

ŚABDA INSTITUTE

SELF-STUDY GUIDE



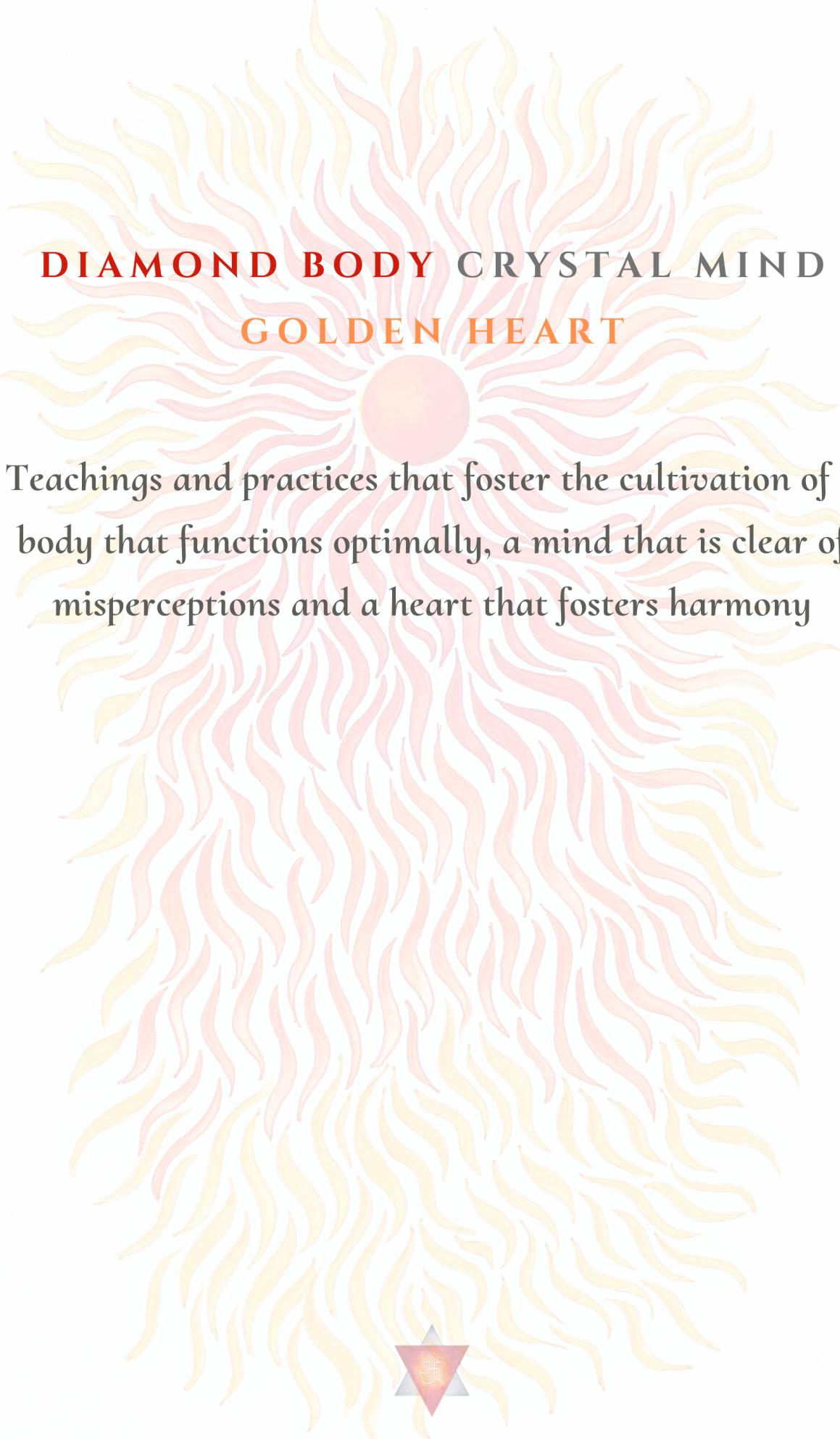
Diamond Body. Crystal Mind. Golden Heart.

Kavitha Chinnaiyan, MD



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DIAMOND BODY CRYSTAL MIND **GOLDEN HEART**

Teachings and practices that foster the cultivation of a body that functions optimally, a mind that is clear of misperceptions and a heart that fosters harmony



FOUNDER'S NOTE

Śabda Institute began as an experiment to test the hypothesis that the highest esoteric teachings of the non-dual Eastern traditions could be applied very directly and practically in one's day-to-day life. Ordinarily, we think of spiritual practice as something that is done outside of one's mundane existence, or as an embellishment to it. This often creates a fissuring of one's reality, where the teaching does not change, shape and radically transform moment-to-moment experience. Instead, it remains just out of our reach.

The Śabda Institute took shape in the proving of the hypothesis. The highest teachings are indeed applicable without regard for our unique life circumstance. We need not become divorced from the vagaries of life to practice spirituality. In fact, the highest practice occurs in the trenches and on the frontlines of life, where the teaching is relentlessly applied and embodied. Here, you will find extensive tools and resources to do just that.

VAJRA DEHA: A diamond body, as defined in the Śabda Institute, is one that is functioning optimally because of a balanced Agni, the fire of transformation that is responsible for digestion and metabolism. With the cultivation of a balanced Agni, the neurohormonal pathways begin to function as they should, resulting in improved health, immunity, sleep, mood, and other aspects of well-being. Of course, these teachings work on the mind and heart too!

SPHAṬIKA CITTA: In the Śabda Institute, a crystal mind is defined as one that is clear, sharp, and free of misconceptions and discursive thought. A crystal mind is cultivated through deliberate work on quieting the mind and then inquiring into its contents. The beauty of working on the mind is that the results spill over to the body and the heart!



SUVARNA HṛDAYA: The golden heart, in the Śabda Institute, refers to radical generosity and openness that arise from a shift in perspective, and not as a mind-based process. Open heartedness is the result of breaking through the walls we build around ourselves; however, this needs to happen in a way that integrates the teachings of the crystal mind and diamond body where the opening is harmonious and infused with beauty.

May your journey be fulfilling in every way and may you find what you're looking for.

Śrī Mātre Namah!

Dr. Kavitha Chinnaian



HOW TO APPROACH THIS GUIDE

In keeping with the Śabda Institute's hypothesis, the deep study of any single course will lead you further in your practice than a cursory or purely intellectual understanding of the totality of our offerings. If there is a course or topic that calls you into deep study, we encourage you to focus there.

However, following the receipt of multiple requests to this effect, this self-study guide was prepared to assist those interested in taking a long-term study approach. The guide recommends a logical sequence and offers suggestions for application in your life. As we know, our goal is to apply these teachings such that they help us evolve in our spiritual practice.

Before we begin, we wanted to let you know that even in self-study, you do not need to go it alone! Please feel free to join any of these free resources where you can access Kavithaji and the SI team for questions or guidance and to connect with like-minded seekers:

SHAKTI RISING FACEBOOK GROUP:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1933962306923494>

A closed group for like-minded practitioners to exchange about their journey.

HEART OF WELLNESS FACEBOOK GROUP:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/266271657824647/>

A closed group specifically for exchanges around the lifestyle practices taught in the Heart of Wellness.



VIDYĀ VERSUS AVIDYĀ (AKA, THE NEED TO APPLY THE TEACHINGS)

We live in a particular way in a particular society. We learn about ourselves and the world at large within the context of social, moral and cultural norms but why are we here? What is it that all of us want more than anything? What do we long for? It is a state of permanent, unchanging happiness or contentment. We don't have to want anything more. This is the deep feeling and study of the fundamental human pursuit. Have you had the feeling that once something happens (e.g. graduating, getting married, having children,...), "I will be good." It implies that once I get there, I can rest from this perpetual seeking. That is what all of us want.

Going through these constant cycles of pain and joy and its constant striving towards permanent contentment is in itself suffering and is applicable to us all. To be free of this wanting is to transcend suffering. The knowledge that gives rise to that is known as Vidyā. This concept has been the stronghold of various texts beginning with the vedās.

There are two words which can be confused because they both mean knowledge: Vidyā is all-encompassing knowledge. If you know the working of one thing, you know the working of the whole universe. This Vidyā involves all the senses, the body, the mind, the heart and all levels of consciousness: the waking state, the dream state, the deep sleep state and beyond that. Jñāna, even though it is equated to Vidyā, is intellectual knowledge, where something is understood intellectually but it hasn't permeated all these levels. Kavithaji uses the example of having learned all there is to learn about a strawberry without ever having tasted one.



Our goal here is to experience the Vidyā (all-encompassing knowledge) and so for this, we must apply the teachings. This guide will contain recommendations on how to implement this in your own life so that you may move beyond the path of Jñāna, to Vidyā.

(Excerpt from class 1 of *Kali Mahāvidyā* self-study course)

What is it that you really want?

A fundamental aspect of the spiritual journey is understanding what it is that we really want. For this, we need to be radically honest with ourselves. If liberation is what we want, this should inform our choices and our lifestyle. This takes discipline and persistence. These are only possible if we have clarity on our priorities. Make it an on-going practice to come back over and over to this question:

“What is it that I really want?”

Make it a saṅkalpa (resolve) to let your life be guided by this in every moment.

OTHER USEFUL REFERENCES:

BLOG:

<https://sabda.institute/what-do-you-really-really-want-a-dialogue/>



PART 1 – ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION



For there to be any ‘progress’ on the spiritual path, we need to cultivate an understanding of the View, and to align our lifestyle and sādhanā to it. The following are three fundamentals courses on: lifestyle (The Heart of Wellness), the tāntric tradition’s View (Fundamentals of Tantra), and the introduction of a meditation practice (Bliss Meditation).

THE HEART OF WELLNESS

This course is based on the book - the **Heart of Wellness**, and is a deep dive into the fundamental understanding of health and wellness. It is based on the logical and algorithmic approach of Āyurveda and includes a guide on how to apply its principles immediately to bring about a long-term change in the physical, mental, and spiritual realms. This course is co-taught by Dr. Chinnaiyan and Dr. Sumit Kesarkar, an eminent Āyurvedic physician and the founder of the [National Library of Āyurveda Medicine](#).

<https://sabda.institute/the-heart-of-wellness-self-study-course/>

BLISS MEDITATION

In just seven short lessons, this online course will teach you how to meditate effortlessly and rewire your mind and body.

<https://sabda.institute/bliss-meditation/>

FOUNDATIONS OF NON-DUAL TANTRA

This course is designed for anyone interested in gaining a fundamental understanding of the non-dual Tāntrik traditions. While pertaining to the non-dual Śaiva path (popularly known as Kashmir Shaivism), the principles examined in this course are also relevant to the Śakta tradition of Śrīvidyā.

We will begin with a brief history of non-dual Tantra and its developed view, which will become the basis for understanding all the other concepts of the path. In subsequent modules, we will gain an overview of the various aspects of the view and the importance of language in the tradition before settling into an understanding of its various practices.

<https://sabda.institute-foundations-of-non-dual-tantra/>

OTHER USEFUL REFERENCES:

BOOKS:

[The Heart of Wellness](#), by Dr. Kavitha Chinnaiyan,

[Glorious Alchemy](#), by Dr. Kavitha Chinnaiyan, Part 1 (The Darśana/ The View)

BLOGS:

<https://sabda.institute/lifestyle-mind-and-disease/>

<https://sabda.institute/the-quest-for-shreyas/>

<https://sabda.institute/meditation-tips/>

<https://sabda.institute/eating-for-yoga-and-for-health-part-i/>

<https://sabda.institute/eating-for-yoga-and-for-health-part-ii-agni/>



SUGGESTED DAILY PRACTICE:

- Implement the Bliss Rx lifestyle prescription.
- Contemplate the View.
- Meditate 20 minutes, twice daily.
- Continue the contemplation of what it is that you really want.



PART 2 – CONTEMPLATION AND SELF-INQUIRY



Building upon the fundamentals from part 1, this section invites you to delve deeper into the darśana and to apply it to self-inquiry and contemplation. This contemplation helps us develop our crystal mind and unravel the conditioning that keeps us set in the same patterns. The two proposed courses also help deepen our understanding of the View.

NAVARĀTRĀ – DEVĪ MAHĀTMAYAM

Literally translating to “nine nights,” Navarātrā is a celebration of Devī/Goddess (Śakti) and occurs four times a year. Although there are numerous stories associated with Navarātrā, the most well-known are recounted in the Devī Mahātmayam, a lush text that describes Śakti’s victory over evil. Śakti takes innumerable forms across the eons to accomplish this task, the most famous of which are Durgā, Mahākāli, Mahālakṣmī and Mahāsaraswati.

Although the Devī Mahātmayam keeps us spellbound in tales of despair and hope, its hidden power lies in its symbolism since the sequence of events in the text closely mirrors the inner transformation on our spiritual journey.

<https://sabda.institute/navarathri-course/>

SHAKTI RISING

The Mahāvidyās are the ten great goddesses of cosmic wisdom. These goddesses become portals to truth, beauty and sweetness in daily life, when we invoke them in specific ways. They show us the path from suffering to joy, from bondage to freedom, and from discontentment to fulfillment.

These great goddesses have been steeped in deep mystery and mysticism, rendering them inaccessible to those who may not be familiar with the tradition. The uniqueness of these goddesses is that they are relevant to every path!

In this self-study course, you dive deep into the mystery of your own being with the Mahāvidyās as your subjects of worship, non-dual self-inquiry, exploration and profound openings.

The goddesses will be explored via imagery, meditations, specific mantras, lifestyle practices and other exercises to open to their radiant presence.

<https://sabda.institute/shakti-rising-self-study-course/>

OTHER USEFUL REFERENCES:

BOOKS:

[Shakti Rising](#), by Dr. Kavitha Chinnaiyan

BLOGS:

To accompany the Navarathra course:

<https://sabda.institute/coming-home-to-ma/>

<https://sabda.institute/the-inner-journey-during-navaratri/>

<https://sabda.institute/how-to-destroy-mahishasura/>

<https://sabda.institute/vanquishing-raktabija-navarathri-gunas-part-ii/>

<https://sabda.institute/shumbha-nishumbha-navarathri-gunas/>



To accompany the Shakti Rising course:

<https://sabda.institute/dasha-mahavidya-the-ten-great-sources-of-wisdom/>

<https://sabda.institute/dasha-mahavidya-kali/>

<https://sabda.institute/dasha-mahavidya-tara/>

<https://sabda.institute/dasha-mahavidya-tripurasundari/>

<https://sabda.institute/dasha-mahavidya-bhuvaneshwari/>

<https://sabda.institute/dasha-mahavidya-bagalamukhi/>

<https://sabda.institute/dasha-mahavidya-matangi/>

<https://sabda.institute/dasha-mahavidya-kamalatmika/>

<https://sabda.institute/teacups-spiritual-conditioning/>

SUGGESTED DAILY PRACTICE:

- Continue with previous practices.
- Include the contemplative practices provided in the 2 courses, as well as the mantra provided in the Navarathra course.
- For Shakti Rising, we suggest proceeding Mahāvidyā by Mahāvidyā, reading the book, doing the class and reading the related blog and using all as the source of contemplation and self-study.
- We suggest that in order to allow sufficient time for each contemplation, that these classes should be taken at a pace of one class per week at a maximum.



PART 3 – DEEPENING BHAKTI



The practice of pūjā and reverence helps us begin to shift our perspective from our limited focus on the “I-self” and take a step toward understanding of generosity, surrender and openness. In the following courses, we explore working with deities, through a simple pūjā and through the Durgā Sūktam chant, while learning to apply them practically in our lives.

DEITY: THE PATH TO LIBERATION

In this four-part course, we will explore the principles of working with a deity. This course is designed for anyone interested in gaining a fundamental understanding of systematically approaching a deity in the non-dual Tāntrik tradition.

<https://sabda.institute/deity-the-path-to-liberation/>

THE SUBLIME ART OF PŪJĀ

In this course, we will explore the exquisite practice of the Pañcopacāra Pūjā, where a deity is worshiped and adored through five offerings.

The beauty of the Pañcopacāra Pūjā is that with its correct understanding and application, the fruit of the pūjā is gained in real time, as it is being executed. Here, we will learn not only how to do the pūjā, but the non-dual philosophy behind it that will

enable not only a deepening of sādhanā but also an exponential growth of self-awareness.

<https://sabda.institute/the-sublime-art-of-puja-online-course/>

DURGĀ SŪKTAM

“Salutations to Her, who is of the hue of fire, who blazes with the heat and luster of tapas, who is born of fire, and who is worshipped in every deed!”

The Durgā Sūktam is highly revered as a transformational chant, which catapults us out of our ordinary existence into the glorious presence of the goddess. Accordingly, in this class, we will learn not just the superficial meaning of this chant but enliven it through practice and application in daily life.

<https://sabda.institute/durga-suktam-online-class/>

ŚABDA SAṄGHA – STHITAPRAJÑA

The Śabda Institute brings together a community of serious sādhakās who are invested in non-dual inquiry and practice. This community has undertaken a study of the Sthitaprajña verses from the Bhagavad Gītā in which we study how these enlightened beings live and how these concepts from this sacred text can be applied to our day to day lives.

<https://sabda.institute/sabda-saṅgha-membership/>

OTHER USEFUL REFERENCES:

BLOG:

<https://sabda.institute/coming-home-to-ma/>

<https://sabda.institute/meeting-goddess-guru/>



SUGGESTED DAILY PRACTICE:

- Continue with previous practices.
- If it resonates with you, incorporate the Ganapati pūjā or chanting of the Durgā Sūktam. If doing together, you can chant the Durgā Sūktam as you set up the pūjā.
- Contemplate reverence and devotion.



PART 4 – CONTEMPLATION OF THE VIEW



When we go on a journey, we have to be clear on both the destination and how to get there. The View is our map on this journey. As we both study and contemplate the View, we see how to apply it in our lives. It is like our North Star, keeping us on the right trajectory. The following courses delve into the View from the Śrīvidyā perspective. The deep contemplation of either of these will lead us to all the wisdom that we could need to know.

LALITĀ SAHASRANĀMA

In this Self-Study Course, we will delve deep into the Lalitā Sahasranāma, or the thousand names of Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī.

The thousand names span the entire teaching of Śrīvidyā philosophy and practice. The beauty of this great hymn is that it is the “cure for all ills” – physical, mental, emotional, psychological, or spiritual. Most importantly, this hymn steadies the mind by clearing out the debris of conditioning and prepares the practitioner for deeper states of meditation and japā (the practice of mantra).

<https://sabda.institute/lalita-sahasranaama-self-study-course/>

FRACTALS OF REALITY

In ten modules, we will examine the philosophy and structure of the Śrīcakra, at a pace of one āvaraṇa per day through the auspicious chant known as the Khadgamāla Stotram, a central hymn of the Śakta tradition known as Śrīvidyā (auspicious knowledge). The beauty of this powerful hymn is that it is immediately penetrative and cuts through our dense conditioning in one fell swoop. When chanted or heard regularly, it changes one's perception, behavior, and thought process, infusing extraordinariness into an ordinary experience. It is said that this powerful stotram, for the right practitioner, can be the equivalent of the lengthy and auspicious Śrīcakra pūjā.

<https://sabda.institute/fractals-of-reality/>

OTHER USEFUL REFERENCES:

BOOKS:

[Glorious Alchemy](#), Dr. Kavitha Chinnaiyan

BLOGS:

<https://sabda.institute/orgasm-sri-chakra-lalita/>

<https://sabda.institute/sri-vidya-sadhana-the-confluence-of-tantra-yoga-and-vedanta/>

<https://sabda.institute/life-liberty-and-happiness/>

SUGGESTED DAILY PRACTICE:

- Continue with previous practices.
- Incorporate study and contemplation of the View.



PART 5 – DEEPENING STUDIES



You may have begun to observe by now that in many of these courses, we learn the same thing from various perspectives. The following courses delve into unique approaches to the view that may resonate with you. Kālī invites us to explore it through the concept of time and Tārā through speech. Through the Śrī Sūktam, we ask what we actually mean by abundance and generosity of the heart. Any of these lenses can take our understanding deeper.

KĀLĪ

In this self-study course, we will delve deep into the adoration and Vidyā (wisdom) of Kālī, the first Mahāvidyā (Great Wisdom). Utilizing the Kālī yantra as a reference point, we will explore the history, iconography, practice, and higher understanding of this great goddess. Importantly, this course will provide the basis for meeting Kālī in our day-to-day mundane life.

Who is this dark, fierce goddess? What is the significance of her iconography? Why is she the prototypical Mahāvidyā? What is a Mahāvidyā, anyway? What is with all the blood and gore, and how is all this relevant to our life and spiritual practice? These are some of the many questions we will explore in this course, every day inching a little closer to the great goddess until we are ready to offer up our necks to her raised sword.

<https://sabda.institute/kali-mahavidya-selfstudy-course/>

TĀRĀ

In this self-study course, we will delve deep into the adoration and *vidyā* (wisdom) of Tārā, the second Mahāvidyā (Great Wisdom). Utilizing the Tārā yantra as a reference point, we will explore the history, iconography, practice, and higher understanding of this great goddess. Importantly, this course will provide the basis for meeting Tārā in our day-to-day mundane life.

<https://sabda.institute/tara-course/>

ŚRĪ SŪKTAM

“Invoke for me, O Agni, the radiant Śrī, who shines like gold, yellow in hue, wearing gold and silver garlands, blooming like the moon, the embodiment of wealth. O Agni! Invoke for me that unfailing Śrī, being blessed by whom I shall attain all modes of abundance.”

In this 8-part course, we explore the magnificent Śrī Sūktam, a hymn from the Ṛg Vedā that celebrates and venerates Śrī, the source of all abundance, radiance, and beauty in creation. In this course, we will learn the correct way to chant the Śrī Sūktam, while delving deeply into its meaning.

Importantly, we explore what it means to live life fully, take a stance of openness and abundance, cultivate true generosity of the heart, and conquer our own limitations. Two verses are explored per class through the lens of one of the eight Lakṣmīs (Aṣṭa Lakṣmīs) to understand the application of key principles in moment-to-moment practice.

<https://sabda.institute/sri-suktam-self-study-course/>



FOUNDATIONS OF ĀYURVEDA

This systematic, comprehensive course is built to adhere to the traditional training in Āyurveda in India. It is taught by Dr. Sumit Kesarkar, B.A.M.S., Ph.D., the founder of the [National Library of Āyurveda Medicine](#) (NLAM). This course is meant to not only acquaint a student to Āyurveda but to delve deeply into its fundamental principles and create the foundation for advanced studies.

Over 12 modules, students explore the foundational principles of Āyurveda including: History and origin, cosmology, doṣas, dhātus, agni, āma, doṣa prakṛti, dhātu and sāra.

<https://sabda.institute-foundations-of-ayurveda/>



Does a potter shape clay around space or space around clay?

When you perceive a pot, do you perceive a pot or clay?

Can you perceive a pot without the space it is in or the space within it?

So what are you perceiving, really?

When you perceive the shape of the pot, is the pot conforming to space or is the space conforming to the pot? Could you perceive the pot's shape without space?

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