

**THE VEDIC WAY AND THE INDWELLING BEYOND:
SELF-ILLUMINATION THERAPY THROUGH A WESTERNER'S EYE**
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(This short paper is a brief and subjective summary of the Vedic Way of Self-Illumination, gathered from the Self-Illumination Therapy Training Intensive taught by scholar Joan Shivarpita Harrigan of Patanjali Kundalini Yoga Care (PKYC). I've used italics in certain points of the paper to indicate my own thoughts on the subject. While I am a student in the Vedic tradition, I am also a Westerner with its own set of cultural roots, traditions and myths and it is why I've translated many Vedic terms into Western terminology as best I can trying to hold to the essence of the root word. There is much to digest in this paper. Consider taking pauses as you read the material so you can allow it to sink in and resonate inside.)

In the Vedic tradition, as in most other religious traditions, scriptural study is an important part of one's spiritual practice. As the mind focuses on God (the One and the All in One, Shiva and Shakti, the Heavenly Father and the Holy Ghost, the Ein Sof and Elohim, etc.), one begins to discern truth amidst untruth and the real from the unreal.

Spiritual philosophies exist to understand the elements of mind in an effort to quell the mind and ultimately go beyond the mind and sit in the silence of Truth.

The Urge to Wholeness

The ultimate and eventual purpose of life, the urge and calling within us all, is to unite our individual Self (Atman) with the Universal Self (Brahman). We are built to seek enlightenment, completion and wholeness. *On the other hand, we are also built to enjoy life, to create and to serve. This, too, is part of our inner urge. Experiencing the play of consciousness, the seesaw of joy and suffering, is a part of our purpose in life.*

The means to enlightenment include three key elements:

1. Intense concentration with deep feeling
2. A healthy body-mind where vital energy flows freely throughout the system
3. An ability to let go into the indwelling beyond

However, one must also realize that the individual and the Universal have never been separate and that this separation is only a figment of one's imagination and a limited and veiled perspective. However, most of us live with only occasional glimpses of this ultimate Truth (if we're lucky) and we are thus put on the path to discover and uncover the Truth within.

Each spiritual tradition has a path to follow and all paths lead to the One. The lineage I study with is a combination of Advaita Vedanta (Vedic non-dualism), Kundalini Science (Science of Spiritual Transformation) and Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. This lineage is currently known by the name Patanjali Kundalini Yoga Care or PKYC. In short, we are "monists who pray to God" (monists being those who believe and ultimately know that there is only One and no second; God being the manifestation of the One that can be seen, felt, heard, etc. at the subtlest of levels (i.e., Shakti, Goddess, Divine Mother, Divine Presence, the Mystery, Holy Spirit, Tree of Life, the Superconscious Universe etc.).

Although we know there is only One, we live in a dualistic world with a dualistic mind-set that incorporates evolution towards God, our One True Self, we pray to God up to the point that a manifest God no longer exists and we "finally" merge and recognize our True Self, a Self that is not and has never been separate.

Qualifications of a Student

We began the intensive learning about the qualifications of being a student of the Vedic Way. Before one is ready to learn spiritual truths, one must meet the qualifications of a student. Oddly, the qualifications of a competent student read like a student who has already reached enlightenment!

One has a general comprehension of all the major spiritual texts (Vedas), is free from sins (through being free from desire and forbidden actions), performs daily rites and special occasion obligatory rituals, is entirely pure in mind, and has adopted the four means to spiritual attainment (discrimination, dispassion, virtues, intense desire for realization).

Wow. This is a high bar and suggests that it is advanced material. Whoa to those who enter this path prematurely. Carol Whitfield writes about this eloquently and in detail in her 2002 dissertation called The Jungian Myth and Advaita Vedanta. The four means to spiritual attainment are worth describing in more detail in order to discern how they might differ for the Eastern and the Western mind.

The four qualifications of a student are:

1. **Discrimination**- knowing the real from the unreal, knowing that lasting happiness doesn't come from external events
2. **Dispassion**- freedom from the six enemies: lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy, which when not used in moderation, conscious awareness and with discrimination will succeed in causing a student to lose one's "perfect equilibrium".

3. **The Six Values and Virtues-** 1) one pointedness or the ability to view thoughts as objects and dismiss them at will, 2) internal rather than external sensing, 3) dharmic/righteous living, 4) endurance, 5) faith/self confidence, and 6) stillness of mind.
4. **Yearning for Liberation-** intense yearning for Self-Realization.

Now, here is a more detailed discussion of the first two qualifications—starting with the most problematic one first—along with some of the limitations and hazards for the Western mind.

Dispassion/Equanimity- *Dispassion might be described as the ability to be dispassionate towards one's "negative" emotions and dispassionate towards thinking that one can attain happiness through external experiences.*

The Vedantic emphasis on dispassion can be problematic for the Western mind since one might think dispassion means having no passion (or attachment/love) and one might even turn dispassion into dissociation. So, I've added the word equanimity in order to include the idea that it's not the "negative" emotions that are the problem but the inability to create enough distance so that one can avoid being swamped and overtaken by them. Other words that could help add nuance would be temperance and moderation. What is important is to find the "just right" balance between passion and dispassion, between attachment and non-attachment—the zero point, where true freedom is found.

In the field of trauma therapy, the term "containment" is used, meaning the ability to expand one's field of awareness, presence and feeling so that one can feel the intense feelings without being overwhelmed by them. Containing doesn't mean suppression or controlling feelings but rather providing enough space for them to be felt in a larger "holding" environment.

Because the Eastern mind has, at least in the past, much less disruptive psychic material from the unconscious, it is easier to let "small" thoughts and feelings go since they are already assimilated in a healthy way. The "current" Western mind and myth lacks the shadow/destructive side of God and thus ended up burying this dark side deep within the unconscious. This deep shadow material is simply too much for the basic practice of dispassion to handle when it emerges and too often the Western mind has to resort to dissociation in order to maintain their practice of dispassion. Rather than being dispassionate towards the shadow side, we actually need to feel more of it before we can let go of it.

By bringing in the feelings from the unconscious—by allowing, tolerating and integrating them—one can then practice dispassion or expansive containment in a healthy way. Engagement and equanimity enable a person to feel intense emotions with a presence of mind and a sense of compassion. It allows a person to be able to enjoy positive experiences and "suffer well" the negative experiences in equal measure. It is part of the creative, dualistic aspects of the Self, of Kundalini Shakti, the Divine Presence. It is my sense that the

Vedic tradition overemphasizes dispassion while neglecting the equally important skill of embodiment, engagement and equilibrium. Being dispassionate doesn't mean one has to lose one's capacity to feel.

Discrimination- *Discrimination is the ability to see the "swinging pendulum" nature of manifest reality—swinging from good to bad, from success to failure, from happiness to sadness—and to see that only the one Absolute Reality is eternal. It is what enables us to be dispassionate and live with equanimity. It enables us to be somewhat wary of our joys and to try to grow from our sorrows. While suffering is a challenge, it often leads to self-transformation while joy does so much more rarely. This qualification is less problematic for the Western mind.*

Onepointedness/Non-attachment to Thoughts- *The first of the "six values and virtues" can also lead to problems for a Western mind. As Carol Whitfield states,*

"The techniques which Vedanta offers for becoming a qualified student do not deal with the problems of the unconscious...Though these techniques are useful, no doubt, for dealing with the conscious mind, they are not meant to work with the unconscious mind. In fact, they perform the opposite function of closing off the unconscious by holding focus of the ego on consciousness alone, dismissing thoughts that may arise from the unconscious and recentering the mind on the pure consciousness of the Self...The modern person is holding too much material in the unconscious for these techniques to be effective."¹

Certainly, it's a high bar just to be able to say one is a true and worthy student. However, there are real hazards for most Westerners when attempting to meet these qualities and they should be addressed so that spiritual bypassing is avoided. At the very least, a student should take the desire to be a good student seriously and with great care. Here would be another list, appropriate to Westerners:

- 1) Have a tranquil mind by assimilating one's unconscious material*
- 2) Be eager for liberation or union with God*
- 3) Have deep faith (made up of self-confidence and confidence in Self)*
- 4) Notice and feel the presence of God within by focusing awareness of one's mind and heart on the One.*

A qualified student lives with attachment and dispassion in moderation; the middle way becomes the sweet spot, which opens and drops one into the here, the now and the indwelling beyond.

The Vedic Way (aka, Sanatana Dharma)

Much like the Tao, the Vedic tradition explains a spiritual way of being and way of life that underlies and describes a righteous culture. The Vedic Way is imminent and transcendent; it

¹ The Jungian Myth and Advaita Vedanta, Dr. Carol Whitfield, written 1992, published 2009.

is individual and Universal; it is here and beyond; it is both monistic and polytheistic; it is experimental and experiential, allowing one's own self to be the subject in the study of spiritual science; it sees ignorance veiling Reality; it is idealistic, paradoxical, and ineffable and has coexisting opposites; it is a way that one must live and allow rather than ensnare and capture; it encourages moderation in all things except yearning.

According to some, all major religions and spiritual traditions were created eons ago by Star People/the Realized Ones (aka, the Rishis) who came from the Pleiades to seed our Earth in spiritual awareness. The Vedic, Egyptian, Jewish, Christian, Celtic, Taoist paths among others all came from this original source. For some, this may be a helpful way to see that all great paths have similar roots. Unfortunately, in the excitement to share our deepest truths and our lineage and spiritual path (aka, religion) with others, those who have written about and those who speak about one's way to God often use hyperbole so that one's lineage is seen as the first and the best. (Hence the bumper sticker "God, protect me from your followers.")

Read nearly any of the world's great religious texts or listen to proponents of these religions and you will see and hear the hyperbole. It's lovely in a way, especially if one can see this as exuberance more than truth. However, it can also be misleading. We should read religious texts with a grain of salt and use our higher mind and deeper heart, otherwise we are likely to get triggered, defensive and perhaps confused comparing one religion to another. Each tradition has amazing things to offer and one must use discrimination when sorting through the hyperbole.

Despite the hyperbole, what struck me about this is imagining that a whole culture could be structured around these truths. Looking at much of our current Western culture, one sees the various Gods we worship, including money, science and an overtly good Christian God (Christ). Our knowledge about God, the True Nature of Reality, the essential nature of God, is our defining myth and informs everything we do. Having a true and whole knowledge of the Self is one of the most important things we can do. Everything flows from there.

Vedanta, Shankara, Kundalini Science

Vedanta, the last part of the Vedas known as the Upanishads, describes a philosophy that uses self-knowledge and discernment to distinguish the real from the unreal. Advaita Vedanta is one of the seven principle systems or revelations (truths seen in a higher state of consciousness) of Hindu philosophy and focuses on pure, non-dual awareness. The other principle systems include Buddhism, Yoga, "Duty" (Mimamsa), "Dualism/Evolution" (Samkhya), and "Logic" (Nyaya).

Shankara is the original teacher of Vedic Non-dualism (Advaita Vedanta) and combines the spiritual science of Yoga, Vedanta and Kundalini Science in his text Tattva Bodha. This text focuses on the four qualifications listed previously.

The Four Stages of Vedic Life

Life is composed of four basic stages:

1. **Student**- rigorous discipline and education, which trains body and mind.
2. **Householder**- family life and serving as a productive member of society.
3. **Retirement**- giving up the responsibilities of home and taking up a life of meditation; loosening the bonds to the world.
4. **Renunciation**- beyond the social order, intent on liberation and self-knowledge.

Three Qualities of Nature (Gunas)

Our world is made up of three qualities of nature: 1) **active and ambitious** (rajas), 2) **inert and dull or dark** (tamas) and 3) **peaceful and balanced** (sattva). We each have an interplay of these three and our unique interplay determines our constitution and temperament. All three qualities have their purpose.

The active/ambitious quality is and can be restless, driven, greedy, intense and stressed. When in balance, it is dynamic and useful in getting things done.

The inert/dull quality is and can be dense, inactive, stubborn and attached to miscomprehension. When in balance, it is a source of stability and groundedness and is a cohesive force that holds things together often in a restful, inactive state.

The peaceful/balanced quality is and can be filled with wisdom, light, happiness, and an evenness of mind, is centered, subtle and beautiful. Most spiritual paths point to and develop this quality for spiritual development and awakening. *Trauma seems to be a combination of the active (fight/flight) and the inert (freeze) qualities.*

Five Temperaments Influencing One's Role in Life

As the qualities of nature interact in each one of us, they also seem to form loosely (and with great generalization) into five main categories. These categories are and should be fluid, exchangeable, and right-fitting rather than rigid and pre-determined. The interplay of our own qualities of nature often create a certain "fit" into certain cultural roles or a combination of roles.

1. **Spiritual/Intellectuals**- custodians of wisdom, counselors, teachers, artists, etc.
2. **Rulers/Warriors**- managers of the structure of society
3. **Merchants/Manufacturers**- creators of goods for society
4. **Service/Laborers**- simple skilled workers who serve and help build
5. **Beyond/Outcast**- those who live outside society

In the Vedic tradition, it is the duty of the village or society to maintain the Spiritual-Intellectuals adequately but not lavishly. No power or great wealth was given to them. The right to bear arms in the Ruler and Warrior role came with the duty and requirement to manage one's emotions so that arms would be used only when necessary and in a noble and correct way. Too often in our current culture, our warriors and rules lack the emotional self-regulation to do so.

Four Goals of Life

The Vedic way also lays out four basic goals of life. Each of us follows one or more of these in our path here on earth. They are:

1. **Pleasure/Affection/Desire**
2. **Livelihood/Wealth**
3. **Righteous Duty/Responsibility**
4. **Spiritual Freedom/Union**

Each can be followed righteously and responsibly or selfishly and irresponsibly.

The natural desire for pleasure and emotional satisfaction can be a beautiful thing. It can provide comfort to self and others. It can teach the mind to be one-pointed, and it can lead to higher, more subtle pleasures such as the fine arts, sacred love, and sacred sex. However, if our desire for pleasure is out of balance, it becomes "hedonistic". The natural path of creating wealth and providing for one's family and one's community can lose focus and turn selfishly to "greed". Our righteous duty ("dharma") to our family and the common good can fail as we turn into a "slacker". And the path of spiritual freedom and the deep yearning for truth and liberation can lose depth and authenticity as we turn into a "pretender".

Four Major Spiritual Paths of Yoga

- 1) **Selfless Service** (Karma Yoga)- loving, selfless service to others, which requires discernment of what is ours to do and what is for others to do
- 2) **Devotion** (Bhakti Yoga)- love and devotion to and communion with God
- 3) **Knowledge** (Jnana Yoga)- wisdom based on self study, contemplation, scriptural study and meditation, so that one's higher mind becomes as clear as possible
- 4) **Systematic Awakening** (Raja Yoga)- holistic, eight limbed path which uses a systematic methodology of increasing difficulty, including:
 - a) Five Restraints or Don't Dos
 - b) Five Observances or Dos
 - c) Postures and Poses (Asanas)
 - d) Breath Regulation
 - e) Sensory Withdrawal or Internalization
 - f) Concentration
 - g) Meditation
 - h) Spiritual Absorption

Most world religions are a combination of Selfless Service (Karma Yoga) and Devotion (Bhakti Yoga). Few religions dive deep enough in to the spiritual truths embedded in the mystical teachings of that tradition given by the enlightened one(s) behind the religion, and which are hard to discern and follow. It is also said that the heart of a "devoted one" (or Bhakti) is a "wise one" (or Jnani) and the heart of a "wise one" (Jnani) is a "devoted one" (or Bhakti). However, these mystical teachings can be decoded if one only reads the spiritual

texts from the point of view of seeing it all as happening within one's very own self rather than outside one's self. The great spiritual teachers essentially were referring to an internal process and journey of awakening that can be achieved by anyone.

Kundalini Science (or the Science of Spiritual Transformation) can be seen as the underlying technology explaining why the four paths work. It focuses on the biggest picture of spiritual development and helps the sincere seeker use each path in the most efficient way. PKYC uses the technologies of all four paths in an individual way depending on one's temperament, obstacles, rising and current spiritual status.

Karma-The Law of Cause and Effect that Shapes Destiny

Karma, or the law of cause and effect that shapes destiny, is a real law that exists in all realms of reality (or sheaths) except for the all-encompassing Reality beyond dualism, at which point karma doesn't exist and has no truth. The path of Yoga and to a great extent the Vedic Way sees karma as a valuable way to describe a key aspect of manifest reality for most of us.

Karmas are the consequences of our past actions, which exist, in the unconscious mind. They are powerful mental constructs also known as patterns and seeds and are made up of:

- 1) **Latent tendencies** which exist at the "mythical story" level (samskaras) of mind
- 2) **Deep seated desires and fears** (stronger and deeper than our latent tendencies) which exist at the "repressed secrets" level (vasanas) of mind

Our karmas are like arrows that we have shot in the past which are now landing, arrows we are shooting now which will land sometime in the future, and seeds planted in our unconscious, which will sprout sometime in the future. In a way, these arrows or seeds create our destiny, not only in this life but in future lives.

Put another way, there are three types of karma:

- 1) Ones that are ready to be **experienced now** that have been created in the past
- 2) Ones that we are **currently creating and are storing** as seeds for the future
- 3) Ones that have been created in the past and are **still stored** as patterns and seeds that unfold at a later date

Cause and effect can even carry over from one lifetime to another. One way to describe the transition from one life to another (reincarnation) is that when a person dies, they get out of their car. And when that person is reincarnated, the Mother Divine gets them a new car and they continue life where they left off. The individual soul continues on the journey of evolution and Self-discovery.

Karmas can be individual, communal (tribal), or cultural. We each live with a combination of these three. Our task in life is to play the hand we are dealt. We have to "eat" what we're

served up and know that our present good actions will be our future meals. Our life is a series of facing the arrows that have been shot and the seeds that have been planted.

The Bhagavad Gita: A Vedic Classic if not the Vedic Bible

This "divine song" and classic text highlights the main concepts and practices of Hindu philosophy through the conversation between Arjuna (the common human) and Lord Krishna (God).

The conversation or discourse is delivered on the battlefield between Arjuna (with his noble efforts to move his family towards righteousness) and his family and elders (who cling to the old ways). It symbolizes the inner war we have between opposing forces of light and darkness in which we have to choose between doing the right thing of "cutting down the enemy" and loving our family at the expense of our spiritual growth.

Lord Krishna (God) counsels Arjuna (us) to fight and destroy the enemy. Arjuna is confused and paralyzed and finally says he will not fight. With this, God outlines the essential philosophy of life. The Self is eternal and the only Reality. Delusion arises from the duality of attraction and aversion; clarity arises from the knowledge of, devotion to, and faith in the eternal Self within. One-pointed concentration, discernment, selfless service, and constant love and devotion are the key elements in realizing the Self. "I am the true Self in the heart of every creature." One surrenders to the Divine Will and to one's own path in life (dharma).

Hearing this proclamation of Truth, Arjuna takes up his duty and his path in life and fights. "I will do your will."

While the whole conversation takes place on the battlefield it is also a metaphor for what takes place within our own body-mind for "the body is also called a field". We each experience the war within our own body-mind and its resolution and dissolution takes place within.

The Five Sheaths of the Human Being or The Veils of the Self (Koshas)

To understand the fullness of who we truly are, one needs to understand that we are made up of layers upon layers, from the gross physical layer of our body to the subtle layers of our energy, our mind, our higher intellect, our Illumined Self and our connection with the One True Self. The layers act as sheaths, which hold, protect, conceal, and connect one level of reality with another and ultimately covers The One, the Self, Pure Consciousness. The five sheaths are:

1. **Body Sheath** (gross, physical body of the waking state made up of the five elements: earth, water, fire, air, space)
2. **Vital Energy Sheath** (subtle body of the dreaming state made up of vital energy forces, subtle energy channels, and subtle body energy centers)
3. **Mind Sheath** (subtle body of the dreaming state made up of the lower sensory-motor mind, the ego mind, and the unconscious mind with our deep stories/mythologies and deep secrets/desires/fears)

4. **Discernment/Higher-Deeper Intellect Sheath** (subtle body of the [mostly] dreaming state made up of the quiet voice of insight (also called one's conscience), one's higher mind, and one's inner felt sense which all advance one's spiritual life)
5. **Limitless Love/Illumined Sheath** (causal body of the deep sleep state beyond mind, which is made up of pure awareness of limitlessness, wholeness, fullness and self-illuminated love.

I have followed the example of Dr. Carol Whitfield in using the terms limitlessness, fullness and love rather than bliss, as bliss often gives the misleading sense of it being an ecstatic experience rather than fullness. Fullness conveys a sense of limitlessness and wholeness and is experienced in the mind as love. While words fail at this level of being, we do use them and the slight difference in connotations can make a difference as we talk about them and use them to point to a certain experience.

Four States of Consciousness and the Three Realms or Worlds

Connected to the five sheaths of beingness are the four states of consciousness.

1. **Waking State and External World** (material existence experienced through the external senses and "surface" thoughts)
2. **Dreaming State and Subtle World** (subtle existence experienced through the deeper internal thoughts and subtle senses of the unconscious)
3. **Sleeping State and Celestial World** (causal existence experienced through momentary illumination and awareness of Oneness/the Self, stillness beyond thought)
4. **"Fourth State", "Beyond Worlds"** (all pervading existence/awareness and witness of the three states, totality of existence, knowledge and bliss or fullness)

Experiencing Different States of Consciousness

There is a distinct shift when one realizes that there are other worlds beyond the physical external world and it's a big deal when people without a previous experience of subtle forces and realities start looking into the internal, subtle or dream world. For those unaccustomed to feeling these internal states, it can be scary. And, it is often the ripening for entry into spiritual life. The key to a gentle entry is the Goldilocks perspective of finding "just the right fit" or experiencing "just enough".

Those with a Kundalini process (an activated psycho-spiritual process) live in the subtle field and internal world of the mind—and mind includes one's internal feelings and internal body sensations, which have consciousness. Some people can and do use gross, material substances and practices to facilitate the experience of the Divine, such as rituals, drugs, potions, etc.

At the subtle level, one uses thought, sounds, body postures/hand gestures, and mantras to facilitate this experience. What is important to recognize is that dreamtime, the internal

worlds, archetypes, and gods within are as real as the waking world. The rules and attributes may be different, but they are real nonetheless.

As one dives deeper into consciousness, the luminosity of the One shines more brightly into the dreamtime, subtle world. While this is not the final world or reality, it is increasingly real because it reflects more clearly the Self that shines within and is the cause of all manifest reality, internal and external.

The dream world is still a world of duality and some of the powerful entities that exist within can sometimes be malicious and self-aggrandizing. *However, they can also serve as guardians of the gate in service to our own development, depending on the relationship we have with these beings. These entities while powerful and dangerous often serve to protect us from more dangerous realms below, which if we aren't yet prepared for may bring us great harm. If we are able to face the power of these entities, perhaps even to face death, then we are allowed entry into the deeper levels within.*

While we all dream at night, living in the dream world means that we are actually aware of and participating in the subtle dream world while we are awake. Similarly, while we all sleep deeply at night, we are unaware of this deep sleep state. We feel good that we slept but the realm of deep sleep is consciously experienced only when we are aware of being "internally awake" in this state.

This deep sleep state is the "mmmmm" state (Makara). Think AUM or OM, where A is the waking state, U is the dreaming state and M is the deep sleep state. One enters the gap between thoughts and once truly established in this state, it is said that one's spiritual life truly begins. One's spiritual practice becomes easier and the work of the Divine Presence (Kundalini Shakti, Holy Spirit) happens when we live a peaceful and balanced life. The symptoms from the Divine Presence working in one's being often happen at night when one is relaxed enough to allow the Divine to remove toxins, burn issues, and move or remove obstacles.

It's interesting to note that the "Ahhhh" sound is often associated with opening of the heart, a grounding of spirit in the waking state. Also, the "Uuuuu" sound of the dreaming state is used by Peter Levine in his trauma therapy work. He uses the intonation "Voooo" with clients to open, expand and vibrate the viscera in order soften the belly and create a sense of safety, belonging and an "I-Thou" contact at the deepest levels (archetypal and secrets).

After one reaches the "mmmmm" state (Makara), the unloading happens. Before one reaches (and is fully established in the "mmmmm" state, things only get moved around; they don't have a chance to get unloaded. It's as if the deepest obstacles are so large that a larger force is required to burn through them or to dislodge them and allow them to melt and dissipate.

The “mmm” state is also where we catch the gap between thoughts, where a deep and perhaps sustained pause takes place. And, catching the gap between thoughts is like having a spiritual orgasm. The quiet fullness of the Divine shines through in a felt sense.

The "MMMMMM" State (Makara)

Getting to the deep sleep "mmmmm" state requires:

1. Intense concentration with deep feeling
2. Healthy and free flowing subtle energy/life breath
3. Having a spiritual focus and letting go into the indwelling beyond

Reaching "mmmmm" is often connected with an internal sense or experience of being welcomed home by celestial beings and great masters.

Rarely do most religions promote the goal of reaching the "mmmmm" state much less going beyond. Mystical traditions do this and many have been kept secret both for reasons of political oppression and for the safety of the seeker. The goal of a Christian is to move towards or get to the heart chakra (subtle body energy center) whereas the goal of a Yeshuite (or advanced practitioner of Christianity) is to go beyond the subtle body energy center of the heart and truly reach heaven, the crown energy center made up of 1000 subtle body brain "petals" of the subtle body brain, called by some the sky of the Heart.

Once at the "mmmmm" state, one is able to, more and more often, rest in the gap between thoughts and allow one's quiet voice of insight to focus on Pure Consciousness, One's True Self more and more often. This then informs an individual's way of being in the world. It guides and it shows. There is:

1. **More awareness and discernment** of the deeper and deepest truths
2. An experience of light and a **welcome by the adepts**
3. An ability to **witness one's thoughts and feelings** more easily and to experience both negative and positive experiences with equanimity
4. An **unloading** of material from the depths of the unconscious

The spiritual journey is about going from the dense to the subtle, about peeling away or piercing the increasingly subtle veils of reality to realize the ultimate Reality. Reaching the "mmmmm" state is an important marker in this journey.

The Lake of Mind (mind always refers to body-mind)

Reaching into the depths of the mind to realize the Self requires (in most all cases) that one experiences "exquisite suffering"—a suffering that is just right, a suffering that is delicately poised. Each person has their own journey through the unconscious to reach super consciousness or pure consciousness. One has to be spiritually motivated to want to dive into the depths. It is not an overnight cure or easy adventure. It often has a winding road

through swamplands, up mountains, and down deep ravines. It is bushwhacking through the brambles of the unconscious mind and has many trials and tribulations.

The Lake of Mind includes, from the gross to the most subtle:

1. **Lower thinking mind** for physical awareness, urges, reflexes and daily functioning
2. **Habitual thinking mind** for daily life activities
3. **Egoic thinking mind** for self concept, self talk, opinions and preferences
4. **Symbolic thinking mind** for self story, personal history and big picture stories we tell about ourselves
5. **Subconscious thinking mind** for one's shadow material and feelings, including our personal archetypes and our personal secrets, deep desires and fears
6. **Higher thinking mind** of discernment, including our purpose, values and will
7. **Beyond thinking** where we get a glimpse of the Divine Self

Beneath this is one's True Self, Ever-Present and Self-Luminous.

Another way to see this is that each subtle body energy center (chakra) has a mind and the subtle brain (crown center) is the headquarters for all the centers: the gut, the heart and the head among others.

Our defense mechanisms make it difficult to even know that deep secrets in our unconscious exist, to know our own core pain. *Feeling one's core pain, integrating it and then letting it go or dissolve requires being on the razor's edge, being delicately poised between feeling it and letting it go. One must dive deep enough into it, through and past the darkness of the repressed material, the archaic that was put in place long ago—frozen and stored for later—because it was overwhelming at the time.*

As one slogs through the unconscious material and begins to unload its content, one begins to get a glimpse of one's Divine Self and the clouds part briefly to see where one is headed.

The Four Functions of Mind

Put more simply, the mind is made up of four interacting functions:

1. **Everyday river of thoughts**—the sensory thinker with inner chatter [Manas]
2. **Superimposed "I-ness" or Ego**—the owner with inner decisions [Ahankara]
3. **Subconscious storehouse**, sandtrap and swamp—the emoter with inner wounds [Chitta]
4. **Reflected Self consciousness** —one's conscience and authentic self with inner wisdom [Buddhi] as we turn towards and absorb and mirror our True Self and Inner Light.

Developing self-illumination thus requires:

1. Training the everyday inner chatter mind in one pointed concentration
2. Training the inner ego to let go and be discerning of one's true identity
3. Training the emoter in proper feeling and unloading its contents

4. Training the authentic self in yearning, purification, self inquiry, spiritual study, contemplation and silence.

In short, we can be outwardly focused on our senses and external projections (reflexive) or inwardly focused on our internal experiences and pure consciousness (reflective). Our inner beauty shines. Native Americans often call this the Beauty Way.

Subtle Body Energy Centers [Chakras]

From the Vedic perspective, there are six subtle body energy centers (chakras) and one subtle brain energy center. The six subtle body energy centers are vortexes of energy while the one overarching subtle body energy center is a 1000 brain petal flower [sahasrara] which is the seat of the indwelling supreme consciousness located in the crown of the head. The great saint Nityananda called this the "sky of the heart".

The six subtle energy centers are:

1. **Root Center**- the seat of Kundalini before She rises; the "noble warrior" focused on our security; grounded and offering root support; when balanced, this "mind" is calm and alert under duress without being dissociated; the quality of solidity and gold.
2. **Genital Center**- source of life-initiating power; the "faithful lover" focused on sensuality; when balanced, this "mind" exhibits moderation; the quality of flowing and lightning.
3. **Solar Plexus Center**- source of [fire] power and confidence; the "wise leader" focused on mastery and success; when balanced, this "mind" is empowered and cooperative without being weak or greedy; the quality of expansion and shimmering blue, as jewels shimmers with light from the fire.
4. **Heart Center**- the seat of unstruck sound; the "loving friend and parent" focused on our relatedness; compassionate and devotional; when balanced, this "mind" is connected and responsible without being co-dependent or armored; the quality of revolving movement and brilliant red.
5. **Throat Center**- the seat of purification; the "mystical artist" focused on creativity and transpersonal development/expression; subtle world connection and support; when balanced, this "mind" is trustworthy and grounded in the subtle realm without being spacey or egoistically proud; the quality of giving space/presence and crimson [purplish red]. Just above the throat center is the "doorway to liberation" through which one enters when one has purified sufficiently.
6. **Brow Center**- the command center, which includes the third eye of clairvoyance; the "truth seeker" focused on discriminating the real from the unreal; zeal for growth and virtue [the two petals]; when balanced, this "mind" is clear and wise without being pedantic or dogmatic; the quality of thoughtful awareness and white. The "mmmmm" state [Makara] lies just past the brow center, deeper within.

Crown Center- the seat of awareness; Conscious Being; 1000 "petal" subtle brain center which commands all the other centers; center of one's being often felt in the heart, thus called "the sky of the heart"; beyond and including all qualities; heaven.

Psycho-Spiritual Methods of Practice for Conscious Union with the Divine [Yoga]

Yoga helps a person prepare for conscious union with the Self. It operates in a dualistic framework right up until the final moment of union, which is monistic and non-dual. Yoga is seen as a preparation for the non-dual teachings and practices of Vedanta.

The practices of yoga (and other practices which are not non-dual) are useful because one has to deal with the manifest world and the subtle aspects of mind, both of which are dualistic, during the time when one has yet to "see" and "know" the unmanifest One as the only reality. Yoga is useful to get to the "mmmmm" state. Yoga and Vedanta are useful between the "mmmmm" state and the "seed/source" state [bindu, blue pearl]. Vedanta is useful at and beyond the "mmmmm" state. Kundalini science [Kundalini Vidya] is useful at all levels.

I might add that somatic psychotherapy and all therapies that work with the unconscious patterns and blockages in the body-mind, are useful if not essential for Westerners on the path of wholeness and Self-realization.

Yoga has three paths:

1. **Systematic Awakening Yoga** [Raja Yoga]- for beginners
2. **Creative Action Yoga** [Kriya Yoga]- for medium level students
3. **Spiritual Absorption Yoga** [Samadhi Yoga]- for advanced students

Again, Yoga is one of the three legs of the stool of The Vedic Way [Sanatana Dharma]:

- 1) Vedanta
- 2) Kundalini Science
- 3) Yoga

Since most of us are beginners, the path of Systematic Awakening Yoga [Raja] fits for most of us.

The 8 Steps or Practices of Systematic Awakening Yoga [Raja Yoga]

One practices these eight steps in a type of sequential order since one step often leads into the next.

1. The **Five Restraints**

- a. Non-harming: empathy
- b. Truthfulness: genuineness (notice that non-harming comes before truthfulness)
- c. Non-stealing: non-coveting
- d. Sensory regulation: "just right" living

- e. Non-possessiveness, accumulation in moderation depending on one's stage in life, stewardship
2. **The Five Observances**
 - a. Purity: healthy lifestyle, diet and environment
 - b. Inner Contentment: equanimity of outer events and experiences, welcoming the unwelcome, seeing obstacles as opportunities for and in service to growth
 - c. Zeal for Growth: Perseverance, Slight holding back of desires to create friction/internal heat and intensity which burns impurities, suffering
 - d. Self-study: contemplation, inner work, therapy
 - e. Surrender: devotion to the Divine, listening, pausing, waiting, watching and following the guidance within
 3. **Body Prayer Postures** [Asanas]: comfortable and aligned body positions for subtle body support and guidance, physical prayers
 4. **Breath Regulation** [Pranayama]: conscious, steady, belly breathing, forceful, etc.
 5. **Sensory Withdrawal/Full Acceptance** [Pratyahara]: internal sensing, diving under/melting into sensations
 6. **Concentration** [Dharana]: one pointedness, complete attentiveness and devotion
 7. **Meditation** [Dhyana]: spontaneous state after deep concentration
 8. **Spiritual Absorption** [Samadhi]: culmination of meditation, Self-realization

Internal-External Balancing Yoga [Hatha Yoga] is comprised of the Five Restraints, the Five Observances, Postures and Breath Regulation. Most people only associate Hatha Yoga with Postures when it should also include the other practices.

Creative Action Yoga [Kriya Yoga] is comprised of the last three of the Five Observances: 1) Zeal for Growth, 2) Self-study, and 3) Surrender. Yoga teaches one restraint of the mind and its modifications of reality.

The key to one's psycho-spiritual practices [Yoga] is to find a "just right" restraint of a desire, a restraint which is gentle, aligned and comfortable so that one can do it for a long period of time. However, for Westerners, one also needs to include the "just right" feeling or expression of one's negative emotions.

The tipping point in our spiritual journey is when we see the external world as unreal and the internal world as the real. Often when we get involved with the external world, we return to seeing the unreal as real but as we practice and establish communion with our unconscious, our higher/deeper mind, and our Self, we see the [external] "real world" as unreal and the internal, unseen world as real.

Divine Presence Risings (Deepenings) [Kundalini Risings]

The Divine Presence always exists within us, though in varying states of arousal.

Most refer to the spiritual awakening process as a rising where we reach higher and higher states. While this is true, it is also true that it is a deepening, where we reach deeper and

deeper states within. Thus, we deepen and reach higher states at the same time. We go beyond and within simultaneously. The process is one of immanence and transcendence. By only talking about reaching higher states of consciousness, we lose touch with the experience of the Divine as within ourselves and our own bodies, which at its deepest levels goes beyond and includes our individual form. Heaven [Crown Center] is above and within.

The main levels of risings/deepenings are:

1. **Unreleased:** Divine Energy slumbers in the Root Center, running the physical body but waiting for arousal.
2. **Arousal:** Divine Energy is aroused in the Root Center but goes between waking and sleeping.
3. **Deflected/Unstable:** Divine Energy has risen but is unstable, fluctuates and causes difficulties. Psychic knots exist in key subtle energy centers, which must be untied so that the sacred energy can flow upward/inward.
4. **Partial/Intermediate:** Divine Energy rises to the Heart, Throat or Brow Centers but no further/deeper.
5. **Upper Process:** Divine Energy has risen to and past the "mmmmm" state and is below the "seed source" state of the blue pearl [Bindu]. Unloading of the "logs and branches" of deep unconscious material happens here. There are a variety of upper process paths.
6. **Advanced:** Divine Energy has risen to the seed source state, one has a pinnacle experience, the unloading deepens and spiritual absorption is refined and expanded. Unloading of the more subtle material, the "seeds and roots", of deep unconscious material happens here.
7. **Complete:** Divine Energy is fully merged with the One, "beyond the seed source state".

The symptoms of spiritual transformation [Kundalini], such as fear, anxiety, spontaneous bodily releases etc, require a spiritual solution rather than mere grounding through meat, exercise, stopping one's practices. These gross antidotes often suppress symptoms rather than address them at their root. They may provide comfort and an ending of the symptoms but they stifle progress. Proper diet, exercise, rest and spiritual practices are needed to facilitate a more peaceful and effective process of transformation.

Seed Source State [Bindu, Blue Pearl]

The Virgin Mary is often seen in a blue veil, which depicts her inhabiting the seed source state of the blue pearl, where the mind merges with the life breath into the Divine and appears as radiant blueness.

Upper Process Paths

There is the upper process path of the "Sacred Heart" [hrit] which Jesus and Ramana Maharshi took and completed. Jesus brought the higher teachings of this sacred heart path but religions took hold of the exoteric path rather than the esoteric path and taught people

to reach the Heart Center, beautiful and wonderful in its own way but far less advanced than the culminating path to the One of the Sacred Heart. Christianity focused its efforts in getting seekers to a Partial Rising rather than a Complete Rising.

The Sacred Heart process is often done in glacial chunks and requires a lot of rest, humility, obedience, acceptance and faith. Often this path is shown when you have given the Divine Mother [Kundalini Shakti] the green light. Sweet, lovely, adorable and fragrant subtle experiences occur in this process.

The Guru Triangle Process or Path

In this upper process, individuals get direct guidance and have a direct connection with their chosen guide, teacher or image. There is a strong feeling of "the Companion".

As one participates in the upper process, there is a subtle difference between just being tired and being pulled inside to allow the process to work itself through.

The paths listed above have been validated for generations from those who have completed the journey and who have taken detailed notes. The Traditional Kundalini Science lineage specializes in the Science of Spiritual Transformation and has very specific knowledge of the process. In addition, other cultures have their own spiritual pathways which might differ slightly due to their own cultural systems and outlooks (e.g., Kabbalah, Celtic Holy Grail, Hawaiian Huna, Native American Beauty Way, etc.).

In the realm of the spirit, the laws—and the routes to spiritual awakening—are not fixed, but are formed. Quantum science has shown us that the subject affects the object so people and cultures do affect the internal pathways of the subtle body. There is no one definitive path. It is always in creation, though we can be aided by understanding the path that might appear before us depending on our own cultural bias and interest.

Three Constitutional Types (Doshas)

There are three constitutional body-mind types in the Vedic tradition. We all have some combination of all three in varying degrees.

1. **Firey** [Pitta]- competitive and enterprising with a sharp mind; reactive and over-engaged when out of balance
2. **Airy** [Vata]- enthusiastic, spontaneous, quick, and hypersensitive with a raw nervous system; anxious, unpredictable and spacey when not in balance
3. **Earthy** [Kapha]- steady and calm with great strength and endurance; sluggish, indolent and slow to change when not in balance

Closing Comments

Self-illumination therapy provides a way for us have a deep understanding of Reality, of our minds and of the Self so that we might use discrimination and proper psycho-spiritual practices to follow the indwelling urge from within to awaken to our deepest and truest Self.

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