

TANTRIC ADVAITA

energizing nonduality

PETER MARCHAND

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Cover image by Peter Marchand – the three colored powder drawings in the ash of the ritual fireplace represent the three principal modes of energy, see Chapter 7.

Aum

Gajananam bhootganadhisevitam

Kapitthya jamboo phalasaara bhakshanam

Umasutam shokvinashkarakam

Namami vighneshwar padparkajam

Aum



INTRODUCTION

Nonduality means 'not-two', an understanding which is beyond opposites, when everything is perceived as one. Through nondual awareness we can fulfill our desire for peace, which requires us to withdraw our attention from the ever-changing, restless dualities of life. Instead, we focus on an unchanging, nondual, peaceful state of pure being. While this pure being or impersonal awareness has received many names, here we will mostly refer to it as the Self. Nonduality is originally known as *Advaita*, which is the central philosophy of all yoga and meditation. We will fully explore it in the first chapter of this book.

The word *Tantra* is associated these days by most Western people with a more spiritual sexuality¹, while the word basically means to change our energy². *Tantric Advaita* is the knowledge on the nondual energy of the Self, a major but often overlooked aspect of nonduality. *Tantric Advaita* is also known as the central philosophy of the ancient tradition of *Tantra Yoga*³.

When we think, read or hear someone talking about the Self, we rather easily get a taste of that pure beingness. That taste is experienced as a blissful feeling, which is an energy. But when that great lecture is ended or the book is finished, the blissful feeling easily

¹ Tantric sex is a rather small branch of Tantra, where sexual energy serves a spiritual purpose.

² Tantra from the root '*Tanu Vistare*' means to 'expand' by 'weaving' together different energies and the knowledge about them. See also Addendum 1 on more related terminology.

³ *Tantra Yoga* seeks the union of nondual energy and consciousness.

gets lost. And when that particular feeling of pure being is lost, pure being itself is perceived to be lost. *Tantric Advaita* teaches us how to understand and use these changes in order to bring the unique energy of the Self back and keep it.

We can actually never lose the Self, as it is ever in our presence⁴, yet we can definitely feel to have lost it. Thus, when the feeling of bliss gets lost, we can try to bring it back by detaching from any unpleasant feeling and focus on our nondual Self-awareness. But if somehow or other we can't do it, then *Tantric Advaita* offers the answers on how to find our way back to the Self by consciously changing our energy. *Tantric Advaita* energizes the practice of nonduality, so that we can truly enjoy life in pure beingness.

For most people that try to practice nonduality, when that feeling of pure beingness seems lost, it is not because they don't 'get it'. Intellectually speaking, the Self can be easily understood, even by children. When we lose the bliss, it is also not for lack of trying to hold on to it, because oh boy do we try. The main reason why we so easily lose the feeling of pure beingness is because our energy and thus our feelings are naturally ever changing. Our energy even often becomes blocked in the process and when we feel stuck in an unpleasant emotion, the bliss seems very far away indeed.

The way nonduality is predominantly taught these days, focuses entirely on the non-practice of maintaining nondual awareness. Teachers tend to block the seeker from using any of the other practices⁵, which have nevertheless always been part of the ancient yogic traditions. Any alternative route to the Self is generally presented as an illusionary game of the ego, a distraction from the most

⁴ More about that in Chapter 1.

⁵ This pertains mostly to Western teachers, yet can also be seen to affect practitioners in India, even though the general spiritual community there knows very well the value of the ancient practices because of their continued experiences with it.

essential objective.

Modern teachers of nonduality have been mostly influenced by some great *Jnana* teachers⁶ of the previous century, with Sri Ramana Maharishi and Nisargadatta Maharaj as the best known examples. Their emphasis on the direct path of non-doing however addressed a particular imbalance within the Indian culture. People were all too often so much distracted by the more energetic practices, that the most essential practice of maintaining Self-awareness got rather lost⁷. Western nonduality teachers bring the same emphasis on non-doing, maybe even with more enthusiasm, in a culture that hardly knows any kind of practice. It logically leads to the opposite imbalance that we are witnessing today. It leaves many practitioners of nonduality stuck into getting it without feeling it. Still some teachers seem to believe that the entire yogic tradition emerged by mistake.

Please understand, I have been inspired by Nisargadatta Maharaj and Ramana Maharishi for decades and I truly admire how modern nonduality teachers have promoted awareness of the Self since many years. It signifies the most important paradigm shift that Western culture has been going through since ages. If I do raise questions in this book about some of the ways in which the Self and the paths have been presented, it is mostly to expand on the subject, letting it further evolve and mature. On the one hand, there are still so many who have no idea about the Self at all and whose attention needs to be withdrawn quite forcefully from the illusion of individuality and duality. On the other hand, there are those who have principally understood the sacred gospel of the Self and now need workable

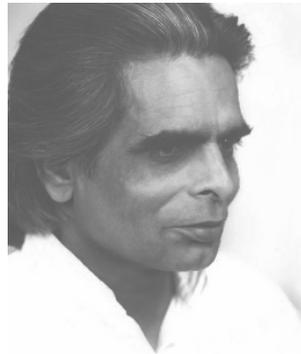
⁶ *Jnana Yoga* is the yoga of true knowledge, see also Chapter 10.

⁷ Also the Buddha and later Shankara pointed out similar imbalances, so it really is quite an old and naturally recurring discussion. Zen Buddhism also influenced many western nonduality teachers, with a simple teaching that seems opposed to the Tantric ways of Tibetan Buddhism.

ways to live nonduality as individuals. For those, *Tantric Jnana*⁸ is providing many practical answers.

My search for the most essential *Tantric Advaita* teachings was originally triggered by some hints found with Ramana and Nisargadatta. Just like their ancient predecessor Shankara, they understood *Tantric Advaita* quite well and promoted it to some degree⁹. In the words of Ramana himself, if awareness of the Self seems hard to find, one may first try some breathing, some *mantra*, or some other more energetic practice. And if even that does not work to sufficiently calm down, he suggests we might need a holiday. Thus, it became clear that working with consciousness and working with energy, even in the most basic of ways, are complementary. One practice needs not exclude the other. They can be alternated or used simultaneously. Awareness of the difference allows for proper balance between these two principal ways of working with the Self. While we focus our awareness on itself, we also harmonize our energy.

Truth be told, in the wisdom gained from my first and foremost teacher Harish Johari¹⁰, there has never been any opposition between working with energy or consciousness. The question only arose years after he left his body. Realizing the complementarity of both approaches made me embark on a mission to understand nonduality through *Tantric*



ill. 1. - Harish Johari

⁸ *Tantric Jnana* is the yoga of nonduality in consciousness and energy.

⁹ See Addendum 3.

¹⁰ I was fortunate to meet Harish Johari, a fabulous author, teacher and artist, when I was only 20 years old. Until he left his body in 1999, I did not listen to any other teacher but him. More about Dada on www.sanatansociety.org.

Advaita with the utmost possible clarity.

As working with our energy is only truly understood by doing, I became a practitioner of tantric healing about a decade ago. This spiritual and energetic healing practice originates with the Nepalese shamanic tradition¹¹, which rests upon a foundation of *Tantra Yoga* practiced by the healer. These healings have been remarkably helpful for my students in fundamentally resolving long-standing emotional issues, along with their physical consequences. Whatever I found to be true in this practice, entirely confirmed the teachings of Harish Johari¹². Nevertheless, it has taken many years before I dared putting the more intuitive awareness of the tantric mysteries that I thus acquired¹³, into the rather rational words shared here.

Tantric scriptures are usually rather secretive, preferring symbolism over reason to communicate the mysteries of nondual energy¹⁴. What follows is an attempt to bring the original tantric science of nonduality in line with the typical rationality found in modern teachings on nonduality. The most essential understanding in *Tantric Advaita* concerns the seeds or potentials that are hidden within the Self, from which the entire universe manifests. These seeds also offer us the principal energetic methods with which to regenerate the feeling of nonduality and retrace our way back to the Self, which is the central subject of this book. This includes the tantric understanding on how these seeds create the multiple dimensions within the universe, to which our individual souls remain ever attached. Thus, the entirety of the yogic tradition is revealed as

¹¹ As Nepal was never durably conquered by the British, Tantra remained part of mainstream culture, while in India it was more pushed to the fringes of society under British rule.

¹² Even though all of Harish Johari's books touch upon the subject of Tantra somehow, the main reference work is 'Tools for Tantra', Harish Johari, Destiny Books 1988.

¹³ See also Addendum 4.

¹⁴ See also Addendum 2.

originating from the Self, bridging the illusion of a gap between nonduality and other practices.

The desire to write about *Tantric Advaita* largely originates from personal interaction with students and also the patients in my spiritual healing practice. In the past years I have experienced a strong increase of people who are principally depressed because of misunderstanding nondual philosophy and becoming stuck in their non-practice. Both teachers and students are responsible for this imbalance. Who doesn't love the doctor who cures all with only one non-pill? Yet the practitioners of yoga postures, breath, *mantra*, or meditation should not be confused about whether all of that is helpful on the spiritual path, or just some distraction produced by the ego. Such confusion is counter-productive, even if people are of course easily distracted.

I hope that with this introduction on *Tantric Advaita*, I can somewhat speed up the passing of this rather natural phase in learning how to deal with our nonduality. Then the beauty of Self-awareness can be truly supported by the entirety of vedic, yogic and tantric science, which is exactly why it was created.

Peter Marchand

NOTE ON THE USE OF SANSKRIT TERMS:

To facilitate the reading for people that are less familiar with Sanskrit, most of the Sanskrit terms have been translated to English, whenever a rather straightforward translation could be found. In those cases however, the original Sanskrit term is also given as a footnote for further reference, as well as for the readers who already know them.

For some Sanskrit words, there is simply no clear translation in English available, because the concept itself does not exist neither in the language nor in the culture. Aside of already quite familiar words such as 'Yoga' or 'Karma', only a few Sanskrit words such as 'Gunas' or 'Kundalini' that seem hard to translate, are thus used within the body of this book.

As the Latin alphabet only has 26 characters, while Sanskrit has 46 of them, the correct writing of Sanskrit words in the Latin alphabet is a subject of much discussion. For example, 'Yoga' is written 'Yog' in Sanskrit, yet the 'g' used at the end of the word includes an 'a' which actually sounds like the 'u' in 'trust'. It's complicated. I have mostly tried to use the characters that seem likely to lead an English reader towards the correct pronunciation.

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Any remaining errors are my own.

1

NONDUAL TRUTH

Dualities are naturally found everywhere in the universe. They appear when a contrast is found between two opposites. In nature we experience summer and winter, night and day, big and small, silence and sound, etc. Many such dualities are also found in ourselves, like in thoughts and feelings, being happy or unhappy, active or inactive, male or female, peaceful or restless. All actions that we undertake in life are somehow meant to change the balance between some of these dualities. We want more of this or less of that, spend endless time thinking on how to achieve it and feel happy or unhappy depending on the results of our actions. We thus naturally live our lives in a state of consciousness that is focused on duality.

Whenever we seek peace however, it can only be found in nondual awareness, where the restless play of opposites disappears. The nondual Self is our purest conscious beingness, which we can most clearly experience when we stop our thinking process in meditation. Even in that absence of thoughts, we still exist and know that we exist. And while thinking always creates dualities, that pure existence seems beyond duality, a true oneness. While our thoughts are ever changing, the conscious witnessing that lies beyond it is experienced as never changing. As it holds no dualities, it cannot change.

Yoga means to seek the union of nonduality¹⁵, so that everything

¹⁵ *Yoga* refers to the root word 'yoke', a wooden bar one carries on both shoulders to unite and balance two opposite objects, such as buckets.

becomes united as one. The search for the absolute truth about ourselves, the universe and everything, has been narrowed down by yogic philosophy to the search for that which never changes. Whatever changes cannot be absolutely true, as it appears only to disappear, like a mirage in the desert. Only that which never changes can be seen as absolutely true, all else then being at most relatively true. As it cannot change, the Self is seen as the absolute truth. It is who we really are, our true essence¹⁶.

Any enquiry into the nature of the universe easily reveals that whatever we find there is ever changing. Likewise, when observing ourselves we find that our body, feelings, thoughts, personality, etc. never stay the same. The only truth that never changes is then found in our pure consciousness, which ever observes whatever happens inside and outside of us. This true beingness is experienced as remaining entirely unaffected by any of the changes that are witnessed outside of it. It is often compared to the screen of a movie theater, which remains white independent of whatever tears or kisses appear upon it. Our pure awareness is in fact our most natural state, yet we tend to identify with what happens on the screen, forgetting that we are the screen. However, as we are observing the things that happen on the screen of consciousness, we cannot be those things.

This feeling of 'I am, and I know that I am' then is revealed as our most essential existence. Words fall short however when enquiring into the very nature of this existential awareness¹⁷. We can most easily explain it as not being this or that¹⁸, but to say what it actually is, remains quite impossible. Nonduality is truly beyond words, and yet we can still get a sense of it, while reading between the lines.

¹⁶ For a more detailed understanding on the subject of the Self, see also 'The Yoga of Truth – The Ancient Path of Silent Knowledge' by Peter Marchand, Destiny Books 2007.

¹⁷ See also Addendum 5.

¹⁸ Known as the practice of '*Neti, Neti*'.

COSMIC BEINGNESS

Qualities are directly related to dualities. The quality of something is expressed as being bigger or smaller than another thing, hotter or colder, more or less dark, etc. When we feel the beingness of the Self, especially in deeper meditation, we cannot say that it is old or young, stupid or wise, happy or unhappy, big or small, dark or light, male or female, etc. It is beyond all such qualities or dualities.

Qualities are what gives a particular form to anything. Having no qualities, the Self is essentially formless. It appears as a void, which is however not at all empty, as it is filled with conscious existence. The formless nature of the Self is hard to grasp for our conceptual mind, which always thinks in terms of dualities, forms and qualities. Yet when mind is quiet, we can still feel this pure beingness existing beyond it, while it remains hard to define it.

As the Self is formless without any particular quality, it cannot change. Only qualities are subject to change. The Self thus seems unaffected by time. We may wonder how something can exist without ever changing and yet here it is, appearing exactly the same last year as it does today. This way, the Self is experienced as eternally unchanging, unborn, unending.

As the Self cannot change, there is also nothing to desire, because we always desire to change something. The Self is desireless and we also cannot desire it to change. And since there is no desire, the Self is ever at peace, just aware of what is. Whenever we are simply enjoying ourselves sitting in the morning sun, it is desire that makes us leave that peace for something else. When we are aware of being the Self, easily we can move beyond desire, except maybe in the desire for peace itself.

Further observance of the Self inside of us brings the clear understanding that the Self is essential to everything we do. Whether

walking or talking, thinking or feeling, nothing that we can do is possible without this silent witnessing happening beyond it. We cannot even lift our hand without the Self being the observer of that movement. That observation of what is happening is very much needed in doing anything, because without it we cannot know what we are doing, so then how to do anything? For that reason, the Self is named omnipotent. The Self is not doing anything, but nothing can be done without it. Likewise, it is omniscient, because without it nothing can be known¹⁹.

Since the Self is thus found wherever something is being done or known, it must be present in everyone. Having found the Self inside of us, we then discover it to exist also in every being outside of us. Behind every eye we meet, that same witnessing must be there, for a pig to do what pigs do, and also for a sunflower or a tree to follow the direction of the sun for example. Hence, we can say that the Self is omnipresent. It exists everywhere in the universe.

When comparing our Self to the Self of a pig for instance, how can we find any difference between them? As the Self has no form and is beyond all qualities and dualities, it cannot be seen as bigger, smarter, happier or in any way superior or inferior to that of a pig. Comparing these two formless kinds of conscious beingness is impossible, as there is nothing to compare them by. We might as well try to compare two invisible clouds. The Self appears as entirely impersonal, devoid of all individuality.

Thus, we can see the Self as the Cosmic Beingness which pervades everything, and in which all are one and the same. There is really only one being looking out from behind a zillion eyes. Therefore, the duality between the individual and the whole is revealed as

¹⁹ Part of this power of knowing from the Self also comes as the 'Cosmic Intellect' or '*Buddhi*', available through deep meditation and intuition.

maybe the most relevant illusion of separation²⁰. In essence, there is no 'me' as opposed to 'us'. We are one beingness that witnesses all our various inner and outer forms, whether they are thoughts, dreams, and feelings, or physical bodies, jobs, and environments.

Throughout history, the word 'God' has been most often used to name this Cosmic Being, yet in most people's minds that word is more associated with some supreme being outside of us. As the Cosmic Beingness exists both inside and outside of us, I prefer to use the word 'Self'. That Self is experienced as the illusion of the 'individual' Self, yet it is known to be the equal to the Cosmic Self. Looking through a microscope, the drop is not essentially different from the ocean.

That Self is who we really are²¹. We are all one never changing, formless, desireless, peaceful, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent cosmic beingness. Whatever individuality we have is not very important in comparison with the Self and it is anyhow ever changing. We can rejoice in the understanding that we are thus ever existing in peace and bliss, yet the question remains how to make this true also in our day to day feeling?

The practice that is most associated with the philosophy of nonduality is to maintain a non-doing, non-trying, non-thinking, nondual awareness. It is the practice of silencing the mind, directly focusing our consciousness on a nondual state of being. This is the path of *Jnana Yoga*²², where we keep an unrelenting focus on the truth of the Self, a continued dwelling in the silent awareness of the observer. In *Tantric Advaita* we come to the realization that the successful application of this technique can be made easier by simultaneously generating the feeling of nondual energy in ourselves.

²⁰ The cosmic illusion (*Maya*), also known as the divine play (*Leela*).

²¹ See also 'The Truth of *Advaita Vedanta*' on [youtube.com/youyoga](https://www.youtube.com/youyoga).

²² *Jnana Yoga* is the yoga of true knowledge, see also Chapter 10.

2

NONDUAL FEELING

All we ever really want is happiness. The search for happiness drives all desire and action. We want more of this or less of that, hoping it will make us happier or at least allow us to remain happy. Yet at some point we understand the impermanent nature of whatever happiness we find in the ever-changing phenomena of life. Whatever comes has to go. We can enjoy our ice cream only until it is finished. Whomever we love now must one day die, might otherwise leave us or become less lovable. Tired of running after a kind of happiness that is always followed by unhappiness, the ultimate objective of all yoga and spirituality emerges: to be happy independent of what happens.

The Self is ever beyond the duality of happiness and unhappiness, because it experiences only the never changing, peaceful happiness that is usually referred to as bliss. Living from the nondual Self means ever living in the bliss of the Self, independent of outer circumstances. That is what we are after in yoga, so it pays to always remember that we are in it for the bliss. The Self is the ultimate objective of yoga, maybe not so much because it is who we truly are, but mostly because it gives us the bliss that we really desire. If the Self would only provide us with some neutral empty feeling, nobody would be very interested. Contrary however to what some people seem to believe, the Self is not without feeling. The incredibly true smile on our face whenever we experience the Self is full proof of the bliss that it brings.

The Self is originally defined in scripture as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, that Being-Knowing-Bliss²³. The Self is the true beingness, the ultimate reality and the absolute truth (*Sat*)²⁴. The Self is also simultaneously experienced as pure silent consciousness (*Chit*)²⁵. And last but not least, the Self is also a kind of energy, a blissful feeling (*Ananda*)²⁶. That bliss is not just an attribute, but part of the very existence of the Self²⁷. *Tantric Advaita* is the knowledge on the essential nature of that energy of bliss. It is the true nondual feeling, the energy of the Self.

As *Sat* or beingness is rather self-evident as long as nondual consciousness and energy are there, the Self is often seen as being 'composed' of *Chit* and *Ananda*, consciousness²⁸ and energy²⁹. Yet the Self is truly beyond this essential duality of consciousness and energy. Consciousness and energy may appear as opposites in manifestation, as in thinking versus feeling. Yet, in the Self they are but two sides of the same coin, entirely inseparable. The consciousness cannot exist without the energy, and the energy cannot be known without the consciousness. They are one beingness.

Especially in modern teachings on nonduality, the Self is most often reduced to consciousness, awareness, the witness, the observer, naming only one half of the pure beingness. That only serves the idea that the best way forward is to focus this awareness or consciousness on itself. Thus, it excludes the energy, the *Ananda*, the bliss of pure beingness, because that would point to the option of

²³ *Sat-Chit-Ananda* is also translated as Truth-Being-Bliss or Consciousness-Being-Bliss.

²⁴ '*Sat*' directly relates to '*Satya*', which means truth.

²⁵ *Chit* is often written as *Cit*, which is more correct but easily leads to wrong pronunciation, when not actually read in Sanskrit. 'C' without 'h' in English is pronounced as a 'K', like in 'Cave'.

²⁶ *Ananda* originates from the word '*Nandati*', which means 'he rejoices'

²⁷ Traditionally, *Satchitananda* is often written as one word, as *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda* are one.

²⁸ '*Purusha*', which more literally means 'person'.

²⁹ '*Prakriti*', which also means 'primordial nature'.

working with our energy. That practical option is excluded because it is feared to distract from the more direct path of non-doing, non-thinking, non-trying, etc. by focusing on a feeling of happiness that may or may not be illusory³⁰. 'Don't do, just be' is the motto, and all energy work by its nature involves a process of doing, some kind of involvement with duality. To state that the absolute beingness is consciousness only and exclude the energy, is however a highly dualistic point of view. All is one in the Self, right?

IDENTIFICATION

To feel the bliss of the Self is essentially a matter of identification, which indeed fully depends on where we focus our awareness. As the 'Father of Yoga' Patanjali³¹ famously puts it: 'If the observer stops identifying with the changes perceived in mind, the observer will be itself'. If we identify with what happens outside of us, or in our thoughts and feelings, we will experience the duality of happiness followed by unhappiness. If instead of feeling 'I am this' or 'I am that', we identify with the pure beingness of the 'I am', then it offers us the bliss that we are after.

The ego is then revealed as the main obstruction to living in blissful nonduality, as it is defined as the one who identifies with this or that. We just naturally tend to identify with our body, our age, our feelings, our thoughts, our jobs, our personality, etc. Whatever happy or unhappy feeling we find in these identifications will never last. The logical main practice then is revealed for the ego to identify with the Self only. Whatever happens around us, whatever feeling or thought

³⁰ The light spiritual feeling of *Sattva* (see Chapter 7), which even though it comes most close to the bliss of the Self, is indeed still part of the illusion, as it may come and go.

³¹ Sri Patanjali is the ancient author of the world-famous *Yoga Sutras* and often named the 'Father of Yoga'.

comes, whatever ability or connection we find in ourselves, it is then all disregarded as unreal, untrue, a mere illusion.

This is the practice that is known as *Jnana Yoga*, the yoga of true knowing³². While it starts with a more intellectual process of understanding the truth of the Self, it ends in true awareness of being the Self. When that understanding and feeling of the Self are present, they only need to be maintained, never again to be lost. Yet that is where the practice of *Jnana Yoga* for most people meets its limitations. In just one second first that blissful feeling and then the knowing can be lost. Daily life seems to bring so many opportunities for that to happen.

The practice of *Jnana Yoga* then prescribes to always return to inner silence to again identify with the Self. Of course, if it can be done, that is always the most direct way to dissolve the illusion of individuality. Furthermore, if thoughts persist anyway, *Jnana Yoga* prescribes that we observe them, question them, discover their illusory nature to bring them to silence and the direct experience of the Self. Most people however have a hard time keeping this up twenty-four hours a day.

THE SHEATHS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

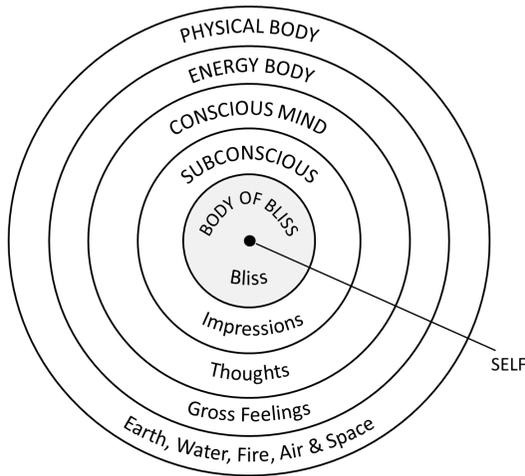
The reason for our limited control over our ever-changing thoughts and feelings is no big mystery. Especially modern man has predominantly perceived humans as thinking beings³³, which gives us a sense of control in thinking what we want to think. Those who never tried might even believe that to stop thinking must be a piece of cake. The truth is that our thoughts are quite erratic, as they are only

³² See also '*Jnana Technique*' on [youtube.com/youyoga](https://www.youtube.com/youyoga).

³³ That distinction between men and animals is actually quite old, with the Sanskrit word for 'mind' being '*Manas*', which in the Indo-Germanic languages lead to the word 'man'.

a reflection of the feelings that lie at their origin. Feelings and thoughts always interact. We are predominantly feeling beings and as such quite complex, as our feelings originate from many different layers of our being.

All matter is made of more or less condensed energy as Einstein taught us, so our physical body is made out of energy. Beyond it however, yogic science reveals that we also have various more subtle energy bodies³⁴, named the sheaths of consciousness³⁵. Every one of these 'bodies' affects the way we feel:



ill. 2. - The Sheaths of Consciousness.

- The physical body³⁶ mostly influences our feelings and thoughts through the neurotransmitters³⁷, the nervous system, the brain, and many more energetic systems within the very cells of our

³⁴ See also 'The Koshas' on [youtube.com/youyoga](https://www.youtube.com/youyoga).

³⁵ 'Koshas', layers as of fine cloth, obscuring the light of the Self.

³⁶ 'Annamayi Kosha', the 'food body'.

³⁷ These 'molecules of emotion' directly affect transmission in the neural patterns of our thoughts and are emotional in nature.

body. If we feel depressed for some time, our body cells will adopt the lethargic feeling. If then we are done with our depression, our body cells may not be. As the physical body is the most dense, it naturally slows down any changes in our emotions.

- The gross energy body³⁸ is where we actually perceive our gross emotions such as love or anger. Its energy can change in an instant and directly influences the ignorance or wisdom in our thoughts.

- The thoughts in our conscious mind³⁹ always have an associated feeling, bigger and smaller likes or dislikes. The two hemispheres of the frontal brain are mostly at play here, producing a rather constant fluctuation between more emotional and more rational thinking⁴⁰. Multiple feedback loops exist between the conscious mind and the other bodies. Fearful thoughts may increase nervousness in the physical body or the gross energy body, yet vice versa such nervousness may also support fearful thoughts.

- Our most persistent feelings and thoughts originate with the past impressions stored within the catacombs of the subconscious⁴¹, beyond our conscious grasp. Whether it is the animal nature of our reptile brain, the childlike emotional nature of the mid-brain or some deep past life blockages within our very soul, the power with which the subconscious can shake our blissful Self-awareness is truly humbling to the conscious mind.

- At our very center we find the body of bliss of the Self⁴², ever inspiring us towards happiness. It is oftentimes feeling quite out of

³⁸ 'Pranamayi Kosha', the 'body of vital energy', see also Chapter 7.

³⁹ 'Manomayi Kosha', the 'body of mind'.

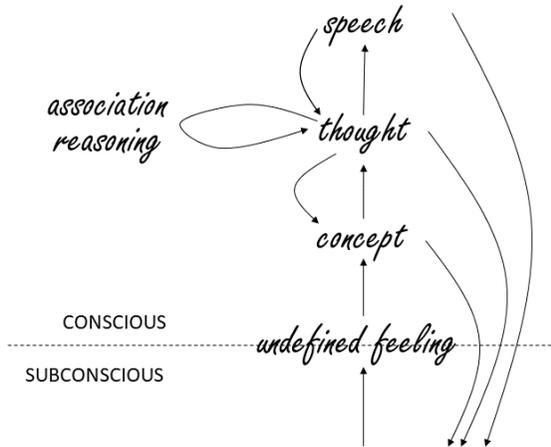
⁴⁰ Solar and Lunar thinking, see Chapter 7.

⁴¹ 'Vijnanamayi Kosha', the 'body of knowledge', also including the cosmic intellect or 'Buddhi' and the principal attachments of the ego or 'Ahamkara'.

⁴² 'Anandamayi Kosha', the 'body of bliss'.

reach whenever too much unhappiness is experienced within the other layers. The actual Self is placed at the ‘center’ of it, as in illustration 2, even though it exists absolutely beyond any place.

The triggering of thoughts through body, mind and the senses can be rather easily neutralized by turning our attention inside, away from the world. However, the subconscious mind remains the main disturbance of our inner silence. It does not directly produce thoughts, but it rather continuously ‘burps’ out a kind of wordless feelings⁴³. The conscious mind then translates these as concepts that lead to the sentences of actual thoughts through association and reasoning. To stop that process requires quite a lot of mental control. The more we silence the conscious mind, the more the subconscious will tend to fill the emptiness. How to silence the subconscious mind is without a doubt the biggest challenge in keeping the silence and bliss of the Self. For sure, if our subconscious mind is somehow unhappy, it is experienced as a ‘pain body’ and our bliss will be short-lived. More on working with the subconscious in Chapter 8.



ill. 3. - Interaction between conscious and subconscious.

⁴³ ‘Para’, the first of the four modes of speech or ‘Vak’.

CHANGING OUR ENERGY

Whenever our feeling thus loses the bliss of the Self, all we have is the will power of our ego to stop talking to our thoughts, let go of any less blissful feeling, disidentify from whatever attachment caused it, enforce inner silence, and hold on to it whatever happens. Yet our will power itself is a feeling, an energy, ever changing, even if we feel more secure in thinking otherwise. However much we can try to bravely stay 'on top' of our feelings, it may not always be enough if we lack the energy.

Nonduality is therefore not just to be lived within the thinking faculty of mind. If we can't durably feel the bliss, what's the use? What good is positive thinking if our feeling doesn't follow it? What good is not thinking if disturbed again and again by new thoughts originating within our feeling nature? Only if somehow or other we can enduringly generate the energy of nondual feeling, we can really live nonduality. As thoughts and the energy of our feelings are ever connected, energetic control brings mental control. Thus, changing our energy allows us to better control our mind, through which the focus on pure awareness in inner silence becomes so much easier.

It is a matter of common sense. When there is nothing to eat, we can solve the feeling of hunger by disidentifying from the body and turning towards the bliss of the Self. Whenever we are hungry however while food is available, why not eat? Then why not do whatever we can on the different energetic levels of our being, to make it easier to truly feel blissfully beyond any duality in total union? Why not cook real tasty food if the occasion allows it, since we have to eat anyhow? Did not all *Jnana* masters teach us to continue behaving naturally? Are we then also not free to make our own choices?

A more obscure renunciate school in India even chooses to destroy any harmony in the energy on purpose, as an ultimate exercise in nevertheless remaining with the Self⁴⁴. We have the same natural freedom to change our energy so that nondual beingness becomes a little easier, without of course depending too much on how we feel at any given moment. Obviously, this freedom also means that anyone can choose at any time to ignore some feeling and entirely focus on the truth of the Self.

Tantric Advaita energizes the understanding and practice of nonduality by including both the consciousness as the energy of the Self. The pure beingness (*Sat*) is recognized both as an awareness (*Chit*) and as a 'feelingness' (*Ananda*). The Self is the smiling neutral observer, the blissful thoughtless knowing⁴⁵. It does not just exist, it is conscious, and it has a feeling, an energy.

Tantric Advaita thus defines the beingness of the Self as pure conscious energy. Even beyond manifestation, when there is nothing to observe, this pure conscious energy eternally feels bliss and knows that it does. This feeling/knowing stands unopposed to any non-feeling and non-knowing. It is, without a doubt, it is. And while in manifestation energy always seems to change, the pure, blissful energy of the Self is never changing, just as unmoving and nondual as pure awareness is. They are one. To consciously generate that energy within our feeling may not always be easy, yet fortunately the Self itself holds the very keys to achieve that goal, the seeds of the universe that exist within the Self.

⁴⁴ The school of 'Agori Sadhus', famous for drinking alcohol, eating flesh of corpses, etc.

⁴⁵ Nobody will be very interested if we take away the smile, the bliss.

3

THE SEEDS WITHIN THE SELF

In the universe everything is ever changing and hence represents only relative truth, an illusion. It is then obvious that the Self as the only absolute reality must also be the source of this illusion. If not, then this illusion would originate within itself, which would make it an absolute reality⁴⁶. Only the Self is unborn, undying, self-existent, and hence all else is born from the Self. However illusory the universe may be, it must be rooted within the Self⁴⁷.

The entire universe is thus nothing more or less than a manifestation of the Self, which then for sure can also be named the Creator. Everything in the universe is but a reflection of it. The Self resides both within and outside of the universe, everything actually being but one. Nonduality must include all duality, otherwise it creates itself a duality between duality and nonduality, between the manifested and the unmanifested, between the universe and the Self. In other words, nondual awareness requires the acceptance and integration of all duality.

In the search for the Self, we naturally first tend to look away from the universe to find the Self within. Our Self-realization remains immature however for as long as it disappears when we open our eyes. If that is still the case, our inner search has not yet been

⁴⁶ It is truly remarkable how those who are most in favor of regarding the universe as an illusion, often simultaneously ignore its fundamental origin within the absolute reality of the Self.

⁴⁷ Likewise, the energy of the universe cannot be born from the consciousness of the Self, if the Self does not in essence contain some energy also, the nondual bliss of *Ananda*.

completed. Once we recognize the Self as ourselves both in unmanifested and manifested form, an unconditional love for everything in the world flows effortlessly from our spiritual heart⁴⁸.

One moment the wave is a wave, the next it again disappears into the ocean. While it is the most common error not to see the wave as part of the ocean, it is equally untrue to see the ocean as separate from the waves it makes. Thus, in *Tantric Advaita*, the manifested universe is seen as a divine theatre⁴⁹, which is manifested from the pure energy of the Self, that has this pure unlimited potentiality. Meanwhile, the Self still exists in unmanifested form. The void is full and ever remains beyond change.

MANIFESTATION

The energy of the Self is truly the most magical of all energies that one can imagine. The seed contains the tree, but the tree cannot be found inside the seed. Likewise, the unmanifested Self contains the potential of all manifested energies in the universe, from ethereal space to the most solid matter. And yet we find no trace of the universe within the Self. *Tantric Advaita* offers us some insight into this mysterious nature of the Self, and how from nothingness things can emerge because they are present within the Self as potentials, often referred to as seeds.

The unmanifested absolute Self somehow holds the potential of the relative, of this manifested universe. The how of it remains a mystery beyond duality and therefore beyond any understanding put into words. Only when we look at how the universe manifests from that potential, we can get a glimpse of it. *Sat-Chit-Ananda* is the result

⁴⁸ 'Hridaya', a *Chakra* in the Heart *Chakra*, also known as the spiritual heart.

⁴⁹ 'Leela', the universal divine play or theatre.

of that glimpse, representing the main nondual seeds of the manifested universe.

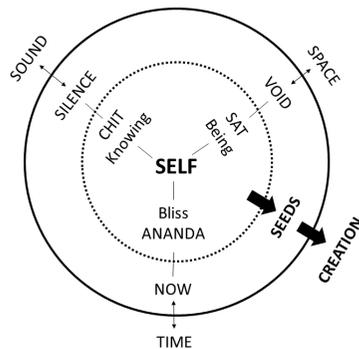
Chit refers to the pure consciousness which we perceive as a witness, because it observes yet ever remains silent. A witness that speaks and gives an opinion is no longer an impartial observer, not a true witness. Yet when that silent witnessing of the Self is heard as the absence of sound, it is also experienced as a sound, the unstruck sound, the sound of one hand clapping, the sound of an empty cave, the sound of silence. When we hear nothing, we start listening for any sound, because the silence holds or implies the potential of sound. That conscious silence however remains never changing, eternally witnessing without a sound, wordless, without a thought. Hence it is absolutely true as opposed to any sound that appears only to disappear. The sound of the silent *Chit* is the first nondual seed of the universe, holding the potential of all sound vibrations.

Sat refers to existence itself, which can never be questioned because the question itself provides the evidence⁵⁰. It never changes, so it is absolute truth. The absolute Self however exists without form, as a void without any particular quality or property, color or shape. We cannot say whether this void is smaller than an atom or bigger than any universe. It is something which is nothing and precisely for that reason, it holds the potential, the very possibility of space and shape. If we were to meet an invisible being, we would naturally wonder what it looks like. When walking in a thick mist that covers everything around us, we still keep looking for some shape or other. The concept of 'zero' cannot even be defined in absence of the potential for some other number. The no-thing holds the potential of some-thing, some shape, some form. Yet the pure beingness without form cannot change, because change is limited to form. Hence the emptiness

⁵⁰ 'Do I exist' is a nonsensical question, as without the existence of an 'I', the question cannot be asked.

which is full of beingness is absolutely true as opposed to any shapes or forms that appear in space only to again disappear from it. The full void of *Sat* is the second nondual seed of the universe, holding the potential of space and shape.

Ananda refers to the eternal feeling of this beingness, which is bliss. This peaceful happiness is self-sustained, unborn, uncreated, uncaused, so it never once began and is never ending. Hence it is changeless, and because it cannot change it is timeless. Only through change we perceive the past as that which was before the change, and the future as that which comes after the change, creating the illusion of time. Time always requires or implies change. It is the eternal now, and yet its very timeless changelessness implies the potential of change and hence of time. When rain keeps pouring all day, we still wait for it to stop. The clock that stands still, seems poised to start ticking. The absence of change implies the potential for change. Within the Self this potential for change in time is however never changing and thus absolutely true as opposed to any changes themselves which continuously appear only to disappear. The eternity of the now of *Ananda* is the third nondual seed of this universe, holding the potential of time.



ill. 4. - The Seeds within the Self.

The silence of the witness thus holds the seed of sound, the void of beingness holds the seed of space, and the blissful eternal now holds the seed of time (see illustration 4). These are the primary energy potentials from which the universe manifests. To generate the very feeling of the Self inside of us, those are also the primary energies to which we can turn for help.

SEED-BASED PRACTICES

Many teachers of nonduality will promote particular practices that concentrate us on the seeds of the Self, on silence, formlessness and the now. Outer silence can lead to inner silence and the listening to the unstruck sound of silence⁵¹. We can experience the fullness of presence in our inner space, turning away from the illusion of form created by the senses to the experience of formless existence within⁵². Always staying in the now and disregarding past and future as nonexistent is probably the best-known practice today⁵³.

In this way, *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda* each offer a direct gateway into the nondual reality of the Self. These are powerful practices based directly upon the nondual seeds of the Self, which come forward in my teachings very often⁵⁴. But they may not be powerful enough when our energy somehow or other has more dramatically moved away from the bliss of the Self.

Our ego is a real drama queen, what to say? That same ego can come to accept that sometimes we are unable to overcome our unhappiness using these quite advanced if somewhat abstract seed-

⁵¹ See Chapter 5 and also 'The Sound of Silence' on [youtube.com/youyoga](https://www.youtube.com/youyoga).

⁵² See Chapter 6.

⁵³ This is a popular practice thanks to the efforts of Master Eckhart Tolle and his bestselling book 'The Power of Now', see also Chapter 7.

⁵⁴ See 'Jnana Technique' on [youtube.com/youyoga](https://www.youtube.com/youyoga).

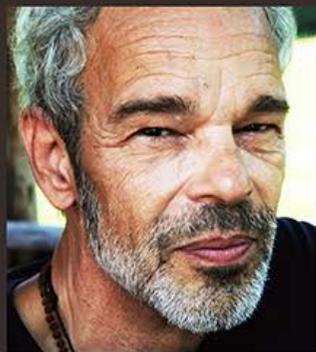
based practices. It is then often experienced as impossible to keep the thoughts silent, to disregard the sometimes painful coming and going of forms to which we feel attached, and to not dwell on our past nor even try to imagine a better future. It is only natural, as people do have lives. Fortunately, the primary energies of sound, space and time that manifest out of these seeds of the Self, are also there to guide us back to the source. They constitute the very essence of the science of yogic practice.

'You are that blissful Self-awareness beyond duality. You really 'get that', yet it is hard to keep feeling it. Tantric Advaita may be just what you need.'

Having discovered the beauty of Self-awareness, nonduality or Advaita becomes a way of pure being. Yet, life tends to produce its various emotions, which easily remove that blissful feeling of the Self. We can actually never lose the Self, as it is ever in our presence. However, when that particular feeling or energy of the Self is lost, pure beingness itself is perceived to be lost.

Tantric Advaita is the ancient knowledge on the nondual energy of the Self. It teaches us how to maintain full awareness of the Self, while simultaneously bringing our feeling closer to the bliss of the Self, energizing our nonduality practice. As we focus our awareness on itself, we harmonize our energy.

The most essential understanding in *Tantric Advaita* concerns the seeds or potentials that are hidden within the Self, from which the entire universe manifests. They are based on the ancient trinity of *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, from which the powers of Time, Space and Sound emerged. These seeds also offer us the principal energetic methods to regenerate the feeling of nonduality. They provide us with a unique insight into the origin of all Yogic and Tantric practice, at all times allowing us to retrace our way back to the Self.



Originally inspired by his teacher Harish Johari from when he was 20 years old, Peter Marchand teaches Jnana, Karma, Bhakti, Ashtanga and Tantra Yoga. Living in Belgium, he guides people from around the world towards happiness, inner peace and deeper meditation. He is also a Tantric healer, following an ancient Nepalese shamanic tradition. Peter also authored 'The Yoga of the Nine Emotions', 'The Yoga of Truth' and 'Love Your Ego'.

"You will find wonderful guidance for achieving the highest spiritual understanding and bliss."

Swami Asokananda, president of the
Integral Yoga Institute of New York &
the Integral Yoga Global Network.

