



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

November 2021 Teachings Article:

Big Questions #11

Wherefrom & Why?

By Gurudevi Nirmalananda

Where has the universe come from? And why? Our yogic tradition answers both these questions by pointing to a single source. That source emanates a creative energy which births the world, then feeds its continuing process. The sages liken the life span of the universe to that of a child, who matures into adulthood, then ages, dies and is reborn.

One “kalpa” is a 12-hour day in Lord Brahma’s life. During that time, the universe is created, continues and dissolves, a span of 4.32 billion human years. Then comes Brahma’s 12-hour night (pralaya), where the universe is partially dissolved back into its source. On the next day of Brahma’s life, this repeats, continuing for 100 of Brahma’s years. This takes 300 trillion years in Earth-based time. Next the universe is fully dissolved back into its source (maha-pralaya), until the cycle begins again.

Yoga’s ancient sages described this thousands of years ago, with today’s physicists putting new language to it as quickly as they figure it out. But physicists are primarily focused on the process while the sages are focused on the source. Why? Because the source is within you. You come from the same source; you are part of the universe that has been manifested.

Nama.h “sivaya satata.m
pa~nca-k.rtya vidhaayine.
cidaananda-ghana svaatma-
paramaarthava-bhasine.
— Pratyabhij~nah.rdayam
Introductory Verse

Adoration to Shiva, who eternally
brings about the five processes
who makes Highest Reality manifest as the universe,
which is at the same time His Self,
the Real Self of each individual,
a mass of consciousness and bliss.

This tradition is Kashmiri Shaivism, which calls the source of the universe by the name Shiva. Shiva manifests as the universe, which means the formless reality becomes visible and tangible in form. When you create something, you make it out of raw materials that are separate from you. But Shiva is the raw material that Shiva uses to create the universe. Just as you are embodied in a human body, Shiva is universe-bodied.

Thus the verse says that universe is Shiva’s own Self, meaning the formless One is being the form of the universe and all the multiplicity of forms within it. This includes your own form: your body and mind and all the dimensions of your being. You are Shiva, being an individual who is made of Shiva.

The significance of this is that you can look inward to discover what you are made of. As the verse describes, Shiva’s own Self is defined as “the Real Self of each individual.” This means you. You are a mass of consciousness and bliss. Thus yoga says you must know your own Self, in order to know the consciousness and bliss that is your true identity.

Like a flower blossoms, this universe effulges forth. It is an ecstatic emanation, likened to an orgasm in the Tantric texts. Nature reflects this process back to us, which is why we are captivated by geysers, volcanoes and each morning’s sunrise. For me, hydrangeas especially embody the effulging forth. Each flower has 100 or more individual blossoms while the whole plant is covered in blooms. It looks to me like a universe full of galaxies.

Physicists have figured out that something existed before the Big Bang. They call it a “singularity,” meaning a dot smaller than an atom. Following on Einstein’s work, the cosmologist Father Georges Lemaître named it the “primeval atom.” Intellectually, you can follow their reasoning process: they figured out that the universe is expanding, so they backtracked to calculate its size before the expansion began. While they say the dot expanded rapidly to become the universe, they don’t know why. Yoga’s sages do.

The great masters named this dot “bindu,” meaning dot. In meditation, you see the bindu inside, revealed in a progression of colors as your inner vision becomes more subtle and more powerful. You find it inside because the source of the universe is also the source of your own being.

Bindu is the dot in the Sanskrit character for the primordial sound, AUM, often spelled OM. ॐ
To Westerners, it looks like the numeral 3 with a tail and footprints. Each of these shapes is a mystical expression of the universal process, a visual of the Divine Reality contained in all.

The part that looks like a 3 is the “a” of AUM, a sound that vibrates in your throat and mouth, which are the cavities depicted in the two partial circles of the 3. This shows Shiva vibrating within himself as the creative power. The tail that extends out and loops around is the emanation, like when your mouth shapes the “u” of AUM, projecting the sound forth in a focused stream of breath.

The footprints are a curved line and a dot. The curved line reflects Shiva’s emanation, likened to how the moon reflects the sun. Now the cosmic power and bliss is reflected back inward, intensifying the reverberation. It all distills into the dot, which denotes the “m” of AUM. This is the bindu, the primeval atom from which the universe is birthed.

The mystical definition of “bindu” is that it is the concentrated mass of undifferentiated energy, gathered into a point of pure potentiality. Bindu also names the inner dot or light that appears in deep meditative levels, as you spelunk into your own existence, all the way back to its source. My Guru divulged the secret teachings about these inner levels to help us through the process. Progressively, these levels are seen or experienced kinesthetically:

Red bindu — you experience this while your physical body is being purified

White bindu — indicates your mind and energies are being cleared and uplifted

Black bindu — clearing your causal body, that which has caused you to reincarnate

Blue bindu — the revealing of your supracausal body, Shiva being you.

You must find the bindus within, yet you must go beyond them. While the blue bindu is the source of your own being as well as our universe, it has a source. From where has it come and why does it exist? Physicists shoot telescopes into outer space to find answers, but yoga’s sages explore the inner space, within their own being.

Their gifts of Shaktipat and the mystical practices empower us to explore the same realms. Poses and breathing practices clear out physical impurities so you can handle the higher-grade energies of meditation. Chanting and study of the texts clear your mind so you can stay conscious at the deeper levels within. Guruseva (volunteering) makes you able to bring the inner revelations into your life.

Yet meditation is the primary practice. It is in meditation that you backtrack inward, to the source of your own being. From where have you come? Of what are you made? Zen roshis ask it this way, “What did your face look like before your parents were born?” Your face is Shiva’s face.

As you track inward, you dive in deeper than your thoughts and emotions. You discover the bliss that underlies your personal patterns, the inner bliss that deepens as it frees you from your dependencies. Realization after realization unfolds as you delve within, giving you a profound understanding of the universe and, more importantly, a profound understanding of your own Self.

Dhiiva”saat sattvasiddhi.h. — Shiva Sutras 3.12

The Self is known by its shining through a clarified mind.

As you deepen into Self, it shines through your mind. You know wherefrom this universe has come as well as why. Your knowing is not merely intellectual, but tangible and experiential. Knowing and being your own Self, you see all that exists as different forms of Self, Shiva effulging forth in all forms. Why? Shiva’s bliss is overflowing, gushing forth in an explosion of creative power, becoming the incredible multiplicity of our universe. Living in this constant awareness gives you universal love, purity and the desire to serve.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES, “BIG QUESTIONS”

To reach our teachers or to learn more about *Svaroopā*® Yoga & Meditation, contact
Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram ♦ www.svaroopā.org ♦ info@svaroopayoga.org ♦ 610.644.7555