

Stage 7

Once your mind, intellect, and ego are in place, the senses and physical world take form. On the bottom rung of this creation ladder are the physical senses (smelling, tasting, seeing, feeling by touch, and hearing), the physical universe, which is composed of elements such as earth, air, fire, water, and ether, and all the actions each person expresses into the physical world.

Tadaa! Perfectly free universal Consciousness now takes the form of all the strange and amazing creations in this world.

Waking up from the illusions of maya

You can think of the experience of awakening from maya as being like the experience of awakening from a dream where you were running from a gang of criminals. Upon awakening, you realize that the whole storyline and experience was an illusion. The criminals didn't exist, nor was anyone really chasing you.

Nevertheless, the experience wasn't completely unreal. Certainly, your fear and pounding heart were real. This is where a subtle distinction comes regarding the unique nature of maya versus the common use of the word illusion. Illusion is generally used to refer to something that doesn't exist but is falsely portrayed as existing. Maya, on the other hand, is existent and non-existent at the same time.

The experience you had while running for your life in the dream was real while the dream was occurring; therefore, the maya of this dream can't be called non-existent. Yet, through the sobriety of wakefulness, you can see that the dream was an illusory world.

The only problem is that there is no objective experiment you can run to prove that the waking state you're experiencing right now is any more real than last night's dream — which probably also felt completely real at the time. If you *are* in a dream right now, I hope the alarm doesn't go off until you finish this chapter!

Don't Forget

Even though the chart in Figure 14-1 appears to show a sequential transformation of consciousness moving down the chart over time, the whole multi-leveled process is also happening all at once.

It isn't so much that pure Consciousness stops being pure Consciousness when the world takes form. Rather, even as pure Consciousness descends into the lower stages of having personal experiences in a physical reality, it never moves from its highest state of pure being.

A popular Indian prayer says, "That highest Consciousness is perfect; and this creation is perfect. Perfection arises from perfection. Even if you take some of the perfect from perfection, still it remains as completely perfect."

Spirituality in Action

Imagine moving your personal consciousness up the chart in Figure 14-1, walking back up the ladder of creation from the physical world and senses, through the mental conditions, beyond illusory limitations, and into the great freedom of your true nature as universal Consciousness. Imagine being an enlightened person who can live in the entire map of creation all at once, being aware of all the levels of consciousness at the same time.