

# Tattva Bodha of Adi Sankaracharya – A Vedantic Primer : Part 2 (contd.)

(Lecture Notes compiled by Venkat Ganesan from the series of  
SVBF Lectures given by Dr. S. YEGNASUBRAMANIAN)

## 2. Analysis of the Individual - jIva vicAra: (continued)

In the discussion on the Analysis of the Individual - जीवविचारः-, in the previous issue, it was stated that the Atman is different from the three "bodies" and the five "sheaths", and is the witness of the three states of Consciousness, the Author enters into the explanation of each of the anAtmA aspects, their components and attributes. The section begins with a discussion of the SarIra-traya (three bodies).

### 2.1 SarIra-traya (three bodies) : sthUla-sUkshma-kAraNa SarIra's

#### 2.1.1 The Gross Body: sthUla SarIra

स्थूलशरीरं किम् ? What is sthUla SarIra ? Gross – sthUlam- means that it can be known by the sense organs for direct perception and is visible to others.

पञ्चीकृतपञ्चमहाभूतैः कृतं सत्कर्मजन्यं  
सुखदुःखादिभोगायतनं शरीरं अस्ति जायते  
वर्धते विपरिणमते अपक्षीयते विनश्यतीति  
षड्विकारवदेतत्स्थूलशरीरं ।

*It is composed of the five elements (mahAbhUtas), that have gone through a process of pacIkaraNam; is born as a result of good deeds; is the abode to experience pleasure and pain; is subject to six modifications, is born, it grows, transforms, decays and dies – is the gross body.*

a) What is it made of ? पञ्चमहाभूतैः कृतं - of the five great elements – Air (vAyu), fire (agni), earth (prithvi), water (Apah) and space (AkASa) – which are matter, and so body is also matter.

- b) What is the process? पञ्चीकृत - by grossification (pancIkaraNam) of these five elements – volume of the body due to "space", respiration due to "air"; body heat due to "agni"; the make up due to water (fluids) and mineral "earth".
- c) How is this body acquired? (if all bodies are made up of the same material, why there is difference among them – animal body, human body, plant body and even variations among them?) - सत्कर्म जन्यम् - the body is acquired out of sat karma – good deeds in the past).
- d) What is its function? सुखदुःखादिभोगायतनम् - it is the abode for the experience of pleasure, pain etc.
- e) What is its nature? - is subject to six modifications ( षड्विकारवत्) as follows:
- शरीरं अस्ति - it exists as potential form in the mother's womb
  - जायते - is born
  - वर्धते - it grows
  - विपरिणमते - it transforms
  - अपक्षीयते - it decays, declines, and
  - विनश्यति - it perishes.

Once we know that the nature of the body is to go through the shadvikAra , we learn to accept it and do not "protest" against it including death. The author declares that this is sthUla SarIram - एतत्स्थूलशरीरम्

## 2.2 The Subtle Body: sUkshma SarIra

सूक्ष्मशरीरं किम् ? What is sUkshma SarIra?  
sUkshmam means subtle – not visible to others.

अपञ्चीकृतपञ्चमहाभूतैः कृतं सत्कर्मजन्यं  
सुखदुःखादिभोगसाधनं पञ्चज्ञानेन्द्रियाणि पञ्च  
कर्मेन्द्रियाणि पञ्चप्राणादयः मनश्चैकं बुद्धिश्चैका  
एवं सप्तदशाकलाभिः सह यत्तिष्ठति  
तत्सूक्ष्मशरीरम् ।

*It is composed of the five elements (mahAbhUtas), before the process of pancIkaraNam; is born out of good deeds; is the instrument for the experience of pleasure and pain; comprises of seventeen items, namely, the five sense organs (jnAnendriyas), five organs of action (karmendriyas), five prANas (prANa, apAna, vyAna, udAna and samAna), the mind and the intellect.*

- a) What is it made of? पञ्चमहाभूतैः कृतं - of the five great elements – space, air, fire, water and earth, born before the process of pancIkaraNam. They are known as tanmAtas.
- b) How is the subtle body acquired? - सत्कर्मजन्यम् - out of sat karma – good deeds in the past.
- c) What is its function? सुखदुःखादिभोगसाधनं - the instrument for experiencing pleasure, pain etc. (as against gross body which is the house for experiencing) Since there are varieties of experiences, there should be varieties of instruments also!
- d) How many are there? एवं सप्तदशाकलाभिः - seventeen are listed as follows:
- पञ्चज्ञानेन्द्रियाणि - Five sense organs
  - पञ्चकर्मेन्द्रियाणि - Five organs of action

- पञ्चप्राणादयः - the five prANas
- मनः - the mind, and
- बुद्धिः - the intellect.

These are subtle and are known as *indriyas* as supposed to their gross counterparts – known as *goLakas*. (For example the physical ear lobe is the gross version and the power of hearing is the subtle counterpart). The subtle body varies from one jiva to another and so every jiva is unique!

सह यत्तिष्ठति तत्सूक्ष्मशरीरम् । - Alongwith these seventeen, is called sUkshma SarIram.

The following table summarizes the differences between the gross body and the subtle body:

<u>sthUla SarIram</u>	<u>sUkshma SarIram</u>
● Gross	Subtle
● Visible	Not visible
● Is the locus of Experience	Is the instrument of Experience
आयतनम्	साधनम्

The author then proceeds to the discussion of each component of the subtle body.

### 2.2.1 Organs of Perception (jnAna indriyas)

श्रोत्रं त्वक् चक्षुः रसना घ्राणम् इति  
पञ्च ज्ञानेन्द्रियाणि ।

- श्रोत्रं : Ear ( hearing)
- त्वक् : Skin (sense of touch)
- चक्षुः : Eye (sight)
- रसना : Tongue (taste)
- घ्राणम् : Nose (smell)

The power of any faculty (hearing etc.) of any individual is only limited, both in quality and quantity. If one has a limited power, then one can infer the possibility of a total power of which he/she is a part.

- So, for each faculty there is a corresponding total power.
- Power itself does not have an independent function unless there is a wielder of that power – for example, seeing power is wielded by the seeing person (*jiva*) and so on. Similarly, for the total power, the scriptures visualized a total power wielder, known as presiding deity for that total power, - the अधिष्ठानदेवता - and the sum-total of the power of all अधिष्ठानदेवता 's, is the power wielded by the Lord, Iswara or Parameswara. The author gives the list of the अधिष्ठानदेवता's and the faculty that each of the devatas presides over.

श्रोत्रस्य दिग्देवता । त्वचो वायुः ।

चक्षुषः सूर्यः । रसनाया वरुणः ।

घ्राणस्य अश्विनौ । इति ज्ञानेन्द्रियदेवताः ।

- श्रोत्रस्य दिग्देवता । The presiding deity of ear (hearing ) is "dik devata"- Quarters (Space).
- त्वचो वायुः । Of skin (touch) is Air
- चक्षुषः सूर्यः । Of eye (sight ) is Surya
- रसनाया वरुणः । Of tongue (taste) is the Lord of Waters.
- घ्राणस्य अश्विनौ । Of nose (smell) are the two Aswins.
- इति ज्ञानेन्द्रियदेवताः । Thus are the presiding deities of the sense organs.

It should be pointed out that by Waters, Sun etc., we don't mean the gross form of these, but the subtle power behind. Having given the presiding deity over each of the organs of perception, the author gives the list of the functions of each of these jnAnendriyas.

श्रोत्रस्य विषयः शब्दग्रहणम् ।

त्वचो विषयः स्पर्शग्रहणम् ।

चक्षुषो विषयः रूपग्रहणम् ।

रसनाया विषयः रसग्रहणम् ।

घ्राणस्य विषयः गंधग्रहणम् इति ।

- श्रोत्रस्य विषयः शब्दग्रहणम् । The function of ear is grasping of sound
- त्वचो विषयः स्पर्शग्रहणम् । The function of skin is perception of touch.
- चक्षुषो विषयः रूपग्रहणम् । The function of eyes is the perception of forms.
- रसनाया विषयः रसग्रहणम् । The function of tongue is the perception of taste.
- घ्राणस्य विषयः गंधग्रहणम् इति । The function of nose is the perception of smell.

### 2.2.2 Organs of Action (karmendriyas)

वाक्पाणिपादपायूपस्थानीति पञ्चकर्मेन्द्रियाणि ।

The five organs of action are:

- वाक् : organ of speech
- पाणि : hands
- पाद : feet
- पायु : excretory organ
- उपस्थम् : genitals

वाचो देवता वह्निः । हस्तयोरिन्द्रः ।

पादयोर्विष्णुः । पायोर्मृत्युः ।

उपस्थस्य प्रजापतिः । इति कर्मेन्द्रियदेवताः ।

Similar to the discussion of jnanendriyas, the presiding deity for each of the organs of action are as follows:

- वाचो देवता वह्निः । The presiding deity of speech is Fire
- हस्तयोरिन्द्रः । Of hands, Indra

- पादयोर्विष्णुः । Of legs, Vishnu
- पायोर्मृत्युः । Of excretory organ, Mrityu (Lord of Death)
- उपस्थस्य प्रजापतिः । Of genitals, Prajapati
- इति कर्मेन्द्रियदेवताः । Thus the presiding deities of the organs of action

वाचो विषयः भाषणम् ।  
पाण्योर्विषयः वस्तुग्रहणम् ।  
पादयोर्विषयः गमनम् ।  
पायोर्विषयः मलत्यागः ।  
उपस्थस्य विषयः आनन्द इति ।

Then, the function of each of the organs of action is enumerated:

- वाचो विषयः भाषणम् । The function of the organ of speech is to speak
- पाण्योर्विषयः वस्तुग्रहणम् । Of the hands, is to grasp things.
- पादयोर्विषयः गमनम् । Of the feet, is movement
- पायोर्विषयः मलत्यागः । Of the excretory organ, is waste removal
- उपस्थस्य विषयः आनन्द इति । Of the genitals, is pleasure of procreation.

The author concluded with the discussion of only ten of the seventeen subtle bodies. Of the missing seven, two of them, namely, mind and intellect, are discussed as part of the inner equipment (अन्तःकरणानि), and five of them, the *panca prANAs*, as part of the *panca koSas*, later. For the sake of completion of this section, we will briefly outline all these seven. The *panca prANAs* are responsible for the five-fold physiological functions as follows:

प्राणः	Respiration
अपानः	Evacuation / Excretion
व्यानः	Circulation
उदानः	Reaction, Throwing out
समानः	Digestion / Assimilation

Mind and Intellect are names of one and the same instrument, called अन्तःकरणम् (inner equipment) based on the function. When there is indecision and oscillation or doubting, it is called Mind - मनः and is defined later as संकल्प-विकल्पात्मकं मनः ।

When the same equipment does assertion than oscillation, it is known as Intellect -बुद्धिः and is defined as निश्चयात्मिका बुद्धिः । The presiding deity of Mind is Moon and that of Intellect is BrahmA.

### 2.3 Causal Body (kAraNa SarIram)

कारणशरीरं किम् ? What is Causal Body?

अनिर्वाच्यानाद्यविद्यारूपं शरीरद्वयस्य कारणमात्रं  
सत्स्वरूप-अज्ञानं निर्विकल्पकरूपं  
यदस्ति तत्कारणशरीरम् ।

*The one that is unexplainable, without beginning, and in the form of ignorance (of Truth), which is the cause for the other two Sareeras, ignorant of its own Nature, which is free from any division (transformation), is the kAraNa SarIram or Causal Body.*

The very word - kAraNa SarIram - itself implies that it is a Body, but the question is, for what is it the kAraNam (cause)?

शरीरद्वयस्य कारणमात्रं - it is the cause for the other two bodies - the sthUla and sUkshma SarIras । That means that the other two bodies are the

effect (कार्यम्) and the kAraNa SarIram is the cause. Let us briefly analyze Cause and Effect. For example, the seed is the cause for the tree (effect). What is the difference between them? The seed is the potential, (dormant) unmanifest form, while tree is the manifest form. So, both the kAraNam and the kAryam are essentially the same but different in condition. Similarly, the kAraNa SarIram is only the sthUla SarIram and sUkshma SarIram, but in the dormant condition. Then the question arises, what is dormant? In a seed, the various branches, leaves, etc. are not differentiated and so are imperceptible. But we have to infer that, even though the differences are imperceptible, they must be there, since from a mango seed only a mango tree grows and not an orange tree! In short, kAraNam must contain kAryam. So, in kAryam, differences are perceptible and is called सविकल्पः and in kAraNam, they are not perceptible and so is called निर्विकल्पः। So the kAraNa SarIram is the निर्विकल्पकरूपं . The deep-sleep state is identified with the causal body, since during this state one does not perceive the differences created by the subtle body and the gross body. It is also described as अनिर्वाच्य-अनादि-अविद्या रूपम् . अविद्या means ignorance - अज्ञानं, but in this context it implies मिथ्या. Atman alone is satyam. It is अनिर्वाच्यम् - indescribable, since any mithyA vastu is indescribable. It is अनादि since its beginning cannot be understood (than calling it beginningless). The concept of time is perceivable only through buddhi which is part of the sUkshma SarIram and at the plane of kAraNa SarIram, all concepts of time fails, since buddhi itself is in dormant form.

सत्स्वरूप-अज्ञानं -As intellect is in potential (or dormant) form in kAraNa SarIram, so also is ignorance !! What ignorance? About the true nature of the Self.

यदस्ति तत्कारणशरीरम् । is the kAraNa SarIram or causal body!

Then what is Atman? Not even kAraNa SarIram! Why? sthUla and sUkshma SarIras are different from each other and are not kAraNa SarIram (are only in the dormant / potential form in kAraNa SarIram). If sthUla and sUkshma SarIras are inert matter (as was discussed earlier), kAraNa SarIram also should be matter only - the subtlest plane of matter, to the extent that we can never understand. So all bodies are inert and are anAtmA and different from Atman.

Table 1 gives a summary of the elements discussed in this discussion of three bodies to enable the reader with a quick reference.

Having defined all "bodies" and enumerated that they are different from Atman (स्थूल-सूक्ष्म-कारण-शरीरात्-व्यतिरिक्तः), the author proceeds to show how Atman is different from the five sheaths (*panca koSa:*) of the body and the three states (*avasthas*), which will be discussed next.

#### References / Source of Material

1. Tattvabodha of Sankaracharya, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Bombay. 1995.
2. Tattvabodha - Lectures by Swami Paramarthananda, Madras.

**Table 1. SarIra trayam (शरीर-त्रयम्)**

<p>sthUla SarIram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Physical body or the Gross body (including the physical organs of perception or <i>Golakam</i> );</li> <li>● Composed of <i>pancamahAbhutas</i> (five basic elements) namely space, air, fire, water and earth after <i>pancIkaraNam</i> (grossification);</li> <li>● gained by good deeds in the past;</li> <li>● is a tenement to experience pleasure and pain etc.</li> <li>● subject to <i>shad-vikAra</i> (undergoes six types of modifications namely birth, existence, growth, aging, decay and death)</li> </ul>
<p>sUkshma SarIram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Subtle body or Astral body;</li> <li>● controls all physiological functions and powers of the organs of perception, action, mind and intellect;</li> <li>● composed of <i>pancamahAbhutas</i> or five basic elements before <i>pancIkaraNam</i>.</li> <li>● Gained by good deeds in the past;</li> <li>● is an instrument to experience pleasure and pain etc.;</li> <li>● composed of seventeen components - <i>jnAnendriyas</i> (five organs of perception), <i>karmendriyas</i> (five organs of action), <i>panca prANas</i> (five different airs), <i>manas</i> (mind) and <i>buddhi</i> (intellect).</li> <li>● Organs of perception or the powers behind them are called <i>jnAnendriyas</i>. They are ears(hearing), skin(touch), eyes(sight or experience of forms), tongue(cognition of taste) and nose (cognition of smell).</li> <li>● It is unique in our scripture and culture to associate a <i>devata</i> (deity) for each one of the organs or the power behind. Presiding deities are: for ear - Space; skin -Air; eyes - Sun; tongue -Varuna; and nose -Aswini Kumaras.</li> <li>● Organ of action are <i>karmendriyas</i>. The organs and presiding deities are as follows - Speech (to speak) - Fire; Hands (to catch or grasp) - Indra; Legs (locomotion) - Vishnu; Anus (excretion) - Mrutyu; and Genital organs(procreation) - Prajapati.</li> <li>● No discussion of the <i>panca prANas</i>, mind and intellect are given at present, but the author discusses them later.</li> </ul>
<p>kAraNa SarIram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Causal body; the cause for the other two bodies;</li> <li>● It is not describable (<i>anirvacanIya</i>) ;</li> <li>● it indicates a state of ignorance since mind and intellect are absent and it is neither existing in all periods of time(past, present and future) nor non-existent.</li> <li>● Causal body influences the deep sleep state (which is discussed later);</li> <li>● Ignorance of the true nature of the Self results in misconception and incorrect identification with gross and subtle bodies.</li> </ul>