

[Four Ways We View the World](#)

Category : [April/May/June 2008](#)

Published by Anonymous on Apr. 01, 2008

PUBLISHER'S DESK

Four Ways We View the World

Meditative, philosophic, scientific and supramundane are dynamic perspectives we can employ every day

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Audio:

In his mystical language of meditation, called Shum (pronounced shoom), my Gurudeva, Sivaya Subramuniaswami, brought forth a unique insight: four perspectives through which people look at the world. While this is a bit more esoteric and abstract than most Publisher's Desk subjects, I think you will find it interesting and useful. Let me introduce you to these varied ways you can view the cosmos.

1. Shumif: The first perspective is shumif (shoomeef), simply defined as awareness flowing through the mind, the mind itself being unmoved. This is the perspective we hold in meditation. Awareness, our identity, is a traveler, able to move freely about, investigating various areas of the mind, like a visitor to the various regions of the United States. If he wants to experience San Francisco, he travels there. If he wants to see Denver, which is much different from San Francisco, he travels there. He is moving, and the cities are stationary. Similarly, in the shumif perspective your awareness is the traveler in the mind, and the various parts of the mind--emotion, thought, intuition--are stationary. One of the goals of meditation is to increase your ability to move freely and at will.

In our ordinary way of thinking and speaking, if we are upset we complain, "I'm upset. That's the way I am. After a while, I probably will be calm again." But from the shumif perspective we say, "My awareness has ended up in the area of the mind

that is always upset. Do I want to be here or not? No, this is ruining my day!" So, we affirm, "OK, I don't want to be here, " and we apply certain tools for moving to an area of mind that is more wholesome and pleasant. But first we have to have the concept that we can move--that it is within our power to change where we are in the mind. Similarly, if a visitor to the Mojave Desert decides, "It's too hot here for me, " he knows he can simply move on.

2. Simnif: The second perspective is called simnif (simneef). From this vantage point, the mind is moving, and the intelligence of the person observing remains stationary. Looking through a microscope at a drop of water, what do we see? Movement. You see many different things in motion. You are the stationary observer, and what you see is moving. You are stationary when looking into an ocean and seeing schools of fish moving here and there. That is the perspective of science or any field of knowledge based on the observation of matter. These first two cosmic points of view, shumif and simnif, are exactly opposite.

3. Mulif: The third perspective, mulif (mooleef), is philosophical, metaphysical and psychological. Gurudeva gave the following description: "Mulif is the way of words, the way of the scholars of philosophical intellect. It is the perspective of some of the religions of the world. It is the perspective that all realization, all understanding, is worked out within and among people and their minds. In this perspective, one is unaware of the Gods, the three perfections of Lord Siva, the existence of beings on other planets, spacecraft. It is more of a subjective, intellectual perspective as to the nature of the universe, God and man. Realization is often attained in mulif through simply understanding deep philosophical concepts. This would be an intellectual realization, not a spiritual one."

For example, we may talk about the absolute perfection of God--Parasiva or Parabrahman--as timeless, causeless and spaceless. To know and understand such a truth is good philosophy, but it is not the same as experiencing it. To make that distinction is important. Experiencing it is in the shumif perspective. Describing it is in the mulif perspective. Mulif is necessary, philosophy is necessary, because we have to understand intellectually what it is we are trying to experience; but we don't want to accept the concept as the experience itself. As Sage Yogaswami once admonished a scholarly disciple, "It is not in books, you fool."

4. Dimfi: The fourth, dimfi (deemfee), is the perspective of space or worlds--inner worlds and outer worlds. Our most common use of dimfi in Hindu practice is in our

worship of the Deities in the temple. The Deities abide in the inner worlds. This is the vantage point of theism. The Deity is separate from us; the Deity is greater than we are. Through prayer, we draw forth the blessings of the Deity. That is the spirit of temple worship. It is, as Gurudeva explains, "the focus or consciousness that acknowledges, understands and communicates with God and Gods, beings on the astral plane, people from other planets. It is here that all psychic phenomena take place and the mind is open to all kinds of possibilities, of the extraterrestrial, out-of-body experiences, etc. Here reincarnation is understood. Mulif and dimfi are exactly opposite."

These four major perspectives create what Gurudeva once called one's "inner mind styling." Many people live in just one of them their entire life without realizing it. An experienced meditator, however, can learn to consciously live in two, three or more at the same time. How can we relate these viewpoints to everyday life? Let's take a common problem--depression--and look at how a Hindu devotee might alleviate it from each of these approaches.

The simnif, or scientific, perspective is often favored. We solve our sorrows by taking an anti-depressant drug, such as Prozac, to chemically alter our mood. The chemistry of medical science is our way out. It sounds dubious, but that's what's going on in the world. Even young children are being put on these medications. In severe cases, drugs may be necessary, but they do have side effects and don't come without an overhead, shall we say. However, simnif can be used positively for changing one's state of mind: applying the wisdom of ayurveda, exercising more, performing hatha yoga and improving one's diet.

Discussing the depression with a friend, counselor or psychologist is the solution from the mulif, or psychological, perspective. The counselor tries to talk someone into feeling better about themselves, talk them out of the problem, help them gain a new understanding. A professional counselor might advise, "You are a wonderful, divine being! You are perfect. Every experience is a good experience if you learn something from it."

Going to the temple for relief is the dimfi, inner-plane, approach. It's not commonly prescribed for depression, but it should be--going to the temple and placing your problems at the Feet of the Deity. We bring offerings, talk to the Deity about our unhappiness and go through a deep, inner process, just as if we were talking to a person in this physical world. But we receive blessings from the Deity, if we open

ourselves in the right way. A force is awakened which you don't get from a person--a blast of divine energy that helps remove the problem. Sometimes, if it works out well, you may go away not even remembering what the problem was. That's a sign of success.

Alleviating depression through meditation is the shumif, or meditative, approach, moving awareness into a happier state of mind, then looking back and cognizing the karmas involved. This is the most advanced method, because the hardest time to meditate is when we're upset, sad or bothered. Still, it can be done.

Oftentimes you can use more than one perspective to help someone out of a slump. Start with mulif to improve the person's mood, reminding him he is a divine being. Listen closely and empathize with his situation, while trying to give him an overview. Then you can move on to dimfi. Recommend that he go into the temple or shrine room and talk to Ganesha about it, place the matter at His Feet and beseech the Mighty One to adjust his emotional state. If he is a good meditator, you can suggest that he then sit down and meditate: "Go into the energies in the spine and become positive again. That powerful spiritual energy is right there within you, and you know how to access it." He may also benefit by getting more fresh air and exercise. In this way, you can use all four perspectives to uplift him.

We try to avoid the all-too-frequent simnif approach of prescribing drugs for depression. A devotee whose spouse recently passed away at a young age told me, "I've been advised by a doctor that I'm depressed because of my grief and should take some drugs." My goodness! Drugs have become a panacea, but grieving is a natural process common to all cultures, because it takes time, often a year or more, to recover from the shock. Rather than confusing grief with depression and taking a drug to make it go away, the better approach is to follow the wisdom of ayurveda, talk about the problem to gain a proper philosophical perspective, beseech divine beings for blessings and change your consciousness through the use of your will.