe to be a sport and is always united with it, is undoubtedly liberated in this life.<sup>10</sup>

And this is reiterated in the *Spanda-karika*:

This entire universe is a sport of universal Consciousness. He who is constantly aware of this truth is liberated in this life, without doubt.<sup>11</sup>

## Perfect Nondualism—Part Two

Long before the emergence of Kashmir Shaivism, the religion of devotion to the one ultimate Reality as *Shiva* was widespread in India. Scholars recognize images of Shiva from antiquity going as far back as the Harappan civilization and the civilization of Mohenjo-daro (ca. 2500 BCE). Then, after the Aryan incursion around 2000 BCE, the priest-authors of the Vedas popularized the names of *Brahman* and *Vishnu* as the deity. Later, Kapila (ca. 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE) introduced the philosophy of Sankhya, which referred to the universal conscious Spirit as *Purusha*. Then, about five centuries later, we find the Svetasvatara Upanishad (400-200 BCE) first extolling the Divine as the Vedic *Brahman*, then as the indigenous *Shiva*, and then as the *Purusha* of Sankhya philosophy, all in the same work—thereby helping to spread the understanding that God is one, though referred to by many names. In fact, much of the theology succinctly expressed in this early devotional Upanishad can later be found in the teachings of Kashmir Shaivism—especially the repeated declaration that there is *nothing else* here but God. This should not be surprising, however, since all those who are graced with the vision of the divine Self, naturally speak of it in very much the same way.

In studying the scriptures of Kashmir Shaivism, we can't help recognizing that, while the Kashmiri sages who lived in the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> centuries did not possess our modern understanding of the natural world, their spiritual vision nonetheless possessed a universal validity. At the same time, the writings of these few mystics living in this common time and place—Vasugupta, Somananda, Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta, and Kshemaraj—are distinctly personal expressions of their own unique experience and proclivities and must not be regarded as a single monolithic entity called 'Kashmir Shaivism'.

The philosophies of Advaita Vedanta and of Kashmir Shaivism both appeal strongly to our spiritual instincts, but we must ask 'which of these two philosophies—Shankara's version of Advaita Vedanta or Kashmir Shaivism—is seen to be validated in the actual experience of the inner revelation of the Self? When the truth is revealed, is the universe and all that's in it seen to be a mere mental illusion, or is all seen to be the very manifestation of God?' I can only speak for my own 'mystical' experience, in which the very first words from my mouth were "O my God, even this body is Thine own!" In that experience, my consciousness was the Consciousness of God, and 'I' was seen to be in the clouds and in the earth; 'I' was realized to be the life-pulse of all creatures, the resounding bells of inner joy and the fiery intensity of song that bursts from the human heart. Everything—even this being I call 'I'—is made of God. All was seen to be an

endless continuum of divine Being; and I experienced that infinite Consciousness as my own. The universe is arguably an illusion, a sequence of appearances, formed at the subatomic level by electromagnetic impulses; but the underlying cause and substance of these electromagnetic impulses is the divine Consciousness that is God.

I saw, in my spiritual vision, that it is the small egoic sense, the personal ‘I’, that creates the interior illusion of duality, that invents the mental opposites of I and Thou, love and hatred, peace and unrest, happiness and sorrow, while in truth there is only the one undivided reality. I saw that the Creator breathes forth the vast universe and then withdraws it again in a repetitive cycle of becoming and ending, and that all things move together of one will in an intricately coordinated universe. In retrospect, my own experience <sup>1</sup> seems to fit more comfortably into the view expounded by the Kashmir Shaivite philosophers than into Shankara’s version. And my experience of the eternal Self occurred decades before I even heard of Kashmir Shaivism. All in all, the precepts of the Kashmir Shaivite philosophers seem to me more representative of the actual experience of the Self than Shankara’s.

I also find the Kashmir Shaivite description of the role of Grace in one’s spiritual *sadhana* to fit more accurately with my own experience. *Sadhana* is the period of one’s spiritual journey in search of the Self. And, in many ways, the *sadhana* of Kashmir Shaivism is similar to the *sadhana* of Vedanta: it consists of self-effort and Grace. Self-effort is in the form of learning about the Self, contemplating the knowledge gained, and meditating on the Self. It is a self-effort toward Consciousness; but Self-realization comes of Grace. There is nothing to be done to receive it, but to be true to the Self, to give our purified hearts to the communion with God within. In this way, we prepare ourselves for Grace.

Every great spiritual teacher, including Jesus, taught that one realizes God through His Grace alone. This may be verified in the Christian scriptures; for example, when Jesus was asked by some of his disciples, “Who, then, can enter the kingdom of God? (in other words, “Who can realize the Self?”),” Jesus replied, “For man it is impossible; but for God all things are possible.” <sup>2</sup> He was saying, in other words, ‘Don’t ask me how to know God. It can’t be done by you or me or anyone! It is God Himself who makes Himself known. Only He has the power to reveal Himself.’ What we can do is to open our hearts and minds, our souls, to receive the light of His Grace; and this alone is the skill, the art, if you will, that we must acquire. The giving of His gifts is entirely in His hands. If anyone can dispute this

of his own experience and has the power to experience the Self at his own whim and convenience, I have yet to hear of such a person.

The philosophers and sages of Kashmir Shaivism hold exactly this same view; furthermore, they hold that this Grace is absolutely undetermined and unconditioned. As it is stated in the *Tantraloka* of Abhinavagupta: “Divine Grace leads the individual to the path of spiritual realization. It is the only cause of Self-realization and is independent of human effort.” If it were dependent upon some conditions, it would not be absolute and independent Grace. Grace is the uncaused Cause of the soul’s release. What appears at first glance to be a condition of Grace, is, in reality, a consequence of it. For example, devotion, which may seem to bring Grace, is, in fact, the result or gift of Grace. In the Kashmir Shaivite tradition, the Absolute is said to carry on the sport of self-bondage and self-release of His own free will; and the postulation of conditions or qualifications would be against that doctrine of free will. This position is made clear in the *Malini Vijaya-vartika*:

The learned men of all times always hold that the descent of grace does not have any cause or condition but depends entirely on the free will of the Lord.

And, again, in the *Paramartha Sara*:

Throughout all these forms, it is the Lord who illuminates His own nature. In reality, there is no other cause of these manifestations except His freedom, which alone gives rise to both worldly enjoyment and Self-realization.

Here, the question may arise that if Divine Grace has no regard for the merit and demerit of the recipients, does it not amount to an act of partiality on the part of God? How is it that He favors some individuals by bestowing His Grace and disfavors others by keeping it away from them? And the answer is that Grace is operative all the time for all individuals. The difference in the descent of Grace is really the differences in the receptivity of the individual souls, each of whom evolves at his own unique pace. Moreover, this problem does not have much significance in the Nondualist philosophies of Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism; because it is the Absolute Himself who appears first as bound, and then as liberated, owing to His own free will. He cannot be accused of partiality, since it is only Himself whom He favors or rejects.

As for self-effort, this is accomplished by our inherent power of will. Shakti, the Divine power of will, exists in us in a limited form. This will, which we possess, is the faculty by which a person decides upon and initiates action. Fickleness of mind flutters and weakens the will power; and conversely, a strong desire and one-pointed longing strengthens it. But too many desires and hankerings after many objects, and aimless running about in pursuit of sense-pleasures dissipates the creative energy, the will power. As one clear-minded sage said, “A definite purpose of action, backed by a strong will, is a sure way to success in any endeavor. Therefore, minimize your desires, make a deliberate choice, and focus the whole energy of your will power in that particular direction, and you will never miss your goal.”

The will of a person may be made to flow in two different, and opposite, directions: outwardly, toward secular worldly goals, or inwardly, toward spiritual goals. If one wishes to concentrate one’s energy toward spiritual goals, then the creative energy, the will, must be diverted from its normal outward-flowing course; by closing all such outlets in the form of worldly desires, one at last attains the state of desirelessness. Then, it is possible to turn the mind inwardly to the Self and attain spiritual knowledge.

It is the desires for worldly objectives that distract one from the attainment of spiritual objectives. But, for one who is established in the pursuit of spiritual goals, worldly gains have little charm, and the necessary duties one must perform in the world take on a spiritual significance. To such a person, every act on the worldly plane is a service to the Lord, in the fulfillment of His will, and a stepping-stone for the upward progress toward spiritual enlightenment.

Therefore, when the objective, or outward, trend of the will is checked, and is given a turn in the opposite direction, the “involved” Shakti begins its evolutionary journey; and, instead of experiencing a poverty of Shakti, a person begins to expand his or her powers, and to feel greater energy, intelligence, increased abilities and an expanded sense of well-being and completeness. Turning in the direction of its source, the mind begins to sense its identity with the Self, the pure and all-perfect Consciousness of the universe. This is the beginning of the evolution from the human to the Divine.

Now, if it were an easy thing to revert the flow of the will from worldly to spiritual objectives, everyone would be able to manage it. But it is not easy. The mind is totally deluded by the amazing and wonderful appearance spread out before it; and, unaware that it is all its own projection, it reaches out eagerly for satisfaction and

pleasure from the ephemeral and empty mirage. Intellectually acquired knowledge helps us to recognize the mirage for what it is—but still, old habits must be overcome. And that is not an easy task. To subdue the habits of nature, instilled by long practice and conviction, to subdue the old outgoing tendencies of the mind, requires great effort. This is known as *tapasya*.

To understand what *tapasya* is, we must understand that it is *Shakti*, the Divine Energy, which manifests as our minds and bodies and their various activities. And, frequently, we expend that Energy in thoughtless and frivolous ways, and thus remain listless and groggy through much of our lives. But, if we could learn to conserve our natural *Shakti*, then we could reap the benefits in the form of greater physical and mental energy, and a clearer awareness of the blissful Self, our eternal Identity. *Tapasya*, which literally means, “making heat,” is the restraint of the outgoing tendency of the mind and senses, which conserves and heats the *Shakti*. The *Shakti*, turned inward, then begins to nourish and invigorate the brain and the whole body, expanding one’s natural powers as well as one’s consciousness.

Here are some of the traditional methods of *tapasya* that help to conserve and evolve the *Shakti* toward its source, *Shiva* (the Self):

- (1) *Mantra repetition*: This conserves the *Shakti* by subduing the wandering mind and the *prana* and focusing the attention on God within.
- (2) *Devotional singing*: This heats the *Shakti* through emotion and elevates the awareness toward God. It is a form of devotional meditation that brings joy and satisfaction to the heart.
- (3) *Concentration of the mind*: By deep thought, attention, study, or meditation, the *Shakti* is concentrated and focused, and the mind becomes subtle and clear.
- (4) *Surrender of the fruits of actions*: This relieves the mind of futile exertions, conserving the *Shakti* and retaining the steadiness of the mind.
- (5) *Eating properly, moderately and regularly*: It is the *Shakti* which is the central regulator of the mind and body; it preserves the heat and cold of the body and distributes the effects of various foods and drinks to the different parts of the body, not only through the bloodstream, but through the nerve currents as well. The choice of a proper, moderate, and regular diet is therefore of great importance.
- (6) *Continence*: When the *Shakti* has been given an evolutionary turn and begins to flow inward and upward instead of outward through the senses, there is an accumulation of heat in the region near the base of the spine. It is there the *Shakti* gathers and creates the heat which causes it to rise. Much of that heat is transferred to the sexual glands, causing an increase in stimulation there. If one allows that energy to be expended frivolously in sexual indulgence, one loses a

great portion of one's *Shakti*. But if it is conserved, it rises, and is absorbed into the body and brain, resulting in greater bodily vigor and luster, as well as greater mental power. This is a practice recommended for *brahmacharis* or *sannyasins* (monks). Married men and women, of course, are exempt from this kind of *tapasya*; for such as these, normal moderation is best.

(7) *Longing for liberation*: Most important, for conserving and increasing the *Shakti*, is a strong aspiration toward, and longing for, liberation. Such aspiration is synonymous with the love of God, for such love is nothing more than a drawing of the heart toward the clarity and joy of absolute Truth. Such aspiration or love will draw the Grace of God and will focus the energy upward toward the seat of Consciousness and will be a strong counteractive to mental inertia and dullness.

According to the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism, there are three different levels of spiritual practice; these levels, or methods (*upayas*), are: *anava upaya*, which is practice on the physical and sensual level; *shakta upaya*, which takes place on the mental, intellectual, level; and *shambhava upaya*, which engages the will and the intuition, and is on the astral or soul level. There is a fourth *upaya*, which is not really a practice at all, but an established awareness of the Self, and is therefore known as *anupaya*, or "no practice." This conceptual division can be simplified somewhat if we simply say that we exist on four levels: "the physical," "the mental," "the astral or soul-level" and "the spiritual." Our activities in pursuit of the Self take place on each of these progressively subtle levels and become increasingly effective as we reach to increasingly subtler levels of activity.

Without doubt, we are all complexly constituted of body, mind, soul, and Spirit. Indeed, all is Spirit, but that Spirit manifests in a progressively more tangible manner as soul, as mind, and as body. According to the subtlety of our awareness, we identify ourselves most predominantly with one or another of these levels of our reality. Normally, we are aware of ourselves as a mixture of several of these elements; but one or another aspect of ourselves is usually a predominant focus. For example, the athlete focuses predominantly on his or her physical fitness and measures his or her competency according to the abilities and qualities of the physical body. It would be foolish to say that the mind plays no part in such a person's awareness, but it is clear that much of the attention of that person's awareness is on their physical well-being and skills. This is true also of those people who labor in the so-called "lower" echelons of trades requiring physical exertion and manual dexterity. We see this body-orientation much more exaggerated, of course, in the animal realm, where physical instinct predominates to a much greater degree, and the mental realm is little developed.

The person who identifies predominantly with the mind gives less attention to the physical body, and more attention to the comprehension and structuring of ideas. That person's focus is on exploring their understanding of ideas, mental task-accomplishments, and the comprehension of their world. They may be "intellectuals," or merely normal goal-oriented and career-oriented people. Those more mentally developed may become writers, scientists, scholars, or technological experts; others comprise the vast majority of businessmen, teachers, white-collar workers, etc. Again, let me stress that, for most of us, there is a complex mixture of physical, mental, and soul-qualities at work in our lives, and none of these is omitted in our overall awareness; and yet, it is also certain that there is clearly a *predominant* focus on one or another of these aspects in each of our lives by which we may be "typed" in various ways.

The person who identifies predominantly with the soul is a person who has become opened to the subtler level of reality. Such persons are governed by a sense of the underlying unity of life, and strive to give expression to qualities of love, kindness, and compassion in their lives, with a strong sense of their purpose as a nurturing and inspiring presence in the world. Such people may become religious leaders, doctors, or crusaders for the social welfare. They are aware, not only of the tools they possess in the way of physical and mental abilities but are motivated to use these God-given tools to benefit others and to lead the world toward peace and brotherhood. The individualized "soul" is that conglomerate of deeply ingrained qualities, evolved over many lifetimes, which makes up the character and purpose of an individual; and the person who identifies with the soul is one whose greatest emphasis is on perfecting the qualities of wisdom and love and on manifesting their own unique destiny in a way which will better themselves and all mankind. There is in the soul a clearer awareness of one's source in Spirit, and so with those who identify with the soul there is a strong desire to manifest that unifying Spirit, and to draw ever nearer to awareness of their own ultimate Being.

That ultimate Existent is the Spirit. The Spirit is that unmanifest Source from which all beings manifest. It is the unqualified Ground of all existence, which, in Itself, transcends all manifestation. It has been spoken of as pure Consciousness and Bliss; It has been spoken of as Brahman, God, or the supreme Self of all. It is that eternal Self with which the saints—the most evolved human beings—identify. They see that the body, mind, and soul are transient elements of their being, and that the One Spirit is their unchanging and eternal Identity. And they hold to their identification with that, paying but passing attention to the demands of body, mind, and soul. They realize that these have but a transient existence and will go on, by

the operation of natural laws, but that they do not constitute their true Essence nor their purest happiness.

Those who identify with the Spirit, the eternal Self, find little to attract them to physical, mental or soul activity and accomplishments. Rather, they seek, and find, their greatest happiness and contentment in the awareness of their pure Being, beyond body, mind or soul. Such as these have no established place in the world; they are beyond the world of other men and women. Their vocation is to live in close union with God, and, though they may be regarded as monks, renunciants, or simply as societal outcastes, they serve as emissaries of the Divine. They act, to be sure. They are not without thoughts. Their souls have become expanded to include all souls in the One in whom they subsist, and their actions and thoughts derive from their Identity as the all-inclusive One; and, though their value is not recognized by the people of the world who are busily engaged in their own self-involved thoughts and activities, such people give clarity and light to the world, and serve as magnets to draw others to the all-gratifying Truth which exists within them all.

In the ancient world of Vedic India, this rudimentary division of peoples was translated into a set of classes or "castes," and was recognized as a natural fact of life; but as time went on, these stratifications of society became calcified into rigid air-tight compartments into which one was born and from which there was no escape. What had been an observation of natural evolution became an inflexible societal stratification based on racial and familial association. This was, of course, a distortion and corruption of what had been a keen observation of the varied levels of human awareness. That observation—that people do indeed fall roughly into several broad "types" according to the evolution of their awareness—remains, nonetheless, a valid one.

Recall how, in the Indian epic, the *Ramayana*, Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu, asks Hanuman, his monkey-servant (representative of the individualized soul), "How do you regard me?" And Hanuman replies, "When I regard myself as the body, I am your servant; when I regard myself as the mind, I am a part of you; and when I regard myself as the spirit, the Self, you and I are one." Note that Hanuman's realization became more subtle and closer to the absolute Truth as he went from identification with the physical body to the mind, and from the mind to the Spirit. From the perspective of Kashmir Shaivism, all our efforts toward personal growth and Self-realization manifest on one or another of these levels of reality. At the grossest level, we identify with the body; we regard ourselves as the servant of God, as His instrument; we perform physical acts: acts of service, ritual

worship, Hatha yoga postures, the sounding of mantras, etc. These are necessary and beneficial practices, but they are at the gross physical level only; we must go deeper toward the subtle if we are to reach God.

The next level of activity is the mental. Here, we perform many practices: we study the scriptures and other writings of the realized saints; we do mental worship, such as prayer, or the mental repetition of the name of God; we continually attempt to refine our understanding and remind ourselves inwardly of the truth of the Spirit. And here, at this stage where we identify with the mind, we come to regard ourselves as a spark or a ray from the one Sun, which manifests and illumines the world. All is seen as God, and we are a part of Him.

Then, on the soul level, the activity is very subtle; we may also call it the level of consciousness. It is simply the constant alertness to reject any obscuration of conscious awareness. It is the jealous guarding of the pure Consciousness that is the witness, the Self. At that level, there is no duality of I and Thou, mine and Thine; there is only *I AM*. Notice that each one of these levels of activity leads to the next, subtler, level. For example, when you do physical acts of service, or worship, this brings with it the mental level of service or worship, as our concentration deepens. Or, if we repeat the name of God on the physical level, such as when we chant aloud, that physical repetition brings with it, by sympathetic resonance, the mental awareness of the name, and we find that we're repeating the mantra on the mental level as well. The idea, of course, is for our worship, our prayer, our meditation, to reach to deeper and deeper levels of subtlety, becoming a transforming force to recreate us at the spiritual level.

Practice at the mental level is superior, of course, to mere physical action, because it is by the transformation of our mind that we truly become transformed into Divine beings. As Krishna said to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, “The Self is realized by the purified mind!” This is also what Jesus taught when he explained that it was the pure in heart who would see God. Also, we have seen what great emphasis is placed on the mental practice of Self-knowledge by the great Shankaracharya, who said, “The practice of knowledge thoroughly purifies the ignorance-stained mind, and then that [intellectual] knowledge itself disappears, just as a grain of salt disappears in water.”

Shankara’s analogy can be easily understood by one whose concentration on the knowledge, “I am pure Consciousness,” leads the mind, through concentrated effort toward understanding, and eventually to perfect mental quietude, and the direct experience of pure Consciousness. Through one-pointed concentration on

this one thought, “I am not merely this body, this mind; I am the Absolute; I am pure Consciousness,” one goes beyond thought and attains the thought-free state. It is in this way that the mental practice leads to the subtler level of spiritual practice. The story of king Janaka and Ashtavakra is a good illustration of this:

King Janaka was sitting one day on the riverbank, repeating his mantra aloud. In a loud, powerful voice, he repeated over and over *So-ham, So-ham, So-ham*; “I am That! I am That! I am That!” Then, along came his guru, Ashtavakra, who sat on the opposite bank. Observing that king Janaka was involved in the physical practice of mantra-repetition, with maybe a touch of mental practice thrown in, Ashtavakra decided to elevate king Janaka’s practice. So, he began to shout aloud, “This is my water bowl! This is my staff!” And, as he did so, he alternately lifted each of the items mentioned. Ashtavakra continued this for a long time, shouting at the top of his voice, “This is my water bowl! This is my staff!”

Soon the king’s mantra-repetition was disrupted, and he quickly became annoyed. Finally, he could take it no more, and he shouted across to Ashtavakra, “Hey, why all this racket? I know those things belong to you; who says they’re *not* yours?” And Ashtavakra shot back, “And who says you are *not* the Self?” Immediately king Janaka’s mind ceased its activity and became absorbed in the silent awareness that he *was* the Self and didn’t need to go on engaging his lips or his mind in repeatedly asserting it. In other words, by the grace of his guru, his mental practice merged into the soul’s awareness of its identity with the Self.

This practice does not call into play either the body or the mind, but rather what we would call simply, “the will.” It is the practice of keeping a willful check on the impulses of the mind, and a willful retention of pure awareness, with a sense of identification with the one all-pervasive Consciousness. It is, in other words, a direct soul-awareness through the effort of will. In its highest stage, this subtle practice becomes no practice at all. It simply remains spontaneously, habitually. It is the state of consciousness which the Zen Buddhists call the state of “No-mind,” which Vedantists refer to as *sahaj samadhi*, “the natural state of unity,” and Kashmir Shaivites refer to as *anupaya*.

To explain how one level of practice leads to a subtler level, let’s take, as an example, the practice of mantra repetition. You may begin by just repeating the mantra on the physical level. And, even on this level, the sound-vibrations have a certain effect on you, instilling peace and a sense of well-being. Then, you begin to reflect on its meaning. Now, it is no longer just a sound; it’s a meaningful thought: *So-ham*. The mind translates the sound into “I am That; I am the one

Self.” That is the mental practice. You repeat the mantra on the mental level with an awareness of its meaning. Then, as you begin to sense the reality of it, as you begin to experience it, you transcend the mantra, and hold yourself poised in the thought-free state. That’s the level of soul-awareness, and is very close to the awareness of Spirit, or the Self. When, eventually, this awareness deepens, one loses all sense of body, mind, or soul, and, transcending all practice, becomes immersed in the awareness of the Self.

Now, to make all this really clear, here are some sample practices from each of these three levels derived from an ancient scripture of Kashmir Shaivism, one of the *agamas*, called *Vijnana Bhairava*, which is said to be a distillation of an earlier text called *Rudrayamala Tantra*, passed down from Shiva himself. “Bhairava” is another name for Shiva, the Lord, the Self. And “Vijnana” means supreme awareness, or knowledge. And it takes the form of a dialogue between Shiva and his consort, Shakti.

In this imaginary dialogue, Shakti asks Shiva to explain His true nature and the practices by which he can be known; and Shiva then details 112 different practices, utilizing those from each of the three levels we’ve discussed. First, we’ll hear of some of the physical practices, some of which have to do with the subtle breath, the *prana*, or the visualizing of inner lights and sounds. Listen to some of the practices Shiva recommends to Shakti. You might like to try them out as I mention them to you:

The breath is exhaled with the sound, *Ham*, and inhaled with the sound, *Sah*. Thus, the individual soul always recites the mantra, *Hamsah* (or *So-ham*, “I am That!”).<sup>3</sup>

*Prana* goes upward (with the inhalation), and the *apana* goes downward (with the exhalation). This is the expression of the creative Shakti. By becoming aware of the two places where each originates, experience absolute fulfillment.<sup>4</sup>

There is a momentary pause, when the outgoing breath has gone out, and there is a momentary pause when the ingoing breath has gone in. Fix your mind steadily on these places of pause, and experience Shiva.<sup>5</sup>

Always fix your mind on those places where the breath pauses, and the mind will quickly cease its fluctuations, and you will acquire a wonderful state.<sup>6</sup>

In the *Bhagavad Gita* (4:29), Krishna says, “Some yogis, devoted to *pranayama* (the control of the *prana*), offer as sacrifice the outgoing breath into the incoming breath, and the incoming into the outgoing, restraining the course of both.” It is this very practice that is being spoken of here in the *Vijnana Bhairava*, which goes on to say:

When the in-breath merges with the outgoing breath, they become perfectly balanced and cease to flow. Experience that state and realize equality.<sup>7</sup>

Let the breath remain balanced and let all thoughts cease; then experience the state of Shiva.<sup>8</sup>

That’s enough practices on the physical level; let’s move on to the mental practices. Here, we enter into the realm of ideas. These practices deal entirely with formulated intellectual knowledge. Shiva says to Shakti:

Concentrate your mind on whatever gives you satisfaction. Then experience the true nature of supreme satisfaction.<sup>9</sup>

Meditate on yourself as a vast, cloudless sky, and realize your true nature as Consciousness.<sup>10</sup>

Becoming detached from the awareness of the body, meditate on the thought, “I am everywhere!” and thus experience joy.<sup>11</sup>

Hold this thought in your mind: ‘All the waves of the various forms in this universe have arisen from me—just as waves arise from water, flames arise from fire, or rays from the Sun.’<sup>12</sup>

Contemplate with an unwavering mind that your own body and the whole universe are of the nature of Consciousness and experience the great awakening.<sup>13</sup>

Contemplate your body and the whole universe as permeated with Bliss. Then experience yourself as that Bliss.<sup>14</sup>

And then we come to the practices involving the soul; these are at a yet subtler level of consciousness. Here, you don't have to think at all. You need only to become aware, focusing on that clear, thought-free awareness that is your soul, an individualized manifestation of the Self. Shiva says:

Observe the arising of a desire. Then immediately put an end to it by reabsorbing it into That from which it arose.<sup>15</sup>

What are you when a thought or desire does *not* arise?  
Truly, the one Reality! Become absorbed in and identified with That.<sup>16</sup>

When a thought or desire arises, detach yourself from the object of thought or desire, and witness the thought or desire as a manifestation of your Self, and thus realize the Truth.<sup>17</sup>

The same conscious Self is manifest in all forms; there is no differentiation in It. Realize everything as the same One and rise triumphantly above the appearance of multiplicity.<sup>18</sup>

When under a strong impulse of desire, or anger, greed, infatuation, pride, or envy, make your mind steady and become aware of the Reality underlying the mental state.<sup>19</sup> Perceive the entire universe as a magic-show, or as forms painted on a canvas, or as so many leaves on a single tree; and becoming absorbed in this, experience great happiness.<sup>20</sup>

Leaving aside your own body for the time being, contemplate your Self as the consciousness pervading other bodies, and thus become all-pervasive.<sup>21</sup>

Free the mind of all supports, without and within, and let no thought-vibration take form. Then the self becomes the supreme Self, Shiva.<sup>22</sup>

At the onset or culmination of a sneeze, or at the moment of fright, or deep sorrow, or at the moment of a sigh, or while running for your life, or during intense fascination, or extreme hunger, become aware of Brahman.<sup>23</sup>

What cannot be objectively known, what cannot be held in the mind, that which is empty, and exists even in non-existence: contemplate That as your Self, and thus attain realization of Shiva. <sup>24</sup>

Meditate on yourself as eternal, all-pervasive, the independent Lord of all; and, thus, attain That. <sup>25</sup>

About *anupaya*, the ultimate state beyond all practice, there is really nothing one can say. It is the reversion of the soul to its universal Source. In such a state, one is on a pathless path, beyond the bodily, mental or astral levels. Immersed in God-awareness, there is no more striving, for there is nothing more to attain. There is no action, no thought, no individual awareness. There is only the pure Bliss of the Self.

Here is what Jnaneshvar, the 13th century yogi, says in his *Amritanubhav* about such a state:

One who has attained this wisdom may say whatever he likes; the silence of his contemplation remains undisturbed. His state of actionlessness remains unaffected, even though he performs countless actions. Whether he walks in the streets or remains sitting quietly, he is always in his own home. His rule of conduct is his own sweet will. His meditation is whatever he happens to be doing. <sup>26</sup>

Such a knower of the Self lives in perfect freedom. You too, by utilizing all these practices—of the body, the mind and the soul—can attain eventually to that (fourth) state. As you meditate, just sit quietly; let the mind be still and become aware of the Self. If you can't do that immediately, then take the help of the mantra, the name of God, the name of the Self. Reflect on its meaning. Identify with that One. And if you cannot do that, at least practice on the physical level: repeat the mantra with the in-breath, and again with the out-breath. Let it carry you to the awareness that you and your beloved God are one.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES FOR PART ONE:

1. from the Introduction to Shankara's *Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, trans. by Swami Prabhavananda & Christopher Isherwood, Hollywood, Calif., Vedanta Press, 1947, 1975; p. 12.
2. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*, III:16; Swami Prabhavananda and C. Isherwood, *Shankara's Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947; pp. 70-71.
3. This philosophy of Shankara's has resurfaced in our current day in the philosophy of Sri Nisargadatta and his disciple, Ramesh Balsekar.
4. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*, trans. by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood; Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947; p. 73. In order to illustrate the process of 'superimposition', Shankara utilizes several examples: A person might see a piece of rope lying on the ground and think that it is a snake. In such a case, that person is said to 'superimpose' a snake on the rope. Or, one might be walking by a field at night, and imagine that a wooden post is a man standing in the field; in such a case, one is said to have 'superimposed' a man on the post. Another example Shankara offers is that of a person seeing a piece of an oyster shell—what is known as 'mother of pearl'; but he imagines that it is a piece of silver. He is said to have 'superimposed' the silver on the mother of pearl. All of these examples are intended to be analogous to the superimposition by the *jīva* of a world of objects upon what is really Brahman. And, while it's easy to see how one could mistake one form for another, such as mistaking a post for a man, or a rope for a snake, or a piece of shell for silver; Brahman is formless. How, then, could one mistake Brahman for a universe of forms? The analogies do not stand up to scrutiny. Shankara *does* distinguish between a personal illusion (*pratibhasika*) and a universal, or collective, illusion (*vyavaharika*); but, according to Shankara, in both cases, it is the individual *jīva* who is responsible for the creation and maintenance of his own illusory perception.
5. Jnaneshvar, *Amritanubhav*, 7:165, 166; Swami Abhayananda, *Jnaneshvar: The Life And Works, etc.*, Olympia, Wash., Atma Books, 1989; p. 186.
6. *Ibid.*, 7:170, 171; p. 187.
7. *Ibid.*, 7:235-237, 240; pp. 193-194.

8. *Ishvara Pratyabijnna-vimarshini*
9. *Tripurarahasya*
10. Kshemaraj, *Pratyabijnahridayam*
11. *Spandakarika*, 3:3

## **NOTES AND REFERENCES FOR PART TWO:**

1. See the account of my personal experience in Swami Abhayananda, *The Supreme Self*, downloadable at [www.themysticsvision.com](http://www.themysticsvision.com), or in the excerpt from that book, “My Enlightenment Experience”, presented as the first article in the Fourth (“God’s Grace”) Section of *The Mystic’s Vision*, Volume One.
2. Jesus, *The New Testament of the Bible*, Luke, 18:18; Matthew, 19:16.
3. *Vijnana Bhairava*, 155.
4. *Ibid.*, 24.
5. *Ibid.*, 25
6. *Ibid.*, 51.
7. *Ibid.*, 64.
8. *Ibid.*, 26.
9. *Ibid.*, 74.
10. *Ibid.*, 92.
11. *Ibid.*, 104.
12. *Ibid.*, 110.
13. *Ibid.*, 63.

14. *Ibid.*, 65.
15. *Ibid.*, 96.
16. *Ibid.*, 97.
17. *Ibid.*, 98.
18. *Ibid.*, 100.
19. *Ibid.*, 101.
20. *Ibid.*, 102.
21. *Ibid.*, 107.
22. *Ibid.*, 108.
23. *Ibid.*, 118.
24. *Ibid.*, 127.
25. *Ibid.*, 132.
26. Jnaneshvar, *Amritanubhav*, 9:20, 21, 31, 34; Swami Abhayananda, *Jnaneshvar: The Life & Works of The Celebrated 13<sup>th</sup> Century Indian Mystic-Poet*, Olympia, Wash., 1989, 1994; pp. 207, 208.

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