

Stage 5

Once creation gets to stage 5, *maya* enters the picture, and that's when everything hits the fan. The Sanskrit term *maya* is often translated as "illusion," which is the closest English translation for this deeply metaphysical word. Maya comes from the root verb *ma*, which means "to measure, limit, and give form," and is sometimes translated as "that which measures." The idea is that the measurements of time and space are the basis of maya.

With maya in the picture, time and space are now measured and therefore limited. Within the previously all-pervasive and eternal universal Consciousness, five cloaks of limitation come into the picture and reduce universal freedom to limited experience.

Until this stage, universal Consciousness is unlimited, pure, and perfect within itself — eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and perfectly contented. Now, with the forgetfulness that comes from the power of illusion, the dream of this world begins. Universal Consciousness becomes covered with the five cloaks, which translate into Sanskrit as *pancha* (five) *kanchukas* (cloaks), or *pancha-kanchukas*. (I always like to share the fun-sounding Sanskrit terms with you.) And these kanchukas do pack a punch! The five powers that become limited by these five cloaks are omnipotence, omniscience, perfection, eternality, and omnipresence. These cloaks act like veils that cover and limit the full powers of supreme Consciousness.

Once the cloaks are in place, supreme Consciousness can do certain things but not others, can know some things but not others, can be in some places but not others, is satisfied with some things but not others, and can exist in one time but not others. When your true nature as universal Consciousness is covered by these five cloaks of illusion:

- **Omnipotence (universal authorship) becomes limited abilities.** Your previous ability to do anything and everything turns into limited action, where you can do some things but not others.
- **Omniscience (universal knowledge) turns into limited knowledge.** Your omniscience of being aware of everything at once becomes limited knowledge, where you know some things and don't know others.

Before this stage of creation, you were all-knowing, but now you have to study to learn things. Without this cloak, there would be no need for schools or universities, because the awareness that is everyone would already know everything.

- **Perfection (universal satisfaction) turns into limited desires.** Supreme Consciousness has no need for the roller coaster of fulfilled and unfulfilled desires. It experiences perfect satisfaction and contentment within itself. However, once this cloak of limited satisfaction comes into place, the universal experience of perfect contentment is compromised by desires, fears, fulfilled and unfulfilled hopes, attachments, aversions, and expectations.

- **Eternality becomes limited time.** Before this stage, supreme Consciousness experienced everything all at once as an eternal awareness and presence, but now it is limited by time constraints of past, present, and future. This limitation of time brings a whole slew of problems.

When your true nature as eternal Consciousness becomes bound by the illusion of time, you begin to hope for something in the future or worry about things that happened in the past. You become locked into an idea of yourself as a separate being in time. From within this limited experience of sequential time, you can't see things objectively or from a bigger picture perspective, but only in bits and pieces and in time-based succession. With this cloak, you feel that you belong only to this time, that you didn't exist before, and that you won't exist in the future.

- **Omnipresence becomes limited placement.** Before this cloak, you were completely free and all-pervasive. You existed everywhere all at once. Now, you have to travel to go somewhere, and you know how much of a hassle that can be.

One modern analogy for the experience of omnipresence is the world wide Web of the Internet, where everything is existing and available to tap into all from one place – your computer. But once the cloak of limitation is placed over omnipresence, you can only be in one place at a time instead of being everywhere all at once.

This fifth stage of creation is where all-powerful Consciousness becomes trapped in its own dream, so that it appears to be at the mercy of outer forces over which it has no control. This stage sets the stage for the dance of limited world experience to take place.

You may wonder why supreme Consciousness would give up its divine freedom and take on these illusory limitations. The answer may be that only through these cloaks of limitation can the supreme all-knowing Consciousness get to have exciting limited experiences such as being surprised, happy, or disappointed – in and as you and everyone else. Only through forgetting that it is the dreamer of the dream of creation can universal Consciousness experience the play of the world, with all its colorful and exciting twists and turns (not to mention pizza).

My oh maya!

Like an artist, it is the nature of Supreme Consciousness to create. *Maya*, also known as universal illusion, brings the paints with which Consciousness crafts its colorful masterpieces of world creation. But maya also brings some not-so-pleasant side effects along with all the entertainment.

Once maya begins to blossom, universally free Consciousness starts to experience the sense of limitation. All of a sudden, omniscient, omnipresent Consciousness starts to feel, “Oh, I can’t do that,” or, “I want this, but it’s not coming to me,” or “I want to know this but it is difficult to understand.” Before this level of maya came into manifestation, your awareness knew everything and could do anything without any effort. Now, just look at yourself!

Seriously, look at yourself and your life and see all the creations of maya expressing in and as your life. Learn to watch, explore, and find entertainment in the play of your life.