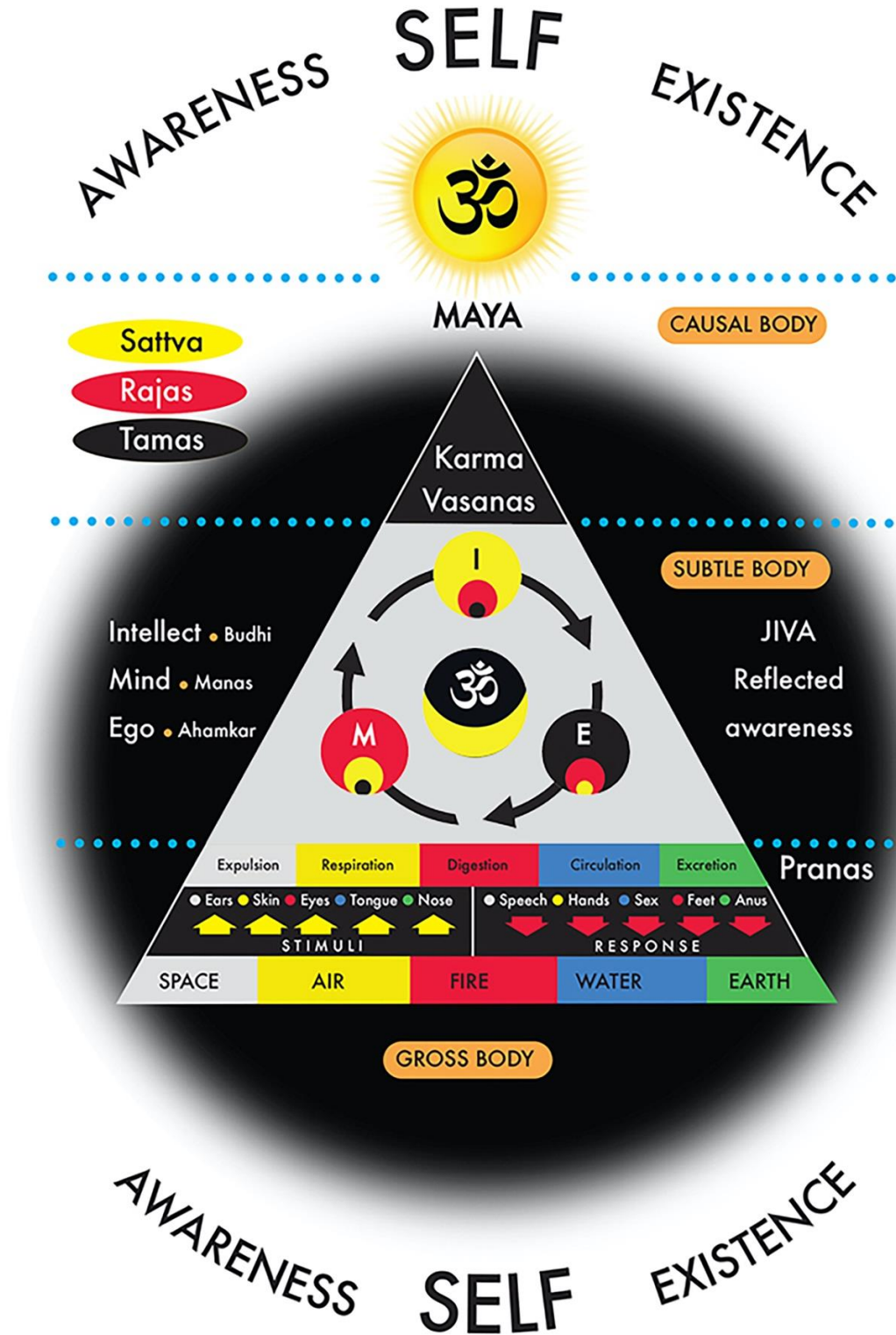


Tattva Bodha

(Knowledge of Truth)

Adi Shankarachya

Written by James Swartz



Forward

It is the desire of everyone to be free of limitations. However, only by understanding one's innermost nature and its relationship to the cosmic order can this desire be realized. The ultimate authority on this topic are the Upanishads, whose topic is Self knowledge. The Upanishads, appended to each of the four Vedas and popularly known as Vedanta are ancient Sanskrit texts from what is now called India.

Like the formula $E = mc^2$, the mantras that comprise the Upanishads contain cryptic nuggets of meaning that require unpacking. A long time ago a great sage, Badarayana, commented on them and his commentaries, which are known as the Brahma Sutras, are also considered source material. Although there is no need for additional source material because the truth never changes, people continue to realize it and feel inclined to speak about it.

Words that appear later cannot be legitimized if they contradict the fundamental non-dual premise of the Upanishads. Non-duality means that reality is only one principle, existence shining as unborn ever-full awareness, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding. In the Eighth Century the most important "modern" link in the Vedic tradition, Sri Adi Shankaracharya, appeared and wrote several important texts about the Self. He did not deviate from the ideas in the Upanishads but presented them with exceptional clarity. His commentary on Tattva Bodha is considered to be the definitive introductory text for the study of the Self.

Why should the teachings of Vedanta be trusted? Because they are not the opinion of an individual or the philosophy of groups of individuals. Nor are they a religious belief system. They are revealed truth, like the knowledge of gravity or electricity, which by definition is not authored by people. Self knowledge is the knowledge of existence shining as consciousness, or awareness if you prefer.

During revelation one's personal point of view is suspended because he or she is "ecstatic", no longer rooted in the small self. Even then, the words used to convey the truth must be verified by many others over a long time before they can be accepted as valid knowledge.

Revealed truth needs additional revelation because the people who hear it second hand tend to interpret it according to their own proclivities. Truth—what is—doesn't belong to me or you. Without it the universal values that make civilization possible would not exist and life would be little more than a nasty competition to survive. Existence and the cosmic order spawned by it is one, so the knowledge of it can only be one. It is not possible to simply read Vedanta or hear a few teachings and come away enlightened because untrained minds are always subject to bias.

The teaching tradition of Advaita Vedanta corrects the tendency to personalize the truth. It cultivates a discriminating dispassionate mind endowed with a burning desire to know and provides qualified teachers established in non-duality who skillfully wield the means of knowledge. If your study of Tattva Bodha

awakens a desire to realize the Self you should approach a qualified teacher and request teaching.

Introduction

Desire

Physical and biological needs are built into the body and shared by all members of the human species. Other needs, however, are cultivated on the basis of predetermined ideas that arise from experience. The tendency of a dog to go towards a man holding a bone is a cultivated instinct. It has previously been fed by hand and remembers that the experience of chewing a bone is attractive. If its owner appears holding a stick it runs away, having developed an aversion to beatings based on past experience.

In addition to the instinctual choices which we share with animals, humans have the ability to think. This allows them to consciously choose between alternatives: good and bad, pleasure and pain, right and wrong, etc. The ability to discriminate makes it possible: to seek improvement and betterment.

Human beings are a work in progress. Not only are they imperfect and incomplete but, unlike animals, they are aware of it. This innate sense of incompleteness and inadequacy gives rise to a strong urge to seek completeness and wholeness. This urge in turn appears as the desire to be better or different from what one presently is and can be as important to them, sometimes more important, than their instincts and natural bodily urges.

The Irony of Desire and Action

Common sense observation shows that attempts to fulfill desires do not permanently remove desire. On the contrary the more desire is satisfied the more desires appear. In spite of romantic notions fostered by the culture about its desirability, desire is a painfully uncomfortable state of mind continually crying to be cured.

Another way to formulate this problem is to say that human beings strive to feel limitless and free. Who doesn't feel limited by an insufficiency of money, time, power, or love? But whether we see the problem as a quest for completeness or a search for limitlessness why, in spite of the ready availability of material objects, self-improvement programs and therapies both religious and secular, does every attempt to become pure and perfect, limitless and complete fail?

Cause and Effect

Because the desire to be complete can only be satisfied if it is possible to achieve completeness. Unfortunately completeness cannot be achieved because of the law of cause and effect. Completeness/limitlessness/perfection could only be realized even if it were possible to make an effort that would bring an unlimited

result. But actions, which are always performed by finite entities, only produce finite results. Even the sum of tens of thousands of limited actions does not equal limitlessness. Thousandaire become millionaires and millionaires become billionaires and billionaires strive for more. Sadly, one is as far from infinite wealth with one dollar as one is with a trillion. With reference to the state of limitless bliss, ten thousand moments of emotional satisfaction are exactly the same as one moment. Even in the realm of knowledge, the more one knows the more one becomes aware of what is unknown. In spite of his great mathematical knowledge Einstein was ignorant of many other important things.

Understanding the limitation of action with reference to freedom, some conclude that the way to completeness is to go limp, drop out and do nothing. But it is impossible not to act. Even non-performance of certain activities produces consequences; if I don't pay my taxes I end up in trouble. If I don't brush my teeth they rot. Furthermore, non-doing does not reduce craving, so a person who is not pursuing his or her desires is as emotionally discontented as someone who is.

At the same time simple observation leads to the conclusion that in spite of appearances this is a purposeful creation and that things here follow certain well known laws. Everything we do depends on this fact. If water one day decided to be dry and ice decided to be hot the whole cosmos would stop working. Because the desire to be whole and complete, like other desires, occurs in a purposeful creation it must serve a purpose. If this is true then there is a way to satisfy it. Vedanta is such a way. But it accomplishes completion in an unexpected way.

Accomplishment of the Accomplished

Every act is performed to accomplish something. Three factors are involved in the process: what you want to be accomplished, the means employed to accomplish it and the person who wants the accomplishment. By appropriate, timely and adequate effort anything that is unaccomplished can be accomplished. However, no effort or action is required to accomplish that which is already accomplished.

A group of ten men were on a trip in the country when they came to a river that needed to be forded. After they crossed, to make sure they were all present and accounted for the leader lined them up but the count only revealed the presence of nine. Distressed, they searched the riverbanks high and low for the missing person and became depressed when their efforts were fruitless. An old man approached and inquired into the cause of their distress. Once the leader explained the situation the old man placed the leader, who had neglected to count himself, in the line and counted ten.

No action produced the missing person because the missing person was not aware that he was a member of the group. He was unwittingly seeking himself. Freedom, perfection, wholeness, limitlessness—call it what you will—is the nature of the already accomplished Self. No accomplishment can complete us.

The Teaching, the Teacher and the Taught

It so happens that the knowledge that the 'I' is whole and complete has been with us for as long as we have been on the earth in the form of the teaching tradition of Advaita Vedanta. Everyone has enjoyed temporary experiences of completeness, which are actually experiences of their innermost nature, but persist in seeing themselves as wanting creatures. To actually accomplish what is already accomplished the desire to experience freedom needs to be converted into a desire to know what one is, If ignorance is the problem.

Knowledge

Two factors are required to gain the knowledge of an object: the object itself and a valid means of knowledge. To gain dog knowledge a dog should be present and the eyes should be backed by an attentive mind because knowledge happens in the mind. If the eyes are functioning but the mind is not present and attentive knowledge cannot take place.

Knowledge is either direct or indirect. The knowledge of the dog gained by looking at it is direct knowledge. However, if the dog is not present the knowledge obtained by listening to a description is indirect. For direct knowledge a valid means of knowledge must be available. For example, ears are not a valid means to gain knowledge of the color of an object. If the means of knowledge and the object to be known are present, knowledge takes place on its own, assuming a qualified mind. No effort is involved. Only the operation of a means of knowledge is required.

Ignorance deprives us of a means of Self knowledge. We may have heard a great deal about someone and seek to know them. Even if we happen to be in his or her presence by chance it is impossible to gain the knowledge until we are informed that the person we are looking for is in front of us. When this happens, knowledge instantly takes place. In this case the words of the one who informed us constitute the means of knowledge.

Only direct knowledge is complete and error free. The knowledge obtained through reading or hearing about an object is subject to question because the picture formed in the mind is influenced by past impressions, beliefs and opinions. The picture formed of an object from a description of the object in different minds is generally different.

Most of us are ignorant of the fact that we are complete and perfect. Just as eyes cannot see themselves, the sense organs and the mind cannot see the Self. Vedanta is a direct and immediate means of Self knowledge. It can deliver Self knowledge because the Self is always present, not hidden away in the spiritual Heart or a transcendental state, nor is it concealed within the physical body.

If you exist, you are the Self. Therefore, it is always possible to know what you are. When do you not experience yourself? That you think that the objects you are experiencing are something other than you is due to lack of understanding. That you don't realize what you are is due to a belief that you are something or someone other than who you are. When this belief is investigated and subsequently dismissed in light of the teachings of Vedanta your sense of limitation and the voice of diminishment that accompanies it dissolves because the Self is limitless. Therefore, if you want to realize your God-given freedom you need to expose yourself to a valid means of Self knowledge.

The Text

Tattva Bodha was written in Sanskrit in the Eighth Century by Shankaracharya and means knowledge of truth. It is an introductory text that sets up the terminology and outlines the fundamentals of Vedanta. After explaining the qualifications necessary to realize the Self, it deals with the relationship between the individual, the world and the Self. It explains the technical terms that form the basis of Vedanta. Without understanding the meaning of these words the means of knowledge will not operate.

To make this text compatible with the subsequent beginning, intermediate and advanced texts that comprise the science of Self inquiry available at ShiningWorld.com I have changed original verse numbering while preserving the meaning.

INVOCATION

***Salutations to the Self, the bestower
of knowledge in the form of my teacher.
This treatise, "The Knowledge of Truth" is for the benefit
of qualified seekers of liberation. (1)***

At the beginning of most Vedantic texts one usually finds a verse that tells the purpose of the text, for whom it is intended and the benefit derived from understanding it. In this case it is for a qualified seeker and its purpose is to explain the nature of reality. The benefit is freedom from existential suffering. A teacher is someone who helps remove Self ignorance.

Modern society is a veritable supermarket of identities. But all our social identities are based on ignorance of our one true identity. Though limited identities offer to solve various topical problems they only offer limited relief. If I am gay I can't be straight. If I'm a man I can't be a woman. If I'm a Republican I can't be a Democrat. The teachings of Vedanta reveal an identity that encompasses all identities and is not in conflict with any.

The knowledge of the Self is mixed with ignorance of the Self. Therefore a

discriminative inquiry is needed. This inquiry will only yield a successful result if the inquirer is qualified. A qualified person possesses the following qualities.

QUALIFICATIONS

***Discrimination (viveka) between
the impermanent and the permanent
is the conviction that the Self alone is permanent
and that everything experienced is impermanent. (2)***

People attracted to Self inquiry have usually enjoyed experiences that convince them that there is a “spiritual” something other than what they perceive with the senses, emotions and the mind. But they are always uncertain what it is. The fundamental method for Self-realization is the discrimination (*viveka*) between what is permanent and what isn't. Although reality is the Self, non-dual existence shining as consciousness/awareness, this fact is mostly unknown. Even if it is known intellectually one needs to train the intellect to discriminate the Self from the changing objects that present themselves if one wants to gain permanent happiness.

***Dispassion (viragya) is the absence of desire
for the enjoyment of the fruits of one's actions. (3)***

This difficult qualification basically excludes most of us from Self-realization because it is precisely the desire for the results of one's actions that people undertake action. A qualified seeker of liberation, however, understands and accepts the fact that the results of action do not permanently erase his or her sense of inadequacy, incompleteness and limitation because they are conditioned by time. Dispassion should arise from this understanding, not from despair. It is common for people to become negative when they realize that getting what they want and avoiding what they don't does not solve the happiness issue. A dispassionate person knows that the satisfaction subjective and objective events bring is always temporary. Understanding that fact frees us from the compulsion to act and allows spontaneous, creative activity, which frees the mind to seek happiness through Self knowledge.

**Looking at disturbing fears and desires from the Self's
point of view, (*sama*) not pandering to them, brings the mind under control.
If disciplining the mind is impossible,
the senses should be controlled (*dama*). (4)**

**Fulfilling one's duty toward oneself, one's family,
community, and religion while keeping universal values
in mind is called *uparama*. (5)**

Dharma is a very wonderful and complex concept with many meanings. *Svadharmā* means *self-dharma*, doing your duty to yourself. It can refer to your essential nature—limitless awareness—or it can refer to your non-essential nature, the person you think you are. In the context of the discussion on qualifications it means doing your duty to the person you think you are. If you don't take care of that person, you will never realize what you really are. You needn't fix the world, no matter how noble your intentions, try to live up to an idea of the perfect you or envy others, because there is nothing wrong with you in the first place.

The path to liberation is not about transcending or denying your conditioned self. It is accepting who you are here and now. If I do not know what my *svadharmā* is, I do not respond to situations appropriately (*visesa dharma*) keeping universal values in mind (*samānya dharma*), I collect unwanted karma, which keeps me going as a doer/enjoyer entity that produces karma. Doing what is to be done at a given place and in a given situation, whether you like it or not, is *svadharmā*. Through it we master our likes and dislikes. Exercising this understanding in every situation builds self-esteem and makes you feel successful because you have done what is right for yourself and the world, not just what is expedient.

**Sticking to inquiry with a happy frame of mind no matter what
obstacles are encountered is called forbearance. (6)**

Forbearance (*titiksha*) is objectivity toward pain of all kinds without anxiety, complaint or attempt at revenge. It applies only to situations that we can do nothing about. In other situations you should act to change things if possible. Forbearance is understanding that people cannot be changed but giving them the freedom to be what they are, and setting up boundaries to take care of yourself.

For instance, I love my wife. My wife loves her mother. My mother-in-law does not love me for various reasons. She wants to visit her daughter on the weekend. I am stuck indoors because of an accident at work. We are going to have to spend two days under the same roof. Should I make a big issue of my bad feelings and react to hers or should I let the feelings slide? If I let them slide and treat my mother in law politely, I am a forbearing person. If I seek every opportunity to let her know how I “really” feel, I am not qualified for self-inquiry.

Faith (*shraddha*) is the belief that what the scripture and the teacher say is true, pending the result of inquiry. (7)

Faith is not blind belief. On the contrary, one should independently reflect and analyze what is being taught to see if it jibes with common sense and reason. Faith is the belief that an honest attempt to enquire will lead to understanding one's innermost ever-free nature.

Single pointedness is the ability to keep the mind absorbed on a given topic for a considerable period of time. (8)

Also known as focus, this quality (*samadhana*) is meant to correct a the tendency of a greedy mind to multitask. The mind is curious. It is its nature to wander. If it does not wander you will not know anything. But this tendency is not always helpful for self-inquiry. It needs the ability to stay on a given topic for a considerable period of time. Since our primary value is freedom and we know that Vedanta can deliver it, we need to bring the mind back to the teachings over and over until its tendency to wander is curbed. Contemplate your desires and fears in light of the teachings and make the required adjustments until your life conforms to the inquiry.

Intense desire for freedom should be one's primary value. (9)

A burning desire for liberation (*mumkukshutva*) means that the person has completely ruled out the possibility that anything that could happen in life would make him or her permanently happy. As a result, all the desires that formerly went into making the world work should be channeled into the Self inquiry. If this factor is present all the other qualities develop quickly. And conversely a discriminating, dispassionate person with a clear mind will not realize the Self unless he or she develops an abiding interest in it.

These are the qualifications required to make a discriminative inquiry into the Self. No other factors are necessary. (10)

INQUIRY INTO THE SELF

The text now discusses the nature of the inquiry (discrimination) that leads to the truth of one's Self.

**The Self alone is real.
Everything else is unreal.
This is the firm conviction of the inquirer
and is called inquiry. (11)**

Because discrete experiences don't last, the happiness derived from them is unsatisfactory. Real means permanent.

**The Self
is that which remains unchanged in the past, present and future.
It exists before and after time.
It pervades and transcends all states of consciousness.
It is called *satyam*, What Is. (12)**

Because the Self is always present the happiness derived from Self knowledge is permanent.

**That which does not exist, like the antlers of a fish,
is called *asat*, unreality. (13)**

Things that exist only in one's mind (fantasies) that cannot be demonstrated to other minds are unreal.

**That which exists but undergoes change
is called *mithya*, apparently real. All things
in the subjective and objective worlds change. (14)**

All discrete experiences are known to be seemingly real when the Self known to be one's self. Taking a temporary experience to be real results in sorrow. Knowing that experiences are seemingly real converts the daily parade of experiences into entertainment.

Existence can be divided into two categories:

The Self, the universal first person, which is called “I” (*aham*) and all the momentary objects that one experiences inwardly and outwardly, which are called ‘This’ (*idam*) or That (*tat*). (15)

Due to ignorance of the nature of the Self a human being is falsely identified with what is changing and apparent: the body-mind-sense complex.

If a person can clearly distinguish the Self from the apparent and changing “not Self,” the real Self be recognized and appreciated as the only source of permanent bliss. Identifying what is “not-self” and asserting that one is the unchanging Self is called inquiry (*tattva viveka*). It is understanding that what one knows about oneself is different from the one who knows.

THE INDIVIDUAL

The following analysis shows how the ever-present “I”, the knower, is different from the body with which it is falsely identified.

What are the three bodies? (16)

The Self is *apparently* clothed in three bodies (*sharira traya*) and enjoys three corresponding states. The food body is called the Gross Body (*sthula sharira*). The physiological systems, the emotions, the intellect and the self concept (ego) are called the Subtle Body. The seeds of one’s past experience are called the Causal Body because they cause one to think, feel and act.

The Gross, Subtle and Causal bodies are witnessed by the *atman*, the Self. If the Self identifies with the Gross Body it seems to be a waking entity. When it identifies with the Subtle Body it seems to be a dreamer or thinker. When it identifies with the Causal Body it appears as a sleeper. This process is similar to an actor playing different characters in a drama or a clear crystal that assumes the color of an object near it (*upadhi*). But like an actor, the Self is distinct from the roles it appears to assume. The Self is therefore called the witness (*sakshi*) of the three bodies and their respective states.

What is the Gross Body? (17)

It is composed of the five elements (*mahabhutas*): space, air, fire, water, and earth, after they have undergone the process of splitting and combining (*panchikarana*).

The gross body is not the Self. It is an object known to it. Experience requires material elements and a gross body which is brought about by a process called *panchikarana*, a five-fold division and recombination of the subtle elements. The gross body first exists as five subtle elements (ideas) in consciousness. Then each subtle element splits into two equal halves and each half splits into four equal parts, so that the resulting gross elements contain half of their original natures and a one-eighth portion of each of the other four. The division of the elements accounts for the diversity of objects. All gross objects are alloys. Once the gross body is created is it possible to experience life.

**The Gross Body is born as a result of meritorious actions
done in the past and is the vehicle by which
one gains experience in the world.
It is born, grows, sustains itself, decays and finally dies. (18)**

When you consider that you could have easily been born as an animal, plant or insect but are instead endowed with self awareness and the capacity to think, it stands to reason that humans value life and do not wish to die. In so far as it is impossible to get something out of nothing, the body can only be the result of previous meritorious choices.

What is the Subtle Body? (19)

It is composed of the subtle aspect of the five elements (*tanmatras*) before they undergo the process of splitting and recombining. It is the result of good actions done in the past and is an instrument for subtle experience. It is comprised of seventeen parts: five perceptive senses (*jnanendriyas*), five organs of action (*karmendriyas*), five vital airs: respiration (*prana*), evacuation (*apana*), circulation (*vyana*), digestion and assimilation (*samana*) and the power in the body to reject unwanted objects (*udana*). *Udana* is active at the time of death and is responsible for expelling the Subtle Body from the Gross Body. The Subtle Body also contains the mind and intellect.

The mind (*manas*) is the location of one's feelings, moods, and emotions. The intellect (*buddhi*) is the deciding faculty and the source of the sense of doership (*ahamkara*). The Self identified with the intellect produces the feeling that "I am a doer. I am a knower." The mind and the intellect are two functional aspects the Subtle Body. When the Subtle Body is feeling volitional, emotional or vascillating it is called the mind (*manas*). When it is involved in the cognitive process of determining, deciding and discriminating it is called intellect (*buddhi*).

The Subtle Body causes the Gross Body, the external material sheath, which is kept alive by the Subtle Body which in turn operates the organs of perception, organs of action and the physiological systems.

The Subtle Body departs when the Gross Body dies. It varies from person to

person. The Self, identified with the emotional aspect of the Subtle Body, causes feelings like “I am happy. I am unhappy. I am angry, etc.” Identified with the intellect is says, “I think, I feel, I believe, I do, I want, etc.”

The Organs of Perception (20)

The organs of perception are called knowledge organs, *jnana indriyas* because they bring us knowledge of the material world. They are: eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin.

The five organs of perception evolve out of the properties of the five material elements. Space, whose property is sound, evolved ears. Air, whose property is touch causes the skin. Fire, which produces light caused the eyes to evolve. Water, the medium for taste evolved the tongue, and earth, whose property is smell, is responsible for the existence of the nose.

The field of experience for the ear is space which makes sound possible. The field of experience for the skin is air which makes touch possible. Perception of forms is the function of the eyes. The tongue operates because water makes taste possible. The purpose of the nose is to cognize earth elements.

The Organs of Action (21)

The organs of action are called *karma indriyas*. They are: speech, hands, legs, genitals and the anus.

The organs of action depends on the following elements. Fire is responsible for speech. Air is responsible for the hands. Space is responsible for the feet. Water is responsible for the genitals. Earth is responsible for the presence of the anus.

What is the Mind? (22)

The mind receives the stimuli from the perceptive senses and unifies the information into one cogent experience. The mind is thoughts, which can be divided into four categories based on their functions. When the mind is in a state of volition, vacillation or doubt it is called *manas*, emotion. When the mind is involved in the analysis of a situation with the idea of making a determination, discrimination or judgement it is called *buddhi*, intellect. When the mind considers itself to be the author of action or the enjoyer of pleasure and pain it is called ego or *ahamkara*. The part of the mind that recalls memories and stores subconscious impressions is called *chitta*.

What is the Causal Body? (23)

It is cause of the Subtle and Gross Bodies. It is inexplicable and beginningless. It is free of division. It causes of Self ignorance because it seemingly conceals the Self and makes it identify with the subtle and/or gross body. It is called the *karana sharira*.

If we are whole and complete, pure and perfect by nature, there is no reason

to enter a body to experience the world since the world is simply a place to garner experience that is aimed at removing the universal feeling of incompleteness. The verse says that the ignorance that causes us to be born cannot be logically explained because the Causal Body is in a dimension prior to the formation of the instrument that wants to know. An effect can't know its cause.

Sleep is identification with the Causal Body. During this state, one is free from the sense of duality created by the Gross and the Subtle Bodies and therefore this state is devoid of thoughts (*nirvikalpa*). While in it we are completely ignorant of everything and don't experience discrete events. In deep sleep everyone experiences limitless happiness or bliss (*ananda*) that is caused by the non-identification with the body and the mind.

What is The Experience of Bliss in the Waking State? (26)

The Causal Body is responsible for the bliss an individual feels in the waking state. Three satisfying experiences operate in it. The mild joy felt when one thinks of a desirable object is called *priya*. The exciting joy one feels when an object of one's desire is about to be gained or a feared object is about to be avoided is called *moda*. The intense satisfaction that happens when a desired object is actually experienced and possessed is called *pramoda*.

What are the Five Sheaths? (27)

The word 'sheath' (*kosha*) does not indicate an actual covering because the all-pervading ever-present Self cannot be hidden by the Gross, Subtle or Causal bodies. However, owing to the proximity of the all-pervasive associationless Self, which is awareness and which is experienced as "I", an individual tends to identify with: (1) The gross body, which is called the food sheath, (*annamaya kosha*), (2) the five physiological functions: digestion, respiration, absorption, circulation and excretion (*pranamaya kosha*), (3) the emotions (*manomaya kosha*), (4) the intellect, because of which one is conscious of one's knowledge and accomplishments (*jnanamaya kosa*) and (5) the bliss sheath (*anandamaya kosa*).

In the waking state an individual knows certain things and is ignorant of other things. In the deep sleep state every individual experiences an undivided state of bliss. Because the mind and intellect are not functioning in deep sleep there are no problems.

***Because the "I", existence shining as blissful consciousness,
is aware of the five sheaths it cannot be any one of them.***

Just as one's material possessions are distinguished from one's self, the Self has no connection with the three bodies or the five sheaths. The knower is always different from the known. Therefore the Self, the only knower, is said to be

“beyond the bodies and sheaths.” (*panchakoshatita*)

What are The Three States? (28)

The three states of experience are the waking, dream and deep-sleep states (*avasha traya*) and correspond to the three bodies.

(1) The state of experience in which the sense objects are perceived through the sense organs is called the waking state (*jagat avastha*). When the Self identifies with the gross body it is called *vishwa*, the waker. The Subtle and Causal bodies also function in the waking state.

(2) The dream state (*swapna avastha*) is the experience of projected by the subconscious impressions (*vasanas*) garnered in the waking state. When the Self identifies with the Subtle Body it is called *taijasa*, the shining one because it reflects consciousness. It is a state luminous with thought and feeling even though the sense instruments are inactive. It has no objective reality.

(3) That state about which on waking one says "I did not know anything. I enjoyed limitlessness" is the deep sleep state (*sushupti avastha*). The experiencer of sleep is an extremely subtle entity called *prajna* which is the Self identified with the Causal Body.

In the waking and dream states we gain discrete experiences but deep sleep is a universal experience. We know nothing because the mind, the instrument of knowledge is absent. Freedom from limitation is bliss. Consequentially people cherish sleep. The Self, consciousness or awareness, however is present in deep sleep so that when the sleeper becomes the waker the memory of the experience of sleep does not disappear. It is not a void.

What is the Self? (29)

The three states of consciousness pertaining to the individual have been described. From this information it should be clear that the Self (*atma*) is given a different name in each state as it identifies with different bodies.

**However, the Self is always the same and ever present in each state.
It is the knower of the states and is therefore called *sakshi* or the witness.**

It is not enough to know what the Self isn't. To realize it directly and retain the knowledge the seeker needs to know what it is which is gained by removing ignorance about it. The text now explains what the Self is. Although one commonly hears that the Self cannot be known, only the Self can be known with certainty since it is the only thing that is always existent, always present and never changes. The objects, subtle and gross, that one knows enjoy a peculiar ontological status: they

are neither real nor are they unreal (*mithya*). Any knowledge of them is subject to error and correction because they never remain the same.

What is the Nature of the Self? (30)

If the Self is neither the five sheaths nor the three bodies what is it? It is the knowledge of them and is awareness, *chit*. Because of awareness things are known. It is the only knower.

The Self does not change when the three bodies and their respective states change. It is unborn and beyond time. Therefore is called *sat*, “that which always exists.”

The experiences suffered by the three bodies do not affect the Self. Self effulgent, it sees space as an object and pervades every atom of the cosmos. It is a complete, partless whole. (*ananta*).

The Self is that because of which I know what I know and know what I don't know. It is innate knowledge. One need not tell an individual that he or she exists and is aware because it is self-evident. When the Self associates with the body it does not know that it is free. It is already accomplished so nothing can be done to gain or lose it. It can only be claimed once Vedanta removes the beginningless ignorance that prevents it from appreciating itself as ever-free existence shining as blissful consciousness.

THE COSMOS

What is the Cosmos and How Did it Evolve? (31)

We shall now explain the cosmos (*jagat*) and the evolution of the cosmic principles. The universe which is created by *Maya/Isvara* and depends on the Self, awareness, for its existence.

How can the empirical objective world, which is timebound and finite, arise out of infinite Awareness? Because the infinite cannot become finite, the presence of a temporal experienceable reality poses a problem.

The creator of the World is called *Maya* or *Isvara*. A created object can come about by a change (*parinama*) of the substance from which it is made. For instance, a lump of clay can be transformed into a pot.

Or it can be created by a misperception (*vivarta parinama*) that takes its substance for something other than what it is.

In the twilight a thirsty traveler approached a village well. Reaching down, she recoiled in fear when she saw a big snake coiled next to the bucket. Unable to move for fear of being bitten, she imagined terrible things, including her own death. At that time an old man coming to the well noticed her standing there petrified with fear.

"What's the problem?" he asked kindly.

"Snake! Snake! Get a stick before it strikes!" she whispered frantically.

The old man burst out laughing. "Hey!" he said, "Take it easy. That's no snake. It's the well rope coiled up next to the bucket. It just looks like a snake in the twilight."

In this case the snake was created by the woman's signorance of the rope. This power of projection is universal and applies moment to moment to any experienced object. It causes inner and outer conflict.

The process of Self inquiry is becoming aware of one's projections and denials and dismissing the apparent part of the Self—the mind—that makes them.

The Creation and the Creator are Non-Different. (32)

Maya is eternal unborn matter (*prakriti*) and the intelligence that shapes it. It is inert and capable of reflecting awareness. It is made of three elemental energies: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Each energy has a particular quality or *guna*. These energies are everything, are in everything and create everything.

Normally, the creator and the substance out of which it creates objects are different. A potter, for instance, is different from the clay out of which the pot is created. But existence is non-dual awareness/consciousness, so there is no other substance from which *Maya* can create. Therefore it fashions an intelligently designed creation out of itself; just as a spider generates its web out of its own body without ceasing to be a spider.



Consciousness appears as this world without undergoing any change. It creates in three stages: 1. pure reflected awareness, 2. awareness reflected in a dull mirror, and 3, the division and

recombination of the five elements. ¹

What is a Self-Realized Person? (33)

It is someone who has realized beyond a shadow of doubt that the Self is unborn and limitless and who has transferred his or her identity from the Not-Self to the Self. It is someone who has realized beyond a shadow of doubt that the Self and the world, which contains sentient beings and insentient objects is non-different from the Self. It is someone who is satisfied with everything as it is.

A *jivanmukta* is someone who is liberated from the notion of personhood while alive. He or she is like a wave that has realized that it is not separate from the ocean. His or her physical body continues as long as the momentum of its past actions are still in force (*prarabdha karma*). He or she does not perform actions with a sense of doership and is unconcerned with the results of actions.

¹ For a detailed discussion read, "The Yoga of Three Energies," available here: <https://www.shiningworld.com/product/the-yoga-of-the-three-energies-the-three-gunah/>

What Kind of Knowledge is Self knowledge? (34)

Knowledge is gained in three ways: (1) by direct perception of the sense organs (*pratyaksha*); (2) indirectly (*anumana*) by inference when the object of knowledge is away from the perceiver and (3) immediately. Immediate knowledge (*aparokshajnanam*) is knowledge of something that is present but unknown. The Self is always present but not always known. Without it nothing can be experienced or known.

What is Karma? (35)

The individual (*jiva*) is beginningless because it is born of ignorance which is beginningless. During its existence it assumes different forms and goes through countless births and deaths. When it is blessed with a human form it performs good and bad actions (*karmas*) with a sense of doership gathering pleasant and unpleasant experiences. Whether an action is good or bad is determined by the motive, not the action itself.

The law of *karma* is the law of cause and effect. Every action produces a noticeable effect and an unseen effect. Noble motives produce good karma which is called *punya*. Selfish motives that cause harm produce misery (*papa karma*).

Three Kinds of Karma (36)

(1) *Agami* karma is actions performed willfully with a sense of doership that leave positive (*punya*) and negative (*papa*) impressions in the Causal Body which fructify later. Animals do not have karma because there have no sense of agency. *Agami* karma is destroyed by the Knowledge “I am limitless awareness”.

(2) *Sanchita* karma is the store of *punya* and *papa* accumulated over time standing in an individual’s karmic account waiting to fructify. It is destroyed by the hard and fast knowledge, “I am limitless awareness.”

(3) *Prarabdha* karma is the results of previous actions fructifying moment to moment. When the *prarabdha karma* is exhausted the body dies. It is rendered impotent by the hard and fast knowledge, “I am limitless awareness.”

The Law of Karma and the three types of *karmas* explain the variety and diversity found in human life. Some people are happy and some are not.

Om Tat Sat