

# Via Kundalini: Intentionality of Consciousness According to Shakta-Vedanta

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Does contemporary western phenomenology present the full picture of human consciousness? In the Indian phenomenological philosophy of Shakta-Vedanta (SV) (Bhattacharyya, 1999; Woodroff, 1981), the phenomenological properties are not confined to isolated qualia, but include the entire spectrum of sensory modalities, and even intentionality. Kundalini Yoga, the living praxis of SV, opens interesting possibilities for the phenomenological study of consciousness applicable to the understanding of human development. The current study presents the map of intentionality according to SV and examines some of its correlations with western phenomenology. This analysis and the mind training techniques from SV were used by the author both in focus groups and with individuals to optimize the process of personal development.

Analysis shows that SV interprets individual consciousness as a play of intentionality, constantly actualized in the transcendent, free, and immutable consciousness-Self (Berliner, 1990). The knowledge of this Self is distinguished from other types of knowledge not as intentional, but as knowledge “of itself by itself”. SV posits a) the unity of perception, meaning, and spatiality; and b) the hierarchical ontological map of intentionality leading to a developmental psychology of intentional consciousness.

The central philosophical diagram of SV, Sri Yantra, summarizes the major types of intentional consciousness. The principal intentionality is the power (*Shakti*, Sanskrit) of consciousness to present the world. In regard to the individual consciousness, Shakti causes/mediates its evolutionary changes through the life span. A set of secondary intentionalities is responsible for self-reflection, various types of thinking, and the actualization of many functions of the psyche. The “reverse” intentionality provides introspection, self-inquiry, and culminates in the experiences of pure consciousness. Shakti (which initiates, sustains, and is the presentation of time, space and all phenomena) is not inferred but perceived directly through meditative concentrations in the specified areas of the spatial schema of the body (Hughes, 1994). SV presents consciousness as embodied, and decentralized. It also demonstrates that specific meanings are connected with the specific forms of perception and the domains of the body-schema.

SV suggests that actualization of the “reverse” Shakti-intentionality (“Kundalini rising”) manifests as spiritual experiences. The latter were studied through analysis of accounts received in focus groups of co-researchers (n = 15) who identified themselves or were identified by SV experts as having “Kundalini rising”. Accounts show the progressive increase of high-order thoughts related to the identified naturally emerging groupings of phenomena in self - consciousness, such as self-

construct/self-sense, interiority/exteriority, constancy/changeability (subjectivity and objectivity), selfhood/transcendentality, and body schema – relatedness/unrelatedness. This was associated with state-specific emotions, such as fear or compassion, and existentially meaningful cognitions such as the notion of oneness of being or the compassion as the nature of one's self. Some co-researchers also reported familiarity with the phenomenological origins of will, knowledge, activity, or enjoyment (Bhavanopanishad, 1976).

SV uses specific dynamic concentrations on motion and time, to capture the unfolding of intentionality (Vijnanabhairava, 1979). The map of spatial groupings of intentional consciousness (*chakras*) resonates with the *in situ* distribution of neuromediators and neuropeptides (Louchakova & Warner, 2003), challenging the belief in the exclusive neurocentricity of consciousness.

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