

THE POWER OF REFLECTION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
NONDUALISM AND MANIFEST REALITY IN THE WRITTEN WORK OF SWAMI
SHANTANANDA

by

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Abstract

The Power of Reflection: An Analysis of the Relationship Between Nondualism and Manifest Reality in the Written Work of Swami Shantananda

by

Carol Lynn Schopfer

Consciousness has historically been described and evaluated from many different philosophical, spiritual, and scientific perspectives. This dissertation presents a study in the area of nondual consciousness that describes consciousness as a non-plural or indivisible phenomenon. The study looked at the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality in the written work of Swami Shantananda. The discussion of consciousness as a reflexive phenomenon was a key component of this study. This research used a textual content analysis in combination with intuitive inquiry to analyze and describe the major themes of Swami Shantananda's commentary on the *Pratyabhijna-hridayam*. The *Pratyabhijna-hridayam* is a collection of sutras within the Kashmir Shaivist yoga tradition that describes the process by which nondual reality condenses itself into manifest reality. The results of this study defined the following six categories or themes that are prominent within the commentary: vibration, bliss, paradox, creativity, luminosity, and reflection. The discussion of the results describes the ways in which these themes elucidate the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. One of the prominent aspects of this discussion describes a process of projection and reflection as key in understanding the apparent difference between nondual reality and manifest reality. The conclusions and recommendations in this dissertation suggest further research and practical application in the areas of philosophy of consciousness, creativity theory, neuropsychology, mystical traditions, and transpersonal activities such as meditation, drumming, dancing, and chanting. Within these conclusions, a clear

relationship was identified between the macrocosm, which is nondual reality, and the microcosm, which is material reality. Viewing the microcosm as a reflection of the macrocosm provides spiritual practitioners with an opportunity to understand the concrete world as a manifestation of the divine.

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I would also like to thank the many family members and friends whose love, patience, and support held me together through the dissertation process. First, I must thank my fiancé', Stephen Forrest, who has been my coach, cheerleader, and biggest supporter. His patience and understanding made this study possible. I'd like to thank Joseph Schopfer for his quiet presence, acceptance, and for his belief in my ability to succeed. Most importantly, I would like to thank him for constantly encouraging me to learn, grow, and to stretch beyond my comfort zones. It is just this attitude that gave me the courage to attempt a project of this magnitude. I also offer my gratitude to Paul Forrest for providing so much material and emotional support over the years. His ever positive attitude and encouragement kept me motivated in times of doubt.

I am deeply indebted to Cindy Kittredge and Patt Rehn for not only encouraging me, but for leading by example. The strength, courage, and commitment they display in their own lives each day made me believe that somehow, I would complete this study, no matter how daunting

the circumstances appeared to be. Finally, I would like to thank Jim Kittredge, Claudia Anderson, and Susan and Greg Coffin for their patience, kindness, and consideration during difficult times.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

OM
 purnam adah
 purnam idam
 purnat purnam udacyate
 purnasya purnam adaya, purnam evavasishyate

OM
That is the Whole,
This is the Whole,
From Wholeness emerges Wholeness,
Wholeness coming from wholeness
Wholeness still remains

Invocation to the Isha Upanishad
(The Upanishads, 1974, p. 12)

A Movement Toward Wholeness

It took me a long time to understand that the process of writing this dissertation was not just an academic process. It was also a process that mirrored my own personal journey toward wholeness. A little over two years ago, I attended a seminar through the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology as one of the requirements for the Ph.D. program. At this seminar, Dr. Katherine Unthank (2007) delivered a presentation on her research in shame and trauma. A single line from this presentation forced open the doors of my unconscious and held me face to face with the emotions that had governed both my personal and academic life.

“Without the *Other*, there is no shame” (Unthank, 2007). When Dr. Unthank spoke these words, I was stunned. Suddenly, I understood why I had spent so many years captivated by the idea of nondualism. From a nondual perspective, reality is singular. There is no *Other*. If there is no *Other*, then there is no shame. My desire to unlock the mysteries of nondualism was simultaneously a desire to avoid my own shame. I was shocked to discover that my dissertation

topic was rooted, not simply in intellectual inquiry, but also in the depths of my own personal pain. The lenses through which I viewed the world were colored with shame and fear.

For many years, I struggled through life's emotional ups and downs like a small child on a large roller coaster, simply hanging on for dear life. I made major decisions from a mindset overrun by fear and self-loathing. Yet, over and over again I returned to poems, prose, and passages in sacred texts that reminded me that my dramatic perceptions of a world full of suffering, separation, and degradation were not the center of the universe. Over time, I began to understand that these perceptions were actually my own projections. The more deeply I looked into the nature of projection, the more clearly I saw that the projections that appeared to be causing me so much suffering were actually the starting point for my healing journey. By understanding both the positive and negative aspects of my psychological projections, I was able to understand how they related both to my own personal issues and also to my passion for nondualism.

Throughout this dissertation, there is a focus on the projection and reflection processes that stem from the Kashmir Shaivist yoga tradition. Through the research and writing of this dissertation, I learned to better understand my own psychological projections and to use those projections as a mechanism to begin to overcome my sense of personal shame. By understanding that my projections are a reflection of both myself and of divine reality, I have been able to see myself more clearly and to accept myself as a manifestation of divinity.

In addition to investigating the nature of nondualism, this study also looked at the role reflection plays in the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. For me, the important word here was relationship. As we will see later in this study, relationship is a key component to understanding the reflexive nature of the universe. As part of my own personal

journey with this research topic, I came to understand the importance of both reflection and relationship in almost every aspect of my life. When I was struggling to define my research topic for this study, it was my fiancé who helped me pin down the specifics of the study by reflecting my own words and thoughts back to me in a way that helped me see myself more clearly. I am deeply indebted to him for his time, patience, and wisdom in helping me focus a myriad of ideas and concepts into a manageable research topic.

Through this research, I explored a unique aspect of transpersonal development by bringing a more relational focus to the topic of nondual consciousness, however paradoxical this may sound. The remainder of this dissertation describes a study that explored the process of projection and reflection in the written work of Swami Shantananda, which is rooted in the Tantric yoga tradition of Kashmir Shaivism. Through engaging in an intellectual, intuitive, and internal research process, I was able to address a profound transpersonal issue while also looking deeply into how my own personal projections have conditioned my life. This dissertation presents themes on nondualism and projection/reflection that can be used as a basis for understanding the personal and interpersonal movement toward wholeness.

I initiated this study with the intent of exploring consciousness as a reflexive phenomenon with the hope that it might encourage individuals to understand themselves as simultaneous subjects and objects. Throughout the literature review in this dissertation, there are many references made to this important concept. As we will see in the upcoming section titled Personal, Social, and Transpersonal Relevance, I have been driven toward a search for wholeness for nearly all of my young adult life. This has been prompted by an overarching sense that the subject/object dichotomy that has dominated the modern paradigm has created a social and psychological rift that is having disastrous effects on both people and the planet we inhabit. With

this in mind, this study explored a means of repairing that social and psychological rift by asking spiritual practitioners to understand themselves as something greater than an individual subject.

The Big Questions

For the majority of my adult life, I have wrestled with the question of how reality can be simultaneously nondual and dual. How can individuals who have a distinct sense of separateness from other entities be a unitary manifestation of divinity? In other words, how does divine unity become pluralism? Questions such as these, that I have repeatedly asked myself as both a student and a spiritual practitioner, formed the basis for this study.

I chose to look at Kashmir Shaivist traditions because this particular sect of Shaivism describes absolute consciousness as a reflexive process. I considered this a key element in the Kashmir Shaivist expression and understanding of nondualism, and I believed that this concept may have strong implications for the way that we relate to nondual consciousness. I specifically chose to review a commentary on the *Pratyabhijna-hridayam* because it provides a specific explanation of the process whereby a singular, Universal Consciousness becomes a pluralistic, tangible world. Throughout the remainder of this dissertation, the letters PH will be used as an abbreviation for *Pratyabhijna-hridayam*.

The *PH* is an 11th century Tantric text from the Kashmir Shaivist tradition that attempts to provide answers to the questions asked in this introduction by explaining the nature of the universe as the unfolding and then contraction of pure Consciousness. The PH consists of 20 sutras, or aphorisms, designed to remind the spiritual practitioner of his/her oneness with Shiva, the divine essence. In his work, *The Splendor of Recognition*, Swami Shantananda provides a detailed commentary on the *PH*. Swami Shantananda is a native Puerto Rican and a devotee of Siddha Yoga. He took the vows of monkhood in 1977 and has been a disciple of Gurumayi

Chidvilasananda since 1982. Currently, he teaches workshops across the globe within the Siddha Yoga tradition.

In *The Splendor of Recognition*, Shantananda addresses the paradox of One that is also Many by describing the creation of manifest reality as process of reflection. This process of reflection begins as Citi, the “creative power of universal consciousness” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p. 403), projects herself onto herself in the ultimate reflexive act. Through this cycle of projection and reflection, manifest reality comes into being as “Citisakti in her limited manifestation” (p. 151). The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality as presented in the work of Swami Shantananda in an effort to understand and describe Consciousness as a reflexive phenomenon.

I chose to analyze the work of Swami Shantananda because his explication of the *PH* is expressed in a lucid manner that demonstrates the relevance of this ancient text in our time. Upon my first reading of *The Splendor of Recognition*, I was deeply struck by the clarity of Swami Shantanada’s elucidation of complex philosophical concepts. His use of concrete, contemporary examples and his deep understanding of the Shaivist tradition combine to form a captivating commentary on a sacred text that has the power to shift the way people interpret their everyday reality. By examining the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality as presented in this work, I believe that I found an approach that can help people better understand themselves and their relationship to their own divinity.

Nondualism

The topic of nondualism, also known as nonduality, has been addressed by numerous scholars and sages throughout the centuries. In the Christian mystical tradition, this term might be used to describe the “celestial union” (St. Theresa of Avila, 1961/1989, p. 216) with God that allows humanity to see itself as a reflection of the divine. In yoga, this term might frequently be

linked with *advaita*, a tradition that guides the spiritual practitioner toward a state of unified awareness in which an individual transcends his/her sense of separateness from Brahman, coming to know the Self as identical with the One Consciousness that is Brahman (Shankaracharya, 1982). Discussing a Tantric perspective on nondualism, Indologist Georg Feuerstein writes, “Tantric ontology seeks to answer the question of how the One can become Many, or how the ultimate Reality, which is singular, can give rise to the countless objects that we perceive through our senses” (Feuerstein, 1998, p.66).

Nondual and other altered states of consciousness may stem from a variety of physical and/or spiritual stimuli. Some of these stimuli include meditating, chanting, drumming, dancing, and of course, psychedelics (Bricklin, 2003; d’Aquili & Newberg, 1999; Fadiman, Grob, Bravo, Agar, & Walsh, 2003). While some of these stimuli are addressed in later chapters of this dissertation, psychedelics were outside the parameters of this study. While some research has been done in the past on the topic of psychedelics, their use in current research is illegal. Also, such research has little bearing on the Kashmir Shaivist approach to the concept of nondualism. It is important to note that for the purposes of this dissertation, nondualism is discussed as a concept as opposed to a state of consciousness. Therefore, the material in the remainder of this dissertation reflects views and perspectives on nondualism that may not result from direct experiences of nondual consciousness or other altered states of consciousness.

Nondualism as an essentially contested concept. As we can see, approaches to nondualism cross the boundaries of culture and tradition. While the term nondualism may appear to describe a common concept within a variety of traditions, these traditions do not clearly define nondualism using the same criteria.

No concept is more important in Asian philosophical and religious thought than nonduality . . . , and none is more ambiguous. The term has been used in many different

although related ways, and to my knowledge the distinctions between these have never been fully clarified. (Loy, 1988, p.17)

According to Loy, nondualism can be broken down into different categories or types, but even within these types there remains a certain degree of overlap.

In order to honor the many voices of nondual traditions, it will be helpful to understand nondualism as an essentially contested concept because acknowledging a concept as essentially contested is akin to admitting that there are many possible interpretations, but no one right answer. According to W.B. Gallie (1964), by their very nature, essentially contested concepts involve consistent disagreement regarding the exact definition and appropriate use of a term. Gallie classifies concepts such as *religion*, *art*, *social justice*, and *democracy* as essentially contested concepts. Nondualism can be described as an essentially contested concept because it meets the defining criteria set forth by Gallie. These criteria revolve around seven common characteristics attributed to all essentially contested concepts.

The first characteristic centers on the idea that the contested concept must represent a valued achievement for the people involved in the discussion (Gallie, 1964). In the case of nondualism, the experiential awareness of reality as nondual is consistently regarded as a valuable achievement across traditions and cultures.

From Tantra to Zen, from the Neoplatonists to Sufism, from Shaivism to Keron, stated in thousands of different ways and in hundreds of different contexts, nonetheless the same essential word would ring out from the Nondual Heart: the Many returning to and embracing the One is Good, and is known as *wisdom*; the One returning to and embracing the Many is Goodness, and is known as *compassion*. (Wilber, 1995/2000, p. 357)

In this quote, Ken Wilber explains that the results of attaining a nondual state of consciousness are viewed as valuable across cultural boundaries. There appears to be a common perception that nondual states of consciousness are connected with virtues such as wisdom and compassion.

These virtues are clearly valued by many spiritual traditions and are often described as the primary aim of spiritual practice.

The second characteristic of an essentially contested concept states that the concept must consist of multiple elements that create an internally complex structure (Gallie, 1964, p. 161). According to Judith Blackstone (2006), descriptions of nondual experiences may be “markedly similar across traditions” (p. 27). However, there are clear differences in both “philosophical interpretation” and “methodological approaches” (p.27). From Blackstone’s work, we can see that the concept of nondualism consists of (a) an experiential element, (b) a philosophical element, and (c) a methodological element. In order to engage in a meaningful discussion on nondualism, each of these elements must be taken into account. Also, as we will see later in this dissertation, philosopher David Loy (1988) describes an additional set of characteristics that he uses to categorize nondual traditions. These characteristics, in combination with the elements listed above, create an internally complex structure.

According to Gallie’s (1964) third characteristic, people must be able to describe the concept in multiple ways, and each description must have equal value. In other words, one interpretation or description cannot be considered better or worse than another. In the conclusion to his book *One: Essential Writings on Nonduality*, Jerry Katz (2007) quotes authors from a variety of nondual traditions in an attempt to explain how things can “appear so individualistic and be non-separate” (p. 177). Each of these quotes provides a unique description of the human search for nondual reality. Throughout Katz’s work, we can see many descriptions of nondualism, each presented as an equal and viable approach to the topic.

Gallie’s (1964) fourth characteristic is adaptability. This means that the concept must adapt to changing circumstances in ways that cannot easily be predicted. Speaking to the

adaptability of nondualism, John J. Prendergast, editor of *The Sacred Mirror: Nondual Wisdom and Psychotherapy*, describes nondualism as “nonsectarian, unhinged to any particular religion or psychospiritual tradition, yet adaptable to many” (p. 2). This quote suggests that the elements and characteristics of nondualism lend themselves to different interpretations by different peoples in different times and places, allowing space for cultural identity to shape the specific approach to the topic.

The fifth characteristic of an essentially contested concept focuses on advancing a new definition or interpretation of the concept. In order to have this characteristic, each body that attempts to advance a new perspective on the concept must acknowledge the validity of other perspectives that already exist. As we will see in the upcoming literature review, many spiritual sects throughout history have proposed new interpretations of nondualism (Blackstone, 2006; Feuerstein, 1998; Fouts, 2004; Kundu, 1983, Lorentz, 2002; Loy, 1988; Sinha, 2001). Simply within the Vedic tradition, there are collections of commentaries by scholars and sages refuting one another’s theories and advocating interpretations presented by their own tradition or lineage (A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada , 1997; Badaravana, 1899; Shankaracharya, 1977; Sinha, 2001; Subba Rau, 1904; Swami Tripurari, 1993). While these scholars do appear to acknowledge the validity of one another’s theories, they clearly do not agree. Instead, they use each other’s works as an opposing force against which to assert their own perspectives.

Gallie’s (1964) sixth characteristic states that all definitions stem from a single, universal model. For example, when Gallie discusses the concept of justice, he describes a harkening back to a common ideal that we call justice. We can see a similar process within the nondual traditions when we look at the consistent call from the many to the one as described by Ken Wilber’s (1995/2000) quote earlier in this section. Also, Georg Feuerstein (1998/2001) describes three

claims regarding the nature of reality that are common to nearly all religious and spiritual traditions. One of these claims states that reality is an undivided whole. This claim suggests that most, if not all, spiritual traditions agree upon a universal model of reality as nondual. Finally, in her book *The Great Transformation*, historian Karen Armstrong (2006) states “All the traditions that were developed during the Axial Age pushed forward the frontiers of human consciousness and discovered a transcendent dimension in the core of their being” (p. xiii). This statement suggests that transcendent states of awareness are shared among a variety of religious traditions. Each of these examples demonstrates that nondualism emanates from a common model.

Gallie’s (1964) final characteristic of an essentially contested concept suggests that an optimum potential exists for the concept and that further discussions may bring about the realization of this optimum potential. This does not mean that further conversations will necessarily result in this realization. It only suggests that such a realization is possible. The continued, and in fact revitalized, conversations on the topic of nondualism suggest a belief that further discussion will indeed optimize both the understanding and the practice of nondual awareness. There are numerous examples of current works on nondualism in the scholarly fields of philosophy, religion, and psychotherapy (Blackstone, 2006; Fouts, 2004; Katz, 2007; Prendergast, Fenner, Krystal, 2003) Also, throughout history we have seen varied methodological approaches toward the attainment of nondual states of awareness (Loy, 1988). Returning to the topic of this dissertation, current literature, such as Swami Shantananda’s (2003) commentary on the *PH*, clarifies and refines the understanding of nondualism within the Kashmir Shaivist tradition.

Operational definitions of nondualism and manifest reality. As we have just seen, interpretations and definitions of nondualism vary across time and traditions. For the purposes of

this dissertation, the term *nondualism* is defined as the concept of nondual reality as opposed to a state of nondual consciousness. The term nondualism is used interchangeably with the term nondual reality throughout this dissertation. Nondualism is described using concepts based upon the work of David Loy (1988) in his comparative study of nonduality. In his book *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy*, Loy describes five characteristics of nondualism. These characteristics include: the negation of dualistic thinking, the concept of non-plurality or indivisible singularity, the non-difference between subject and object, the identity of phenomena and the absolute, and the possibility of mystical union between the individual and the Absolute. This dissertation treats these characteristics as sufficient characteristics. This means that any description of nondual awareness that contains one of these characteristics is considered nondual, and therefore falls under the heading of nondualism. Within the context of this dissertation, the phrase *manifest reality* refers to the pluralism of material reality, i.e., objects that can be perceived by the senses.

Across traditions, a variety of terms are used to refer to nondual reality. These terms include the Absolute, Consciousness with a capital ‘C’, Brahman, the Tao, and One Mind. These terms attempt to describe the indivisible unity that lies at the core of nondual philosophy. The following quote by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1997) describes the essence of these interchangeable terms. “The Complete Whole must contain everything both within and beyond our existence; otherwise He cannot be Complete” (p. 14). The singularity of this reality results from an awareness of the unity of all things including the abstract principles of *subject* and *object*. Throughout this dissertation, Consciousness with a capital ‘C’ is often used to describe nondual reality in the Kashmir Shaivist tradition.

Personal, Social, and Transpersonal Relevance

The transpersonal relevance for this dissertation can be found both in the exploration of the concept of nondual reality and in the discussion of Consciousness as a reflexive phenomenon steeped in relationship. As a study of both immanence and transcendence, this dissertation provides further research in the following emphasis of the ITP Global Research Vision—*Spiritual Experiences and Qualities That Serve the Global Community*. Whereas this study was limited to the exploration of the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality in *The Splendor of Recognition*, the tenets of Kashmir Shaivism, as expressed in Swami Shantananda's eloquent explication of the *PH*, provide a strong foundation for further research in the areas of personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal development.

On a personal level, my interest in this study stemmed from a strong emotional response to the damages done to both humanity and the natural world as a result of a paradigm that encourages the development and expression of the self over awareness of the other. In order to move beyond our cultural pre-occupation with the self, it is important to understand the nature of the relationship between the self and the other. The root of this relationship can be found in principles of psychology and philosophy that, up until recently, have presented consciousness as an individual phenomenon, leading to a distinct sense of separation between the self and the other.

For the past several decades, some philosophers and social scientists have been arguing against the Cartesian subject/object dichotomy that divides not only the thinking subject from the perceived object but also the self from the other. In contrast to Descartes, wisdom traditions throughout history have presented perspectives on a universal truth that sees the self as identical with the other. According to many Eastern spiritual traditions, ignorance of our true nature is the primary cause of suffering (Ajahn Chah, 2002; Pantanjali, 1982; Powers, 1995; Shankaracharya,

1977). It is this same ignorance that creates a dualistic interpretation of manifest reality. This dualistic interpretation underlies the Western subject/object dichotomy. In this way, manifest reality implies a subject/object dichotomy. However, according to Eastern traditions such as yoga, Advaita Vedanta, and various forms of Buddhism, this dichotomy is simply a manifestation of our ignorance of our True Selves (*ibid*).

In keeping with the Tantric approach to nondualism (Feuerstein, 1998), Kashmir Shaivism uses the process of repetitive reflection to make room for the universal dance between self and other that both flows from and returns to the indivisible source that is Consciousness at play (Kundu 1983; Hughes, 1995). Thus, the primacy of the individual gives way to a paradigm that holds no ultimate difference between other and self, creating a worldview that supports the interdependence of all beings. This study reviewed the concepts of both dual and non-dual reality as they relate to the realization of the self in order to provide a philosophical framework for the writings of Swami Shantananda as they pertain to the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality.

Research Questions

The primary research question in this study was ‘In *The Splendor of Recognition*, how does Swami Shantananda describe the relationship between nondual reality and manifest reality?’. Secondary research questions for this study included: How does the process of universal projection and reflection in Swami Shantananda’s account of Shaivist cosmology relate to the process of individual projection and reflection? How can further research on the psychological processes of projection and reflection, stemming from the work of Swami Shantananda, contribute to transpersonal growth, development, and expression?

Overview

The remainder of this dissertation covers a review of the relevant literature, a summary of the approach and method, the research results, a discussion of those results, and conclusions and recommendations for further research. The literature review provides an overview of nondualist theory, a description of the basic nature of the Cartesian subject/object dichotomy, and an exploration of the concept of reflexive consciousness. The review includes nondualist theory from the perspectives of Indologist Georg Feuerstein and contemporary philosopher David Loy, as well as discussions on the reflexive aspects of Kashmir Shaivism based on the work of K. Skora and Jaideva Singh.

The methodology for this study was intuitive inquiry, a hermeneutical style of inquiry developed by Rosemarie Anderson as a means of “bringing the compassionate heart to scientific inquiry” (Anderson, 1998, p.71). By applying the dialectic process of intuitive inquiry to a textual analysis, I formed a relationship with the text that encouraged a deep, personal exploration of the work and fostered an awareness of my own ontological and epistemological lenses that pertained to the study. My work with intuitive inquiry involved, and was complemented by, experiential exercises such as creative/imaginative explorations.

Summary

This study was designed to address the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality in the written work of Swami Shantananda. This was done through a content analysis of *The Splendor of Recognition* using intuitive inquiry as the primary research method. A primary intent of this study was to provide a perspective on nondualism that encourages the reader to examine his/her place within the dual/nondual paradox. By using intuitive inquiry to explore and expound the lenses that I used to view the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality, I have presented a personal and interpersonal journey into the heart of human and divine Consciousness. Through this exploration of the relationship between nondualism and manifest

reality, this study looked at possible approaches for understanding nondual reality. This included looking at reflexive consciousness as a means of moving between the dual and nondual. This dissertation opens doors for further research in the area of reflexive consciousness, which has strong implications for intersubjectivity theory. It also provides a foundation for further research in existing and new approaches to transcending the subject/object dichotomy thereby encouraging a more holistic approach to personal development.

Notes to the Reader

This dissertation represents an attempt to understand and describe a variety of approaches to relationships with self, others, and the world at large. These approaches stem from reflexive, intersubjective, and nondual perspectives. Therefore, in an effort to create an engaging relationship between the reader and the text, this document is presented in the second person.

In the transliteration of Sanskrit to English, consonants such as n and m or s and sh are sometimes interchanged. Therefore, the word Sankhya may be seen written as Samkhya. Shaiva may also be spelled Saiva. In order to be consistent with the original author's spelling, these words may be seen with both spellings in this dissertation.

This dissertation is intended to be accessible to all members of its audience regardless of sex, race, or religious preference. Please note that all direct quotes containing a sexist pronoun such as *he*, *she*, *him*, or *her* are aimed at all individuals. For example *he* refers to he or she and *him* refers to both him and her.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Intent and Overview

The purpose of this section is to introduce the basic literature related to both dualism and nondualism in order to provide a strong context and foundation for the analysis of nondualism and material reality in Swami Shantananda's work *The Splendor of Recognition*. This section begins with an overview of the Cartesian subject/object dichotomy as a means of exploring the modern perception of dualistic thought. The review continues with an overview of the philosophy of nondualism focusing on Eastern approaches, most specifically those in the Tantric and Shaivist traditions. The intent of this sub-section is to outline some criteria to help us better understand and evaluate the concept of nondualism. These criteria provide a foundation for further discussion in later sections of this dissertation. Finally, the review concludes with a brief discussion of the reflexive aspects of Kashmir Shaivism as presented by respected authors in the Kashmir Shaivist tradition.

Dualism and the Cartesian Subject/Object Dichotomy

In order to fully understand the nature of the Western subject/object dichotomy, it is important to clarify what we mean by the terms *subject* and *object*. The *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (2006) describes the philosophical *subject* as:

1. That which thinks, feels, perceives, intends, etc., as contrasted with the objects of thought, feeling, etc.
2. The self or ego.

These definitions suggest that the *subject* is identified as both the ego and the agent of cognitive and emotional processes. Moving forward with the concept that the subject is the primary agent of both cognitive and emotional processes, let us look at how this term relates to the term *object*.

Referring again to the Random House Unabridged Dictionary (2006), we see that the word *object* has a variety of definitions including:

1. Anything that is visible or tangible and is relatively stable in form.
2. A thing, person, or matter to which thought or action is directed: an object of medical investigation.
3. The end toward which effort or action is directed; goal; purpose: Profit is the object of business.
4. A person or thing with reference to the impression made on the mind or the feeling or emotion elicited in an observer: an object of curiosity and pity.
5. Anything that may be apprehended intellectually: objects of thought.
6. Metaphysics - Something toward which a cognitive act is directed.

Whereas each of these verbal depictions supplies our definition of the term *object* with relevant nuances and connotations, perhaps the most poignant description for our current purposes comes to light in statement number six, the metaphysical definition stemming from a philosophical/psychological base. In this instance, the term *object*, “something toward which a cognitive act is directed” (Object, 2006), denotes a term that encompasses both material and abstract entities, for a cognitive act can be directed toward a material item such as book or a coffee mug, or it can be directed toward an abstract concept such as a thought or a social construct.

Now that we have operational definitions for the terms *subject* and *object*, let us look at the writings of Rene Descartes, whose work dramatically changed the philosophical landscape of the relationship between *subject* and *object*. During the 17th century, Western philosophy became increasingly captivated by an aura of dualism. This dichotomy encouraged a mechanistic view of the world that allowed scientists to rely on empirical observation as a means for determining cause and effect. This paradigmatic shift was due, in part, to the works of mathematician and philosopher Rene Descartes (*b.*1596 – *d.*1650). Descartes’ insistence on the inherent division between the cogitating self and the physical, biological self opened a door for Western

philosophical and scientific traditions to conveniently divide human existence into two distinctly separate domains, the intellectual-spiritual domain and the physical-mechanical domain (Brennan, 2003). Within this framework, the mind can be viewed as independent from the body. The logical generalization springing from this view leads to the conclusion that the spiritual realm is then also independent of the physical world, which is governed unconditionally by universal, mechanical laws. As we will see later in this chapter, nondualism can also be interpreted within this framework. However, in many interpretations of nondual reality, the body is seen as illusory rather than simply independent. Therefore, the physical world is viewed from a spiritual rather than mechanical perspective.

In his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641/1998), Descartes presents six philosophical meditations that address the fundamental existence of humanity and nature. These meditations focus on the use of doubt as a means of philosophical inquiry, the nature of the human mind, the existence of God, the nature of truth, the essence of material things, and the distinction between the mind and the body. In his sixth meditation, Descartes presents two primary arguments in support of the dualistic paradigm (Kemerling, 2006). First, he establishes that the mind and the body can be perceived as separate entities, i.e., we are able to understand our thoughts and attitudes as distinctly different processes from our mechanical, biological functions. Based upon this distinction, he asserts that God could naturally cause either the mind or the body to exist independently of the other, supporting the claim for the distinct and absolute division between mental and physical spheres.

And although I may, or rather, as I will shortly say, although I certainly do possess a body with which I am very closely conjoined; nevertheless, because, on the one hand, I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in as far as I am only a thinking and unextended thing, and as, on the other hand, I possess a distinct idea of body, in as far as it is only an extended and unthinking thing, it is certain that I, [that is, my mind, by which I am what I

am], is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it. (Descartes, 1641, Meditation VI ¶ 9)

Second, Descartes looks at the spatial component of the body, suggesting that the body can be infinitely divided into smaller material particles. This divisibility, in contrast to the inherent indivisibility of the intangible mind, presents a fundamental incompatibility between the nature of the mind and the body. This apparent incompatibility presents another clear distinction between the mental and physical realities (Kemerling, 2006).

Descartes' primary method of establishing his division between the rational self and the external world begins with the use of doubt as a method of philosophical inquiry. He begins by doubting the reality of everything in existence, including himself (Husserl, 1950/1973). From this stance, his first conclusion is the existence of the cogitating self, for, in order to think, something must exist to do the thinking. This assumption is reflected in Descartes' famous statement "I think; therefore, I am" (Descartes, 1637, Part 4, ¶ 3). This statement clearly distinguishes the cogitating self as the primary agent of existence, separating the concept of subjectivity - the way in which I know myself, from objectivity - the way in which I am known. Thus, when looked at from this perspective, Descartes concludes that the subject is distinctly separate from the object, reinforcing the concept of dualism. It can be argued that Descartes makes a strong case for a nondualist approach because the mind, which determines reality, can be said to exist completely independently from the body. However, Descartes focuses strongly on the separation of the body from the mind rather than on a contrast between the reality of the mind and the illusory nature of the body.

Approaches to Nondualism

In contrast to the dualistic paradigm represented by Descartes, the philosophy of nondualism purports a theory of unification. This theory relies, not on the reductionist

perspective of the cogitating self, but rather on an expansive aspect of human consciousness as presented in various wisdom traditions. As we saw in the introduction to this dissertation, nondualism is often described as a perspective that views reality as an indistinguishable whole. Within this paradigm, various schools of thought attempt to describe issues such as the apparent existence of material objects and the sense of a subjective self. Most of the works discussed in the following section are rooted in Eastern spiritual traditions. The texts and authors were chosen based upon a) their contribution to a basic understanding of nondualism, b) their relationship to reflexive consciousness, and c) their relevance to Kashmir Shaivism.

As noted in the introduction, philosopher David Loy (1988) discusses several types of nondualism. These types include the negation of dualistic thinking, the nonplurality of the world, the nondifference of subject and object, and the possibility of mystical union between the individual and the Absolute. By looking at each of these types of nondualism, we can gain some basic insight into the primary elements that constitute nondual consciousness.

The negation of dualistic thinking. In his discussion on the negation of dualistic thinking, Loy (1988) explains that a paradox arises whenever we try to categorize objects or thoughts. Using the example of purity, Loy presents this paradox by describing the process of attempting to live a pure life. The moment that we attempt to act on only pure thoughts, we must evaluate each thought in order to determine whether it is pure or impure. The instant that we engage in that process, we create a dualistic worldview by dividing pure from impure. The paradox lies in the attempt to live a pure life while transcending or negating the very concept of purity. In other words, in order for something to be pure, it cannot be pure. This approach can be described using the phrase "A is not A, therefore it is A" (p. 19).

Loy provides descriptions of the negation of dualistic thinking from the Taoist mystic Chung Tsu, the Buddhist sage Nagarjuna, and the Zen master Hui Hai. In one example, he uses Nagarjuna's explanation of the Buddhist term *sunyata* (emptiness) in an effort to explain the concept of negating dualistic thinking. In this description, he writes that one only arrives at *sunyata* when one has exhausted all means of theorizing and has recognized the futility of theory. In Loy's example, Nagarjuna warns against interpreting *sunyata* as a theory of positive assertion in the world. In his essay *Existentialism, Pragmatism and Zen*, D.T. Suzuki (1956) attempts to address this same issue stating,

The philosopher's way is to start first from the experience and logic of a reconstructed world, and, failing to recognize this fact, he proceeds to apply his 'logic' to the experience of *sunyata*. This necessitates that *sunyata* step out into the world, which means destroying *sunyata*. (p. 262)

Clearly, the process of 'stepping out into the world' forces *sunyata* back into a dualistic paradigm thereby destroying the very essence of the concept. As we saw earlier in the statement "A is not A, therefore it is A" (Loy, 1988, p. 19), traditional Western logic cannot be applied to the paradox inherent in negating dualistic thinking.

The nonplurality of the world. Following his discussion of dualistic thinking, Loy moves on to discuss the nonplurality of the world. In this section, he states

The unity of everything 'in' the world means that each thing is a manifestation of a 'spiritual' whole because the One Mind incorporates all consciousness and all minds. This whole – indivisible, birthless, and deathless – has been designated by a variety of terms; as well as the One Mind, there are the Tao, Brahman, the Dharmakaya, and so on. (p. 22)

According to Loy, nonpluralism represents an integral, holistic approach to nondualism. Loy also provides examples from a variety of traditions suggesting that the negation of dualistic thinking is directly connected to the concept of nonplurality. This theory suggests that because we interpret the world dualistically, we "experience a pluralistic world" (p. 23). Returning to our

earlier example of purity, we see that in the process of attempting to live a pure life, we must first divide life into actions that are either pure or impure. This very act of division causes us to experience pluralism or manifest reality.

The nondifference of subject and object. Loy furthers his discussion on nondualism by reintroducing the idea of negation in a slightly different context. When looking into the relationship between the subject and the object from a nondual perspective, Loy paints a very *negative* picture. In his initial treatment of this relationship between the subject and the object, Loy explains that from a nondual perspective, many issues are addressed through a negative lens. In other words, negation, or describing what *is not*, appears to be the simplest way to describe nondual concepts. In this way, nondualism denies the dualistic perception of subject and object that can also be described as the perception that the “experiencing self is distinct from what is experienced” (Loy, 1988, p. 25). Within the philosophy of nondualism, “nonduality is an experience in which there is no such distinction between subject and object” (p. 25).

The Vedic tradition addresses this concept of non-separation using the word *avidya*, meaning ignorance. This type of ignorance clouds our vision, causing us to experience reality as dual. Through spiritual practice, one can transcend such ignorance, attaining a higher state of existence in which one lives in nondual awareness. We can easily see that the perspective of nondifference between subject and object leaves us in a similar place as that of nonplurality of the world. In both cases, the spiritual practitioner transcends his/her sense of differentiation between things that are normally perceived as distinct. As we will see throughout the Findings and Discussion Chapter in this dissertation, the primary descriptions of nondual reality throughout *The Splendor of Recognition* are descriptions of the nondifference between subject and object. Because the relationship between the subject and the object were so fundamental to

this study, a separate section later in this chapter has been devoted to further discussions on this approach to nondualism.

The possibility of mystical union between the individual and the Absolute. With these brief explanations of the negation of dualistic thinking, the nonplurality of the world and the nondifference between subject and object, we have seen several overarching approaches to nondualism. Now, let us look at Loy's final criteria, the possibility of mystical unity between the individual and the Absolute. In addressing the possibility of mystical unity, Loy addresses the problem of seeing the Absolute as other. In order for this unity to become possible, a person must discard the idea of the Absolute as different from the self. "To experience the Godhead/Absolute is to 'let go' completely and realize that consciousness is nothing other than *me*, fully becoming what I have always been" (p.291). In other words, a person must allow the dissolution of the self in order to recognize that the self and Absolute are, in fact, one and the same.

An example of this can be seen in Todd Lorentz's (2002) study of nondualism in Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamakakarika*. For Lorentz, the possibility of mystical union between the individual and the Absolute represents a particular challenge in the work of Nagarjuna. As in the early Buddhist perspective described above, Nagarjuna presents a framework in which the concepts of the individual and the Absolute exist only in a conventional, dualistic sense. "The reification of phenomena, including the reification of the personal 'self', dualistically conditions one's interpretive framework" (Lorentz, 2002, p. 84). Therefore, any attempt at mystical union would simply reinforce the idea that there is a separate self. For Nargarjuna, the concepts of both the individual and the Absolute "arise dependently, exist empirically in the conventional sense, and are sustained through the belief in a relationship between the two" (p. 85). As a solution to

this dilemma, Lorentz suggests that the means to achieving a mystical union between the individual and the Absolute involves both the individual transcendence of conventional reality and the realization that there has never actually been a separation between oneself and the Absolute.

Vedanta and dualism. When looking at types of nondualism, it is important that we briefly step way from Loy's categories in order to clarify some issues related to a specific, well known type of nondualism. Because Vedanta is so frequently associated with nondualism in Indian thought, it is important that we acknowledge both the nondual and dual interpretations of Vedanta in an effort to do justice to the variety of philosophic approaches within the Indian traditions. Advaita Vedanta is one of the best know schools of Indian nondual theory. The tradition of Advaita Vedanta, based upon the wisdom of ancient Vedic texts such as the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita, and Srimad Bhagavatam, addresses the teachings of non-duality as they were originally presented and interpreted by Shankaracharya (Advaita Vedanta Center, n.d.). Advaita Vedanta literally means nondualism or monism and teaches that the individual self is identical to the Whole or the Absolute (Advaita, 2001).

In contrast to this and to the other works that we have discussed so far in this section, Madhavacharya, the founder of the Dvaita school of Hindu philosophy, interprets the Vedic texts as promoting a distinct separation between the Absolute and material reality.

The glorious Lord, who is superior to and different from the person of the world, and unlimited by the three qualities, shows himself as many, and again the unblemished Lord, the first cause becomes the individual one and goes to rest. Thus there is the scriptural declaration of His (Atman's) withdrawing Himself into self. For it cannot be that the pure Lord merges into the qualified Atman. (Subba Rau, 1904, p.16)

Madhvacharya's description of the Lord as 'different from persons in the world' clearly indicates a distinction between the Absolute and material reality. Here, there is obviously a difference

between the subject and the object, for once Consciousness has been qualified, it is incapable of merging with the Absolute. With this approach in mind, it is important that we do not confuse the term Vedanta with nondualism.

Nondualism and the Relationship Between Subject and Object

Returning to Loy's work, we will see nondualism involves an additional layer of complexity beyond the characteristics discussed in the previous section. As we saw in the introduction to this dissertation, nondualism consists of multiple elements with a complex internal structure. Not only do we need to be concerned about the fundamental characteristics of nondualism, but we must also take a more in depth look at a critical dimension of nondualism raised earlier in this dissertation— the relationship between the subject and the object.

Furthering his thoughts on approaches to nondualism, Loy (1988) discusses distinct approaches to the relationship between the subject and the object stemming from three dominant traditions of Indian thought. Each of these traditions attempts to provide an explanation for the “epistemological problem of the relation” (p. 189). According to Loy, the first approach, represented by Sankhya-Yoga, presents a complete sundering of subject and object. The term Sankhya (also spelled Samkhya) currently refers to a “specific system of dualist philosophizing that proceeds by a method of enumerating the contents of experience and the world for the purpose of attaining radical liberation” (Larson & Bhattacharya, 1987, p. 3). Within this tradition, the mind and body are polarized. The intellect, which is linked with the ego and the mind, are associated with the subtle body, and are therefore seen as separate from the gross, physical body (Larson & Bhattacharya, 1987). Through this polarization, we can infer a clear separation between the cognizing subject and its objects of perception. In Sankhya, this dualism is represented by the distinction between purusha (consciousness) and prakriti (matter).

This dualism distinguishes Sankhya from other Indian philosophies such as Kashmir Shaivism. However, yoga scholar Georg Feuerstein (1998/2001) comments that pre-classical Sankhya espoused a theory of nondualism. The movement away from nondualism actually came through the later influence of the analytical traditions of Buddhism. In their descriptive work on Sankhya, Larson and Bhattacharya (1987) describe three periods within the evolution of the Sankhya philosophy. In the second period, running from the seventh or eighth century B.C.E to the first century C.E., Sankhya is described simply as a method of attaining salvation by means of knowledge. In some instances, the philosophy appears to be monistic while in others, it appears dualistic. It is not until the third period, beginning after the advent of the Buddhist and Jain movements, that we see the fully developed notions of prakriti and the gunas that we associate with Sankhya today.

Loy's second example of the relationship is represented by early Buddhism. In this relationship, the subject is conflated into the object. Because the self is simply an aggregate of experiences and interactions, the self dissolves into nothingness, leaving a void. The realization that there is no self leads to a direct experience of the void in which there is no experiencing subject and therefore no object to be experienced. Quoting the Mahayana Buddhist sage Shantideva, Luis Gomez (1973) writes

Once you have adopted the notion of emptiness, the notion of existence disappears, yet later, through exercise in the notion of "nothing exists," the notion of emptiness also disappears. Once you do not conceive of any entities which could be assumed not to exist, how could nonexistence stand before the mind, which then will have no support? And when neither existence nor nonexistence stand before the mind, then the mind is at rest, without an object, because it has nowhere else to go. (Shantideva, cited in Gomez, 1973, p. 369)

In this example, we can see that the nature of nonexistence eliminates the very concept of a subjective experience. Both subject and object have ceased to exist because the subject has been conflated into the object.

In contrast to this example in early Buddhism, Loy's third option is exemplified by Advaita Vedanta, which conflates the object into the subject. In the literature of Advaita Vedanta, Brahman is frequently described as *One Without a Second* (Akhilananda, 1959; Burch, 1962; Phillips, 2001). In this instance, Brahman represents the fullness of consciousness that encompasses the entire universe. Whereas each of these traditions presents a different perspective on the relationship, Loy concludes that Advaita Vedanta is the only one of the three that truly attempts to present a nondual relationship between subject and object. However, he also states that the controversy that existed between early Buddhism and Vedanta also exists between different branches within Buddhism, suggesting that some branches of Buddhism present perspectives that might be considered compatible with the criteria of nondifference between subject and object.

Another clear illustration of this subject-object relationship can be seen in Ramanuja's commentary on the Vedanta Sutras where the object is obviously conflated into the subject. The following quote provides a clear example of this process.

The *Brahman* alone, who is pure intelligence and hostile to all characterising attributes, is real; all other things than Him, such as the varied distinctions of the knower and the known and the knowledge arising there-from, etc., are merely assumed to exist in Him and are unreal. (Badarayana, 1899, p. 27)

Brahman, the eternal subject, contains all things. Distinctions are neither separate from Him nor do they envelope Him. Rather, they exist in Him. The descriptions of nondual reality in *The Splendor of Recognition* also fall into this category of the subject/object relationship. We will see

numerous examples of this relationship in the Findings and Discussion Chapter of this dissertation.

It is important to note that Loy's categories of the subject-object relationship do not take into account all possible approaches to the relationship between nondual and manifest realities. Ramanuja's commentary indicates not only a belief in the singularity of existence, but also in the omniscient subjectivity of Brahman. In this example, Brahman contains all things, but anything characterized by an attribute or distinguishable from the all knowing subject is not real. In essence, objective or material reality is an illusion of perception. In contrast to this, Tantric nondualism, which also espouses the omniscient subject that contains all thing and conflates the object into the subject, clearly refutes the idea that manifest reality is an illusion. In our later discussion of nondualism in Kashmir Shaivism, we will see a nondual system that incorporates material existence into its soteriology while still conflating the object into the subject.

As mentioned earlier, Loy's study does not specifically address nondualism in Tantric yoga. Before we get into a more in-depth discussion of Tantric nondualism, let us look at one more approach not directly discussed by Loy. This additional approach suggests that the true essence of reality is not a sundering of subject and object. Nor is it a conflation of one into the other. Instead, it is something other than subject or object, something mysterious and undefined.

An example of this approach can be seen in the following quote from the Isha Upanishad.

Into blinding darkness go they who worship action alone.
 Into an even greater darkness go they who worship meditation.
 For it is other than meditation. It is other than action.
 This we have learned from the enlightened ones who teach us . . .
 Into a blinding darkness go they who idolise the Absolute.
 Into an even greater darkness go they who dote on the relative.
 For it is other than the relative. It is other than the Absolute.
 This we have learned from the enlightened ones who teach us.
 (*The Upanishads*, 1978, p.15)

As we can see from this example, this description of the relationship between subject and object is a denial of the concepts of subject and object all together. The answer is neither in meditation or action. It is not in the Absolute or the relative. It is neither this nor that. It is something truly other, something beyond the comprehension of our limited, rational consciousness.

Another example of this fourth approach to the subject-object relationship can be seen in the writings of D.T. Suzuki (1982) where the author describes the Zen concept of *satori* as “neither subject nor object” (p.44). Suzuki also states that *satori* is “an experience experiencing itself” (p.100). Like the Isha Upanishad, these phrases point us toward something that is not only greater than a single subject or object, but also something other than either of these basic concepts. According to this approach to the subject-object relationship, it is possible to transcend both the subject and the object without conflating one into the other. It is possible to become something else entirely, something that defies logical explanation.

Earlier in this work, we looked at Nagarjuna’s perspective on uniting the individual with the Absolute. The result of such a union may appear quite similar to the approach described above. In both cases, the individual must transcend the concepts of subject and object, thus transcending the very ideas of individuality and absolutism. However, the processes by which one achieves this transcendence are different. From Nagarjuna’s perspective, the union of the individual and the Absolute can be achieved by rationally deconstructing the nature of the individual self, while the process described by Suzuki above stems from an immediate awareness of awareness itself. Suzuki’s approach relies more on direct experience than cognition.

Nondualism in Kashmir Shaivism

Now that we have reviewed several criteria of nondualism in order to help us understand varying approaches to the topic, let us look at Tantric, and more specifically Shaivist, approaches

to nondualism. In his book, *Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy*, Georg Feuerstein (1998) describes nondualism from the Tantric perspective saying,

Like Advaita Vedanta, most schools of Tantra also maintain that the ultimate Reality is singular. However, they tend toward the view that the Many actually and not merely apparently evolves out of the One (while still being contained within the One as the eternal backdrop of cosmic existence). They reject any metaphysics of illusionism. This emanationism is technically known as *sat-karya-vada*, which denotes that the effect (*karya*) is preexistent (*sat*) in the cause: the world could not come into existence if it did not already exist in potential form in the ultimate Being. (p. 67)

For the Tantric practitioner, Consciousness includes the principle of transcendent power, thereby including manifest reality. According to Feuerstein (1998), the Tantric approach to nondualism is rooted in the tradition of Sankhya. The ontological principles recognized by Sankhya are essentially the same as those of the Tantric traditions. Some of the common points between these systems can be seen in the Rig Veda. The term *tantras* was originally used to refer to the subject-area enumerations within the Sankhya tradition (Larson & Bhattacharya, 1987).

The similarity in ontology can be seen in the apparent dualism espoused by both traditions. In Sankhya, this dualism is described using *purusha* and *prakriti* mentioned earlier in this dissertation. For Kashmir Shaivism, this apparent dualism is represented through Shiva and Shakti. Shiva represents universal Consciousness and Shakti represents manifest reality. While both traditions acknowledge the appearance of dualism, Sankhya holds that matter is indeed separate from consciousness, while Kashmir Shaivism suggests that matter is simply a manifestation of the singular Absolute. In other words, for the tantric Shaivist, matter is simply another form of Consciousness.

In addition to the ontological principles described in the *Samkhya-Karika*, Tantric philosophers added an additional twelve principles based upon their own experiences of the subtle differences in meditative and ecstatic states of consciousness. Feuerstein goes on to say

that for Tantric practitioners, this concept of emanation does not lie in the realm of philosophy. Rather it exists in the realm of spiritual practice. The categories that delineate the levels of Reality exist, not for the sake of cognitive knowledge, but instead to serve as a map to guide the practitioner back to the ultimate Reality.

Within the context of Shaivism, nondualism is again seen as a manifestation of the Universal in the particular. According to N.L. Kundu (1983), author of *Non-Dualism in Saiva and Shakta Philosophy*, things can be known in the particular only because the Universal is involved. Kundu states that “the particular or individual is continuous with the existence of Being. In other words, a manifested thing and the reality of which it is a manifestation are inseparable” (p. 22). Whereas this perspective appears to be reminiscent of Loy’s nondual criteria of nondifference between subject and object, it presents a slightly new approach as it presents the subject and the object as inseparable rather than identical. However, it does appear that within the Shaivist tradition, the object is indeed conflated into the subject as in Advaita Vedanta, for Kundu goes on to describe the disappearance or merger of the object into the subject.

It has already been pointed out that one Universal ‘Mahajati’ is present as ultimate Being or ‘Maha Satta’ permeating the universe of things. All things subsist in existence or Being. Without ‘Sattva’ or existence nothing can be conceived. In other words, every individual thing or event is nothing but external manifestation of the supreme universal or ‘Mahajati’. Its individual aspect is nothing but projection or outward manifestation. (Kundu, 1983, p.24)

Because this study focused on the a sutra/commentary from the Kashmir Shaivist tradition, the main approach to nondualism used in this study was similar to Loy’s non-difference between subject and object where the object is conflated into the subject.

According to R.K. Kaw (1967), author of *The Doctrine of Recognition (Pratyabhijna Philosophy)*¹, the Pratyabhijna Doctrine of Kashmir Shaivism presents a monistic philosophy that does not distinguish between the absolute real and the worldly real. Kaw discusses the concepts of Śakti (power of Śiva) and Sattā (the highest reality) to describe the sentience of all beings, saying

The *Sattā* of insentient objects like earth or stones, lies in their manifestation. In reality, nothing is insentient at all. According to this view, even the illusive silver and snake perceived erroneously in place of a piece of mother-of-pearl and rope respectively are also real objects, since these elusive objects also possess the Śakti manifestation of Cittā. (p. 100)

Because these objects possess Śakti, they are both real in their own right, and yet inseparable from Śiva. Within this view, all manifestations are real manifestations of Śiva. Kaw quotes the Kashmir Shaivist sage Somananda saying “the Lord (*Śiva*) fashions by Himself His Own self in the form of diverse objects” (p. 101), thus making his single self diverse.

Kaw (1967) also describes the unity in multiplicity by looking at the difference between determinate knowledge and indeterminate knowledge. Because human minds perceive things in a limited fashion, the mind must narrow down its experiences so that things can be perceived within its limited framework. The process of forming mental constructs begins with the perception of an object of experience that has yet to be formed in a particular shape, sound, image, concept, etc . . . Kaw refers to this stage of knowledge as indeterminate knowledge. Once the mind has processed the experience or object into a comprehensible form, the mind has essentially determined the nature of the experience or object. Therefore, this knowledge is called determinate knowledge. According to Kaw, the nature of indeterminate knowledge is unity, whereas the nature of determinate knowledge is multiplicity. Because both unity and multiplicity are related within the same subject, we have unity in multiplicity.

As we can see, Kaw's (1967) approach to Śiva and Śakti clearly falls into Loy's category of the nonplurality of the world. It could also be said that the object is conflated into the subject because the object exists in the 'eye of the perceiver' or subject. Kaw also alludes to the "ever-existent Transcendental Self" (p. 108) that is identical to Shiva. This correlates with Loy's final criteria regarding the possibility of mystical union between the individual and the Absolute.

In addition to his descriptive work in *The Doctrine of Recognition*, Kaw (1975) wrote an in-depth commentary on the *Pratyabhijna Karika of Utpaladeva* that provides strong insight into the non-dual philosophy of the Shaivist tradition. This work is particularly important to our discussion because it again highlights the Shaivist belief that the Supreme Being is more than just consciousness as a singular entity. According to Kaw's commentary, the Pratyabhijna philosophy holds that the Supreme Being contains the objects of material reality (Kaw, 1975). Again, we see that Tantric Shaivism rejects the idea that material reality is merely an illusion. Rather, we see that the Supreme Being makes material reality manifest within him/herself. It is here that we find the crux of the Pratyabhijna philosophy. Because material reality is made manifest in "the form of its perception" (p.23), it can be recalled in that same form. This ability to recollect or remember is the same ability that allows the individual to recall his/her True Nature as identical to the Supreme Being itself.

Continuing along these lines, Kaw (1975) draws out Utpaladeva's focus on the power of knowledge by describing the relationship between subjective and objective reality saying that objective or material reality can only be perceived through the lens of subjective consciousness. Therefore, objective reality ceases to exist without a subject to perceive it. Through this, he concludes that the light of the subject is not different from the object. It is actually the essence of the object. This line of thought is critical to the upcoming discussion on reflexive consciousness,

because through the act of reflection, we see the process that presents material reality as an objective phenomenon.

Reflexive Consciousness

In this dissertation, *reflexive consciousness* refers to the ability of Consciousness to co-create reality through the process of reflection. In order to understand reflection in this manner, it is important that we look more deeply into the process of reflection in our everyday lives. To do this, we must look at the way that our reactions to objects are dependent upon the process of reflection. Each time that we view an object or we name something, we are automatically engaging in a relationship with our own consciousness as it is reflected back to us via the object being named or represented. For example, the naming of an object or concept automatically objectifies and re-presents that object or concept.

As an example of this reflexive process, let us look at educational theorist Paulo Freire's understanding of the *Word*. In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1993) breaks down the essence of the *Word* into the elements of action and reflection. In this text, Freire presents action and reflection as equally valuable, but opposing forces within the *Word*. Within the *Word*, action and reflection are co-dependent processes. It is not possible to engage in one process without engaging in the other because the process of reflection is not possible without an initial action to reflect upon. This applies to something as simple as perceiving an external object such as a book or a painting. Put simply, reflection contains action that is dependent upon some sort of reflection for further action. New action, whether consciously or unconsciously, is always initiated by a re-action. Hence the nature of existence is a constant play of action/reflection/reaction as shown in figure 1 below.



Figure 1. The projection of consciousness leads to the creation of a new object which, through its interaction with a subject, creates the process of reflection. The reflection in turn demands a reaction from the subject, creating a new object to act as an agent of reflection.

From the figure above, we can see that our everyday experience of reality is much more a process than a static entity. Perhaps we could say that it is more like a film than a photograph, a shifting series of images, sensations, and experiences. “The world is made of processes, events rather than things” (De Quincey, 2005). When looking at the action-reflection-reaction process, we can see how the process of interacting with the world continually refreshes our reality by providing us with a constant source of new material to reflect upon.

Kittredge (1997) uses the gyre as a model to address a similar, cyclical process that creates new entities via “responding forces”(p.70).

A gyre, as it appears in Yeatsian poetry, is cyclical in nature but three-dimensional like a tornado funnel. An event triggers the motion of the gyre in its upward spiral with the circle at the top growing ever wider much like a funnel. As the circle at the top widens, it reaches a point where the center can no longer hold the gyre in orbit. The power of the gyre dissipates with the gyre falling away from itself. However, at that point, a new gyre is born, growing in the other direction. At some point, it too will fall away and another gyre will be born. Much like da Vinci’s view of pyramidal forms in linear perspective, Yeats’ metaphor is at once two dimensional and three-dimensional for as the gyre moves as a circle on one plane, it also grows in a spiral (p.70).

From this model, we see a developmental spiral that perpetuates its own existence in multiple dimensions. Like the gyre, the action-reflection-reaction process is not a linear progression, but rather a spiral of transformation ignited by a single action, perpetuated by its own natural process. This progression becomes an important lens for viewing the concept of manifest reality in the PH because, as we will see, manifest reality is created by a single act of reflection from the

Supreme Consciousness, but is perpetuated by the multiple reflections of individual consciousness interacting with its perceived environment. From this perspective, the phenomenal world can be seen as inherently relational because we perceive the world through the reflective/interactive nature of our own consciousness.

Self-Reflexivity. It is important to note that this process of reflection between the subject and the object is not in opposition to nondualism. Because the subject is projecting itself onto the object, it is easy to assume that the object must exist as separate from the subject. Yet, when we look closer at how reflection works in practice, we see that the experiencing subject is actually using the object self-referentially as a tool to better understand itself. In this way, the object is actually conflated into the subject as we saw in Loy's (1998) non-difference between subject and object.

Object Relations

While looking at the subject-object relationship within the context of reflexivity, it is important that we look at how this relationship is portrayed in *Object Relations Theory*, a perspective within the psychoanalytic tradition of Western psychology. This is important because it provides some additional insights into the role projection plays in establishing the relationship between subject and object. In this section, we will look at a brief overview of *Object Relations Theory* focusing on the work of D.W. Winnicott and Heinz Kohut, two known theorist in this field.

Object Relations Theory attempts to describe both internal and external relationships within the field of psychology (St. Clair, 2000). Within this approach, the term *object* broadly refers to something “with which a subject relates” (p. xiii). Freud used the term object more specifically, referring to something that satisfies a human need. However, this term is now most often used to address interpersonal relationships, looking at the influence of past relationships on

current or future relationships. One way to describe this approach is to say that our feelings toward the primary objects of our relations, the people we are close to or our primary care givers, determine the way that we experience our lives (Fadiman & Frager, 2002).

According to Heinz Kohut, the importance of object relations does not end in early childhood. Throughout our lives, we continue to need others to act as objects of our (idealizing) projections or as empathic mirrors to us in order to maintain the self. They serve as our *selfobjects*. Within the context of psychotherapy, Kohut believed that the therapist should act as a *selfobject* for the client, should the transference call for this, in order to help the client resolve issues within his/her self structure (Buckley, 1994). For object relations theorist Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, object relations could also be applied to the social interaction within family systems. The relationships between family members help people to continually re-frame and clarify self-object boundaries (Daniels, 2007). It is important to note that within this school of thought, relationship is seen as primary.

For the purposes of this dissertation, we will look at one of the key areas of *Object Relations Theory*, which focuses on internal objects. According to *Object Relations* theorists, “Individuals interact not only with an actual other, but also with an internal other, a psychic representation that might be a distorted version of some actual person” (St. Clair, 2000, p.2). From this quote, we can see that internal objects are created by “psychic representation” (ibid). In many cases people are reacting to these inner representations of a person rather than the person him/herself. In this sense, it is the individual’s projection that is determining how s/he relates with other individuals.

Object Relations Theory is generally thought to operate on the belief that our inner objects are generally created early in our lives. These objects may be created by relationships

with our parents or loved ones before we are even able to verbalize our experiences (Winnicott, 1971). D.W. Winnicott's work in *Object Relations Theory* posits the concept of *Good Enough Mothering* as way of suggesting that some mothers are able to help their children transition from the desire to be unified with the mother to an acceptance of his/her individuality. The child's initial desire is to destroy the *otherness* of the mother, reunifying the mother with the child. A *good enough mother* is able to withstand the child's destructive desires by maintaining her individuality and placing constructive boundaries that enforce her separateness without denying the child his/her basic needs. As a result of this process, the child's standard way of relating to the mother has been transformed and replaced by a new way of relating. The child must now relate to the mother as separate, external object (Epstein, 1995).

The idea of destruction is central to Winnicott's thesis. "Whereas the subject does not destroy the subjective object (projection material), destruction is objectively perceived, has autonomy, and belongs to 'shared' reality" (Winnicott, 1971, p.91). Here, we see that the projection is destroyed the moment that it belongs to a shared reality. This tells us that something very important happens through the act of perceiving something as other than oneself. The current, internal projection is destroyed in favor of a shared reality, a reality based in relationship with another. Stemming from this, the primary relationship changes from a relationship with a projection to a relationship with an externalized other.

Unlike some of the interpretations of nondualism addressed earlier in this document, *Object Relations Theory* does not present a picture in which the subject and object fuse. Rather, the subject transforms based upon its relationship with the object. However, this approach can still be understood using the action, reflection, reaction process defined previously. In the case of *Object Relations Theory*, the action is the original attempt to destroy the mother's otherness in

order to merge with her. This can be seen as an attempt to conflate the object into the subject. However, when the mother withstands the destruction, what the child sees reflected back at him/herself is a separate self, not another version of itself. In this way, it reacts by understanding itself as a separate, autonomous being in relationship with another.

Viewing *Object Relations Theory* in the context of nondualism presents an interesting dilemma. On one hand, *Object Relations Theory* can be viewed as an attempt to conflate the object into the subject, but as we saw above, this does not lead to a sense of singularity, but rather to an awareness of the separate self in relationship. Therefore, *Object Relations Theory* provides a different view of psychological well being than that of the Kashmir Shaivism by emphasizing separation rather than unity.

Object Relations Theory also emphasizes a model in which psychological projections represent a lower level of personal development, while in the Kashmir Shaivist tradition, individual projections can be seen as analogous to the original projection of Citi and, therefore, as a natural and healthy aspect of reality. Within the Shaivist approach, projections can be used to understand the nature of reality, bringing the spiritual practitioner closer to an awareness of his/her own divinity. While *Object Relations Theory* does not provide the same vision of psychological health as we see within Kashmir Shaivism, it does provide some insight into the relational nature of consciousness, which can also be seen in Kashmir Shaivism through the reflexive nature of Consciousness.

Consciousness in Relationship

As we have seen in *Object Relations Theory*, human experience can be understood as a continual process of relationship. However, it is not just psychology that presents relationship as the primary agent conditioning and/or determining human experience. The emerging paradigm in philosophy has also begun to look at the primary facets of human existence including

consciousness as phenomena embedded in relationship. According to Philosopher of Consciousness Christian de Quincey (2005), consciousness, like day to reality, is not an impersonal *thing* to be objectively analyzed. Rather, it is a personal process of engagement. “Consciousness is not an ‘it’ – it’s an ‘I’ or a ‘you’ (de Quincey, 2005, p. 175). However, it extends beyond simple subjective awareness to include the relationship between the subject and the object. Before we look more deeply at the relational aspects of consciousness, let us first look at how de Quincey defines consciousness.

According to de Quincey, author of *Radical Knowing* (2005) and *Intersubjectivity: Exploring Consciousness from the Second Person Perspective* (2000), the term consciousness can be interpreted in a variety of ways. In his work on intersubjectivity, he contrasts three different types of consciousness - philosophical consciousness, psychological consciousness, and spiritual consciousness. In his definitions of these three terms, he suggests that psychological consciousness and spiritual consciousness presuppose philosophical consciousness because the definition of philosophical consciousness is expressed as a *state of being*, or in my words, a state of sentience. In this instance, people, giraffes and lady bugs are said to be conscious, while rocks, cars and household appliances are not. This preliminary definition of consciousness opens the door for the existence of both psychological and spiritual consciousness.

For de Quincey (2000), psychological consciousness refers to both the contents of consciousness and the means of accessing those contents. In his definition, contents of consciousness might include thoughts, beliefs and images, whereas the means of accessing the contents of consciousness might refer to the abstract spaces in which the contents are stored, e.g. the conscious or unconscious mind. In the case of psychological consciousness, de Quincey is careful to clarify that the contents of psychological consciousness belong to the conscious mind.

Therefore, only beings capable of conscious cognition possess a form of psychological consciousness, e.g., a person who is awake and capable of formulating basic concepts whereas a person who is asleep or in a coma is not.

Further down this line we reach spiritual consciousness, which builds on the suppositions of psychological consciousness, but is essentially defined as a subtype of psychological consciousness because, like psychological consciousness, it refers to a *state of consciousness*. However, unlike psychological consciousness, spiritual consciousness refers to specific states of consciousness often associated with “enlightenment” or “highly evolved” states of consciousness that encompass such qualities as universal compassion, non-dual awareness and divine union. The definition of spiritual consciousness, in this case, is similar to the description provided earlier for Consciousness with a capital ‘C’.

Using these definitions of consciousness, we can now move forward to look at how consciousness is described as a relational phenomenon. For de Quincey (2000), consciousness becomes relational when it is understood as an intersubjective experience rather than an objective entity. De Quincey defines intersubjectivity as a “mutual co-arising and engagement of interdependent subjects, or intersubjects, which creates their respective experience. It is ontological. Strong or ontological intersubjectivity relies on co-creative nonphysical presence and brings distinct subjects into being out of a prior matrix of relationships”(de Quincey, 2000, p.138). In this definition, we can see that subjects, in this case conscious entities, come into being through their relationships. Our very beingness is dependent upon relationship. This awareness of the self in relationship presents a sense of unification rather than separation, bringing us closer to a nondual worldview in which material reality manifests as objects and

individuals in relationship. Much like the inseparable Shiva and Shakti of Kashmir Shaivism, individuals cannot exist outside of relationship.

This concept is also present in the work of transpersonal psychologist Jorge Ferrer (2000). In his work on participatory knowledge, Ferrer looks at human experiences, and particularly transpersonal experience, as co-created events. These events engage people as holistic beings, encouraging them to interact on a variety of levels including, but not limited to, the cognitive, emotional, intuitive, and embodied planes. In this fashion, participatory knowledge combines such aspects as *subject* and *object*, or knowing and being, into a holistic, relational engagement with the world. A brief experience of unitive consciousness that includes somatic sensations such as an increased heart rate along with an overwhelming sense of compassion for all beings might be considered a co-created, participatory event because it engages the mind, the body, and the heart in a process that connects the individual with beings outside the person's normal sphere of engagement. It also suggests multi-dimensionality and non-locality of consciousness, which are characteristic of Ferrer's participatory events. While this approach may not be congruent with the Kashmir Shaivist approach to a universal nondualism, it does provide both another approach to looking at consciousness from a relational perspective and a new perspective on unitive consciousness.

Like de Quincey and Ferrer, philosopher and ecologist David Abram (1996) also discusses consciousness as a form of relational engagement. However, Abram addresses this intersubjective form of knowing through reciprocal relationships in the natural world. Building on the work of phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, Abram states

He [Merleau-Ponty] calls attention to the obvious but easily overlooked fact that my hand is able to touch things only because my hand is itself a touchable thing, and thus is entirely a part of the tactile world that it explores. Similarly, the eyes,

with which I see things, are themselves visible. With their gleaming surfaces, their colors and hues, they are included *within* the visible field that they see – they are themselves part of the visible, like the bark of a cedar, or a piece of sandstone, or the blue sky. To touch the coarse skin of a tree is thus, at the same time, to experience one's own tactility, to feel oneself touched *by* the tree, and to see the world is also, at the same time, to experience oneself as visible, to feel oneself *seen*. (p.68)

Here, Abram touches on a key element in the investigation of relationship and reflexive consciousness, for if the experience of seeing is dependent upon being part of the visible, the viewer must invariably be a part of the process of viewing, for s/he and the object being viewed now exist in direct, dependent relationship with one another. The ability to experience oneself as both viewer and that which is visible presents an interesting challenge to our standard approach to consciousness, for we are in the habit of remaining either in the subjective/first person state of awareness, or of jumping to a more scientific/objective perspective that attempts to completely separate itself from all subjective biases. It is from the reflexive, intersubjective, perspective, the perspective from which a person is simultaneously viewer and viewed, that relationship becomes primary because from within this context it is not possible to project one's consciousness onto another conscious being without also being the object of another's projection.

This reflexive process leads us back to both the reflexive aspects of Kashmir Shaivist philosophy and to our earlier discussion of *Object Relations Theory*. Here, it is through a process of projection and reflection that a person understands him/herself within the wider context of relationship. Once a person can understand him/herself as simultaneously knower and known, s/he is one step closer to understanding him/herself as a whole being who is identical to divine reality.

Moving back to our focus on reflexivity, we see that according to Anthropologists Barbara Myerhoff and Jay Ruby (1982), authors of the introduction to *A Crack in the Mirror*:

Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology, “Reflexive, as we use it, describes the capacity of any system of signification to turn back upon itself, to make itself its own object by referring to itself: subject and object fuse” (p.2). While it is possible to interpret reality from a singularly subjective perspective and thereby assume that multiple realities exist – one for each subject, this approach simply reinforces a separatist, dualistic approach to reality. However, if we view the process of reflection as an interactive, transformative process arising from a co-created reality as suggested by de Quincey, we see that in actuality, both the subject and the object arise from a singular entity. Through the process of reflexivity, the subject and the object continue to co-create the very reality from which they sprung, a bit like a snake swallowing his tail.

The Concept of Reflection in Kashmir Shaivism

As we saw briefly in the introduction to this dissertation, within the Tantric tradition of Kashmir Shaivism, Consciousness creates the manifest universe through an act of reflection in which Citi projects herself onto the backdrop of her own nature without losing her unitary ineffability. Through this process, Citi becomes both the ultimate, indivisible reality and the pluralism that we know as our individual, embodied selves as well as the physical world around us. This process of reflection continuously manifests itself through the activities of Supreme Consciousness. This element of reflection in Kashmir Shaivism can be seen in B.N Pandit’s commentary on the *Paramarthasara of Abhinavagupta* when he states

Just as the disk of the moon appears to be moving when reflected in flowing waters and just as it looks to be static in still waters, so does this great master *Atman* appear in multifarious variety in the different categories of bodies, senses, organs and worlds. Here the difference between the moons and the *Atman* is that the former requires some entity other than it to catch its reflections, but the latter reflects His own powers in His own psychic light and appears Himself as His reflection. (p. 24)

As the Atman is related to the nature of the individual soul, this statement clearly suggests that the individual soul exists only as a reflection of Supreme Consciousness. This process can also

be seen in the works of N.L. Kundu (1983) where the author describes the “Pure Light of Absolute Consciousness” (p. 35) as projecting itself into the world as a means of revealing its true essence. Kundu states that this projection is “manifested in the multiplicity of things” (p.35). Through this projection and reflection process, the manifest world comes to know itself reflexively.

In addition to acknowledging the reflexive nature of Citi, Kashmir Shaivism also addresses reflexive consciousness by using the term *vimarsha*, which is often referred to as a “touching back” (Skora, 2001, p.24) or “the capacity of consciousness to be conscious of itself” (p.29). This concept of self-awareness implies that individual consciousness has the ability to reflect upon itself, creating an additional layer of conscious awareness. According to K.M. Skora (2001), in her work titled *Consciousness of consciousness: Reflexive awareness in the Trika Saivism of Abhinavagupta*, Consciousness within the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism can be more accurately described as consciousness of Consciousness, “exhibiting a remarkable capacity termed ‘reflexive awareness’” (p.1). Skora carefully relates this capacity of consciousness to both know and touch itself to a bodily awareness, suggesting that this concept is akin to two bodies moving back and forth, touching one another.

For Skora, Abhinavagupta’s foundational works in the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism present both a conscious and embodied way of knowing both the self and the divine. As one is clearly presented as a reflection of the other, the divinity of manifest reality is explicit in this context. This brings us back to Feuerstein’s (1998) comments regarding the inclusion of transcendent power within the expression of divinity. Both Skora and Feuerstein clearly describe a nondual but actual relationship between Supreme Consciousness and material reality, but according to Skora, this process is inherently reflexive in nature. Within the Kashmir Shaivist

tradition, this reflexivity underlies the basic relationship between the concept of nondual reality and concrete appearance of manifest reality.

Relevance

Returning to the initial intentions described in the introduction to this dissertation, we can see that this literature review has provided both background information and multiple perspectives regarding the key elements of this study. These key elements include nondualism, the subject/object dichotomy, and reflexive consciousness. As we have seen in the sections that discussed nondualism and reflection in Kashmir Shaivism, both nondualism and reflexive consciousness are important concepts within this philosophical system. However, these concepts are not expressed in ways that are obviously relevant or applicable to a post-modern audience.

The Splendor of Recognition describes these concepts in an accessible manner by providing examples of direct experiences and by offering contemporary analogies. By looking specifically at the relationship between nondual reality and manifest reality in *The Splendor of Recognition*, this study attempts to help spiritual practitioners understand their own nature from a new perspective. Using reflexive consciousness as a vehicle, the spiritual practitioner can better understand his/her own divine nature by understanding him/herself as more than just a separate individual. This allows the practitioner to see the self as more than a perceiving subject who is impacted by external objects that are beyond his/her control. Instead of perceiving reality as a static set of circumstances, the spiritual practitioner can come to understand reality as a co-created process in which s/he actively participates.

Chapter 3: Methods

Overview

This chapter provides an explanation of the context, approach, and method that were used in this study. The first section of this chapter looks at the nature of the context in which the study was set, followed by a brief description and rationale for the post-structuralist approach and a brief overview of some key hermeneutical thinkers who influenced the approach to this study. The next section provides a description of the components of a content analysis and my process for conducting such an analysis. The final section describes how I used intuitive inquiry within the context and approach.

Context

History and origins. The primary intent of this study was to evaluate the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality in Swami Shantananda's commentary on the *PH* titled *The Splendor of Recognition*. Therefore, it is important that we understand some of the historical context surrounding this ancient, sacred text and its original author. Kshemaraja, author of the *PH*, was an eleventh century Shaivist sage who is believed to be the foremost disciple of Abhinavagupta, one of the most renowned teachers of Kashmir Shaivism during this time period (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003). Little is known about the Kashmiri sages of this time. However, we do know that numerous writings have been attributed to Kshemaraja including the *PH*, commentaries on the *Shiva Sutra*, and the *Spanda Karika*. Swami Shantananda (2003) suggests that some of the difficulty readers may have in interpreting the meaning of the *PH* stems from the lack of historical context available to us today.

The term *pratyabhijna-hridayam* translates as 'the heart of recognition'. This sacred work stems from the Pratyabhijna school of Kashmir Shaivism, known for its emphasis on the

recognition of the individual Self as identical to the Universal Self. The *Pratyabhijnadharshana*, also known as the Philosophy of Recognition, addresses this form of realization as the path to freedom from the constraints of the individual ego (Singh, 1963). In breaking down the components of the word Pratyabhijna, we find that ‘Prati’ stems from pratipam meaning ‘forgotten through delusion’. ‘Abhi’ translates as ‘close at hand’, and Jna means ‘illumination or knowledge’, suggesting that the knowledge that has been forgotten through delusion is close at hand (Singh, 1963).

When looking at the title *Pratyabhijna-hridayam*, we must also consider the way in which Kshemaraja viewed the term hridayam or heart. According to Shaivist scholar Paul Eduardo Muller-Ortega (1989), Kshemaraja’s comments on the *Shiva Sutra* suggest a belief “that the Heart is connected to the realization of the highest spiritual goals defined by the non-dual Kashmir Shaiva tradition” (p. 78). Thus we can consider the *PH* as a text that points the reader toward the highest spiritual goals of Kashmir Shaivism by learning to access the forgotten knowledge so close at hand.

The sutra. Before we go on to discuss Swami Shantananda’s commentary on this text, it is important to note a particular issue regarding the context and interpretation of the *PH*. Earlier in this section, we discussed two important points regarding this text. First, little is known about the life and teachings of the author, Keshemaraja. Second, the lack of historical context can present problems interpreting the meaning of the text. These two issues are further complicated by a third obstacle to ascertaining the meaning of this work – the nature of the sutra as a text that needs to be interpreted. Because the *PH* is composed of twenty sutras or aphorisms, the text is brief – shrouded in mystery, yet rich in meaning.

According to Eastern religious scholar and writer Allistair Shearer (1982), sutras were not intended to be strictly literary works. Instead, sutras were written to aid travelers on the spiritual path as a mountain guide might shout directions back to those further down the trail. Using this example, the sutras would be the directions and the mountain guide would be the guru or spiritual master. One might also say that the sutras were intended to be used as contemporary students might use lecture notes or mnemonic devices. In this instance, the notes (sutras) are used to recall the details of the lecture from the teacher (guru). Dvaita sage Madhvacharya describes the sutra as a work that should be “concise, unambiguous, of fresh and high import, of universal application, free from repetition and inaccuracies of word and sense” (Subba Rau, 1904, p.4). Without the aid of a guru or spiritual master, the meaning of the sutras can be difficult to interpret. For this reason, commentaries on the sutras written by highly experienced spiritual practitioners become an invaluable resource for interpreting their deeper meaning.

The author. Now that we have looked briefly into the background of Kshemaraja and the *PH*, and we understand the importance of the commentary in relationship to the sutra, let us turn our attention to the specific commentary in question. In *The Splendor of Recognition*, Swami Shantananda brings the *PH* to light with a commentary that encourages the reader to apply the wisdom of this text to his/her own life in a current and personal fashion. By using examples from his own experience, Swami Shantananda opens the door for the reader to do the same. Swami Shantanada’s background as a practitioner and teacher in the Siddha Yoga tradition has provided him with an immense well-spring of spiritual authenticity and authority (Muller-Ortega, 2003). He took the vows of monk-hood in 1977, and in 1982 accepted Gurumayi Chidvilasananda as his Guru. He has since continued to dedicate himself to her “worldwide teaching mission” (Muller-Ortega, 2003, p. xiv). Swami Shantananda’s years of spiritual contemplation and his intense

exploration of the *PH* have come together to produce a clear and relevant explication of the wisdom from this timeless text.

Approach

Interactivity and post-structuralism. As part of this research, I believe I created a written document that encourages the reader to engage with the dissertation in an interactive manner. This intent is supported by the method of intuitive inquiry as presented by Rosemarie Anderson (2006) in her manuscript “Intuitive inquiry: The Ways of the Heart in Research and Scholarship”². Anderson states:

Specifically, when I read a study, I am both researcher and ordinary person trying to make sense of my life. Sometimes a terrific study merely gets me thinking in new ways, asking questions of life that I never asked before. . . research that inspires, delights, and prods us to insight and action is at least as valuable to the scientific enterprise as more technical reports that will inevitably follow. (p. 44)

In this series of statements, Dr. Anderson refers to specific cognitive, emotional, and action oriented responses to research studies. These references suggest an interactive relationship with the research she reads. In addition to addressing her own responses as a reader, Anderson (2006) also defines reality as both interpretive and intersubjective, lending power to the role that the reader plays in the interpretation of a study.

Another significant component of this dissertation addresses the nature of dualism, and more specifically the Cartesian subject/object dichotomy. Because this dissertation presents nondualism as a state that transcends the subject/object dichotomy, it is important that the approach to this research emphasizes the relationship between the reader and the written document rather than strictly the written work as a stand-alone entity, distinctly separate from the reader. Within the post-structural paradigm, the authority for meaning and truth is shifted away from the author as the Cartesian subject. Instead, emphasis is placed on the interaction between

the reader and the text (Sarup, 1998). Therefore, I used a post-structuralist foundation for this study.

Again, this approach is supported by intuitive inquiry. Intuitive inquiry has been described as a “postmodern and culturally inclusive method” (Anderson, 2006, p. 37). Indeed, in addition to postmodern, this method might also be termed post-structural, for Anderson (2006) describes reality as “constructed by the biological, cognitive, and cultural structures and habits we inhabit” (p. 37). One of the risks associated with this approach was the potential lack of objectivity due to the destabilization of both the self and reality. This risk was intensified because both the self and reality can be defined strictly as constructs with no intrinsic identity. As we will see in the Findings and Discussion Chapter of this dissertation, both the self and reality are constantly being reconstructed through a reflexive co-creative process.

As part of this post-structural approach, I used the lenses generated by particular phases of intuitive inquiry to identify my own cultural, biological and cognitive lenses surrounding the major concepts in my research. I then attempted to identify specific examples of how these lenses conditioned my interpretation of both nondualism and material reality as presented in *The Splendor of Recognition*.

Hermeneutics. Because the method for this study centered on textual analysis and because intuitive inquiry is itself a hermeneutical method, it is important to look at some of the key aspects involved in interpreting a text. This means looking into some of the basic approaches to hermeneutics as a method for understanding and interpreting written work. In order to understand how hermeneutics was applied to this study, we must first have a basic understanding of some traditional approaches to hermeneutics. Therefore, we will briefly explore some key

hermeneutical thinkers who have influenced the context of textual interpretation during the past several centuries.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, hermeneutics is defined as “The art or science of interpretation, esp. of Scripture. Commonly distinguished from *exegesis* or practical exposition “ (Hermeneutics). However, over time, the principles of hermeneutics have shifted from focusing dominantly on religious texts and interpretations of scripture to a more general focus on the way in which a reader interprets the written word. Currently, hermeneutical theory provides a variety of approaches to the critical interpretation of text. This shift has often been attributed to one of the more influential writers in the field of hermeneutics, Friedrich Schleiermacher, 1768-1834.

Schleiermacher was a German philosopher and theologian who first presented the idea of a universal hermeneutics. Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics “does not relate to one particular kind of textual material (such as the Bible or ancient texts), but to linguistic meaning in general” (Hermeneutics, 2005, Romantic Continuations section, para. 1). Philosopher Heinz Kimmerle (1977) suggests that Schleiermacher brought a more holistic approach to hermeneutics. This approach opposed the more common view that hermeneutics should be used as a series of “aggregate observations” (Kimmerle, 1977, p.28) to assist with specific problem areas in a text. In this context, the term ‘aggregate observations’ refers to an evaluation of selected sections of a text without taking into the account the intended meaning of the entire text. In this way, Schleiermacher promoted a universal approach to hermeneutics. He suggested not only that a hermeneutical approach must be applied to an entire text, but also that a general hermeneutics must be applied. This meant that the analysis of religious texts must adhere to the same general principles as the analysis of all other texts.

Schleiermacher is also known for emphasizing the importance of the author's intent when critiquing a text (Dicenso, 1990). This meant that the author's perspective on the work was of primary importance. However, the author's intent is not always easy to decipher from a purely rational point of view. Therefore, for Schleiermacher, hermeneutics was an art that involved feeling or intuiting one's way into an author's mind (Kimmerle, 1977; Bowie, 2006). This process relies on a more psychological approach to interpretation. It also demands an openness to non-rational or perhaps even transrational forms of knowledge. It is important to note that the goal of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics was understanding. Hermeneutics was only a transitory vehicle to this end (Dicenso, 1990). Once understanding had been achieved, the hermeneutic method could be discarded as so much dust in a dust bin.

Another influential figure in this field is Hans-Georg Gadamer, 1900-2002. Gadamer, a student of phenomenologist Martin Heidegger, built upon the work of Schleiermacher's hermeneutical theories. However, in contrast to Schleiermacher, Gadamer chose to emphasize historicity over authorial intent. For Gadamer, all texts were in some way historical. Gadamer focused on texts as both "cultural and historical expressions" (Dicenso, 1990, p.80).

For Gadamer, history was inherently interpretive. The true study of history, which is involved in the study of any text, required an examination of both the inquirer and the object of inquiry. The relationship between the knower and that which is known is critical to Gadamer's approach because it is this relationship that allows for the validity of multiple interpretations. The knower and the object of knowledge influence one another, thereby creating a unique interpretation. In other words, the unique relationship between the subject (the knower) and the object (that which is known) eliminates the possibility of an objective truth (Dicenso, 1990). This

reflexive approach to the art of interpretation allows for an openness that does not belong strictly to either the reader or the text, rather, it belongs to the relationship between the two.

The reflexive aspects of Gadamer's work can clearly be seen in his use of the grammatical middle voice as a means of expressing the self-referential process of knowing (Eberhard, 2002). Like Schleiermacher, Gadamer was also interested in understanding. However, for Gadamer, understanding was not simply the goal of inquiry. Instead, it was a process with its own inherent value. In his preface to *Hermeneutics: Ancient and Modern*, Gerald Brun describes Gadamer's approach to hermeneutics saying that he focused on

the movement of understanding itself, where understanding does not stop with the determination of meanings but is an ongoing critical reflection in which we see ourselves and what matters to us in the light of the text, even as we see the text in the light of ourselves and our interests. (Brun, 1992, p.11)

In contrast, literary critic and writer E.D. Hirsch, 1928-present, opposed Gadamer's approach by returning to Schleiermacher's focus on importance of the author's intent. He criticized Gadamer, saying that viewing the text as an autonomous entity, separate from the author's intent, deprives it of any 'true' meaning. For Hirsch, the text either had a single, unchanging meaning or no meaning at all (Dicenso, 1990) and this meaning must have involved the author's intent. According to Hirsch (1967), this "shift toward exegesis . . . encouraged willful arbitrariness and extravagance in academic criticism and has been one very important cause of the prevailing skepticism that calls into doubt the possibility of objectively valid interpretation" (p.2).

Philosopher Paul Ricoeur, 1913-2005, agreed with Gadamer's thoughts on the text as a reflexive approach to understanding. However, Ricoeur took Gadamer's approach one step further by eliminating the dialogical element. For Gadamer, the text operated as a separate entity, retaining a quality of otherness. It acted as an object to the reader's subject. In contrast, Ricoeur

saw the text as an opportunity for “linguistic disclosure” (Dicenso, 1990, p. 115) to provide a space in which meaning was made accessible to the reader. As we can see from the language used to describe this process, the relationship between the reader and the text was not an active relationship in which the reader extracts meaning from the text. Rather it was a passive, reflexive relationship that allowed meaning to arise or become apparent.

Ricoeur viewed hermeneutics as an opportunity for philosophical inquiry. Like Schleiermacher and Gadamer, he saw the goal of hermeneutic inquiry as understanding. However, for Ricoeur, this understanding was not limited to either the intent of the author or the self-awareness of the reader. Rather, it opened the door for a deeper understanding of human existence (Thompson, 1998).

Looking at the theorists discussed above, we can see that the process of hermeneutical inquiry supported the interactive approach of this study. In particular, the works of both Gadamer and Ricoeur provide a strong foundation for evaluating a text from an intersubjective perspective by encouraging a reflexive relationship between the reader and the text. This study incorporated this reflexive, intersubjective approach by encouraging active engagement between the researcher and *The Splendor of Recognition* and between the reader and the final research project.

Before concluding this section, we must first look at one final aspect of this interpretive art – the nuances and challenges involved in explicating a sacred text. For the theorists discussed above, hermeneutics is a philosophical mode of inquiry centered on understanding both the nature of the written word and sometimes the very nature of the self. While the approaches of these theorists may be applicable to texts in general, sacred texts often present unique challenges to the hermeneutical inquirer. These challenges may include a lack of accurate historical

information surrounding the origins of the text, questions about the spiritual validity of the text outside its native culture, issues regarding the applicability of ancient wisdom to contemporary life, the limits of the reader's spiritual experience, and the awareness that sacred texts may have multiple meanings (Carpenter, 1992; Reinhartz & Wacker, 2004; Sawyer, 1999).

Theology Professor and researcher David Carpenter (1992) addresses some of these concerns, writing:

Perhaps we should begin by recalling what is usually implied in our concept of hermeneutics, when applied in a religious context. In such a context, hermeneutics has traditionally referred to the interpretation of sacred scriptures – the canonical texts of religious communities – with the intent of bringing to light their contemporary significance for that community. Furthermore, this contemporary significance is usually sought at the level of textual meaning: it is the 'ideality of the text', its relative independence from the conditions of its composition, that make the task both possible and necessary. (p.18)

Due to the transcendent nature of the text in question, this study took a somewhat traditional hermeneutic approach to the analysis of *The Splendor of Recognition* by focusing on the contemporary relevance of the content as opposed to its historic relevance. Based upon some of Carpenter's suggestions above, this study operated under the following assumptions: (a) the meaning of a sacred text can be understood independently from its historical context, (b) the essence of spiritual wisdom transcends both time and culture, and (c) sacred texts can and should be read looking for multiple levels of meaning. However, it was not the intent of this study to dishonor either the cultural or historical context of the *PH* or *The Splendor of Recognition*. With this in mind, let us tread gently on the sacred ground before us as we journey into the heart and splendor of Swami Shantananda's explanation of the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality.

Data Collection and Analysis

Content Analysis. Content analysis is the search for patterns or structured regularities in texts (Myers, 1997). Traditionally, content analysis was used as a method for empirical research. Whereas content analysis has now become an accepted form of qualitative research, it still has the ability to maintain some of the advantages of a quantitative analysis (Mayring, 2000). Some of these advantages include following step by step rules or procedures for analysis such as dividing the material into content analytical units, and using feedback loops to carefully create and revise categories in light of the research question.

Within qualitative content analysis, there are two primary subdivisions. The first subdivision is a deductive process of category formation in which categories are determined from the literature base before data coding takes place. The second subdivision is an inductive process in which initial categories are formed from a brief review of the literature, but these categories are revisited and revised during the process of coding the data (Mayring, 2000).

For the purposes of this study, I conducted a modified qualitative content analysis using the inductive process. The procedures of content analysis were used to add structure to the intuitive inquiry method. As part of cycle 3 of intuitive inquiry, I identified key phrases within *The Splendor of Recognition* that were used to formulate categories. These categories were further refined and subcategories were added. Finally, I asked for external feedback regarding the integrity of the categories in an effort to determine resonance validity.

In the stages listed above, we can see the multiple feedback loops that lend the overall process a degree of objectivity. However, the inductive approach to analysis is, in many ways, very subjective. Klaus Krippendorff (1980), author of *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*, actually describes this process as very intuitive. In addition to working well with intuitive inquiry, content analysis was also well suited to the particular hermeneutical approach

of this study, for one of the intents of a content analysis is “to understand data not as a collection of physical events but as symbolic phenomena . . .” (Krippendorff, 1980, p.7). In fact, the precursors to content analysis were the hermeneutical studies of biblical texts (Krippendorff, 1980).

While this may seem like an unusual approach for working with the topic of nondualism, breaking the text down into smaller units actually replicated the process of taking the nondual universe and condensing it into material reality. This process, in essence, simulated the original movement of the universe from nondual to dual as described in the *Splendor of Recognition*. After breaking the text down into units, the units were reassembled into categories that reflected the essence of the topic as whole. Due to the importance of reflection in this study, this process complemented the nature of the research. Through this process, I was better able to understand the nature of my topic by comparing the relationship between the categories and the topic to the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. In other words, I was able to use the reflexive nature of this research process as another, practical approach to understanding the role of reflection in the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality.

Intuitive inquiry.

Throughout this section I have made several references to the use of intuitive inquiry as a research method. The use of intuitive inquiry in this study complemented the content analysis process by opening doors that lie beyond the standard, objective way of knowing. By using this method, I was able to explore the spaces beyond the limits of scientific knowledge by attempting to access my unconscious lenses and biases toward this topic. In addition, because nondual consciousness is normally understood to be a trans-rational state of consciousness, I believe that using a method that incorporates non-rational knowledge into the research process enhanced my understanding of the topic.

Because intuitive inquiry was developed primarily for the investigation of human experiences, one of the challenges of this study was adapting the research strategy to a textual analysis. However, the nature of this particular study lent itself well to the use of intuitive inquiry because the research topic incorporates the deeply human experience of defining the relationship between oneself as a sensory being and the divine as a non-plural entity. I focused on this aspect of human experience for the creative and intuitive exercises that were used throughout this process. It is important to note that intuitive inquiry was used in a previous study that was confined to textual analysis (Carlock, 2003).

Intuitive inquiry uses five cycles of hermeneutical interpretation in an effort to “refine and amplify the researcher’s interpretation” (Anderson, 2006, p.10). Cycle one uses a creative process to help the researcher clarify his/her research topic. During this exercise, the researcher attempts to relive the experience or nature of the research topic before using his/her imagination to envision a particular text or image that represents the research topic at that time. Once that image or text has been identified, the researcher then engages with that object daily through a dialectic process, encouraging impressions and images to arise and eventually coalesce into a focused research topic. All insights and impressions are recorded as part of this process. During cycle two, the researcher develops his/her preliminary lenses, which represent assumptions about key aspects of the research topic. Again, the researcher regularly records his/her insights.

In cycle three, the researcher identifies data sources, develops criteria for selecting research participants or literary records, collects data, and prepares summary reports. As this study was a textual analysis, data sources and literary records were be the primary focus of the data collection process. Cycle four focuses on refining the lenses developed in cycle two based

upon new understandings from the data that has been gathered. In this cycle, the researcher compares the preliminary lenses with the new lenses, seeking to understand how his/her assumptions regarding the research topic have changed. In cycle five, the researcher steps back and re-evaluates both the literature and the inquiry process in light of the study results.

Cycle One- Clarifying the Research Topic. After repeated meditations and a fair bit of intellectual research, I was still struggling to find a text or image that both captured my imagination and felt intuitively appropriate for this study. It was not until my final seminar at the Institute of Transpersonal psychology that this text became clear. At the recommendation of my Dissertation Committee Chair, I had done some creative exploratory work to help me better understand my relationship to the topic. While at the seminar, I described one of my creative works to a close friend who is a member of my cohort at ITP. The description was of a doll made of wire and construction paper. The doll had a hole where her stomach would normally have been. The doll's arms were also made of rings - circles full of holes. Up until that point, I had been interpreting these holes as a sense of unknowing and insecurity. However, my friend was very quick to point out a play on words. He reminded me that the holes might also be interpreted as *wholes*.

This struck a very powerful chord in me. I was immediately reminded that the primary focus of my research was wholeness. As I began to think about my own relationship to wholeness, I remembered a passage in a text that originally caught my attention about seven or eight years ago. This text was the invocation to the Isha Upanishad quoted in the introduction to this dissertation that states, "*OM, That is the Whole, This is the Whole, From Wholeness emerges Wholeness, Wholeness coming from wholeness, Wholeness still remains*" (*The Upanishads*,

1974, p. 12). Through meditative and intuitive work with this text, I was better able to understand the importance of my research topic.

When I entered into a meditative state, and allowed myself to simply feel the sounds, tones, and energy of this sacred text, I found myself opening to a very natural and free state of being. Chanting the invocation, alternating between Sanskrit and English, I was able to get a sense of how wholeness felt for me personally. I could feel a very clear shift in my body as my muscles relaxed and I abandoned anxiety and fear of the future. I was also able to see my own resistance to feeling that wholeness on a day to day basis. I was forced to confront my own guilt, shame, and sense of worthlessness. For me, the idea of unmediated wholeness represented both a desired goal and a feared *other*.

The following descriptions come from my meditation journal related to Cycle one of intuitive inquiry.

My belly feels centered and strong but my arms feel free like they want to move – like my doll of wire and paper chains. I can feel my shoulders relaxing, moving down my back allowing my chest to open. I have more room to breathe. . . OM . . . this is the whole. (Schopfer’s personal journal, September 1 – September 20, 2008)

I see clouds that move like puddles when a rock is thrown into the water. From a single cloud, another cloud rises forth, and then another moving slowly outward and then tunneling back in on themselves. (ibid)

OM this is the fear, that is the fear, from the fear the fear emerges, taking the fear from the fear the fear still remains. I am projecting my fear onto the world and seeing it reflected back at me. (ibid.)

Quotes such as these reflect my personal process as I journeyed toward a deeper understanding of my research topic.

In addition to working with a particular text or image, Cycle one also encourages a better understanding of the intended audience for a particular research study. This section of Cycle one

caught me by surprise. When I originally began the intuitive exercises designed to help me clarify my audience, I was expecting to see either a community of therapists or perhaps even a group of philosophers. Either way, I was definitely expecting to see a group of trained academics. Instead, what I found was a group of spiritual practitioners sitting before me. I suddenly realized that my study was aimed at a very wide audience. It is important to me that anyone with a strong interest in spiritual practice, regardless of his/her spiritual tradition or level of education, can access the results of this study with the hope of applying them to their own personal journey. For me, this study was not just an abstract philosophical investigation. Rather, it is a journey of personal growth that I hope will be accessible to all people who have an interest in psychological and spiritual growth. Through Cycle 1 of intuitive inquiry, I was able to understand why this research topic was so meaningful to me on a deep personal level. This understanding informed my research throughout this study.

Cycle Two – Developing Preliminary Lenses. Cycle two of this method was a bit more challenging for me. Identifying key texts for the dialectic activities came fairly easily because I was clearly drawn to a number of texts cited in either the introduction or literature review of this study. However, once the texts had been chosen, and I had consciously identified lenses based upon my interaction with these texts, I was still a bit uncomfortable with my understanding of the topic. I felt as though something was missing. In response to this sensation, I undertook some creative work to try to help me understand some of my unconscious lenses. This work took the form of three separate collages. One collage addressed my unconscious understanding of nondualism, another focused on reflexive consciousness, and a third looked at my subconscious biases toward the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. In the remainder of this section, I will list both the results from my conscious lenses resulting from the dialectic activities

with various texts and my previously unconscious biases generated from my creative explorations.

The primary texts that helped me generate my lenses related to nondualism were David Loy's (1998) book *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy*, R. K. Kaw's (1967) *The Doctrine of Recognition (Pratyabhijna Philosophy)*, Jerry Katz's (2007) *One*, Judith Blackstone's (2006) article *Intersubjectivity and Nonduality in the Psychotherapeutic Relationship*, Georg Feuerstein's (1998) *Tantra*, and Prendergast, Fenner, & Krystal's (2003) *The Sacred Mirror*. I chose these texts because they provide insights into nondualism from a variety of disciplines and approaches including, philosophy, spirituality, and psychology. Feuerstein and Kaw provide perspectives that are specific to Tantra and Kashmir Shaivism, which were central to this study.

After repeated engagements with these texts over a long period of time, I developed the following list of lenses regarding nondualism. Nondualism is a state of consciousness or form of existence that (a) is ineffable; (b) is paradoxical; (c) is integral, holistic, and non-plural; (d) is internally complex, (e) defies rational comprehension, (f) is identical to true self awareness, (g) requires a transcendence of the individual ego, and (h) leads to compassionate and self-less behavior. These lenses describe my conscious effort to understand the concept of nondualism from a cognitive and rational engagement with a variety of texts that directly address the topic of nondualism.

In contrast to the previous list of lenses, the following lists were derived from my attempt to understand my unconscious biases related to this study. These lists were developed by reviewing collages that were created strictly for this purpose. In her article "Intuitive Inquiry: The Ways of the Heart in Research and Scholarship," Rosemarie Anderson (2006) suggests that

the process of determining lenses for cycle two might be aided by social interaction and dialogue. Therefore, I asked for assistance when reviewing my collages before creating the lists of my unconscious lenses. This assistance took the shape of a dialogue between me and another experienced researcher. We both looked at each collage together and generated possible interpretations that related to the topic at hand. Ultimately, however, I made the final decision regarding which interpretations to include in the list of final lenses. It is important to note that the following lists reflect my own personal, unconscious biases that included my own fears and unverified assumptions.

My list of unconscious lenses for nondualism included (a) nondualism as an unachievable fairytale, (b) nondualism as a process that leads from darkness into light, (c) nondualism as an opening to the ethereal, (d) nondualism as a state of psychological safety and security, and (e) nondualism as a process of rebirth. Developing the list of lenses for reflexive consciousness and the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality was a bit more challenging because the collages did not contain as many clear and obvious themes. However, with some time and effort, I was able to create a list of lenses for reflexive consciousness that presented the concept as something that (a) a person must step back from everyday reality to perceive, (b) requires a person to look from the outside in, (c) may require a shift in perspective including feeling turned upside down, and (d) has strong philosophical and analytical elements. My collage depicting the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality reflects a very different energy and attitude than the previous two collages. The list generated from this collage describes this relationship as (a) clean and precise, (b) specific and orderly, (c) both sensuous and sensual, (d) full of doorways between states of consciousness and ways of being, and (e) a creative space teeming with life and growth. The preliminary lenses regarding nondualism that were developed through

dialectic activities with scholarly texts will be revisited in Cycle 4 of intuitive inquiry. In this cycle, I will re-evaluate these lenses in light of my research findings

Validity

The validity for this study was determined by a triangulation of my literature review, the use of intuitive inquiry, and the content analysis. The information gleaned from each of these approaches formulated the basis for my findings and conclusions. The findings from cycles of intuitive inquiry, along with the results of the content analysis, will be related back to the directly back to the relevant literature in a later chapter.

Strengths and Limitations

Throughout this chapter, we have looked at a number of strengths and limitations regarding the methods for this study. Some of the strengths included a) the hermeneutical tradition supporting the search for contemporary significance in religious texts, b) the complementary aspects of content analysis and intuitive inquiry, and c) the objectivity gained through the use of multiple feedback loops in a content analysis. Limitations included (a) the lack of historical context surrounding the *PH*, (b) the lack of objectivity within the post-structural approach due to the destabilization of both the self and reality, and (c) the application of intuitive inquiry to a textual analysis. These limitations were addressed by confining this study to the current relevance of the *PH*, using a formal content analysis to balance out the subjective perspective of the post-structural approach, and grounding the study in human experience by focusing on the potential practical applications of the theories derived from this research.

The Research Process

Insights. The process of forming the categories for this study was steeped in an awareness of my own energy, physicality, and state of mind. Throughout the content analysis, I kept a meditative journal that tracked my physical, psychological, and emotional experiences as I

unitized the data and attempted to form them into preliminary categories. During the unitization process, I became very aware of the aspects of this study that pertain to psychology of the body. I also became aware that the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality could be considered analogous to the relationship between human abstract awareness and the physical body. I will address the relationship between abstract awareness and the physical body in more detail in the Conclusions and Recommendations Chapter.

When I began the unitization process, I was reminded that I was initially drawn to the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism because it includes the body in its soteriology. The relationship between the body and nondual reality is harmonious rather than adversarial. According to Feuerstein (1998), Shaivism has a “body positive approach” (p.53) to spirituality. Because this approach supports my kinesthetic learning style, I was very happy to use my physical awareness as well as my cognitive and intuitive awarenesses to provide additional insights into the research process.

Unitization. With these insights into my approach in mind, I incorporated my physical body into the process of unitization in a number of ways. First, I made sure that I felt comfortable enough with the results of the first three cycles of intuitive inquiry. Then, I knew that I was ready to begin the unitization process. My next step was to decide how I was going to record the units of data. Rather than highlighting each separate unit and then attempting to convert it into an electronic format, I decided to physically cut out each unit of data. This would allow me to engage with the research in a very physical manner. I realized that I would need to obtain an additional copy of *The Splendor or Recognition* since I was intent on cutting the text into small pieces. However, I was convinced that this would be the best approach for both me

and for the study as a whole. I believed that the more physically engaged I became with the text, the more likely I was to be fully present to the research process.

I began each unitization session by carefully choosing my surroundings. This included enhancing my sensory experiences by including specific visual, auditory, and olfactory aids. I chose music or chanting in the background that I believed would complement a peaceful and centered mood. On some occasions this included listening to the PH chanted in Sanskrit while I worked. On some occasions, I added yellow flowers and a yellow candle to the room to enhance psychic openings while on others I added nutmeg to boiling water as a means of enhancing clairvoyance. My journal tracked all of these sensory aids along with the details that arose during my meditations prior to each unitization session. I also recorded my reactions to the process at the end of each session.

For example, from one unitization session, my research journal reads

Tonight the meditation centered on my nose and eyes. I could feel the questions sinking deep into the base of my eye sockets. I could smell the nutmeg, and I could feel myself inhaling more consciously, aware of the sensations of my breath.

For months, maybe years, it has felt like I've been swimming uphill. Finally, tonight, everything feels right. I am me again – in the right place doing the right thing. I am home. ((Schopfer's research journal, January 21, 2009)

Another night, as I continued my work, the meditation process took a slightly different turn relying more on my subtle body and intuition for insight into the unitization process.

Tonight, the energy in my meditation moved toward my finger tips. I could feel the breath expanding down my arms out toward the ends of my fingers. I could also sense my subtle body – particularly in the area around my hands – as if I could extend my hands further than the bounds of my physical body. I could feel my breath reaching into my subtle body. Perhaps, tonight, my intuition will be in my hands as I reach to cut out certain sections of the text. (Schopfer's research journal, January 26, 2009)

Both of the quotes above reflect my awareness of my physical body during my meditations. The quote below, written near the end of the unitization process, emphasizes the

psychological and emotional aspects of my meditations that also influenced the data collection process.

In my meditation today I realized that I need to let my research process reflect my own inner being and inner needs. This process is deeply related to my own personal journey and I need to allow that to take its appropriate place in light of the work rather than push it aside in order to get things done.

Today, I took my time, savoring many of the statements, allowing them to sink into my system. The categories seem reasonably clear now. It feels good to be done with this portion of the research. I feel lighter. ((Schopfer's research journal, January 31, 2009)

Throughout the unitization process, I kept a list of preliminary categories that were briefly referenced in the final quote above. Initially, these categories were formed simply by making a mental list of words and phrases that seemed to be appearing frequently throughout the process. Eventually, I began to write down these words and phrases, logging them to see if the data would ultimately reflect these initial observations. This initial mental list kept my mind engaged on a cognitive and analytical level throughout the process which complemented my attempt to engage physically, emotionally, and intuitively with the text.

Allowing myself to engage with the unitization process on so many levels encouraged me to use multiple modes of awareness as I decided which units to include in the data analysis. I believe that this approach helped me accurately determine which units of data were most directly relevant to this study. I found this reflected both in the categorization process where nearly all of the units of data fit into clear-cut categories and in the unitization process itself where the units divided themselves quite naturally and intuitively in chunks that maintained the integrity of the original text. The units divided into chunks that ranged in length from less and a single sentence to an entire paragraph. Because one of my primary concerns during this process was ensuring that the unitization complemented the meaning of the text, I was very conscious that the units

themselves must be substantial enough to clearly reflect the substance of work. Before I began cutting out the individual units, I was unsure how naturally and clearly each unit would divide. I believe that the clear division of the text into workable units can be attributed to the use of multiple modes of awareness that allowed me to easily ascertain the cognitive meaning of each unit while still being conscious of intuitive whole of the text.

Category formation. Once the units of data were cut out, and my preliminary list of categories was carefully recorded, it was time to form the final categories. This was the most challenging part of the research process, in part because the unitization process yielded approximately 2000 units, and in part because there were so many possibilities that needed to be narrowed down.

I began by writing down each of my preliminary categories in large letters with a black marker. I then cut out the categories and placed them all around my bedroom, covering the king-size bed and the entire floor. Once the categories were evenly spread out, I began to look at each unit of data individually. I picked up each unit of data and attempted to place it in one of the preliminary categories. If it did not clearly fit into a category, I initially placed it in a pile labeled 'Miscellaneous'. Once I felt that I found the right category for the unit, I physically placed it underneath the category label on the bed or floor. For most categories, the list of units carefully placed beneath each label quickly became reasonably large piles. Eventually, I taped the labels to small cardboard boxes to keep the piles from overlapping.

As I went through this process, I quickly discovered that several of my preliminary categories were slightly mislabeled, and that I needed to add a category that was not on the preliminary list. In addition, as I worked through more of the units of data, I discovered that quite a few of my preliminary categories did not contain enough units to warrant a category of their

own. Upon further reflection, I could see that when I combined several of the smaller categories into larger ones, nearly each unit appeared to have a place. By the end of the process, there were very few units remaining in the ‘Miscellaneous’ category.

This process was very time consuming and somewhat agonizing. Initially, I was often struggling with units that appeared to fit into more than one category. Finally, I decided to separate those units into their own pile, photocopy them so that I had multiple copies of each of unit, cut out those copies, and place a copy of those units in each of the categories where they appeared to belong. I was quite pleased and surprised to see that, once this was done, so many units fit into multiple categories. For me, this reaffirmed the natural connections among the categories and demonstrated the interwoven nature of the themes in the text. Referring back to our earlier discussion about the translation of the word ‘sutra’ as ‘text’, it seems natural to me that the themes arising from a commentary on a sacred sutra would be deeply and beautifully interwoven.

After each unit of data had been placed in an initial category, it was time to review and refine the categories. This involved looking at each unit again to ensure that it truly fit into the category where it had been placed. If a unit was misplaced, it was moved to a more appropriate category or added it to the ‘Miscellaneous’ category. Once this was done, I went through the ‘Miscellaneous’ category, moving any units that appeared to belong in one of the current categories. Finally, I needed to look again at consolidating categories. I asked myself if any of the remaining categories still appeared to have too few units to justify a section in the Findings and Discussion Chapter of the dissertation. Then I asked myself if each category truly resonated with my understanding of the text. Next, I asked myself if any of the categories appeared to be redundant or to have too much overlap with another category. Finally, I looked at the basic titles

of the categories to be sure that they accurately represented the themes reflected by the units I had placed each category.

When I had eliminated or merged as many categories as I could without compromising the data, and I had renamed the categories to my satisfaction, I brought in another researcher to evaluate my findings. In keeping with Dr. Rosemarie Anderson's work on Resonance Validity, I asked an outside, experienced researcher and friend to review my units and categories. Upon first glance, my friend was immediately concerned that I had too many categories. He quickly pointed out that I had three categories that could more accurately be described as subcategories of a larger category that was not even on my list. My initial reaction was one of dismay as I realized that I had overlooked something that now appeared so obvious. However, it did not take me long to incorporate his suggestion, and to realize that my categories now felt accurate, complete, and appropriate for the research topic. My friend agreed that the units and categories now seemed well matched, and we were both happy with the overall findings.

Once the categorization process was complete, I had narrowed the total number of categories to 6 with 3 subcategories. In comparison to my original fifteen preliminary categories, the final categories seemed succinct and clear, but also broad enough to capture the larger themes of *The Splendor of Recognition* within the confines of the parameters of this study. The overall process of forming these categories, while arduous, provided me with a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. The final categories resonated for me both intellectually and intuitively, and they also resonated for another experienced researcher.

The final challenge of this research process was to finalize the category titles and write a two sentence description of each category. Between finalizing the categories and writing these descriptive statements, some unexpected things occurred in my personal life, and I took some

time off from the dissertation process. When I resumed my work on this study, I was amazed at how healing it felt to review many of the units while searching for an accurate and meaningful description of each category. While two sentence descriptions could never do justice to the deep and meaningful themes that had arisen from this research process, these descriptions did help me to focus my thinking and attempt to make the intangible tangible, both for myself and my audience. I hope that this focus helps to make the next chapter of this dissertation both meaningful and accessible.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Introduction

The Findings and Discussion Chapter includes a detailed description of each category that resulted from the content analysis conducted in this study. This chapter describes the results of Cycle 3 of intuitive inquiry. Each of the final categories that emerged from the study is broken into subsections, and each of these subsections is supported with examples from the data.

The initial content analysis process yielded fourteen potential categories. These categories included: universality, humanity, femininity, awareness, luminosity, relationship/reciprocity, resonance/vibration, ecstasy/bliss, freedom versus limitation, creativity, naturalness, flux, reflection, multi-layeredness/multiplicity, and appearing versus disappearing. After a thorough review of these potential categories and additional rounds of sorting and resorting as described in the Methods Chapter, the following final categories emerged from the analysis: vibration, bliss, paradox, creativity, luminosity, and reflection. The category of paradox contained three subcategories. These subcategories center on the idea that the universe is simultaneously a) completely free and limited, b) creative and destructive, and c) singular and multiple.

The relationship among these categories is complex. These themes are tightly woven throughout the text, and there is a great deal of overlap among them. In many cases, a single unit of data simultaneously addresses three separate categories. In this sense, these results validate the internally complex nature of nondualism as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to describing the categories and subcategories listed above followed by a description of Cycles Four and Five of intuitive inquiry.

The categories and subcategories will be described in detail as they relate to the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. However, because within Shaivist

philosophy, manifest reality is truly a “manifestation of Supreme reality” (Feuerstein, 1998, p.53), the categories and subcategories often appear to be focused on the nature of Supreme reality. Through the units of data that describe Swami Shantananda’s human, embodied experiences of the Supreme reality, the relationship between manifest reality and nondualism becomes clear. Throughout the description of the categories and subcategories, I attempt to elucidate this relationship by quoting particular units of data that best exemplify the elements of both manifest reality and nondualism. In many quotes throughout this section, Swami Shantanada refers to reality with a capital ‘R’ when referring to nondual reality. For the sake of consistency throughout this dissertation, the discussion simply refers to all forms of reality using a lower case ‘r’. Nondual reality is always qualified with adjectives such as nondual, Supreme, or Absolute.

Vibration

Throughout *The Splendor of Recognition*, Swami Shantananda regularly refers to the vibratory nature of reality. After reviewing all of the units of data that refer to this vibratory nature of the universe, it became clear that Consciousness itself is composed of vibrations. These vibrations, in turn, create manifest reality. One of the primary ways in which vibration is understood within the Shaivist tradition is through the use of language. Letters, syllables and words become the vehicles of the creation and maintenance of the universe. Through a mastery of vibration, individuals on the path toward salvation return to an awareness of nondual reality through vibration and vibratory experiences. The data is not clear regarding whether or not conscious awareness of these vibratory experiences is required in order to understand nondual reality. However, in his own life, Swami Shantananda is clearly aware of the vibratory nature of both Consciousness and his own personal experiences on the path to nondual awareness.

The universe is vibration. In this subsection, we see that universe is composed entirely of vibrations. From the initial creation of the universe, through each moment in time as we know it, vibration is the constant creator and co-creator of all that is. Looking at the creation of manifest reality, we see that vibration existed prior to all material things. Here we are confronted with the paradoxical nature of reality that will be discussed in greater detail in a later section.

The totality of sound is the source of everything and is simultaneously contained in everything. Of course, this vibration cannot be perceived, as there is nothing at this level either to hear or to be heard. All of creation, and the vibrational sounds associated with it, exist in the vast silence of *mahasunya*, the Great Void. It is from this silence that they will emerge into boisterous activity. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.239)

Within this delicate balance between silence and sound, the veiled universe waits to unfold.

From here, we see the initial desire of Shiva and Shakti together that has the power break this paradoxical silence and push the world forth in being. “Together, never apart, Siva and Sakti express the initial vibratory movement, the *spanda* of wanting to become the creation. In them there is the intention to manifest, though this intention is as yet unexpressed” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.32). Still, the power of vibration waits, holding its breath and the entire world with it. “The uncreated heart, the pulse that exists prior to creation, is itself the origin of all worlds, all beings, all things both subtle and manifest” (p. 362). At last, the universe comes into being through its own vibratory nature. Here we are told that Shakti creates “ the universe by pulsating rhythmically in movements of contraction and expansion, like the systole and diastole of the human heart” (p.347).

Moving now from the creation of reality to the nature of reality, and more specifically to the nature of the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality, Swami Shantananda provides a basic description of Consciousness as a vibratory phenomenon. In doing so, he also describes his experience of the relationship between Consciousness and manifest reality.

Suddenly, I found myself looking at the world through Gurumayi's eyes. I saw people, leafy trees, buildings of some sort—everything was threaded through an intricate web of delicate, conscious vibrations. These vibrations seemed to be the basic material, the fabric from which everything was fashioned, and since I could see those vibrations as well as the forms they took, it appeared that the world was there and, at the same time, not there. Each form appeared to be made of frosted glass, a faint luminosity that was a reflection of my own inner light. My heart was filled with love, and through that love, I felt a connection with the whole of creation. It seemed as if everything was a part of me. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p. 302)

In this quote, we can clearly see that Swami Shantananda's direct, human experience of the vibratory nature of the universe relates directly to his awareness of nondual reality. He begins by describing vibrations as the basic building blocks of concrete objects such as trees and buildings, in essence, using his own experience to demonstrate that manifest reality is composed of vibrations. He goes on to describe a sensation of being in connection with "the whole of creation" (p.302). His experience of sensing everything as part of himself describes one of the criteria of nondualism discussed earlier in this dissertation—namely, a nondifference between subject and object where the object is conflated into the subject. From this quote, we can clearly see that vibration is a key component of the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality.

In the following quote, we can see another example of vibration as a key component of the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality.

There the mantra lost its form altogether. I could hear neither syllable nor any hum; the only sound was a very fine vibration. Listening to this pulsating energy, I entered a state without thought or images. I no longer perceived the vibration of the mantra in a particular place—it literally penetrated my entire body. All I was aware of was the act of perception itself. It seemed that I was truly immersed in witnessing Self-consciousness. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.253)

Here, the pulsations become the means for transcending an awareness of material reality and entering into a state "without thoughts or images". The vibratory sensation produced by the mantra was used as a mechanism to transcend physical place, moving Swami Shantananda from

a state of consciousness in which he perceived multiplicity to a state of conscious in which he understood the universe as a unitary phenomenon—the phenomenon of perception.

Language and vibration. In the following examples, we see that the vibrational elements of language act as both containers and co-creators of manifest reality. A strong component of Shaivist philosophy focuses on the vibratory nature of the universe, particularly on the syllables of the Sanskrit language. This approach to the vibrational power of the Sanskrit language as an integral component of Kashmir Shaivism is expounded upon in the work of Paul Muller-Ortega (1989). In this subsection, we will see how Swami Shantananda (2003) describes the universe as both created and maintained through the vibration of the syllable and the word.

To begin, we will look at how Swami Shantananda (2003) describes the basic functions of the syllables and letters of the Sanskrit alphabet in relationship to the manifestation of the universe. “The *saktis* of the letters function as a matrix of energies, forming a vast vibratory web. These powers weave and interweave, acting together to generate all the various levels and manifestations of the cosmos” (p.243). Next, we see how Swami Shantananda uses a direct quote from Kshemaraja to describe how the vibrations of the letters create and maintain the entire cosmos.

All embracing I-ness [*purnahanta*] is the mistress of all the letters from [the first] “a” to [the last] “ksa” which, as the absolute power of unstruck sound, it contains and encapsulates. Thus it is a pure immutable awareness even though it has absorbed into itself every cycle of creation and destruction in the play of the Wheel of Energies, constituting the unfolding cosmic order of countless words and all they denote. It [*aham*] is the supreme level of speech, the great unspoken mantra which, eternally manifest, is the life of all beings. Here it is called the vibration of the Lord because it unfolds pulsating within one’s own being as does the movement of this divine universe. (p.361)

Here, we clearly see the connection between the previous subsection describing the creation, maintenance, and very nature of reality as vibration and the vibrational power of language within the Shaivist belief system.

From here, we look more closely at how the vibrational power of language not only creates but also maintains these levels of reality.

Para-vac contains all letters, all words, all objects, all beings—everything that is to compose the created universe. *Para-vac*, immersed in delight, vibrates subtly as *aham*, ‘I am,’ the pulsation of the Self. This is equivalent to saying that at this highest level, speech and the objects named by speech are undivided and indivisible, coexisting as a vibrating power that Abhinavagupta identifies as *sabda-rasi*, ‘the totality of sound’ . . . (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.239)

Here, we see that everything in the created universe is contained within a vibrational phrase. We are also told that everything that has been created (i.e., manifest reality), is also undivided and indivisible, (i.e., nondual). Again, it is through the vibratory nature of the universe that we come to understand the paradoxical relationship between the dual and the nondual. Similarly, we see how the vibrations of the Sanskrit language play their role in the dissolution and recreation of manifest reality.

At the time of the dissolution, all created forms and their constituent vibratory sounds are reduced once again into the fifty letters, which wait in the womb of Consciousness, like seeds, until the next creative cycle—the opportunity to re-form the universe of words with their designated objects. (p.240)

In the following quote, we see that the vibratory power of letters, words, and syllables is not limited to the Sanskrit language. It can also be found in the Christian tradition.

In this doctrine, as we have said, the fundamental reality is viewed as pulsating Citisakti who projects the universe of forms from her own exquisite vibration. This perspective is not unique to Saivism. The Gospel of St. John, in the Bible’s New Testament, begins with a well know description: ‘In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God’” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.237).

This reminds us that the power of vibration is not limited by belief in a particular tradition or path, but rather extends across various religious communities. This vibrational nature of the universe is also validated by current research in quantum mechanics (Green, 1999).

Vibration on the spiritual path. In the following quotes, we will see how awareness of the vibratory nature of the universe can contribute to the growth and development of the spiritual practitioner. This process begins with a simple awareness of vibratory sensations followed by an awareness of the pure energy associated with the vibrations. Ultimately, this leads to a state of unitary awareness. This is the very essence of *pratyabhijna*. “As a yogic practice, *pratyabhijna* involves the persistent and steady return of our awareness, over and again, to the ever-present movement of the *spanda* that vibrates in all our actions and all our thoughts” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.370).

“Early in my meditation practice, I began to have experiences of pleasant vibrations, quite subtly, all over my body. I enjoyed the sensation: it was like an energy coursing through my body, and it felt delicious, like a tickle” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.264). Here, we see how the awareness of vibration in mantra recitation connects to the vibrational nature of the Sanskrit language discussed previously. “I connect not so much with the words’ meaning but with the mantra’s vibration—the energy itself, and the way the energy feels inside me” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p. 252). This energetic awareness slowly leads to an even more powerful experience—the experience of non-separation. “From seeing the vibration as an experience that ‘I’ have, I began to appreciate that it was not different from me” (p.264).

This sense of non-separation represents an advanced stage of awareness in which the spiritual practitioner is able to understand him or herself as identical to all other forms of reality, thus transcending the standard dualistic perceptions of everyday life. As Maslow (1968) describes in his work on B-Values, many people experience a momentary state of oneness with all things. Few make a consciousness effort to regain that state after it has passed. Within this section that is geared toward the spiritual practitioner, we see descriptions and advice aimed

toward an audience who asserts effort toward attaining and maintaining a nondual state of awareness.

In another example discussing the role of vibration on the spiritual path, Swami Shantananda quotes Baba Muktananda writing,

If while meditating calmly you can regard the countless vibrations of the mind as the movements of *citi*, if you can keep your attention focused on *citi*, if you could remain full of that, then instead of your mind causing you misery and suffering, it would flood you with bliss and happiness. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.259)

This simply reminds us that vibration is at the center of all things, including the fluctuations of the mind that we try to eliminate as spiritual practitioners.

In the quote below, we will see that because vibration is a basic component of both nondualism and manifest reality, the vibrational nature of the universe can act not just as a common denominator, but also as key to understanding the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality.

That is, only if the yogi perceiving exterior objects is able, at the same time, to anchor his attention on his inner center, the Self. From that perspective, the energy moving outward is seen as identical to the energy vibrating within – even though the yogi may be experiencing an invasion of sounds, smells, and other sensations. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.325)

Through this statement, we see that vibration is a key element in understanding that manifest reality and the nondual reality of the Self are in fact identical. In order to understand that, we must experience manifest reality, (e.g., sounds, smells and sensations) as the vibrational energy moving outward, while the energy of the Self is the vibrational energy we experience as inward. The challenge for the yogi in this setting is to maintain enough of an inner focus to be aware of both vibrational levels simultaneously.

Following this, we can see that that through a process of purification, the yogi can unite the sensuous world with the inner world of his/her own Self, culminating in a blissful state of

awareness fueled by the vibrations that underlie all of reality. This blissful state produces a sense of non-separation from the world reminiscent again of Loy's nondifference of subject and object discussed earlier in this section.

Instead of producing a sense of separation, the purified senses of an enlightened yogi perceive the Great Light shining within all created objects. Each perception vibrates with the ecstasy of the Self, enjoying the world of its own creation. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.296)

Once a person has reached such a purified state, the vibrations of their being become so powerful that their very presence encourages the growth of fellow spiritual practitioners.

Speaking of such a powerful yogi, Swami Shantananda writes,

Bhagawan Nityananda was not a teacher in the most familiar sense of that word, and yet his immersion in the primordial pulsation of being was, from the accounts of people who spent time in his presence, absolute and total. The vibrations of pure Consciousness emanated so strongly from his holy being that his devotees would spend days traveling to his ashram in Ganeshpuri for the opportunity to stand just for a moment in his presence. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.363)

Such devotion to spiritual practice results in a complete union with both inner and outer vibrations, creating a resonance that carries far beyond the bounds of the yogi's physical being. This is the true power of vibration on the spiritual path.

As we reach the conclusion of our discussion on vibration and the spiritual path, Swami Shantananda reminds us, as spiritual practitioners who wish to return to the nature of the true Self, that "Thanks to the powerful grace of this self-reflective vibration at the heart of Consciousness, the efforts we make to return to the knowledge of our own Self do bear fruit" (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.369).

As we can see from the various citations above, *The Splendor of Recognition* clearly uses vibration to describe the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. Each of the multiple quotes and in-depth descriptions provided by Swami Shantananda sheds a bit more light

on this deep and complex relationship. By looking at vibration from a variety of perspectives, we have been able to see how this theme weaves itself through the very fabric of reality to help us move from one to many and back to one again.

Moving forward with the findings from this dissertation, we will see that Swami Shantananda describes the vibrations of Consciousness hand in hand with the human and divine experience of bliss.

Then, recalling the teaching contained in sutra 5 – that all our perceptions vibrate with the light of *sakti* – we can apply the other face of discrimination, affirmation: *All this is a creation of Consciousness. All this is the vibration of my own Self. The projections I'm seeing are full of bliss.* (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.174)

The vibrations, which are Consciousness itself, form the primary experience of the universe–bliss. This leads us directly into the next section of this dissertation, which focuses on the description of the category of bliss.

Bliss

Throughout *The Splendor of Recognition*, Swami Shantananda (2003) regularly reiterates the importance of bliss, which he refers to as ‘bliss Consciousness’. Before we continue further with this section, it is important to clarify what we mean by bliss. When we speak of bliss, we are referring to what Swami Shantananda calls ‘bliss Consciousness’ or a higher level of cognition achieved by a yogi or spiritual practitioner. In the following quote, Swami Shantananda clearly distinguishes between the passing state of consciousness that we normally associate with bliss and the permanent resting state of Consciousness that is true bliss.

This bliss of Consciousness is not to be confused with the passing joy and satisfaction we can derive from moments of pleasure or peace in our lives. It’s not ‘blissfulness’ that we’re speaking of here, but *cidananda*, a state that is beyond what is pleasurable, enjoyable, delightful, wonderful, or any other qualifying term we might think of. It’s the state in which a yogi rests permanently in what is. (p.292)

While many of us may not experience ecstatic states of consciousness on a regular basis, Abraham Maslow's (1968) work on B-Values indicates that many, if not most, people experience a transcendent, ecstatic state of consciousness at some point in their lives. While this may not prove the hypothesis that we are on earth to experience the blissful nature of our own being, it does appear to support that possibility.

According to Swami Shantananda (2003), the importance of experiencing our blissful nature cannot be overestimated because when we experience true bliss, we also experience ourselves in union with the divine. This, in turn, frees us from our dualistic perception of reality. "When we experience ourselves as the Great Lord, we are aware of our blissful nature and feel free from the restrictive effect of our vikalpas" (p.122-123). This experience of true bliss is at the heart of the paradoxical relationship between nondualism and manifest reality, for we must first experience our own eternal bliss as divinity itself before we can transcend our sense of separation as projected by our perceptions of multiplicity (i.e., our vikalpas).

While Swami Shantananda may not directly state that we equal bliss, he certainly expresses the importance of seizing every opportunity to experience the bliss that is our true nature. "The sages of Kashmir Saivism encourage us to approach every moment as an opportunity to experience the bliss of Consciousness" (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.49).

Why we live. One of the key elements in this category centers on bliss as both the essence of and the reason for human existence. According to *The Splendor of Recognition*, we exist to experience bliss. In the following quote, Swami Shantananda quotes Baba Muktananda as he describes this *raison de etre*.

'THIS IS WHY WE LIVE,' Baba Muktananda says, 'to experience supreme bliss, the highest enthusiasm, the highest ecstasy. A human life is mysterious and significant; it is

sublime and ideal. In this human body, in this human life, we can see the Creator within, we can meet him and talk to him, and we can also become him.’ (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.292)

Here, we can clearly see the primacy placed on ecstatic experience. However, we can also see the connection between experiencing ecstasy and becoming one with the Creator. It is this connection that helps to guide us closer to understanding the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality in *The Splendor of Recognition*. “*I could see this radiance of Consciousness, resplendent and utterly beautiful, silently pulsating as supreme ecstasy within me, outside me, above me, below me – in short, everywhere*” (p.60).

Bliss, Shiva, and Shakti. The following quote directly addresses this complex relationship between nondualism and manifest reality by likening it to the relationship between members of a newly wedded couple who are still discovering details about one another in the infancy of their marriage. In this passage, Swami Shantananda quotes Kshemaraja as he describes the indivisible bliss experienced by Shiva. Note that in this instance, Sambhu is an epithet for Shiva.

‘Sambhu triumphs [over all] by the glory of [his] incomparable and undivided bliss. He, like a newly wedded husband, constantly gazes at his beloved power who, although inwardly undivided, dances in many ways outside [her] own nature, [her] diverse forms and seemingly new aspects conceived in the varied light of *vikalpa*. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.117)

Here we see Shiva (Sambhu) and his beloved, Shakti or Citi, exemplifying different aspects of the universe. Shiva is obviously nondual or “undivided”, while Shakti represents manifest reality as she portrays the diverse aspects of the universe. Again, we see the paradoxical nature of the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality, for Shakti is internally undivided, but still manages to dance in her “diverse forms”. From the quote above, we get the sense that Shiva’s undivided bliss is due, at least in part, to watching his beloved in all of her myriad forms. It is

clear that bliss plays a central role in the amorous relationship between nondualism and manifest reality.

Following on from this, we see that the blissful aspects of the relationship between Shiva and Shakti do not reside with Shiva alone. Shakti represents the manifest power of bliss in the world. In other words, it is Shakti's drive to experience her own bliss that causes her to create the manifest world.

This is why, in the texts of Saivism, Siva is represented through his *citsakti*, the power to illumine, to give existence and form, to bestow an appearance to things – in short, *prakasa*. Sakti is represented in her aspect as *anandasakti*, the power of bliss, for she not only experiences the immense satisfaction of being perfect, full, and ecstatic, but that very bliss has driven her to take the form of all created things. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.117)

It is through the blissful desire of Shakti that we, as aspects of manifest reality, are able to experience bliss. However, even at the moment that we, as Shakti made manifest, return to our true nature and experience bliss Consciousness, we are residing in the nondual nature of Shiva. “Ultimately, our awareness is permanently established in the ecstasy of Siva where thoughts can have their play without affecting our supreme freedom and splendor” (p.265). Here, Shiva and Shakti act as two sides of the same coin, one side representing the tangible nature of our manifest selves and the other representing the nondual reality in which our true Consciousness rests. We live our daily lives as Shakti, but through spiritual practice, we return to our true nature as Shiva.

Bliss and other positive aspects of human nature. As I progressed through the units of data, it quickly became clear to me that the experience of true bliss in *The Splendor of Recognition* was intimately connected with a variety of other positive human experiences and emotions. The primary experiences and emotions that Swami Shantananda associates with bliss are play, love, freedom and spontaneity. Within *The Splendor or Recognition*, these words are consistently used within a cosmic context. Play is associated with the cosmic play of Citi as she

dances through her manifest forms. Love is used to mean the cosmic love associated with an ability to love existence itself. Freedom refers to the complete freedom that comes from spiritual liberation, and spontaneity is associated with the unexpected positive sensations that arise when we are able to truly appreciate each moment.

In reference to Citi's decision to make herself manifest, Swami Shantananda (2003) asks "Why does she do it?" (p.181). He responds, saying that "it's to become a *samsari*, an individual who operates in the material world. It is her play, as Gurumayi's name (Chidvilasananda) implies: the bliss of the play of Consciousness" (p.181). It is this sense of cosmic play that reminds us why Citi was so willing to bring us into the world. Through the joy we experience in the form of play, Citi experiences the cosmic nature of play itself. "Thus, the phrase *visva-siddhi* of the sutra now signifies *bhoga*, the enjoyment of the universe in its true nature, which we now see as the blissful play of Citi" (p.47). By tuning into this sense of cosmic play, we are reminded of the desire to know ourselves as playful beings. This is the same desire that sparked the creation of the manifest world. The desire that calls us back to a sense of oneness with the entire universe.

The following quote regarding cosmic love reminds us of Ken Wilber's (1995/2000) nondual heart discussed in the introduction to this dissertation. This nondual heart found goodness by inviting the Many to return to and embrace the One. In a similar vein, Swami Shantananda describes how the heart calls all of existence into itself through love. "When we align our attention with these spontaneous movements of Citishakti, she leads us into *cidananda*, the conscious bliss that assimilates creation, the love that brings everything in existence into the heart" (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.286). This "conscious bliss", which is so intimately connected to cosmic love, shows us the path to reuniting the Many with One, much

like David Loy's (1988) characteristic of nondifference between subject and object. Here, as in Advaita Vedanta, the object is conflated into the subject allowing "everything in existence" (the Many) to return to "the heart" (the One).

Moving onto the connection between the experiences of bliss and freedom, we find that the correlation between these two experiences can be seen quite clearly in the following quote in which Swami Shantananda describes his own personal experience of bliss Consciousness. It is important to note that, later in this chapter, we will discuss the contradiction of freedom vs limitation in *The Splendor of Recognition* as one of the dominant examples of the paradoxical nature of the universe.

Below Swami Shantananda describes the true bliss that is found in both freedom from desire and freedom from the constraints of our contracted perceptions.

'Nothing can manifest unless it enters the light of the highest Reality. And the highest Lord is full of the flow of bliss, because he is free from all desire, he is fully perfect, because he is the essence of absolute freedom, and because he has attained to the state of full universal ecstasy'. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.367)

In a more concrete expression, the following quote allows us some insight into the personal experience of this sense of freedom. It is through this combination of abstract concepts and first hand experiences that Swami Shantananda provides a well rounded description of the complementary relationship between bliss and freedom.

I experienced myself as one mass of radiant, blissful Consciousness, and the sensation was utterly delicious. In that moment, blissful within my own being like the Goddess Citi, I also experienced a sense of total freedom. I was *svatantra* in the midst of my own universe. (p.34)

Here, we see that bliss is strongly equated with a "sense of total freedom". It is also associated with feeling the Goddess Citi herself. Below, we again see a connection between freedom bliss

Consciousness as Swami Shantananda paraphrases Kshemaraja describing the highest sense of spiritual achievement.

In sutra 16, Kshemaraja speaks of this ultimate spiritual freedom, the astounding state of a liberated yogi, a Siddha. Both Baba and Kshemaraja indicated that the most prominent characteristic of the highest attainment is the unalterable experience of *cidananda*, the bliss of Consciousness. (p.292)

Again, we see the intimate relationship between spiritual freedom and the bliss of pure Consciousness. By attaining a state of true freedom, the liberated yogi has also settled into the experience of bliss Consciousness.

In the following quote, we see that even once a person has attained a state of complete freedom rooted in the bliss of true Consciousness, one is still aware of his/her manifest nature. This represents the true union of nondualism and manifest reality in the state of unencumbered consciousness, which Swami Shantananda describes as liberation.

Sutra 16 says that when the bliss of supreme Consciousness is attained (*cidananda-labhe*), even while one perceives (*cetyamanesv api*) one's body and so on (*dehadhisu*), one is identified with Consciousness (*cidaikatmya*) as a firm experience (*pratipatti – dardhyam*) – which is the state of liberation while alive (*jivanmuktih*). (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.292).

Finally, we see that, according to Swami Shantananda, one of the key messages of the PH centers around the freedom for each person to create his/her own reality that leads to a truly blissful life. “For me this is the most significant message of this sutra: like unencumbered Consciousness, we as individuals possess the freedom to establish a universe in which we can live blissfully “(p.43). This sense of freedom, which manages to exist even in the contracted state of manifestation, forms one of the primary characteristics of the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. We will discuss this in greater detail in the section on paradox.

Finally, we take a brief look at the role of spontaneity in the experience of true bliss. Throughout *The Splendor of Recognition*, Swami Shantananda regularly refers to the

spontaneous nature of Citi. In the quote below, he clearly equates spontaneous delight with the true joy or bliss that comes deep within the hearts of the spiritually adept. “Bubbling with spontaneous delight in the hearts of these yogis, Sambhu makes their practices full of astonishing joy” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.265). In this case, because the joy is related to “spontaneous delight”, we are able to see a direct relationship between bliss and spontaneity. It is through Citi’s ability to be spontaneous that we have the complete freedom addressed in the previous paragraph. As the categories resulting from the research in this study weave together to form an intricate web of overlapping experiences, expressions, and ways of manifestation, so too do the positive emotions and experiences associated with the bliss of Consciousness.

The attainment of bliss through spiritual practice. As with the category of vibration, we will quickly see that there is a strong relationship between the experience of true bliss and a dedicated spiritual practice. It is through spiritual practice that we find we are able to return to our true nondual nature. In the previous subsections, we have seen how bliss relates to the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality, and we have also seen how bliss is connected with variety of other positive emotions. In this subsection, we will see how bliss, within the context of our spiritual practice, can act as a guide leading us back into the nondual resting place of Shiva.

First, let us look at the spiritual and psychological processes that facilitate the movement toward true bliss Consciousness. The following series of quotes describes some of the basic principles at play when a yogi becomes absorbed enough to transcend his external perceptions. This transcendence allows him to merge with Shiva and experience true bliss Consciousness. As we will briefly see, there is a complex science within the Shaivist tradition that guides the spiritual practitioner on this intense journey.

“Of course, the very presence of that silence is testimony that the flow of *prana* and *apana* has ceased. Then, with a quiet mind, one can experience *Madhya-vikasa*, the bliss center” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.331). “In the space of Consciousness, these powers of Sakti merge into bliss. In this process, the flow of *prana* and *apana* in the *ida* and *pingala-nadis* stops as it comes in perfect balance in the central conduit, the *susumna-nadi*” (p.330). “I’d like to point out to you that when you’re perfectly absorbed in your identity as Siva—in the state of the highest experience, the *siva-pramata*—you will naturally know his powers of awareness, bliss, will, knowledge, and action” (p. 158). Through these statements, we see that there is a series of processes that naturally seem to occur on the path toward bliss Consciousness.

Adding to this, Swami Shantananda quotes Abhinavagupta as he describes varying states of consciousness that lead successively to the highest state of bliss Consciousness.

Abhinavagupta speaks of seven distinct states of ecstasy, culminating at the top of the *sahasrara* in *jagadananda*, ‘the bliss universe’, which he describes in this way: ‘That in which there is no division or limitation, for it flashes forth all around, in which Consciousness is intact [that is, in which it is Consciousness alone that expresses itself, whether as knower or means of knowledge or as known], that which increases and expands by the nectar of divine joy of absolute sovereignty [and] in which there is no need for imagination or meditation – Shambhu told me *that was jagananda*. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.317).

Similarly, Swami Shantananda quotes his Guru, Gurumayi Chidvilasananda, discussing the state of *Samadhi*, which is the highest state of consciousness within the eight limbs of yoga.

Samadhi is the state in which your intellect, your mind, your subconscious mind, your heart, and the ego have all come to terms with themselves. They all know what they are doing. It isn’t that the heart wants one thing, the mind wants something else, and the intellect wants to do yet another thing. All these instruments, all these elements, are in agreement so there is supreme joy, the ecstatic experience; there is harmony. (p.341)

Here, again, we see that there are a variety of stages involved in attaining bliss Consciousness, but once it is attained, one enters an ever joyful, nondual state of awareness.

Looking at the experience of bliss Consciousness through the eyes of an ordinary spiritual practitioner rather than those of a purified yogi, Swami Shantananda describes the ecstatic state of consciousness experienced by a woman as she was able to transcend her ordinary state of consciousness and discover a blissful sensation of non-separation.

With this expansion came a sense of ownership: she felt that she encompassed the entire hall as well as every one of the several score of people who were sitting in meditation there at that time. There was no feeling of 'I' and 'other'; she experienced one indistinguishable mass of conscious bliss. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.285)

This, again, helps us understand the role bliss plays in the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality.

On a more personal note, Swami Shantananda shares his own experience of bliss arising from a meditative experience. This experience does not directly address a nondual state of consciousness, but it does suggest that once a certain level of spiritual attainment is reached, the spiritual practitioner experiences a merging of inner and outer as the sense of inner joy moves outward through the physical body.

I sat down at the back to meditate on the exquisite sensation of inner joy that I was experiencing. With no forewarning, this joy seemed to explode right out of my body, streaming from me in all directions. Then, wondrously, the objects I perceived through my five senses became imbued with vibrant luminosity.

There was an effervescence of sparkling bliss arising from my body, and when I looked at Baba, I could see the same bliss pouring from him. Infinitesimal bubbles of ecstasy seemed to percolate from the floor of the courtyard, from the walls, from each person and tree and bird that I could see. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.34)

Having looked at the nature of bliss as described in *The Splendor or Recognition* from multiple perspectives, we can clearly see how bliss can act as both a guide and a goal on the spiritual path to nondual awareness. Through the intimate relationship of Shiva and Shakti, we saw how the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality dances between the bliss of

Shiva in his singular, eternal silence, and the bliss of Shakti in all of her myriad forms. As we become more able to allow our consciousness to rest in the eternal nature of Shiva, while continuing to recognize our own material existence, we are able to simultaneously experience the bliss of both Shiva and Shakti.

Paradox

As we have alluded to numerous times already in this chapter, paradox plays a key role in Swami Shantananda's commentary on the PH. Without understanding the paradoxical nature of the universe, it is impossible to comprehend the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality in *The Splendor of Recognition*. While it is evident that paradox as a whole is an important element of Swami Shantananda's description of the universe, this theme weaves its way through *The Splendor of Recognition* in three very particular ways.

First, the universe is repeatedly described as both completely free and limited. One way of looking at this is to say that the singular universe is completely free, while manifest reality is limited. This juxtaposition can create a general sense of dis-ease for many spiritual practitioners as they attempt to understand themselves as both free from the consequences of their limited physical bodies and from the karmic nature of the universe while still abiding within these apparent limitations. This paradox is addressed in *The Splendor of Recognition* by looking at the simultaneously expansive and contracted nature of the universe. We can see this clearly in an example discussed at the beginning of this dissertation in which Citi reflects herself back onto herself. In this process, the ever expansive nature of Citi contracts while remaining ever expansive.

Second, we see that the universe is simultaneously being both created and dissolved in each moment. Through the processes of creation and dissolution, the universe is continually appearing and disappearing. Finally, we see the issue at the heart of this study. The universe is

simultaneously singular and multiple. It is through the process of reflection mentioned above that Citi not only contracts while remaining ever expansive, but also becomes multiple while remaining singular.

Freedom and limitation. Swami Shantananda's (2003) description of the paradoxical relationship between freedom and limitation clarifies many of the issues that face Westerners, and particularly Western spiritual practitioners, in post-modern society. As we will quickly see, Swami Shantananda ties many of the psychological issues that people in Western societies face to our limited perception and to our inability to see ourselves in the light of Citi's perfection.

The understanding of our limited perception begins with Citi's willingness to descend into a limited form. "Thus, citir eva, 'herself,' of her own free will, descends from the state of pure luminosity and becomes contracted, samkocini, according to the objects she perceives, cetya" (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.115). Quoting Kshemaraja, Swami Shantananda describes this movement into a limited state of being as a choice to assume a dual nature.

When the highest Lord, whose very essence is Consciousness, conceals by his free will [the] pervasion of nonduality and assumes duality all round, then his will and other powers, though essentially unlimited, assume limitation. Then only does this [soul] become a transmigratory being, covered with *mala*. (p.181)

Put another way, Swami Shantananda writes:

When the Lord puts on his limited powers, he begins to perceive differences, both between himself and the world around him and also between various objects in the world. This contracted perception is known as *mayiya-mala* (the impurity of illusion), the second of the innate impurities. It is with this perception of differences that the conscious particle that is the *cidanu* becomes a limited individual covered by the forces that will give him a body. Now the Lord becomes a limited being, known as *purusa-tattva*, the principle of the individual. (p.99)

This results in a dualistic approach to reality in which perception becomes individual.

This individuality is no longer able to perceive the universe in its singularity. It is only capable seeing pieces rather than the whole. "Enshrouded in the limiting conditions of a body

and a mind, the supreme Self no longer perceives the total unity of free Consciousness, but perceives only separate measurable units” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.45). It is important to note that it through this limited capacity that the universe becomes capable of action as we know it. However, it is action in its incomplete form.

The term *karma* means, simply, ‘action,’ but it is no longer the free, spontaneous action of divine power; it is now the capacity to do, to perform deeds and have thoughts under the sense of possession that is the province of the ego. (p.186)

Once perception has become dualistic, it is no longer holds the singular, complete power of Shiva. “One outcome of having a dualist viewpoint is a sense of being limited in our capacities. This is the incomplete power of action that is experienced by the individual” (p.262).

As Swami Shantananda (2003) clearly points out in the quotes from the previous paragraph, the limited perception associated with the individual results in what psychology calls the ego. Swami Shantananda attempts to elucidate the relationship between the ego and unitary Conscious by contrasting identification with the ego and identification with the Self as Consciousness, He writes, “The limited ‘I,’ the *ahamkara*, or ego, is the same sense of identification, except that it’s limited by desires; feelings; notions of personality and character, of social position, and physical appearance – which, of course, are nothing more than ideas” (p.145).

Once the ego has come into being, a whole host of other issues arise including the ability to compare ourselves to others who appear to be separate from us. Swami Shantananda directly attributes the issues that arise from this comparison, such as low self-esteem, dissatisfaction, and other negative sensations, to the sense of separation that stems from the limitation of individual consciousness.

The writer Mark Twain once said ‘Deep down in his heart, no man much respects himself.’ This lack of self-esteem is a clear sign of the presence of *anava-mala*, the initial, root

constraint by which the utter freedom of the divine will (*iccha-sakti*) contracts and becomes our experience of being imperfect, incomplete, unsatisfied, and incapable. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.182)

On the bright side, within the sub-category of freedom vs limitation, we see that Swami Shantananda (2003) believes that it is possible to unify the freedom of Consciousness with the limitations of manifest reality. “Utpaladeva says that both spiritual freedom and worldly pleasure, both *moksa* and *bhoga*, are available to the soul graced by Sankara” (p.209). He even provides guidance on the path to transcend our limited, negative sensations in order to re-unify our limited perception with the perception of pure Consciousness resulting in the bliss Consciousness described in the last section. This is the essence of liberation. The process or re-unification begins by freeing ourselves from attachments.

One of my very favorite descriptions of liberation is from Gurumayi, who describes this sublime state as true freedom from attachment: ‘As you free yourself from everything and everyone, every place and every time, every moment and every year, every planet and every star, you feel this incredible rush of ecstasy. In fact, you enter into another realm, an expanded realm, a realm of light, a realm of understanding. It is inside. Even though we feel it is an out-of-body-experience, it is within this body. When you have this experience, you become aware of how this body is not a barrier, an obstacle. (p.294)

Here we see not only the body positive approach to spirituality mentioned by Feuerstein (1998) earlier in this dissertation, but also the interwoven nature of the categories resulting from this study. While Gurumayi’s quote above clearly addresses the theme of freedom vs limitation by describing a sense of absolute freedom in which the individual remains in the limited body, it also alludes to the categories of bliss and luminosity, which are closely tied to the awareness of complete freedom.

In the following quotes, Swami Shantananda (2003) provides the spiritual practitioner with several other approaches to transcending the paradox of freedom vs limitation.

You may think that *I am Siva* is a pretentious stance to assume, but I assure you that it is not. You’re not *pretending* to be Siva; you *are* Siva. Whether or not you’re in the state of Siva at

any particular moment, you are still Siva, and the pretense, if you want to call it that is that you're an individual. I have come to feel that this is true pretentiousness: for me to see myself as a limited individual when I've studied for years, experienced at times, and know very well that, ultimately, *I am Siva*. (p.206)

Here, Swami Shantananda describes this process of transcendence as a dilemma of identification. Once the spiritual practitioner begins to identify with the Self that is Consciousness rather than with the individual self experienced through limited perception, the paradox disappears. In other words, like Gurumayi's quote about freedom from attachment, this level of awareness relies upon a person understanding that s/he can be completely free within the apparent limitations of his/her physical body. "Only the liberated ones we call Siddhas, whose sense of separation has totally dissolved – which is the very meaning of the term 'liberated' – are free from the effects of *anava-mala*" (p.185). In this freedom, the yogi is at complete peace with the paradoxical nature of the universe.

Creation and Dissolution. The category of creation and dissolution tells us that the universe is constantly being created and dissolved each second. This causes the universe to appear and disappear before our very eyes. Through this process, we come to see how the paradoxical nature of the universe plays out within the context of manifest reality, presenting us with both constant uncertainty and possibility.

Describing the creative and destructive aspects of the universe that result in constant regeneration, Swami Shantananda (2003) writes

Here what we experience is that the universe is created anew in every instant. Right now, as you read these words, new worlds are flashing into being and again dissolving into nothingness. Siva and Sakti do not stop the process of conception at any moment. If they did, everything would instantaneously disappear into the Great Void. (p.95-96)

This process of creation and dissolution is underpinned by the inherently creative nature of the universe that we will discuss in greater detail later in this chapter. Next, we will see that it is the

very nature of our perception that fosters this paradoxical process of simultaneous creativity and destruction.

It is said that when Siva opens his eyes, the universe comes into being (*srsti*); the same happens with us when we activate our sense of sight, hearing, touch, smell, or taste. Our experience of the appetizing smells of cooking food, or the feel of dewy grass on the bottoms of our feet, or the voice of someone dear to us – these, and so many other of the sensations that fill our days, are *abhasas*, reproductions of the divine power creating our universe. (p.222)

It is through these abhasas that we perceive the manifest nature of reality. However, as Swami Shantananda describes above, these abhasas are merely reproductions of the ultimate unitary reality that has been projected onto itself. By experiencing ourselves as sensing beings, we both create and destroy the universe in each moment. In other words, each time that we open our eyes to see something, we are part of process that creates something in that specific moment. When we close our eyes, that object (or at least that object as we have perceived it) disappears. This is the true process of the creation and dissolution of the universe in each moment.

Another example of this personal relationship with the creative and destructive process can be seen in the following quote.

When I speak to someone for just a few moments, that person is created and destroyed millions of times right before my eyes. The *abhasas* that compose his body, his voice, his feelings, his gestures are appearing and disappearing, vibrating beyond the reach of my senses. Each pulsation of *spanda* creates, maintains, and destroys everything. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.82)

Here, again we see not only the intimate personal connection with the constant destruction of the universe, but also the nondual nature of *spanda*, or vibration, which contains all of processes that occur within the universe.

As in the reflexive processes that we discussed in the literature review of this dissertation, in the following quote, we see that the personal process that Swami Shantananda (2003) describes above is mirrored at the nondual level of reality. “We have mentioned this before, in

sutras 1 and 2, where these movements of *spanda* are represented as Siva creating the universe when he opens his eyes (*unmesa*) and dissolving it when he closes them (*unmesa*)” (p.347).

Through this mirroring of the individual and the nondual, we again see that nondualism and manifest reality simply act as reflections of one another.

Referring back to the creation, maintenance, and dissolution of the universe, we see that according to Swami Shantananda (2003), there are only three main processes that make up the entirety of the universe. “These are the three main processes that occur in the universe: coming into being (*srsti*), continuing existence (*sthiti*), and dissolving or retreating into repose (*samhara*)” (p.37). Throughout this chapter, we will continually see references to these three processes along with the occasional reminder of the nondual nature of these apparently separate aspects of existence. As we can see, creation and dissolution make up two of these three main elements.

Looking at these three elements or processes from a slightly different perspective, Swami Shantananda (2003) quotes Abhinavagupta as he describes the nondual nature of the awareness that results from prolonged spiritual practice.

I make the universe manifest within myself in the Sky of Consciousness. I, who am the universe, am its creator! – this awareness is the way in which one becomes Bhairava. All of manifest creation is reflected within me, I cause it to persist – this awareness is the way in which one becomes the universe. The universe dissolves within me, I who am the flame of the [one] great and eternal fire of Consciousness – seeing thus one achieves peace. (p.286-287)

Here we can clearly see the connection between the individual or manifest reality and the nondual. As the ‘universe dissolves within me’, the object becomes conflated into the subject and we experience nondual reality.

Through the following quote, we are reminded of the discussion in the introduction of this study in which we defined *pratyabhijna*. In that discussion, we saw that *pratyabhijna*

translates as ‘the heart of recognition’. By breaking the word down into smaller components, we saw that this also means knowledge that has been forgotten through delusion is close at hand (Singh, 1963). It is through remembrance of this knowledge that we return to our true Selves and understand the nondual nature of reality. “*Pasyanti-vac* is the cosmic memory in which all forms are reabsorbed and retained during the dissolution of the universe, and from whence these ‘remembered’ expressions emanate as the universe is re-created” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.240). Here, we see that it is the process of remembrance that allows the universe to be recreated after it has been dissolved. Again, we see the cyclic and constant regeneration of the universe through the processes of creation and dissolution.

This paradox of creation and destruction can also be seen through the eyes the spiritual practitioner as an aid on the spiritual path. “Peacefully and with the utmost care, you can observe the emergence, maintenance, and the dissolution of your thoughts, memories, and emotions: vibrant waves of *sakti* that emerge and submerge, arise and disappear ceaselessly” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.206).

This connection between individual thoughts and the nature of the universe furthers our discussion on the relationship between creation and dissolution for the spiritual practitioner. As with many of the categories/subcategories that resulted from this study, creation and dissolution has a particular meaning for the spiritual practitioner, and can provide guidance on the path toward nondual awareness. For example, in the quote above, the practitioner can use his/her awareness of the creation and dissolution of thoughts as means of submerging him/herself into a more meditative state in which thoughts eventually cease to exist. According to Swami Shantananda (2003), this ability to allow thoughts, memories, and emotions to pass by unencumbered marks a progressive stage on the spiritual journey.

When looking at creation and dissolution from the perspective of the spiritual practitioner, we can see that there are a variety of ways in which these processes can be used as vehicles to enhance a spiritual practice. In the following statement, Swami Shantananda (2003) describes grace as a process that helps an individual dissolve his/her sense of separation from universe, moving beyond his/her dualistic perception of reality.

Concealment is the reason that grace exists; Grace is the solution to concealment. By means of grace, the Lord ends the concealment he has imposed on himself. He comes to the recognition that his own Consciousness penetrates the cycles of the universe. In other words, grace resolves—or dissolves—the illusion of duality inherent in the individual's universe. (p.207)

According to Swami Shantananda, grace is a gift bestowed by God. However, the effect of grace is determined by the spiritual practitioner. It is up to us to recognize the moments in which God bestows grace upon us and to make use of this grace to further our personal and spiritual development. Once we have been given the gift of dissolution that grace brings, we must learn how to incorporate that into our growth process in order to gain the full effect. Within this framework, we are free to choose how we use the gift of grace.

In the quote above, we again see the process of dissolution playing a key role in the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality as the individual moves beyond the bounds of dualism while retaining his embodied, dual form. Discussing this same idea in a slightly different format, Swami Shantananda writes

Then the yogi's senses, having been purified by the fire of Citi, experience that his existence is full of light and love. Thus by his own power, he manifests unity and causes the disappearance of that which once had made him believe there was a difference. (p.284)

Again, it through dissolution or disappearance that the spiritual practitioner arrives at a state of nondual awareness. Through the apparent contradiction of creation and dissolution, the universe continually creates, maintains, and destroys itself over and over again. However, by using this

paradox as a guide, the spiritual practitioner is able to transcend the apparent dualism of the universe, returning to a singular state of awareness while still maintaining his/her physical form.

Singularity and multiplicity. As we continue to discuss the paradoxical nature of the universe, it is important to address the sub-category that was central to this study. As anticipated, the data clearly indicates that, according to Swami Shantananda, the universe is simultaneously singular and multiple. This concept has been alluded to numerous times already in this Findings and Discussion Chapter. However, this section will be devoted to describing the data that specifically supports this assertion.

While describing *The Story of Queen Lila*, Swami Shantananda (2003) provides a wonderful overview of the relationship between manifest reality and nondualism in a way that reflects Loy's characteristic of the nondifferentiation of subject and object. Again, as we have consistently seen with the Shaivist tradition, the object is conflated into the subject because the Self contains all.

‘Birth that arises from a wish’, Sarasvati told Queen Lila, ‘is no more than the wish itself. It’s like a wave in a mirage! Your palace, you, the king, and I are all pure Consciousness – all exist within the Self. In every atom, there are worlds within worlds. You and your husband have been through many incarnations. Though from the divine standpoint the whole universe is experienced right here, from the physical point of view, millions of miles separate the planes.’ (p.194-195)

Here, we see the divine contrasted with the physical, or in other words, nondualism contrasted with manifest reality. Yet, in the end, ‘all exist within the Self’. On one hand, the physical and divine are separate, while on the other hand, they are not. This is the paradox of singularity and multiplicity.

Throughout *The Splendor of Recognition*, Swami Shantananda (2003) refers to the principles of creation, which he calls the *tattvas*. Within the Shaivist tradition, the *tattvas* are used as a means to explain the process of manifest creation. In essence, they trace the energy of

Shakti as she takes manifest form, explaining her state at each stage of creation. As we saw in the previous two sections on freedom and limitation and creation and dissolution, the universe is constantly expanding and contracting and it is constantly being created and dissolved. The process of contraction leads a singular essence to become multiple forms, while the process of creation actually makes the multiple forms manifest. “Just as the Self is the one energy that assumes all these forms, so the *tattvas*—which are energies that condense according to their particular vibrations—are all, intrinsically, the same energy” (p.82). Here, we see that the *tattvas*, while contributing to the process of making the world multiple, are actually manifestations of a singular energy.

Building on this explanation above, Swami Shantananda (2003) references the *tattvas*, describing the seemingly contradictory process by which the universe becomes multiple while still remaining singular.

What the list of *tattvas* provides is an ontological map, a map of the various states being assumed by Consciousness as it congeals itself into the universe – and, in reverse, the process by which it then returns to the state of Supreme Siva. (p.93)

In the following statement, we see how the Consciousness returns to its original, supreme state. “—then our own mind turns toward itself in contemplation and ascends to its natural state. The mind (*citta*) changes the direction of its gaze and becomes supreme Consciousness (*citi*) once again” (p.258). It is important to note that throughout this process, the universe never leaves its state of constant singularity. The process of contracting into multiple forms and the process of returning to the ‘Supreme state of Shiva’ are both contained within that very supreme state.

Referencing a personal conversation on this topic, Swami Shantananda (2003) writes

I turned to my companion and said, ‘Isn’t it amazing to think that these are all the *abhasas* of Lord Shiva!’ She said, ‘You’re joking.’ I said, ‘No. There is nothing in this universe but God. It’s all God. Only our understanding makes us see it otherwise.’ (p.74)

Here, we see that it is our personal perceptions that co-create the material world as we know it.

Below, Swami Shantananda looks at the nature of those perceptions in an effort to help us understand how the universe can simultaneously be both singular and multiple.

Everything that's projected onto the intellect has a double character. On one hand, our perceptions are external to the Self because they're projections, on the other hand, they're perceived by the Self, so they're at least partially assimilated by Consciousness. In other worlds, we know they're separate, we also know we're one with them. (p.264)

In the introduction to this dissertation, we discussed projections as part of the projection, action, reflection, reaction process. Within this process, we saw that everything that is part of our conscious awareness is, in fact, a projection. Referencing the quote above, we see then see that everything in our conscious awareness has a double character. This double character is what allows us to understand how we can be separate from Consciousness and yet simultaneously identical to it.

Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the identification of the Self with the divine. When writing about the paradoxical concept of singularity and multiplicity, it is difficult to discuss the relationship between these two concepts without addressing this identification because we, as individuals, are examples of multiplicity while the divine is an example of singularity.

Throughout *The Splendor of Recognition*, Swami Shantananda (2003) discusses this sense of identification to help the reader better understand the paradox of multiplicity and singularity.

In the third sutra, we explored the mutual reciprocity between our world and ourselves. In the fourth sutra, we find that this astonishing connection involves absolutely everything in the universe, and that rather than simply being mutually dependent, as the term 'reciprocity' implies, the universe and we are one and the same. (p.90)

Similarly, he writes

When you think of Consciousness, when you even consider the notion that the world and all your thoughts about it are Consciousness, then that is how you see the world. And, the sutra tells us, the mind itself is that Consciousness. (p.115)

We continue to see the importance of this sense of identification as Swami Shantananda (2003) describes an exercise that can help the spiritual practitioner further his or her sense of personal identification with Shiva. He suggests repeating the following set of phrases to oneself “Siva, the sky of Consciousness; Siva, the God dwelling in the heart; Siva, the perfect plenitude – you are my very own Self!” (p.278). Through this process, the spiritual practitioner begins to better understand his/her true nature as divine. In addition to reciting the mantra above, Swami Shantananda also suggests meditation as a route to personal identification with the divine.

We have seen such suggestions referenced earlier in this chapter when Swami Shantananda talked about how the purification process of the yogis is aided by deep meditation. “This means of meditation—and I can personally attest to its power—is the natural application of all that we’re studying in these very sutras: the supposition that Consciousness is all that exists” (p.113). While this dissertation, and *The Splendor or Recognition*, may be highly theoretically based, Swami Shantananda is careful to remind us of the importance of the practical applications of these theories. It is through the practice of identifying oneself with the divine that the spiritual practitioner begins to understand how the universe can be simultaneously both singular and multiple.

As we have been able to see through the three subcategories of freedom and limitation, creativity and dissolution, and multiplicity and singularity, according to *The Splendor of Recognition*, the universe is inherently paradoxical. Because the primary intent of this study was to explore the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality, it is critical that we understand this paradoxical nature of reality. According to Swami Shantananda (2003), it is through spiritual practice that a person transcends the dualistic perceptions of the universe and becomes able to hold these paradoxical concepts side by side. For the purposes of this

dissertation, we have seen that by conflating the object into the subject, (i.e., acknowledging that all things are identical to Shiva), the spiritual practitioner can return to a supreme state of awareness in which reality is simultaneously singular and multiple.

Creativity

In the category of creativity, we see that the universe is inherently creative. As part of that universe, we as human beings are also inherently creativity. As we saw in the last section, *The Splendor of Recognition* emphasizes a personal identification with the divine. Therefore, like Citi, who creates the manifest universe through her own projection and reflection, we also create reality through our projections and reflections. In addition, we will see that acts of creation often involve the spoken word or syllable. As we saw in the category of vibration, the Sanskrit language is viewed as an integral aspect of the creative process.

As we begin looking into the creative nature of the universe, we see that every act of creation depends upon perception.

The act of creation is simultaneously an act of perception. When I perceive something, I am creating it for myself. The creation exists as long as I retain it in my perception, and when I dissolve what I perceive, for me it ceases to exist. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.38)

Much like we saw in the paradoxical subcategory of creation and dissolution, we see that we, as human beings, have the power to both create and destroy our reality in each moment. Whether it is by conscious choice or not, we are constantly creating and dissolving. When all is said and done, the paradox of creation and dissolution boils down into a single creative act, the initial creation of the universe. However, within the imminent world, there must be two sides to each coin. Therefore, in order to create, we must also appear to destroy or dissolve. Upon becoming aware of our true Self, we come to see that within the acts of creation and dissolution, there is in fact, only creation.

The universe is inherently creative. According to *The Splendor of Recognition*, it is the very nature of the universe to create. Earlier in this chapter, we saw that the universe is also naturally paradoxical. One of the primary paradoxes discussed in this text is the constant creation and dissolution of the universe. The category of creativity delves even further by describing the nature of reality as inherently creative.

We might well ask why Citi bothers to take form. It is a question that has arisen in many variations, one not just asked by philosophers and their students but also by very ordinary people: *Why me? Why this? Why is this happening? Why did God create this universe anyway? Why did the supreme Reality create anything at all?* Abhinavagupta has a beautiful reply. He says it is the nature of supreme Reality to create, so to ask why God brings the world into existence is as absurd as asking why wind blows, why fire burns, why water is wet. It is an intrinsic quality of Citi to create a universe, something she cannot avoid doing. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.64)

As we see here, the creative nature of the universe is inherent. The creative nature of reality transcends logic and must simply be accepted as a fact of life. As we look more deeply into the basis for the creation of the universe, we again see that the basic patterns of the universe are inherent and cannot be addressed logically.

Let me restate that last point: without objects, we would not be subjects. Which is to say that, from the very outset of manifestation, the reciprocity between an individual and her world is established as the primordial pattern of the entire universe. The basis for reciprocity is the fundamental distinction between subject and object. Why this distinction arises is a question that cannot be answered. It just is. What we're discussing here is the result. This differentiation is the springboard for the entire process of creation. (p.75)

As we continue to discuss the category of creativity, we see that the root of creation is the intention of divine power. It is through this intention that the entire universe comes into existence. "The first step into creation – is the appearance of the Lord's power of will, his *iccha-sakti*, and his intention to create" (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.95). Because the intent to create is at the root of all reality, the universe is continually driven to create.

It is as a natural expression of this capacity that the ultimate Reality manifests the world of things. In Kshemaraja's words: 'Sakti, leaping in delight, lets herself go forth into manifestation.' As an act of divine creative will, the universe appears. (p.65)

Again, we see creation connected to divine will. According to the *Splendor of Recognition*, all of existence stems from the will and intention of divinity.

Not only is the universe intentional in its creative process, but it is also self-aware. Here we see Shakti, or creativity made manifest, as aware of both herself and her creation. In other words, her creativity is informed by her own self-awareness.

Here *prakasa*, which is pure illumination, is personified as Siva, while *vimarsa*, the power of self-enfolding knowledge that both creates and knows its creation, is personified as Sakti. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.31).

In this statement, it is important to note that Shakti not only creates, but also knows her creation.

Swami Shantananda adds to this concept writing

In this pure creation, there is no separation, no differentiation whatsoever between outer and inner. This is why it's called 'pure'; at this level only one exists. It is easy, in other words, for God to see that he and his universe are one. In the same way that we would see a connection between our own ideas and ourselves, God is aware that the creation is taking place within the unlimited expanse of his own consciousness. (p.97).

In the next subsection, we will see that humans also have both the power to create reality and the power to know that creation. Reaching that level of awareness is the goal of many spiritual practitioners, for to create with that degree of self-awareness, the spiritual practitioner must also know him/herself as identical to the divine.

In addition to intent, will, and self-awareness, we also see an aspect of reciprocity in the creative processes of the universe. In describing the creative nature of Citi or Consciousness, Swami Shantananda (2003) writes, "it is this same Consciousness that creates everything it perceives" (p.46). In other words, the self-awareness of the universe works on multiple levels. Because Citi is both the creator and that which is created, she is both the perceiver and the

perceived, the knower and the known. Not only does that which creates (Citi) know its creation (manifest reality), but that which is created also knows its creator. We will explore this sense of reciprocity in more detail in the reflection category later in this chapter.

Finally, looking at the inherently creative aspects of the universe, we see that human beings, as aspects of the divine, participate in the creative process.

It is said that when Siva opens his eyes, the universe comes into being (*srsti*); the same happens with us when we activate our sense of sight, hearing, touch, smell, or taste. Our experience of the appetizing smells of cooking food, or the feel of dewy grass on the bottoms of our feet; or the voice of someone dear to us – these, and so many other of the sensations that fill our days, are *abhasas*, reproductions of the divine power creating our universe. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.222)

Here, Swami Shantananda describes the relationship between the divine power of creativity and the human power of creativity. As we see in the last sentence, the *abhasas* that we experience are simply reproductions of divine creation. However, as we will see in the next subsection, human beings actually hold the same creative power as Citi, because, as we have previously discussed, we are Citi. The *abhasas* mentioned above are simply our perceptions of reality in their multiple form. Through our basic daily activities, we, like Citi, also have the power to create and re-create reality as we know it.

We create our own reality, with a difference. Normally when people talk about creating their own reality, they are talking about the mind frame in which they perceive things. Culturally, in the West, we are taught that our perceptions color the way that we perceive our reality. For example, most people are familiar with the ‘glass half full or half empty metaphor’ in which a person is given a glass half full of water and asked what they see. The person is judged to be either an optimist or a pessimist depending upon whether they see the glass as half full or half empty respectively. In this manner, it is assumed that people create their own reality by choosing to view the world through positive or negative lenses. In *The Splendor of Recognition*, Swami

Shantananda (2003) presents a similar concept from a different perspective. In this subsection, we look at how Swami Shantananda describes the human creation of reality.

In order to understand how it is possible for humanity to have the same powers of creation as the divine, it is useful to understand Swami Shantananda's perspective on the creation of humanity.

Kshemaraja tells us in his commentary on this sutra that the same principles of creation that give shape to the manifest universe also structure the body of a human being: 'As the Lord is universe-bodied, so the [individual] experient—because of Consciousness being contracted—has the body of the entire universe in a contracted form, much [as] the *vata* tree resides in a contracted form in its seed.

With this in mind, it is easier to understand how the human being, as a subset of manifest reality, can contain all of Consciousness within his/her own individual Self.

From here, we will see Swami Shantananda describe human creation of reality in many different ways. With each description, we will come to better understand how humankind engages in the creation of its own reality, and how that creative process provides an additional clue into the nature of the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. Below, again we see that the creative nature of humanity is directly linked to the identification of the Self with the divine. Here, Swami Shantananda (2003) quotes Abhinavagupta saying

I make the universe manifest within myself in the Sky of Consciousness. I, who am the universe, am its creator!—this awareness is the way in which one becomes Bhairava. All of manifest creation is reflected within me, I cause it to persist—this awareness is the way in which one becomes the universe. (p.286-287)

Once a person has become aware of his/her identity as the divine, s/he becomes aware of the human ability to create reality.

This power provides us with the ability to make true choices about the directions of our lives and our impact on the world from within our human bodies. Discussing Kshemaraja perspective on human creativity, Swami Shantanada (2003) writes

He [Kshemaraja] says that at all levels, the world we perceive is inextricably woven into the fabric of our existence. We have the opportunity to create and re-create – and create again – our experience of that world, and thus, we hold the power to find a direction in our lives that will, ultimately, bring us growth and fulfillment. (p.85)

As we saw in the introduction to this section, this ability to create and re-create is directly related to our ability to perceive. It is through perception that we are able to create the world anew in each moment.

We give expression to the creative act of Siva through the process of *abhasana*. Do you remember the *abhasas*, those sparkles of conscious light that flash forth all forms in the universe? We spoke about them in sutra 3. In exactly the same manner, through our own sense, we project the objects that we perceive, causing them to appear before us. That may seem like an overstatement, but consider how differently three people will perceive the same object – three universes! (p.221)

It is important to note that, for humankind, the process of creation takes place through our senses. It is actually our individual, physical characteristics that allow us to create reality. “*Abhasana* is the capacity to re-create the world, to make it manifest before us, and this power springs from the heart of Siva within our bodies” (p. 221-222). In this way, humanity’s process of creating is very different from Citi’s, yet both are simultaneously creating the world.

Consider what’s happening for you right now. The words you are reading at this moment are your creation, *srsti*. I might have written them, but they exist for you only through your own perception. In that sense, you are creating them anew in this moment. As these words continue being present in your perception, you maintain them, *sthiti*. They exist and are meaningful to you because, you, as a conscious being, make them real. (p.205)

This process of creation not only involves perception, it also involves the mind. For human beings, the process of creation is actually a product of the mind. “*Bhavana* means, literally, ‘to bring into existence,’ and that is what you do in this practice: create something within your mind” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.278). By using both perception and the mind, we are able to ‘bring things into existence’.

As we are beginning to see, within *The Splendor of Recognition*, both divinity and humanity have the ability to create reality. Now, we also see, that humanity, like the divine, must use both intention and will in order to manifest a reality of his/her conscious creation.

Several times, I've state that an individual is responsible for creating her own universe, and I've also described factors that contribute to this: perception, thought, perspective, and so on. With karma, we come to what we might call the fundamental factor in this creation: one's intention, one's will. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.187)

As we saw in the previous subsection with Citi, will and intention are integral components in the process of creation.

Through the power of perception, intention, and will, the human being can use his/her mind to consciously create reality. While this may be difficult for many people to believe, through the spiritual journey, one comes to understand his/her ability to transcend the current paradigm and relate to his/herself as one with the divine. Through this process, the spiritual practitioner comes to know that s/he holds the power to create the world anew each moment. "We may tell ourselves that we live in response to challenges of the world, but in truth the operations of our psychic instrument are testimony to something completely different: we create that world" (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.140-141).

Creation and the Word. As we saw in the category of vibration, creativity is also link to language. In *The Splendor of Recognition*, words, sounds, and language as whole play a significant role in the act of creation. According to Swami Shantananda (2003)

In sutra 12, Kshemaraja speaks of how the supreme power of Speech, who is identical with the consciousness of the perfect I-ness and who contains within herself the whole collection of powers of the sounds of the alphabet, brings the sphere of the empirical subject into being through the successive stages of the manifestation of sound. (p.235)

Here, we see how the universe is created through sound. We also see that speech, like manifest reality, is identical to the divine. Therefore, speech, like human beings can also create reality.

However, the process sound and speech use to create is different than the process used by human beings. Here, we are not subject to the issues of perception, will or intention. Instead, we rely on the relationship between words and their objects. “Intermediate speech also manifest at the level of *suddhavidya*, the principle of pure knowledge, where the Lord comes into a perfectly balanced relationship between word and object – the ground from which creation can physically manifest” (p. 245). It is this balance between the word and the object that provides the framework that allows reality to burst forth.

In the quote below, we again see the creative connection between words and their objects.

At the time of the dissolution, all created form and their constituent vibratory sounds are reduced once again into the fifty letters, which wait in the womb of Consciousness, like seeds, until the next creative cycle – the opportunity to re-form the universe of words with their designated objects. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.240)

Again, we see the comparison between the creative process and seeds waiting to sprout. Like human beings, speech holds the creative capacity of the entire universe within its essence.

However, unlike humanity, speech does not have senses with which to perceive reality.

Therefore, its ability to create is not rooted in an individual mind or body. Rather, it is rooted in the word’s inherent ability to separate. It is the word that creates manifest reality from singularity through its ability to separate the subject from the object.

The Great Lord, in his unfading integrity, expresses himself as ‘I am’, the pure and simple *aham*. As it initiates the process of creation, the *aham* emits its expression as *idam*, ‘this,’ by which it gives birth to the created objects. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.122)

The movement from the word ‘I’ to the word ‘this’ initiates a philosophical separation that creates the space for manifest reality to come into being. Building on this concept, Swami Shantananda (2003) quotes the Sama-veda, saying

‘This, [in the beginning] was only the Lord of the universe. His Word was with him. This was his second. He contemplated. He said ’I will deliver this Word so that she will produce and bring into being all the world.’ (p.238)

As we saw in the category of vibration, once the philosophical space has been created for the existence of manifest reality, then the actual vibrations from the sound of the word brings reality into being.

In a final analysis of speech and the power of creation, it is important to look at how this process of creation reflects on the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. As we have already seen, speech has the power to create manifest reality from Supreme reality in its nondual state. The following quote gives us some insight into how the word separates, but is still encompassed in the singular state of initial creation.

Madhyama-vac, intermediate speech, manifests at the level of *isvaratattva*, the principle of lordship, where the Lord’s view of creation takes clear form and the words stand distinctly separate from the created objects they designate, even though the objects are still bathed in the light of unity. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.245)

Here, we are able to see that while speech and the word act as separators that enable the philosophical and physical creation of the universe, the words and the objects they have created are still bathed in the light of unity. This light represents Consciousness in her singular form.

Luminosity

Throughout *The Splendor of Recognition*, there are a variety of references to the luminous nature of Consciousness. Material reality is often described as being bathed in the light of Consciousness. Luminosity or light, like vibration, is closely linked with the creative process of Citi. In this section, we will look more closely at how Swami Shantananda describes reality as both bathed in light and as light itself.

Initially, we will look at how Swami Shantananda describes the light of Consciousness before moving into understanding how the universe can be composed of light particles and be

identical to the light of Consciousness. Finally, we will look at how Swami Shantananda views the role of luminosity on the spiritual practitioner's journey to enlightenment. Through the descriptions in each of these sections, we will better understand how Swami Shantananda views the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality.

The light of Consciousness. In reviewing the data that forms the category of luminosity, a common description quickly came to the forefront. In the category of vibration, we saw that the universe is composed of vibrations. Similarly, within the category of luminosity, we see that Consciousness is described as a great light that illuminates all of manifest reality. When describing the importance of the light of Consciousness within the Shaivist tradition, Swami Shantananda (2003) writes "In yoga, the veracity of any particular perspective is gauged by the extent to which it reveals or veils the nature of the Great Light" (p.169). Throughout *The Splendor of Recognition*, we see that the term light of Consciousness or Great Light appears over and over again. This term is used to describe the both the creative and illuminative powers of the universe. As we will see in the category of reflection, without the light of Consciousness, neither Citi nor humanity would have the power to create.

Discussing the origin of the term *abhasa*, Swami Shantananda (2003) provides the following description of the luminous nature of reality.

By choosing the term *abhasa*, he seems to emphasize two significant aspects of the creative act: on the one hand, the objective manifestations are forms of *mahaprakasa*, the great light of Consciousness, which illumines; on the other hand, that they are ephemeral flashes, mere projections onto the screen of Citi with no permanent existence. (p. 74-75)

Here we see Consciousness described as a light whose role is to illumine. Below we see that the light, like Citi herself, already contains the seeds of manifest reality. However, it is through the ability of Consciousness to illumine that manifest reality can be perceived.

Similarly, all created forms issue forth from the unformed and undifferentiated space of Consciousness. These expressions of God are apparently propelled into existence in an infinite diversity of form, making explicit what lies implicit in the light of *prakasha*. (p.74)

As we saw in the category of creation, it is perception that allows humanity to create its own reality. Here we see a slightly different description of that same creative process that we saw in the previous section. According to Swami Shantananda (2003), luminosity is born through the act of perception, allowing the manifest world to come into existence.

“Maheshvarananda explains that in the act of perception, the Great Light, (*mahaprakasa*) pours its luminosity through the psychic instruments” (p.296). From here, Swami Shantananda quotes Maheshvarananda as he describes

‘How the light of Consciousness, our own awareness, emanates from the center of our being and flows in surges of delight through our sense to take hold of impressions of the world. This same awareness then brings these impressions inward, through the agency of the psychic instrument, leaves them as offerings for the enjoyment of the Self’. (p.137)

Taking it a step further, Swami Shantananda (2003) writes, “These organs of the mind are floating in the undulating ocean of Consciousness, impressing the vibrations of *aham*, the pure ‘I am,’ onto objects of perception, and making them shine with vitality” (p. 296). As we can see from the quotes above, it is through the ‘psychic instruments’ of humanity and ‘the organs of the minds’ that manifest reality is born. This creative process is dependent not only on the sensory and psychic powers of perception, but also on the light projected by Consciousness that allows us to perceive at all. Describing this idea from a slightly different perspective, Swami Shantananda writes

When I was young, I used to love to watch the day’s first traces of sunlight touch the valley where I lived. In the soft glow of the morning, I could begin to distinguish the contours of the distant hills, the silhouettes of the trees and rooftops, the wide expanse of the sugarcane fields that covered the valley like a carpet. Once the sun itself appeared on the horizon, the light would brighten, clarifying the lines of the landscape and bringing

forth its vivid tropical colors. It seems to me that the light of *prakasa* performs this function within us. (p.28-29)

Above we saw the light of Consciousness in action from the perspective of multiplicity. It is through the luminous perceptions of individuals that manifest reality comes into being. However, there is another perspective. “And when he says, *I saw the earth being born and expanding from the light of Consciousness*, he is pointing out that this pervasive light, which is the universe, continuously gives rise to the universe” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.60). Here, we see the light of Consciousness representing nondual, Supreme reality that creates the universe through her own reflection. In a similar example, Swami Shantananda quotes the Siva-sutra writing, ““The luminous being of the perfect I-consciousness inherent in the multitude of words, whose essence consists of the highest nondualism, is the secret of mantra”” (p. 249).

These two apparently contradictory approaches to the luminous universe shed some light onto the contradictory relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. As we saw in the category of paradox, the universe itself is inherently paradoxical. Here, again we see the paradox of singularity and multiplicity presented through the light of Consciousness. However, here, the luminous characteristic of the universe provides us with an answer rather than just another question.

The light of Consciousness is invariably singular. However, this singular light is also the light that allows us to perceive manifest reality. “This light is the capacity of Consciousness to illumine and reveal, to make things appear and manifest“ (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.27). In essence, it is the instrument by which the paradox is resolved. Nondual reality and manifest reality are the same. They are simply viewed differently from different perspectives. When we look at the light itself, the world is singular. When we look at what the light is shining on, the world is multiple. According to Swami Shantananda, “The subject is the light that

illuminates, the object is that which is illuminated, and the relation between them is a function of the illuminative power- knowledge” (p.44). Here, we are assuming that the subject is Citi—the subject into which all objects are ultimately absorbed. The object is manifest reality. In other words, through the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality, we find true knowledge.

The universe is light. Earlier in this chapter, we saw the universe described as composed of vibration and as identical to vibration. Here, we see that the universe is also composed of light and identified with light. “When Baba speaks about the light that *pervaded everywhere in the form of the universe*, he is saying that this light is the universe” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.60). Below, Swami Shantananda describes a personal experience in which he is able to perceive all of manifest reality as the light of Consciousness. As part of this experience, he also describes his ability to identify himself with the divine. Through this passage, we are better able to understand how humanity, light, and vibration can all be simultaneously identified with Supreme reality.

This marvelous light spread out in all directions, dissolving the images I’d been perceiving: the ashram grounds, Nandi, the trees, the clouds, the sky itself. The light radiated its splendor all around, absorbing the entire world into itself. In the end, there were no forms remaining. As far as I could see – in front, behind, above, below, everywhere – there was only an intense luminosity. My body had disappeared as well, and any sense I’d had of myself as an individual. All that was left was the amazing light, which was scintillating with tremendous joy. Though it was profoundly silent, it seemed that, within itself, this great light was silently murmuring, *I am, I am, I am.* . . (p.344)

As we continue to look at the role luminosity plays in the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality, we again see Loy’s characteristic of the nondifference of subject and object. In the quote above, we see the light ‘absorbing the entire world into self’. This is another example of the object, or in this case objects, being conflated into the subject. In addition to providing another example of the nondifference of subject and object, the passage

also describes the process of transcendence from a sense of individuality to a sense of unity. Here, we have a first-hand description of the movement from multiplicity to singularity. As part of this experience, Swami Shantananda was bathed in the pure of light of Consciousness, which is supreme Reality itself as seen/heard in the silent mantra ‘I am’.

Because the fundamental nature of the universe is light, this means that we are also composed of light. In the following quote, Swami Shantananda (2003) describes the subtle nature of reality as composed of light. “At the subtlest level, our bodies are nothing but shining particles of light, pure energy – and, according to Utpaladeva, each of these particles is an *abhasa*” (p.80). Here, we see that even our bodies, that most concrete manifestation of our existence, are made of light particles. In this context, the entire universe, manifest and unmanifest, is composed of pure light and is the very root of all existence.

The luminosity of *prakasa* is what determines existence, the Saiva philosophers tell us. The objects we perceive appear in their specific natures through the agency of the Great Light. *Prakasa* is their source, that is, the ground from which they originate. (p.28)

Swami Shantananda continues, “This luminosity is, furthermore, the raw material of creation. What we perceive as fire or earth, metal, water, or any other material is nothing but a manifestation of the light of Citi” (p. 28). It is this light that connects humanity to its everyday perceptions of manifest reality.

While it is important to note that the universe may be composed of light particles, it is also important to note that the universe is identical to the light of pure Consciousness. As we saw earlier in Baba Muktananda’s description of the universe as light, “Consciousness is light – not a light that can be seen with the eyes, but the light by which the eyes see” (p.27). Here, we see that the light of Consciousness that underlies all manifest reality also composes nondual reality.

Light and the enlightened. Like many of the other categories in this dissertation, luminosity holds particular importance for the spiritual practitioners in *The Splendor of Recognition*. Throughout this text, Swami Shantananda (2003) makes numerous references to the relationship between light and the enlightened yogi. Whether these references are to the flames of Consciousness, the chakra of fire, or the light of pure Consciousness, Swami Shantananda is clear that luminosity plays an important role in the path of the spiritual practitioner as s/he strives for enlightenment.

Before we look at how Swami Shantananda (2003) describes the relationship between light and the journey home to the true Self, let us first look at a description of the world from the perspective of an enlightened being. Here we will see that it is through the light of Consciousness that the universe is continually being reborn. When describing this light of Consciousness, Swami Shantananda quotes the autobiography of Baba Muktananda writing

The light pervaded everywhere in the form of the universe. I saw the earth being born and expanding from the light of Consciousness, just as one can see smoke rising from a fire. I could actually see the world within the conscious light, and the light within the world, like threads in a piece of cloth, and cloth in the threads. Just as a seed becomes a tree, with branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit, so within her own being Citi becomes animals, birds, germs, insects, gods, demons, men, and women. I could see this radiance of Consciousness, resplendent and utterly beautiful, silently pulsating as supreme ecstasy within me, outside me, above me, and below me. (p.59-60)

In this quote, we not only see light described as Consciousness, but we also see the creation of manifest reality through the eyes of a liberated yogi. Again, we see a clear reference to the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality as Baba Muktananda describes the manifest world coming into being before his very eyes. It is through the light of Consciousness that Baba Muktananda is able to perceive this great process of creation. When looked at through the eyes of a liberated yogi, we can see that the world is truly composed of light. Now let us look at the role light plays in the process of purifying the senses of the spiritual practitioner.

In the attempt to reach the goal of enlightenment, the spiritual practitioner has very likely submitted him/herself to deep periods of meditation. During these periods of meditation, the world as s/he knows it may dissolve into a light that either illumines, burns, or both. Describing one of his own meditative experiences, Swami Shantananda (2003) writes, “In that flashing forth of the sensation of love, all my disparate thoughts tend to dissolve. Then I can easily enter into a space of inner silence that is vibrant with light, with *samvit*” (p.323). Writing from a more abstract perspective, Swami Shantananda states

As he gets closer to his goal, the flames of Consciousness grow higher and glow with greater intensity, forming what appears like a *cakra* of fire, a circle of luminosity that envelops the triad of perception – knower, knowledge, and known. The yogi then perceives the entire universe as that luminosity. (p.276-277)

In these two quotes, we see examples of how ordinary consciousness dissolves in the light of Consciousness, bringing the yogi into a silent state of unification. In this state of unification, “the yogi feels that his actions are inspired by *sakti*, perceives the entire universe to be suffused with the light of the pure Self, and lives in the awareness of his own identity with the vastness of God” (p. 294).

Below, Swami Shantananda (2003) describes the experience of purification on the spiritual path. As we can see, the purification process occurs by fire, burning away the impurities and allowing the yogi to see the world as it truly is.

Then the yogi’s senses, having been purified by the fire of Citi, experience that his existence is full of light and love. Thus by his own power, he manifests unity and causes the disappearance of that which once had made him believe there was a difference. (p.284)

Here, again we see the yogi returning to a state of nondual awareness. As we continue to look at the data in the subsection, we see that fire and light are regularly connected with a yogi’s ability reach a state of nondual reality. “Instead of producing a sense of separation, the purified senses of an enlightened yogi perceive the Great Light shining within all created objects. Each

perception vibrates with the ecstasy of the Self, enjoying the world of its own creation” (p. 296). This is similar to the quote regarding Baba Muktananda’s awakening that we saw earlier. The Great Light shines both from within and on each object of creation. It is via this Great Light that human beings see manifest reality. However, it is only the yogi whose senses have been purified who is capable of knowing that the Great Light is actually also identical to those objects that s/he perceives with the senses. Therefore, it is only the enlightened yogi who sees that nondualism and manifest reality are actually one and the same.

Throughout the category of luminosity, we saw one paradox resolved, but another created. By understanding that the light of Consciousness creates the perception of manifest reality, we were able to see how the singular universe can be viewed as multiple by the individual perceiver. However, we have also been presented with another dilemma. Because the universe both is the light of Consciousness and is made visible by the light of Consciousness, it appears that the light of Consciousness is illuminating itself. In the following category on reflection, we will look at this apparent paradox in greater depth.

As we saw in the category of creation, the universe is constantly being created and re-created in each moment. In the category of luminosity, we come to understand that it is only the yogi whose senses have been purified who sees this continuous process creation through the light of Consciousness because s/he is able to recognize the Self as identical to the light of Consciousness. Through intense spiritual practice, the yogi can have his/her senses purified by the fire of Consciousness, recognize his/her divine nature, and transcend the dualist perception of the universe.

Reflection

As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, the concept of reflection appears repeatedly as a critical theme in *The Splendor of Recognition*, the *PH*, and the whole of Kashmir Shaivist philosophy. The research from this study clearly indicates that reflection plays a key role in the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. We often see the concept of reflection closely linked with the idea of projection. For, in the initial creation of the manifest

world, Citi projects herself onto herself. In this way, she becomes a reflection of her own being. Therefore, throughout this section, we will see references to both projection and reflection as we explore how these two complementary processes help to create and maintain manifest reality.

In the introduction to this chapter, we discussed the interwoven nature of the findings in the study. While each category has its own unique qualities and can be described separately, the categories also overlap, weaving in and out of one another as they co-create the Shaivist world view. In this section, we will see how the category of reflection weaves in and out of the other categories we have already described in-depth earlier in this chapter.

Projection and Reflection. As noted above, one of the first steps to understanding the role of reflection in *The Splendor of Recognition* is to understand the projective power of the universe. This is particularly important because the act of reflection is always based upon Citi's initial projection. Swami Shantananda (2003) refers to this process, writing "As she exercises her *svatantrya-sakti*, her power of free will, the one Reality projects her light like an explosion of fireworks on a dark night, sending forth brilliant sparks that assume the countless forms that inhabit the cosmos" (p.41). Here, we see that manifest reality is created as Citi, in her nondual form, projects herself outward. Again we see the connections with the previous categories of freedom versus limitation, creativity, and luminosity. Citi's projection is intimately tied to her free will, her desire to create, and her luminous nature.

Following on this idea of initial projection, Swami Shantananda (2003) states

Citi's universe, of course, is not the reflection of another reality; it is a projection of her own being. Though Citi's universe is three-dimensional—the various forms breathe and move and interact with each other in a dizzying variety of ways, creating new forms and destroying old ones—yet all this takes place within Consciousness, projected onto a portion of her own being. (p.57)

Here, we see how the inseparable nature of projection and reflection are directly related to both nondualism and manifest reality. Through the processes of projection and reflection, the subject becomes an object. This subject/object relationship, which we discussed in the literature review of this dissertation, is central to the relationship between projection and reflection and also central to the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality, for it is the combination of projection and reflection that allows manifest reality to be maintained. We will discuss this in more detail later in this section. However, for the moment, it is important that we understand how Swami Shantananda (2003) views this subject/object relationship.

The central theme in all of these illustrations is how Consciousness, the eternal subject, becomes the object of its own perception. What is most interesting to me is that Baba Muktananda used to say that *Yoga-Vasistha* is not a collection of metaphors but a replication of reality. (p.195)

The fact that Citi chooses to contract herself and become multiple allows her to become an object of her own Consciousness. The reflexive relationship between the subject and the object is at the heart of the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality because it is the constant interplay between the singular subject and her multiple objects that create the reflections that we see as our day to day reality. The ‘three-dimensional’ forms of manifest reality exist within Consciousness as a singular entity. This relationship is only possible through the projection and reflection process. Quoting Kshemaraja, Swami Shantananda (2003) writes

If you project the vision and all the other powers [of the senses] simultaneously everywhere onto their respective objects by the power of awareness, while remaining firmly established in the center like a pillar of gold, you [will] shine as the One, the foundation of the universe. (p.326)

This quote reminds us that the power of projection is at the heart of the universe. However, this power is not limited to the initial projection of Citi, which creates the manifest world. This power also belongs to human beings as we create each moment of our reality. Therefore, it plays a

critical role in the constant creation and re-creation of the universe discussed in previous sections of this chapter.

As we discussed in the section on creativity, in *The Splendor of Recognition*, Swami Shantananda (2003) emphasizes the idea that we create our own reality. Below, we see that we create our reality through the process of projection.

Let's say that you imagine something. The stronger your intention and the longer the time that you hold onto that thought, the more likely are its chances of manifesting in the physical realm. This is one way we shape our reality through our emotional reactions. With this action, *viksepa*, projection, takes place. (p.193)

It is important to remember that within this context, *viksepa*, or projection is manifest reality. It is the projections of nondual reality that we perceive as manifest reality. In the statement above, we see that we also create manifest reality by our own projections.

Let us look in greater detail at how this takes place. First, we see that the things we normally perceive as objects of our awareness are actually simply projects of nondual reality.

The *saktis* appear from their origin, the Self, faster than physical light, apprehending the objects of the world and projecting them, just as a camera prints images on a film. The act of perception culminates when the experiences are labeled: 'toast and coffee,' 'wet grass,' and 'so-and so's voice.' (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p. 222)

The *saktis* act as intermediaries between nondual reality and the human senses allowing us to perceive manifest objects. These objects are, in fact, simply projects of nondual reality made manifest in the light of Consciousness. In the following quote, we see how reflection perpetuates this process, in effect, maintaining manifest reality.

At the deepest level, *pramana* is the reflection of an object in the light of the inner Self, which adopts the particulars of what it perceives and mirrors them in the screen of its light. This act of knowing makes the projections of Reality, the *abhasas* that we discussed in sutra 3, present themselves afresh in every instant, taking on colors and various forms in accordance with our attitudes and desires. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.132-133)

Here, we see the reflections from the initial projections of reality being used to create new projections. These new projections are the *abhasas* that we have seen discussed throughout this Findings and Discussion Chapter. “Utpaladeva postulates that everything we experience and perceive is an *abhasa*, or a combination of *abhasas*. That’s like saying that everything in life is a projection, flashing forth, of Reality “(p.73). The process outlined in the quote mirrors the action, reflection, re-action process discussed in the literature review of this dissertation. In this case, we might word it as projection, reflection, re-projection. In essence, we are reproducing reality in each moment by reflecting on the objects of Citi’s original creation.

Finally, it is important to look at why our perceptions of manifest reality may not reflect our conscious wishes and desires. We can see this by looking at the nature of our projections.

So, even our conscious screen is colored by these three qualities of nature. This is why our perception itself can be deluded. We may be projecting onto a screen that is dismal and dour, or at another time, a screen that is tinged with passion and attachment. Of course, there are times when our screen is clear, and we easily view what is projected on it with equanimity. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.143-144)

In this statement, Swami Shantananda describes the way in which human projections create the reality we experience. The process of projecting our thoughts onto the backdrop of our own minds is much like Citi projecting herself onto herself. However, in the case of human beings, the backdrop of our minds is not pure like Citi. Instead, it may be colored by emotions, moods, or past experiences. Another way of saying this might be “What we perceive as being ‘out there’ is actually a projection appearing on our inner screen, and the understandings we have about that projection come from our own memory” (p.140). These impurities influence the nature of the projection, creating a reality may not consciously desire.

In this subsection, we have seen how projection and reflection work together to constantly create and re-create the manifest world. However, the role that reflection takes in this

process of creation and re-creation is particularly important in helping us understand the simultaneously simple and complex relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. Once Citi, as the light of Consciousness, has created her initial projections, these projections appear as objects within our perception. The next step, the step that continues to create, re-create, and maintain reality in each moment, is the process of reflection.

The reflection in the mirror. In this subsection, we will see that Swami Shantananda regularly compares Consciousness to a mirror. Within this mirror we see the reflection of nondual reality. While manifest reality may have initially been created by Citi's act of projection, the way in which reality is re-created and maintained is through the process of reflection.

As we saw with the action, reflection, reaction model, reflection plays an intermediary role—the role that keeps the process in continual motion. Once the initial action has taken place, it is the reflexive nature of reality that allows that action to maintain its momentum. Human beings are continually reacting, perpetuating the initial action of Citi. In this process of reaction, we are responding to what appear to be external events. However, we are actually responding to the initial creative act of Citi reflected in a mirror of our individual consciousness. In the quote below, we see how the images and actions that we react to on a daily basis are really reflections of nondual Consciousness itself.

If a city were reflected in an enormous mirror, the likeness would show buildings, vehicles, street signs, sidewalk newsstands, and all the other aspects of urban life. This reflection might seem to have a life of its own, just like the city itself does. And yet if we looked closely, we would observe that we could never extract an image from the surface of the mirror. No matter what is reflected in a mirror, the substance of the image is still nothing other than the mirror. Just so, the many creations of Citi have no life apart from Bhairava, as Abhinavagupta calls supreme Consciousness. Our perception of differences is 'empty' in the sense that differentiation, in and of itself, is not reality of the more pure One. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.56-57)

Here, Swami Shantananda uses the idea of reflection as a metaphor to describe the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. The objects of our day to day awareness can be compared to the vehicles, street signs, and other concrete objects mentioned in the quote above. As we can see, these apparently concrete objects are not concrete at all. In fact, they are simply manifestations within the mirror. In this case, the mirror acts as nondual Consciousness. While our individual consciousness acts as the agent of reflection. The actual objects that appear before us are simply *abhasas*, or projections of Supreme reality that appear in the mirror of our individual minds. Describing an experience of looking at himself in a mirror, Swami Shantananda (2003) states, “Well, here my world was reflected not just in a store mirror but also in the mirror of my own consciousness” (p.118).

In the following statement, Swami Shantananda (2003) describes reflection as a process that allows us to perceive objects as separate and distinct, while maintaining their original nondual qualities. “Remember in sutra 2 we talked about *pratibimba*, the reflection in which all objects remain distinct and recognizable. Well, in individual beings like us this reflection takes place on the intellect” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.138). Note that Swami Shantananda describes things as taking place on the intellect rather than in it. We can compare this to Citi projecting herself onto herself. Citi projects herself onto herself rather than into herself because she is projecting outward, creating manifest reality. Likewise, we are also creating manifest reality by projecting onto our intellect. As we saw in the section on creativity, we re-create and maintain manifest reality simply by perceiving manifest reality in each moment. This process of absorbing perceptions and then projecting them onto our intellect in order to consciously understand them is also a process of creating manifest reality.

Each time that we hold something in our conscious awareness, we create that very possibility in the universe. Putting this another way, Swami Shantananda (2003) writes

When I first heard Baba bring it up, I wondered, *What does this have to do with me?* And then I understood that I could view my own awareness as a reflexive screen. In other words, I could consider that whatever I saw (or heard or tasted or smelled or even touched) was received on the mirror of my awareness – or, to forge another metaphor implied by the language of this sutra, on ‘a portion’ of consciousness. (p.57-58)

This mirror image allows us to step back from ourselves and take a look at the very nature of our perception. By thinking of our individual consciousness as a mirror, we can begin to see how the projection/reflection process works at the level of manifest reality. The process of re-creating and maintaining manifest reality mirrors the process of Citi’s initial creative action. This occurs every time that we perceive an object in our awareness, for each time that we allow a perception into our individual consciousness, we invariably reflect upon that awareness, which is actually what creates the reality that we perceive. In other words, as we saw in the section on creativity, we create our reality by reflecting on the objects that arise within our consciousness. This constant creative process is an active process humans engage in each day. Without our ability to reflect on the objects within our awareness, manifest reality would cease to exist.

Once we understand that the mind works as an agent of reflection, we can better understand how the yogi goes about purifying his/her mind. “You simply allow the impressions carried within you by the sense to present themselves on the mirror of your intellect without attempting to interpret them. This is illumination (*abhasana*) from the first moment of perception” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.222). Normally, human beings are viewing the universe through a dusty mirror, one in which images are skewed by old psychological and emotional baggage or, as Swami Shantananda suggest above, interpretations.

This is what the sages of Saivism speak about the need to purify he intellect. Imagine a mirror that is stained or covered with dust. It doesn’t work well: images reflected in it can

be distorted. We perform spiritual practice to clean the surface of the *buddhi* so that it becomes a perfect reflector (p. 144).

This spiritual practice acts like the light of Consciousness described in the section on luminosity. It serves to burn away the impurities that are like dust bunnies on the mirror of Consciousness. Once these dust bunnies have been cleared away, we are capable of seeing ourselves and all things around us as identical with the divine. In other words, we are capable of seeing the mirror for what it truly is. We no longer confuse the images in the mirror with the mirror itself.

This means that we become capable of viewing our mind or intellect as a mirror and the objects of our perception as the things we see in the mirror. It is this form of awareness that returns us to a nondual state of awareness. “It is the mind that experiences itself as God. It is the mind that realizes its own identity with the Self. A purified mind – as I’ve said before – is the mirror on which Siva reflects his perfect light, the light that brims with his overflowing bliss” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p. 342). Here, again we see how the category of reflection overlaps the category of bliss. It is through the process of reflection that the spiritual practitioner can understand the true bliss of Consciousness by becoming aware of his/her own divinity. “The awareness of the subject and the awareness of the object become equally clear in their real nature. ‘I am’ and ‘this’ rest in perfect balance in the luminous, infinite mirror of Siva – identical to each other and identical to Siva” (p.96-97).

Reflection, the knower, and the known. When we looked at the nature of projection and reflection in the earlier in this section, we saw that once Citi contracted herself into her manifest form by projecting herself onto herself, she created herself as an object of her own perception. Through this process, she became self-aware on a whole new level, for she became both the perceiver and the perceived. This self-reflexive aspect of Consciousness can be seen in a term we discussed in the literature review of this dissertation called *vimarsha*, which is can also be

spelled *vimarsa*. As noted in the literature review, this term refers to the ability of Consciousness to know itself through the projection/reflection process. “This light of Consciousness is inextricably linked to the second aspect, *vimarsa*, awareness, which can be viewed as the reflection of that light on itself – the capacity of Consciousness to know herself” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p. 28). Here, we again see that this process is intimately tied to the luminous nature of reality. It is the light of Consciousness that creates the possibility of self-awareness.

In this next quote, we see how *vimarsha* reinforces the idea that Consciousness operates like a mirror allowing us to experience manifest reality. “Classically, *vimarsa* is compared to a mirror or a reflective pond, for it is in this metaphor that we can best distinguish all three functions of awareness. Like a mirror, *vimarsa* shows us ourselves and our creation” (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.31). The functions of awareness that Swami Shantananda refers to in this quote are knowledge, the knower, and that which is known.

These three functions are linked through the process of reflection. As we have already seen, that knower is the subject (Citi), who through the power of her own projection, becomes the known. The third function, knowledge, is created by the reflexive relationship between the knower and the known. The knower projects his/her consciousness onto the known or object. S/he then receives a reflection back from object, which provides new information or a new level of awareness. This level of awareness is the knowledge gained by the perceiving subject. Throughout this interaction, the knower, the known, and the knowledge are all engaged in reflexive process. It is this process that creates manifest reality in each moment.

As we look at how this reflexive process operates as a means of maintaining manifest reality, it is important to remember that process is also being mirrored at the nondual level.

As we said in the very beginning, in the entire universe there is one knower, one knowledge and one known. *Pratyabhijna*, then, is the knowledge of the knower turning back to know itself. The light of the Self reflects on itself, always turning back to know itself. The light of the Self reflects on itself, always turning to its own rapturous presence as the only knowledge that exists. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.369)

Here, we see that the reflexive process that we experience on a daily level is itself simply a reflection of the self-reflexive nature of the universe.

In this category, we have seen how the projection/reflection process operates in the same manner as the action, reflection, reaction process described in the literature review of this dissertation. We have also seen how Consciousness acts as a mirror, allowing us to see manifest reality projected onto the screen of Consciousness. Finally, we have seen how the self-reflexive nature of the universe both maintains manifest reality and mirrors Supreme reality. Throughout this final category, we have been able to see how intimately connected reflection is to the other categories listed in this dissertation. While each category has a its own distinct qualities and characteristics, the true nature of the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality in *The Splendor of Recognition* must be viewed through a lens that incorporates all of these findings.

As part of this incorporation process, Cycles 4 and 5 of intuitive inquiry are used as a means of joining the findings we have just discussed with the lenses described in Cycle 1 and as a means of relating the findings back to the literature review in Chapter 2. These cycles are contained in the Findings and Discussion Chapter because both the lenses described in Cycle 4 and the relationship to the literature review described in Cycle 5 have a strong bearing on the interpretation of the findings.

Intuitive Inquiry Cycle 4

In Cycle 4 of Intuitive inquiry, I revisited the initial lenses of the study from Cycle 2. Then, I reviewed all of the findings of the study in light of these initial lenses. When I sat down to map out my new understanding of nondualism based upon my experiences with the data and

the data collection process, I found that my approach to nondualism had changed quite a bit. The initial lenses in Cycle 2 reflected beliefs in nondualism that were particularly academic and separate from manifest reality. It reflected a belief system that saw nondualism as whole, but separate from manifest reality. In the initial lenses, there was no mention of anything tangible, nothing that directly related to human experience other than behaviors that might result from attaining a nondual state of consciousness.

For reference purposes, the initial lenses from Cycle 2 described nondualism as a concept that (a) is ineffable; (b) is paradoxical; (c) is integral, holistic, and non-plural; (d) is internally complex, (e) defies rational comprehension, (f) is identical to true self awareness, (g) requires a transcendence of the individual ego, and (h) leads to compassionate and self-less behavior. As we can see, these lenses are particularly abstract and do not directly address the inclusion of manifest reality. While I have retained many of basic principles of these lenses, the refinement process in Cycle 4 has helped me to expand my awareness of nondualism to include manifest reality. In this remainder of this section, I will describe the new set of lenses that arose for me after reviewing the data from this study.

Paradoxical. One of the lenses that remains at the forefront of my understanding of nondualism is the paradoxical nature of the universe. As we saw earlier in the Findings and Discussion Chapter, one of the primary philosophical dilemmas surrounding nondualism is its paradoxical nature. In *The Splendor of Recognition*, we saw a variety of examples supporting the paradoxical nature of nondualism including the simultaneous singularity and multiplicity of the universe. As part of my Cycle 4 review, I realized that a paradox is inherently logically contradictory. Therefore, by nature, it defies logical comprehension. With that understanding, I chose to include one of my preliminary lenses from Cycle 1 underneath the banner of paradox.

This lens from Cycle 1 is lens (e), which states that nondualism defies rational comprehension. Because the lens of paradox implies a concept that defies rational comprehension, this lens no longer needs to be listed separately.

Achievable. One of the new lenses that became clear to me during my Cycle 4 revision centers around the idea that nondualism is an achievable state of consciousness. In Cycle 2, I did not address the spiritual practitioner's ability to achieve a nondual state of consciousness. After reviewing the data from *The Splendor of Recognition*, it became clear to me that, with enough spiritual practice, nondualism is an achievable state of consciousness.

For me, the important aspect here is the spiritual practitioner. Throughout *The Splendor of Recognition*, Swami Shantananda makes many references to spiritual practice and describes much of his own personal spiritual journey. The intent of *The Splendor of Recognition* is not only to describe the process by which Consciousness becomes contracted and enters a manifest form, but also the process by which the spiritual practitioner can regain knowledge of his her true self, in essence, attaining a state of nondual awareness.

This lens contrasts with one of my unconscious lenses from Cycle 2. In Cycle 2, when I did an analysis of my unconscious lenses through the experiential collage, I discovered that I had an unconscious belief that nondualism was fairytale-like—in essence, an unachievable state that had been written about in a mythic manner. In contrast to this, I now consciously believe that nondualism is an achievable state of consciousness that is often dependent on prolonged spiritual practice.

Immanent and transcendent. My next lens from Cycle 4 focuses on the fact that nondualism is both immanent and transcendent. While this is closely related to the lens of paradox, I thought it was important to distinguish between the two because immanence and

transcendence implies a relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. In my Cycle 2 lenses, I did not address immanence as related to nondualism in any way. After completing the research for this study, it became clear to me that the universe is simultaneously immanent and transcendent. It also became clear to me that both immanence and transcendence are key characteristics of nondualism.

Full of potential. The next lens that appeared in my Cycle 4 review was potentiality. This particular lens arose very intuitively for me. While no category resulting from this study directly referenced the idea that the nondual universe is constantly full of potential, it was implicit in many statements made throughout *The Splendor of Recognition*. From Citi's initial projection of herself onto herself, we see the immense creative potential inherent in the nondual universe. In the category of creativity, we saw the human potential for creating our own reality in every moment. The more time I spent intuitively evaluating the data, the more convinced I became that that nondual reality must be viewed through the lens of potentiality.

Perfectly balanced. This lens is also indirectly related to paradox. In order to understand the paradoxical nature of the universe, it is important to find the balance point between the two opposing concepts. Because this study was based on a sacred yoga tradition, I did some reflection on yoga and on my personal yoga practice as part of this study. With this in mind, I explored my own physical practice of yoga and related it back to the philosophical concepts of this study. During this reflection, I recognized that one of the key components of yoga is balance—both physically and philosophically.

When practicing yoga, I have often had teachers present me with what appeared to be physically contradictory instructions. After fiddling with those instructions for some time, I discovered that I could occasionally find a point of perfect balance between those two apparently

contradictory statements. When I found this balance, the awareness was immediate, instinctive, and intuitive. When I was attempting to refine my lenses for Cycle 4 of this study, I was able to connect those physical experiences with images that arose from the data. As I was writing the findings for the category of paradox, I retained an intuitive sense of balance between each of the subcategories in that section. For me, the transcendent moments where I understood how the universe could simultaneously meet two contradictory criteria felt the same as the moments when I found perfect balance in a yoga pose.

Unchanging. The final lens as part of Cycle 4 states that the nondual universe is unchanging. Even though the nondual universe is immanent and full of potential, it does not change. One of the key characteristics that became clear to me from reviewing the data from *The Splendor or Recognition* was the invariable nature of the universe. While things may appear to change on the screens of our individual minds, the screens themselves do not change. In other words, while things that we see in a mirror appear to move and change, the mirror itself stays the same.

After completing the process of refining my lenses on nondualism, I was surprised at the degree of change. While I still believe that many of my original lenses from Cycle 1 are applicable to nondualism, I believe that the lenses in Cycle 4 add a great deal of depth to the topic. In light of the research topic, I find it both comforting and humorous that these additional lenses helped me see the concept of nondualism from a more holistic perspective.

Intuitive Inquiry Cycle 5: Conclusion of Findings and Discussion

Throughout the Findings and Discussion Chapter, there were brief references to issues that were discussed in the literature review of this dissertation. These focused mainly on David Loy's characteristic of nondifference of subject and object and the action, reflection, reaction process described in the section on Reflexive Consciousness. In Cycle 5 of Intuitive inquiry, I

evaluated the findings of the study in light of the entire literature review. This led me to look at the literature from a different viewpoint. After reviewing all of the data for this study and completing the Cycle 4 lenses, I believe that I have a much more nuanced approach to the concept of nondualism. I also believe that the data from this study lends texture to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Because *The Splendor of Recognition* is based upon the *PH* which is comprised of sutras, we discussed the nature of the sutra in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. Therefore, we already know that the sutra is an aphorism designed to remind the spiritual practitioner of information s/he has received from a guru. However, in our current context, it is important to note that the term sutra literally means ‘thread’ (Shearer, 1982).

When we looked at the categories that resulted from this study, we saw that the data overlapped between and among the categories. We saw that bliss and luminosity were intertwined and that the paradoxical nature of reality is inseparable from the projection and reflection of Citi. With this in mind, we might say that the categories from this study are like threads woven together. Seeing these categories as separate threads that come together to form a single tapestry helps us to understand the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. Throughout the remainder of this section, we re-evaluate the main themes that were presented in the literature review of this dissertation in light of the research findings.

Re-evaluating the subject/object dichotomy. The data as presented in the Findings and Discussion Chapter of this dissertation directly addresses the subject/object dichotomy, particularly in the category of reflection. In this category, Swami Shantananda (2003) makes multiple references to the subject/object dichotomy, describing both the object itself and knowledge of the object as dependent upon the perceiving subject. When we look back at the

dualistic approach of Descartes, we see that Descartes clearly views the subject as completely independent from the object of perception. According to Swami Shantananda (2003), this is not the case. The perceiver and the object of perception are completely linked through the process of reflection. The object can only be known when a subject exists to know it.

We also saw this in the category of creativity. In this category, Swami Shantananda (2003) describes the process by which human beings recreate their reality in each moment. This process is dependent upon the act of perception. Each time that we perceive an object, we create that object in that moment. “Through our own sense, we project the objects that we perceive, causing them to appear before us. That may seem like an overstatement, but consider how differently three people will perceive the same object – three universes!” (p.221). This statement clearly indicates that within *The Splendor or Recognition*, the subject and the object are not independent. The object cannot exist without the perceiving subject. This leads us directly into our approaches to nondualism.

How we think about nondualism. In the literature review of this dissertation, we looked at a variety of perspective and approaches to nondualism. These approaches were described in relationship to criteria established by David Loy (1988). These criteria included the negation of dualistic thinking, the nonplurality of the world, the nondifference of subject and object, and the possibility of mystical union between the individual and the Absolute. Because the majority of this study focused on a tradition with an approach to nondualism that meets the criteria of nondifference of subject and object, this section will focus on how this dissertation relates back to this particular philosophical approach to nondualism.

In the section of the literature review that focuses on this topic, primary attention was given to describing the nondual in negative terms. While data across categories in this study

makes both direct and indirect reference to the idea that there is no ultimate difference between the subject and the object, the data does not tend to refer to nondual reality using negative terminology. Instead, Swami Shantananda (2003) uses both metaphors and personal anecdotes in an attempt to help the reader positively understand how the subject and the object are actually the same. Reviewing a quote from the category of vibration, we see how Swami Shantananda (2003) uses his own personal experiences to describe one perspective on the nondifference of subject and object.

Suddenly, I found myself looking at the world through Gurumayi's eyes. I saw people, leafy trees, buildings of some sort – everything was threaded through an intricate web of delicate, conscious vibrations. These vibrations seemed to be the basic material, the fabric from which everything was fashioned, and since I could see those vibrations as well as the forms they took, it appeared that the world was there and, at the same time, not there. Each form appeared to be made of frosted glass, a faint luminosity that was a reflection of my own inner light. My heart was filled with love, and through that love, I felt a connection with the whole of creation. It seemed as if everything was a part of me. (p. 302)

In this quote, we see how Swami Shantananda uses his vibratory, nondual experience to describe the nondifference between subject and object in a positive manner. Rather than describing what is not, he uses his personal experience to describe what is. In this case, 'everything was a part of him'. This indicates a clear nondifference between subject and object.

However, there is one example in which Swami Shantananda (2003) directly discusses his perspective on the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality. In this statement, he uses a negative description of reality.

The question always arises, *Is the universe real or is it unreal?* It's difficult for me to take my world seriously when I know it's ephemeral. And yet I can't really dismiss it as wholly unreal because, after all, in every moment I am experiencing it – or my version of it. Utpaladeva leads up to believe that the world is neither false nor true. What is it then? I've thought about this question for years, and I still don't have a satisfactory answer. All I can say is that holding the view that creation is an expression of multiple systems of *abhasas* seems to benefit me greatly. (p.84)

The negative reference here occurs in the statement regarding Utapaladeva, where Swami Shantananda describes the world as ‘neither true nor false’. It is in keeping with the text that this approach does not appear to resonate deeply for him. For, he goes on to say that viewing the world as a system of *abhasas* seems to benefit him. This is a far more positive statement.

This leads us into the next level of our discussion on nondualism. In the literature review, we discussed three different approaches to the subject/object relationship within nondualism. There approaches were (a) the complete sundering of subject and object, (b) the conflation of the subject into the object, and (c) the conflation of the object into the subject. As already mentioned other places in this dissertation, Kashmir Shaivism relates to (c), the conflation of the object into the subject. Swami Shantananda’s (2003) quote in the previous paragraph clearly describes this conflation of the object into the subject by stating that ‘everything was part of me’.

Looking more specifically at the literature on nondualism in Kashmir Shaivism, we are reminded that Shaivist philosophy does not distinguish between reality with a small ‘r’, or manifest reality and reality with a capital ‘R’, meaning Absolute Reality. In other words, both nondualism and manifest reality are real. When we review the findings from this dissertation in that light, we see that Swami Shantananda supports that specific approach to nondualism. While he occasionally uses the term Reality with a capital ‘R’, he also describes nondual reality and manifest reality as equally ‘real’. Throughout the categories in this dissertation, we see references to both nondual reality and manifest reality as equal and viable levels of reality. In fact, when seen through the eyes of an enlightened yogi, they are the same. The following quote is from the category on luminosity.

The light pervaded everywhere in the form of the universe. I saw the earth being born and expanding from the light of Consciousness, just as one can see smoke rising from a fire. I could actually see the world within the conscious light, and the light within the world, like threads in a piece of cloth, and cloth in the threads. Just as a seed becomes a tree,

with branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit, so within her own being Citi becomes animals, birds, germs, insects, gods, demons, men, and women. I could see this radiance of Consciousness, resplendent and utterly beautiful, silently pulsating as supreme ecstasy within me, outside me, above me, and below me. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.59-60)

Here, manifest reality is seen for what it truly is—the light of Consciousness.

The universe is reflexive. Because the reflexive nature of the universe is such a prominent theme in Shaivist philosophy and because this concept relates directly to my secondary research questions, I dedicated a specific section of the literature review to discussing consciousness as a reflexive phenomenon. That section of the literature review relates to two very particular themes that arose in the data from this study. The obvious theme is the category of reflection in which Swami Shantananda (2003) repeatedly describes the reflexive nature of the universe. The second theme revolves around language as a source of universal creation.

During the presentation of the data in this chapter, we related the reflexive nature of the universe as presented by Swami Shantananda (2003) to the action, reflection, reaction process described in the literature review for this dissertation. In this section of the literature review, we looked at how the universe can be described as a set of processes and events rather than static objects. These processes are made of up interactions among people and objects. As we have already seen in this chapter, according to Swami Shantananda, manifest reality is created by perception. A perceiving subject must exist in order to perceive an object. This process of perception is directly linked to the reflexive nature of the universe. Manifest reality is created by Citi's initial projection of herself onto herself. It is then maintained by the constant reflections of that initial projection. Each time that we perceive an object, we are projecting our consciousness onto that object and receiving a reflection, exactly as described by the action, reflection, reaction process in the literature review.

Another aspect of reflexive consciousness addressed in the literature review was an evaluation of the *Word* as an exemplification of the action, reflection, reaction process. In the literature review, we discussed Paulo Freire's (1993) description of the *Word* as a vessel that contained both action and reflection. As stated earlier, it is not possible to engage in one process without engaging in the other because the process of reflection is not possible without an initial action to reflect upon. While this example was only a small section of the literature review, it warrants greater consideration in this chapter because it relates directly to a prominent theme that arose from this study. As we saw earlier, many of the categories that have been described in this chapter had a subsection that related to language. While language did not come out as its own separate category, it did provide important data within the context of several categories. This relationship between language and the creation of the universe, particularly as we saw it described in the category of creation, supports Freire's description of the *Word's* power to represent reality. As we saw in the data from this study, the *Word* had both the vibrational and representational power to create reality. This topic will be explored in greater depth in the Conclusions and Recommendations Chapter.

The final section of the literature review to deal with reflexive consciousness centered on the concept of *vimarsha*, which we already discussed in some detail in earlier in this chapter. As we saw from the data that directly addressed this concept, *vimarsha* plays a key role in Swami Shantananda's (2003) descriptions of the reflexive universe. "Classically, *vimarsa* is compared to a mirror or a reflective pond, for it is in this metaphor that we can best distinguish all three functions of awareness. Like a mirror, *vimarsa* shows us ourselves and our creation" (p.31).

Objects in relationship. In the literature review for this dissertation, we discussed *Object Relations Theory* as a psychological school of thought that describes consciousness as a

relational phenomenon. Within this framework, we discussed how the philosophical and psychological works of Christian de Quincey (2000) and Jorge Ferrer (2000) describe consciousness as an interactive phenomenon focusing on the transformational aspects of the subject/object relationship. According to Christian de Quincey (2005), consciousness is an intersubjective experience rather than a static phenomenon. The data from this study supports the idea that both individual consciousness and Absolute Consciousness are interactive, relational processes. For example, Swami Shantananda (2003) writes “Kshemaraja tells us in this sutra, the objects we perceive, the objects we live with, have their diversity because of the constant interplay between ourselves and those objects” (p. 85).

In the literature review, the idea of consciousness as a relational phenomenon led to the concept of a co-created reality. However, the data we saw in the Findings and Discussion Chapter provides a slightly different perspective. While it appears that reality clearly has a shared element, the data from *The Splendor of Recognition* suggests that we as individuals continually create and re-create our own reality. This reality may still result from interwoven relationships in the same way that the conclusions of this study were created by the interwoven categories, but the focus of *The Splendor or Recognition* is on the individual spiritual journey. While consciousness may indeed be relational, our journey toward understanding our own divinity is very personal.

Spiritual Practice. The area of spiritual practice was not directly addressed in the literature review of this dissertation. However, the data clearly indicated the importance of spiritual practice on the path to attaining a nondual state of consciousness. While this theme did not appear as a separate category, it did arise as subsections of several categories including bliss and vibration. While there was no section of the literature review directly allocated to discussing

the issues of the spiritual practitioner, it is important to note that in Cycle 1 of intuitive inquiry, the image of a room full of spiritual practitioners arose again and again as the audience for this study. At the time, I was particularly surprised by this image. When I began reviewing the data, I suddenly began to understand why that image had come forward with such a strong presence. The data in this study clearly has powerful implications for the spiritual practitioner as presented in various subsections of this chapter. More details on the potential applications of this data will be presented in the Conclusions and Recommendations Chapter.

What's missing. Within Cycle 5 of intuitive inquiry, it is important to re-evaluate the data to see what has been left undone. Because this study was confined to a particular text, this aspect was challenging for me. However, when I sat down to review the data in light of the relevant literature, I discovered what was missing for me on a personal level. The section of this work that still needs to be completed is the application of the data to the practical world. While Swami Shantananda provides some excellent concrete examples from his own experience and some direct advice for spiritual practitioners, this dissertation does not cover practical applications for the data. In the following chapter on conclusions and recommendations, I make some clear recommendations for further research in areas where the data from this study may be practically applied.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

In the introduction to this dissertation, we looked at a translation of the Invocation to the Isa Upanishad that described the world as whole. In this invocation, we saw that even when the whole was removed from the whole, the whole still remained. In other words, the whole never ceases to exist, regardless of what may happen to the parts. Swami Shantananda (2003), in his text *The Splendor of Recognition*, elucidates the *PH*, which describes the process of the universe contracting itself into manifest reality. Put another way, this text describes the process of the whole turning into parts. In an attempt to understand the interaction between this indestructible whole and its parts, this study explored the relationship between nondual reality and manifest reality as presented in the work of Swami Shantananda in an effort to understand and describe Consciousness as a reflexive phenomenon.

This study used intuitive inquiry in combination with a qualitative content analysis as the primary methods of research. In the first two cycles of intuitive inquiry, I discovered the intended audience of the study and described my preliminary lenses. These lenses were the primary beliefs that conditioned my approach to the topic of nondualism prior to beginning the research. Next, I completed the third cycle of intuitive inquiry, which involved conducting the content analysis, reviewing the data, and separating the data into distinct categories. Finally, I revisited my lenses, looking at how my beliefs about nondualism had changed since completing the research. Then, I related my research findings to the literature review as shown in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. The final lenses from Cycle 4 are listed in the Findings and Discussion Chapter.

As we saw in the Findings and Discussion Chapter, the data emerged in six distinct categories. These categories included vibration, bliss, paradox, creativity, luminosity, and

reflection. The category of paradox contained three subcategories. These subcategories center on the idea that the universe is simultaneously a) completely free and limited, b) creative and destructive, and c) singular and multiple. The category of vibration describes the universe as composed of vibration. Manifest reality is created through a vibrational process. Once a person understands that manifest reality is made up of vibrations, s/he can see the vibrational, nondual nature of the universe as it manifests in concrete objects. The category of bliss describes the nature of Consciousness as ecstatic or full of bliss. Manifest reality is created from a state of bliss, and humans exist to experience bliss. The category of paradox shows us that the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality is inherently paradoxical. This concept is demonstrated throughout *The Splendor of Recognition* as Swami Shantananda (2003) attempts to explain how the universe can be simultaneously singular and multiple. According to the data in this study, the universe is inherently creative. The section on creativity described both the nondual universe and humankind as constant agents of creation. The category of luminosity describes the universe as composed of light. This light is equated with Consciousness, the very essence of the nondual universe. Finally, the category of reflection focuses on the reflexive nature of reality. In this category, Consciousness operates as a mirror reflecting manifest reality back at itself so that it may experience its own divinity.

In this Conclusions and Recommendations Chapter, we will look at three primary conclusions that emerged from the findings in this study. These conclusions are:

1. The universe is simultaneously singular and multiple. Nondual reality and manifest reality are both contained in one another and are identical to one another. Their apparent difference is created through the projection/reflection process.
2. The universe is composed of vibration. Through this vibration, the universe creates.

3. Human beings exist to experience to bliss. As reflections of the divine, humanity exists to reflect the true light of Consciousness in all of its bliss.

Each of these conclusions has ramifications for the field of Transpersonal Psychology, for spiritual practitioners, and for the general populace. Therefore, recommendations for either further research or practical application will be described for each of these groups as appropriate.

In the introduction and literature review of this dissertation, there was a strong focus on consciousness as a relational phenomenon. After completing the data collection and analysis, I was surprised to find that the data did not strongly support this focus. However, what I found most interesting was the fact that the findings, the conclusions, and the recommendations did appear to mirror my personal journey. Considering the emphasis this study placed on reflexivity and mirroring, I was particularly intrigued by this apparent coincidence. It seemed appropriate to address that slight shift in focus in this chapter.

When I originally began work on this study, my personal journey toward wholeness was centered on understanding myself in the context of relationship with others. This was evidenced by the opening section of this dissertation that described my attempt to understand and heal my own shame. Throughout the process of writing this dissertation, I have continued to develop, both personally and professionally. Living as an American in the United Kingdom, I have had many opportunities to explore my sense of identity. After nearly 3 ½ years in the UK, I have come to understand myself as more than an American. I have learned to see myself in a broader social context in which my individuality is less constrained by cultural boundaries. I believe that this experience has helped understand my social self more clearly, and as a result, my personal and spiritual journey has shifted away from a focus on relationship and more toward a focus on creating my own reality.

Due to some unforeseen personal and financial difficulties, I took a term off from working on this study. Because I had already completed the first three cycles of intuitive inquiry, which included the data collection and analysis, I had time to distance myself from the results of the study prior to writing the Findings and Discussion Chapter. When I returned to the data in order to write the final two chapters of this dissertation, I was surprised to see that the data clearly reflected not just a focus on reflexivity, but a focus on creativity. Therefore, the conclusions and recommendations listed in this chapter also reflect a focus on both reflexivity and creativity. However, it is interesting to note that these conclusions also mirror the lessons I am learning on my own journey toward wholeness.

Singular, multiple, or both?

To see a world in a grain of sand
 And a heaven in a wild flower,
 Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
 And eternity in an hour. (Blake, 1863, ¶ 1)

One of the key questions of this study centered on the idea that the universe is simultaneously singular and multiple. In the excerpt above from Blake's famous poem *Auguries of Innocence*, we see that world can be seen in a grain of sand. This suggests that each grain of sand must contain the world, and yet we know that the world contains the grain of sand. In other words, the micro and the macro are contained in one another. However, according to *The Splendor of Recognition*, there is actually no other, for all is pure Consciousness. Therefore, micro is macro.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the first conclusion from this study states that the universe is simultaneously singular and multiple. Nondual reality and manifest reality are both contained in one another and are identical to one another. Their apparent difference is created through the projection/reflection process. In this conclusion, we will discuss how the

findings in this study support this possibility, and how transpersonal psychologists, spiritual practitioners, and members of the general public might apply recommendations from this conclusion.

Discussion and support. In the literature review for this dissertation, we explored a number of possible relationships between the subject and the object. These relationships included: (a) a complete sundering between subject and object, (b) the conflation of the object into the subject, (c) the conflation of the subject into the object, and (d) the denial of the existence of subjects or objects all together. In *The Splendor of Recognition*, we have seen that Swami Shantananda's (2003) approach to nondualism clearly reflects a nondifference between subject and object with the object conflated into the subject. Yet, we have also seen that manifest reality is actually identical to Consciousness itself. In this section, I would like to consider the fact that Swami Shantananda is attempting to describe the primary dilemma inherent in having the object conflated into the subject. Here, we still talk about the object as if it were separate from the subject. We simply describe it as being conflated into the subject, thereby allowing there to be only one Self that contains all. However, we still have the dilemma that, to most people, there appear to be separate selves and separate objects. Through his description of the projection/reflection process, Swami Shantananda describes how it is possible to have not just multiple objects that are contained in a singular Self, but also how those objects can be identical to that Self.

I believe that this particular relationship wherein the subject and object are identical was not listed separately in Loy's (1988) list of subject/object relationships because traditions such as Advaita Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism attempt to describe this relationship alongside the description of the object being conflated into the subject. I believe that this is why Swami

Shantananda relies so heavily on personal anecdotes and descriptions of people's direct experiences. This approach provides the reader with more direct insight into the actual nature of the experience that is at the heart of nondualism. Rather than attempting to logically explain how these two apparently separate relationships between subject and object can exist side by side, he goes directly to the heart of the matter by looking into the experiences themselves.

However, this does not preclude him from attempting to describe both of these relationships throughout the text. As we saw in the category creation, he quotes Abhinavagupta stating that the human beings, who are aspects of manifest reality, as identical to the divine and as containing all of manifest reality. Here, we again see the snake swallowing his tail.

I make the universe manifest within myself in the Sky of Consciousness. I, who am the universe, am its creator! – this awareness is the way in which one becomes Bhairava. All of manifest creation is reflected within me, I cause it to persist – this awareness is the way in which one becomes the universe. The universe dissolves within me, I who am the flame of the [one] great and eternal fire of Consciousness – seeing thus one achieves peace. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.286-287)

By stating that the universe dissolves in him, Abhinavagupta is making a clear case for conflating the object into the subject. However, according to the quote, not only is Abhinavagupta himself the universe made manifest, he is also the creator of all reality. This suggests that he is both manifest reality and pure Consciousness. By stating that 'all of manifest creation is reflected' in him, he is suggesting that he is the mirror of Consciousness upon which manifest reality is reflected. This, in turn, suggests that manifest reality is identical to supreme Consciousness.

Based on this statement, I would like to postulate that *The Splendor of Recognition* provides two different approaches to the subject/object relationship. In one approach, the object is conflated into the subject. In the other approach the subject and the object are identical. The second approach is dependent upon the projection/reflection process described in the category of

reflection because it is this process that allows us to perceive the subject and object as separate. In other words, it is the projection/reflection process that creates the appearance of what we call manifest reality. The question now becomes, if we have two separate subject/object relationships in *The Splendor of Recognition*, which one is correct? The answer is that they are both correct. The process of determining the correct relationship at any given time depends upon the psychological/spiritual state of the perceiving subject.

Once a yogi has obtained enlightenment, s/he is able to see that manifest reality is composed of projections and reflections within his/her own mind. Once the true nature of these projections/reflections is recognized, the yogi's perception changes as we saw in Swami Shantananda's (2003) description of seeing the vibrations that compose manifest reality. Because manifest reality is created through perception, the nondual nature of manifest reality can only be seen when the yogi's senses have been purified and s/he is able to see manifest reality for what it is—identical to supreme Consciousness. In other words, manifest reality is always identical to Supreme reality. It just may not appear to that way to a person whose senses have not been purified.

For the person whose senses have not been purified, the subject and object appear as separate. For these individuals, it is easier to understand the subject/object relationship with the object conflated into the subject. In other words, it is difficult for me to truly understand that the objects I see are actually identical to consciousness because, unlike Abhinavagupta, I cannot see the vibrations that compose the rocks, trees, tables, and chairs. It is easier for me to understand that all these things are contained within supreme Consciousness. Therefore, *The Splendor of Recognition*, presents different perspectives on reality for different audiences. Both are true, depending upon where a person is on his/her spiritual journey.

Recommendations. For the field of Transpersonal Psychology, I would like to recommend an area of further research related to this conclusion. As we saw in Abhinavagupta's description of himself as the creator of all reality, he was able to see himself as the creator of manifest reality while still being part of manifest reality at that moment. In other words, he knew himself as both the subject and the object of his own action. I believe that understanding ourselves as simultaneously the subject and the object of our own actions has implications for further research in transpersonal psychology. This research could take several different forms.

First, this relates to work being done in the areas of intentionality and manifestation. Further exploration could be done on how understanding ourselves as the subject and object of our own actions helps us understand the way in which we create our own reality. Such research could be built upon the work of Ernest Holmes (1919/1997), author of *Creative Mind and Success*, which addresses how belief and thought create success or the work of Wayne Dyer (2004), which discusses how we use intention to create our own reality.

Second, further research could focus on the grammatical middle voice in which the subject is the object of his/her own action. For example, in the sentence 'The seeds scattered in the wind', the seeds are both what was scattered and what did the scattering. They are both subject and object simultaneously. This can also be seen in sentences such as 'Jane slid down the hill'. Jane both did the sliding and is what was slid. The middle voice contains a strong reflexive element, which is described by Suzanne Kemmer (1993) in her book *The Middle Voice*. This reflexive relationship between the subject and the object can be compared to the projection/reflection process described in the category of reflection in this dissertation. By understanding the reflexive nature of our own existence, we can begin to see the power that we

hold as reflections of divine reality. Additional research has been done on the middle voice by Phillippe Eberhard (2002) in his doctoral dissertation discussing Gadamer's hermeneutics.

From a more experiential perspective, the recommendation for spiritual practitioners based on this conclusion centers on creating our own reality. As we saw throughout the Findings and Discussion Chapter, Swami Shantananda continually offered advice to spiritual practitioners. However, he did not directly address the benefits of viewing the individual self as both a projection and a reflection. If we are indeed projections of divine reality who create our daily reality through our own projections and reflections, then we have the power to manifest our reality through these projections. While further research may be needed in the area of intention and manifestation in order to better understand how we create our own reality, practitioners can begin working with this concept on a day to day level by focusing their thoughts on positive outcomes for themselves and others. According to Swami Shantananda (2003), we create our reality through our imagination.

Let's say that you imagine something. The stronger your intention and the longer the time that you hold onto that thought, the more likely are its chances of manifesting in the physical realm. This is one way we shape our reality through our emotional reactions. (p.344)

By holding our own well being and the well being of others in our imagination, we can begin to create a more positive reality in the manifest world. A practical example of positive creation for the self and others can be seen in the work Jean Watson (2002) in her work on intentionality in nursing.

On a different note, the recommendation for the general public relies on looking at this conclusion from a slightly different perspective. So far, we have looked dominantly at the subject/object relationship and more specifically, at the reflexive nature of this relationship. Now, let us look at this reflexive relationship from a different viewpoint. If the microcosm and

the macrocosm are both identical to one another and reflections of one another, then it is logical to assume that this is true of the macro and micro levels of our day to day reality as well. For example, let us look at an organizational structure. At the macro level, most organizations have a mission, a vision, and a high level strategy. At the micro level, they have the detailed operations of the organization such running meetings, giving presentations, producing labels for products, responding to customer e-mails etc . . . By looking at these levels as reflections of one another, we should be able to ensure congruence between the high level strategy and the detailed operations of the organization. As part of this recommendation, I would like to suggest that further research be done in the area of organizational dynamics using a reflexive process to look at the micro/macro relationship. This work could build on Fritjof Capra's (2002) work on learning and leadership in organizations as described in his book *Hidden Connections*.

The recommendations for this conclusion look at the reflexive relationship between holism and compartmentalism from several different perspectives. These perspectives include viewing the self as both the subject and object of the same action and viewing the micro/macro relationship as a reflexive relationship in which operational details mirror macro-organizational constructs. Both of these perspectives provide distinct recommendations for both further research and practical application in the areas of intention, manifestation, and organizational dynamics.

The Universe and Vibration

Science and Metaphysics agree. The essence of all things is vibration. Science reveals that everything in the manifest universe is ultimately composed of packets of energy; quantized units vibrating at specific frequencies. Esoteric wisdom reveals that in the beginning, all things were created through sound (i.e. vibration); whether it be the "OM" of Eastern mysticism or the "Word"/Logos of Western spirituality. (Selvarajah, 2002, ¶1)

The second conclusion of this study states that the universe is composed of vibration. Through this vibration, the universe creates. This concept, clearly outlined in the category of vibration in this dissertation, is supported by both spirituality and science. As we have seen from this study,

Kashmir Shaivism clearly supports the idea that the universe is composed entirely of vibration and that these vibrations create and maintain the universe. Within the field quantum physics, research in string theory also supports the idea that the universe is composed entirely of vibrations.

Discussion and support. Throughout this dissertation, we have seen numerous quotes from Swami Shantananda (2003) describing the vibrational nature of the universe. On several occasions in this dissertation, we have discussed a passage in which Swami Shantananda describes seeing manifest reality as pure vibration. In his work called *The Doctrine of Vibration*, Mark Dyczkowski (1987) discussed the principle of *spanda* within the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism. He describes *spanda* as the “recurrent pulsation of the absolute objectively manifest as the rhythm of the arising and subsidence of every detail of the cosmic picture that appears within its infinite expanse” (p. 24). Here, we see that within Kashmir Shaivism an entire doctrine of study has been devoted to the vibrational nature of the universe. The description of *spanda* above provides another perspective on the connection between vibration, creation, and the constant creation and dissolution of the manifest world as described earlier in this dissertation. As we can see, this pulsation or vibration affects every aspect of the universe.

Joining spirituality and philosophy with science, Layne Redmond (1997) and Fritjof Capra (1975/1999) discuss both the spiritual and scientific aspects of rhythm and vibration. In her book *When the Drummers were Women*, Redmond describes the pre-Christian goddess worshiping traditions of the Mediterranean. Within these traditions, the Great Goddess was known to use a frame drum to regulate the seasons and cycles of the moon. It was the rhythm or vibration of the drum that maintained reality as the people knew it. This can be compared to Capra’s (1975/1999) description of Shiva’s cosmic dance in *The Tao of Physics*.

He is called *Mahesvara*, the Great Lord, when he is represented as the personification of the fullness of *Brahman* and he can also impersonate many single aspects of the Divine, his most celebrated appearance being the one as *Nataranja*, the King of the Dancers. As the Cosmic Dancer, Shiva is the god of creation and destruction who sustains through his dance the endless rhythm of the universe. (p. 90)

Redmond (1997) goes on to describe the nature of brain waves that begin when the child is still in the womb. She describes these brain waves as “rhythmic vibrations emanating from the brain and nervous system” (p.171). Here, we see that the very nature of consciousness, at a scientific level, is composed of vibration. She continues this line of thought, describing how our states of consciousness can be classified by the measuring the number of brain waves per second that are pulsing through the brain. These classifications range from the delta level, which is the slowest level, up to the alpha level, which Redmond describes as the “basic rhythm of nature” (p. 172). She describes Tantric yogis as aspiring to the alpha level of awareness.

Like Swami Shantananda (2003), Redmond links the brain waves or vibrations to the process of meditation. For Redmond (1997), this means focusing attention inward in an attempt to change the brain frequency level to the alpha level. For Swami Shantananda, this means focusing inward in such a way as to understand that the vibration of the interior self is the same as the vibrations of the objects in the external world. As we saw in the category of vibration, Swami Shantananda (2003) relates meditation and vibration in the following way.

That is, only if the yogi perceiving exterior objects is able, at the same time, to anchor his attention on his inner center, the Self. From that perspective, the energy moving outward is seen as identical to the energy vibrating within – even though the yogi may be experiencing an invasion of sounds, smells, and other sensations. (Swami Shantananda & Bendet, 2003, p.325)

Similarly, Capra (1975/1999) describes the physical universe as composed of vibrating atoms. These vibrating atoms themselves are composed of electrons, protons, and neutrons that are also in constant movement. According to Capra, “Modern physics, then, pictures reality not at all as passive and inert, but as being in a continuous dancing and vibrating motion whose rhythmic patterns are determined by the molecular, atomic, and nuclear structures” (p. 194). Here, we clearly see that the universe is composed of vibration at a molecular level. As Capra so beautifully demonstrates, science and spirituality meet at the level of vibration.

However, Capra is not the only physicist to describe the universe as being composed of vibration. In his book, *The Elegant Universe*, physicist Brian Greene (1999) describes the intricacies of *string theory*. According to *string theory*, the universe is completely comprised of exceptionally small vibrating strings. The interesting part of this theory in relationship to our study is that, according to string theorists, each of these strings is identical (Resonance in Strings, 2003). Here, again we see that that science and spirituality converge on the principle that the universe is composed of vibration. In addition, we now have agreement on the fact that the entire universe is created from identical material. Physics says it’s made up of vibrating strings. *The Splendor of Recognition* says that it’s made up of Consciousness in the form of vibration.

Recommendations. For the field of Transpersonal Psychology, there are several areas for further research that stem from this conclusion. These areas include combinations of psychology of the body, consciousness studies, and creativity theory. In the areas of psychology of the body and consciousness studies, I would like to recommend further research into the induction of ecstatic states of consciousness through vibrational experiences such as dancing, drumming, and chanting. In her work, *Sweat Your Prayers: Movement as Spiritual Practice*, Gabrielle Roth (1997) describes an archetypal model for joining dance and spiritual practice called *The Five*

Rhythms. In this book, Roth discusses the rhythmic nature of both human beings and the universe as a whole. She then applies this principle to her archetypal dance practice. Such work is reinforced by Eugene d'Aquili and Andrew Newberg (1999) in their book *The Mystical Mind* in which they describe the neurophysiologic experience created by rhythmic experiences such as dancing, drumming and chanting. Further research could look at the neurophysiologic experience of dancers during each stage of *The Five Rhythms*.

In the area of creativity theory, I would like to recommend further research on the relationship between creativity and the *Word*. Whether it is the traditional Eastern sound of Om or the *Word* that was with God in the beginning, the spoken word has great spiritual significance. As we have seen throughout this dissertation and as we saw in the introductory quote for this section from Dr. Asoka Selvarajah (2002), the *Word* is inherently vibrational. In numerous spiritual traditions including Kashmir Shaivism and Christianity, the word holds to power to create reality. As we saw in the literature review of this dissertation, the Word, whether written or spoken, holds creative power through its reflexive nature. Once an object or being has been labeled with a word, it becomes the object of another's projection thereby igniting the projection/reflection process discussed in the previous conclusion.

Further research in the area of creativity and the written word could be based on the work of Natalie Goldberg (1986) whose famous book *Writing Down the Bones* provides advice for creative writers. Such research could also build on the work of Natalie Rogers (1997) who suggests working with multiple creative art forms including the written word in order to unleash creative potential. Finally, research in the area of creativity and the spoken word could begin by looking at the work of Dennis Tedlock (1983) who looks at the power and the challenges of the oral narrative.

For spiritual practitioners, there are many practical applications for working with the spiritual aspects of vibration as we noted earlier. These include dancing, drumming, and chanting. In his work, *The Yoga of Sound*, Russill Paul (2004) describes a variety of approaches and practices directly related to the sacred power of vibration. In this book, Paul focuses on the practice of sacred mantras. He describes mantras as “vibratory representations of divine energy” (p.40). According to mantra expert Thomas Ashley-Farrand (1999), mantra recitation can be used for a variety of purposes including healing and creativity. Through mantra recitation, spiritual practitioners can gain a more practical understanding of the vibratory nature of the universe and can raise their own person vibration, moving them closer to the alpha state described by Redmond (1997) earlier in this section.

As we have seen, both science and spirituality support the conclusion that the universe is composed of vibration. Because the vibratory nature of reality affects so many aspects of our day to day lives, there are many possible areas for both practical application and further research. In this recommendations section, I have simply focused on a few of these areas in an effort to encourage increased awareness of the relationship between vibration, creativity theory, philosophy of consciousness, psychology of the body, and personal/spiritual growth and development.

Living in Bliss

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others. (Williamson, 1992, p. 190-191)

In the quote above from Marianne Williamson (1992), we see the unification of two categories from this study –the categories of bliss and luminosity. By shining in the light of Consciousness, we experience the bliss of Consciousness while allowing others to do the same. As we saw in the Findings and Discussion Chapter, the categories in the dissertation overlap, weaving together to form a unique interpretation of reality. Within the merger of these two categories, we come to the third and final conclusion of this study. Human beings exist to experience to bliss. As reflections of the divine, humanity exists to reflect the true light of Consciousness in all of its bliss.

As we saw in the category of bliss, human beings exist to experience bliss. According to Swami Shantananda (2003), Baba Muktananda stated bliss as the reason that we live. We are here to bask in the light of Consciousness and to know ourselves as divine beings. This lovely image reminds us that we are here for a purpose. Through Marianne Williamson’s (1992) quote above, we can see that allowing ourselves to shine in the light of Consciousness is not a selfish act. Rather, it is selfless. In leading by example, we encourage those around us to share in this blissful light by living up to their true potential.

In order to understand how to live up to our true potential and how to see ourselves as divine, it is helpful to understand the project/reflection process that we have discussed throughout this dissertation, for it is through this process that we are able see ourselves as reflections of divinity. This is the first stage in recognizing ourselves as truly divine. In the first conclusion from this section, we looked at how the projection/reflection process enables us to manifest our reality. In this section, we will look at how this same process helps us to understand our own divine nature, thereby helping us to live fully in the light of Consciousness.

Support and discussion. According to Psychologist Robert A. Johnson (1989), human beings in Western culture have a tendency to repress their ecstatic experiences. In his book,

Ecstasy: The Psychology of Joy, Johnson uses the Greek myth of Dionysus to describe the path of ecstasy and to encourage people to rediscover their own ecstatic nature. In his work, *Essential Spirituality*, Roger Walsh (1999) also discusses the profound experience of true bliss. Walsh suggests that by focusing on our bliss or passion, we will find our true path in this lifetime. In her doctoral dissertation looking at the search for joy in mystical Christianity, Susan Carlock (2003) describes the search for transcendent joy by looking at the experiences of eight Christian mystics. According to Carlock (2003), true joy is “a state of consciousness or level of psychospiritual development in which one experiences wholeness, fulfillment, sweetness, purity, and love” (p.1). This experience of transcendent joy can be related to the Swami Shantananda’s (2003) description of the bliss of Consciousness. Within *The Splendor of Recognition*, bliss Consciousness is described as a higher state of consciousness generally experienced by advanced spiritual practitioners.

According to Swami Shantananda (2003), we achieve bliss Consciousness by understanding ourselves as identical to the divine. As we saw in the first conclusion in this chapter, there are two ways of viewing the subject/object relationship with *The Splendor of Recognition*. These two approaches are viewing the subject and the object as identical and conflating the object into the subject. The immediate truth of these subject/object relationships is dependent upon the perceiving subject’s level of spiritual development. Because most people are not advanced yogis whose senses have been purified, it is easier for many people to understand the object as something contained in the eternal, all consuming subject that is generally labeled as some form of divine Consciousness. For those of us who cannot perceive the true nature of the Self, it is easier to understand ourselves as reflections of the divine. In this manner, we see ourselves through the light of Consciousness as reflections in the mirror of the divine.

Recommendations. For the field of Transpersonal Psychology, I would like to recommend further research in the area of ecstatic consciousness. Building on the recommendation from the previous section on vibration, I would like to suggest that additional research be done in neuropsychology, building on ecstatic states of consciousness such as those researched and described by d'Aquili and Newberg (1999). As we saw in the previous section, many types of human experience can lead to ecstatic states of consciousness such as those described by Swami Shantananda (2003) and Susan Carlock (2003). These include meditation, dancing, drumming, chanting, and transcendent sexual experiences. Further research into the neuropsychological foundations of these experiences would enrich the field of Transpersonal Psychology and potentially present additional concrete evidence to supplement the dominantly qualitative approach of the transpersonal fields of study.

Additionally, I would like to suggest that further work be done to investigate the concept of human beings as reflections of the divine within other mystical traditions. This research would enhance knowledge within the transpersonal fields regarding the relationship between humans and the divine and could also serve to support spiritual practitioners in their attempt to understand their own personal relationship with the divine.

For spiritual practitioners, I would like to recommend engaging in transpersonal practices that encourage blissful and ecstatic states of consciousness. According to the research from this study, practitioners such as Swami Shantananda (2003) were better able to understand their own divinity when in a state of bliss Consciousness. For Swami Shantananda, many of these experiences arose from states induced by deep meditation. However, as described in the works of d'Aquili and Newberg (1999), and Goffredo Bartocci and Simon Dein (2005) such experiences can also arise from rhythmic activities such as dancing and chanting. By engaging in such

activities, spiritual practitioners may gain access to states of consciousness that will enable them to momentarily experience a state similar the bliss Consciousness described by Swami Shantananda, eventually moving toward a more permanent state in which they are able to see themselves as identical with the divine.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we have reviewed a number of conclusions and recommendations relevant for the field of Transpersonal Psychology, for spiritual practitioners, and for the general public. These recommendations center on work in the areas of philosophy of consciousness, creativity theory, neuropsychology, mystical traditions, and transpersonal activities such as meditation, drumming, dancing, and chanting. I hope that these recommendations for further research and/or practical application assist in the professional development of the transpersonal fields of study as well as the personal development of spiritual practitioners.

As we have seen throughout this dissertation, nondualism is a complex topic that demands much from the academic scholar and the spiritual practitioner alike. While this study may have reviewed a variety of approaches to the topic of nondualism and may also have added a new perspective on the relationship between nondualism and manifest reality, there is still much work to be done in this field in order to advance our understanding of the deep, paradoxical dilemma of the human condition in a divine world. It is my hope that this study has provided a platform for additional thought and research in this area.

In addition to highlighting my research conclusions, I would also like to add some personal conclusions that arose from this study. At the beginning of this dissertation, I described a dawning awareness, as I began to look closely at my research topic, of my own shame. Throughout the research process, I was able to look carefully at how I projected my personal

sense of shame and my fears onto those around me. Through maintaining an awareness of this tendency, I have learned how to own my projections, understanding them as reflections of my fears. Not only has this helped me address the core issues in my life, but it has also helped me relieve pressure from my personal relationships. Now that I am less likely to hold others accountable for my fears and insecurities, I can more easily accept others as they are.

This sense of acceptance for both others and for myself became very clear during my research process. In my research journal, I was able to record unusual moments of grief as I began to let go of many of my unwanted projections and replace them with a more balanced awareness of myself and others. While releasing unwanted projections, I was also able to see that projections are a natural and inevitable aspect of the universe. Rather than attempt to eliminate all of my projections, I simply learned to understand them and to evaluate them carefully to understand their impact on my world view and my psychological well being. By understanding myself as both a subject with my own projections and an object of the projections of others, I was better able to see that the reality we create lies somewhere in between our mutual fears and desires.

The use of intuitive inquiry, in combination with the content analysis, helped me find a balance between the subjective and objective aspects of this study. While intuitive inquiry encouraged me to lean into my more subjective interpretations, the content analysis held me accountable to the more objective reality of the data. It was a true joy to see the subjective/objective relationship that was so central to this study be so clearly reflected in my own research process. Through the insights gained from the research, I feel confident that this dissertation presents opportunities not just for intellectual growth and further academic research, but also for personal and spiritual growth and development.

Verily the one Self is all, free from differentiation and non-differentiation. Neither can it be said, "It is" nor "It is not." What a great mystery. (Dattatreya, 1934, ¶4)

Appendix

Notes

1. R.K. Kaw's 1967 book, *The Doctrine of Recognition (Pratyabhijna philosophy)*, is not directly related to Kshemarasha's famous work, *The Doctrine of Recognition*. Kaw's book is a distinctly separate work describing and analyzing the Pratyabhijna philosophy.
2. Rosemarie Anderson's 2006 unpublished manuscript, "The Ways of the Heart in Research and Scholarship", is Dr. Anderson's most recent work on intuitive inquiry. This work builds upon her 2004 publication in the *Humanist Psychologist* titled, "Intuitive Inquiry: An Epistemology of the Heart for Scientific Inquiry".

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