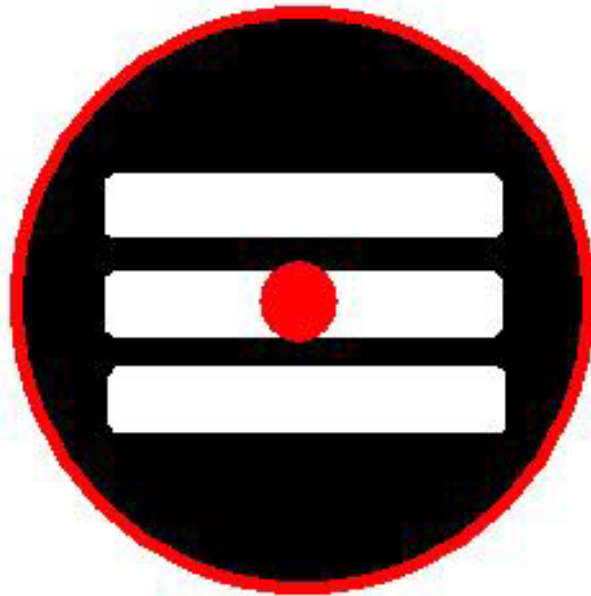


ON THE MANIFOLD BODIES OF THE SOUL



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Most 'New Age' spiritual teachers are content with sharing their own inner knowing or awareness in a way that offers people help with their personal problems or aids them in their spiritual development. Many of the spiritual traditions they draw on – not least that of 'yoga' - also recognise the basic importance of bodily awareness – awareness of our breathing for example. Rare however, are those teachers who set themselves the task of transforming their 'bodily knowing' into a comprehensive new BODY OF KNOWLEDGE - one that not only offers a new foundation for the life of the individual, but for society, for the sciences and arts, and thus for human civilisation as a whole. Such teachers need not only their own meditational experiences of 'enlightenment' or 'heightened awareness' but also a broad foundation of deep learning and study, together with the capacity to meditatively rethink fundamental metaphysical questions regarding the nature of reality. In doing so they need to forge a richer, more refined and differentiated language than those in current use by other teachers and thinkers – one through which they can formulate a new and deeper understanding of what even simple terms such as 'soul' and 'body', 'mind' and 'spirit', 'health' and 'spirituality' actually mean - rather than taking these terms for granted. Every genuine revolution in human knowledge and civilisation requires a new language for the expression of inner knowing - one that does not take for granted the terms of either everyday language, of fashionable spiritual or scientific jargons, or even the inherited languages of ancient spiritual traditions. 'Yoga' is supposed to be to do with the body, and to involve bodily practices and cultivate bodily awareness. Any genuinely 'new' yoga then, if it is to form the foundation of a new body of spiritual and scientific principles and practices, must begin by addressing anew a whole series of basic questions:

What is 'the body'?

What is 'a body'?

What is bodyhood?

As souls is it that we 'are' or 'have' a body - or even several different bodies?

Or is it that we 'body' our being or soul, body what we 'are'?

Is 'spirit' something disembodied and immaterial?

Or is it precisely that which bodies and materialises itself?

Can there be such a thing as a disembodied soul that passes from one bodily incarnation to another?

Or can the soul only 'incarnate' because there is no such thing as a disembodied soul – because the soul has its own innate bodily shapes and forms, both physical and non-physical?

Are we simply aware of a world of bodies in space? Or are we constantly bodying the individual nature of our awareness, or 'soul'?

Do 'we' body our individual souls? Or are 'we' but the individualised embodiments of that universal awareness which is the essence of the divine - the divine soul of the universe?

Does the body 'have' a soul?

Or is the body the soul itself – embodied -- an individualisation and embodiment of both the individual and divine soul?

Does the body 'have' a language?

Or is it that the body IS a language – a living molecular, biological and expressive language of awareness or soul?

Is it only awareness or soul that has countless levels, expressions and dimensions, or does our body and bodyhood too?

Are the many so-called 'subtle' bodies of the human soul separate bodies or 'things in themselves'?

Or are they rather distinct but inseparable aspects of our bodyhood – of the unique mode of bodying the universal awareness (singular) that is the divine source of all souls (plural) in their individuality?

Is the most fundamental scientific 'fact' the 'objective' existence of a world of physical bodies in space and time, or subjective awareness of such a universe?

Is awareness a property, product or function of our bodies and brains, and 'the soul' the ghost of a neurological machine?

Or are all bodies nothing but embodiments of awareness or soul, and all organs the bodily expression of organising patterns of awareness?

Is it through the physical body and its senses that the self or soul perceives a material world around it? Or is the entire physical universe and every body we perceive in it a materialisation and self-manifestation not of 'energy' but of soul – of awareness?

Is it our bodies that enable us, as souls, to move from one place to another in space?

Or is all physical movement and travel the embodiment of a journey of the soul, a movement through different spaces, atmospheres, moods and climates of soul?

Do places 'have' a particular soul, sensed through their 'atmosphere'?

Or are they the materialisation of that soul and its 'atmospheric' qualities?

Does our awareness of the sensory qualities of things, such as their shape and colour, affect our souls?

Or are they the sensory expression of soul qualities, soul colours, soul shapes and soul tones - of innate sensual qualities of awareness itself?

Is there such a thing as an un-ensouled, inanimate or insentient object?

Or are all things ensouled with awareness, however diffuse or highly differentiated?

Such are some of the basic questions concerning the fundamental nature of body and soul addressed by The New Yoga. For this is a yoga not of the physical body alone but of the soul and its body. By 'soul' is meant 'awareness' – both that unbounded and divine awareness whose body is the entire universe, and its individualised expression and embodiment as our own soul. The soul body is what unites us with the divine and universal awareness body, and through it, with the individualised awareness or soul of each and every thing within it.

All that we hear, see, feel, touch – all that we perceive as the bodies of both things and people, is a “materialised body image” (Seth) of their soul. Perception is the outer form we give those patterns and qualities and states of awareness - however elementary - that constitute the essential bodily nature of any soul - whether that of a human being, animal, plant, stone or seemingly insentient object of any sort.

Physical perception is a process by which *we ourselves* give material form to the soul body or ‘psychic body’ of a thing or person. We each do so within the unique spatial field of our awareness. No two people ever sit in the ‘same’ space or room together. Instead they each sit in their own materialisation of that room and its objects. They think they sit in the same room because they have materialised it in what they think is an identical way. They may be totally unaware of subtle or even stark differences in the rooms they materialise, or reduce these to mere differences in their opinions or feelings about the room. The fact remains that the two rooms (or more if there are more people) however seemingly identical, are nevertheless absolutely distinct. That does not mean they are separate rooms. For whilst distinct they are also inseparable, each wall comparable to a two-sided mirror, which both connects and distinguishes the rooms reflected in it on either side.

The images of people and objects we create in our dreams are not merely mental images created from memory. They are living images with a sensuous tangibility and substantiality that can even exceed our experience of objects perceived in our waking awareness.

The process of creating materialised body images or ‘phantom bodies’ of other souls is the essence of what we call ‘dreaming’. Essentially both people in the room are ‘dreaming’ that room, except that in the waking state their respective dream rooms are both more stable and

congruent with that of others, so that rather than experiencing them as their own private dream rooms they experience the room as they would a shared dream, one with a seemingly solid character.

Our awareness of the world we perceive around our bodies, like our awareness of the space around us in a room, is not itself something bounded *by* our bodies or created in our brains. Instead both our bodies and the physical environments, rooms and objects we materialise around them constitute our own larger 'world body' - materialised within and from a space or field of awareness not bounded by our skins. That world body includes all the materialised images or phantom bodies that give form to our perception of the things and people around us, allowing us to perceive their own innate awareness or soul in material form.

As awareness, the soul is not 'contained' in or 'bounded' by the body, like space contained in a room, air contained in a balloon or water contained in a bottle. For it is also the space, air or water surrounding any bounding vessel or 'container'. The body as a boundary – and every body is essentially nothing but a boundary, like the skin of a balloon - is merely a more or less permeable membrane, between its own inside and outside, between the inside and outside spaces of our own awareness or soul. Each person in a room materialises the apparently solid reality of the objects within it from the divine-cosmic aether - which they then perceive merely as the seemingly empty space and invisible air around those objects and around their bodies and contained by a single room. In reality, space and air is an the divine aether (Akasha), this being an unbounded space of awareness that is itself pervaded (Ksha) with the 'aetheric' or 'air-like' substantiality of awareness (Prana), an air we breathe through our felt body surface as a whole and constitutes our own 'body of breath' or 'pranic body'.

Dreaming, like waking perception, is an activity of creating tangible images of objects, environments and people through attunement to their souls. In nightly dreams, the things we dream of often combine, condense, or merge characteristics of objects, people, events and environments we know in waking life. That is because they give form to soul aspects and qualities of more than one object or person - aspects and qualities that are also aspects and qualities of our own soul that we can freely combine and give form to in our dreams.

If we dream a tree, it is not just the memory of some 'actual' tree we recall or creatively modify. The dream tree is an expression of the tree-nature and bodily tree-form of our own soul - which is *also* what enables us to resonate with the souls of trees in waking life in such a way as to materialise an image of their souls - to perceive trees *per se*.

What we perceive as the form of our own 'physical body' is itself a materialised image of our own 'psychical body' or 'soul body' - of the individualised forms and features of our own awareness or soul. It is *also* a materialisation of our own 'physical soul' or 'body soul' - the innate awareness of our body's atoms, cells and organs.

What we perceive as the 'physical' body of another person however, is not their independent physical materialisation of their psychical body and physical soul, and in this sense not their true physical body at all. Instead it is our materialised image of their psychical body and physical soul, a phantom materialisation of it - a 'phantom body'.

When two people meet in the flesh there not two bodies present but four, six - indeed eight. There is each person's independent 'physical body', what Seth calls a "primary construction". Yet this itself is a materialisation both of their own 'soul body' or 'psychical body', and

of their 'physical soul' or 'body soul'. In addition there are two further 'phantom bodies' – each person's materialisation of the soul body and body soul of the other. These are what Seth calls "secondary constructions". It is the phantom body of the other - our own materialised image of their body soul and soul body - that we perceive, and not their own true physical body, their own 'primary construction' or materialisation of their soul body and body soul. No one can directly perceive the true physical body of another. All that they can directly see, hear, feel and touch is a phantom body – their own materialised body image of the other. This is an esoteric truth of which few are aware, and most would find impossible to comprehend.

For it would and does indeed imply that each partner in sex for example, is not actually – directly – making love to the true physical body of the other but to a phantom body. Similarly, each murderer who thinks they can kill another person by piercing their physical body with a knife or bullet is mistaken. All they can pierce is a phantom body. Killing the true physical body of another is only possible if in doing so we are at the same time piercing their *soul* – doing so in such a way and to such a degree as to affect both the psychical body and physical soul of the other – and in this way *indirectly* injuring or 'killing' the physical body that is *their* materialisation of it.

No healer or physician ever actually treats or operates on the true physical body of a patient, but works solely on a phantom of it. What distinguishes the true 'spiritual' or 'psychic' healer is that they are aware of working directly on the soul of the other and its 'inner bodies' – in particular their psychical body. Most forms of complementary and alternative medicine on the other hand (homoeopathy, herbal remedies or acupuncture for example) are not forms of psychic healing in this sense, for they are designed to directly affect the

'physical soul' or 'body soul' of the patient, rather than their psychical body or 'soul body'.

Orthodox medicine knows only what it thinks of as the physical body of the patient, and thinks of itself as bringing results by its direct effect on what it thinks of as the patient's actual physical body. In reality the extent to which it can bring about such effects depends on the degree of closeness or correspondence between the physical body that the physician thinks they are treating directly and the phantom materialisation of the patient's body that they are actually creating – and then testing and treating.

The danger of both orthodox and complementary medicine however, lies not only in their ignorance of these different dimensions of our bodyhood, but in the result of this ignorance - their power to unhealthily disrupt the intimate relation between the human being's many distinct but inseparable bodies – their psychical body, their physical soul, their physical body and their larger 'world body' of phantom materialisations.

Essentially, it is relationships that are 'healthy' or 'unhealthy', in or out of kilter, just as it is also relationships that heal. Indeed one can go so far as to say that health *as such* has to do with the health of human relationships, and with healthy and unhealthy ways of relating to ourselves and others. There is no such thing as a 'sick' body or soul, only what Martin Buber called "sicknesses of relation". Soul itself is a feeling relation to others and to the divine Other – that divine awareness of which we are all individualised embodiments. What makes anybody a 'healer' is not their mental knowledge about the body, but their bodily awareness of the patient as a being or soul - their capacity to feel and

transform the dis-ease of soul that finds expression in a patient's disease symptoms.

Soul as such – awareness - is also a relation to the countless possible bodily forms and shapes that it can take. Similarly, each individualised awareness or soul is also a relation – a relation to its own ways of giving bodily shape and modes of expression and those of others. Like words, the language that *is* our body can be a more or less rich or poor, deep or superficial, resonant or distorted expression of those wordlessly felt but still unformulated dimensions of awareness that constitute our soul.

As a language, the body too, is essentially both a product and a medium of *relationship*. Thus how deeply we feel, touch or embrace another person's true body depends on how truly we feel, touch or embrace their *souls* as we feel, touch or embrace their bodies – or rather our own phantom bodily materialisation of their soul.

Whether we reap full enjoyment from sex, die from a knife or bullet wound, or are healed by a form of medicine, all depends ultimately on the degree of resonance or dissonance between our soul and its body and the phantom materialisations of it created by others. Here too then, it is the embodied soul relationship of one individual to another that finds expression in the course and outcomes of their 'physical' relationship and interactions.

It is the aspects of other peoples' soul that we are sensitive to, or choose to focus on or find easy to resonate with, that determine how we perceive their bodies - shaping the phantom bodies that are our materialised body images of them. These phantom bodies give form to the particular nature of our feeling awareness of others. This is something directly sensed by others, even if unconsciously, and

therefore has the power to affect both their feeling awareness of themselves and its bodily expression – for better or worse.

Not just the beauty but health and goodness of another can be deeply influenced by the ‘eye’ of the beholder – meaning not just the way we look at other people or judge them in our minds, but what we actually see before us, which is the phantom body we have created through resonance with aspects of their soul and ours that may be more or less beautiful or healthy. Simply to think ‘well’ or ‘ill’ of someone is no mere metaphor – for it can lead others, if they let it, to feel well or ill, feel good or bad. Similarly, if we see someone looking sick or unwell this may either provide a clue to a dis-ease of soul they are unaware of, or encourage them to feel and be less well than they actually are.

The way we perceive others physically – through the phantom body – is determined by the aspects and qualities of their soul we attune to. And we can only attune to soul aspects and qualities of others that are also actual or latent aspects and qualities of our own soul. All perception alters both perceiver and perceived. Our perception of other people *acts* on and affects them, just as does their perception of us. Perception therefore, whether of people or things, is not just action but dynamic interaction. There is no such thing as an ‘objective’ perception of a thing, body or person. For everything that we perceive as an ‘object’, whether thing or person, is the result of an ‘inter-subjective’ interaction between two souls, each of whose perception is shaped by their individualised patterns and qualities of subjective awareness.

Not only every soul, but each of its aspects or qualities, and every patterned complex of such soul aspects and qualities - both human and non-human - has its own innate bodily form. It is therefore capable

of both materialising that form, and of being perceived in phantom form, both in our dreams and in waking life. That is why in dreams, as in altered states of consciousness, drug-induced or not, our perception of reality can alter dramatically, and also expand dramatically – allowing us to perceive not only our ordinary reality in extra-ordinary ways but other realities and other species or sub-species of consciousness ordinarily invisible to us.

That is why, like dreams, myths and fairy tales are replete with strange worlds and creatures, including images of spirits, demons or monsters of all sorts. There are realities – aspects, qualities, complexes or species of consciousness - behind these images, even though their nature may bear little resemblance to the way we perceive them through the phantom forms we give them – for these are drawn from our known reality and not from realities of which we are normally unaware. Thus they invariably tend to be given animal, chimerical or neo-humanoid forms – whether the mythical beasts, humanoid or animal gods of the past or their contemporary equivalents - monstrous or humanoid ‘aliens’. Yet such ‘anthropocentrism’ and ‘anthropomorphism’ blinds us to the fact that the way a jellyfish perceives the bodily form (Greek *morphe*) of a shark or the way a spider perceives the bodily form of a cat, may bear no relation whatsoever to the way we, as human beings, perceive a shark or spider.

Despite this, even ‘scientific’ biology assumes our human way of perceiving the bodily form and anatomy of other species is their ‘true’ and ‘objective’ physical form. In reality human perception is no less ‘species-specific’ than that of all other creatures and species. Just as they cannot perceive other species through our human eyes and senses, nor can we perceive our environment and the other life forms within it with their eyes and senses – with the eyes of a fly, the ears of a

bat, or the electrical sense of a shark for example. Just as there are sounds inaudible to a human being but not to a bat so there are beings – whole species of consciousness – that are perceptible to other species we know of but not to us human beings, except in altered states of consciousness.

Awareness, by its nature, feels. Yet just as we cannot feel an object except by touching it, so does our awareness of the souls of others touch them in the very act of feeling them. As 'feeling awareness' our soul is necessarily touched by every way in which we both feel others and are felt by them. It is out of this feeling awareness that we form our phantom bodily images of each other. And just as our souls are sensitive to the way people see and feel us, so are our bodies sensitive to those phantom bodies through which others materialise an image of how they feel us.

As a result, our soul bears within it the resonant trace or imprint of 'every-body' we have ever encountered – both every phantom image we have materialised of other souls, whether in dreams or waking life, and also every phantom image they have materialised of us. Together these traces constitute our *own* 'phantom body', a body of bodies with countless faces. The phantom body is the bridge between soul and body, or more exactly speaking, between our soul body and our body soul, for the phantoms we bear within us affect the molecular and cellular awareness that make up our physical soul, the soul of our physical body – and thus can find expression in its outer appearance, both to ourselves and in the phantom form in which it is perceived by others.

Our inwardly felt body as a whole, our body of feeling awareness or soul body, is a sense organ of the soul, just as our physical body is a

sensory image of our soul. Yet as far as our physical body is concerned however, 'the eyes have it'. For whilst visual perception is a creative activity that *forms* what the eyes see (symbolised by the fact that more nerve signals pass from brain to eye than vice versa) the look in someone's eyes and the way people look at one another – the light of their gaze – is nothing essentially physical at all. For as John Heron pointed out¹, were visual perception something purely physical and 'objective', we could not explain why it is that when we examine someone's eyes in a purely clinical and objective way, like an ophthalmologist, we immediately lose all sight and sense of the subjective quality of their gaze – its soul quality. The *gaze* has to do with the way in which, as souls, we can peer out through our eyes as physical sense organs, peer into the souls of others through their eyes, and see the way in which we are being seen through them.

That is why, even though our eyes, as physical organs only form and perceive phantom images of each other's physical bodies, including their eyes, our gaze is able to penetrate through to their soul – for it is the gaze of the soul and not just a reflection on the retina, and because the eyes are not just an organ of the physical body but are indeed truly 'windows of the soul'. That is why even though the trans-physical light of their gaze does not radiate and reveal its qualities through their eyes – hence their lack of expressiveness - the blind too can gaze, for listening is itself a type of inner gaze, and the gaze as such is essentially nothing but a quality and direction of *awareness*.

The gaze of a sighted person however, reveals the true nature of the 'look' on their face and in their eyes – which is not just something we observe and look at, but reveals their whole way of *looking out on* and feeling the *world* and other people. The gaze is a direct expression of

our soul – revealing the direction and quality of our feeling awareness, not just of ourselves, but also of others.

There are many accounts of the apparent ‘bilocation’ of gurus and yogis – their simultaneous bodily manifestation in more than one place at the same time.

There is a simple but more profound explanation for this that goes beyond current understanding of ‘out-of-body’ travel in the ‘astral body’. Such standard phrases and terms beg the most basic question of what bodyhood as such – any body - essentially is, and whether, given that awareness or soul has its own innate bodily shapes and forms, there is or ever can be any such thing as a disembodied or ‘out of body’ soul or spirit.

The simpler but more profound explanation of bilocation does not rest on a crude dualism of soul and body, but on a deeper understanding of the nature of soul (as awareness) and of bodyhood (as its individualised expressive form or language). If we ‘think’ of someone somewhere – that is to say, if we direct our *awareness* to where they are in space or time, we cannot but *body* that awareness. We do so, knowingly or unknowingly, by sending out a phantom body of our own to wherever they are, one which they may or may not perceive. That phantom embodies the particular portion of our awareness that, wishing to be close to another person despite the physical distance separating us, remains *with* the other person in soul wherever they are - and is therefore also able to *be* with them in space wherever they are. For space itself is nothing but the larger field or world-space of awareness within which all bodies take shape and manifest.

Understanding soul as space, and bodies as bounded portions of a larger field or space of awareness, allows us to schematise the relation principle aspect of our soul-bodyhood, namely:

1. **The formless body** – the soul as a formless field of pure bodiless awareness - yet one which is the source of all bodies, manifesting, taking shape as and pervading all bodies - an awareness whose body is the entire universe and every body in it.
2. **The elemental body** – the body experienced as nothing but different elemental qualities of awareness - as boundless space (Kha), as light (Prakasha), as flaming fire, watery fluidity, dense earthly solidity, or as the all-pervasive breath (Prana), air or 'aether' of awareness (Akasha).
3. **The pranic body or body of breath** – the vitalising, all pervasive 'aether', 'air' or 'breath' of awareness (Prana) within and surrounding our bodies.
4. **The psychical body or soul body** - the soul as an individualised shape, form or embodiment of the divine awareness.
5. **The physical soul or body soul** – the innate awareness of the molecules, cells and organs making up our physical body.
6. **The physical body** – the outer bodily manifestation or form taken by the physical soul as determined, felt and perceived by the individual soul.
7. **The phantom body** – our own pseudo-physical materialisation of the soul body and body soul of a thing or person, given bodily form to aspects of our soul in resonance with it.
8. **The world body** – the entire physical world around us understood as our own larger body, a body of bodies made up of all our own phantom bodily images and materialisations of other souls, soul states and soul qualities.
9. **The dream body** – This is not just our physical body as we feel it within our dreams but the entire body of phantom bodies, whether of things or people, that make up our dream environment, each of which is endowed with its own independent life and awareness.
10. **The karmic body** – this body is a body of bodies, composed of the traces, imprints, seeds or blueprints of every phantom body we have or ever could dream or materialise.
11. **The mental body** – both our mental self-image and an independent body of 'thought forms' composed of organising patterns of awareness. These are made up of inner light and sound. It is around such 'astral' thought-forms' that phantom bodies form.

12. **The awareness body.** None of the nine dimensions of bodyhood described above are soul-less. All can therefore be seen as distinct bodily aspects of soul or awareness - aspect of a singular **awareness body**. This is a body that is both one and many, universal and individual, divine and human, non-physical and physical, and that can take countless forms.

To separate these distinct but inseparable aspects of our divine spiritual soul or awareness body into separate bodies or bodily 'sheaths' or to merge and dissolve them into a single oceanic soul lacking all individualisation, differentiation or form makes no sense. On the other hand, the account of the nature of body and soul offered by The New Yoga makes new and deeper sense of traditional esoteric terminology, Eastern and Western - for example Rudolf Steiner's differentiation of the inner self or 'ego' (awareness body), the 'astral body' (an umbrella term for the mental and psychical body and phantom bodies), the 'etheric body' (the physical soul), the physical body and the 'double' (the karmic body).

The essence of the new form of tantric pair meditation that is the experiential foundation of The New Yoga, lies in using our eyes and body as a whole as a 'sense organ of the soul' and a medium of bodily 'shape shifting' - allowing us not only to form but also to dissolve, 'transform and 'morph' the otherwise fixed 'phantom' perception we have of each other's bodies. As a result, we perceive countless new and hitherto unseen faces and forms of our soul body and that of others, through resonance with those specific aspects of our soul that link us with them.

We are as much aware of our self as a whole - our soul - as we are aware of our body as a whole - in all its distinct but inseparable aspects. If there is a further body to be named it is quite simply the soul understood as our whole self and **whole body**. The 'whole body' in turn is intimately interwoven with the 'world body' and the 'mother body'. The **mother body** is the 'Great Goddess' (Mahadevi) that is Mother of

all life - being the autonomous, creative life and motion that is immanent within all the bounded units or 'monads' of awareness that make up the infinite multiplicity and diversity of the world of bodily forms. She is the one-in-manyness of these monads, which are not separate but continuous and inseparable. She is both the physical soul of every body in the material universe, and at the same time is the autonomous power of manifestation within all bodies, physical and non-physical. She is the creative essence of bodily 'life' in all realities and in every conceivable shape and form - the infinite diversity of bodily form as a singular and divine body. In essence, the Mother quite simply *is* bodyhood - being the *bodying* of all bodies, being the entire *embodied* cosmos - and thus also the *entire body* of the divine source awareness that is the great god (Mahadeva). She is the singularity or oneness of that creative 'power' of manifestation ('Shakti') that arises from the divine awareness or soul ('Shiva'). As Shakti or power of manifestation she is inseparable from that divine-transcendental source awareness (Shiva) from which all realities, forms and bodies emerge and within which they eternally and quiescently abide. At the same time the Mother is the bounding womb and aware inwardness of each and every body that emerges from that divine awareness. At the deepest level, the Mother is that primordial womb of inexhaustible inwardness or potentiality from which all actualities arise. Aware of this realm of potentiality the divine awareness dreams all realities and all beings that could possibly be - only to creatively release them into their own free and autonomous self-actualisation. Yet in doing so, each creature is also endowed with awareness of its own inexhaustible potentialities, and with it the capacity to dream and release them into actuality - that unity of Shiva and Shakti that is the essence of creativity. Here, the universal singularity or oneness of awareness or soul that is Shiva is complemented by the oneness of the mother body that is the Great Mother.