



Svaroopaa® Vidya Ashram

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Multi-Dimensionality #4

## Three Ways to Get Enlightened

By Gurudevi Nirmalananda

You may have heard that enlightenment is easy — “You don’t need any practices, just know who you are. Just know.” Personally, I needed help with that. I needed lots of help! I got the help so I know how it works. After enough preparation, this is what happens: you just know.

The Shiva Sutras describes this path to enlightenment, called Shambhavopaya. The word names the process: the upaya (path) of cultivating the knowing-feeling (bhava) of being Shiva (Shambho). It is a feeling of downshifting, like leaning back into your multidimensionality, the ease of settling into your own Beingness.

I teach this process in every satsang and course. I lead you past the fragmentation of your mind to a deeper inner dimension. You feel whole. You shine with light. The trick is this: when the program ends, simply continue to experience your own Shivaness. Instead, you might go back to your mind, with its many concurrent agendas.

For those who get ensnared by their mind, another upaya is best – applying your mind to Consciousness. Since it is your mind that blocks your easing into Shiva-Self, you must work with your mind. This is Shaktopaya, the upaya (path) of working with Shakti (the energy of Consciousness-Itself).

How do you do this? You fill your mind with the energy of Consciousness by repeating the mantra. The mantra given by an authorized teacher emanates the power of Consciousness. Each time you repeat it, it uplifts your mind and mood. You can liken it to clearing the clouds out of your mind so the sunlight of your own Beingness can shine through.

This is a familiar process if you’ve attended one of my satsangs or programs. I formally give the mantra, and explain both its meaning and how to use it. When you take it with you, your progress toward enlightenment continues. But if you climb out of your mantra-mobile, you won’t be making headway toward your destination.

Because your mind may tend to steer itself back into the swamp, the other tools of yoga are important. They rescue you from yourself. This path includes yoga poses, yogic breathing, chanting, sutra studies, guruseva (volunteering) and dakshina (giving donations). I include many of these in programs. They engage your body and mind along with your capacity for relationship. Any aspect you leave out is untouched by yoga.

This is Anavopaya, the upaya (path) of anu (the individual). You work with your uniqueness, delving into the practices that you resonate with. As you extract the nectar from each one, the others draw your attention, ultimately giving you a full 360 on Consciousness.

With Anavopaya, your mind becomes easier to handle. It synchs up with Consciousness, so it loves the mantra, making Shaktopaya come naturally. The inner flow of mantric power attunes you to the ever-flowing current of Grace, which gives you the knowing of your own Self. In this way, Shambhavopaya comes naturally, as the fruits of your efforts, organically available to those who have matured spiritually.

It’s a process. If you were ready for enlightenment, you would get it by hearing one word from the Guru. But already you’ve read 500 words, right here on this page, so clearly you need some spiritual development. That’s called normal.

Normal means you have a mix of qualities. Sometimes you are insightful, understanding and helpful. Other times you are speedy, maybe even assertive or impatient. And you do know how to be resistant, lazy and self-indulgent. While everyone goes through all three, one of these three will be your main mode. Your modus operandi determines the upaya you need. Baba described it this way:

The upayas or means of reaching the Self are different. This is due to the three gunas or qualities — sattva, rajas and tamas...

If you are consistently insightful, understanding and helpful, sattva guna predominates. For you, cultivating the bhava (knowing-feeling) of being Shiva through Shambhavopaya will be successful.

Because of your sattvic nature, this is not a way of withdrawing or escaping from the world, but a way of finding the light of Consciousness within life.

For those who tend to be speedy, maybe even assertive or impatient, rajo guna predominates. You need Shaktopaya – do more mantra. As your mind marinates in Consciousness, you become more kindhearted, but without losing your intelligence.

If you have an unhurried approach to life, you may be lazy and self-indulgent, usually accompanied by resistance to change. Tamo guna is holding you back, so your path is Anavopaya, doing practices that get your gumption going.

The reality is you, like everyone, have a mixed bag. The three gunas are described like a braid made with a white strand (sattva), a red strand (rajo) and a black strand (tamo). Every direction you turn it, all three are in play. The gunas keep the world moving, an ever-changing extravaganza. It is only when you turn within that you find constancy, the underlying essence that gives rise to all that is in the world — including you.

I am describing the three-fold nature of Consciousness. The upayas and gunas are only two of the yogic systems that describe how the world works. If you're lost in the forest, you want a map so you can find your way out. These yogic maps give you a GPS, so you get to enjoy the scenery along the route that is taking you home.

You experience the triune nature of time, living in the present while calling on your past and imagining your possible future. Yet your conception of all three can be limiting. You may live in the past, celebrating or bemoaning what happened. Yet your memories are incomplete, perhaps even distorted. Better yet, scientific research has proven that, when you expand your sense of self, your past changes.

To live in the now is promoted as a great spiritual attainment. Unfortunately you can be stuck in your analysis of the present moment, especially if you are comparing it to how you want it to be. Suffering happens in the now.

Your future is changeable, everyone agrees. The yogic principle of karma details how you create your own future. However your timeline started decades ago, even lifetimes ago, with some of your future already set into motion by your past, even by your actions and thoughts in the present. Understanding time can set you free from it.

My favorite of the three-fold models of Consciousness is found in Shiva's trident. It is like a spear, the tip like a three-prong fork with the outer two tines curved. Past, present and future are on the three prongs, as well as the mystical reality hidden in the mundane.



On the middle prong is Para, in white, the embodiment of purity and perfection. On the left is Apra, the limited, inferior or lower reality, impure and causing pain, black and yellow in color. On the right is Paraapara, which is the combination of para and apra, meaning the Divine in the mundane. The red color embodies the ephemeral nature of the world, which is aflame with the Divine hidden within. In explaining this, Baba said:

Shiva is the individual souls, the world and the body and the senses.

In other words, to become enlightened, you must not leave the world. There is no need, for the world is Shiva, in masquerade. Learn to see through the mask by looking inward. For this, you need practices, and most especially the support and guidance of a Master. That's where I got the help I needed. It's called Guru's Grace.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES, "MULTI-DIMENSIONALITY"

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