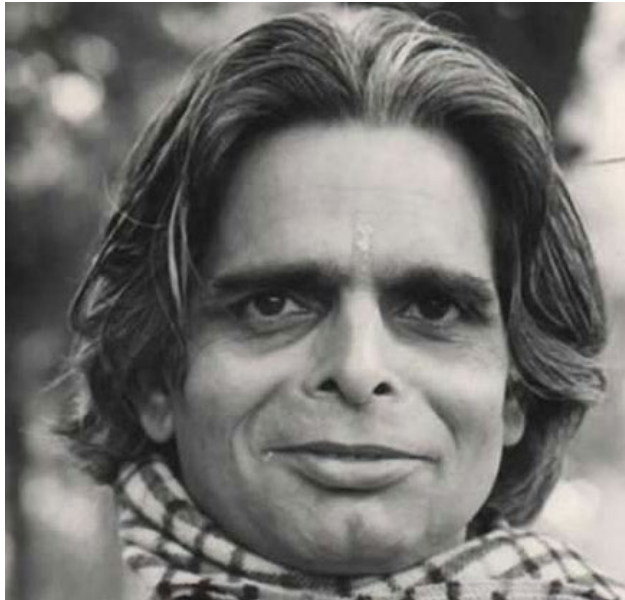




# DEDICATION

*To Harish Johari, who shaped my life like no other.*





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# INTRODUCTION

*I would like to start where this book concludes: the transformation brought about by the deepest state of meditation - known as Samadhi - is everyone's birthright. And clearly, we are entirely free to find our own way inside. Yogic science has an answer and a practice at the ready for every question that we might encounter on this path. I have tried achieving the same in this book. It is based in over 40 years of meditation practice, as well as in the experiences with my students.*

*In wellness meditation we are quite free in what to do and it might give us a really nice experience. From the point of view of yogic lore, achieving a state of mental relaxation is however just the beginning. To reach the really deep state of altered consciousness called Samadhi requires a rather clear if personalized methodology. If the transformative power of actual yogic meditation is our objective, there truly is a lot to learn in easing the process of withdrawing towards our very center.*

*Even though it is best not to talk about our achievements, I have no problem confirming that I have experienced multiple Samadhis over the past 2 decades. That is anyhow not such a miraculous thing. It happens to many, especially in India, as on average just a few years of regular practice may lead us to master the meditation phases that allow Samadhi to happen. Samadhi is not some elusive state that is only reserved for renunciates that are willing to give up on everything else. This book empowers anyone that takes up the challenge to start practicing actual meditation at home.*

*When I started writing this book, I thought I needed about 200 pages. They became more than 600. In part this is because I am trying to be clear and complete, as I plan only one book on meditation. The other reason is found in the very necessary personalization of the meditation process, meaning that I need to offer different solutions to a wide variety of readers. As the practice on our meditation mat must be complemented with a variety of practices and attitudes in life, there really is a lot to consider. And then especially when applying the ancient yogic principles to the lifestyle of the modern-day householder yogi.*

*I am aware that a book like this is not often written, because of the idea that people are not up to dealing with that much information, insight and what could be called spiritual ambition. Yet I have found that many seekers are remarkably devoted to understanding how everything fits together. I expect nothing from the reader, except for all to live up to our*

*tremendous potential within the limitations of each moment. This book offers no quick fix, but a clear if far from straight path forward. How much time we have to practice is irrelevant once we accept ourselves as a work in progress.*

*This book is based on the teachings that I have received from my teachers, with additional understanding gained from scripture. Any word written cannot however escape my subjectivity. Hence only the errors are mine. Anyhow this book concerns the unspeakable. May it bring the reader to the practice and from there to their own insights.*

*Nothing in this book should thus be accepted by the reader because it is written here. Only by working with it, the understanding becomes ours. It is mainly based in the teachings of Harish Johar<sup>1</sup>, complemented by the other teachers that followed in his wake<sup>2</sup>. The main paths, phases and practices of meditation taught here correlate with the principal teachings found in the ancient Yoga Sutras of Patanjali<sup>3</sup>. I also often refer to Ramana Maharish<sup>4</sup> and Nisargadatta Maharaj<sup>5</sup>, whose teachings inspired much clarity.*

*This is not a scholar's study on the subject of Samadhi, rather the viewpoint of a practitioner. As yogic scriptures number in the thousands and often disagree on many subjects, I have refrained from referring my sayings to particular texts. Finding some idea in scripture simply does not prove any statement. If for some of the more controversial subjects I do refer to specific teachers or scriptures, it is to absolve myself of too much responsibility, not to prove a point. I stay as close as possible to the original teachings. When as a Westerner I discuss this most essential body of knowledge from the Indian heritage, I am aware of the danger of cultural appropriation, as explained in Appendix 1.*

*I hope the reader may enjoy the reading, as I have enjoyed translating the ancient science to the here and now. Certainly the reader should develop personal preferences regarding the practices and attitudes proposed here, but to discover our path we must know our options. May it all inspire to try out some of the described practices. It will not only bring real insight, yet also the direct experience of our truly blissful divine nature. Any more lofty objectives aside, may it help all to be more happy, healthy and wise.*

*Peter Marchand*

---

<sup>1</sup> Harish Johari is my original teacher, whom I met at the age of 20. More details in Story1 and in many other stories of this book.

<sup>2</sup> Baba Dwarka Das (Story 4), Narayan Rishi (Story 17), Narvada Puri Mataji (Stories 27, 29 & 38) and Kathia Baba (Story 3).

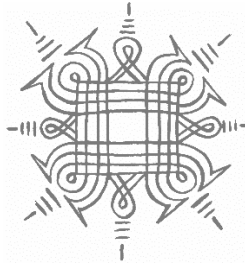
<sup>3</sup> The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali is a world-famous ancient text on yoga and especially deep meditation. The author is the sage Patanjali of India, often seen as the 'father of yoga' and who especially created the foundation for Ashtanga Yoga.

<sup>4</sup> Ramana Maharishi (1879-1950) is perhaps the most famous Indian saint of the past century. His teachings have very much defined modern understanding of nonduality, typically known as Advaita Vedanta.

<sup>5</sup> Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897-1981) is a contemporary of Ramana, a householder yogi with direct teachings on nonduality.

# 1

## WHY MEDITATE?



*In meditation, we seek a happiness that is independent of what happens. Giving peace a real chance allows us to see beyond thought and meet our ever happy inner cosmic being. Discarding layers upon layers of individuality, we aim at reaching the deepest states of meditation, miraculously boosting our spiritual evolution. We thus grow into a life with enough peace and happiness to be really worth living, while also becoming extraordinarily magical.*



### 1.1. Happiness

The central question that leads us upon the path of yoga and meditation is if we can be happy independent of what happens. It is a life changing yet logical quest, as we cannot fully control what happens. As long as our happiness depends on what is outside of us, we cannot durably escape unhappiness.

To meditate means to seek happiness inside rather than outside. It rests upon the most important spiritual experience that happiness is ours if we can actually stop our mind from seeking it outside of us. As we thus discover our endless smile in the spiritual heart<sup>(HRIDAYA)</sup>, we can learn to keep that inner connection. Only then we may actually truly enjoy whatever is happening. We can still care about what happens around us, better than ever, while our happiness no longer depends

on it. Through the path of meditation, happiness becomes self-existent, while a minimal level of peace is needed to maintain it.



## 1.2. Giving Peace a Chance

Happiness or unhappiness are experienced as pleasant or unpleasant emotions, which partially relates to their level of peace. Unpleasant emotions are usually rather devoid of peace. While pleasant emotions are not always very peaceful, they still require some peaceful basis to endure. Even our anger will be more palatable if it has some element of peace. In peace, happiness comes easily.

Peace is our key to live a happy life. We all need it and to some degree we all want it and occasionally cry for it, yet few truly have it. Meanwhile, nothing is needed to get some peace. If we let everything go, then peace is what remains.

Our mind is like an AI computer that is talking non-stop. It can give us plenty of good advice, but it just does not want to stop. We cannot turn it off nor run away from it because it is plugged directly into our brain. And it is so far advanced that it produces not only thoughts, but also a variety of pleasant and painful feelings, to

maximally engage us in its storytelling. What thus sounds like a science-fiction story is a daily yet natural reality in most people's heads.

Primarily what we need is peace of mind. Mind is our great servant, programmed to always seek the fulfilment of our desires. By its nature, it does not seek nothingness. It always looks for some thing to make us more happy. Yet that something is always outside of us, beyond our control. To just enjoy what is makes a lot of sense most of the time. Mind is the main obstacle when we want to be happy with what we have.

Fortunately, our mind can definitely be made more peaceful. That alone will already increase the level of happiness in our feelings. And if we can regularly have some real peace from mind, then also on a deeper level more bliss can be generated.

To unplug our dear brain computer, meditation is the key. We can blame others or even society in general for our lack of peace, while peace we can all have, if we give peace a chance. By itself, it is not demanding. Everything else will naturally attract our attention when needed, so we do not even need to remain that much aware of it. But peace requires some time, some energy, some purposeful action towards inaction.

Getting more peace in our lives is thus the first objective of meditation, the short-

term goal. From the moment that we start some meditation practice, peace will increase, even if that practice is still far from truly peaceful. Meditation will thus improve our lives on every level. We will quite rapidly see its benefits in our work, relationships and health. Our happy feelings will become more peaceful and durable, and they will not lead to unhappy feelings so easily.

While these are all very good reasons to meditate, there is also that world famous long-term objective generally known as enlightenment. That is a much more mysterious story of spiritual development, which is also a whole lot more ambitious. Through meditation, we may seek to become truly happy independent of anything else, like literally. Most people are not up to entertaining that notion. This objective however rests upon the ancient discovery that a powerful peaceful happiness already exists inside of us, literally.



### 1.3. The Thinker

The words 'man' and 'human' originate with *Manu*, the name of the first man of the new human race that emerged after the great flood, according to ancient *vedic*

scripture. This name is referring to *manas*, the Sanskrit word for our mind. The *vedic* tradition thus defines us humans as thinkers, ruled by the mind. It is also quite the modern view.

Even though animals also have thought processes of some kind, humans have developed thought as no other species on earth, as far as we know. According to evolution theory, the advanced thinking capacity of our frontal brain lobes has made us into the most dominant animal on the planet. Thinking has allowed us to subjugate nature to quite some degree, while it has not brought much progress in mastering ourselves.

Thinking obviously has a place in our lives. However, it is not the only feature that makes us human. First of all, we are also very much feeling creatures. Thoughts and feelings always interact, for better or worse. Thinking thus comes very naturally to us, like breathing, eating or sleeping. But to think continuously, from the time we wake till we go to sleep, may not be the best way to use our brain.

Our mind is programmed that way, but also gives us the freedom to question and reprogram ourselves. Contrary to the other animals that are largely driven by instinct, our thinking capacity gives us the freedom to make our own choices. So how do we want to evolve as human beings? What could be the benefits of not

thinking, at least now and then? Modern culture may be rightfully proud of the many achievements brought about by thinking and science, yet is the time then not right to also move beyond? Would it further our goals?



### 1.3.1. THE TWO-EDGED SWORD

We have this incredible tendency to believe that we can solve every problem through our thinking. When dealing with practical matters that usually holds true, though it might sometimes take a while or even many generations. The value of thinking in managing other issues is however much more limited. When we wonder how to get from here to there, we might use our mind and google it or something, sure. Yet when we ask the question where to go, our thinking may not bring a clear answer as there are just too many options and parameters. Then we have to feel where to go.

We try to outthink all of our problems, even though very often this is shown not to work very well. Sometimes we might think the same thought 100 times and still believe it is worthwhile to keep repeating it. Every so often we just cannot stop unpleasant thinking about past or future, even though we are quite aware it is not going to bring us anything. Thoughts thus appear as extremely addictive<sup>→4.1.7.</sup>

The ability not to think about the things that we feel are useless to think about, may be the first advantage of learning how to stop thinking. It would save quite some time and energy for starters. However greatly our brains have evolved, they are still just tools like our hands. If we cannot master our thoughts, our thinking capacity may often be more of a problem than part of a solution.

We can see this very clearly for example in how humankind now seems poised to fully destroy its own environment. The freedom of choice that our thinking brings us obviously carries great responsibility. It allows us to pursue even the most imaginary desires, while animals living natural lives are not often involved with what they cannot have. They usually display more common sense than we do.

Through our thinking, our desires appear as unlimited, though obviously fulfilling them is not. That conflict produces much unhappiness in itself, creating a state of rather permanent dissatisfaction in many people, even if they have so much to be happy about.

Thinking about all of this is obviously part of the game and has led to many auspicious movements and revolutionary scriptures. Nevertheless we can wonder, if thinking can lead to wisdom, why does it so often bring people in the opposite direction? Honestly, all ancient wisdom

presented in this book has not stopped me from being quite stupid sometimes.

The very nature of the thinking process is in fact impartial and can lead anywhere. Through association and reasoning, our brain is basically just computing thoughts, very much like a computer would. Thinking is a two-edged sword, which can cut either way. We can prove anything through our thinking, hiding the fact that at the basis of every thought pattern lies an essential thought or axiom, which is not based in rationality at all.



### 1.3.2. BEYOND THOUGHT

At the origin of our thought patterns and opinions lie deeper subconscious feelings and insights. For example, for too many people, a forest is just a bunch of trees, a source of firewood maybe, not a living community. We can give grand lectures about taking care of the environment, but all these words will do little to convince those who do not feel a more profound connection to nature.

Thinking brings our feelings from the subconscious to the conscious. That may be useful, allowing us to translate a deeper feeling into some concept that we can work with. It is often where a solution starts, but truly not where it ends. Our spiritual insights may have a hard time to overrule our deeper fears, frustrations and

desires.

Thinking differently very often is not enough to feel differently. Nothing in the universe seems more complex than our feelings. They are affected in so many ways, subject to so many parameters<sup>→4.1.1</sup>, that rational thought can only scratch the surface of their true meaning. Their most essential source lies within our subconscious programming, the so-called *karmic* impressions<sup>(VASANAS)</sup> of the past<sup>→3.6.1</sup>.

As we try to find our happiness inside, independent of what happens outside, our past programming clearly stands in the way. Our feelings often generate endless cycles of thought, expanding now this way, then that way, hardly bringing any significant result. As we may nevertheless keep trying to make some sense of it, should we not first learn to better listen inside? What happens if we can stop thinking about how we feel, allow those feelings to talk for themselves?

What comes out is definitely open for interpretation, so can we remain open-minded about it? Or will we try to control everything by labeling it within our thought constructs? Life and the feelings it brings is not very suitable for scientific analysis. There are just too many data for science to work with. So what if we listen just a while longer, before we again start talking to ourselves about what we have heard? What if we can really remain silent, let go

of the tendency to analyze, the illusion of control? What if we can refrain from adding to any unpleasantness by commenting on it? What might come out of our silence?

In science it is well known that the most revolutionary discoveries are not made through rational thinking. Rather, they come as more accidental and strange intuitions from somewhere beyond our conscious mind. What if we could more consciously tap into that subconscious potential? Imagine what scientific progress we could generate by making meditation a standard part of the training of scientists?

Since AI is anyhow going to do much of the data-based analytical thinking for us in the nearby future, should we not look into developing something more juicy ourselves? When asked, AI confirms it will never have intuition. Whatever options it may so nicely display before us, we will still need to choose between them from deeper inside, from what can be called our 'I' or Intuitive Intelligence.

In dealing with our feelings, if thinking can be alternated with not thinking, it might just work better. Thinking will be very useful to make more concrete our understanding that emerges more clearly from the subconscious by not thinking. And why not simply add not thinking to thinking and thinking to not thinking, make them one?



### 1.3.3. TO SEE

The power of not thinking comes as an ability to see, which is the literal translation of *Dhyana*, the Sanskrit word for meditation. This seeing is not based on book loads of thoughts, weighing this and that. It is a doubtless knowing, a connection to that intuitive intelligence, which traditionally is called the cosmic intellect<sup>(BUDDHI)</sup>. It can be used to see inside as well as outside.

We will explore the subject of developing intuition further on  $\rightarrow_{2.6.1}$ . To truly understand our complex feelings though, intuition is a must. It will allow us to reduce some issue to its essence and hence resolve it. That way we can really move forward in becoming more happy independent of what happens.

As thinkers, we can thus understand the value of moving beyond our thinking, towards our even greater intellectual capacities. That ability to access our higher intellect and bring its insights to the light - into our thinking process - may be the ultimate human potential.

And as we thus may learn how to stop thinking, we will also discover the unexpected treasure of our true divine nature, the cherry on the cake. Yet we have to very fundamentally stop thinking of ourselves as thinkers only. We are so much more than that.





## 1.4. Our True Being

I have written so often about this unspeakable truth<sup>6</sup>, that I am at a loss now where to begin, without overly repeating myself. Since the central subject here is meditation, let us look at what I usually call the Self<sup>(PARABRAHMAN)</sup> from that point of view.



### 1.4.1. TEARS OF BLISS

When we meditate, we want to find out what is hidden behind our thoughts and feelings. Many secrets can be discovered there, yet the jewel of our dreams is our true beingness. It is the witness of everything that happens, the inner eye of pure consciousness. And it is simultaneously the most essential energy through which everything happens, from which everything manifests. As such, it is who we are in essence, our purest conscious energy or energized consciousness. I most often call it the Self, while it comes with many names such as awareness, presence, beingness, the heart, the holy spirit, cosmic consciousness or even god.

When in meditation we finally stop all that thinking, we still feel to exist and know

that we do. It may be a strange experience, as we suddenly acquire a new sense of reality and all else seems to fade away as unreal. This new peaceful empty fullness brings joyful tears to our eyes. We have closed them at the start of our practice, while now we truly move our attention away from them and rejoin our heart of hearts. We then hold on to it for as long as we can, which is a long and complex love story.

When the thoughts have come back, something nevertheless has changed. Some sense of that Self remains, especially directly after meditation. It is the most precious thing that we take away from our practice. It may still be fragile, almost like a phantom, elusive when chased, impossible to catch, yet so nearby. It is even easily simply forgotten, within the maze of our thoughts and the business of our lives.

As we evolve in our practice, it becomes easier. At some point we realize that we have always known the Self, that it is actually nothing very special, this consciousness that remains in the gaps between our thoughts. Every individual knows of his own conscious existence, this sense of 'I am'. It is so self-evident that it seems totally unimportant. Why would we then seek it? Most people see something worthless there, negligible as a

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<sup>6</sup> Mainly in 'The Yoga of Truth – The Ancient Path of Silent Knowledge' by Peter Marchand, Destiny Books 2007, and

'Tantric Advaita, energizing nonduality', by Peter Marchand, self-published at Amazon 2021.

grain of sand. It is however a diamond far greater than any diamond.

So then we laugh and know to have found that which will ever bring our smile back. Some unhappiness may be unavoidable till the illustrious end<sup>→4.1.4</sup>, but we already feel free from it. We know to be free to be happy whenever we want, whatever happens. It is a wealth greater than any king's, truly destined for a god. Whatever we can say or think about it matters nothing but that one understanding, that we have found liberation. To hold onto it is in part a learning process, yet at least the pathway to heaven<sup>→3.8.4</sup> is ours.

People who have never really meditated often believe that this stopping of our thoughts means that the plus of happiness and the minus of unhappiness are brought together into one big zero. They feel that while meditation might bring peace, it can bring no happiness, reducing our existence to that of a rock<sup>7</sup>. There is some logic there, but reality is different. Because if we can bring ourselves to this zero, this pure beingness without thoughts, then an unbeatable happiness emerges that can only be experienced. It appears for no reason at all but its own existence. In zero, that emptiness is full of unlimited beingness. It makes us want to laugh, to scream, to

make fun of everything including ourselves.

Part of our evolution also includes answering a new question that starts dominating our mind. Why does the Self have this power, which is undeniable, to so lighten our heart? It is hard to believe in what we do not understand. The answer will teach us about its nature and how to embrace it, put it in our pocket, make it ours. All practice leads to it as it emerges from it, as it teaches us.

Empty of thoughts, the Self is empty of judgement and thus indeed beyond like and dislike, happiness and unhappiness. The blissful feeling of the Self is never influenced by whatever happens. We cannot even be sure if it vibrates at all or not, but it is the essence of life.

Silence is the sound of that pure awareness, which gives meaning to all other sounds, including words and thoughts. Unmoving, it is ever peaceful. Desire is absent, not even triggered by change. Time itself seems to disappear into that bottomless well.

There are no words for the Self, except to say what it is not, in fact then naming everything else. Only poetry can somewhat communicate the truth of it, leaving it mostly to our imagination, as we sense for it. We cannot see, hear, taste, smell or touch it. It cannot be drawn nor photographed and yet it can be meditated

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<sup>7</sup> Sorry rock.

upon→10.6. Even the most advanced scanner that humankind might ever develop will never be able to detect the Self, as the perceiver lies beyond perception.



#### 1.4.2. WE ARE ONE

The Self is in everyone's awareness, while it is nothing, no thing. It is formless, like an invisible cloud. It is more subtle than the most subtle of particles and yet bigger than any multiverse. We might say it is unmanifested beingness within manifested beingness, even while the very definition of these words remains unclear.

And since we most essentially are that, we cannot do anything without it, while it does nothing. We cannot even take a step forward without our awareness of that movement being present. In meditation doing nothing means being exclusively with the Self. Nevertheless, in all else the Self is also needed: in thinking, in feeling and in doing. That goes for everyone, which brings about a major realization.

That Self which we find inside of ourselves, must be present in everyone, since without it nothing can be done. And since it is without form, there cannot be any difference between that Self in each of us. There is no way to compare my Self to the Self of anyone else. One might just

as well compare two invisible clouds. That Self which we found through our meditation within ourselves, seems to extend well beyond, into the entire universe. That Self which so much feels like our own, is our own, while it also belongs to the universe, which we are. We are all one in the Self. It is from this feeling of union with everything that we smile.

To truly see that Self behind another's eyes is beyond description. Because we recognize ourselves there, beyond similarities, as if we were looking in a mirror. It cannot even be compared to meeting one's identical twin, because there is only one, not two. Blessed is the one who comes out of the inside only to meet himself outside. And then it happens again and again, till we wink at ourselves behind the eye of a chicken, identify ourselves in a flower or a mountain, in whatever is.



#### 1.4.3. TREASURE ISLAND

Now we know that we are all one, in essence, this one pure happy beingness. For the first time, we feel 100% connected. We have never been alone, that was just an illusion. Love arises from beyond conditioning, beyond wanting or needing. Love is the energy or *shakti* of the Self, the source of our smile, the answer to our question about that happy power of the

Self. Everything is perfect and we love all of it.

And then again we lose that connection. Having discovered our quintessence does not mean that we have excluded whatever else we are. Everything else has just lost some power, some relevance. The other aspects of our being however have not disappeared. They still hold great power and their relevance to us cannot be ignored so easily.

The light of the Self is thus still covered by the layers of our individual beingness. That is why, among other things, deepening our meditation practice is needed to lift these veils. The diamond is ours, if we want to work for it. The pirates have found Treasure Island, but where to dig and how deep?



## 1.5. Layers & Patterns

'Layers within layers' is another essential aspect of manifested reality that I have touched upon in all my books till now. These are the different layers of our individual being, the so-called sheaths of consciousness<sup>(KOSHAS)</sup>. They stand in the way, so to speak, of the full encounter with the Self in the deepest state of meditation

that is known as *Samadhi*.

This understanding is the basic *vedic* psychology. It is very different from Western psychology, which is mostly developed by people studying other people with severe mental issues. *Vedic* psychology originates with healthy people studying themselves through *Samadhi* meditation, which is the ultimate practice of inner observation.

The descriptions of our personalities, struggles and behaviors in Western psychology are usually produced by looking at ourselves from specific angles. Typical examples are the famous psychologist Freud, who looked at us from the point of view of sexuality, or Adler, who explained all of our behaviors from the angle of a power struggle. Each of the famous Western psychologists thus promotes their unique model of the human psyche, while none of these models seems able to singularly explain all of our complex psychological issues. Western psychology commonly does not even believe in a universal psychological model, while finding universal formulas is central to all science.

*Vedic* psychology on the contrary is essentially based upon self-observation in the deep meditation trance. It originates with the ancient *vedic* seers<sup>(RISHIS)</sup>, yet anyone can have the same observations. The most important source of this knowledge comes when we look from the

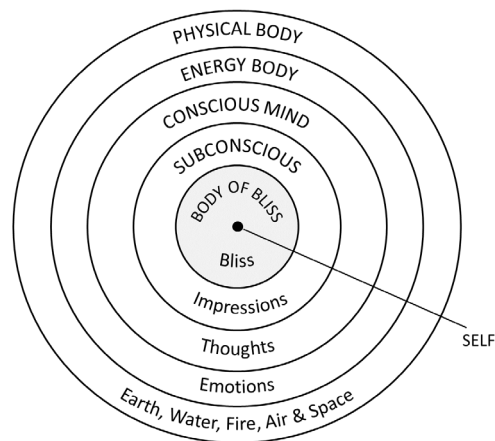
inside to the outside. In the trance state, our awareness is fully centered in itself, providing a uniquely objective view upon our own psychology.

Especially when moving out of the deeper meditation state, as different layers of our being again manifest, we can see them emerge with absolute clarity. Some of that objective experiencing of our being may also continue when observing ourselves and others in the normal waking state. Last but not least, when returning towards the center of our being in meditation, we also get a telling perspective, as these layers are being peeled of and discarded one by one.

It is always amazing how the *vedic* psychological model is so easily, instinctively recognized by anyone learning about it. This knowledge appears not as a particular and thus relative point of view on who we are. When observing ourselves, everyone can easily perceive these layers, which can be seen as truly universal. According to *vedic* philosophy, they do not only exist within our human psychology, but are the essential layers or dimensions found in anything manifested in the universe.

As sheets of cloth covering a lamp, or sheaths enveloping a knife or sword, these layers are what we are made of, as individuals. They obscure the light of the non-individual Self shining from within. These layers are particular forms of

energy and the more close they are to the Self, the less dense and more subtle they are.



*Image 1 - The sheaths of consciousness.*

Our outermost layer is the physical body, made of the five elements. Next is our raw energy body, where we experience a variety of emotions. The conscious mind tries to make sense of life, thinking of solutions. The subconscious has wordless, energetic opinions about all of it, based in past experiences. It covers the gentle vibration of the body of bliss, directly generated by the Self.

As energies, the vibration of these sheaths typically ever changes. As our awareness identifies with these changes, they cloud our understanding and bring forth a variety of feelings. These are all too often far removed from the peaceful bliss of our innermost being. The different mental, emotional, behavioral, energetic

and biochemical habitual patterns that we can find in ourselves, all relate to interactions between these layers. To change these patterns, we need to understand their components.

The central objective of yoga and meditation is to be happy whatever happens<sup>←1.1</sup>. That is impossible without full access to the bliss of the Self, which may dissolve any unhappy feelings generated within the layers of our individuality. Some understanding of these layers is thus a requirement, so that they literally become more transparent. Each has different properties and separate ways in which they can be troublesome. Especially to reach deeper meditation, we cannot easily let go of these layers without clearly recognizing them.

As we thus divide ourselves into different densities of energy, we should always remember the unity inherent within these layers. What appears here as five separate aspects of our individual psychology is actually one thing, which we could call the bodymind. Each layer is in continuous interaction with the other layers and no behavior within one layer can be explained without referring to all other layers. These interactions happen so fast that they can only be perceived as a continuous interplay of energies. They manifest from the one energy of the bodymind, our vehicle into this world.

To separate our experiences of the

different layers of our being is nevertheless useful in so many ways. Especially for the meditation process, each of these layers brings particular phases, obstacles and techniques. For example, the physical body poses the issue of sitting painlessly<sup>→7.4</sup>, while releasing the *pranic* body requires breath retention<sup>→8.6</sup>. Each sheath of consciousness plays a particular role within the process of meditation.

In trying to bring happy harmony to these layers, the more subtle inner sheaths outrank the more gross outer layers. If the physical body feels miserable, we can still breathe a good feeling into the emotional energy of our *pranic* body. When our emotional energy feels unhappy, some constructive thoughts in the mental body may overrule it. If our thoughts become hectic and desperate, we may still generate peace from the depths of our subconscious soul. And if our very soul is disturbed, the Self remains peaceful as ever.

The more deep inside we work on the very subtle levels of our manifested existence, the more this happy harmony that we seek may be durably established from the inside. Still, every layer requires some attention.



### 1.5.1. THE PHYSICAL BODY

What we generally regard as our body (ANNAMAYIKOSHA) is made out of the food (ANNA) we eat. It contains the five elements earth, water, fire, air and space, which correspond to the solids, liquids, fire, gasses and space of Western science. It is the earth element that gives it a particular form. Its many tissues, organs, systems, biochemistry and electro-magnetism are extremely complex and their limitless interactions are hard to fully understand. Also in our body, too many data.

The central hurdle in meditation created by the physical body is to develop a comfortable sitting posture. It should remain stable even if we are no longer in control of the body during the trance of deep meditation →13.2.4. The somewhat daunting ultimate objective is to be able to sit without moving for 3 hours, which is usually seen as the minimal duration of a truly successful deep meditation session →7.4.

Sitting on our spine is essential to reach the trance state. If we lie down or support the body too much, we usually fall asleep as our mind shuts down. Further on we will dig at length into the methods available to gradually develop a rock-solid sitting posture. If needed we can start with an already comfortable Cross-legged Posture with props and we usually end

into the full Lotus Posture →7.4.4.

For this to work however, the body needs to be relatively healthy. In the chapter on physical balance →4.3 we will go into the related solutions, even if sometimes temporary. We also recognize how our emotions may cause physical imbalances →3.3.1. We can learn how to detach from some pain or discomfort that we may be unable to avoid →7.6.5.

Balancing the elements in the physical body will also help us to better balance our desires and direct them towards the upper energy centers →4.4. It may also be a requirement to achieve the basic emotional balance →4.1, that is needed to attain the deep meditation phase. Imbalances in the physical body may create or support unpleasant feelings and reduce the duration of our stay in more uplifting emotional states. Science points here to the many information molecules known as neurotransmitters, such as serotonin, endorphins and adrenalin. They communicate emotional information within the nervous system and towards other types of body cells as well.

Another major task is to sufficiently remove stress from the physical body prior to our meditation practice →7.2.1. Otherwise, when the body relaxes in meditation, the release of stress energy will disturb our concentration and might also trigger strong emotional responses from the subconscious mind.



## 1.5.2. THE ENERGY BODY

As we move further inwards towards the Self, our first subtle body<sup>(PRANAMAYIKOSHA)</sup> is entirely made out of the vital energy called *prana*. The life force of the energy body is primarily absorbed by our continuous breathing. It permeates the physical body and creates like a force field around us. This *pranic* body extends about an armlength from the physical body and is often named the *aura* in more Western spirituality.

It is here that we experience our emotions in nine essential emotional flavors<sup>→4.1.5</sup>, which we can directly affect through breathing exercises. The origin of these emotions however is also found in the other layers. Still, our vital energy vibration<sup>(GUNA)</sup> can be experienced as low, high or balanced<sup>→4.2.1</sup>, which will have a major impact on the quality of our feelings. Connecting to the feeling of the Self is hard when our energy vibration is either low or high. Real meditation is only possible when our energy vibration is balanced, while meditation is a great tool to bring it into balance.

The life force vibrates because of its basic polarity, which is traditionally expressed as a fluctuation between solar and lunar energies<sup>→4.2.4</sup>. It is quite normal however that our energy is either more solar or more lunar, more expanding or

more contracting. Sometimes we are more rational, verbal, extroverted and creative, reflecting the more electrical and heating solar energy. Or we can be more emotional, visual, introverted and sensitive, because of the more magnetic and cooling lunar energy. That again depends on the other layers, together creating our more solar or more lunar personality in each moment, as it is needed<sup>→4.4.3</sup>.

The idea of individual separation, which is usually named the Ego<sup>→1.5.4</sup>, is very much based in our particular energy vibration. If that energetic aspect of the Ego cannot be sufficiently flexible to deal with changing circumstances, the basic polarity of our energy becomes imbalanced and the neutral feeling of the Self is lost.

Fortunately, breathing exercises and other practices can at least temporarily restore neutrality in the *pranic* body and our feeling. That is also essential to keep the physical body in a healthy state. In the meditation process the solar and lunar energies may become so well balanced that the life force becomes neutral or non-polar. Only then the energy can rise to a higher and more subtle level. That process usually starts in the *pranic* body, for example with alternate nostril breathing<sup>→8.5.2</sup>. Many more aspects of working with the *pranic* body will be discussed further on<sup>→8</sup>. They will all help



us to relax, reducing the stress where we are most directly experiencing it.

In deeper meditation, after losing awareness of the physical body, our attention is also withdrawn from the *pranic* body towards the center. While we can then still experience subtle feelings, they are no longer so emotional in nature. In that phase, breath will ultimately stop and the *pranic* body will be temporarily shut down, set on standby. It is thus reduced to its most subtle essential form, which is like a pilot light or a seed.



### 1.5.3. THE CONSCIOUS MIND

We usually believe that thinking takes place in the brain, while according to *vedic* science this is both correct and incorrect. Conscious thought requires the electrical currents in the neural patterns of our brain cells, as well as their more emotional interplay with all kinds of information molecules in the cerebrospinal fluid. Yet in the *vedic* model, our thoughts are experienced in a more subtle energy body: the mental body (MANOMAYIKOSHA) of the conscious mind<sup>(MANAS)</sup>.

Whatever happens in the brain is thus seen as the connection between this thought field made of subtle *prana* and the *pranic* and physical bodies. The mental body itself is the subtle energy of those thoughts as they appear to us. It is

further connected inside through the body of the subconscious mind→1.5.4.

Hence our thoughts are affected from everywhere within the bodymind. That soup we just ate, the energy of a place or some old trivial memory may all in part be responsible for whatever thought comes to our mind. While it appears as if there is only one person thinking, there are actually many partners in this inner dialogue, which also happens between distinct parts of the brain.

The usually endless stream of thoughts should thus never be taken too seriously. A thought in itself has no validity and it is up to us to discard it or accept it. Thoughts are not only happening through association and reasoning. They originate in some particular part of the bodymind and are thus always partial, even if sounding rational and impartial.

The most important quality of our thoughts is definitely energetic and emotional in nature. Rationality is only trying to make some sense of it. Both the most stupid as the most elevated thoughts may originate with the deeper layers. The one who tries to understand is the Ego, feeling responsible to make informed decisions.

Understanding is the great illusion created by the conscious mind→3.4. If we can remember that, then it does pay off to improve our understanding. Relatively wise concepts may reduce the

restlessness of mental confusion→3.4.1. We feel less of a need to think all the time and to understand equally means we know what to do, how to practice→3.5.

Stopping thought is the most direct method to increase Self-awareness, while when we are thinking both coexist. To stop the high-speed train of thoughts may thus begin with slowing it down. To pull the emergency brake is possible, but it might give us a headache and depends so much on willpower that the inner silence usually cannot last more than a few seconds in the less advanced practitioner→10.1.1.

Mind is by its nature excited, restless and whimsical. To gradually slow it down means to focus it somewhere, not allowing it to roam around as usual. Prior to that it is generally advisable to first calm down the energy vibration of the *pranic* body, as it is from there that the mental body is primarily powered.

Yet at some point it becomes merely a decision to stop thinking. On the one hand, this emerges as a phase during the meditation process. On the other hand, it is also an ability that one may acquire through practice, which no longer requires any prior practice and can be applied on the fly in daily life. So yes, some people move through life with the power to hold on to inner silence.

If the silence in our inner dialogue can last long enough, the meditation trance

truly starts and we really dive into ourselves, beyond the conscious mind. In the deeper stages of deep meditation, the mental body will be shut down in the same way as explained earlier for the *pranic* body, being reduced to its seed.



#### 1.5.4. THE SUBCONSCIOUS

What to say about the subconscious, which lies beyond thinking, talking or writing? For sure what follows cannot be taken too literally. The conscious mind is the part of our bodymind about which we are conscious. We only get some idea of what can be found in the subconscious on the basis of what seems to emerge from it into the conscious mind. The mystery remains however when we ask ourselves how all these things are organized within the catacombs of the subconscious (VIJÑANAMAYIKOSHA).

As two layers of the bodymind, there is quite a grey zone in between the conscious and the subconscious mind. They are hard to separate, as without the subconscious content, the conscious mind simply cannot function. Equally in absence of a conscious mind, the subconscious has no way to express itself. In a more nerdy way, we might compare the conscious mind to the software of a computer, using the data stored on the hard drives of the subconscious.

*Beyond memory*

The subconscious first of all holds our memories. These impressions consist of words and concepts, stories of the past, including signals from all senses, as well as recollections of related emotions. All personal content of the subconscious originates with our processing of past impressions, while it goes way beyond a storehouse of memories.

All our past experiences, as well as everything we have thought, felt and learned about them, have also created another kind of subconscious content that is no longer directly related to our memories. Much of it even seems not to be primarily present as words, nor as remembered images or smells for example, but rather as content of a more energetic nature. We might also call it personality.

We can imagine our subconscious as a galaxy of star systems, not just very wide but also terrifyingly deep. Some areas are radiating peace or blooming love, while other parts may create violent eruptions or show like dark stagnant black holes, surrounded by foul gases. Some subconscious issues are clearly more active, while many others are rather dormant. And all together they also influence each other and the whole of the subconscious, which may then appear as more or less peaceful.

*Atomized words*

Moving deeper inside we clearly move beyond words. Nevertheless, part of the subconscious definitely still holds words. These words exist there as the building blocks of the endlessly computed sentences that we find in the conscious mind. Yet, in the subconscious there is no linear train of thoughts. Rather, the words there exist as definitions, ideas, concepts and memories. Very much like an encyclopedia, however without alphabetical ordering. So rather like a search engine, the subconscious seems based on a kind of keyword recognition, which is usually called association.

Also the associations between these words exist as concepts somehow, so the subconscious contains simple phrases made out of a few words, such as 'Italians eat pasta' or 'I don't like jazz'. Our inner ideas also contain opposing views such as 'I cannot trust anybody' or 'I have to give everyone the opportunity to be nice'.

There are even entire songs, poems and stories recorded into the subconscious, which we can recall from memory. Repetition of thoughts in the conscious mind seems like a main process through which our content is firmly engraved within the subconscious.

All these words, basic concepts and stories are continuously available to be used by the conscious mind. Without

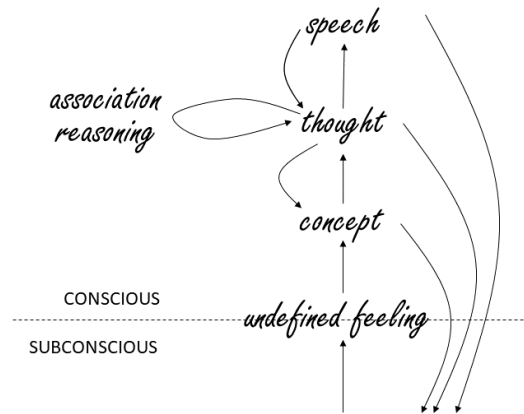
them we simply could not think. All apparently random associations made by the conscious mind are also based in these subconscious relationships, making free association an important tool in therapy to understand our subconscious drives.

As the subconscious holds our memories, it thus also contains the conclusions we more or less consciously distilled from them. Like we might remember in full detail something that happened yesterday, but within a month that memory will have partially faded, depending on the value it has to us. At some point the actual memory may thus move beyond our reach, but the seed of it will remain available, as the ultimate conclusion that we have drawn from it.

*Vedic* scripture calls part of the subconscious content atomized, reduced to the smallest form or seed<sup>(BIJA)</sup>. As atomized 'words', our past experiences may help us in more instinctively judging new experiences, without needing to remember those past adventures. Given how many things happen in just a single day, it is actually the only workable way in which the sum total of all our memories can be truly helpful to us.

Quite some information stored in the subconscious originates with learning processes that are mostly subconscious themselves. For example, our conscious understanding of the meaning of facial

expressions and other body language is usually low. Meanwhile subconsciously, we all have that knowledge to some degree and it will affect our interactions with others without us being very aware of it.



*Image 2 - Interaction between conscious and subconscious.*

As per *vedic* science, as shown in Image 2, thoughts are created when such atomized words emerge from the subconscious as not very clearly defined intuitive feelings<sup>(PARA)</sup>. They are translated by the conscious mind into the actual concepts or words out of which our thoughts are made<sup>→10.3.1</sup>. Sentences emerge through association and reasoning, eventually also while speaking.

### *Emotional values*

Words also have values attached to them, based in those past experiences. These are first of all sensory such as

sounds, visuals, smells, tastes and textures, while they also have an emotional component. Like and dislike primarily are present here in a highly refined fashion, including an infinite variety of levels of harmfulness or attractiveness for example. This must go well beyond a system of words with clear definitions. Who can name all variations to the color blue?

This way, the understanding that is stored subconsciously is very emotional in nature, energetic in fact. We might say that a particularly flavored feeling is attached to every word. It is what gives the words in our personal encyclopedia meaning. Some words will have a lot of meaning or value, whether positive or negative. Other words are far less important, mere facts of the past or the knowledge gained from them, without much consequence.

### *Words of music*

Words are made out of sound syllables. Hence also the words in the subconscious are sounds. And because of the emotional values attached to them, they are not just sounds, but songs, music. The entirety of the subconscious thus might sound like fire or a waterfall, with the overall sound as an interplay of so many little sounds. The music is continuous, yet only the loudest sounds are heard by the

conscious mind and they are often triggered from there as well, as well as by the sense organs.

The power of sound is one of the greatest powers of yoga, especially when used in *mantra* or seed sound meditation→10.3.1. It can very directly affect the music of the subconscious, which is also its atomized understanding. Just like the sound of a *mantra* is more powerful than its meaning, the energy of our inner music is more powerful than whatever conceptual understanding is attached to it.

Thus, the words in our subconscious not only become more abstract as we move deeper inside. They are also increasingly reduced to their essential energies, expressed as sound frequencies→9.1.2. In deeper meditation, this may be directly experienced→10.3.1.

### *Narrow-mindedness*

When we move about in life, we tend to look for that which we deeply know as pleasurable, while trying to avoid that which we remember as painful or uncomfortable. The subconscious however naturally mistrusts anything which is so new that it cannot be understood through past experiences. Whatever is thus not recognized, is often feared, hated, or simply labeled as 'irrelevant' or even 'nonexistent'.

Some historians believe that language development in prehistory did not start with common, practical things, which could more easily be pointed at than named. The first words thus would not have been apple, tree or stone, but rather sun, moon, stars, river, water, light, death. Naming these rather incomprehensible things not just gave a feeling of understanding them. It also brought a sense of power, a way of controlling that fear of the unknown. Oh that, that is the sun, case closed, nothing important. While the mystery has not disappeared, it feels as if known once we name it.

The subconscious may thus block us from accepting the unknown, the intangible, the truth beyond words. Accepting the unknowable is contrary to the very function of the subconscious, which is to classify and value everything, safely put it in a labeled box. We have to be always aware of this tendency of the subconscious to reject that which does not yet fit within its prior programming, also while reading any book.

### *The origin of the Ego*

At the center of it all, we find the most essential word 'me' or 'I', to which all other words are related. That relationship is there in the fundamental separation between 'me' or 'not me'. It is here that we find our dear Ego<sup>(AHAMKARA)</sup>, the 'I-maker', in

its most essential form.

We identify as 'me' with the physical body, with the feelings in our energy body, with the thoughts in our conscious mind, with the impulses produced by the subconscious and maybe also with the next layer, the blissful energy emerging from the Self. The Ego thus has no body of its own, being just like a bunch of ideas in the subconscious taking their totality very seriously.

The Ego is a reflection of the Self in the subconscious, when the awareness of 'I' seeks an answer to the question 'Who am I?' in our various bodies. It is like the reflection of the moon in a puddle of water, which a child might take for real as it tries to grab it. We cannot find the Self in the bodymind, only in the 'I am' of our awareness.

Still, we mostly identify with what we see as personal, which for most people starts in the physical body. From the identification with the physical body, we also tend to identify with things outside of us, start seeing physical things as part of us. This identification manifests in 'mine' and 'not mine', 'I want' and 'I don't want', 'I like' and 'I dislike'. This process is not limited to physical things. It includes opinions for example, which depend on identification with some content of the conscious and subconscious minds. And it obviously also includes other beings.

While a majority of the concepts thus

stored in the subconscious may be labeled as 'irrelevant', the number of 'important' identifications that make up the entirety of our Ego is still vast. And all tend to produce and reproduce in us certain more or less powerful tendencies<sup>(VASANAS)</sup> to think, feel and act in particular ways, whether uplifting or not. Some of them we may easily change, just by changing our mind about them. Others are more resistant to the power of the conscious mind and we keep repeating them from the subconscious, such as bad habits.

Desires and aversions may emerge from all layers of our being. The elements of the physical body are a primary source, triggered by the life force as it interacts with the elements in the energy centers of the *pranic* body<sup>→4.4.1</sup>. Desires and aversions may be further amplified by the capacity for fantasy of the conscious mind. Yet it is in the subconscious that these truly gain power, as we attach to them, which is primarily a subconscious identification process.

Fortunately, we do not only repeat our mistakes. Every day we also try to repeat our successes. Our Ego gets to decide which is which. To change our tendencies, desires and aversions at their source is the true spiritual growth<sup>→3.8</sup>. Whatever we come to understand in our conscious mind, it can only gain true meaning if the subconscious accepts to be reprogrammed accordingly.

It is truly mysterious how the subconscious is said to contain our *karmic* impressions<sup>→3.6.1</sup>. They produce not just our *karmic* tendencies to act in certain ways, but also *karma* as destiny itself. Whatever happens to us is thus said to be attracted by our own inner vibrations. The songs of the subconscious are ever heard by the universe and somehow it responds. Life provides us with the experiences needed to bring the music into the conscious and allows us to finetune our inner tunes.

### *Impersonal programming*

Not all of that Ego content is personal however. Some of it clearly relates to the body we are born in. The subconscious holds genetic memories of our bloodline. It has information that is available to large ethnic groups, such as a talent for Salsa. Some is typical for humanity at large, such as the ability to appreciate music, which is of course at the same time influenced by personal experiences.

As humans and chimps share a surprising 98.8 percent of their DNA, especially our animal nature is found here, like in possessiveness or territorial behavior. These animal instincts are usually associated with the reptile brain, while the desire to cuddle comes more from our mammal programming.

It is said that gods only give, demons

only take and human beings do the business of give and take. We can thus see our animal nature also as that which makes us into takers→4.10.3. Humans usually feel that stealing is really bad, while among animals it is shamelessly common, both in between species, as within the same species, and even in a clan or family. Just watch the birds in the garden fight over the food offered to them. We can see this as natural and harmless since animals do not have the human brain that allows taking that selfishness to the next level. Selfishness is nevertheless in origin a survival trait programmed within our bodymind.

Sometimes we may feel surprised to see our behavior explained through that of animals and vice versa. How is it possible? Because we share some part of our subconscious programming, which still very much rules our conscious actions. As those animal instincts keep us alive, we should be grateful for them, yet also see how they may lead us astray from a happy human life.

Many of our actions, such as breathing, digesting or walking, are usually regulated subconsciously. Even more complex actions such as driving can be done without thinking about them. Many of our reactions to what others do or say just happen from beyond thought. We are not robots that cannot move beyond their original programming, nevertheless even

our conscious decisions are largely preprogrammed. Very much like in an AI computer, our programming and the related understanding just evolves.

Some of this programming must also be recognized as a conscious conditioning by others, found in raising kids, school education or media manipulation. With good or bad intent, we are taught to fear or hate this and that, as well as to want or need certain things to feel good about ourselves, or to feel accepted by others. Conditioning is a terrible word, while also fairly natural, part of a learning process. Continuously we program, deprogram, reprogram.

The Russian scientist Pavlov showed us long ago how dogs could be conditioned to salivate at the sound of a bell, if that sound was repeatedly presented at the same time that they were given food. We must thus realize that our conditioning does not only manifest in us through conscious thought. A lot of understanding is subconscious, existing beyond thought and created beyond thought. This is especially true during childhood, but it is still happening.

### *Our soul*

Where are our subconscious data thus stored as words, sound frequencies or energies? Science will mostly point to the midbrain, hindbrain and brain stem. Some



information that is more common, inherited from various life forms that precede us, is directly found in our DNA and all related information molecules in the physical body. Yet according to *vedic* science, the subconscious mind is not limited to the parts of the body it uses. The song of the subconscious is heard within our very soul, which is the subtle body of the subconscious.

The soul<sup>(JIVA)</sup> is defined in *yogic* science as the energy body that travels from one physical body to the next, in the mysterious process of reincarnation<sup>→2.7.2</sup>. The subconscious layer of our soul is thus personal, while the Self is impersonal. The soul is our most central individual beingness, as shown in Image 3. It also 'contains' the impersonal Self and the layer of bliss.

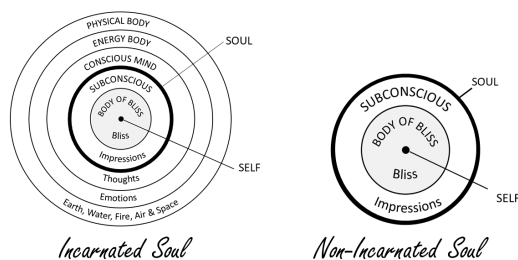


Image 3 – The individual soul.

Some of the tendencies we are born with originate in past lives. They are not just the result of the random recombination of the genes of our parents. Any parent knows that a baby

shows a highly unique character within weeks of being born. The journey of the soul through many lives and spiritual dimensions is described further on<sup>→2.7.2</sup>. The subconscious can thus be seen as our soul's very database, based in its personal history throughout many lives.

### *Cosmic Intelligence*

The layer of the subconscious mind sort-of has an outside and an inside. The outside of the layer is the interface with the conscious mind. Its words are more concrete and the content is more personal and memory related. On the inside however, words become more abstract and universal. They are called the cosmic intellect<sup>(BUDDHI)</sup>, from which the name Buddha originates.

This knowing is impersonal and is seen as a manifestation of cosmic intelligence, the most pure 'wording' that the awareness of the Self may trigger in our subconscious mind. The cosmic intellect is like a universal potentiality rather than some kind of divine encyclopedia, as it does not hold words. The seeing of the Self manifests cosmic intelligence in our subconscious, producing some more essential understanding there. When those new insights are accepted by the subconscious, they become in a way again personal, even if their language might remain more abstract and

universal.

The more close we move within the layer of the subconscious in the direction of the Self, the more the understanding that we find is thus truly universal, no longer time-bound even. Our cosmic intelligence makes us see beyond what all happened in the past, towards what always is, has been and will be, in every now. Pure seeing, the essence of intuition, is found here→2.6.1. For most people however, the outer layer of the subconscious produces too much noise to hear the subtle whispers of the innermost layer.

Within the layer of the subconscious, *vedic* science will thus often separate the more personal content of the Ego from the universal content inspired by the cosmic intellect. In the theatre of our inner dialogues, they play very different roles. A rather revealing old metaphor sees the physical body as a country, managed by the conscious mind as its administration. Our deep Ego is then the king who has to take all decisions, advised upon by the wise advisor that is the intellect, and inspired by the Self, which is god almighty.

### *Transforming Karmic Tendencies*

The rather logical task at hand is to bring the subconscious into the conscious and reprogram it. The challenge may feel truly overwhelming, given the vastness of

our inner content. Thinking and feeling are not the same thing, precisely because of the immense power of this content. While part of it is personal and our own doing, some of it as explained is even impersonal, a burden shared by all, in DNA, etc. It seems like an impossible endeavor to unravel all that, until we realize that there is another way, which does not depend on handling each little inner sound one by one.

As explained before, every word stored in the subconscious relates to the single word 'I'. It is the Ego, the identification and attachment that gives power to these words. If we can exclude the central player in this game, it ends. The words and memories may still exist, but without the Ego they will have no more power. They will all basically be labeled as 'irrelevant' in the subconscious.

In the words of Ramana Maharishi - who was introduced in the Introduction - 'All *karmic* tendencies are attached to the Ego and it is thus that they can also be dissolved through disidentifying from the Ego.' Thus we may escape from the impact of our earlier programming, from our childhood, from our past lives, from the reptile brain, even from our very DNA. Only then can we truly move from 'I am number one' to 'we are one'.

This is the path of yoga and meditation, and especially of deep meditation. Again quoting Ramana: 'Through a deeper state

of deep meditation<sup>(NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI)</sup> all the knots of the *karmic* tendencies are loosened and all past *karmanas* destroyed, so that the light of the Self is experienced without effort, inwardly and outwardly, and at all places and times.' This deep transformation of ourselves, which also increasingly brings access to our cosmic intelligence, is the true objective of this book.



### 1.5.5. THE BODY OF BLISS

This is the deepest layer of our individual beingness, centered around the Self. Yet the Self is not limited to that layer or place, as it is omnipresent, in every layer and place. The body of bliss<sup>(ANANDAMAYIKOSHA)</sup> holds the energy that is the most direct manifestation of the Self, while it is not the Self. The Self also has an energy, but that energy is unmanifested, a potentiality, which is a rather abstract story<sup>8</sup>.

The body of bliss holds the essential manifested energy from which all other energies are manifested. So all layers of our being originate in our most subtle body, which is ever peacefully happy. It holds no words and is unaffected by any pleasure or pain experienced in the other layers. Its energy is directly 'fed' by the Self

on a continuous basis. Contrary to the *pranic* energy out of which all other bodies are made, the energy of this blissbody is beyond polarity<sup>→4.2.4</sup>. Hence it exists beyond action and inaction<sup>→4.2.1</sup>, as all action is created by the polarity of *prana*.

We can indirectly experience the bliss of this layer when through increasing Self-awareness its gentle vibration starts influencing the other layers. To fully and directly experience this subtle body, we have to really withdraw all of our attention from all other layers. That is only possible in the deepest phase of deep meditation<sup>→13.2.4</sup>.

Even then, the body of bliss is part of the illusion, with the risk of attachment to this peaceful happiness. So we even have to let go of the desire for that feeling to reach the end point. If after meditating we attach to the resulting bliss, we destroy it.

What more to say? We're in this yoga game for the bliss, for that happiness which is Self-sustained. I can only wish for everyone to succeed in that objective. Knowing however that even the auspicious desire for bliss must ultimately meet our equanimity, it is all part of a letting go of everything, rather than a seeking. What we seek is right here, right now. We are that.

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<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 2 of 'Tantric Advaita, Energizing Nonduality', by Peter Marchand, self-published at Amazon 2021.



## 1.6. Deep Transformation

Life itself teaches us, transforms us, shapes us all the time. Yet that can go either way, towards more blockage or more flow, attachment or detachment, illusion or Self. All *yogic* and other disciplines, all therapies and healings, all wisdom and ideals, thus serve the same goal. They gradually transform our subconscious programming towards more universal intelligence, peace and happiness, whether more or less directly.

Nevertheless, without the ultimate transformation power of deep meditation, letting go of the multitude of profound attachments of our subconscious personality is an impossible task. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the most central yoga scripture<sup>9</sup>, clearly state that the observer can only fully know itself, if the attention can be entirely withdrawn from its objects, meaning everything else.

The English term 'deep meditation' is actually quite misleading, as it just gives the impression of a really good meditation. The original word *Samadhi* is very clearly described as a highly specific and entirely abnormal state of inner absorption<sup>→13.2.1</sup>. Simultaneously it is regarded as our most natural original

state, our seed state<sup>→13.5.1</sup>. *Samadhi* is the culmination of all practice, bringing us beyond practice. *Samadhi* is the principal *yogic* practice that makes a *yogi* into a master of yoga or union.



### 1.6.1. ALL IS AS ONE

*Samadhi* literally means that all is perceived as one<sup>→13.2.1</sup>. It is called the fourth state of being, next to the waking state, the dream state and deep sleep. It is like a peculiar kind of sleep, a trance, where we lose awareness of the physical body without losing awareness altogether at all. In this state of deep meditation, the Ego seems temporarily lost, leaving only the awareness of the Self, experienced in the body of bliss and even beyond<sup>→13.2.4</sup>.

There are no words that come close to this experience. It is just a passing phase of course, a mere taste of enlightenment. Body consciousness, our emotions, the conscious mind, the subconscious and the Ego are naturally revived at the end of it<sup>→13.2.5</sup>. Yet, *Samadhi* only needs to happen once to change everything.

That 'I', which is the central creator of all valued content in the subconscious, will have gained a lot of power and confidence. But it will also be so much more relaxed and detached from this content as a result of it. Automatically, in

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<sup>9</sup> Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, verse 1.4.

one clean effortless sweep one might say, all those innumerable little songs of the subconscious will have changed tone. As the one central parameter in our programming is altered by the deep meditation experience, the entire program adjusts→13.4.4.

Following that experience, people's personalities tend to show quite fundamental changes. A rather doubting, timid nature may fully disappear, astonishing everyone. Some kind of self-sabotage, such as frequent resistance against taking proper care of our body, suddenly is no more. New talents in art and music may be discovered. Spiritual books that before were hard to get, now seem entirely transparent. And above all, a smile comes so much more easily.

In the first hours or days after a true *Samadhi* experience, that smile seems glued to our faces. While we are back in the waking state, we still feel very connected to that other place we just visited. The entire universe looks ridiculous as a result and yet so very lovable. Hence the smile. We will talk more about coming out of a deep meditation experience, so that we do not block its naturally manifesting effects→13.3.3.

The state of *Samadhi* is in some ways similar to the hibernation of animals. It likewise involves the shutting down of the physical body, which is not the case in deep sleep. After a while even the heart

will stop, breath will stop, everything but the tiniest vibrations will stop. In the chapter on deep meditation we will explore at length what all this means→13.2.4. The more the body shuts down, the more we lose our awareness of it, which is the key to enter *Samadhi*.

*Samadhi* starts when the conscious mind falls asleep and we lose our awareness of the body, along with our connection to the sense organs. It is like sleeping without sleeping, but it is different from dreaming because the conscious mind is no longer active. Any other deep experience, while we are still aware of sitting there, is not that.



## 1.6.2 EVOLUTIONS IN SAMADHI

Our first *yogic Samadhi* will be a life changing experience, while it is only a new beginning. To attain the ultimate objective of enlightenment, the cumulative effect of multiple *Samadhis* will be needed. *Samadhi* is also not the end point because it has many levels, a gradual letting go of all layers of our existence→13.2.4. While the first experience may only take a few minutes, we gradually move towards ever longer trances that may last many hours, if not more.

At often astonishing speed, this process will change our personality, until it finally becomes so relaxed and flexible

that it ceases to have relevant existence. Hence it is said that we attain natural *Samadhi*, where the trance state extends even to the waking state→13.5.



### 1.6.3. PRAY FOR PATIENCE

We will further on explore how to detect the occurrence of *Samadhi* in our meditation practice→13.2.2. Yet *Samadhi* is not something that can be done→12.2. We can only create the circumstances for it to happen. So while we should never lose sight of that precious jewel, we cannot be too eager for it. Ultimately, willpower has nothing to do with it. Tiptoe inside, don't make a sound, don't scare away that which cannot be found<sup>10</sup>.

After getting our first tastes of deep meditation, which might happen quite rapidly, it becomes more difficult again. Honestly, it will take most people years of sustained practice to master *Samadhi*, even if some beginner's luck is involved→13.2.3. To have the power to consciously bring ourselves to the point where the grace of *Samadhi* can happen, it takes time and effort.

For my original teacher Harish Johari→Story1, it only took about 10 minutes to enter *Samadhi*, after which we could no

### Story 1 Meeting My Teacher of Truth



*Once upon a time, I met master Sri Harish Johari, who became my principal teacher (SATGURU). He was a successful author, a gifted painter and sculptor, a splendid cook, an ayurvedic massage miracle, a wonderful chanter of mantras and a unique composer of Indian music. To me he was mostly such an inspiring teacher, but he did not think that to be very important. He was a magical person, stirring things inside of me with a warmth that was really addictive. He effortlessly combined universal beingness with individual character, always so clear about the subjectivity and objectivity of his teachings. His knowledge was so vast that it felt like he could answer any question in full detail. My limited understanding is entirely shaped by him and this book would not exist if I had not been fortunate to meet him when I was only 20 years old. If that would not have happened as it did, for sure the course of my life would have been entirely different.*

<sup>10</sup> Paraphrasing myself here from the last chapter of 'The Yoga of Truth – The Ancient Path of Silent Knowledge' by Peter Marchand, Destiny Books 2007.

longer detect any heartbeat or breath. It takes quite a bit longer for most practitioners that are already able to attain such a state. It still takes me half an hour to one hour or longer for *Samadhi* to make its appearance, and there is no guarantee. Anyhow the first *Samadhi* is just a start. Who knows how long the full enlightening of our programming will take? We embark here on quite a long journey, which may last more than a lifetime.

So, we hold our horses. We realize that this is the greatest of ambitions, the practical expression of the ultimate desire for liberation. Most people are not at all ready to accept this challenge. Most people that are interested in meditation are not able to deal with that kind of expectation and the frustrations that it may bring. Many people picking up this book now, may only be ready for it many years later. Let it remain on their bookshelf until the time is right. Expectation is the trap.



## 1.7. The Divine Ego

Any impatience thus represents wrong understanding, wrong method, the wrong approach altogether. We have to hold our spiritual Ego<sup>→2.8.3</sup> in check and that is not

easy, because this path does require quite some effort. We will have to sacrifice at least some other attachments to walk the full length of it. We may tend to compensate for that by inflating our self-image, hiding our Ego in spiritual wrapping paper.

The objective of *Samadhi* must be simultaneously forgotten and always remembered. Very essentially, we accept ourselves the way we are, while improving, moving further, as indeed we can. We enjoy our own song, yet that just motivates us to compose the next one.

We all have this incredibly funny and tragic tendency to keep searching for the ultimate instant solution. We want to jump right now straight to the end point, from wherever we are. That is also why many teachers are still selling such so-called ultimate solution.

Yet no *mantra*, idea, exercise or power will be sufficient on its own. Such ultimate, powerful practice - and there are many - can only fulfill its promise after we have followed the path to the point where we are ready. When all obstacles have been removed, only the last non-step needs to be taken. There are no true shortcuts and very often it is only our impatience that causes us to disagree with anything other than an instant path<sup>→10.6.1</sup>.

Whoever keeps looking for some ultimate solution forgets that there is no ultimate problem. That which we truly are,

is enlightened already. However dark our days may sometimes appear, that light is indestructible, always at hand in our presence. The Ego and its programming are just a natural thing, an assumed identity that suits our manifested existence. Along with the entire universe, it is itself a manifestation of the unmanifest Self. There is nothing wrong with the theatre of life as long as we do not take our roles in it too seriously. Our desired transformation is actually a matter of natural evolution.



### 1.7.1. SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

This gradual relaxation of the Ego can be seen most clearly in the natural maturing of its desires. As our life force continuously interacts with the five elements of the body in the energy centers called *chakras*<sup>→4.4</sup>, a variety of desires are experienced in the bodymind. The Ego's attachment to these desires naturally evolves, as they are satisfied to some degree and more refined and rewarding tastes are developed.

Actions and efforts to fulfill our desires are part of this process of spiritual growth. As a desire is fulfilled, the experience causes us to look for something better. The understanding of the desires of the *chakras* shown in Image 4 brings so much insight into life and ourselves.

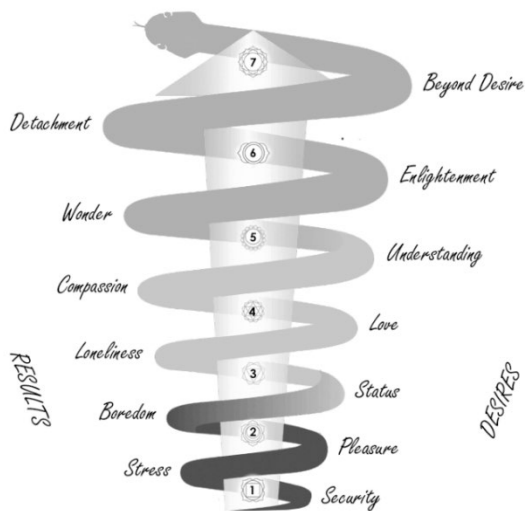


Image 4 – The desires of the elements in the chakras & the results of fulfilling them.

The density of the earth element creates the fixed physical form of the body, producing the 1<sup>st</sup> *chakra* desire for security of this form. As we secure our needs and survival through the fruits of our work, that desire becomes less. It then matures into wanting some enjoyment to compensate for the never-ending stress of working to secure ourselves, as our security will never be 100%.

The juice of the water element generates a variety of feelings, producing the 2<sup>nd</sup> *chakra* desire for enjoyment. As we thus satisfy mind and the senses in high variety, that desire becomes less. It then matures into wanting to achieve something to compensate for the satiation or boredom produced by endless sensory and mental entertainment.

The light of the fire element makes us



aware of what people see in us, producing the 3<sup>rd</sup> *chakra* desire for social status. As we achieve our social goals and a feeling of popularity, that desire becomes less. It then matures into wanting real love to compensate for the loneliness that we experience in the emptiness of people's congratulations, labels and opinions.

The life force in the air element brings a feeling of kinship with other living beings, producing the 4<sup>th</sup> *chakra* desire for real, unconditional love. As we gather some loving family or community around us, that desire becomes less. It then matures into seeking better understanding to compensate for the suffering caused by lack of harmony in both ourselves as in our community. The more we open our heart, the more it seems to bleed and we want answers.

The distance produced by the space element manifests as the 5<sup>th</sup> *chakra* desire for observation and understanding. As we contemplate, listen and read, that desire becomes less. It then matures into the desire to fundamentally transform ourselves through meditative processes, seeking to compensate for the limited power of words to harmonize our ever-changing feelings.

The harmony in the super element that holds all elements<sup>(MAHA TATTVA)</sup> generates opportunities for real bliss, producing the 6<sup>th</sup> *chakra* desire for enlightenment. As we practice meditation and gain a level of

emotional stability, that desire becomes less. It then matures into giving up all desire to compensate for the tendency of any desire to break our inner silence, even the desire for silence.

In between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> *chakras*, the reprogramming of the Ego is happening in the most fundamental way, until in 7<sup>th</sup> *chakra* there are no words nor desires left. *Samadhi* is the main tool that produces this fundamental transformation.

There is more to say about our desires of course<sup>→4.4</sup> and as the true spiritual desire for enlightenment evolves, it also brings with it quite particular phases, called the seven steps to heaven<sup>→3.8.4</sup>. This ancient wisdom offers the main framework for evaluating our spiritual progress and adapting our practice accordingly. This evolution is a process that chiefly occurs in the subconscious.



## 1.7.2. THE HERO OF THE PATH

Yet who is climbing this stairway to heaven? And what is the role of deep meditation on the way? *Samadhi* cannot be done and to learn nondoing by doing seems illogical. The Self is who we already are, so what to do? The Self will not be doing anything about it, though its mere presence is sufficient to fulfill its endlessly inspiring role.

In some stages leading towards full

Self-awareness in *Samadhi*, the Ego's willpower is definitely needed. The doing that is required is however an undoing, at least a temporarily letting go of all our attachments and related stories and desires. The illusion of being someone separate must be deprogrammed before the truth of union can be fully accepted. The Ego is destroyed by the fire of Self-knowledge, only to rise like a phoenix from the ashes→13.4.4. Then we just play our individual role in manifesting that universal Self.

One might say that the Ego is a hopeless case. Whatever solution it sees for its problems holds the seed of future problems. It is like a person fearing to drown in a river and seeking to hold on to a variety of weeds growing on the shore. Yet time and again their impermanent nature causes them to break, while the Ego desperately tries to catch some others, instead of just going with the flow.

There are phases in spiritual growth where self-study reveals that useless nature of our Ego games, which may create a feeling of nihilism. Nothing makes sense anymore, no doing seems worthwhile. Our desires, though still clearly present, seem not worth any more effort. Yet we have only lost an illusion to gain the reality of the Self. This feeling of disdain for our pointless Ego games will

be turned to love. It will bring full awareness of the beauty of life and the naturalness of the spiritual growth of the Ego.

This undoing of itself is a glorious task that only the Ego can fulfill. Only the Ego can decide to meditate and let go. The Ego must sacrifice itself upon this path, freely offer up all its attachments. The Ego is thus the true hero of all spiritual progress<sup>11</sup>. The doer may be an illusion, while the illusion must find its own solution. Time is an illusion, but the illusion still requires it to merge into timeless reality.

Hence, in this process of reaching deep meditation, we take our time, but try not to waste it. Sometimes we will be more involved with it. Sometimes we will need or desire more involvement elsewhere. When we have some free time or even a lengthy holiday, we are free to invest some of it in this long-term project during a retreat→5.6. While we are actually just fine as we are, there is always room for growth.

*Samadhi* cannot be a goal in itself, as it is a new beginning, no end point. We will benefit as much from the path towards it, as from what comes after. *Samadhi* is thus the medium-term objective of our meditation practice, while from the start this activity will bring more peace and

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<sup>11</sup> See also 'Love Your Ego' by Peter Marchand, self-published at Amazon 2019.

happiness in our lives.

In every second, our Ego is showing its lovable, divine, original nature through the effort of relentlessly pushing upward, like a tree trying to grow more branches into the sky. It only requires us not to cling to any results, lest it becomes just a new Ego game. We know who we truly are and let our light manifest ever more brightly. It is not even exclusively ours, so why attach to any achievement? Our Ego carries the burden of choosing every move or non-move. To move forward, we must love the mover, our dear divine Ego. We are the heroes that walk the *yogic* path.



### 1.7.3. THE MEANING OF LIFE

While we have come this far, why not also answer the rather ultimate question? Since our life is bound to fundamentally change by the path described here, should we not first know what is the actual purpose of the game, the meaning of life?

It will always feel like a mystery of course, but somehow the *vedic* seers have given an explanation that is both logical and workable. It is a four-part answer that rests upon the absolute reality of Self-awareness:

1. The universe manifests from the Self.
2. This happens naturally, without reason.

3. The meaning of life lies with the players.
4. Enlightenment is the last level of the game.

So first, the universe is a manifestation of the unmanifested Self. If the universe would not manifest from the Self, it would be a reality by itself. Yet there can be no two absolute realities existing separately from each other. The Self is the absolute reality and the universe is the relative illusion that it creates.

Second, the manifestation of the universe happens naturally, without particular meaning, purpose or expectation. This is only logical since the Self has no desire and thus never does anything with a purpose 'in mind'. The seers usually point to the blissful energy<sup>(ANANDA)</sup> of the unmanifested Self as the source of universal creation. While it is beyond change in the Self, this unmanifested energy or *shakti* has the tendency or potential to change and thus naturally manifests the universe. Just like feeling really good makes us dance and do things without particular reason, the universe manifests from the bliss of the Self simply because it can. The question on the meaning of life is thus more a matter of 'Why not?', rather than one of 'Why?'.

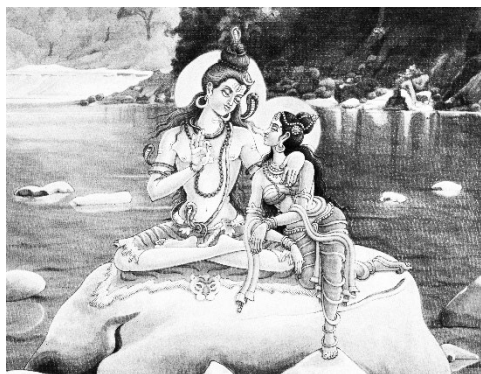
Third, as there exists no inherent or ultimate meaning to the game of life, only

we can give meaning to it and are entirely free to do so. That purpose can be found within the entertainment that the universe has to offer. Consisting of the five elements, it brings the natural desires related to the *chakras* already discussed<sup>1.7.1</sup>. All these desires ultimately serve our desire for happiness, which thus ever matures as our energy rises. Most will agree that the highest happiness that can be found within the illusion of the universe is in togetherness, love. It is the experience of unity in actual diversity, a game of hiding, seeking and finding.

Fourth, to find happiness independent of what happens in the universe is the last level of the game of life. This is the search for the undying happiness of the Self, known as enlightenment. It can thus be seen as the ultimate purpose of life, yet the manifestation of the universe is obviously not needed for it, since the Self is enlightened by itself. Hence the summum bonum can be found in a state of being manifested in life while being simultaneously anchored in full Self-awareness. This state is also known as natural<sup>(SAHAJA)</sup> *Samadhi*<sup>13.5</sup>, the result of multiple deep meditation experiences, the goal of this book.

Thus the game of life<sup>(LEELA)</sup> can be seen as a divine entertainment for us to enjoy. It was not created for us to escape from. The illusionary nature of the game<sup>(MAYA)</sup> is confusing, which is part of the fun. This

## Story 2 *The Game of Hide and Seek*



*Once upon a time, Shiva and Shakti were floating through nothingness in their eternal embrace. Somehow, Shakti said to Shiva: 'Oh dearest beloved, it is so nice to be together in endless peace, love and bliss. But sometimes it gets a little boring. Can we not play a game? My nature is energy, which is ever changing, so I would love to create a universe where my energy can play in endless variety.'. Then Shiva wondered 'Oh my dear, I am the consciousness that is never changing. So how can I enjoy that ever changing universe of yours?'. Shakti however had her answer at the ready: 'No worry honey, I will place you inside of everything, so that you are at the center of every thing and everything. The center never needs to change, only my energies swirling around it will change. Thus you can remain never changing and I can be ever changing. We will then lose and find each other again and again and we will have so much fun.'. Thus Shiva agreed, Shakti created the universe and the divine love game of hide and seek called Leela began.*

love game of hide and seek between consciousness and energy is beautifully illustrated in one of the many *vedic* creation stories<sup>←Story2</sup>.

While playing, we can nevertheless escape from the unhappiness caused by the ever-changing nature of the game.

The clue is to remain detached from anything happening in the game and identified with the absolute reality inside. The path that leads towards this heaven on earth is the path of *Samadhi*. And we are all free to walk it.

