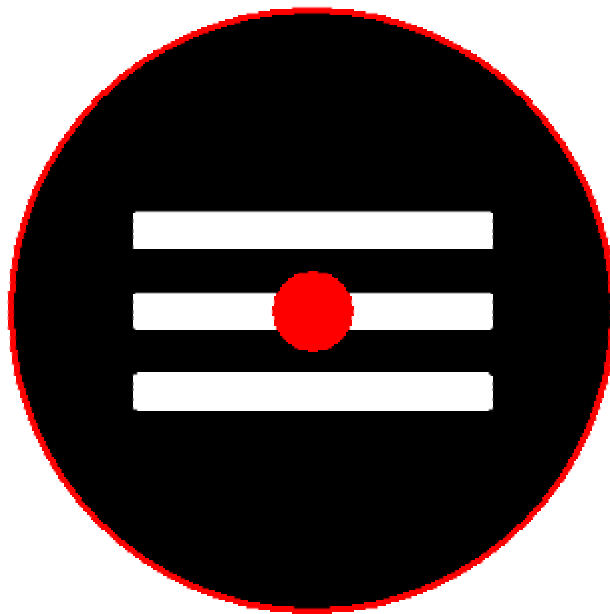


**THE NEW THINKING  
BEHIND  
'THE NEW YOGA'**



**Peter Wilberg**

**There was neither non-being nor being then.  
There was neither the realm of space nor the sky.  
Which is beyond?  
What encompassed?  
Where?  
In whose protection?  
What water was there - deep, unfathomable?**

*From the Creation Hymn of the Rigveda*

**Philosophy is an elaboration of different kinds of spiritual experience. The abstractions of high-grade metaphysics are based on spiritual experience and derive their whole value from the experiences they symbolise. No metaphysical concept is fully intelligible without reference to the spirit.**

*Abhinavagupta*

**Devoid of intellectual discernment are those Europeans who want to convert and civilise the Hindus.**

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

<b>ROOTS - THE DOCTRINE OF RECOGNITION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>THE ESSENCE OF THE NEW THINKING.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>‘BEING AWARENESS’ .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>THE NEW THINKING OF AWARENESS.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE HINDU GODS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>REALISING RELIGIOUS TRUTH IN ONE’S LIFE.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>‘SHIVA’ - THE LIGHT OF AWARENESS.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>‘SHAKTI’ – AWARENESS AS ‘POWER’ .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>A NEW TANTRIC THEOLOGY.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>THEOLOGY AND THE OCEAN OF AWARENESS .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>‘SHIVA’ AND ‘KASHMIR SHAIVISM’ .....</b>	<b>21</b>

## ROOTS - THE DOCTRINE OF RECOGNITION

Central to the historic lineage of Tantric teachers leading from Somananda to Abhinavagupta was the so-called ‘Doctrine of Recognition’ (‘Pratyabhijna’) as set out by Somananda’s disciple Utpaladeva. At the heart of this doctrine is the understanding that divine subjectivity or awareness comes to *recognise* itself in all the countless modes and dimensions of experience that emerge within it. Similarly, the divine awareness (SHIVA) that is present in us all as our very Self, recognises itself, as if in a mirror, in all that we experience. For ‘experiencing’ as such is innately *subjective* – not in the sense of being the cognition of an object ‘by’ a subject but as the *self-recognition* of subjective awareness in all its experiential contents.

**“... things that have fallen to the level of objects of cognition  
... are essentially consciousness (‘Bodha’).” Utpaladeva.**

Yet if we continue *thinking* of things as mere ‘objects of cognition’ – of sense perception and of thought itself – we fail to achieve a state of truly aware or ‘recognitive’ experiencing (‘Vimarsha’). And if we fail to *intellectually* recognise every thing and thought we experience as reflective expressions of subjective awareness we cannot experience them *as such*. The intellectual recognition of ‘The Doctrine of Recognition’ is therefore itself essential for its pre-reflective truth to be *experienced in awareness*. According to Abhinavagupta this intellectual recognition has the nature of a choice or decision which has to be constantly repeated in order to realise itself. In this teaching, as in that of The New Yoga, there is *no contradiction whatsoever* between the intellect – thought - and meditative thought-free awareness. That is because the awareness of a word, name, thought or concept is, in itself, something innately wordless, nameless, thought-free and concept-free. In ‘The Doctrine of Recognition’ itself, both sacred names such as ‘Shiva’ and the refined intellectual comprehensions they symbolised were recognised as direct means to ‘enlightenment’ - to the liberation of awareness FROM the intellect. For since verbal ‘thought-constructs’ (‘Vikalpa’) can themselves be symbolic or conceptual *expressions* of an awareness *free* of thought-constructs (‘Nirvikalpa’) they can also serve as sacred mantra which liberate that awareness - allowing it to *realise* and *recognise* itself through its *reflection* in them.

# THE ESSENCE OF THE NEW THINKING

**The New Thinking** risks a decisive articulation of that “other thinking” anticipated by Martin Heidegger, a meditative thinking more primordial than the metaphysics and theology of ‘Being’ that has been decisive in the development of European-Western-Greek thinking. It is this metaphysics that has culminated in the ‘Europeanisation’ of the world – more specifically its Americanisation through the global dominance of Technology and of Calculative Thinking. In contrast, The New Thinking is not an old or new thinking of ‘Being’, but an old-new thinking of Awareness (*cit*). As such, it articulates in an entirely new way the as-yet unthought dimensions of an entirely different tradition of thought to that of Greece and the pre-Socratics – the tradition of Indian religious thinking in the form of *post-Vedantic* religious philosophy and of ‘Kashmir Shaivism’ in particular. The new and unthought dimension of this tradition of thinking lies in its *implicit* recognition of nine basic and ultimate truths:

1. Awareness (*cit*) has an essentially unbounded, non-local or *field* character.
2. The absolute *awareness field* is both the *singular and divine source* of all beings (the truth of ‘monism’) but is not itself a *single divine being* (the myth of ‘monotheism’).
3. The divine awareness field, as the source of all beings, can no more be conceived of as one single and ‘supreme’ being than can the ocean – as the source of all fish – be conceived of as one single and supremely big fish.
4. Awareness, as the source of all bodily and sensory experiencing, has itself an innately *sensual* character (bliss or *ananda*) and is the source of an infinite multiplicity of *bodily* forms.
5. Being the *field-condition* for our experience of any being or body, subject or self, object or thing, awareness cannot itself be reduced to the property or product of any being or body, subject or self, object or thing.
6. Awareness (‘Shiva’) embraces not only being as Actuality, but the reality of non-being - understood as a realm of pure Potentiality – the power or capacity for actualisation (‘Shakti’).
7. Potential realities, by their very nature, have reality only *in* awareness, and do so only as those potential shapes, patterns, tones and qualities *of* awareness that constitute the individual nature of potential ‘beings’ or ‘consciousnesses’.
8. Individualised ‘selves’, ‘souls’, ‘consciousnesses’ or ‘beings’ are localised *field-boundaries* of awareness (‘bodies’) emerging from and within the unbounded and non-local *awareness field* that is the divine.
9. ‘Bodies’ are therefore nothing essentially biological, material or energetic – they are the very *field-boundaries* of awareness uniting the unbounded fields or ‘spaces’ of awareness within and around them.

## ‘BEING AWARENESS’

Explicit in Martin Heidegger’s thinking of Being is the understanding of the human being as a being whose own being – and/or potential non-being - is experienced as a *question*. The human being, as a being that ‘ex-ists’ or ‘stands out’ in a definite relation to beings - and thus to the very ‘Being’ or ‘is-ness’ of beings - is therefore a being for whom ‘The Question of Being’ is no abstract philosophical question but rather one that is *constitutive of their very being*. Implicit in Heidegger’s thinking therefore is the understanding of the human being as a being whose very *awareness of being* is *constitutive of their being*. Perhaps this itself can point the way to a reconciliation of the Graeco-Western thinking of *Being* with the Indian thinking of *Awareness (cit)*. This other way of thinking achieved one of its highest expressions in the *Shiva Sutras* of *Vasugupta*, and the commentaries thereon, notably that of *Ksemaraja*. The *Shiva Sutras* are a major foundational ‘scripture’ or treatise of ‘Kashmir Shaivism’. Their very first line or ‘thread’ (*sutra*) is but a single compound word in Sanksrit – but a word that in itself makes a quite extraordinary statement - an infinite statement. The word is *caitanyamatma*. What this word says is that the awareness (*caitanya*) of an aware being (*cetana*) is the very self (*atman*) of that being. *Caitanyamatma* can therefore be translated as ‘awareness being’ or ‘awareness self’. Its profound message is: ‘being a self’ means ‘being aware’. Our ultimate selfhood or ‘self-being’ consists in *being awareness*. The same message is echoed in the *Vijnanabhairava* – perhaps the single most important treatise or *tantra* on yogic meditational practices. “The same Self characterised by awareness is present in all bodies ...”. Here ‘all bodies’ is synonymous with ‘all beings’ – for the very selfhood of all beings consists in their being *self-embodiments* of absolute or divine awareness.

The second *sutra* consists of two words: *jnanam* (‘knowledge’) and *bhandhah* (‘bondage’). It implies that *knowledge is bondage*. The ‘bondage’ referred to is that of the limited, empirical or experienced self as opposed to the awareness self (*caitanyatman*). The ‘knowledge’ referred to is that specific mode of cognition that we ordinarily call ‘consciousness’ – awareness *of* something rather than *awareness as such*. The traditional Western identification of subjectivity or awareness with the finite consciousness of the empirical or experienced self - with ‘awareness *of*

something' – is perhaps the major reason why Heidegger avoided the phenomenological language of 'subjectivity' or 'consciousness' in favour of an ontological discourse around Being and beings. From an onto-phenomenological perspective however, there nevertheless remains a central question surrounding the relation of Awareness and Being – for since Awareness also 'is' in what does the very 'is-ness' or Being of Awareness consist? The question is also central to the distinction between, on the one hand, Heidegger's attempt to think the fundamental 'ontological difference' between *Being and beings*, and, on the other hand, the understanding of this difference in Indian thought as one rooted in a more primordial 'onto-phenomenological' difference – the difference of *Awareness and beings*.

**“Every appearance owes its existence to the light of awareness. Nothing can have its own being without the light of awareness.” Ksemaraja**

Put in other terms, since awareness is the primordial *field-condition* for our experience of any beings whatsoever, including our own being, it can no more be *reduced* to any being nor *explained* by any existing thing than can 'Being' as such. But whereas Heidegger's questioning addresses the essential mystery of Being in a way that takes as its starting point the human being's own awareness of existing, the tradition of thinking expressed in the *Shiva Sutras* affirms the primordial reality of awareness itself, as that 'light' in which all beings first arise and come to stand out or 'ex-ist'. The two traditions meet in Heidegger's notion of Being as a primordial 'clearing' or *Lichtung*, for this is a term resonant with *the light of awareness* designated by the Sanskrit *prakasha*. Yet whereas Heidegger *implies* that Being is essentially Aware Being or Awareness of Being – he does so without positing Awareness itself as the ultimate and divine reality. The New Thinking is an onto-phenomenology that explicitly *grounds* the very Being of Awareness in the *Awareness of Being* – that is to say, in Awareness as such. It is in this way that The New Thinking makes the transition from the thinking of Being to the Thinking of Awareness. It does so through the first of the *Shiva Sutras*, through the word *caitanyamatma*, understood as saying that the Being of all beings consists not only in their awareness of beings but in *Being Awareness*.

## THE NEW THINKING OF AWARENESS

We cannot be said to be truly *thinking* unless we are aware of our thoughts rather than identified with them. Identified with our thoughts, our awareness is focused on what we are thinking *about* – on the object of thought rather than the thought itself.

**The New Thinking** is the very *awareness of thinking* without which both awareness and thinking lose themselves in their objects. Through awareness of thinking, thinking itself can become self-aware. Moreover it can begin to think its own source in awareness as such – not awareness ‘of’ this or that, but a thought-free awareness (*nirvikalpa*). This is awareness *experienced* as the very space or ‘field’ within which thoughts (*vikalpa*) both arise and pass away.

**The New Thinking** is therefore also founded on the recognition that thinking itself, like every possible ‘thing’ we may experience and think about, is something we experience in a field or space of awareness. Thoughts we have *about* our experience are themselves a part of our experience. Yet neither experiencing nor thinking are the same ‘thing’ as *awareness*. Our *awareness* of any thing we experience *is not itself a thing*. Similarly our awareness of any thought we experience *is not itself a thought*. Instead any thought, like any thing we might think about, is itself just another ‘thing’ we *experience* in our awareness. Since thoughts about the things we experience are themselves things we experience, thinking is nothing separate and *apart from* our experiencing but forms *a part of* its very texture or weave. Thought itself is the loom or ‘tantra’ of experiencing. And yet whilst thoughts may bring new ‘things’ to light in our awareness, awareness as such is something essentially thought-free. It is that very ‘light’ in which both thoughts and things first come to light, and out of which new thoughts and things can be brought to light in our experience.

The light of awareness (*prakasha*) is that primordial ‘clearing’ or ‘field’ that Heidegger called both *Lichtung* or *Feldung* – being the *field-condition* for our experience of any thought and any thing whatsoever. That does not mean that awareness itself cannot be turned into an object of thought. What it does mean is that every *thought* we have *about* awareness is in essence no different from any other



*thing* we experience *in* our awareness - both being fundamentally distinct from *the light of awareness* as such. To *think* the nature of awareness as such therefore - in distinction from any thoughts and things we experience *in* our awareness - leads inevitably to the understanding that awareness can in no way be thought of as the product of anything we experience within it – whether the human body or brain, or any *experience* of ourselves as ‘subjects’ of awareness. For even our *self*-experience is something that arises and alters within a larger subjective world or *field* of awareness. To speak of ‘my’ awareness or ‘your’ awareness on the other hand, implies that awareness is the *private property* of a self or subject experienced in that larger field of awareness. Regarding waking awareness as the private property of the self is like regarding dreaming as the private property of a self we dream of. Similarly, regarding waking awareness as the product of some object we are *aware of* – for example the brain - is like regarding dreaming awareness as the product of some particular object we *dream of*.

**The New Thinking** challenges this illogic, recognising instead that all experienced ‘selves’ or ‘subjects’ of awareness, are – like all the thoughts and things they experience *in* their awareness – nothing but localised self-manifestations or ‘selvings’ of a universal or divine *awareness field*. This divine awareness field was recognised in Indian theosophy under different god-names - for example as *Brahman* or *Shiva* – and its field character was also given explicit recognition in the *Bhagavadgita* as the ‘field knower’. Yet neither divinity nor the self (*atman*) were understood in the Western way as independent entities or beings ‘possessing’ awareness. Instead they were seen as identical *with* pure awareness as such (*cit*). That individuals nevertheless experience awareness as theirs – something they ‘possess’ – is but the particular way in which the universal or divine awareness field experiences *itself* through them. It is the latter which ‘individualises’ or ‘selves’ itself in the form of individualised fields of awareness, each of which experiences ‘it’ - awareness as such – as ‘their’ private property. To experience subjective awareness as our personal and private property is one thing. To *think* it that way is quite another. For any experience of awareness – not least the experience of awareness as ‘ours’ – occurs within a transpersonal or ‘transcendental’ awareness field – a universal and divine awareness field that is not only *immanent* in each person’s individualised awareness field but also transcends all such fields.

**The New Thinking** is a thinking that recognises that awareness as such, being the ultimate *field condition* for the experience of any self or world whatsoever, can neither be the private *property* of any self or subject nor a *by-product* or ‘emergent’ *property* of any object or world of objects. Being the *field condition* for our experience of any ‘thing’ or ‘thought’, nor can awareness be a product or property of things or thoughts. Similarly, being the *field condition* for our experience of any body or being, awareness cannot itself be the product or property of a body or being – whether the human body or a divine being.

**The New Thinking** therefore runs counter to all bio-ideology that ‘subjectivity’ or ‘awareness’ is a property of the human body or brain, and to the religious dogma that awareness is the property of a divine being. On the contrary, all beings and bodies, as individualisations of the universal or divine awareness field have their source in that field. Conversely however, the universal awareness field cannot be thought of as something bodiless, selfless or impersonal or ‘suprasensuous’. For being the very source of all sensuous bodily experiences of self and world – indeed being *that which* senses, bodies, selves and worlds itself in us - it must be recognised as having its own *innately sensuous qualities and bodily forms*. Indeed, it is from these innate awareness qualities or ‘qualia’ that all beings are composed. It is the individualised patterns and combinations of such awareness qualities arising from the universal awareness field - that constitute the very essence of individuality - giving each individual’s *experience of awareness* its ‘own’ unique sensuous qualities and bodily shapes.

**The New Thinking** is thinking with *soul*. Yet it does not identify ‘soul’ with an individual ‘subject’ or ‘object’, ‘mind’ or ‘brain’, ‘body’ or ‘bodymind’ – but rather as *universal, self-individualising awareness*. ‘Qualia’ or ‘awareness qualities’ are the basic *soul qualities* – all innately *sensual* - which find expression in all the *sensory qualities* of experienced reality. In essence, ‘The New Thinking’ is simply *thinking as such*, but experienced in a new way - not as a ‘supra-sensuous’ process of mental reflection *on*, abstraction *from*, representation or conceptualisation *of* experience, but rather as a *sensuous process* of bringing our *sensory experiencing* into *resonance* with *new sensual qualities* of awareness or ‘soul’, thus intensifying our *sensuous experience* of the universal soul or awareness field itself – The Divine. The New Thinking overcomes the *dualism* of immediate bodily or ‘lived’ experience on the one

hand, and abstract representational thinking on the other. For it understands both thinking and experiencing as something emergent within a third and more fundamental dimension of reality – that of awareness itself. As a result it also understands ‘thinking’ and ‘thoughts’ as phenomena that emerge, like things themselves, as *experienced* phenomena within fields of awareness. The thinking of thoughts therefore bears the same essentially *experiential* character as the ‘thinging’ of things in our awareness field – both ‘thinking’ and ‘thinging’ being ways in which awareness *gives form* to itself, and is therefore able to experience itself in different forms. Awareness as such is essentially formless. Yet this formlessness is not a Buddhistic *emptiness* but a *fullness* of potential forms. These formative potentials are different potential forms taken by awareness itself – potential ‘consciousnesses’. Their *actualisation* is the essence of ‘energy’ in its root sense of ‘formative activity’ (*energein*). That does not mean that we need in any way follow the modern scientific and New Age spiritual *dogma* that ‘Everything is Energy’ – for ‘energy’ is in essence nothing but the formative capacity or power (SHAKTI) of *awareness* (SHIVA).

## THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE HINDU GODS

In a whole range of terms unique to Indian religious thinking – including *bhava* and *bhakti*, *dhvani* and *rasa*, *sattva*, *tattva* and *tanmatra* - there lies a reaching towards a fundamental, hitherto unthought distinction. This is the distinction between any manifest sensory phenomena or qualities we are *aware of* – that we ‘experience’ – and innately sensual qualities *of awareness as such* – for example its innate *luminosity* understood as ‘the light of awareness’ (*prakasha*), or its sensual character as ‘bliss’ (*citananda*). This fundamental distinction, hinted at by such terms as the ‘light of awareness’ but made explicit for the first time in The New Thinking, offers us a wholly new way of understanding the essential nature of the Hindu gods – a new *hermeneutics of Hinduism*. This is a ‘qualia hermeneutics’ – one which sees the essential source of all meaning or ‘sense’ neither in *sensory* experiencing nor in *supra-sensous* ideas and abstract concepts but rather in innately *sensual* qualities of awareness – in noetic ‘qualia’ or sensual ‘soul qualities’.

We are all familiar with such sensual soul qualities – for example through the inwardly sensed ‘brightness’ or ‘darkness’ of someone’s gaze or tone of voice, or through the ‘fieriness’ of their temperament. Such terms are no *mere* sensory or elemental ‘metaphors’ but rather give literal expression to innately sensual and elemental *qualities* of another person’s awareness, qualities which in turn give expression to the underlying mood or feeling tone (*bhava / dhvani*) which tunes and tones it. For just as vocal tones have sensual qualities of brightness or darkness, lightness or heaviness, sharpness or flatness, warmth or coolness, so also do feeling tones – understood, like moods, as basic tonalities of awareness which shape and colour an individual’s entire experience of themselves and the world. From the point of view of this ‘qualia hermeneutics’ both the Vedic and Tantric *gods* need not be seen as deifications or ‘personifications’ of either *abstract concepts, human emotions, or elemental phenomena*. Instead they are personifications of elemental, sensual qualities *of awareness* - qualities which are themselves essentially divine - trans-human and trans-personal. Thus ‘Agni’ is not essentially a deification or personification of ‘fire’ as a natural sensory phenomenon but of a fiery and light-radiating quality of awareness. Similarly, ‘Soma’ is a personification of the sensuous and blissful fluidity of awareness. ‘Shiva’ is both a personification of the bliss, spatiality and light of awareness and a name for the ultimate or divine awareness field itself. Most of the Hindu divinities have been identified with the divine awareness field as such. This is no accident, for each and all of them are *expressions* of that singular field. Similarly, not merely the ‘gods’ of the elements but *those elements themselves* are ultimately expressions of this field – which is the source of countless sensual and elemental qualities of awareness. And it is not only the gods ‘as such’ but also the very hymnodies offered to them that ‘personify’ these qualities.

What is surprising however, is that despite all talk of gods, Hindu and otherwise, as ‘personifications’, so little attention has been paid to the root meaning of ‘personification’ as ‘through-sounding’ (*per-sonare*). What is exceptional about the Hindu tradition is its far more explicit recognition of the significance of sound – *mantra* - as the very *medium* through which awareness quite literally ‘per-sonifies’ itself. We find this recognition above all in the teachings of the *tantras*, which acknowledge that a divinity and its mantra are essentially one. Yet even in the Vedic hymnodies there is a profoundly self-reflexive acknowledgment of their own nature as

expressions of the very essence of divinity – an acknowledgement that the way in which ultimate truth (*Rita*) sounds through and gives form to itself in human hymnodies *to* the gods is in essence no different from the way in which it personifies itself *as* those gods. The process is one and the same – the same process of awareness giving form to itself in the manner of the spoken word that is the deep meaning of *brahman*. The divine, quite simply is its speech – *vak*. The gods quite literally take their seat in the syllables of this speech, not because they have no reality outside it, but because they too are songs sung and sounded by the ultimate divine. When the gods cease to be experienced directly in their ultimate truth - as trans-human qualities of divine awareness – then it is that those qualities, and with them the gods themselves, need to be constantly re-evoked through reverently resounding them – through once again singing each syllable of the songs that they are.

**“The undying, inexhaustible syllable of the song is the final abode where the gods have taken their seat. What can one who does not know this do with the words of a poem?”**

*Rigveda*

**I think the only possibility of salvation left to us is to prepare readiness, through thinking and poetry, for the appearance of the god or for the absence of the god during the decline; so that we do not, simply put, die meaningless deaths, but that when we decline, we decline in the face of the absent god.**

*Martin Heidegger*

**“... interpretation must be animated and guided by an illuminative idea. Only through the power of this idea can an interpretation risk that which is always audacious, namely, entrusting itself to the secret élan of a word, in order by this élan to get through to the unsaid and find an expression for it.”**

*Martin Heidegger*

## REALISING RELIGIOUS TRUTH IN ONE'S LIFE

The relation between anything we experience or are aware of and awareness *as such* is the same as the relation between objects we are aware of in space and the seeming emptiness of space as such. Indeed it is the very *same* relation - since space as such is essentially nothing 'objective' but rather subjective – awareness space. Similarly, 'subjectivity' or 'awareness' simply IS space, the spaces, inner and outer, within which we experience things. This Fundamental Distinction between *awareness* and *experience*, central to both Tantric metaphysics and to that of The New Yoga, needs to become more than just a conceptual distinction however. Instead the conceptual distinction needs itself to become something we are both *aware of* and *experience* in a tangible way.

What happens if people are *unable* to make the Fundamental Distinction between whatever 'things' they experience – including their own thoughts *about* those things - and the space or spaces of awareness within which they experience those things and those thoughts about them? If their sensory or emotional experiences are too intense they may feel 'overwhelmed' by them, or filled to the point of bursting by them - unable to feel them safely embraced within a larger space of awareness. Alternatively they may seek to habitually contract the space of their awareness to a narrow focus, fearing that if their awareness space were expanded it might fill with things that are 'too much' for them - or that they would rather NOT be aware of in the first place. Either way, their actions will be a mere reaction to their experience, and their behaviour an unaware expression of it. In addition, their thoughts themselves become mere mental interpretations placed on their experience - rather than the expression of a deeper, more meaningful and insightful awareness of the things they experience. Indeed they may use thinking to constantly and obsessively 'objectify' their experience – in doing so turning both themselves and others, both things and thoughts into mere intellectual *objects* of their minds. In this way however, they impoverish the rich *subjective* dimensions of their experience, and deprive their thinking itself of richer experiential sources. Worse still, in doing so they turn *themselves* into mere objects of their own mind and intellect, actions and perceptions, judgements and punishments. Worst of all, they may experience *themselves* too, only as *objects* of

other people's action and perceptions, thoughts and emotions and turn other people into mere *counter-objects* of their own.

Finally, suffering from all this, their only recourse may be a desperate appeal to 'God', or hope in some 'Force' or 'Energy' or Saviour figure, human or divine. The problem is that in seeking to feel a deep and real contact with this saving figure, force, energy or God, they effectively reduce it to just another thing to experience or be *aware of*. In doing so they not only reinforce their spiritual *blindness* to the Fundamental Distinction – the distinction between any thing or being we are or can be aware of, and awareness as such – they also *block* their own path to God or to 'salvation'. For by failing to recognise this Fundamental Distinction they also fail to recognise the Fundamental Truth that God is not a being 'with' awareness - nor any being one can seek to become aware OF in order to address, get answers from or 're-link' to. 'God', quite simply, IS awareness - which is why awareness as such is our very link to God – and our only way of 're-linking' to God. This is the fundamental 're-ligious' truth of Tantra and of The New Yoga – one that distinguishes it from all religious 'fundamentalisms' founded on worship of beings and of scriptural texts. Yet this fundamental truth is also one whose reality is impossible to realise – to make fully real in one's life – without recognising the Fundamental Distinction from which its truth derives. Through distinguishing Awareness and Experience we can learn to so expand and deepen the space or 'field' of Awareness within which we Experience things, that new or more intense Experiences emerge within Awareness. Thus it is, that through Awareness itself, we can come to Experience or Be Aware of far *more* of ourselves, other people and the mundane world. We can also come to a new experience *of awareness* in its divine nature – to a 'mystical' experience of 'God'.

Every time we make the Fundamental Choice to 'step back' from anything we *experience* and identify instead with the very *awareness* of experiencing it, we may find in turn that *this very awareness* has itself certain qualities that we *experience*. That is why, in The New Yoga, the Fundamental Distinction between Awareness and Experience is not a static principle but a dynamic one. The dynamic principle is:

**From a new AWARENESS of EXPERIENCE  
to a new EXPERIENCE of AWARENESS.**

It is from this principle that The New Yoga offers a whole new understanding of the true nature of ‘mystical’ experience. Such things as space, light, matter, and action or ‘energy’ are all aspects of our ‘mundane’ experience. ‘Mystical’ experience on the other hand, is the experience of awareness itself AS space, AS light, AS matter and AS action or ‘energy’. That is why mystical experiences have often been described as experiences of ‘expansion’ of consciousness, of ‘timelessness’ or of ‘light’. This is awareness itself experienced AS light - that ‘light of awareness’ without which no thing or being can ever come to light in our ordinary experience. Yet the realm of mystical experience also embraces the direct experience of awareness in the FORM of any thing or being, worldly or divine – for example, the experience of different ‘gods’ or divinities. Here however, a distinction must be made between religious or mystical ‘visions’ on the one hand and true mystical ‘states’ or ‘experiences’ on the other.

A true mystical experience is indeed nothing – ‘no thing’ – for it is not an experience of any thing or being, human or divine, mundane or extra-mundane. Instead it is a direct experience of *awareness* in the *sensual form or quality of some thing or being*. Mystical experience is real because everything IS an awareness, and because awareness possesses its own innate sensual qualities and forms. That is why, in The New Yoga there is no dimension of our ‘mundane’ sensory experience that cannot be transformed into a dimension of true mystical experience.

**“Philosophy is an elaboration of different kinds of spiritual experience. The abstractions of high-grade metaphysics are based on spiritual experience and derive their whole value from the experiences they symbolise. No metaphysical concept is fully intelligible without reference to the spirit.”**

Abhinavagupta



## **‘SHIVA’ - THE LIGHT OF AWARENESS**

All awareness is awareness of things sensory and bodily, for even our thoughts have their own sensory shapes and forms. Without awareness however, we could not experience - be aware of - any thing, body or sensory quality whatsoever. For just as without light nothing is visible, so without what Tantric teaching calls ‘The Light of Awareness’ (‘Prakasha’), nothing can come to light IN our awareness. And just as light is the pre-condition for us seeing things, so is The Light of Awareness the condition for us experiencing things in any way at all. SHIVA, as The Light of Awareness - is that ‘light’ which IS awareness, bringing all things to light within itself.

**“The Sun shines not there, neither moon nor stars. There these flashes of lightning do not shine, nor does fire. It is that by whose shining all things shine. It is the Light of that which illuminates all this.”** Shvetashvataropanishad

The Light of Awareness – the experience of awareness itself AS light - is the Tantric key to experiencing the Awareness Bliss (‘Chitananda’) that is ‘En-Lightenment’ (‘Samadhi’). This Bliss, according to Abhinavagupta:

**“... is not like the intoxication of wine or that of riches, nor similar to union with the beloved. The manifestation of The Light of Awareness is not like the ray of light from a lamp, sun or moon. When one frees oneself from accumulated multiplicity [of things experienced in that Light], this state of Bliss is like that of putting down a burden; the manifestation of the Light is like the acquiring of a lost treasure ... universal non-duality.”**

What Abhinavagupta calls “universal non-duality” is the truth that The Light of Awareness (SHIVA) and all that it brings to light are inseparable - for nothing can come to light *in* awareness that is not itself an expression and reflection *of* its Light. Just as physical light is reflected in all that it makes visible, so is The Light of Awareness reflected in all that it brings to light in our experience. Indeed it is precisely through “the accumulated multiplicity” of experienced things that the singular Light of Awareness can come to recognise itself IN its singularity, thus experiencing itself – through us – as the Bliss of Enlightenment.

## **‘SHAKTI’ – AWARENESS AS ‘POWER’**

The words ‘potentiality’, ‘potency’ and ‘power’ share a common root. Our awareness of our own inexhaustible inner potentialities as beings constitute the very *core* of our being – a core of pure potency, potentiality or *power*. The Light of Awareness is not only awareness of things actual, but of all things hidden, latent or potential – for it is these that it serves to bring to light - to release into actualisation. Potential realities – potentialities - are no less real than actualities. For something to become actual it must already have reality as a potentiality. Potentialities cannot be experienced in the same way that actual things can, but they have reality in awareness – for they are potentialities of awareness – as all the countless different forms and shapes that awareness can take. The reality of every being, in every situation and in every moment, abounds in potentialities. These potentialities are as much a part of their reality as all that is already actual.

Tantric science understands the relation of Energy, Matter and ‘Light’ in quite a different way from Einstein’s famous equation:  $E=mc^2$ . For if ‘matter’ is the outwardness of ‘energy’ - its already actualised physical forms - then the inwardness of ‘energy’ is not ‘light’ in the form of photons or quanta of energy but The Light of Awareness itself. All true ‘vitality’ or ‘energy’ is a coupling of the LIGHT of Awareness (Shiva) with the ‘darkness’ (‘dark matter’ and ‘dark energy’) of its hidden latent or ‘coiled-up’ potentialities (‘Kundalini’). Out of this coupling comes the capacity or *power* of awareness to actualise or bring to light its own infinite and inexhaustible potentialities. In the Tantric tradition SHIVA is identified with awareness with the *Light* of awareness. His inseparable feminine counterpart – SHAKTI – is identified with the *Power* of awareness, its innate capacity or power (‘Shak’) to actualise its infinite, inner potentialities. It was the Greek philosopher Aristotle who first mistakenly identified reality with actuality or ‘energy’ (Greek ‘energeia’), rather than with the *dynamic process of actualisation* (Greek ‘dynamis’). It is this process that Kashmir Shaivism understood as the divine *coupling* of SHIVA and SHAKTI - of awareness AS light and awareness AS power – that is the very *hyphen* in the Kashmir Shaivist understanding of divinity as ‘SHIVA-SHAKTI’.

## A NEW TANTRIC THEOLOGY

“Only a god can save us now.” (Martin Heidegger). That ‘god’ cannot be ‘any old god’. Indeed it cannot be *any* ‘god’ in the traditional sense of some separate entity or ‘supreme being’ standing over and above all other beings – or capable of being reduced to an object by those beings. Nor can it merely be some human ‘personification’ of divinity – whether what we personify through it be human emotions, elemental forces of nature, or some abstractly represented philosophical or ethical conception of ultimate truth. Instead this ‘god’ can only be a personification of that ultimate or divine reality that sounds through (*per-sonare*) and thereby *personifies itself* in every being, human and divine. A divine reality which is *not itself* a god but is that which *gods itself* – personifying itself in every god. Yet how can we even begin to think ‘a’ god that personifies the divine source of ‘all’ gods – let alone name it. Thankfully we need not name it ourselves, for it has already been named – not as God the Father, Son or Holy Ghost, and certainly not as Allah or Jahweh. Those monotheistic religions which worship a God of gods, a being above all others, deny the very essence of divinity. For being the source of all beings, the divine can no more be conceived as a being, even a supreme being, than the ocean, as the source of all fish, can be conceived as a fish, even a supreme fish. Even the biggest fish in the pond is not the pond – let alone an infinite ocean – but simply one fish among others. So perhaps we should desist in the attempt to name ‘God’ as such – conceived as some supposed ‘superfish’, ‘superbeing’ or even ‘superman’, and instead concentrate our search on just “a god” – albeit one that is indeed more than just *one god among others*. In what religious tradition is such a god even thought? In the tradition of *tantra*, which recognises in SHIVA a personification of an ultimate or ‘divine’ reality which is not itself a being and yet is the source and essential ‘self’ (*atman*) of all beings. This divine reality is *universal awareness*, that which is the *field-condition* for the experience of any being and any universe whatsoever – and thus also the ultimate source or field in which all things, all worlds and all beings – and all gods – take shape. And yet it is neither a *person* nor an *impersonal* energy or abstraction. How can it be, since it is the source of our personhood and of all persons? ‘A god’ which itself personifies ultimate reality in the form of universal awareness is also a god that personifies itself in and through *all* gods. This ‘god’ was called PARAMSHIVA.

# THEOLOGY AND THE OCEAN OF AWARENESS

Just as an ocean is the source of all the fish and other life forms within it, so is the Divine Awareness the source of all beings within it. All beings dwell *within* the Divine Awareness as all fish dwell within the ocean. And just as fish are formed from the very stuff of the ocean, so are all beings formed from the divine God-stuff of awareness. All the fish and life forms within the ocean are connected to one another through it, not just because they all dwell within it, but because they are all self-expressions of it. Similarly, all beings are connected to one another both outwardly and inwardly. They are connected outwardly because they all dwell within the Divine Awareness, and connected inwardly because the essential Self of each being is its nature as a Self-expression of the same Divine Awareness. Yet if God is the Divine Awareness, and this Awareness is compared in this way to an ocean, then it makes no more sense to think of God as a single *being*, than it does to think of the ocean as a single supreme *fish*. Understanding this, The New Yoga helps us to also understand the differences between different types of religion in a new way.

- **Theism** is the belief that God exists as a BEING.
- **Monotheism** is the belief that God is ONE supreme BEING separate from the world and other BEINGS.
- **Polytheism** is the belief in a plurality of Gods, each of which is a divine or trans-human BEING.
- **Hentheism** (from the Greek ‘hen’ meaning ‘one’) is the belief that God is the ONENESS of all beings or ‘BEING’ as such.
- **Henotheism** is a form of polytheism resting on the belief in one supreme BEING or God ruling over all other gods and beings.
- **Pantheism** (from the Greek word ‘pan’ meaning ‘all’) is the belief that God IS the world - is ALL BEINGS.
- **Atheism**, strictly speaking, is not disbelief in God. It is disbelief in the existence of God as a BEING.
- **Panatheism** (‘Buddhism’) is the belief that NO BEINGS exist, because everything is in a constant state of BECOMING.
- **Panentheism** (from the Greek words ‘pan’ and ‘en’, meaning ‘all’ and ‘in’) is the belief that all BEINGS dwell IN God, and that God dwells IN all BEINGS.
- **Nootheism** (from the Greek ‘noos’, meaning ‘awareness’) is a form of ‘panentheism’ that identifies God with the awareness IN which all BEINGS constantly ‘BE-COME’ or ‘COME-TO-BE’, in which they all ‘dwell’, and which also dwells in them all.

## ‘SHIVA’ AND ‘KASHMIR SHAIIVISM’

‘Nootheism’ is a new term which describes the fundamental religious principle or God-concept of The New Yoga. Yet this is not a principle that rejects those of other religions, but one that can actually embrace and unite them all. The religious philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism showed that this was possible. For it both derived from, incorporated and transcended many traditional forms of Indian religious theism, polytheism, henotheism, hentheism and pantheism – just as it also incorporated and transcended Buddhist panatheism, and thus pointed the way to a new philosophical understanding of atheism. It did this through its presentation and reinterpretation of the nature of the traditional Hindu god SHIVA. ‘Shaivism’ means simply the religion of Shiva. Yet in Kashmir Shaivism the name ‘Shiva’ is ‘overcoded’ – denoting and connoting much more than was previously meant by this name, and comprehending much more through it. In Kashmir Shaivism, ‘Shiva’ is that name which unites all the religious principles or ‘–theisms’ up to and including the highest and most all-embracing principle of them all, namely Noo-theism. That is because what the single name ‘Shiva’ names in Kashmir Shaivism includes all of the following denotations:

**The nootheistic Shiva** - Shiva as identical with awareness (‘noos’).

**The panentheistic Shiva** – Shiva as that awareness in which all things dwell and which dwells in all things.

**The panatheistic Shiva** – Shiva as that awareness within which occur endless dynamic processes and cycles of becoming.

**The atheistic Shiva** – Shiva as that pure awareness of Being that is not itself a being.

**The pantheistic Shiva** – the Shiva that is everything, every being.

**The henotheistic Shiva** – the Shiva that rules over every other god precisely because it is not a god in the ordinary sense of a divine being but rather pure awareness.

**The hentheistic Shiva** – Shiva as the monistic character of awareness, its singularity or Oneness.

**The polytheistic Shiva** – Shiva as awareness in all its infinite shapes, personifications and ‘powers’ (Shaktis) - as all gods and goddesses, and as the godliness of every being.

**The monotheistic Shiva** – awareness as the singular, divine creative source of each and every being.

**The theistic Shiva** – awareness as distinct from the world of beings but also able to recognise itself as a being through each being.

## **Bibliography:**

Heidegger, Martin *Discourse on Thinking* with introduction by John M. Anderson  
Harper Torchbooks 1966

Heidegger, Martin Interview with *Der Spiegel* magazine, 1976

Lawrence, David Peter *Rediscovering God with Transcendental Argument*  
State University of New York Press, 1999

Kosok, Michael *The Dialectics of Nature* Proceedings of the 1st International Telos  
Conference, Ed. Grahl and Piccone, Telos Press 1970

Mehta J.L. 'Heidegger and Vedanta', from *Heidegger and Asian Thought*  
Ed. By Graham Parkes, Motilal Banarsidass Press 1992

Mehta, J.L. *Philosophy and Religion – Essays in Interpretation*  
Indian Council of Philosophical Research 2004

Singh, Jaideva *Siva Sutras - The Yoga of Supreme Identity* Motilal Banarsidass 2000

Singh, Jaideva *Vijnanabhairava or Divine Consciousness* Motilal Banarsidass 2001

Wilberg, P. *The Qualia Revolution* New Gnosis Publications 2004