

Hello all,

Welcome to *Alternativz* Volume 2, Issue 1, ***Enlightenment In Kashmiri Shaivism***. I have several articles in the works but am presently compelled to write briefly about enlightenment, specifically in the context of Kashmiri Shaivism.

For me, Kashmiri Shaivism offers a purest and most essential “notion” of enlightenment, one that I find particularly accessible. I hope you will too.




Kashmir, situated in northern India and southwest of Tibet and China.

In Kashmiri Shaivism “enlightenment” is simply clear and present consciousness that we are fully unified with the world, with each other, with the universe, all else, animate and inanimate.

The opposite of unity is “dualism”. It refers to the understanding and experiencing that we are separate from all else. In this case, there is I, and there is everything else. In KS, dualism is considered delusional and the fundamental root cause of humanity’s ignorance and suffering. Certainly, this ignorance plays a key part in man’s destruction of man and of the planet.

What I find so wonderful about this “definition” is that it blows away the smoke and fog around what “enlightenment” is, at least in the Shaivist context. In Shaivist parlance, *enlightenment* is knowing, experiencing, and living “unity”.

This essential idea of “unity” is at the root of many Eastern spiritual traditions, and, although largely obscured, underlies most western religions. (To my way looking at it, Kashmiri Shaivism has remained a “spiritual tradition” and has not morphed into a religion, i.e. the business of spirituality, in this way remaining relatively pure.)

The important thing to note is that this “unity” isn’t a notion.  It is a real and present experience that all of us can have. (Is humankind Earth’s only life form that suffers from its absence?)

Simply, Kashmiri Shaivism concerns itself with realizing unity. Yes, it has a conceptual/intellectual framework, but the core of it is *real*, experiential, it can be one’s “reality”. The Shaivist pursuit involves making it one’s reality. It does so through “yogic method” including asana, pranayama, and dhyana. No surprise here. After all, this is the very point of “yoga”. The beauty of Kashmiri Shaivism is that it makes this so crystal clear.

The essential Shaivist text is the *Shiva Sutras*, thought to have been discovered or revealed circa the 8th century in Kashmir via Vasugupta. In Singh's *Shiva Sutras - The Yoga Of Supreme Identity*, he offers that there are several accounts of how the sutras came to be revealed, but all accounts share the principles that they “were revealed to Vasugupta”, and that “they have no human author”. Whether one accepts this as true or not makes no difference.

Kashmir is situated in northern India high in the Himalayas and shares its northern border with Tibet. Kashmir was an important seat of Buddhism in the 4th century and is thought to have been the gateway via which Buddhism made its way into Tibet and China. Based on similarity of philosophy and method, I believe China's Taoism moved in the other direction, and ultimately influenced the development of Shaivist thought, Taoist and Shavist principles being very similar. In fact, the fundamental method by which one realizes “unity” is essentially the same, involving posture, breathing, relaxation, and mental focus on “the center”, i.e. the navel - manipura.

We have documented the Taoist method in some detail in [Wuji Qi Gong And The Secret Of Immortality](#), which if practiced, cultivates prana (qi) and facilitates “dissolution”.

From *Shiva Sutras, Anavopaya #22*: “When the prana of the yogi who is united with the transcendental consciousness, spreads outside, including external objects, he experiences everything as identical, as cidananda - Shiva consciousness.” This is the quintessential experience of unity, an experience that grows with practice. In Kashmiri Shaivism it becomes an essential objective of being, i.e. perpetual dissolution and with it perpetual unity.

When the prana is cultivated and becomes full and robust, and the body dissolves, the prana spreads out. When it does our body boundary disappears and we perceive everything as an ocean of prana. The sense of “I” as something separate from everything else disappears.

From *Shiva Sutras, Anavopaya, #4*: “One should meditate on the *dissolution* of all the tattvas successively in their preceding source right up to Shiva, i.e. of the gross body into the subtle, and the subtle into the causal and thus realize the highest tattva, Shiva.”

This “dissolving” is a very ancient spiritual concept. [The Samkhyan model of manifestation](#) (circa 3500 B.C.E.) describes the process by which matter and consciousness precipitate from the Absolute, the heavier from the lighter and the gross from the subtle. Samkhya's yogic process describes the reverse, where the heavy is resorbed by the light and the gross is resorbed by the subtle.

Thank you for your interest and consideration,

Stephen Elliott, President, COHERENCE

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