

# **‘Brahm’ in the eyes of the Upanishads.**

**Compiled from the Upanishads**

**by:--**

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## **‘Brahm’ in the eyes of the Upanishads.**

After having written three elaborate books {(i) The Revelation of Creation; (ii) The Pentagon of Creation; (iii) The Triumvirate of Creation} on the theme of ‘Creation’ as it has been elucidated in the Upanishads, a natural quest arose in me to search the vast repository of knowledge contained in the Upanishads to answer one question directly related to this theme of Creation on which I had written these books. The question was: ‘Who was that enigmatic Being, or what was that mysterious Entity that was responsible for creating this ‘Creation’, that provided the spark to initiate the complex process of creation and set it rolling forward in an endless cycle, that formed the core, the ‘nucleus’, from which the Creation sprang forth, and which controls the entire existence as its only Supreme Authority from within it.

The Upanishads answer this question extensively, in passages after passages, verses after verses. They call this divine Being or eclectic Entity as ‘Brahm (also pronounced as Brahmn)’. So, this ‘Brahm’ is the nucleus of the universe, the cosmos. That’s alright, but then, who or what is the representative of this Brahm at the microcosmic level of creation? The Upanishads call this entity as the ‘Atma (also pronounced as Atmn)’, the soul. The word ‘soul’ itself gives an idea of the spirit of what the Upanishads wish to say—for it means the essence that is at the core of everything in existence. Hence, ‘Brahm’ is the ‘nucleus’ of creation at the macro level of existence, and the ‘Atma’ is its counterpart at the micro level. We shall soon read more about them.

Brahm is the ‘Supreme Being’ or the ‘Parmatma’, the ‘supreme Atma or Soul’ of creation. Being the Lord of creation, he is also known as the ‘Ishwar’, meaning the Lord God.

Nothing can come from nowhere; there has to be a point-source from where everything that exists comes. Nothing can come into being if there is no original source that produces it, that precedes it; everything that exists is bound to have some or the other point of origin from where it is born, from where it emerged, which gave ‘birth’ to it, which ‘created it’, before the product of such initiation starts expanding and unfolding its self into the colourful form that it finally takes. This point-source, the ‘nucleus’, is the fountainhead from which the Creation had emerged or sprung forth in the beginning.

The ‘point of origin’ of this vast, multifaceted, ever-changing and infinite creation is the ‘nucleus’ of this creation. It’s the ‘nucleus’ as it is the center from where the entire process started; it’s the center around which the entire creation exists; it’s the focal point of this living world. So, when answering the question, ‘who or what is at the center of creation and its source’, I decided to title this book as “The Nucleus of Creation”. It is because just like the case that every known material thing in this world has an ‘atom’ as its fundamental unit, and no atom can exist without a ‘nucleus’, this term ‘nucleus’ would reflect the quintessential importance and basic nature of that mysterious Being or Entity

that is not only responsible for this creation coming into being but is also responsible for its very existence and its orderly functioning.

Everyone knows that all materials that are known to exist have one thing in common—and it is that they are all made up of atoms. Further, we are all aware that all atoms have a ‘nucleus’ at their center. Without the nucleus, the atom has no existence, and by extension there would be no molecules which are formed by a combination of atoms, and that act as the building blocks of every known material thing in this world.

We see the material things in this world, but not the atom, and if we can’t see the atom there is no question of seeing its ‘nucleus’! But does that mean that there is no nucleus? If there is a visible thing, if there are visible material things, then surely and certainly there is a nucleus at its core, though the latter is invisible and imperceptible for the physical organs of perception that can see only the gross form of the finished product, the material thing that the organs can touch, feel, smell, see and taste, rather than what goes inside that product, the hidden but subtle essence of the finished product.

When we talk about the ‘creation’, we refer to a ‘living creation’, a living entity, and not something dead and lifeless like a piece of metal or dead-wood. Just like a child owes its life to the father whose sperm ‘created’ it, this ‘living creation’ too owes its existence to the Father who created it.

Surely it can be argued that the term ‘creation’ encompasses even the inanimate world consisting of the distant planets, stars and galaxies which do not have ‘life’ in them. But remember: life has many connotations, many salient features and characters: ‘movement’ is one of them, and ‘change’ is another. This obviously is seen in all the otherwise inanimate-looking entities of this physical universe—all the distant planets, the stars and galaxies show dynamism in as much as they move and have constantly changed over period of time, and are in different stages of either evolution or devolution in the larger frame of the infinite creative process.

Then, another sign of life is ‘sound’. We know now that a deep humming sound is generated by our own earth due to its magnetic field and rotation on its axis, and this sound can be clearly heard when we go in space at some distance from the surface of the earth.

Even apparently lifeless plants on earth have been proved to have life in them. Plants do not move like other creatures, but still they have life in them: they breathe, they reproduce, they grow, they die, they need food and water to survive, and show many such traits that are shown by ordinary living beings.

Therefore, a living creation does not only mean living creatures as we generally understand the term ‘life’ to mean. It encompasses everything that exists within the parameters of this universe, its length, breath and depth.

Now, the question arises: Who is this Father who created the living world; who is the 'Cosmic Father'? Who is behind the unfurling of the flag that is visible in the form of the product known as the 'creation'?

Well, the Upanishads have provided an answer to this eternal question that has baffled the mind, and it is this: 'He', the Cosmic Father, is known as "Brahm". Brahm is a very enigmatic entity, an esoteric entity that is very difficult to easily comprehend by the mind and the intellect with their limited capabilities.

The Upanishads are the philosophical treatises, which are the most ancient scriptures, that present, among other things, an analytical exposition of the greatest mysteries of this enigmatic creation. They are very systematic and diligent in their approach, or shall we say 'very scientific' when it comes to explaining the enigma of creation with all its subtle and finer nuances. Since the subject matter of the research, analysis and exposition done by the Upanishads is something that is beyond perception of the ordinary organs of perception, something that is highly abstract, subtle and extremely sublime as compared to the things of this gross world, the field of study of the Upanishads is therefore called 'metaphysics'. The word 'physics' is incorporated in this word to indicate that the methodology adopted by the texts of the Upanishads to elucidate upon anything is a very systematic and scientific approach. The way the Upanishads have analyzed and explained things are highly organized, very orderly and scientifically arranged. The Upanishads have brought what is the 'absolute abstract' within the reach of the mind and the intellect.

This Cosmic Father, the Brahm, injected his genes of life into the off-spring he produced, i.e. in the creation. Remember: Only living entities produce or reproduce, and not dead or lifeless ones. So therefore, Brahm is a 'living entity'—an entity that has 'consciousness' in it. 'Life' and 'consciousness' are synonymous with each other. Just like the child bearing its father's invisible genes in its blood, the creation that came into being too harboured the invisible genes of the cosmic Father, the 'Brahm' in its bosom. But in which form? Well, it was in the form of the 'Atma', the 'nucleus' or the 'soul' or the 'essence' of creation. This Atma was the individual's 'consciousness' that was a mirror image of the cosmic Consciousness that created or produced it. Hence, this Atma was the 'nucleus' of creation at the micro level of existence in the same way as Brahm was the nucleus of creation at the macro level of existence.

We have already seen that the Brahm at the cosmic level of existence, and its microcosmic counterpart known as the Atma or the soul of the individual entity in creation are nothing but 'Consciousness'. Thus, while Brahm represented by the Consciousness was the nucleus of this creation at the cosmic level, the Atma that represented this same Consciousness at the level of an individual creature became the nucleus of creation at the micro level of creation. It's very clear now. The Atma is the 'soul' of creation in as much as it is the essential ingredient, the quintessential component of the living world without which the creation, the living world, would have no meaning whatsoever. This is another clear point.

Now, the next question regarding this metaphoric ‘nucleus’ is this: Where is it located? The atom as the nucleus at its center. But does this also applies to the creation. Well, the answer is ‘yes’ and ‘no’. Let us see how.

Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, is the ‘essence’ of existence, and so is its microcosmic counterpart known as the Atma. The word nucleus also refers to the inner and the most important part, the ‘essence’ of anything. It refers to that subtle and primary aspect of creation without which nothing else has any meaning. Since ‘Brahm’ and the ‘Atma’ (i.e. the pure Consciousness) is the pivot of creation, they are the nucleus of creation by every count; they are ‘central’ to the very concept of existence of creation. So, the answer is ‘yes’: Brahm and Atma are the core, the center, the nucleus of this creation.

But does it mean a center in the way we have a nucleus of an atom or the center of a circle? Now, the answer is ‘no’. The Brahm and the Atma representing ‘Consciousness’ at the macro and micro levels of creation respectively, are completely dissolved or diffused in this creation, being present in it in a uniform manner everywhere simultaneously. How do we understand this mystery? Let us take a simple example from our day to day life to grasp its meaning. The ocean is made up of ‘drops of water’. The ‘drop of water’ is the essence or the nucleus of the ocean. The ocean has its existence because of the individual drops of water. If there is not a drop of water, there is no ocean! Now, can anyone answer the question: ‘which is that drop of water around which the mighty and endless ocean is built?’

Let’s take another example. A seed grows into a huge tree. It means that the huge tree that rises so many meters into the sky, a tree that is vibrant with life and colour, has its origin in a tiny seed that seems lifeless and inert. Suppose we cut the seed to locate the magical nucleus, the center from which the tree originated. Can we find one? Of course the answer is ‘no’. There is no fixed point in the body of the seed that can be said to be the spot from where the tree originated. The entire seed is responsible for creating the tree. Then another argument is this: where is ‘sign of life’ or ‘consciousness’ in this seed that would produce an entity known as a living tree that grows, needs food and water, bears fruits, leaves and flowers, becomes a habitat for numerous birds and insects, and in general exhibits all the signs of a living entity? Surely there is no such visible sign of life in the seed. But since this seed produces the tree, it is undeniable that it harbours life in its bosom.

This explains the phenomenon of Brahm and the Atma vis-à-vis this creation. Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness is the invisible nucleus of creation. When we study the same Brahm with regard to the creation at its micro level, we have its counterpart known as the Atma. So, the word ‘nucleus’ here applies to the ‘Atma’ or the pure consciousness of the living being at the micro level of existence, and to Brahm, the same consciousness at the cosmic level when we are dealing with the macro level of existence.

The Brahm which started the process of creation and set it rolling forward was a ‘living entity’. In other words, it had ‘Consciousness’. Since this consciousness is at the core of the living creation, since this ‘consciousness’ is the subtle and imperceptible entity that

kick-started the process of creating a living world, since this creation is ‘living’ only till the time it has ‘consciousness’ in it, for otherwise it would ‘not be living’, we say that the ‘consciousness’ is the ‘nucleus of this creation’. This entire creation revolves around consciousness (or Brahm). If there is no consciousness, there is no living world. If there is no consciousness, there is only barren and arid land devoid of life.

Remember once again: Only a living entity can produce or create; life and consciousness go hand in hand. The word ‘creation’ has a cosmic dimension; it is an all-including term that encompasses everything in existence. Even the distant planets and the stars and the galaxies are incorporated in the wider meaning of the word ‘creation’ just like the creatures on earth, and the plants as well. When we observe closely we find that each single unit of this vast, measureless and fathomless cosmos is regulated by some hidden force and guided by some standard principles. Modern science accepts this fact and says that everything in this creation, all heavenly bodies as well as all things on earth, is regulated by certain well-established principles of various components of science, such as physics, mathematics, biology, chemistry etc. That is, there is some unseen but supreme power that regulates everything in this existence like an unseen puppeteer controlling the puppets on the stage from behind the curtain. If the puppeteer stops his hands, the puppets stop too. No one sees or knows the puppeteer, but everyone sees and recognizes the puppet. But let us not forget that the puppet is of no worth without the puppeteer. In the context of this creation, the puppeteer is the Brahm, the Supreme Consciousness, while the individual units of this creation are the visible puppets that represent this invisible puppeteer. We see the material things in this world, but not the atom, and if we can’t see the atom there is no question of seeing its ‘nucleus’!

Thus, the curious mind of our ancient sages and seers decided to research about this mysterious, enigmatic and esoteric entity that was at the very center—‘the nucleus’— of existence. This entity is known as ‘Brahm’. Then these ancient thinkers contemplated upon Brahm and came to the conclusion that it is an entity that is cosmic in dimension, that is omnipresent, omnipotent, infinite, eternal and the only entity that really matters when one studies the true nature of life and existence. That is, Brahm is the ‘Ultimate Truth’ of life in this creation.

This study of Brahm was done at a cosmic plane of creation: Brahm created the vast universe that is known as well as still unknown. But, what was the form of this Brahm in the world immediately known? The Upanishadic seers called this form as the ‘Atma’. The Atma related to the immediate world concerning us, just as Brahm related to the world at large, the cosmic form of creation.

Thus, Brahm and Atma aroused great curiosity amongst ancient sages and seers. They wished to find out what they were; they had an earnest desire to know them, to understand them and solve their mystery. Thus was unraveled this great enigmatic mystery of Brahm and the Atma in the philosophical and metaphysical expositions of the Upanishads.

So we have seen that the term ‘Brahm’ has wide connotations—it means any one or all of the following: The Supreme One, the Supreme Being, the Viraat Purush (the cosmic and colossus form of the Supreme Being), the Parmatma (the supreme Atma, the ethereal Spirit, the Soul), the cosmic Consciousness, the Absolute Truth, the Universal Truth, the Divine Being, the subtle and sublime entity that is all-pervading, all-encompassing, immanent, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient and all-knowing, that which is both invisible as well as visible, that which has an existence both at the macrocosmic level of creation as well as the microcosmic level, that which predates creation and lasts beyond creation, that from which the entire known as well as the unknown world has emerged, that which is impossible to prove but incontrovertibly there, that which even the scriptures have failed to define and describe in certain terms, and so on and so forth.

In this book we shall see how the different Upanishads—also known as ‘Vedanta’ because they present the essential teachings or the conclusion of the Vedas which they arrive at after elaborate discussions on the subject of metaphysics, theology and spiritualism—treat this topic of Brahm with its myriad connotations and metaphysical and spiritual implications. This book will attempt to bring under one roof all the different aspects of Brahm as expounded and elucidated in the Upanishads, along with elaborate references to the specific verses where the relevant topic can be found in the original texts.

For the purpose of our book, we shall break the subject of ‘Brahm’ into several topics, and then go to discuss them one by one.

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The **eclectic divine virtues** of Brahm have been enumerated in countless Upanishads, for instance in the following—

(a) Krishna Yajur Veda: *Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 21; *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 15-19, Canto 3, verse nos. 17-22; *Kathrudra Upanishad*, verse no. 12, 27-28, 30-31, 42; *Taittiriya Upanishad* Valli 3, Anuvak 10, verse no. 2-5; *Skanda Upanishad*, verse no. 13; *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad*, verse no. 4; *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 16, 20-21, 26, 29; Canto 3, verse no. 2; and Canto 4, verse nos. 31-32; *Yog Kundalini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 35; *Saraswati Upanishad*, verse no. 50-52; *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*; *Tejobindu Upanishad*, Canto 6, verse nos. 35-43, 47-57, 66-67, 103, 106 (virtues of Brahm); *Pran Agnihotra Upanishad*, verse no. 15.

(b) Atharva Veda: *Mandukya Upanishad*, verse no. 3; *Mundak Upanishad*, Mundak 1, section 1, verse no. 6; Mundak 2, section 2, verse no. 7, 9-11; Mundak 3, section 1, verse no. 3-5, 7-9; *Atharvashir Upanishad*, Kandika 4 (full); *Naradparivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 8 which is fully dedicated to enumerating the grand virtues of Brahm; Canto 9, verse nos. 3, 19-22; *Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph 4; Canto 2, verse nos. 1-7; Canto 4, paragraph no. 1; Canto 8, verse no. 2; *Shandilya Upanishad*, Canto 2, section 1, verse nos. 2-5, and Canto 3, section 1, verse nos. 1-8, 11-14; *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 17-18; Canto 4, verse no. 27-31, 33, 67; Canto 4, verse nos. 35-38, 67; Canto 5, verse nos. 10, 20-21, 66-67, 72, 77, 113; *Atma Upanishad*, verse nos. 1-D and 1-E, verse nos. 2-4, 9, 30-31; *Pashupat Brahm*

*Upanishad*, Purva Kanda/Canto 1, verse nos. 11-16, 20-21, 25, 29, 32; Uttar Kanda/Canto 2, verse nos. 1, 13-16, 26, 27-30, 43-44; *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 4; Canto 5, verse nos. 6, 8-9, 16-17, 22; *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 7; *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 1; *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph no. 1; Canto 2, paragraph nos. 3, 5-8 (albeit in the guise of enumerating the glorious virtues of Lord Shiva or Rudra); *Mahavakya Upanishad*, verse no. 6 (Brahm lives in the body as the Atma; Brahm is known as Hans), verse no. 10 (Brahm is the Supreme Being); *Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 4; *Devi Upanishad*, verse no. 3; *Dattatreya Upanishad*, section 1, verse nos. 1-3.

(c) Shukla Yajur Veda: *Adhyatma Upanishad*, verse nos. 61-64; *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad* Canto 2, Brahman 3 describes this Brahm's two forms in detail; *Advai Tarak Upanishad*, verse nos. 7 and 9-10; *Tarak Upanishad*; *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Brahmin 1, section 3, verse nos. 1-4; Brahmin 3, section 1, verse no. 3.

(d) Sam Veda: *Chandogya Upanishad*, *Keno Upanishad* and *Avyakta Upanishad*.

Now, let us study about Brahm under different heads.

**Brahm predated this existence**—The *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 12 states that Brahm saw Hiranyagarbha being born. Since Hiranyagarbha was the first sign of life and nothing existed prior to it, it proves that Brahm pre-dated Hiranyagarbha because only the parent can watch the child's birth. To quote—"The great Lord Rudra (literally Lord Shiva who is also called Maheshwar or the Great God, but here referring to the supreme Brahm) who is the cause of coming into being of all the Gods of creation and who endowed them with their divine powers, great authority and majestic glories<sup>1</sup>, who is the unquestioned, unequivocal and the only supreme Lord of all that exists, who is all-knowing and omniscient, and who had watched the emergence of Hiranyagarbha<sup>2</sup>—let that supreme transcendental Being (Brahm, the Supreme Lord) bless us with pure, auspicious and enlightened wisdom and intellect" (Verse no. 12).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>It is Brahm who has created the numerous Gods and then bestowed each one of them with their divine and glorious powers and authority which are astounding and most magnificent. These Gods are of two basic types—the *primary Gods* such as the Fire God, the Water God and the Wind God which are personifications of the original elements of creation and represent the different fundamental life creating, sustaining, developing and concluding powers of Brahm. They also stand for the fundamental virtues and sublime but subtle qualities that are so characteristic of Brahm. The *secondary Gods* are the ones which followed once this creation came into being, when Brahm had to devise a mechanism to regulate his own creation and ensure its orderly functioning; he had to lay down the detailed infrastructure and frame the constitution for his own creation lest it would just fall apart under its own weight of unregulated growth and uncontrolled propagation. This was a distinct possibility in the creator's mind—because the very origin of this creation was based on 'Maya' or deception which tended to hide the truth. Thus, the secondary Gods are primarily guardians or 'enforcing authorities' of the doctrines and principles of creation laid down by the Father of creation.

Naturally therefore, the Father Brahm 'had' to give these Gods necessary power and authority to implement and enforce his ordinances; he had to 'delegate his own powers' to a great extent to these Gods so that this vast and measureless realm could be

controlled. In this scenario, Brahm retained the central command, interfering only when absolutely necessary, and having the final say in all matters. That is why even the Gods fear him.

<sup>2</sup>*Hiranyagarbha* is the first sign of emergence of creation. It is the first embryo and, in terms of metaphysics, the subtle gross body of creation. There was nothing prior to *Hiranyagarbha*. So if someone ‘watched its emergence’ it implies that this someone or some unknown entity existed even before *Hiranyagarbha* started to become a reality; this someone or something obviously pre-dated *Hiranyagarbha*. Now, it has also been said in verse no. 11 of this Canto no. 4 of this Upanishad that everything collapses into Brahm and merges into him at the time of conclusion of creation. Therefore it is very logical to say that this Brahm existed ‘after the end of creation’ and ‘before the beginning of creation’, i.e. in the intervening period. This is possible because nothing can come into being from nothing; there must be something however unknown and inconceivable and untraceable and incomprehensible into which everything collapsed at the end and from which it was reborn. Had it been true that after the conclusion of the any given creation there was a complete ‘nothing’ it would have been a ‘black hole’ type of thing, and modern science has established that even light cannot escape from this black hole, so there was no question of the next world ‘remerging’ from this ‘black hole of nothingness’.

This validly proves that there was indeed ‘some entity’ even after the conclusion of the last creation and before the beginning of the present creation.]

The Atharva Veda’s *Mahavakya Upanishad*, verse no. 10 says that **Brahm is the Supreme Being**. To quote—“It is the divine eclectic Brahm whose glories and majesty are being eulogized by ancient Gods and saints; it is Brahm who is held in high esteem by them. It is this Brahm who is pursued and worshipped by them. It is this Brahm who is the ultimate ‘Deva’ or the exalted Lord God known as the Supreme Being (10).

*Brahm* is an enigmatic supreme and transcendental entity in this creation that defies all definitions and adjectives, and it is beyond all comprehension and all-interpretations. It has paradoxical qualities; it is qualified by one set of attributes and then these attributes are denied in it. That is why Brahm has been defined by the words ‘Neti-neti’—neither this nor that—by the Vedas.

The nearest *analogue to Brahm is regarded as the sky* because the eclectic virtues of Brahm as being infinite, eternal, measureless, fathomless, all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-inclusive and omnipresent, as being the bearer of everything in creation, as being non-attached to anything inspite of being the bearer of things as well as being in close proximity of anything that exists, as being untainted by any of the things present in its vast bowls, and such other eclectic virtues—are all evident in the sky. This fact is endorsed in the Atharva Veda’s *Nrisingh Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 5, Canto 4, verse no. 9, and Canto 5, verse no. 9.

Brahm is the universal Absolute, the unequivocal *Truth*, and the only Reality in creation. It is the cosmic Spirit and Consciousness of creation that is present uniformly in each single unit of creation, from the single celled one right up to the most complex and colossal one, including the inner being of the spiritual seeker as his ‘true self’, as his Atma. It has no specific form, shape or colour; it is attributeless and invisible. But at the same time it has revealed itself in the form of the visible world complete with its

stupendous variety and astounding diversity as a proof not only of its existence but also of its supernatural powers and qualities.

A wise and enlightened person who can see this Brahm inside his own self as well as in the rest of the creation, who has this grand and cosmic view of Brahm and is convinced of its truth obtains freedom from all ignorance arising out of a distorted and limited view of the supreme transcendental Brahm who is beyond definition and comprehension.

Brahm is the hypothetical name given to that entity in creation which is the supreme transcendental eternal Soul of the entire setup of creation. It is characterized by such qualities as being self-existent, self-evident, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, infinite and imperishable, one single entity that is all-pervading and all-encompassing, immanent and indivisible, wise and enlightened, the subject of all knowledge and research as well as knowledge personified. It is gross as well as subtle, with attributes as well as without any. These apparently opposite qualities make Brahm so special and unique that it defies all conceivable definitions, because on the face it appears to have a dual form, but it is essentially non-dual and indivisible one single whole.

Brahm is a term that refers to such virtues of creation as growth, expansion, evolution, development, and the swelling of the ethereal spirit or soul. Brahm is one divine essence and source from which everything that has an existence emanated, or with which they are identified and to which they would ultimately return. It is present in each and every single entity that has an existence, but at the same time remaining aloof from them. It is the real Absolute and the unequivocal Truth in creation.

In fact, Brahm is the object of all Upanishadic discussions, all metaphysical and theological debates and ponderings. It is the object of all meditation and worship and knowledge. It is the final frontier of knowledge that is achievable with honest endeavour, and it is called the ultimate Truth and the absolute Reality in all that exist. Without Brahm, nothing is true and real.

Brahm in metaphysical context refers to the *pure Consciousness* that has two levels of existence—one is the macro level, and the other is the micro level. At the macro level this refers to the cosmic Consciousness that is universal and uniform throughout this creation, and this fact that the cosmic Consciousness is the Supreme Being himself personified is endorsed in the Atharva Veda's *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 56. At the micro level of creation, the term 'consciousness' refers to the individual's Atma, the soul of the individual creature. This Atma is his truthful 'self'.

Since everything in creation is a revelation of Brahm, it naturally follows that the term 'Brahm' also applies to the inanimate things of this world as much as it applies to the animate creatures. At a more subtle and more microscopic level of physical existence, the term 'consciousness' implies the dynamic forces and energy of creation that subtly live inside the atom of all elements, and thereby of all things that exist in this physical world because the atom is the basic unit in this creation and all elements are basically made up of atoms. The atom is the fundamental unit that represents the unique identity of any given element. In the field of metaphysics, the basic elements are earth, water, fire, air and sky, and the dynamic force that are inherent in all of them which enables them to harbour and sustain life is known as the 'Brahm' factor—for otherwise they would have not been able to harbour and sustain 'life'.

Therefore we see that whereas the term Brahm refers to the ‘consciousness’ that is present in all ‘living beings’ such as plants and animals, it also applies to the apparently ‘non living’ aspect of creation because all things that exist are made of the basic elements, and all elements have ‘atom’ as their basic unit. The atom has dynamism and stupendous cosmic energy trapped in its core—as is evident in modern times when we are all well acquainted with the phenomenon of ‘atomic energy’.

In this context it must be noted that an atom is externally neutral, but harbours dynamic energy inside. Outwardly it shows no signs of movement but internally it constitutes of electrons that continuously revolve around the nucleus. So, there is internal ‘movement and activity’. It is this ‘electron’ that provides the otherwise neutral atom its magnificent powers known as the ‘atomic power’. This analogy of the atom would clearly help one to understand the concept of Brahm and its dynamism in the form of Shakti. Like the atom, Brahm is externally neutral. The Shakti of Brahm is like the dynamism of the atom personified in the electrons which are an integral part of the atom but need to be activated to be of any use. Just like each and every element of this world is made of atom which is universally present everywhere, Brahm too makes up this world as its integral and inseparable part. Just like nothing can exist without the atom though the atom is not visible, nothing can exist sans Brahm though the latter is not visible.

The above explanation is endorsed in the *Annarpurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, verse nos. 17-18 which explicitly say as follows—

“Verse no. 17 = Whatever is visible in this world consisting of two facets, one that is animate and the other that is inanimate, has something at its core without which this world would just not exist.

The transcendental vision which enables a man to see this hidden entity without which nothing would exist, the entity that is not visible and apparent in its external form but nevertheless constitutes the very core and the very basis of creation, helps him to realise the universal presence of the invisible Brahm that forms the core, known as the ‘Atma’, of the entire creation.

This eclectic vision of creation enables the wise and enlightened aspirant to see Brahm everywhere in creation, to realise that Brahm is the essence of existence, and that it is the truth that is universal, uniform, all-inclusive and all-pervading (17).”

“Verse no. 18 = A person who has any kind of attraction for or attachment with any of the things that are visible in this world is said to be one who is bonded to this world, who is fettered and bound in shackles. [This is because all things that are visible in this mortal world are gross in nature, are perishable and transient by nature.]

To be freed from such attractions or attachments is deemed to be Mukti or freedom.

It is impossible to describe one’s feelings in tangible and comprehensive form about what one has ‘seen’ behind the external façade of the visible world.

[The reference here is to ‘Brahm’ and not to the physical sights of the world. In other words, the ‘Brahm’ that the wise, enlightened and Brahm-realised man ‘sees’, or of whom he has a divine vision, or whom he perceives as the basis and fundamental essence of creation, cannot be described in words. This is because words have their own limitations, and Brahm is such a divine, esoteric, enigmatic and mysterious entity that it

can only be experienced and never defined in words. Brahm is not something gross that can be 'seen' with the gross organ of sight (eye) and therefore it cannot be described, because a man can only correctly describe things that he has 'actually seen with his eyes'. The Brahm that he 'sees' is with the 'eyes of self-realisation, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment'; this Brahm exists in the subtle plane of existence and not in the physical plane like other sense objects. Just like the physical eyes cannot see the 'air' or the 'atom' to be able to define or describe them, it is also not able to do so with Brahm.

Even in the physical world when one sees any object, he would not be able to completely describe it in its entirety because of the fact that words have their limited use, but supposing he is able to narrate any thing seen in physical form completely, the narration might not hold good after some time because the thing would have undergone a change, howsoever miniscule.]

In fact, this sight or vision (of Brahm) can only be witnessed and experienced and endorsed, but never defined or described (18)."

Thus, a wise man who has developed this holistic view of Brahm realises that his 'true self' is the Atma (the 'atom' in the above illustration) which is Brahm or consciousness personified (in a microcosmic level of existence), and that this same Brahm is the one who lives in each unit (atom) of creation (at the macrocosmic level of existence).

The **uniqueness and paradoxes associated with Brahm** have been briefly outlined in the Atharva Veda's *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse no. 43; *Atma Upanishad*, verse no. 31; *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 4; *Devi Upanishad*, verse no. 3.

Now let us see what the *Atma Upanishad*, verse no. 31 says—"The truth of the matter is that Brahm presents an array of great paradoxes in creation. For instance, it neither takes a birth (because it never dies to take a new birth as it is eternal, imperishable, infinite, constant and immortal) nor can it be said that it has no birth (this is because the world is a visible manifestation of Brahm; it is Brahm that is revealed in the form of the world and its inhabitant creatures, both of which are known to have a beginning or have taken a birth).

Similarly, Brahm does not remain in fetters (because it is eternally free as the ethereal Spirit or the cosmic Consciousness or the Truth that can never be shackled by un-truth or delusions), but paradoxically it appears to be butted and bound (because it is revealed in the form of the physical world which has a parameter, and is clearly definable and limited by certain characteristic features).

[Brahm, in its primary form, is eternal, indefinable, infinite, form-less and attribute-less, but when the same Brahm is revealed in the form of this creation or the world it becomes finite and assumes for itself certain attributes and features so typical of this world.]

Brahm is not an aspirant of anything, it does not desire anything (because it is completely fulfilled and self-sustained), but when revealed in the form of a Jiva (the living being) it appears to have so many aspirations and desires (for the obvious reason that Brahm has allowed its self to be surrounded by Maya which creates the impression that Brahm needs something, that Brahm has to sustain itself by seeking sustenance from the outside world).

Brahm has no desire for Moksha (liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation—simply because it is eternally free).

Brahm is not Mukta (free) either (because he has the cosmic responsibility of looking after this creation which constantly dies and takes birth again in an endless cycle, making Brahm, the Supreme Being, virtually entangled in this responsibility).

This is indeed the great truth of the supreme Brahm. Indeed, Brahm is ‘supreme’ because there is nothing beyond it, and there is nothing without it. Nothing escapes Brahm; nothing exists that is not Brahm, but at the same time Brahm transcends everything known and understood in the form of this creation (31).

The *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse no. 43 describes the *paradox* about Brahm as follows—“‘Brahm devours his own self’ in a symbolic way. The primary reason of this highly paradoxical situation that appears to be incongruous and ridiculous on the face is that nothing exists in this creation that does not have Brahm at its core, or that does not represent one or the other aspect or virtue of Brahm, or that does not reflect Brahm in some way. Everything in existence, including the ‘eater’ and the ‘food eaten’, is a manifestation of Brahm like the rest of the creation. There is, in fact, nothing in this creation that is not Brahm!

[That is, both the thing that is eaten as well as the person who eats it are manifestations of Brahm. This deduction is based on the tenet of non-duality or ‘Advaita’ which says that there is only one truth in creation, and therefore there cannot be two types of truths. Falsehood can be many, but truth is always one. Since Brahm is the quintessential ‘truth’ of creation, it naturally follows that (i) what ever that exists, such as the food that is eaten and the eater, are the same Brahm existing in these two forms, and (ii) to understand this apparently ridiculous proposition one has to have a well developed intellectual stature and spiritual evolvment.

For instance, it is only when one sees the earth from high up in the sky that one can understand the truth of the statement that the earth is not flat, but is a round ball-like structure hanging without any support in the fathomless void of space. For otherwise, if viewed from the surface, the same earth appears to be flat, with extremely high mountains that rise up to almost touch the sky on the one hand, or with deep chasms or canyons or furrows that go down in its seemingly depth-less bowls on the other hand. In fact, all these three things are true depending upon the level from which one views the earth.

Likewise, only those who have had acquired the depth of spiritual vision, the broadness of spiritual wisdom and a high level of spiritual enlightenment that enables one to see or understand something that is beyond the gross, the ordinary and the mundane aspects of creation, something that is supernatural and transcendental, can understand the true meaning of the statements associated with Brahm and the Atma. For the rest of the creatures, all these observations seem to be absurd and imaginary.]

The very fact that something exists is a proof of the existence of Brahm. Hence, both the eater and the food eaten are not only proofs of the existence of Brahm but also establishes that Brahm is the ‘eater’ as well as the entity that is ‘eaten’ (43).”

The Atharva Veda’s *Devi Upanishad*, verse no. 3 outlines the *paradoxes about Brahm* as follows—“Veda (knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity and literally skills) as well as

A-Veda (the opposite of Veda) are both my forms. [This is because ‘everything’, the high and the low, are a revelation of the dynamism of Brahm.]

Similarly, Gyan (knowledge, enlightenment) and A-Gyan (ignorance, stupidity) are also my forms.

‘Ajaa’ (that which is un-born; the invisible form of creation) and ‘Non-Ajaa’ (that which is born; the visible form of creation) are both my forms.

The high and the mighty (such as the Gods, the exalted sages and ascetics, the kings and wise men), as well as the lowly and humble, such as the beast and other lowly forms of life in this creation (known as the ‘Tiryak’), are my forms too (3).”

The **various terms used to describe Brahm**—refer Atharva Veda’s Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Purva Kand/Canto 1, verse nos. 11-12; Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse no. 1; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8, verse no. 1; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 3, section 1, verse nos. 2-5.

Now let us see what terms these Upanishads use to describe Brahm.

(i) The Atharva Veda’s *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 8, verse no. 1 employs the following terms to describe Brahm—**Vyasthi Brahm, Samasthi Brahm, Sanhaar Brahm, Sristhi Brahm, Ubhayaatmak Brahm, Baahaya Brahm, Vyavahaarik Brahm, and Aarsha Brahm**. These have also been explained therein. Let us quote this Upanishad in its entirety as follows—“Narad wished to have more elaboration on this eclectic and esoteric subject, so he asked—‘Oh great grandfather! What is meant by the terms ‘Vyasthi’ and ‘Samasthi’? Please be kind to explain.’

Brahma explained—‘Vyasthi and Samasthi are the two aspects or limbs of the same Brahm manifested or revealed in the form of Pranav (i.e. as the ethereal sound reverberating as the background sound in the cosmic ether that is conceptualised in the form of the monosyllable word OM).

The same Brahm, also known as Pranav or OM, is said to have three subtle forms—viz. the first is known as ‘Sanhaar Pranav (i.e. the Brahm that is the cause of conclusion; that exists beyond conclusion of creation)’, the second is known as ‘Sristhi Pranav (i.e. the Brahm that is the cause of creation; the one that pre-dates creation; the one from which this creation has come into being)’, and the third aspect is known as ‘Ubhayaatmak Pranav (i.e. the Brahm that displays two characteristics; the Brahm which is both the concluder as well as the creator)’.

The ‘Ubhayaatmak Pranav’ again has two aspects—one is ‘Antaha’ (secret, hidden, internal, esoteric or subtle form of Brahm that is not visible or perceptible externally), and the other is ‘Baahaya’ (the external, visible, manifested and perceptible form of Brahm; the form that is easily known, seen, understood and experienced).

The ‘Vaahaya/Baahaya Pranav (Brahm)’ is also known as ‘Vyavahaarik Pranav’, or Brahm that is revealed in the practical world, the usual and customary form of Brahm known by the creature. This is the variant of Brahm that a creature comes in contact with. It is the external form of Brahm in practical life. It is the non-abstract and tangible aspect of Brahm that is otherwise beyond comprehension and too abstract and intangible to be grasped.

The Vyasthi Pranav (Brahm) is also known as Baahaya or Vyavahaarik Pranav. [This is because of one simple reason. The individual creature ('Vyasthi') is Brahm personified in the enlightened view of the Upanishads. The reason is that the Atma of the creature, which is his true self and which is pure consciousness, is this Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, residing in the heart of this individual creature. Without this Atma the creature would cease to exist. Since a creature is a verifiable and visible entity, since no one can deny his own existence, this revealed form of Brahm at the individual level—the Vyasthi level—is called 'Baahya Pranav or Baahya Brahm', or the form of Brahm that is externally visible, is seen, is tangible, is on display, is well known and understood. It does not require any grounding in the Upanishads or the Vedas to be convinced about the existence of a living being right in the front of an observer. The Baahya form of Brahm is too evident to arouse any sort of doubt and confusion. The only thing that is needed is a sharpened intelligence and wisdom that are able to analyse and correctly interpret the teaching of the scriptures which say that each individual living being is a manifestation of Brahm, and to understand the reason behind this assertion of the scriptures. In other word, Brahm is revealed in its 'Vyasthi' form as an individual creature in this world. It is in practical life that one can feel and experience the presence of Brahm if one is wise and enlightened enough to realise the basic truth of the tenets of the scriptures that whatever that exists in this creation is nothing but Brahm. No other proof of Brahm's existence is needed than the presence of a living being right in the front of the wise observer.]

Aside of these forms of Brahm, there is another form known as 'Aarsha Pranav'. This form of Pranav or Brahm is also known as the 'Viraat' or the vast, macrocosmic, invisible, all-encompassing and all-pervasive form of Brahm.

[The word 'Aarsha' means that about which the ancient sages and seers—or Rishis—had written, anything that is authorised by these Rishis and sanctified by the Vedas. Hence, that form of Brahm which includes everything in the creation, which displays the grand characteristics of being all-inclusive, all-pervading and all-encompassing, who is invisible and macrocosmic in nature and form—i.e. Brahm in its Viraat or vast and colossus form—is known as Aarsha because this form has been established and sanctified by the ancient sages who had meditated deeply and realised the vastness of the cosmic Consciousness that they named as 'Brahm', as well as by the Vedas that are essentially codified form of that esoteric and enigmatic knowledge. The Vedas are in effect the knowledge of the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm that the ancient sages and seers left for posterity.]

The 'Sanhaar Pranav' is also known as 'Brahm Pranav' because it is in this form of the supreme Consciousness (Brahm or Pranav) that the creator Brahma (i.e. that manifested form of supreme Consciousness which is responsible for creating this visible world) dwells in a concealed form.

[The Sanhaar Pranav is that aspect of the cosmic Consciousness, the 'Viraat Purush', that brings about the conclusion—'Sanhaar'—of creation. The word 'Sanhaar' means to end, kill, slay, annihilate, demolish. But a new phase of creation is hidden in the bosom of the same Viraat in the form of Brahma, the creator of the visible world. When the time is ripe, Brahma rises from the Viraat Purush's navel atop a divine lotus to initiate the new phase of creation. So, while the Viraat concludes this present creation as the Sanhaar Pranav, it is the same Divinity that would be the cause of the next generation of creation in the form of Brahma the creator. In the Purans, this Sanhaar Brahm has been

named ‘Rudra’ which is the angry form of Brahm. Brahm has been depicted in its angry form as ‘Rudra’ because normally Brahm has a very calm and neutral demeanour in his role of the creator and sustainer of creation. He gets angry only when he decides to wind up the show. Without being angry, he would not be able to demolish the same creation that he has so assiduously nurtured for such a long period of time.]”

(ii) The Atharva Veda’s *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Purva Kand/Canto 1, verse no. 11-12 uses the following epithets for Brahm—**Pashupati Brahm, Maheshwar Brahm, Manas Brahm and Hans**. Let us see what these two verses say on Brahm—“verse no. 11 = Pashupati Rudra (i.e. Lord Shiva)<sup>1</sup> is the doer or performer of all Yagyas (fire sacrifices; he represents the Brahma priest). Lord Vishnu is the Adhvaryu (the priest who takes care of the details of the rituals). And Indra (the king of Gods) is the Hota (a special category of priest)<sup>2</sup>.”

\*The Supreme Being known as the ‘Maheshwar Brahm<sup>3</sup>’, the Great Ishwar (Lord God) known as Brahm, who resides in the inner-self (of all the living beings as the pure consciousness known as the Atma) is the patron deity, the Brahm (the God), to whom the sacrifice is offered, and he is the one who enjoys the benefits of the fire sacrifice. This supreme Lord is also known as ‘Manas Brahm’—literally the Supreme Being who lives in the subtle heart as well as in the conscious and the sub-conscious mind of the creature. It is this Lord who is the real beneficiary of all the good and auspicious deeds done by the creature. In other words, the real beneficiary of all good and auspicious deeds is the creature himself, and no one else. This is because the ‘true self’ of any creature (living being) is his Atma, his pure conscious soul, and the Atma is a microcosmic counterpart, a perfect image, of the supreme Consciousness known as Brahm or Pranav.

[The term ‘Mana’ has two components—viz. the ‘subtle heart’ because it is here that the Atma lives, and ‘subtle aspects of the conscious mind’ because it is here that the grand virtues that distinguish Brahm, such as wisdom, enlightenment, knowledge, deep insight, intelligence, erudition, sagacity, the ability to discriminate and differentiate between the right and the wrong, etc. are located. That is, the real benefit of doing the fire sacrifice with devotion and faith is derived by the Atma or the inner-self of the creature which finds auspiciousness and holiness with this endeavour. The fire of the sacrifice symbolically burns all the taints and impurities that may have mired the purity and divinity of the Atma because of its association with this world full of corruptions and impurities.] (11).

[Note—\*This stanza can be interpreted as follows also—‘The real beneficiary of the fire sacrifice or any other forms of auspicious deeds is the supreme Lord known as ‘Maheshwar’, the Great Ishwar, who is also known as Brahm. This Brahm resides in the subtle Mana (heart, conscience and sub-conscious mind) of the aspirant as his Atma which is pure consciousness and the concerned individual’s ‘true self’. In other words, the real beneficiary of all good and auspicious deeds is the creature himself, and no one else.

<sup>1</sup>The *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 14 which stresses that ‘Isha’ or the Lord Shiva, who is regarded as the supreme Lord of creation, is also known as ‘Pashupati’. His divine consort is said to be ‘Swaha’. In mythology, Swaha is a personification of the oblation offered to the fire sacrifice. Swaha is also depicted as the daughter of Daksha Prajapati and wife of Agni, the Fire-God; she is said to preside over burnt offerings. Her body consists of the four Vedas and her limbs are the branches of the Vedas, called Angas.

<sup>2</sup>The *Brahma priest* is the head, the senior most and elder class of priest who is a representative of Brahma, the creator and patriarch of creation. Brahma was the first God who did the cosmic fire sacrifice and started the tradition of fire sacrifices and worshipping of the Fire in order to empower one to successfully undertake any given enterprise. This priest uses the hymns of the Rig Veda.

The *Hota priest* is the priest who offers oblation to the sacred fire; he uses the hymns of the Atharva Veda. The Hota priest offers the oblations on behalf of the patron who finances the fire sacrifice. Since in earlier times only kings and other noble men had the wherewithal to hold elaborate fire sacrifices involving huge outlay of money, the king of Gods, Indra, is cited here as being the Hota priest as he made arrangements for the material things needed for the completion of the fire sacrifice. Besides this point, Indra was the God of rain, and therefore his nod was needed for a good harvest from which the grain could be collected to be offered to the supreme deity. Therefore, metaphorically and by implication it was Indra who was himself offering the oblations to the Supreme Being.

The *Adhvaryu priest* chants the hymns of the Yajur Veda. With the same logic as applied for the Hota priest, Vishnu was the Adhvaryu priest because he took care of the nitty-gritty of creation; Vishnu ensured that the details of maintenance of creation were taken care of like this priest who takes care of the Mantras associated with the various Gods and Goddesses who preside over the various aspect of the mundane life on earth.

<sup>3</sup>It is to be noted here that the term ‘Maheshwar’ is traditionally applied to Lord Shiva who is also known as Rudra. But a fine distinction must be made between Shiva who is honoured as Maheshwar, and Shiva who is known as Rudra. Rudra is not the complete Brahm as clearly stressed in verse no. 10 for the simple reason that the lowly quality of Tama Guna dominates him, and it is due to this Tama Guna that he is so angry and wrathful. On the other hand, that form of Shiva which is holy, wise, enlightened and self-realised, and which is the patron deity of ascetics and sages is known as Aghor, the renunciate and dispassionate form of Shiva who is ever-submerged in meditation and contemplation. This Shiva is pure, holy, truthful, enlightened and blissful. These are the hallmark virtues of the Atma, the pure consciousness that is ‘Chinmaya’ (truthful, enlightened, blissful—refer verse no. 14). Hence, the Shiva who is ‘Maheshwar’ is the one who possesses the eclectic qualities possessed by the Atma at the individual level of creation, and of the supreme transcendental Atma known as the supreme Brahm at the cosmic level of creation.]

“verse no. 12 = The ‘Manas Brahm’ (as described in verse no. 11 above) has a subtle, a divine and a sublime form or aspect or facet known as ‘Hans<sup>1</sup>’, ‘So-a-Ham<sup>2</sup>’, etc.

[This Manas Brahm obviously is the pure conscious Atma as the divine bird Hans, the Swan, is frequently used in the Upanishads as a metaphor for the Atma to indicate the latter’s immaculacy, holiness, purity and divinity, along with a high degree of wisdom, enlightenment and erudition. Since the Atma is also the ‘self’ of the creature, a person who performs a fire sacrifice with a holistic approach is expected to become highly self-realised and spiritually awakened or enlightened so much so that when he declares ‘I am that Brahm’ (So-a-Ham), he actually means it and is not being pretentious or deceitful. He is deemed to have understood the esoteric meaning of the term ‘Brahm’ vis-à-vis his own truthful ‘self’ known as the Atma.]

This symbolic fire sacrifice (that is done to attain this eclectic state of existence when the aspirant becomes enough self-realised to understand that he is the supreme transcendental Brahm personified in the form of his Atma known as Hans) is actually done by practicing meditation upon Naad.

What is it? When the seeker of Brahm becomes completely submerged in the thoughts of Brahm and the Atma, when he continuously meditates upon the pure consciousness by employing the Mantra ‘Hans’ (as described in a number of Upanishads for this purpose), his inner-self begins to resonate with the sound of Naad<sup>3</sup> (i.e. the cosmic sound which is said to be generated by the vibrations in the ether created by the resonance of the cosmic Consciousness). This sound flows in a continuous stream like the flow of oil on a clean surface. Its vibrations reverberate in the nerves and veins of the practitioner’s body so much so that he becomes oblivious of everything else in this world.

Any disruption in this state of transcendental existence of continuous bliss and stability is the state of existence known as the Jiva—i.e. the Atma that lacks steadiness of bliss and tranquility, and is therefore tossed and tumbled around by the changing nature of the gross world around it.

[In other words, the ‘Jiva’ or the living being is an entity that is different from Brahm by the virtue of its losing its connection with the Atma, the pure consciousness. Otherwise, there is no distinction between the Jiva and Brahm.] (12).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The eclectic Mantra *Hans*—refer verse no. 4 of this Kanda/Canto 1 and its note. The metaphysical importance and relevance of a Swan vis-à-vis the Atma have been explained as note of verse no. 20 of the present Kanda/Canto 1 of this Upanishad.

<sup>2</sup>The Mantra *So-a-Ham*—This Mantra has been described in a number of Upanishads—viz. (i) Sam Veda = Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 83. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 34, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-133; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 28; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 17, Canto 4, verse nos. 1.11-2, Canto 5, verse nos. 69-72. (iii) Atharva Veda = Tripadvibhuta Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 5, paragraph no. 15.

<sup>3</sup>*Naad* is the cosmic sound that is said to be generated in the cosmic ether due to the vibrations caused by pulsations of Consciousness. It is the subtlest form of sound and stands for the subtlest form of dynamism of this cosmic Consciousness that the Upanishads prefer to call Brahm. In this manifestation of Naad, Brahm is called Pranav. The cosmic sound of Naad is encrypted in the form of the monosyllabic Mantra known as OM. Therefore it follows that OM is a word manifestation or representative of the cosmic Naad which stands for the cosmic form of life-generating energy and dynamism called Consciousness. The divine entity that possesses this virtue is the Supreme Being known as Brahm.

Now, Hans is a bird—i.e. it is a living being with a gross body which harbours the same Consciousness inside it in the form of the Atma. This Atma possesses all the eclectic virtues that Brahm possesses. Therefore, for all practical purposes, both the ‘Hans’ and ‘OM’ refer to the same cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, albeit at two different levels of creation. While the term ‘OM’ refers to the existence of the Consciousness at the cosmic level in the form of Pranav or Brahm, the term ‘Hans’ refer to the same Consciousness that resides inside the gross body of the individual creature as his Atma.

This word OM is an ethereal sound that is used during Yoga or meditation exercises to contemplate upon Brahm because its repetition results in submerging the practitioner in a continuous and overwhelming stream of sound waves, of increasing frequency and pitch, that are generated by the vibrations caused by continuous repetition of OM. The sound reverberates throughout his inner being so much so that it reaches a crescendo. It is then that the practitioner is said to hear the cosmic Naad, the cosmic background sound in the ether which is believed to be generated by the cosmic Consciousness known as

Brahm. It is much like the case of one listening to a favourite radio station only when he catches the particular frequency.]”

(iii) Atharva Veda’s *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Uttar Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 1 says that Brahm is also known as **Parmatma**, the supreme Atma, and *Purush*, the Viraat Purush who is the primary Male from whom the rest of the creation has come into being.

(iv) **Sakal and Nishkal Brahm**—The Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 3, section 1, verse nos. 2-5 narrate the two aspects of Brahm as being *Sakal* and *Nishkal* when sage Shandilya asked sage Atharva about it. To quote—  
“Verse no. 2 = ‘Oh Shandilya! It is true that the supreme transcendental Brahm is neutral and does nothing. It is also true that it is in the form of an ‘Akshar’ (here referring to the ethereal word OM which is a monosyllabic sound having no forms). In spite of these, Brahm has three subtle forms—called ‘Sakal’ (meaning Brahm having a visible form; or Brahm that has specific attributes), ‘Nishkal’ (having no visible form; having universal virtues in their most sublime form), and ‘Sakal-Nishkal’ (having both the characteristics of a Sakal and a Nishkal Brahm; a composite of both the values) (2-3).

“Verse no. 4 = Now, the ‘Nishkal’ form of Brahm is being outlined.

Brahm that is an embodiment of Truth, that is an image of extreme bliss, happiness, beatitude and felicity, that does nothing and remains motionless, that is honoured by the epithet of ‘Niranjan’ (i.e. an entity that has no taints, blemishes, darkness and faults of any kind), that is universal and uniformly all-pervading and omnipresent, that is most subtle, atomic and microscopic, that has his mouth in all the four directions (i.e. is able to see, hear, feel, smell and taste everything that exists in any point in this physical world; one from whom nothing is hidden or kept secret), that is indefinable and indescribable, and that is eternal, imperishable and infinite—verily, this subtle, sublime, ethereal, universal, all-encompassing and all-inclusive divine formless appearance or revelation of Brahm is called its ‘Nishkal’ form (4).

“Verse no. 5 = Now, the form of Brahm known as ‘Sakal’ is being described.

Brahm that is identified with natural Avidya (ignorance), Mool Prakriti (primary Nature) and Maya (delusions), that which is said to have subtle qualities represented or symbolized by the three colours of red, white and black (standing for the Raja Guna, the Sata Guna and the Tama Guna respectively).

When the unqualified, formless and attribute-less divine Being (i.e. Brahm) is visualized as being surrounded by Maya (delusions), he is said to have acquired different colours, such as dark and yellow.

[It is like viewing something with tinted glasses. It is obvious and natural that the thing viewed would adopt the colour of the glass through which it is being viewed. Similarly, when the immaculate and ‘Niranjan’ Brahm is viewed through the veil of Maya around it, the colours of the latter would naturally affect the former, though of course these colours are not the natural and inherent colours or traits of Brahm.]

Assuming these two colours, the same Brahm is called Maheshwar or Lord Shiva (who is responsible for concluding this creation) and Isha or Lord Vishnu (who is responsible for sustenance and protection of the same creation).

[This stanza can be interpreted and read as follows as well—The same Brahm is seen as having a yellow colour to emphasize his role as the sustainer and protector of creation, and as having a dark colour to emphasize his role as the concluder of creation. That is why he is called ‘Maheshwar’ or the Great Lord because he performs two opposite functions simultaneously—one of sustenance and the other of conclusion of creation. The ‘yellow’ colour stands for sustenance and protection, while the ‘dark’ colour stands for destruction. They go hand-in-hand to suggest that what has come into being and so meticulously sustained and looked after would not escape destruction and conclusion in due course of time.]

This is the ‘Sakal’ form of Brahm (5).”

(vi) **The Vaishwanar Brahm**—Reference: (i) Atharva Veda = Mandukya Upanishad, verse no. 3; Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 4; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8, verse no. 11; Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Kanda/Canto 2, verse nos. 28-30. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Brahma Upanishad, verse no. 21; Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse no. 15.

The word ‘Vaishwanar’ refers to the all-pervading and all-encompassing macrocosmic form of Brahm. It is that aspect of Brahm which represents the whole ‘Vishwa’ or world, the visible creation. It is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm and represents the sum total of all gross bodies in existence. It, more practically, refers to the Jagrat or waking aspect of consciousness because it is in this state that the individual becomes aware of the surrounding world; it is during the Jagrat state that the consciousness receives inputs from the world, the ‘Vishwa’, and establishes a contact with it. So, that aspect of Brahm that relates to the gross aspect of creation at the cosmic level is known as *Vaishwanar Brahm*.

This aspect is also known as the ‘Viraat Purush’ as the latter term refers to the all-pervading and all-encompassing form of Brahm at the macrocosmic level of creation. The entire creation is said to be formed from the body of this Viraat Purush. Or, it is this Viraat Purush who has metamorphosed himself in the form of the entire creation. Hence, one is inseparable from the other just like water and ocean.

Another term used in this context is ‘Vaishnawar Purush’ which is a combination of the two terms ‘Vaishwanar Brahm’ and ‘Viraat Purush’.

This Vaishwanar form is, however the gross aspect of the otherwise most subtle and sublime Divinity known as Brahm. In other words, the macrocosmic form of Brahm from which the rest of the creation was made evident is called Vaishwanar. This form of Brahm is its first aspect or Paad out of its four aspects.

The ‘Vaishwanar Brahm’ is described in *Mandukya Upanishad* of Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 3 as follows—“The first aspect of Brahm and Atma is called Vaishwanar<sup>1</sup>. This aspect of Brahm known as the Vaishwanar is the revealer and regulator of the visible world as it corresponds to the waking state of consciousness. It is this gross aspect of Brahm that makes the creature’s Atma (i.e. his true conscious self) become aware of the visible world. It therefore corresponds to the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness which makes the creature aware of the external world.

This gross aspect (i.e. gross body) of Brahm (in the form of this vast world) has seven ‘Angas’ or body parts or units or divisions<sup>2</sup>, and nineteen ‘Mukhas’ or mouths<sup>3</sup>.

This form of Brahm is the enjoyer and consumer of all the material things in this world (because it is able to perceive this world with its material sense objects and get enticed by their charms).

This form of Brahm is called the ‘Vishwa’ or the physical gross and visible world in which the creature lives and with which he interacts. [It is from this word ‘Vishwa’ that the term Vaishwanar is derived.] (3).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The concept of Vaishwanar Brahm and Atma have also been explained in the Krishna Yajur Veda’s Brahma-panishad, verse no. 21, and Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse no. 15.

The term *Vaishwanar* in simple words means the form of Brahm that is as large and as vast as the universe, enclosing it from all sides like a moat of a fort, and even existing beyond it. This all-inclusive, all-pervading and all-encompassing macrocosmic form of Brahm is the ‘Vishwa’ or the world because this world is a manifestation of Brahm, it is Brahm revealed in its myriad and diverse forms, and it is the glory of Brahm on display. If fact, if one wishes to witness Brahm, he must observe Brahm at play in this world itself. The physical aspect of Brahm in the form of the visible world is equivalent to the Jagrat state of consciousness because it is in this state that the creature sees the world. Here the word ‘creature’ refers to his Atma or soul which is pure consciousness and his true self. This Atma is called Vaishwanar because, like Brahm, it is manifested as all forms of life in this world.

<sup>2</sup>The *seven parts* of the Vaishwanar Brahm’s body have two interpretations. One way of considering them is related to the seven Lokas or subtle worlds that exist. These seven worlds are the following— The *seven Bhuvans* or Lokas according to the Purans are the following:--According to Brahmaand Puran (BP) and Vaaman Puran (VP) there are the following Lokas-- ‘Bhu’ or earth [BP-3,4,2-18]; ‘Bhuvaha’ or the space between the earth and the heaven [BP-3,4,2-19]; ‘Swaha’ or the heavens known as Brahma’s abode; the space beyond the earth’s atmosphere; cosmic wind represented by the solar wind blows here [BP-3,4,2-20]; ‘Maha’ or the world created by Brahma pronouncing the divine word Maha meaning the great heaven or the outer space; it is believed that great sages and seers stay here; it is 1000 Yojans or appx. 8000 miles away from the Swaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-21; VP-52,21-22]; ‘Janaha’, so called because it was to be inhabited by the humans and the cows [BP-3,4,2-22; VP-52, 22]; ‘Tapaha’ or the Loka where great amount of austerity and penances are done; it is said to be 60 million Yojans or appx. 60 x 8 million miles away from the Janaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-24; VP-52, 23]; and ‘Satyam’ or the truthful heaven where the supreme Lord has his abode; it is 300 million Yojans or appx. 300 x 8 million miles beyond the Tapaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-25; VP-52, 24].

The seven Bhuvans or Lokas according to the Vedantic view are the following:-- the seven organs of perception situated in the region of the head —viz. the two eyes + two ears + two nostrils + one tongue/mouth = seven. Refer *Mundak Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 2, section 1, verse no. 8.

Another way of interpreting the seven parts of the Vaishwanar’s cosmic body are the following units of creation—the Duloka or the heavens is its head, the Sun (representing the fire element) and the Moon (representing light) are its two eyes, the Vayu or the air element is its Pran or vital life giving winds with which it breathes and which infused life in the units of its cosmic body, the Akash or the sky is its abdomen in which all the organs of the Vaishwanar’s body are located just like the man’s abdomen encloses all his organs, the Aapha or water is its fluid part such as its blood, mucous and semen, the Anna or food produced in the world is its intestines and rectum (as it is the food that is digested

in the intestines to sustain the body and its residue is collected in the rectum before being expelled from the anus), and the Prithivi or earth is its two legs.

<sup>3</sup>The nineteen mouths of the Vaishwanar Brahm are the following—10 sense organs consisting of five organs of perception (eye, ear, nose, tongue, skin) and five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, excretory, genitals) + 5 Prans (or the vital winds such as Pran or breath, Apan, Samaan, Vyan and Udaan) + 1 Mana (mind) + 1 Buddhi (intellect) + Ahankar (ego, self pride) + Chitta (sub-conscious) = 19. These are the components through which the creature interacts with the world—or ‘sees’ the visible world during his Jagrat or waking state of consciousness.]”

The same idea is expressed in *Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 4 which asserts that the all inclusive form of Brahm is called Vaishwanar and it is one of the four Paads or limbs or aspects of the divine form of the Supreme Being. While describing the cosmic form of Lord Nrisingh/Narsingh, it says—“He who is called ‘Vaishwanar’ because his body consists of the entire creation and his ‘true self’ called the Atma that lives in this cosmic body is the cosmic Consciousness that pervades uniformly in this creation—verily, this macrocosmic form of Supreme Being known as the Vaishwanar is the symbolic first Paad or aspect or facet of Lord Nrisingh”.

The *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 8, verse no. 11 describes Vaishwanar Brahm as follows—“This macrocosmic form of the divine Brahm (cosmic Consciousness), personified as the Supreme Being, has nineteen metaphoric mouths (symbolised by the following—the 5 sense organs such as ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin + 5 organs of action such as hands, legs, mouth, excretory and genitals + 5 Prans or vital airs or winds such as Pran or main breath, Apan, Vyan, Udaan and Samaan + 4 Anthakarans or inner self such as Mana or mind, Buddhi or intellect, Chitta or sub-conscious and Ahankar or ego and pride = 19), whose limbs are the eight Lokas (consisting of Bhū, Bhurva, Swaha, Maha, Janaha, Tapaha, Satyam and Patal =8), who is the undisputed supreme Lord (‘Prabhu’) of the entire world, who is revealed in the four states of existence known as Sthul or gross, Sukshma or subtle, Kaaran or causal, and Sakshi or the one who is a sole witness of everything—verily, the supreme transcendental and all-pervasive macrocosmic Brahm who has revealed himself as this vast and colossus creation is known as ‘Vaishwanar Brahm’ or the Viraat Purush. (11)”

(vii) Atharva Veda’s *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad* assigns the following names to Brahm—viz. **Maheshwar Brahm** (Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 11), **Manas Brahm** (Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 11-12), **Hans** (Kanda/Canto 1, verse nos. 12-15, 20-21, 32), **Param Hans** (Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 25), **Pashupati Parmatma** (Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 29), **Pashupati or Pashupati Rudra** (Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 32); **Parmatma and Purush** (Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 1).

Some of the other unique qualities of Brahm have been enumerated in the Atharva Veda’s *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 1. To quote “This Supreme Being **lives in the ‘Brahm-pur’** (literally the city of Brahm), and he is honoured as being **Viraj** (neutral or immune to the effects of Raja and other Gunas such as Sata and Tama; one who is immaculate and holy) and **Nishkal** (one who has no taints, blemishes, blights,

shortcomings and impurities; one who has no parts or divisions or fractions as he is immutable and an indivisible whole).

He is **Shubhra** (one who is auspicious and holy) and **Akshar** (imperishable and eternal). His glory, divinity and magnificence is supreme, unquestioned and beyond reproach.

He is called **Nirmak** as he is the supreme controller and regulator of everything in creation; he is the one who had designed ‘destiny’ of all things in existence; he is the supreme cosmic astute architect of this creation.

He is like a **Madhukar** (the honey-bee) because he collects the best elements in creation, and gives the best to the world he creates and rears. [Like the honey-bee which collects nectar from an assortment of flowers, and then transforms it into honey for the benefit of the rest of the world, the supreme astute Creator known as Brahm collects numerous primary elements of creation which are useless in themselves, and then moulds them in accordance to his wishes to produce a lively and dynamic creation of an astounding variety that is so productive, magnificent and beautiful.]

He remains absolutely neutral and dispassionate in his divine abode, appearing to do nothing. [In other words, after he had finished completing the task of creation, he assumed the role of a neutral guardian and judge who would dispassionately control this creation from within. His neutrality and restraint were a necessity for impartial regulation of this creation, to reward those who were good and punish who were evil.]”

The entire **creation was produced** by Brahm in his manifestation as the **Viraat Purush**—refer (i) Rig Veda’s Aiteriya Upanishad, Canto 1, Section 1-3. (ii) Atharva Veda’s Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 1, section 1, verse no. 1, 7, 9; Mundak 1, section 2, verse no. 1; Mundak 2, section 1, verse nos. 1-10; Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 9-10. (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Shewatshwatar Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 4.

**Brahm resides in the subtle space of the heart** of the creature—refer (i) Atharva Veda’s Mundak Upanishad, Mundak 2, Section 1, verse nos. 9-10; Mundak 2, Section 2, verse no. 1, 6; 9; Mundak 3, Section 1, verse no. 7; Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 25. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Shewtashwatar Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 11.

**Brahm resides in the gross body of the creature (as its Atma and Pran)**—refer (i) Atharva Veda’s Mundak Upanishad, Mundak 3, Section 1, verse no. 4-5 (as the creature’s Pran); Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 9, verse no. 15; Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 17, 19-20; Canto 2, verse nos. 13-16, 21-25, 31-46. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Shewatshwatar Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 7; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 40; Brahmo-panishad, verse no. 4. (iii) Rig Veda’s Aiteriya Upanishad, Canto 1, Section 2, verse no. 3; Canto 1, Section 3, verse no. 12-14.

**Brahm is the controller of the entire creation**—refer (i) Atharva Veda’s Mundak Upanishad, Mundak 2, Section 2, verse no. 7. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Shewtashwatar Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 1, 7.

### **The non-duality or oneness between Brahm and Atma:**

*Non-duality* or oneness or uniformity between ‘Brahm’, the cosmic Consciousness, and the ‘Atma’, the individual creature’s self and the pure consciousness that lives in his heart, has been elaborately explained in all the major Upanishads because this is the basic theme around which the philosophy of the Upanishads is built. Some of these Upanishads are the following—

(i) Rig Veda’s *Atma-poojo-panishad*.

(ii) Shukla Yajur Veda’s *Adhyatma Upanishad; Subalo-panishad*, Canto 3, 5, 7 (verse no. 1), and 9 (verse no. 16); *Paingal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no.18; *Niralamba Upanishad; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*, Canto 5, Brahman 1.

(iii) Krishna Yajur Veda—*Brahm Vidya Upanishad*, verse nos. 17, 81-110; *Tejo Bindu Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-43, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-51, 60-64, Canto 4, verse nos. 2-30, 69-79, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-75, 90-96, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-72; *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse nos. 7-8; *Skanda Upanishad*, verse nos. 2-7; *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad*, verse no. 93/15; *Kathrudra Upanishad*, verse no. 41-42.

(iv) Atharva Veda’s *Atmo-panishad; Mundak Upanishad*, Canto 3, section 2, verse nos. 3-4, 8; *Mandukya Upanishad*, verse no. 2; *Atharvashir Upanishad* (which describes Rudra as a manifestation of Brahm); *Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph 4-6; Canto 8, paragraph no. 2; *Shandilya Upanishad*, Canto 3, section 2, verse no. 2-3; *Atma Upanishad; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 8, verse no. 7; Canto 9, verse nos. 7-8; *Mahavakya Upanishad*, verse no. 6; *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 8-10.

(v) Sam Veda—*Maho-panishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 7; *Keno-panishad; Chandogya Upanishad*.

The Atharva Veda’s *Mahavakya Upanishad*, verse no. 6 says that **Brahm and the Atma are the same**, and that since the term *Hans* (a divine Swan) is used for *Brahm* it means that it also implies the *Atma* of the individual creature. To quote—

“The supreme transcendental Brahm (the cosmic Consciousness), which is as life-giving, as splendourous and as self-illuminated as the celestial sun, resides in the gross body of every living-being who breathes in the form of the latter’s *Atma* (soul; the ‘self’). This Brahm (that resides in the creature’s physical gross body as his *Atma*) is known as the ‘Hans’ (literally a divine Swan).

This ‘Hans’ also refers to the breath that comes in and moves out of the creature’s body while making a subtle hissing sound while doing so.

[‘Ha’ sound is made when one inhales, and ‘Sa’ sound is made when one exhales. This is a continuous process. In Yoga Upanishads it is referred to as the silent, steady and continuous involuntary repetition of the ‘Hans Mantra’ which pertains to the supreme transcendental Brahm. This is sort of involuntary meditation and contemplation done

when a spiritual aspirant has accomplished certain level of enlightenment and spiritual achievement. Such an aspirant is not required to specially sit for Yoga at a fixed time or for certain duration of time, as his entire life is spent in meditation and contemplation. He is meditating upon Brahm and the Atma all the time, even when he is asleep or going about his mundane duties in this world. The reason is that each of his breath is a repetition of the ‘Hans Mantra’ related to Brahm; he is always focused on Brahm.]

When the spiritual aspirant becomes enlightened and self-realised he becomes firmly convinced that his true identity is the ‘Hans’ that is an acronym for Brahm, the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness that is the Absolute Truth of creation. That is, he becomes convinced that the ‘Hans’ is none but his ‘true self’; or that ‘he is the Hans (Brahm) personified himself’. [‘Hans So-a-Ham’.]

Meditating upon this Hans makes him enlightened about the vital winds known as Pran and Apaana (which are the two primary winds in his body, the former moving upwards, and the latter moving downwards in the body). This also enlightens him about the importance of breath and its control.

[This is because only when he concentrates his mind during meditation that he is able to hear the subtle sound of ‘Ha’ and ‘Sa’ being made by the vital winds as they come in and go out of the body in the form of breath. This leads him to discover that his Atma, the pure consciousness residing in his gross body as his true ‘self’, and the Pran, the vital wind that makes the sound of Hans, are synonymous with each other. One can’t exist without the other. If there is no ‘consciousness’ or life-awareness inside the body, the latter would not breathe, and if the breath is stopped the body would die automatically, thereby snuffing out consciousness from it.]

Hence, by constant and persistent practice of this eclectic Vidya (spiritual knowledge that is obtained by steady meditation and contemplation) for a long time does one become aware of the presence of the supreme transcendental Atma known as the ‘Parmatma’, the Supreme Being, that is honoured and eulogized by the epithet ‘Satchidaanand’—one that is ‘Sat’ or truthful, one that is ‘Chit’ or consciousness, and one that is ‘Anand’ or blissful.

In other words, when the spiritual aspirant becomes self-realised, he also becomes Brahm-realised. This results in his experiencing the presence of the truthful, the conscious and the blissful Atma in his own inner-being. He becomes enlightened, and this enlightenment means he has attained knowledge of the Absolute Truth. That is, he has attained true Gyan (6).”

The fact that **Brahm (the cosmic Consciousness), Ishwar (the supreme Lord) and Jiva (the creature) are one** has been proclaimed in the *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse no. 77 in the following words—“The sky element is a uniform entity that is universal and immutable because it cannot be divided or fractioned or portioned. But the same sky is given different names according to the space it occupies—for instance, it is called ‘Ghatakash’ when it is present in the vacant space of a pot, and ‘Mahakash’ when it is considered in its cosmic form that is present outside the body of the pot. [And, when the pot is broken, both the forms of the sky, viz. the Ghatakash and the Mahakash, become one and the same, having no separate existence or name. Hence one concludes that the different names assigned to the sky element is

basically fallacious, and has its genesis in ignorance of the fundamental truth about the sky.

Similarly, the Atma is universally the same entity; it uniformly pervades throughout the creation, both at the micro level of an individual creature, as well as the macro level at the plane of creation or world at large. Therefore, to treat the Jiva (a living being; a creature) as being separate or different from Ishwar (the Supreme Being) is an erroneous idea based on fallacious premises and ignorance of the truth.

[The Atma is the same in all the creatures, and this Atma is nothing but pure consciousness that is an entity established as being divine, sublime, subtle, universal, uniform, immutable, indivisible, eternal, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent etc. It is this same Atma that resides in the gross body of any given individual as well as in all other creatures in existence. This is the micro-level view of the Atma. At the cosmic level, it is the same Consciousness that exists at every level of creation; it is this Consciousness that is the cause of this creation, its development, growth, expansion, and its conclusion. Even after the end of one cycle of birth and death, it is this Consciousness that prevails, and then becomes the fountainhead from which the next cycle sprouts forth, and upon which it rests.

This Consciousness known as the Atma is the central pivot around which the whole wheel of creation revolves. This fact is elucidated in a number of Upanishads. Since the Atma is one and immutable, it is the same irrespective of the level or plane of creation in which it exists. Again, the Atma is pure consciousness and nothing else. Therefore it follows that there is no fundamental difference between the Jiva and Ishwar as both are the same ‘consciousness’ or Atma personified.

The treatment of an entity that is universally and indisputably ‘one’ and non-dual, i.e. which is never ‘two or more’, as having more than one forms or existences is indeed fallacious and extremely absurd.

Therefore, to treat the Jiva and the Ishwar as two distinct or separate entities is fallacious, erroneous and misconceived (77).”

**Brahm has countless mouths, ears, eyes and necks (heads)**—refer (i) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Shewtashwatar Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 3, 11, 14, 16. (ii) Atharva Veda’s Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 11, and Canto 6, paragraph no. 11; Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 3. The phrase ‘having countless ears’ simply means that Brahm, in the form of the Viraat Purush, assumed as many forms as there were creatures who could hear. It also means that Brahm, as the living being’s consciousness, heard or became aware of everything that was happening in this creation.

**The 19 symbolic mouths of Brahm**—Since this entire creation is a manifestation of Brahm, every unit of it, each living being, is a manifestation of Brahm.

Now, the living being has external organs as well as internal organs of the body. Then there are the gross components as well as the subtle components of this creation that together help the wheel of creation rotate smoothly just like a car which has some visible components like the wheel, the steering wheel, the pedals for clutch and brake etc, as well as some invisible components that work behind the scene to actually make it possible that the immobile car moves on its own, such as the internal combustion engine

that almost magically uses the innocuous looking liquid such as the petrol or the diesel and makes them move the immobile car, the hidden mechanism of the other mechanical units of the car such as the clutches, the gears etc. that act in concert to actually make the static car move without anyone pushing it from behind.

Similar is the miraculous case with Brahm. This vibrant and dynamic creation was created from virtually nothing by Brahm, and then life was injected into it in such a way that it became self-sustaining, self-driven, self-propagating, and self-moving like the car.

And just like the car, the Supreme Being retained his right to steer it and stop it when he liked like the car's driver. The same driver would re-start the car when he so desires.

The *Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 4, and Canto 8, verse no. 9 refer to the nineteen symbolic mouths of Brahm. They are as follows—The 5 organs of perception (the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the skin) + the 5 organs of action (the hand, the leg, the mouth, the excretory and the reproductive) + the 5 Prans are the vital airs or winds such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyan and Udaana (which control all the functions of the body) + the 4 Antahakarans (the 'inner instrument' of the creature by which his mind works and receives the world) = 19. [The Antahakaran with four dimensions is described in Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 4.]

**Brahm is beyond comprehension**—refer Atharva Veda's Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos.13-20, 26-30; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 29.

**Brahm is Sat-Chid-Anand**—'Sat' = truthful; 'Chit' = consciousness; 'Anand' = bliss.

Refer (i) Krishna Yajur Veda's following Upanishad = Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 26-27; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 41; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 6, 23; Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 46. (ii) Atharva Veda's Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 29; Canto 5, verse no. 68, 74; Gopal Purva Tapini Upanishad, verse no. 23; Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad, verse no. 46.

**Brahm encloses this entire creation from all sides**, and nothing exists outside the boundary of Brahm. This fact has been asserted in the *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 3, verse no. 7, 9; Canto 6, verse nos. 2, 9; and in *Gayatri Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Gopath Brahman, Kandika 38.

**The relationship between Brahm and the world** has been explained in Kathrudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 42.

The **uniformity and non-duality between Shiva and Brahm** has been expounded in— (i) Krishna Yajur Veda's Dakshin Murti or Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad, Pancha Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 30, Skanda Upanishad, verse nos. 9, 13, and Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 32. (ii) Atharva Veda's Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 3, section 2, verse nos. 11-15; Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 11, 32; Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 3-8 and 15.

**Non-duality between Lord Ram and Brahm**—refer Ram Rahasya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 5 which elaborately describes the Beej Mantra of Lord Ram, i.e. ‘Raam/Raang’, and stresses that the letter ‘Raa’ in this Beej Mantra, as well the letter ‘Raa’ in the Lord’s ordinary name ‘Ram’ represents the supreme transcendental Brahm. Refer specially verse no. 6-7, 11, 13-14.

The **Pran or life consciousness of all the living beings is Brahm personified** in that form—refer Mudak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 3, section 1, verse no. 4; Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 17, 19-20; Canto 2, verse nos. 13-16, 21-25, 31-46.

The **Pran has its origin in Brahm**—Mundak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto) 2, section 1, verse no. 3.

The Atharva Veda’s Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Kanda/Canto 1, verse nos. 21, 24, 27, and Kanda/Canto 2, verse nos. 6, 15-16 assert that the **Sun and the Pranav (cosmic sound) are metaphors for both the Atma as well as the Brahm.**

**Why Brahm or Ishwar, the Supreme Being, the supreme Lord and Authority of creation, had to become a Jiva (creature)** has been explained in (i) Shukla Yajur Veda’s Paingal Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and the whole of Canto 2. (ii) Atharva Veda’s Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12; Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph nos. 9, 11-13.

**Brahm is revealed in the form of the Bhuts (elements; creatures) and pervades uniformly** in this creation so much so that nothing is there that is not Brahm—this eclectic fact is highlighted in the *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse nos. 6, 8-9, 16-17, 22.

**The non-duality of Brahm** has been exemplarily explained in the *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 8, paragraph no. 2 by citing the example of gold and water as follows—“Just like ‘pure gold’ can have many forms such as a wrist-band, a crown, an arm-band etc. without disturbing the inherent nature and intrinsic quality of the metal known as ‘gold’ (in other words, none of these forms affect the fundamental nature and quality of the metal known as ‘gold’ with the atomic number 79 just because gold has changed its shape and cast into various designs by the goldsmith), just like the ‘water’ present in the ocean assumes so many varied forms such as small and large waves, froth, bubbles, hail that falls from the sky, salty water, ice etc. without changing its own basic nature and characteristic quality (in other words, none of these forms would in any way alter or affect the basic molecular structure of water which essentially consists of two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen—H<sub>2</sub>O), just like ‘earth’ retains its basic characteristics, its fundamental qualities and its intrinsic value in spite of having so many varied external features as marked by the presence of innumerable mountains and hills of all imaginable contours and dimensions, countless varieties of plants such as large and sturdy trees or the humble grass, shrubs and creepers (in other words, though the earth is punctuated by so many varied external features,

though it displays such diversity in its external form, its basic structure of being a round globe made of the element known as ‘earth’ is not at all compromised)—in the same way, all the forms that I take in this creation are basically the various revelations of my one fundamental universal form which is the non-dual form, the one that is called ‘Advaita Brahm’.

All the myriad forms that are seen in this creation, all the variety that is observed in this creation, all the numerous contours, shapes, sizes, colours and forms that this creation takes are nothing but my own form, simply because the entire creation is nothing but ‘me’ revealed in its form.

Not a single atom exists that is not ‘me’. Or, if it had not been for me, there would have been no creation in existence now. [In other words, even the minutest of things as well as the most colossus of things are nothing but ‘me’ revealed in these forms. Nothing exists without ‘me’. The pronoun ‘me’ stands for the Supreme Being known as Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the Atma or true ‘Self’ of creation.] (2).”

**Jiva and Brahm**— The non-duality between the **Jiva and Brahm** has been proclaimed in the following Upanishads:—

(a) Krishna Yajur Veda— Rudra Hridaya Upanishad; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 17, 81-110; Tejo Bindu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-43, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-51, 60-64, Canto 4, verse nos. 2-30, 69-79, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-75, 90-96, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-72; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 7-8; Skanda Upanishad, verse nos. 2-7; Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/15; Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 56-58; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 70, 73.

(b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Adhyatma Upanishad; Subala-panishad, Canto 3, 5, 7 (verse no. 1), and 9 (verse no. 16); Paingalo-panishad, Canto 4, verse no.18; Niralamba.

(c) Rig Veda—Atma-poojo-panishad; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahman 1.

(d) Atharva Veda—Atmo-panishad; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 77; Par Brahm Upanishad, last stanza of verse no. 2; Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 20-21.

(e) Sam Veda—Maho-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 7.

Atharva Veda’s *Par Brahm Upanishad*, last stanza of verse no. 2, clearly asserts uniformity between **Brahm and the Jiva** as follows—“Brahm, who is the eternal and primary Lord, is also manifested as the Jiva, the living being. How a person who knows this esoteric secret can ever agree to accept that there is difference or some degree of distinction or separation between Brahm and the Jiva because he is convinced that they are one and the same. He never imagines that there is a difference between Brahm and the Jiva.”

The non-duality or oneness between **Atma and Parmatma** has been expounded in *Yog Kundalini Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 81.

The relationship between **Jiva and Parmatma**, the living being and the supreme Soul or Lord God of creation, has been explained in *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 52-53.

The *Paingal Upanishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and the whole of Canto 2. Now let us see what Canto 1, verse no. 12 has to say on the subject of

**who is a Jiva**—“That all-knowing and omniscient Ishwar (the supreme Lord of creation) invoked his own stupendous powers that created illusions and delusions in this creation, called his ‘Maya’, which allowed him to assume any form that he wished, and in conjunction with it (or joining hands with his own Maya, or allowing himself to become veiled in his own delusions) he entered the body of the individual creature. He was so enamoured with his own creation, and especially when he allowed his Maya to accompany him, that the same cosmic Lord who is beyond comprehension of even the wisest of men and the reach of the holy scriptures, such as the Vedas and the Purans, became engulfed or surrounded by ‘Moha’ (worldly attractions, infatuations, attachments, endearments, longings, love and affections). With this twin fault—viz. Maya and Moha—that supreme Lord who has no attributes and names became a ‘worldly creature’. [That is, when Maya found out that it’s Lord is getting interested in and developing affection for what he has created, it went ahead to fulfill the wishes of its Lord like a faithful and obedient servant would. Maya went literally overboard to please the Lord, and knowing that he might balk and suffer from indecision as to whether or not to allow himself to plunge in the formidable web of creation that he plans to unfold (because Brahm was an enlightened Being, and he would soon realise his failings), Maya showed its sly hand and made him get infatuated and enamoured with the creation to such an extent that the Lord lost awareness of who is was, and consequently became engrossed in this world like a fish takes to water at the first opportunity. Say, if this can happen to the Ishwar whose Maya did not think twice in casting its evil spell upon its own Lord, how can an ordinary creature can ever expect to be free from its tentacles!]

Therefore, the supreme Ishwar, now manifested as a creature, the Jiva, began to treat himself as a doer of deeds and an enjoyer of or a sufferer from the consequences of those deeds because he became associated with the three types of bodies<sup>1</sup> that he had assumed in his form of a worldly creature.

When he got associated with the body having three divisions (gross, subtle and causal), he naturally lived through all the states through which these bodies pass during their sojourn in this mortal world—such as the waking state, the dreaming state, the deep sleep state, and the Turiya state of existence. Further, since he had assumed all the characteristics of a creature’s body, he assumed that he would die like an ordinary creature. Thus, the immortal Lord became mortal! [In other words, once Maya and Moha had their upper hands, the Lord of creation was misled to believe that he is an ordinary mortal being who has a mortal body, undergoes the three states of existence so characteristic of the body, that he would die, and that he would enjoy or suffer the results of his deeds.]

As a result he went round and round like the bullock turning the water-wheel or the potter’s wheel which goes on endlessly turning; he got trapped in this wheel of a continuous cycle of birth and death (12).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The *three types of bodies* of a creature are the following—the gross body having the various sense organs, the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect, and the causal body consisting of the Atma surrounded by the bliss sheath.]

The Atharva Veda’s *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 12 describes who is a Jiva as follows—“The ‘Manas Brahm’ (i.e. the Brahm that lives as the sub-conscious and the subtle mind of the creature, controlling the latter’s thoughts and emotions from within) has a divine and sublime subtle form known as ‘Hans’, ‘So-a-Ham’, etc.

[This Manas Brahm obviously is the pure conscious Atma as the divine bird Hans, the Swan, is frequently used in the Upanishads as a metaphor for the Atma to indicate the latter's immaculacy, holiness, purity and divinity, along with a high degree of wisdom, enlightenment and erudition. Since the Atma is also the 'self' of the creature, a person who performs a fire sacrifice with a holistic approach is expected to become highly self-realised in as much as he declares, with the greatest of honesty and sincerity 'I am that Brahm' who is represented by Hans which is a metaphor for the Atma.]

This symbolic fire sacrifice (that is done to attain this eclectic state of existence when the aspirant becomes enough self-realised to understand that he is the supreme transcendental Brahm personified in the form of his Atma known as Hans) is actually the practice of Naad. When the seeker of Brahm becomes completely submerged in the thoughts of Brahm and the Atma, when he continuously meditates upon the pure consciousness by employing the Mantra 'Hans' (as described in a number of Upanishads for this purpose), his inner-self begins to resonate with the sound of Naad (i.e. the cosmic sound in ether which is said to be generated by the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm). This sound flows in a continuous stream like the flow of oil on a clean surface. Its vibrations reverberate in the nerves and veins of the practitioner's body so much so that he becomes oblivious of everything else in this world.

Any disruption in this state of transcendental existence of continuous bliss and stability is the state of existence known as the Jiva—i.e. the Atma that lacks steadiness of bliss and tranquility, and is therefore tossed and tumbled around by the changing nature of the gross world around it.

[In other words, the 'Jiva' or the living being is an entity that is different from Brahm by the virtue of its losing its connection with the Atma, the pure consciousness. Otherwise, there is no distinction between the Jiva and Brahm.] (12)."

**Brahm** has two aspects: (a) **Saguna and Nirguna; Murti and Amurti; Sakar** (pronounced as **Saakaar**) and **Nirakar** (pronounced as **Niraakaar**).

The terms 'Saguna', 'Murti' and 'Sakar' mean that aspect or form of Brahm, the Supreme Being and the cosmic Consciousness, which is visible and has definable and specific attributes and characteristics. The terms 'Nirguna', 'Amurti' and 'Nirakar' have the opposite meaning.

The concept of Saguna or Murti Brahm vis-à-vis the Nirguna or Amurti Brahm as well as Tarak Brahm have been elaborately described in—(i) Shukla Yajur Veda—*Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* in its Brahman 1, section 3, verse no. 1-4; Advaita Tarak Upanishad, verse no. 10. (ii) Atharva Veda—*Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph no. 4; Canto 2, paragraph 1-10; *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 8, verse no. 3 (last stanza), and verse no. 8.

Brahm is also known as **Tarak Brahm**. The word 'Tarak' means that which takes the creature and his soul across the virtually un-crossable ocean represented by this world and its delusions, an ocean that is also represented by the endless cycle of birth and death in which the creature is trapped eternally.

Tarak Brahm is that divine aspect of the super consciousness known as Brahm which provides the spiritual aspirant with Mukti and Moksha—i.e. final liberation,

deliverance, emancipation and salvation. The formula used to achieve this eclectic goal is known as the *Tarak Mantra*.

The *Tarak Brahm* is that divine entity which can provide spiritual emancipation and salvation to the aspirant. It can liberate and deliver the creature from the endless cycle of birth and death and its accompanying torments and miseries. The word *Tarak* means to cause or enable to pass or cross over, to carry over, one that rescues, provides relief and succour, one that can provide liberation and deliverance to the creature from any bondage. Further, the word *Tarak* also refers to the ‘eye of wisdom that liberates one from the darkness of ignorance and delusions’, and it has relevance here because meditation leads to the opening of the inner ‘eye’ of insight that leads to self realisation and enlightenment. ‘*Tarak*’ also means a meter of 4 x 13 syllables; hence it refers also to the various Mantras used for the purpose of meditation, Mantras that have the power and the potentials to provide liberation and deliverance the soul from the cycle of birth and death.

According to the Atharva Veda’s *Dattatreya Upanishad*, section 1, verse nos. 1-3, the ‘*Tarak*’ is that aspect of the Brahm, the Supreme Being, that bestows Mukti (spiritual liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) to the seeker. Therefore, Brahm is called ‘*Datta*’—‘one who gives’ Mukti. And the Mantra for this aspect of Brahm is ‘*Hans*’.

To quote verse no. 2 of *Dattatreya Upanishad*—“I am known as ‘*Datta*’—one who gives. [Here it means that Lord Narayan is the *Tarak*, i.e. he is the One who provides—gives, bestows, grants—the worshipper with the fruit of spiritual liberation and deliverance; the one divine entity that helps the creature to find freedom from all his fetters pertaining to this entrapping world and the gross body in which his soul lives.]

Those who realise this fact, as well as those who preach this fact to others are no longer regarded as ordinary mortal creatures of the mundane and entrapping world of delusions, but are deemed to be liberated themselves as well as be a provider of liberation and deliverance to others.’

[That is, those devotees who meditate upon me and realise my truthful form also become my own image in as much as they are transformed from being a creature who is trapped in this delusory world to an enlightened being who has obtained liberation and deliverance himself, along with being empowered to liberate others. They are ‘*Tarak*’ themselves. Since I am known as ‘*Datta*’, as I am the provider—a giver, a bestower, the one who grants the boon of Mukti or spiritual liberation and deliverance to the devotee—the worshipper who attains me (Brahm; the spiritual Absolute Truth), becoming self-realised and Brahm-realised as a result, also becomes a ‘*Datta*’ himself as he is empowered to show the path of Mukti (liberation and deliverance) and the path of Sattva (truth) to others.]”

There are various Upanishads dealing with this aspect of meditation and spiritual deliverance which is known as *Tarak*. For instance especial mention can be made of the Shukla Yajur Veda’s *Advai Tarak Upanishad*, especially its verse nos. 7 and 9, and *Tarak Upanishad*. As the name itself suggests, these two Upanishads are dedicated to this theme of *Tarak*, and they describe *Tarak Brahm* in all its finer connotations.

The *Ram Rahasya Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 5-6, and Canto 2, verse no. 1 refer to Lord Ram as the *Tarak Brahm* when Hanuman

preached about the Lord to some sages who wished to know the esoteric secrets about the divinity of Lord Ram, and how a creature can attain his much-cherished dream of obtaining Mukti or Mokhsa (liberation and deliverance, as well as emancipation and salvation respectively) by being devoted to the Lord, and using the Lord's Mantras to reach his spiritual goal. Here, Lord Ram is referred to as the Tarak Brahm.

Now, let us quote this Upanishad—

“Canto 1, Verse no. 5 = Hanuman replied, ‘Oh the exalted ascetics, sages, seers and devotees of Lord Vishnu! Listen to what I have to say. It has the potential of destroying all sins and cutting through the fetters of this deluding and fearsome world (5).

“Canto 1, Verse no. 6 = It incorporates the essence of all the scriptural and metaphysical essences, their tenets, their axioms and maxims. Besides this, it is about the ‘Tarak Brahm’, i.e. it is about the Brahm who delivers one from the torments associated with this seemingly endless cycle of birth and death, and provides liberation and deliverance to its followers.

Certainly, Ram is the supreme transcendental Brahm personified. Lord Ram is an embodiment of the supreme form of Tapa (doing severe penances, observing of austerities, enduring hardships and undergoing sufferance for a noble cause). Indeed, Lord Ram is that ultimate ‘Tattwa’ (literally the essence, the fundamental or basic element or aspect) you talk about, and indeed *Lord Ram is also that ‘Tarak Brahm’ referred to herein above* (who provides one's soul with the ultimate liberation and deliverance from the miseries and torments associated with this deluding and artificial world of entrapments, from the shackles that this gross body represents, as well as from the fetters created by being engrossed in ignorance and delusions pertaining to them both)’ (6).

“Canto 2, Verse no. 1 = Sage Sankadi and others asked Hanuman, ‘Oh the strong and valiant son of Anjani! Lord Ram is famous as Tarak and as Brahm (i.e. he is renowned as the one who provides liberation and deliverance to the soul of a creature, as well as is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being himself). We request you to preach his divine and holy Mantras for the benefit of all of us.”

The concept of **Sakar/Saakaar and Nirakar/Niraakaar** has been beautifully explained in the *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 1-7.

The *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 8, verse no. 8 says “With this sublime and holistic view of creation along with the realisation that everything is Brahm personified, or that Brahm embodies the entire creation in its universal cosmic form, he must understand that the same Brahm has a gross body that is visible (the Saguna Brahm) as well as a subtle body that is not visible (the Nirguna Brahm).

Similarly, he must be firmly established in the eclectic view that the Atma and the supreme transcendental Brahm are one and the same (8).”

Let us see what *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Brahmin 1, section 3 has to say on this subject—

“Verse no. 1 = The Yoga described earlier has two divisions—one called ‘Purva’ (i.e. the previous, former) and the other called ‘Uttar’ (i.e. the post, after, later half). The Purva Yoga is called ‘Tarak<sup>1</sup> Brahm’ (i.e. the Yoga which leads to realisation of the truthful Brahm which spiritually liberates the aspirant and delivers him from the shackles that tie him down to this body and its accompanying torments vis-à-vis the world), while the Uttar Yoga is known as ‘Amanasak’ (i.e. that leads him to become absolutely disinterested in this world and its illusionary charms, and consequentially lead a life of total renunciation and dispassion; such a man does not take an interest in anything pertaining to this deluding world and remains aloof from it; he remains engrossed in the bliss obtained by Brahm-realisation and thereby gets lost in his own self)<sup>2</sup>.”

The Tarak Brahm further has two categories—one is called ‘Murti Tarak’<sup>3</sup> and the other is ‘Amurti Tarak’<sup>4</sup>. That Brahm (consciousness) which is limited to the sense organs is called Murti Tarak, while that which is beyond the purview of these senses and is even beyond the centre of the eyebrows (i.e. which is beyond the reach of even the mind) is called Amurti Tarak (1).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The word *Tarak* refers to that supernatural mystical authority that bestows liberation and deliverance to the Yogi (an ascetic who is a spiritual aspirant and a seeker of emancipation and salvation through the path of Yoga or mediation). Therefore, Tarak Brahm is that ultimate Truth the realisation of which sets the soul of the ascetic free from the bondage of this body consisting of the gross organs if he pursues it diligently and seeks to arouse his dormant divinity which had been hitherto living dormant and concealed in his own self which is wrapped in a host of worldly faults represented by his inherent Vrittis and Vasanas (habits, tendencies, inclinations as well as passions, yearnings, lusts etc. which pertain to the body and the sense objects of the gross material world).

<sup>2</sup>That is, when a man has realised the ultimate Truth, he becomes disinterested in falsehoods. So when he has realised the supreme transcendental Being through the process of Yoga, he becomes non-interested in this material world of sense objects and the deluding charm proffered by it. Therefore, he appears to be taciturn and forlorn in his demeanors and his day to day interactions with the world. So, in short, by realisation of the truthful essence known as Brahm which gives him liberation from fetters of ignorance, delusions and the illusionary images of this world, and instead helps him to extricate himself from their trap and become self aware, the ascetic shows the least inclination to get involved in the muck once again, though he has to live surrounded in it because of the fact that his sublime Atma has to reside in the gross physical body till the time comes for it to leave it at the time of his physical death. Until that time, he copes with the world and the body, but is so disenchanted with them both that he shows no interest in either of them.

<sup>3</sup>The word ‘Murti’ literally means an idol, a statue, an image, a form, that which has a shape. Hence, the *Murti Brahm* refers to the pure consciousness present in the various sense organs of the body which directs them to do good deeds and religious duties as a means of attainment of liberation or Mukti. The phrase might also refer to doing meditative exercises which invariably involve the body and its sense organs which are an image of Brahm because the various postures and other means of Yoga actively need the coordination of the all the organs of the body. It might also mean physical worship of images (Murti) as well as observing other rituals that can only be done by the medium of the body and its sense organs, and not by mental contemplation and meditation. Mental worship would be ‘Amurti’ form of adoring the Brahm, while physical worship involving rituals, idols and organs of the body would be ‘Murti’ form of adoration of the same

Brahm. Though this is also a means of emancipation and salvation, but since the gross and perishable body and its sense organs have their own limitations, they are not as effective as the superior form of meditation which eliminates the need or interference of the body and its sense organs. Another interpretation is as follows—a realised ascetic has become aware of the fact that all the living creatures, in fact the entire animate as well as the inanimate world, is nothing but a manifestation of the same ubiquitous Brahm. They are all Brahm's image, or Murti of Brahm. To show respect to each of them in equal intensity is equivalent to showing respect to Brahm. This awareness eliminates ignorance of the ultimate Truth about this creation—i.e. it paves the way for obtaining Mukti through worshipping 'Murti Brahm'. In other words, the Murti Brahm has a discernible form and ascertainable characteristic features that are physical manifestations of the Amurti Brahm, or the Supreme Being known as Brahm that has no form and attributes.

But as has been pointed out in the Upanishads elsewhere, this form of worship might give success in achieving mystical powers called the various 'Siddhis' which can enable the ascetic perform stupendous magical feats, they are nevertheless not beneficial for him if his main aim is to attain liberation from the cycle of birth and death. That is only possible when he has disassociated himself from his body, or the 'Murti' (image) of Brahm because this body is synonymous with the fetter that tie a soul to this world, and when this bondage is done away with then only is true liberation possible. So although the body is an useful mean of doing Yoga, and although worship of the manifested (Murti) form of Brahm has its value and importance, but their usefulness is limited to physical aspects of Yoga and worship and not to their higher ethereal forms which relate to the final emancipation and salvation of the spirit.

<sup>4</sup>The word 'Amurti' refers to the form of Brahm which has no discernible physical shape and characteristics, which is attributeless and formless. There the term 'Amurti Brahm' refers to that consciousness which prevails after the awareness of the body is eliminated, that consciousness which is the focus of the mind and intellect, that consciousness which exists in the transcendental plane—that is called *Amurti Brahm*. It is that Brahm which is beyond the purview of the body and which has no form, no shape, no attributes, no manifestations, no definitions and no descriptions. In other words, the Amurti Brahm has a 'non-formed' form as opposed to its manifested image as a 'Murti Brahm'. It is the ultimate Truth that has no form but is nevertheless the absolute reality and the truth of creation.

A person perceives that stupendous Truth, also known as the supreme Brahm, in the way that suits him best, that appeals to his mental bearing and perception of what the Supreme Being is or what the supreme Truth is like. There are a number of schools of thought, and their followers witness the supreme divinity in different forms. For example, the followers of school of philosophy that believes in manifested divinity as various incarnations of different denominations visualise that supreme entity that is essentially one and immutable whole in the form of their honoured deity. This is called the 'Saguna' Brahm because it has certain attributes and a form. Those who believe in the principle of duality, see him as Parmatma, the Supreme Being, whereas the followers of non-duality see it as the un-manifested Brahm who has no attributes. Similarly, the followers of Sankhya philosophy see it as Purush, while those who believe in Atma see it as pure consciousness state of enlightenment. Yogis/ascetics see it a fount of light and those who believe in the philosophy propounded by the Vedas see it as a manifestation of OM or Pranav. Those who follow the tenets of the Upanishads see it as the supreme transcendental Truth and the absolutely Reality that is beyond comprehension and words, that is at the very cause, at the very root of everything that exists, that in which everything that exists would ultimately collapse and merge, and that which is the object of all metaphysical research and analysis. This Brahm has no form and attributes, and

hence it is called 'Nirguna Brahm'. With such broad scope, it is impossible to categorise that divine, supreme and transcendental entity as this or that.

“Verse no. 2 = Both these forms of Brahm should be deeply contemplated upon sincerely by diligent application of the mind, because it is only the light of deep insight and intuition which one gets with the eyes of wisdom and enlightenment that can enable and entitle an aspirant to have a first hand experience of that (glorious, magnificent, divine, ethereal, supreme, transcendental, eclectic and holy) Brahm (2).

[Note—This is the Brahm who is known as 'Tarak' because he can provide liberation and deliverance to the soul of the creature.]

“Verse no. 3 = With the progress in practice and over a period of time, there appears a glorious effulgence of a shaft of brilliant light from the pin-hole like subtle aperture said to be present between the two eyebrows. This light is synonymous with the Purva (previous) vision of Tarak Brahm (3).

[Note—By focusing one's attention on the truth of Brahm with sincere and deep desire to know about him, to experience and witness him, the aspirant ascetic/Yogi first controls his sense organs. Then he concentrates his attention on the spot which is called the 'Agya Chakra'. This is the subtle energy centre in the body, located between the eyebrows, which can unfold the hidden spiritual powers to see the unseen. By focusing of the mental powers of concentration at this focal point just like the beam of laser being focused on a particular object, that pin-hole is managed to be opened, and the inherent divine light that was previously concealed behind the veil of ignorance is now brought to the fore. The 'light of enlightenment' then shines through like a beam of torchlight, and it illuminates the subtle space in front of his nose with colours of different hues as described in Brahman 1, section 2, verse no. 8. Since the appearance of this glorious light is the first indication of the Yogi's success in Brahm realisation, i.e. that he has been successful in opening the hitherto closed eye of wisdom and enlightenment located at the central point of the eyebrows, it is called 'Purva Tarak' or the first part of Brahm realisation that would lead to the ultimate success in realisation of Brahm in its full glory in the later half, called 'Uttar Tarak'. Brahm is synonymous with enlightenment, so this light is the illumination emanating from the Tarak Brahm who resides in the aspirant himself but was hidden from his view until he had made a sincere attempt to unravel the great secret of Brahm.

Even as the torchlight can illuminate the path in the darkest of nights, this light of wisdom and enlightenment that comes with self-realisation can illuminate the spiritual path of the seeker of Truth.]

“Verse no. 4 = The Uttar division or the second part of this Yoga of Brahm realisation is called 'Amanasak' (as mentioned earlier in verse no. 1 above). It is marked by total elimination of the mind; or by the total non-involvement of the mind. That is, the mind has no role to play here. This state goes beyond the reach and purview of the mind-intellect complex of the Yogi. It is said that a majestic and immense fount of brilliant light resides or is located in the upper edge of the root of the tongue, or at the rear end of the palate in the mouth.

When the aspirant Yogi is able to witness and experience that light as result of persistent practice, he is able to acquire the various mystical powers known as Siddhis, such as Anima etc.<sup>1</sup> (4).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>There are eight mystical powers that can be accessed by those who become expert in doing Yogic exercises. But it must be noted that these mystical powers can give worldly fame and glory, but they cannot deliver the aspirant from the snare of this cycle of birth and death. This is only possible by concentrating upon the Tarak Brahm located in the centre of the eyebrows. It must be understood that this Tarak Brahm is so-called because it has the potential to provide liberation and deliverance to the spiritual aspirant seeking it, and as has been described earlier, this location is the site of the third eye of wisdom and erudition. So it follows that what actually gives liberation and deliverance is the truthful knowledge of the reality, the ‘true’ reality and not the ‘apparent’ reality, which helps one to overcome the illusions of reality that are created by ignorance and delusions. Therefore, what is important is the acquisition of the correct and true knowledge which is laced with erudition and wisdom that can enlighten a person about his true self and the falsehood of the materialistic world of sense objects.

Brahman 1, section 2, verse no. 10 tells us that the divine light that is observed at the top of the head is the provider of eternity. Inside the body, it is the supreme Brahm located in the Brahm Randhra that is the final destination for the seekers of this light symbolizing eternity. This Brahm Randhra is the hair-like slit on the top of the head. It is believed that at the time of death, a truly realised Yogi’s vital winds called his Pran makes its exit from this slit to enable his Atma to merge with the supreme Brahm present in the vast sky outside his body. So, if the effulgence of light that is subtly witnessed in the central point of the eyebrows is known as ‘Purva Tarak’, it naturally follows that the brilliant shaft of light radiating out from the Brahm Randhra on the top of the head would be the ‘Uttar Tarak’. The word ‘Uttar’ also implies the northern direction, or the top, or the zenith. The location of Brahm Randhra is at the ‘zenith of the body’, and hence the Brahm visualised here is ‘Uttar Tarak Brahm’.

So it can be safely assumed that the various mystical powers called *Siddhis* are sought by those Yogis who are not so evolved in the hierarchy of spiritualism because though these Siddhis bestow him with stupendous magical prowess, they don’t guarantee his spiritual emancipation and salvation. That comes with ‘Uttar Tarak Brahm’ only. Nevertheless, those Yogis who have been successful in acquiring these mystical powers employ them for the benefit of others and not for their own selfish ends. These eight Siddhis are the following--(i) ‘Anima’ means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) ‘Mahima’ is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one’s achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) ‘Garima’ is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) ‘Laghima’ is to have simplicity and humility; (v) ‘Praapti’ is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) ‘Prakramya’ is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) ‘Ishwatwa’ is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) ‘Vashitwa’ is to be able to control and subdue others.]

*Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Brahman 3, section 1, verse no. 3 describes who or what is understood by the term Brahm. To quote—“A wise person who has an eclectic and holistic view of the Divinity, who views this world with the eyes of spiritualism and wisdom, sees that supreme transcendental entity which is the ultimate Truth and Reality of all that exists, and which is only one and non-dual, as Brahm. As a result of this perspective, his existential vision changes.

He sees the same Lord everywhere, having countless names and as many attributes and qualities. The Lord is known as the Ishwar (the supreme Lord of creation; the sum total of all the macrocosmic causal bodies of this creation); is Apramaye (having

the following attributes or qualities—boundless, limitless, endless, measureless and without any parameters); is Aj (one who has no beginning, one who is unborn); is Shiva (auspicious, truthful, wise, enlightened and renunciate; the patron God of ascetic); is the Param Akash (one who has the highest degree of qualities possessed by the sky—such as being vast, measureless, fathomless, eternal, infinite, without a beginning and end, pure and uncorrupt and incorruptible; one that is all-pervading and all-encompassing like the sky; one in whose bowl the entire creation has been conceived, is born, is nourished and in which it finally perishes); is Niralamb (one who neither has nor needs any support or prop for its existence or being); is Advitiya (one who is unique, non-dual, one and only one, matchless and without a parallel); is Brahma (the creator of the visible world; the creator of knowledge symbolised by the Vedas); is Vishnu (the sustainer and caretaker of the creation; the Viraat Purush); and is Rudra (one of the forms of Shiva responsible for conclusion of creation; famous as anger personified) etc.

In other words, a man—who is enlightened enough to see that the essential operational factor present in all these entities is none else but Brahm who is also the essential factor of the conscious Atma present in the cave-like heart of the creature—becomes firmly established in his Atma. With this eclectic awareness and holistic knowledge of who or what Brahm is, he becomes free from all types of doubts and perplexities caused by so many theories and doctrines. This also creates a sense of detachment from and disillusionment with all things which are not real and deluding instead, and which are created by ignorance of the reality. So such a wise, enlightened and self-realised man transcends all worldly notions and emotions, and instead experiences the state of the mind called 'Unmani', i.e. he lives with no interest in any thing that is not the truth, he remains aloof and in constant state of detachment from everything, and instead remains focused on the Atma of which he is convinced as being the only spiritual Truth. For all practical purposes as far as the world is concerned, he is aloof and detached like a man disillusioned with its charms, but this happens because he is charmed by something more enduring and eternal! [See also Brahman 2, Section 2, verse no.4.]

When all the sense organs of the body have ceased to matter (i.e. when all the different organs cease to perceive and react to those perceptions), that person begins to drift in an ocean of utter bliss of Brahm realisation. He becomes unwaveringly calm, serene and tranquil, steady in his state which is devoid of any restlessness, agitations, perplexities, consternations and general state of flux of the mind for which it is so notorious. This meditative practice makes him as steady and unwavering as the flame of lamp which has been placed at a place where there is no wind blowing, where there is absolute stillness of air. This helps him to attain that Brahm who is himself steady, unwavering, still, constant, uniform and unchanging (3)."

The *Advai Tarak Upanishad*, verse no. 10 describes the Murti and Amurti forms of Brahm as follows—"This 'Tarak' meditation that provides liberation and deliverance from the bondages of the body has two aspects. One is called 'Murta' Tarak while the other is called 'Amurta or non-Murta' Tarak. That where the sense organs of perception and action culminate (i.e. the subtle mind) is called the 'Murta Tarak', while that which is beyond their purview, that which is visualised at a spot outside the central point of the two eyebrows, or that which lives in the causal body, is called 'Amurta Tarak'<sup>1</sup>.

Therefore the aspirant should always concentrate his attention on the essence of things and not allow it to be misled by delusions. The fundamental essence is always the same because Brahm is one and non-dual. As a result, he is able to have an experience of the supreme transcendental Brahm as a fount of profound eternal and truthful bliss as well as of bright light having a divine radiance. This establishes that the Brahm that goes beyond these two forms and definitions of Murta Brahm and Amurta Brahm, i.e. the Brahm that is beyond the limiting visions of a formed variety and a variety that has no fixed form, is an auspicious fount of brilliant 'Tej', or divine energy and splendour personified. This Brahm should be seen (witnessed and experienced) by the internal vision of insight, wisdom and enlightenment.

The mind depends upon the eye to see anything in the external world. Therefore, the 'internal eye' is needed by the mind to 'see' (visualise, witness and experience) the divine and subtle light provided by the Tarak Brahm. That is, the eye of wisdom and insight, of enlightenment and erudition is needed to visualise the eclectic and stupendous form of that supreme entity known as Brahm that can actually provide liberation to the aspirant from all his spiritual troubles as well as ensure deliverance to his soul. Without the eye of wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and knowledge one cannot hope to see (witness and experience) that supreme Brahm although he is residing in one's own bosom. This understanding kindles the light of self-realisation in the aspirant ascetic and opens his inner eyes of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. Such an attained ascetic becomes 'Brahm realised' (10).

[Note--<sup>1</sup>The mind-intellect uses the various organs of perception, such as the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin to perceive the external world which is nothing but a manifestation of the supreme Brahm, because that Brahm pervades throughout the creation, uniformly and universally. There is nothing that exists that is not Brahm. This conviction of the mind enables it to see Brahm in the entire world, and since this form of Brahm is visible and in an image form as the myriad shapes and sizes of this creation, it is therefore called Murta or formed aspect of Brahm. The Atma (the pure conscious self which is the true identity of the creature) perceives this form of manifested Brahm and worships it through the external organs of the body—the organs of perception and the organs of action. The mind-intellect complex of the subtle body is the command and control centre for the Atma. Therefore it follows that the Brahm which the creature recognises and worships through his external body which is under the command and control of the subtle body is called 'Murta Brahm'.

On the contrary, ascetics train their mind to focus on the divine light that is seen during meditation in front of their eyes on the tip of their nose as previously described in verse no. 6 above. This form of Brahm is formless, and therefore is called Amurta Tarak or an un-formed variant of Brahm. This wisdom and enlightenment are the exclusive domain of the Atma as the latter is the pure consciousness embodying these grand and eclectic virtues. The higher echelons of the subtle mind (i.e. the thinking and discriminating intellect) perceives the same Brahm in an un-manifested form as the source of all divinity and illumination symbolising all knowledge in existence. It is the divine fount of light that lights up the entire creation, both at the macro level as well as the micro level. It is the pure consciousness in all its glorious magnificence. This subtle and sublime form of Brahm is not visible to the gross organ of the eye like the manifested Brahm with external contours and attributes as revealed in the form of this creation. It is sublimity and subtlety at its glorious best. Hence, this latter form of Brahm that is invisible, all-pervading and ubiquitous is called 'Amurta Brahm'. It is also recognised as

‘Tej’ because it is a fount of splendid light that is the source of all illumination in this creation.

Essentially both forms of Brahm are liberating because both give wisdom and enlightenment to the aspirant, albeit in different ways and contexts. The Murta Brahm is visualised by a wise and intelligent mind which has understood the reality and truth behind the façade of falsehoods, while the Amurta Brahm is witnessed during meditative exercises that require effort, concentration and practice. Refer Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/3/1-4.]”

**Pranav Brahm**—The word ‘Pranav’ refers to the cosmic sound that existed even before this creation came into being. The very existence of this sound establishes that there was an entity that literally breathed or pulsed with energy before it took some shape which came to be recognized as the ‘creation’ or the ‘world’. Since there was a cosmic sound, the ‘Pranav’, before anything came into existence, it proves that there was a ‘conscious’ entity when everything was dead. It is from this ‘consciousness’ that the rest of the creation emerged, simply because a dead entity cannot produce or create anything, including the ‘cosmic sound’. Later on, this cosmic sound known as Pranav was captured by the receptive mind as the word OM just like modern sound gadgets catch the electronic waves in ether and convert them in audible sound which we hear on the radio or the cell phone.

Thus, the supreme entity from which everything else emerged, the entity that is assigned the name of ‘Brahm’, is called ‘Pranav Brahm’.

The *Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, in its Canto 1, paragraph 4 describes the relationship between Brahm and Pranav. To quote—“Brahm is synonymous with Pranav, the cosmic Consciousness from which the ethereal vibrations that are heard as the cosmic Naad and visualised as the monosyllabic word OM, has emerged. [The vibrations generated Consciousness created the primordial cosmic energy that powered the dynamo of life in this creation.] This Pranav (Brahm) has taken the form of the Atma, the pure consciousness that resides in the bosom of all living beings and which lends life to the otherwise lifeless gross creation. Therefore, all the Mantras that have their primary origin in this Pranav (i.e. in the primordial sound of OM which represents the cosmic ethereal vibrations generated by Consciousness which in turn created the energy that transformed itself into life) are actually an image or reflection of Brahm. The Mantras can be said to be sound manifestations of Brahm because Mantras are based on letters and syllables which are primarily different genres of sound having their seat of origin in Pranav or OM (4).”

**The different Paads of Brahm**—These are the different plains or levels of existence in which Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, has manifested itself. Thus, depending upon how Brahm is perceived, it is said to have **eight, five, four and three Paads**.

The word ‘Paad’ literally means a leg or the pedestal upon which Brahm stands. The **8 Paads of Brahm** (or limbs, legs, aspects, facets or pedestals of Brahm) are the various spiritual and mystical empowerments that Brahm needs and possesses that enable him to conceive, develop, sustain, support and finally conclude the vast creation. Broadly, they can be classified into six categories.

(i) First are the *eight Siddhis* or mystical and enigmatic powers that it possesses. These are the following—(i) ‘Anima’ means the power to become microscopic or so

minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) 'Mahima' is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one's achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) 'Garima' is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) 'Laghima' is to have simplicity and humility; (v) 'Praapti' is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) 'Paraakramya' is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) Ishwatwa is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) 'Vashitwa' is to be able to control and subdue others. Sometimes, Paraakramaya is replaced by 'Praakaamya' which means irresistible will. But they imply the same thing because one obtains victory and glory only when one has an irresistible desire to attain it.

(ii) Second, there are the *eight assets* that are needed to help support and sustain the creatures in this world. These are called the eight Vasus, and they are the various patron Gods who preside over the essential assets that are necessary for sustenance of life. These Vasus are—Vishnu is the sustainer, Shiva who is the annihilator, Kuber who is the treasurer of the wealth of the Gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and 'Ray' representing glory and fame. The element 'Fire' is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. The 'fire' element is the active force in creation and is primarily responsible for kindling the cosmic cauldron that set in motion the process, and once having set it in motion it then sustained it and would finally annihilate it by burning it to cinders. On the other hand, Lord Vishnu is the passive force of creation represented by his other form of Viraat Purush which is the primary male aspect of creation. Lord Vishnu, who is the sustainer of the creation, is the Lord of Laxmi who is the Goddess of wealth, and is the supreme creator because Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who created the visible world and its creatures, was himself born atop the divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu utilizes the services of Laxmi who is the personification of the active forces of creation to create, sustain and annihilate the world. The Vasus are symbolic Gods who represent those essential aspects of creation without which life would be difficult to conceive and sustain and finally conclude.

The *eight Vasus* are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) the rays and radiance of the sun (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), and (viii) the holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation).

According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following— Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

According to Purans, the eight Vasus are the following-- Dhruv (ध्रुव), Dhar (धर), Som (सोम), Aap (आप), Anil (अनिल), Anal (अनल), Pratush (प्रत्यूष) and Prabhas (प्रभास).

(iii) The third set of mystical and spiritual powers that Brahm possesses are the *eight virtues* that have stupendous spiritual prowess, and they together empower Brahm

to help the latter to support and sustain the entire creation. These powers are derived by severe Tapa (penances and austerities) and are part of Yoga (meditative techniques) prescribed for acquiring immense spiritual potentials. Briefly they are the following--(1) 'Yam' or self restraint; (2) 'Niyam' or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) 'Aasan' or postures for meditation; (4) 'Pranyam' or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) 'Pratyahar' or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) 'Dhaarna' or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (7) 'Dhyan' or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect; and (8) 'Samadhi' or a state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation.

(iv) The *eight forms of Maya*, or the delusion and ignorance creating powers of Brahm without which the creation would neither be conceived nor expanded, because if everyone becomes aware of the reality, if everyone realises that everything is perishable and immaterial, that whatever is seen and enjoyed are like a mirage seen in a desert, then all would renounce the world, there would be no marriages and procreation, there would be no creation of wealth and strife and tension to protect this wealth, there would be no desire to have dominance over others, for all are equal and one in the eyes of Brahm and they have the same Atma which prevails uniformly in the breadth and length of the creation. So Brahm uses Maya as a tool to maintain a veil of ignorance and delusions to carry forward his game plan, until the time he decides that he had had enough of it and then initiates the folding-up process of concluding this creation for good, or for at least that time when he decides to roll the carpet once again.

Now, these eight forms that Maya takes are the following—the five elements forming the basic building blocks of the gross creation (i.e. the elements of earth, water, fire, air and space which form the gross body of all the living creatures) + mind + intellect (together called the subtle body of the creature) + Ahankar (the ego, pride and arrogance that the creature possesses, leading to the notion of 'I', 'me', or 'mine' = eight entities.

(v) Now, once the creation has been brought into being, Brahm has to look after it. And to do it, he uses his maverick powers of care-taking and sustenance as revealed in the form of the *eight mothers* who look after the offspring-creation. These mothers are the following—(a) one who gives birth, (b) one who takes care of or rears (e.g. a nanny), (c) a foster mother, (d) mother earth, (e) the holy cow, (f) goddess Laxmi who is the patron goddess of wealth and material well being, (g) Sheetla Mata who is the patron Goddess of infectious skin diseases, e.g. chickenpox, and (i) any elderly, respected woman.

(vi) Brahm then uses his fatherly virtues to take care and sustain his creation by manifesting himself as the *eight Lokpals*. They are the following-- (a) Indra (the king of Gods), (b) Agni (the Fire God), (c) Yam (the Death God), (d) Nirriti, (f) Varun (the Water God), (g) Vayu (the Wind God), (h) Kuber (the treasurer of Gods), and (i) Ish (Lord Shiva).

**The 5 Paads of Brahm**—The Brahm with five Paads or aspects have been mentioned in *Par Brahm Upanishad* of Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 5. These five aspects of Brahm are represented by the five states of consciousness—viz. the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or dreaming state, the Sushupta or the deep sleep state, the Turiya state

or the earlier state of transcendental existence that comes beyond the Sushupta, and the Turiya-teet or the higher echelons of transcendental existence which is the climax of one's spiritual achievement.

**The 4 Paads of Brahm**—The four 'Paads' of Brahm are the four legs upon which Brahm stands. These four Paads symbolically establish the greatness and supremacy of Brahm as the all-powerful and all-controlling Authority in this creation. Since Brahm is the supreme Divinity that has revealed itself in the form of this creation, since each and every unit of creation is a manifestation of Brahm and without Brahm nothing exists, nothing has any relevance and truth (refer *Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph 1), it follows that the entire creation represents Brahm's four cosmic forms or aspects or facets—which are called the four legs or Paads of Brahm. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the supreme Brahm has manifested himself and is made known to this world by the means of these four mediums.

The four Paads of Brahm, literally meaning legs or pedestals or aspects of Brahm, stand, inter alia, for the four states of existence of consciousness—viz. the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or dreaming state, the Sushupta or deep sleep state, and the Turiya or transcendental state. This fact is affirmed in the Atharva Veda's *Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph 5; Canto 4, paragraphs 1-3.

These four Paads of Brahm have been explained elaborately in the following Upanishads—(i) Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 3, section 18, verse nos. 2-6, Canto 4, Section 5, verse no. 2, Canto 4, Section 6, verse no. 3, Canto 4, Section 7, verse no. 3, and Canto 4, Section 8, verse no. 3. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 1. (iii) Atharva Veda's Mandukya Upanishad, verse nos. 3-7; Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 4-7; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 5-8; Par Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 5; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8, verse nos. 9-19; Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 5; Canto 4, paragraph nos. 2-3, 6; and Canto 8, paragraph no. 4; Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse/paragraph nos. 2-14.

The Atharva Veda's *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 5 describes the four places in the body of the Jiva, the living being and an embodiment of Brahm. These are the navel, the heart, the throat and the head. These are called the 'four Paads of Brahm' or the four seats where Brahm has revealed its 'self'. This Brahm is known as the 'Chatush Paad Brahm'.

In the navel region, Brahm reveals itself as the network of Naadis that have their origin here and are responsible for carrying sense perceptions throughout the body of the Jiva. In the heart, Brahm is revealed in the form of the Atma or pure consciousness that is said to reside in its subtle space called the Hridaya Akash. The heart is the only pumping station of the body which helps in circulation of the life-infusing blood throughout the body. The third spot, the throat, is where Brahm lives in the form of Pran or breath. It is the breath that keeps the body alive, and it is the throat by which a man speaks and eats. Speech is a sound manifestation of the Brahm, and of course without eating no Jiva can survive as this aspect of Brahm is sustainer of creation by ingesting food and imbibing liquids for life. Finally, the head is the location of Brahm as it is here that the brain is located; it is the site of wisdom, erudition, intelligence, knowledge and sub-conscious and

all other aspects associated with the mind that is the deemed revelation of Brahm's great ability to think and analyse.

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse/paragraph nos. 2-14 describes the four eclectic but most esoteric Paads of Brahm in the context of the famous Gayatri Mantra with four lines "Tatsaviturvarnyam Dhimahi Dhiyo Yo Naha Prachodayat; Paro Rajase Suvarnam" in great detail.

**The difference between the three Paads of Brahm (known as the Tripadvibhut Brahm) and its fourth Paad** (dominated by Avidya) has been explained in the *The Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, paragraph no. 4 as follows—

"The Upanishads describe the magnificent and grand virtues of Brahm known as the 'Tripaad Brahm'—i.e. that aspect of Brahm which is symbolised by the three divine Paads (limbs or aspects of the Supreme Being) that are distinct from the fourth Paad. The fourth Paad is dominated by Avidya (ignorance) and Maya (delusions) which stand for darkness. Hence, that form of Brahm which is distinct from and not affected by the tainting effects of the fourth Paad characterised by darkness associated with Avidya and Maya is honoured by the holy Upanishads as the 'Tripaada Brahm'—or Brahm with three limbs or aspects that are free from the darkness. [Obviously, this second form of Brahm would be glorious and radiantly illuminated like the Sun in the dark sky. It ought to be clearly understood here that the 4<sup>th</sup> Paad is the lowest Paad and covers the whole gamut of known creation as narrated in Canto 3, paragraph nos. 7-15. This 4<sup>th</sup> Paad is the lowest and the grossest aspect of Brahm where Avidya and Maya are the dominant players—refer Canto 8, paragraph no. 4. Such a creation is transient and ever-changing. It has a certain beginning and an end—something that is quite the opposite of and inconsistent with what one expects from Brahm which the Upanishads unequivocally and unanimously proclaim to be one, non-dual, unchanging, steady, constant, infinite and eternal. So, while the 4<sup>th</sup> Paad is the lowest aspect of Brahm, the 1<sup>st</sup> Paad would refer to the highest and the most sublime form of Brahm, with the rest of the two Paads lying in between. These four Paads have been described in paragraph no. 6 of this present Canto 4.]

A spiritual aspirant who honours Brahm in the glorious form as 'Tripaada Brahm' is sure to attain Moksha for himself. [This is because he would be dealing with the higher and more evolved stages of consciousness.]

Such an enlightened person should think in the following manner—

'This 'Tripaad Brahm' is beyond darkness. It is a divine fount of light and illumination that itself eliminates darkness.

The Tripaad Brahm is a personification of supreme bliss, beatitude and felicity; it is eternal, imperishable, truthful and most divine; and it is known as 'Kaivalya' because it is unique and one of its only kind.

I (the spiritual aspirant) know (am acquainted with) this great Purush (the divine Being, the divine Brahm, the Supreme Being) who is as splendid and radiant as the celestial Sun ('Aditya'), and who is beyond the reach of darkness ('Tama'). [The word 'Tama' means darkness and it implies a preponderance of the negative virtues of Avidya or ignorance and lack of true knowledge (refer last stanza of paragraph no. 5), and 'Maya' means delusions along with all its accompanying spiritual problems. The 'Aditya'

or the Sun is the only self-illuminated celestial body in the sky, and all the planets are lighted by it. This metaphor of the Sun in relation to Brahm is most apt because it is Brahm that is at the core of life in this creation. Brahm is pure cosmic Consciousness. It is the Consciousness that injects 'life and vitality' into the otherwise lifeless and inane creation; it is the Consciousness that 'illuminates' this world for the creature in as much as it enables the creature's body to perceive the external world through his sense organs of perception just like the celestial Sun lights up the world for him to see with its physical light. The whole creation revolves round this Consciousness just like the planets go around the Sun. The Sun is the sustainer and protector of life on our planet, and hence to liken it with the supreme sustainer and protector known as Brahm is also very appropriate for purposes of understanding. Again, the Sun is the most evident source of light in the world and it removes the latter's darkness by its own illumination which also is another reason for its selection to represent Brahm.]

Those who understand this and realise the truth of Brahm in the aforesaid manner become a personification of Amrit in this world while they are still alive. [The term 'Amrit' literally means the ambrosia or nectar or elixir that provides eternity and bliss. Hence, here it means that a wise, erudite and self-realised person who has become enlightened enough to know and understand what the essence of the term 'Brahm' is as described in this and other Upanishads indeed becomes highly enlightened and exalted. He accesses the supreme fount of eternal spiritual Truth that provides him with never-ending bliss that gives him eternal peace and happiness. When this is achieved, he becomes a living example of someone who is a personified form of Amrit, someone who effuses ambrosia of spiritual bliss and happiness, i.e. he becomes 'Brahm personified'. Positive energy radiates out of him much like the brilliant light radiates out in all the directions from the Sun. He exhibits all the grand characteristics that are expected from a realised soul who has become Brahm-realised and self-realised, someone who has understood the grand Truth and Reality of creation, someone who has overcome the effects of Maya and Avidya.]

Such a person is said to have obtained 'Mukti'. There is no other way to attain Moksha (final liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation). [The 'Mukti or Moksha' referred to here is known as 'Jivan Mukti'—a phrase meaning he has attained liberation and deliverance while his soul or his Atma still lives inside the gross body in this world, or while he is still alive.] (4).”

Atharva Veda's *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 5, explains the four Paads of Brahm very succinctly as follows—“In the form of the Jiva, Brahm lives at four symbolic places—viz. the navel, the heart, the throat and the head. These are called the 'four Paads of Brahm' or the four dimensions in which Brahm has revealed itself. This Brahm is known as the 'Chatush Paad Brahm'.

[In the navel region, Brahm reveals itself as the network of Naadis that have their origin here and are responsible for carrying sense perceptions throughout the body of the Jiva. In the heart, Brahm is revealed in the form of the Atma or pure consciousness that is said to reside in its subtle space called the Hridaya Akash. The heart is the only pumping station of the body which helps in circulation of the life-infusing blood throughout the body. The third spot, the throat, is where Brahm lives in the form of Pran or breath. It is the breath that keeps the body alive, and it is the throat by which a man speaks and eats.

Speech is a sound manifestation of the Brahm, and of course without eating no Jiva can survive as this aspect of Brahm is sustainer of creation by ingesting food and imbibing liquids for life. Finally, the head is the location of Brahm as it is here that the brain is located; it is the site of wisdom, erudition, intelligence, knowledge and sub-conscious and all other aspects associated with the mind that is the deemed revelation of Brahm's great ability to think and analyse.]

Brahm is attained in any of the four states of existence. That is, during the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or dreaming state, the Sushupta or the deep sleep state, the Turiya state or the earlier state of transcendental existence that comes beyond the Sushupta.

Brahm is also revealed in the form of the Fire having four aspects, viz. the Ahawaniya, Garhapatya, Dakshina, and Sabhya. Therefore, a wise man should develop the metaphysical wisdom whereby he sees these fires as manifestations of the Atma in the sense that just like the Atma, which is the pure consciousness which infuses life in this otherwise lifeless and gross world, these fires too inject life in this creation in the form of energy, heat, light and dynamism. Obviously, no life is imaginable and tenable without the 'fire'.

The supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm is represented by Brahma the creator during the Jagrat state, by Vishnu during the Swapna state, by Rudra during the Sushupta state, and by the primary form of eternal consciousness during the Turiya state.

[During the waking state known as the Jagrat state, the creature is aware of the physical world and is engaged in its activities just like the creator Brahma who is perpetually engaged in process of creation of this physical world.

Vishnu is depicted in the scriptures as lying in a reclining state of Yog-Nidra or the sleep during meditation to indicate his deep concentration and always thinking of means and ways to keep the creation sustained and happy. He remains aloof from the physical activities of the gross world unless he is required to actually intervene in the form of various incarnations. But this visibly sleeping mode of Vishnu doesn't mean that he is not involved in the affairs of the world, as he is said to be in the dreaming state called the Swapna state when he remains very much active, but this activity is of a subtle nature rather than of the gross sort in which Brahma, the creator, is involved.

Rudra refers to Lord Shiva who remains perpetually blissful and in a state of meditation. He is the patron God of ascetics. This is why is represented by the deep sleep state known as Sushupta.

Finally, there is the Turiya state which goes beyond the Sushupta state when the sleeping creature experiences utmost bliss which is perpetual and not interrupted by coming back to the waking state once again. It is sort of permanent Sushupta. During this state, the truthful character of the Atma is revealed, i.e. one feels bliss and ecstasy.]

The *Brahm Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 1 says that Brahm with its four legs is established in the body of the creature at four sites—viz. the navel, the heart, the throat and the Brahm Randhra (the head). To quote—"1. There are four place in the body of the Purush (literally a 'man' who is a visible manifestation of Brahm, the divine, supreme and transcendental Being whose macrocosmic gross body is known as the Viraat Purush, and the latter has revealed himself as the individual living being, the

man, also known as ‘Purush’ after his parent, the Viraat) where the pure consciousness representing the divine Being lives. These four places are the navel, the heart, the throat and the Brahm-Randhra<sup>1</sup>.

At all these four places, the supreme Brahm, with its glorious divine virtues symbolically represented by its four legs, is present<sup>2</sup>. That is, these are the four sites where the divine Being, in all his cosmic divine splendour, radiance, grandeur and majesty, lives in the body of the individual creature and displays his astounding powers as the pure consciousness, which is also known as the Atma<sup>3</sup>.

In the same vein, Brahm as the Atma has also been envisioned to exist in the four states in which consciousness lives--viz. the Jagrat state called the ‘waking state of consciousness’, the Swapna state called the ‘dreaming state of consciousness’, the Shushupta state called the ‘deep sleep state of consciousness’, and the Turiya state called the ‘blissful state of consciousness’<sup>4</sup>.

Each of these of four states of existence of the creature (i.e. of the consciousness residing in the creature as it’s pure and true ‘self’ known as its Atma) are symbolic revelations of one of the four divine aspects or ‘legs’ of Brahm. This is the micro level revelation of Brahm in the form of the individual creature.

The same Brahm also shines and makes its self-illuminated presence felt at the cosmic level as Brahma the creator, as Vishnu the sustainer, caretaker and protector, as Shiva the concluder, and as Akshar literally meaning the imperishable Lord of creation (known as ‘Ishwar’). These four revelations of the Supreme Being (Brahm) stands for the four states in which Consciousness exists—viz. Brahma represents the waking state called the Jagrat state of consciousness, Vishnu represents the dreaming state called the Swapna state of consciousness, Shiva represents the Shushupta state of consciousness, and Akshar (pronounced as ‘Akchar’) represents the Turiya state of consciousness. [This fourth state is called ‘Akchar’ because it represents the cosmic Atma or Brahm that is inherently imperishable, infinite and eternal, and hence called ‘Akchar Brahm’. The word Akchar also means a letter, and therefore it refers to the divine ethereal word OM which is used as a synonym for Brahm.]<sup>5</sup>

The glorious Aditya or the Sun shining brilliantly in the sky is a visible manifestation of Vishnu (who is none but the Viraat Purush—the cosmic gross body of Brahm and from whom the rest of the creation, including the creator Brahma and the concluder Shiva, have come into being)<sup>6</sup>.

The supreme Lord or Ishwar (Brahm) has no physical body with either the subtle organs such as the Mana (thinking mind and emotional heart), or the gross physical organs such as the ears, the legs and the hands (because Brahm has no physical attributes and physical forms). Brahm is a divine entity that is an embodiment of light and illumination emanating from cosmic Consciousness, also known as the Atma<sup>7</sup> (1).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>These are the *four sites* where the four important *Chakras*, or the whirling circles of cosmic energy inside the body of the creature, are located. It is believed that these Chakras have trapped divine mystical energy which can be unleashed by means of Yoga, and once released they enable the aspirant acquire mystical powers that are rare and very potential. These four Chakras are called respectively the Nabhi Chakra, the Hridaya Chakra, the Kanth Chakra and the Brahm Randhra Chakra.

Meanwhile, the *Brahm Randhra* is the hair-like slit present at the top of the skull from where Brahm entered the body of the individual man at the time of creation, and then took up its residence in the man’s mind-intellect complex from where Brahm

controlled the entire chariot represented by the body of the individual man as well as the all other creatures in a similar way, thereby exercising an overall control over the entire creation which ran the risk of going off track and meeting an accident if there was no authority to control and regulate it. It is believed that at the time of death, the Pran or life sustaining vital winds in the body of a realised and attained ascetic leaves the body through this slit to merge with the 'elements' outside.

<sup>2</sup>The *four legs or pedestals of Brahm* have been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition in its Canto 3, Section 18, verse no. 2-6, Canto 4, Section 5, verse no. 2, Canto 4, Section 6, verse no. 3, Canto 4, Section 7, verse no. 3, and Canto 4, Section 8, verse no. 3.

There is another way of interpreting this stanza. The Viraat Purush is represented by the sacrificial horse (Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 1, Brahman 1). A horse has four legs. Here the term 'leg' is a metaphor for the four pedestals upon which the entire edifice of creation rests. These four legs represent the four aspects of the divine cosmic glory of the Supreme Being. It is on these four legs that the magnificent sacrificial horse stands in the mid of the sacrificial venue for the rest of the assembly to see and pay its obeisance to it—thereby symbolising the fact that in order to appreciate the glories and magnificence of the supreme transcendental Brahm one has to have a holistic view of the Divinity.

The four vital places in the body cited in this Upanishad, viz. the navel, the heart, the throat and the Brahm Randhra, mark the four places where Brahm has planted one of its four symbolic legs to establish itself in the body of the creature. These four sites are the locations of the four vital Chakras or the whirling dynamic cosmic energy centers located inside the body. They are the Nabhi Chakra, the Hridaya Chakra, the Kantha Chakra, and the Vyom Chakra. The Upanishads dealing with Yoga assert that the subtle energy that is trapped in these Chakras has to be unleashed by a spiritual aspirant in order to realise Brahm, or know Brahm or become Brahm-realised. Unlocking of the trapped energy of these four great centers of the body would unleash the dynamic spiritual energy that is equivalent to making the aspirant similarly empowered as Brahm.

Even from the practical standpoint, these four sites have biological importance. The Naadis or ducts that represent the nerves present in the body are said to have their origin in the central cluster of Naadis present in the region of the navel (Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 14-15). The Naadis that represent the veins or arteries in the body have their nodal point in the heart because the heart is the pumping center of the body's blood and controls circulation (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 4). The throat control breath, and is therefore the site of Pran without which no life is ever feasible. Finally, the brain which is the site of the mind and intellect is located in the head where the Brahm Randhra resides, and it is more than evident that without brain the body would be no better than a vegetable or any other member of the plant kingdom. Thus we deduce that this statement that Brahm is present in the body with its four legs located at these four sites is a metaphoric way of acknowledging the inviolable and undeniable importance of these four locations in the creature's body. These four places mark the four symbolic legs by which the 'consciousness' present inside the otherwise gross and inane body makes itself felt as 'conscious life' in this world. These four sites are indispensable for the Atma to live in the world and interact with it. These are therefore the symbols of the presence of Brahm inside the body of the creature.

<sup>3</sup>It would be noted here that the mystical *Brahm*, who has been described here to have the four legs representing the entire creation with all its diverse virtues and unique qualities, resides in the creature's own self. In other words, Brahm is to be found internally and not externally, and therefore there is a need for self-realisation if one really wishes to come face-to-face with the supreme Lord of creation. Brahm is no 'ordinary

Being', but one who is an all-inclusive and all-incorporating divine entity having four types of subtle and sublime forms that are symbolically called his 'four legs' because they establish his divinity and holiness as well as his supremacy and unquestioned authority in the entire creation, right from its conception till its conclusion. Wonder of wonders is that such an astounding and stupendous fount or spring of divinity, holiness and spiritual powers lives in the individual's own body but still the person seems to be drowned in sorrows and miseries associated with this body as well as the world in which he lives. It is such an ironic situation that whilst the diamond is in one's own closed palms, he goes on begging for alms (i.e. seeking happiness, contentedness, peace and bliss) from door to door!

<sup>4</sup>These four states briefly are the following:-- (i) the *waking state* is one in which the creature is awake in this world and interacts with it, his sense organs of perception remaining active and his brain receiving stimuli through them originating from the external world. (ii) In the *dreaming state*, the mind remains active while the body sleeps and inactive externally. During this state the mind has a free run of its imagination and lives in a world of dreams, doing things that it would like to do while awake but unable to do so for a variety of reasons. (iii) The *deep sleep state* is the state when even the mind rests, and there is complete calmness. This is a transient state because the mind reverts back to its old world and relives its old life within a short span of time. (iv) On the contrary, the *Turiya state* is a perpetual state of blissfulness when the mind remains oblivious of the external world even though the person seems to be wide awake and going about his duties in a normal way. This is a state attained by ascetics and sages who practice regular meditation and contemplation, and it results in their permanent peace and blissful demeanors.

<sup>5</sup>These four concepts are easy to follow. *Brahma* the creator is synonymous with all the activities associated with the creation of this world—all the hustle and bustle of daily life pertaining to creation and their accompanying successes and failures, their joys and sorrows, the physical activity necessitated for creating new wealth and propagating creation by creating offspring etc. are all signs of the creative activity of Brahma. Since any physical production, its enhancement and its destruction that pertains to this visible gross world of material objects needs the involvement of the body, the *Jagrat state* or the waking state is associated with Brahma. In other words, the Jagrat state is a state in which the supreme Brahm assumes the role assigned to Brahma in order to carry forward the process of creation according to the laws and rules of Nature laid down by him at the beginning of creation. This is also why Brahma is also considered to be the forefather of the entire visible world which the person can see and observe while awake.

Next comes the *Swapna state* or the dreaming state which stands for the supreme Brahm's manifestation as *Vishnu* the sustainer and protector. The fact that during the dreaming state a man can sometimes imagine of things that portend what holds in the future and it is often found that problems that seem insurmountable while awake are solved during dreams are evident proof that the consciousness works during this phase to protect the creature from future dangers and provide an answer to many of the questions that have been vexing it. Many great discoveries have been made while the discoverer was sleeping and 'dreamt' of certain things that was simply beyond conception at that time. Brahma could create, but development and up gradation of what was created was the job of Vishnu. That is why it is said that 'the way to great achievement is to dream big and then implement those dreams into practice'. Besides this point, the body needs complete physical rest to recuperate its lost energy and it is not possible to dream while one is actively involved in this world, so the importance of sleep when one can dream is a metaphoric way of saying that Brahm, in his revelation as Vishnu, 'protects' the creation when the creature sleeps and dreams. That is why dream is regarded as a sign of sleep

when the body is completely at rest as opposed to a sleep when one is in physical discomfort and tosses and turns about the whole night. This is also why the Purans have depicted Vishnu as perpetually reclining in a state of sleep on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk called the Kshirsagar.

The third state of *Shushupta* or deep sleep is when the mind is also asleep. This state is like meditation of the Atma while the body is sleeping, and it similar to the meditation practiced when the body is awake. Since deep meditation makes both the body and the mind calm and rested, this state of consciousness is especially invigorating for the spirit. Even as the person remains oblivious of all kinds of external impressions and even of severe physical pain during meditation, this Shushupta state produces absolute calm and tranquility which is like the one obtained when one dies. All his worldly worries are exhausted and shut off; he remains in a blissful state of meditation during sleep. These two reasons—one, his blissfulness and remaining completely calm as obtained during sessions of deep meditation and contemplation, and second, this state resembling the calmness and peace obtained at the time of death—makes it a revelation of Brahm's form as *Shiva or Rudra* because this God is a synonym of perpetual meditation and blissfulness as well as the one who concludes this creation. This is why Shiva has been traditionally depicted by the scriptures (Purans) in a perpetual trance-like state of Samadhi, doing meditation on a constant basis, and in a perpetual blissful state, remaining naked like an ascetic and with no care in the world. He is also regarded as the 'concluder' symbolised by the fact that during this state of Shushupta, the creature has exhausted all its desires and aspirations as well as all its pleasures and miseries—i.e. every cause of worldly turmoil has been 'concluded'.

Finally, we come to the fourth state called *Turiya* or the state of perpetual bliss. This is the state that goes beyond the above three states, and it is achievable when the consciousness does not revert back to the earlier states. Then, obviously only one state remains, and the creature does not have to oscillate between these three states every now and then. Since this state gives permanence and stability to blissfulness and peacefulness, it is called *Akchar*—something which is imperishable and eternal.

<sup>6</sup>The fact that the *Sun* is a manifestation of the Viraat Purush and the eye of the creation has been repeatedly stressed in almost all the Upanishads. For example, Chandogya 1/6/3,5,6; 1/10/7; 2/9; 2/14; 2/24/12-14; 3/1-11; 3/18; 5/13; 6/4/2 etc.; and Brihad Aranyak 2/1/2; 2/5/5; 3/7/9; 3/9/5; 5/15 etc.

At the time of creation, the Sun God had taken up his residence in the eye of the creature to illuminate the world for him at his individual level just like the celestial Sun lights up the world at the macro level of creation. The Sun is like the bulb of the headlight, represented by the eye, of a car which is represented by the body. The headlamp would be useless if the bulb did not have its presence there. It is the bulb that illuminates the dark world outside for the car to move on. This bulb of the car's headlamp is like the celestial Sun for the world at large. The former is at a micro level while the latter is at the macro level. This metaphor would explain the importance of the saying that the *Sun resides in the eye*. At the time of creation, the Sun-God was ordered by Viraat Purush to be established in the eye of a man. So, whereas the worship of Brahm in the eye is his Adhyatmic form of worship, worshipping him in the Sun is the Adhidaivic form—Aeitero-panishad, 1/2/4.]”

The four aspects or Paads of Brahm Brahm have been described in *Mandukya Upanishad* of Atharva Veda tradition, in its verse no. 3-7. Now let us see what these verses say on this subject—

“Verse no. 3 = The first ‘Paad’ or aspect of Brahm and Atma is called Vaishwanar<sup>1</sup>. This aspect of Brahm known as the Vaishwanar is the revealer and regulator of the visible world as it corresponds to the waking state of consciousness. It is this gross aspect of Brahm that makes the creature’s Atma (i.e. his true conscious self) become aware of the visible world. It therefore corresponds to the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness<sup>2</sup> which makes the creature aware of the external world.

This gross aspect (i.e. gross body) of Brahm (in the form of this vast world) has seven ‘Angas’ or body parts or units or divisions<sup>3</sup>, and nineteen ‘Mukhas’ or mouths<sup>4</sup>.

This form of Brahm is the enjoyer and consumer of all the material things in this world (because it is able to perceive this world with its material sense objects and get enticed by their charms).

This form of Brahm is called the ‘Vishwa’ or the physical gross and visible world in which the creature lives and with which he interacts. [It is from this word ‘Vishwa’ that the term Vaishwanar is derived.] (3).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The concept of Vaishwanar Brahm and Atma have also been explained in Nrisingha Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, in its Canto 4, verse no. 4, as well in the Krishna Yajur Veda’s Brahmopanishad, verse no. 21, and Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse no. 15.

The term *Vaishwanar* in simple words means the form of Brahm that is as large and as vast as the universe, enclosing it from all sides like a moat of a fort, and even existing beyond it. This all-inclusive, all-pervading and all-encompassing macrocosmic form of Brahm is the *Vishwa* or the vast physical world of infinite dimensions, because this world is a manifestation of Brahm, it is Brahm revealed in its myriad and diverse forms, and it is the glory of Brahm on display. In fact, if one wishes to witness Brahm, he must observe Brahm at play in this world itself. The physical aspect of Brahm in the form of the visible world is equivalent to the Jagrat state of consciousness because it is in this state that the creature sees or perceives the physical presence of the world. Here the word ‘creature’ refers to his Atma or soul which is pure consciousness and his true self. This Atma is called Vaishwanar because, like Brahm, it is manifested as all forms of life in this world.

<sup>2</sup>The 1<sup>st</sup> stage is called waking or *Jagrat*. During this state, a creature’s sense organs that constitute its gross body are active and they receive inputs from the physical material world outside which they in turn transfer to the mind which forms the creature’s subtle body. This mind then filters through the clutter of information, then either orders the organs of action to respond accordingly, or it consults its supervisor, the intellect, for advice. Meanwhile, the mind stores all the information in its data bank for future reference much like the record room of an office. The true self of the creature, the pure conscious Atma, is like the King in whose secretariat the mind and intellect work, and therefore the Atma is the final Authority which takes the final decision and is responsible for all the things done by each of these individual entities. Even as the King cannot absolve himself for the sins committed by his subjects during his rule or plead ignorance of whatever is happening in his kingdom though he is not directly involved in them or in the day to day routine work of the kingdom as he stays in his palace and cannot be practically expected to control each movement in his kingdom, but he is morally responsible for them and cannot deny this responsibility. Similarly, the Atma of the creature is responsible for each and every thing that the creature does though the Atma is limited to its palace-like residence in the heart of the creature. So, the otherwise immaculate Atma is accused of things that body or mind of the creature does because the Atma is at the helm of affairs.

During this Jagrat state, the Atma interacts with the outside world through the medium of the sense organs of the gross body (i.e. the physical body). The sense organs of perception of the body collect information from the external world and pass them over to the mind, which in turn processes them and passes necessary instructions to the organs of action on the one hand, and files data for future reference in its memory bank on the other hand. The mind would also refer to the intellect those things which are not routine in nature. It is the transcendental state of supreme enlightenment and self-realisation.

The Jagrat state is when the consciousness is aware of the external world of material objects, and this is made possible through the medium of the sense organs of perceptions such as the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin which enables the creature to respectively see, hear, smell, taste and feel this world. The creature's responses are carried out with the help of the organs of action such as the hands which receive, the legs that take him to the desired place, the mouth that helps him to speak and eat, the excretory organs that helps it to eliminate waste from the body, and the genitals which helps him to recreate and enjoy the sensual pleasures of the world. These organs are located in the gross body, and since the world is experienced through them, the latter is also deemed to be gross. The coordination of all the perceptions and actions is done by the mind-intellect which is the subtle part of the body.

This Jagrat state has been explained in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, Brahman 1, verse no. 20; Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 16-19, 31, 34-35.

<sup>3</sup>The *seven parts* of the Vaishwanar Brahm's body have two interpretations. One way of considering them is related to the seven Lokas or subtle worlds that exist. These seven worlds are the following— The *seven Bhuvans* or Lokas according to the Purans are the following:--According to Brahmaand Puran (BP) and Vaaman Puran (VP) there are the following Lokas-- 'Bhu' (भूः) or earth [BP-3,4,2-18]; 'Bhuvaha' (भुवः) or the space between the earth and the heaven [BP-3,4,2-19]; 'Swaha' (स्वः) or the heavens known as Brahma's abode; the space beyond the earth's atmosphere; cosmic wind represented by the solar wind blows here [BP-3,4,2-20]; 'Maha' (महः) or the world created by Brahma pronouncing the divine word Maha meaning the great heaven or the outer space; it is believed that great sages and seers stay here; it is 1000 Yojans or appx. 8000 miles away from the Swaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-21; VP-52,21-22]; 'Janaha' (जनः), so called because it was to be inhabited by the humans and the cows [BP-3,4,2-22; VP-52, 22]; 'Tapaha' (तपः) or the Loka where great amount of austerity and penances are done; it is said to be 60 million Yojans or appx. 60 x 8 million miles away from the Janaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-24; VP-52, 23]; and 'Satyam' (सत्यम्) or the truthful heaven where the supreme Lord has his abode; it is 300 million Yojans or appx. 300 x 8 million miles beyond the Tapaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-25; VP-52, 24].

The seven Bhuvans or Lokas according to the Vedantic view are the following:-- the seven organs of perception situated in the region of the head —viz. the two eyes + two ears + two nostrils + one tongue/mouth = seven. Refer *Mundak Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 2, section 1, verse no. 8.

Another way of interpreting the seven parts of the Vaishwanar's cosmic body are the following units of creation—the Duloka or the heavens is its head, the Sun (representing the fire element) and the Moon (representing light) are its two eyes, the Vayu or the air element is its Pran or vital life giving winds with which it breathes and which infused life in the units of its cosmic body, the Akash or the sky is its abdomen in which all the organs of the Vaishwanar's body are located just like the man's abdomen encloses all his organs, the Aapha or water is its fluid part such as its blood, mucous and semen, the Anna or food produced in the world is its intestines and rectum (as it is the food that is digested

in the intestines to sustain the body and its residue is collected in the rectum before being expelled from the anus), and the Prithivi or earth is its two legs.

<sup>4</sup>The *nineteen mouths* of the Vaishwanar Brahm are the following—10 sense organs consisting of five organs of perception (eye, ear, nose, tongue, skin) and five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, excretory, genitals) + 5 Prans (or the vital winds such as Pran or breath, Apan, Samaan, Vyan and Udaan) + 1 Mana (mind) + 1 Buddhi (intellect) + Ahankar (ego, self pride) + Chitta (sub-conscious) = 19. These are the components through which the creature interacts with the world—or ‘sees’ the visible world during his Jagrat or waking state of consciousness.]

“Verse no. 4 = The second ‘Paad’ or aspect of Brahm and the Atma is equivalent to the Swapna or the dreaming state of consciousness<sup>1</sup>. It is a subtle form of existence of Brahm and it refers to the world that is not visibly manifested and tangible, that has no physical existence but is nevertheless perceived to be there at the mental level just like the world of dreams (which the creature thinks to be real as long as the dream lasts).

Thus, that aspect of Brahm or cosmic Consciousness by which subtle things which are not physically visible or perceptible can become known, or that aspect of existence in which the creature can see and visualise things that have no gross forms, is called the dreaming state of existence. It is also called the ‘Taijas<sup>2</sup>’ form of Brahm.

(Like the gross form of Brahm as described in verse no. 3—) This form of Brahm also has a body, albeit a subtle one, having seven parts or components as well as nineteen mouths. [These have been enumerated in note of verse no. 3 above.]

Brahm (or the cosmic Consciousness existing at the vast macrocosmic level of creation) and the Atma (or the Consciousness existing at the individual microcosmic level of the individual creature) in this second Taijas form enjoys the material things of the world, but at a subtle level of existence. [This refers to the state in which the creature dreams. For all practical purposes, the world of dreams and its material objects appear to be real for the creature as long as he dreams, and he enjoys them just like he would have enjoyed them in the world when he was awake. There is no difference between how a creature would respond to a given situation, how he would desire to obtain a particular thing, or how he would enjoy the material things of the world that he encounters while he is awake or while he dreams. The only difference is the level in which the consciousness exists—for in the waking or Jagrat state of consciousness the gross body is active and it helps the Atma of the creature to actually perceive and interact with a gross world having a physical existence, while in the Swapna state the same situation is converted into a subtle level.] (4).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>*Swapna* or dreaming state is the 2<sup>nd</sup> state of consciousness when the latter has withdrawn its self from being actively involved in the outside world through the medium of the sense organs of perception and action. But the mind does not sleep and remains active as before, though this activity is at the subtle level of the sub-conscious. Here, the consciousness remains active through the medium of the vital winds, called the various Prans present inside the body, and moves in the different Naadis (tubular ducts in the body, such as the nerves and veins etc.) which keep the mind working. Refer Shukla Yajur Veda’s Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 12, and Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahman 1, verse no. 18; Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse no. 20; Krishna Yajur Veda’s Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 58-60; Rig Veda’s Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad of Rig Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 19.

This Pran is deemed to be synonymous with the life factors and consciousness in the body as well as with the latent fire element present inside the body which gives the energy, strength and vitality to the body to live and remain active. If it were not for the fire element (Tej) and the wind element (Pran), the consciousness (Atma, the ‘self’) would have found it difficult to live in the body. In fact, the Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 3 clearly states that the Pran in its manifestation as Agni or fire.

Since no external stimuli is being received from the outside world, the mind begins to replay what is stored in its memory bank and uses its stupendous abilities to imagine and recreate situations and circumstances in an imaginary world of dreams. Since the Atma living in the causal body depends upon the mind living in the subtle body to feel or sense anything pertaining to this world, for all practical purposes therefore the Atma begins to live in this new world of dreams conjured up by the mind and gets as involved in it as it was during the waking state. Since the mind is active here, the man remembers some of his dreams even when he wakes up. So as far as the Atma is concerned, the two states of waking and dreaming means the same—the world exists for it in both these two states.

<sup>2</sup>The word *Taijas* refers to the inherent light of conscious that is present in an entity that makes it aware of anything because of this ‘light’. *Taijas* means energy, light, radiance, vigour and vitality. A dead entity would not see and feel anything, and hence a dead body has no *Taijas* in it. The dreaming state is compared to the *Taijas* because for all practical purposes the creature’s gross physical body appears to be lifeless and dead from the outside as it shows no sign of life. But this apparent lifelessness is only skin deep as the consciousness is very much alive and active inside the body because the creature is dreaming and actively participating in the world of his dreams. This world is subtle because it has no physical gross existence.]

“Verse no. 5 = The third ‘Paad’ or aspect of Brahm and the Atma is equivalent to the Shusupta or the deep sleep state of consciousness<sup>1</sup>. It is a subtler form of existence of Brahm or consciousness and it refers to the state when the creature does not even dream. Since in this state of existence the world has ceased to exist and the mind which actually makes the Atma aware of the world and its material objects too ceases to exist, the creature has no desires or wants left in him. This gives the Atma of the creature complete rest, peace and tranquility; it marks the state of existence where there is bliss and contentedness because of the simple reason that there is nothing to disturb the natural state of blissfulness and tranquility that the Atma possesses.

In this third state of existence the creature’s Atma, his pure conscious ‘self’, has nothing to distract it. It exists in its primary form of being enlightened. This is being aware of the highest form of spiritual knowledge of the ‘self’ in the form of the pure consciousness that wants nothing, that remains ever contented, that is blissful and is at peace with itself.

This eclectic and divine form of the Atma that exists in this third state of Sushupta is therefore ever blissful, contented, tranquil and peaceful. The Atma that is consciousness personified enjoys its natural state of inherent blissfulness and peace.

Since the eclectic Atma becomes aware of its conscious and blissful state of sublime and exalted existence, it is called ‘Pragya’—meaning knowing, enlightened and wise. Indeed, this is the third aspect or step of Brahm in which the latter’s primary form of being all-knowing and all-wise comes to the fore. [Brahm and the Atma are synonymous with each other—the only apparent difference being in the level in which the cosmic Consciousness exists. If we think of this Consciousness at the level of the

individual creature, it is called the Atma, and if we think of it at the vast level of the creation, it is called Brahm.]

The creature comes in close contact with his 'true' form as the enlightened Consciousness when he transcends the first two states of Jagrat and Swapna, and reaches the third state of Sushupta. (5).

[Note--<sup>1</sup>Beyond the second state of existence of consciousness is the third eclectic state called the *Sushupta* or deep sleep state. This has been elaborately dealt with in the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, Brahman 1, verse no. 19; Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 14-15, 19, 21-30. During this stage the creature does not dream.

The Sushupta or the deep sleep state of consciousness is the 3<sup>rd</sup> state in which the mind has also become defunct, and the Atma has withdrawn itself into the exclusive domain of the causal body and lives in seclusion, disconnected with the external world because of the non-involvement of either the gross body or the subtle body. Here it is surrounded by the space of the subtle sky around the heart, called the Hridya Akash. During this state of existence, the vital winds, called the Pran or 'life' of the creature, keep on moving in the different Naadis (various ducts such as nerves and veins etc.) as during the dreaming state so as to keep the body alive as is evident from the fact that all the subtle and imperceptible functions of the inner organs of the body such as the liver, kidneys, heart, pancreas, digestive organs, lungs etc. continue uninterrupted as before, because if they cease to function the body would die. It is the mind now that has gone in a defunct state. But this phase is temporary and shows the true nature and fundamental characteristic of the Atma, which is blissful and peaceful, contented and fulfilled, not feeling restless and perplexed in any manner whatsoever because it is now not being disturbed by the mind's constant nagging. That is why a sound asleep man does not want anything, he does not feel anything, he is not worried about anything, he is not concerned about anything, and he does not remember anything. That is also why one feels very relaxed and refreshed after even a short deep sleep when the mind and the body both find their rest.

The Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 4, verse no. 6, and Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in Canto 2, verse no. 62 describe in clear terms why a creature stops dreaming.]

“Verse no. 6 = Brahm is the supreme Lord of all, is all-knowing and omniscient, is a resident in the inner self of all living beings as their Atma or their true self, and is not only the primary cause for this creation coming into being but is also the cause for its remaining in existence and for its conclusion. [In other words, being the supreme Lord of the world who knows everything inside out, it is Brahm who decides when to create this world, how to maintain it, and when to conclude it.] (6).

“Verse no. 7 = That enigmatic, most esoteric and mystical entity which has paradoxical qualities such as it being neither enlightened or aware of anything nor being ignorant or not enlightened about it, an entity that is both enlightened and not enlightened, and hence deemed to be absolutely neutral so much so that it has no concern for or awareness of what is inside or what is outside, an entity that is neither understood or discerned by the organs of perceptions nor approachable or accessible by the organs of action, an entity that does nothing (as it does not need to do anything), an entity that has no parallel and comparisons or symbols, an entity that is beyond the reach of thoughts and speech (i.e. that cannot be thought of, cannot be even imagined, and cannot be spoken about or explained), an entity that is only accessible or witnessed by personal experience, an entity

that is the point where everything in existence would ultimately collapse and conclude, an entity that is an embodiment of such divine virtues as being peaceful and tranquil, being auspicious and holy, and being non-dual and unmatched—verily, this entity is known as Brahm, the supreme transcendental Divine Being. And the state of its existence as described herein above, the state in which it exhibits these grand qualities is called the fourth aspect or Paad of Brahm.

This fourth state of existence of the cosmic Consciousness is called ‘Turiya’<sup>1</sup>—literally meaning the state that transcends the usual three levels in which an ordinary creature lives in this world. Indeed, this is the truthful form of the Atma that is worth knowing (as it represents the real and truthful nature of the soul of the creature). [In other words, the Atma exhibits these characteristics if it is left alone. Since the Atma is the microcosmic form of Brahm, it follows that these eclectic qualities are also the qualities of Brahm.]

Verily, this is the fourth ‘Paad’ or aspect of Brahm (7).

[Note--<sup>1</sup>Then comes the 4<sup>th</sup> state of existence of the Atma, and it is known as *Turiya* state. This state is reached when the third state becomes a perpetual phenomenon instead of being only a temporary phase. Once this state of Turiya is reached, then even though the man might wake up from sleep and appears to be going about his normal duties in a routine manner in this world, his pure consciousness remains aloof and distanced from the sense organs of perception and actions as well as from the mind. This is the ‘transcendental state’ of existence of consciousness, and it goes beyond the third state of Sushupta or deep sleep state of consciousness. Here the spiritual aspirant lives in a state of perpetual Samadhi. That is, he remains in a constant state of blissfulness and meditation though he lives in this physical world and goes about his normal affairs like an ordinary man.

During this 4<sup>th</sup> state called ‘Turiya’, the Atma acquires all the characters of the earlier three stages, viz. the waking, the dreaming and the deep sleeping states in their individual form as well as in a combined and composite way. In this state of spiritual existence, the consciousness exhibits all the traits of the earlier three states at the same time along with the unique traits which would obviously be a net result of the combined affect of all the individual traits that are so unique to each of the three earlier states of existence consciousness—viz. the waking state, the dreaming state, and the deep sleep state.

The 4<sup>th</sup> state of existence of the consciousness or Atma is also called the ‘Turiya Chaitanya state’. In this state, the creature exists in its purest form as the pure consciousness which is undiluted, uninterrupted and unpolluted by any impulses or inputs from the external world. This results in its pristine and immaculate form as ‘consciousness’ to shine through (much like the flame of the candle which shines with all its brightness and splendour once the tainted glass covering around it is removed). This consciousness is the true ‘self’ of the creature and its real identity.

Thus, it is the Atma or the pure consciousness as the true ‘self’ of the creature that is the witness of the existence of the other three states in which the creature lives. This ‘self’ or Atma is imperishable and without a birth or beginning. This is because the other three states continue to appear and disappear in a rhythmic cycle as the creature wakes up to face the world after his phase of sleep is over, only to go back to sleep again when it is exhausted, and wake up again refreshed and rejuvenated from sleep. But the fourth state is like the Sun in the sky which is steady and shines constantly upon the world and lights it up. This Sun is unaffected by anything happening in this world and to this world, and remains completely dispassionate and detached from anything mundane and terrestrial. Nights and days appear and disappear in a cyclic manner, but the Sun remains the same.

During the night it is erroneously assumed that the Sun is no more, but as science has proved the Sun is there in the sky though it might not be visible to the creature during that period of time called the ‘night’ as it is shining on the outer side of the globe. The day is comparable to the waking state of consciousness, the moon-light night to the dreaming state of consciousness when a man is able to see this world but with a different light, while the dark night when nothing is visible is comparable to the deep sleep state of consciousness when nothing of the external world is visible.

The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 64, and Subalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 9, verses 1-7 describe what the practical implication of this Turiya state of consciousness is.

According to Brahmo-panishad, verse no. 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, these four states of existence represent Brahm in his different divine manifestations. The same Brahmo-panishad, in verse no. 21 describes the presence of the Atma in the four states of consciousness.]”

*Chandogya Upanishad* of Sam Veda tradition elaborately describes the so-called *four symbolic legs or pedestals of Brahm* in its Canto 3, Section 18, verse nos. 2-6, and in Canto 4, Sections 5-8 in their various verses.

We shall now see one by one what these Cantos have to say.

(i) Canto 3, Section 18, verse no. 2-6 of Chandogya is quoted here with notes:—

“Verse 2—The Brahm when investigated according to the ‘Adhyatmic’ philosophy is said to have four pedestals or feet—as the faculty of speech located in the mouth and throat and represented by the tongue, the Pran which are the vital wind forces sustaining life (such as the breath), the faculty of sight located in the eyes, and the faculty of hearing located in the ears. Similarly, the Brahm according to the ‘Adhidaivic’ school of thought has four pedestals or feet —Fire (Agni), Wind (Vayu), Sun (Aditya) and the different directions (Disha). So, these are the two views of Brahm based on these two schools of thought or philosophy (2).

“Verse 3—The speech or voice is the 4<sup>th</sup> leg of Brahm who is revealed in the form of the ‘Mana’, or mind and heart of the creature. This speech or voice is glorious and radiant with the scintillating light or brilliant illumination effusing from the ‘fire’ element. An aspirant who knows or realises this fact becomes blessed with good fame and glory, magnificence, splendour and radiance that is associated with Brahm and known as his ‘Tej’ (3).

[Note—(i) The voice or faculty of *speech* in a man is an instrument by which Brahma residing in a creature as the mind and heart collectively, called the Mana, expresses himself. What a man thinks in his mind and feels in his heart is made evident to others and is made known to them by the words which he speaks by using his voice. Sincerity or pretensions are evident from the tone and tenor of his voice, his gestures and body language as well as the words of his speech. That is why we say ‘heartfelt words’ or ‘to be in a proper shape of mind’ when a man speak coherently and cogently. Further, it is by the words in speech that a man’s heart and mind are known; they are like a window to Brahma present in the creature in the form of his mind and heart. Words can cement bonds or break them.

(ii) According to ‘Adhidaivic’ philosophy, the fire is one of the 4 legs of Brahma. The speech of a man makes him glorious, famous and highlighted just like the fire is known and recognised by the bright illumination and heat it generates all around. Hence, speech and fire have factors which are common to both. That is why we say ‘a fiery

speech', a speech that 'illuminates' our wisdom or knowledge and enhances them, a speech that spewed 'fire and brimstone', and the 'heat' generated by a person's 'fiery speech'. Besides this, at the time of creation, the Fire-God took up a residence in the mouth of a man. It is through the mouth that he speaks. Hence, speech and fire are likened to the 4th pedestal of Brahma.]

“Verse 4—In the same vein, the ‘Pran’ is Brahm’s 4<sup>th</sup> leg or pedestal. It is energised or infused with the light and vitality of life by the mind as well as by the ‘air or wind’ element which is Brahm’s 4th leg according to ‘Adhidaivic’ philosophy. A person who knows or realises this fact is blessed with good fame and name, glory and magnificence, radiance and splendour laced with the stupendous powers of the mind and the vitality and agility of air which are manifestations of Brahm (4).

[Note—Pran is synonymous with breath or fresh air. At the time of creation, the Wind-God took up residence in the nostril of a man. Worship of Pran is the Adhyatmic form of worship of Brahma while that of the air or wind is the Adhidaivic form respectively—Aeitereyo-panishad, 1/2/4.]

“Verse 5—The ‘eyes’ are the symbolic 4<sup>th</sup> leg or pedestal of Brahm (who is invisibly, subtly, unperceivable present in the eyes in the form of the innate ability of the eyes to ‘see’). It is glorious, illuminated and radiant with the splendorous glow and brilliance emanating from ‘Aditya’ (Sun) which has its symbolic presence in the eyes and which represents Brahm according to the Adhidaivic School of philosophy. An aspirant who knows and realises this fact is blessed with good fame, name, majesty, splendour, radiance and stupendous glory which resembles that of the Sun and which is associated with Brahm (5).

[Note—The *Sun* is like the bulb of the headlight, represented by the eye, of a car which is represented by the body. The headlamp would be useless if the bulb did not have its presence there. It is the bulb that illuminates the dark world outside for the car to move on. This bulb of the car’s headlamp is like the celestial sun for the world at large. The former is at a micro level while the latter is at the macro level. This metaphor would explain the importance of the saying that the *Sun resides in the eye*. At the time of creation, the Sun-God was ordered by Viraat Purush to be established in the eye of a man. So, whereas the worship of Brahm in the eye is his Adhyatmic form of worship, worshipping him in the Sun is the Adhidaivic form—Aeitero-panishad, 1/2/4.]

“Verse 6—The ‘ears’ are the 4th leg or pedestal of Brahm who is in the form of the mind and heart or ‘Mana’ of a man. It is activated by the inputs from the various directions which are Brahm's 4<sup>th</sup> pedestal at the Adhidaivic level. [That is, the sound coming from everywhere makes the ears and the faculty of hearing active; without any sound, the ear loses its function and utility. To test that the ear is functioning normally, we test whether a person can hear or not]. A person, who knows and realises this fact become endowed with good fame, glory, majesty, powers and wisdom associated with Brahm (6).

[Note—(i) We note that from verse no. 3 till 6, all the entities have been called the ‘4th leg or pedestal of Brahm’, and not in a serial fashion such as the first, second, third and fourth in that order. This is to emphasise the fact that all of them are equally important and there is no distinction between the one and the other as to their importance as well as to the extent Brahm is present in them. We cannot start the counting from any particular entity, say the Pran, as being number one and more important than the other three.

(ii) *Pran* is evidently ‘air or the wind element’ because breath is air or wind, and ‘Pran’ is synonymous with breath. Stop the breath of a man, and he dies. Now as we know, a ‘fire needs air to keep burning’. If the speech is likened to the fire, it needs the Pran in the form of wind to keep it alive by being fed with its life sustaining force. The ‘wind’, which is a forceful expression of the powers of ‘air’, is strong enough to blow away trees and even topple ships on the high seas as is evident during severe storms. Hence, the wind, as Pran, empowers a man to do tremendously difficult tasks requiring strength, stamina, vitality and power.

(iii) The *eyes* are like the ‘head lamp of the body’ even as the Sun is the head lamp dangling from the roof of the sky. Without the eyes the world is dark even as the sky will be dark without the Sun. Therefore, these two entities are synonymous with each other and are the metaphors for light and illumination, which in turn stand for wisdom and enlightenment. A person cannot read anything without the eye and light, and the light referred to here is the one provided by the Sun, because in ancient times, the Sun was the only source of light as compared to later days when light was produced by artificial means such as the candle and the electric bulb. Therefore, the eyes, the Sun and the light go hand in hand.

(iv) Similarly, the *ears* are like the radars which collect and ‘hear’ the information pouring in them from all the directions. In olden days when books were not in vogue, the only way to ‘acquire knowledge was to hear’, and to ‘give knowledge was to speak’. Again we see that the process of speaking and hearing are hand in hand. The various directions entered the ears of a man at the time of creation— Aetereo-panishad, 1/2/4.

(v) The *mind* is the controlling center of this network. All the inputs from the eyes and ears are sorted out here in the mind. The role of the mind and the heart are interlinked. The ‘heart’ is like a minister whose advices influence the decision taken by the mind. They work in tandem. A decision of the mind without the interference of the heart can be called ‘a clinical, dry, fact-based and emotionless decision’. So in the final analysis, we see that its such a complex image of interactions between the various facets of Brahm that the whole composite structure should be taken into account to understand what it means as well as the meaning of Brahm and his creation, rather than isolating one individual verse or section or canto of any Upanishad and fruitlessly and endlessly engaging ourselves in debates and discussions.]”

(ii) Canto 4, Section 5-8 of *Chandogya Upanishad* also describes the four legs or pedestals of Brahm. Let us now see what it says:--

The *1st leg of Brahm* (canto 4, section 5)—“Verse no. 1--One day, the bull said to Satyakam, ‘We have increased our numbers to become one thousand. So now take us back to the hermitage of the ‘Acharya’ (the teacher), sage Gautam (1).

“Verse no. 2—Should I tell you about one foot/leg (i.e. aspect) of Brahm?’ Satyakam said to the bull, ‘Oh Lord! Do tell me’. Then the bull preached to Satyakam— ‘The four directions of the compass —east, west, north and south (the four cardinal points) — represent one leg of Brahm who is known and defined by the name of ‘light’, and who is ‘self illuminated’ (2).

“Verse no. 3—A wise, erudite and scholarly person who worships, adores, contemplates upon and praises this illuminated and glorious form of Brahm as revealed in the form of the four directions, becomes endowed with the light of glory and fame in this world, and he is able to establish his authority over other such worlds. Such a person attains the same

exalted and illuminated stature as that of the self-illuminated Brahm. [That is, he obtains glory and fame as an enlightened and wise person while alive, and his fame spreads in all the four directions as mentioned here. Upon death, even the Gods of those four directions, i.e. all the Gods present everywhere, show respect to him, and such a person acquires an exalted stature amongst all the Gods.] (3).

[Note--Verse no. 3 expounds that Brahm stretches as far as the length, breadth and depth of the cosmos. This is the 3-dimensional (3D) version of Brahm. The word 'light or illumination' does not of course refer to the physical light, but the light of knowledge, wisdom, scholarship, erudition and enlightenment. It refers to the fact that a person who has this knowledge is as illuminated as a brightly lit lamp.]”

The 2<sup>nd</sup> leg of Brahm (canto 4, section 6)—“Verse no. 1--The bull told Satyakam that the Fire-God will tell him further about the second foot or pedestal (i.e. aspect) of Brahm. After this, Satyakam drove the herd of cows towards the hermitage of the sage (his teacher, Gautam). When evening arrived, he stopped the herd and lit a fire, offered oblations to it and sat down on its west side, facing the east (1).

“Verse no. 2—The Fire-God called out three times to Satyakam, and he replied, ‘Yes my Lord!’ (2).

“Verse no. 3—The Fire-God said, ‘Oh gentleman! Should I tell you about the 2<sup>nd</sup> foot or leg or pedestal (i.e. aspect) of Brahm?’ he Satyakam replied, ‘Sure Lord, do tell me about it’.

Then the Fire-God said, ‘The second leg of Brahm has the following connotations—the 1<sup>st</sup> aspect is earth, the 2<sup>nd</sup> is Antariksha (the sky or space above the earth), the 3<sup>rd</sup> is Duloka (the heavens), and the 4<sup>th</sup> is the ocean (here referring to the vast inter galactic space or the space beyond the limits of the known universe as well as the ocean on earth which covers ¾th of the surface of earth, and represents that celestial ocean). The 2<sup>nd</sup> leg of Brahm with these four divisions or aspects or manifestations or forms is known by the name of ‘Anant’ which means ‘without an end’ (3).

“Verse no. 4—A wise, erudite, scholarly and enlightened person who worships, adores, contemplates upon and praises these 4 aspects of the 2<sup>nd</sup> leg of Brahm having the quality of ‘Anant’ (i.e. one which is without an end) —such a person becomes blessed with the quality and virtue of being Anant himself (while alive) and is also able to conquer or vanquish or establish his authority over those realms that are famous as having no end (i.e. he attains the eternal heaven upon death). In this way, a wise person who honours and worships Brahm who has this 2<sup>nd</sup> leg symbolising the above described 4 foundations or bases of the cosmos and possesses the quality of endlessness, is indeed able to attain a similar stature as that of the Brahm (4).

[Note--(i) Everything created needs a base or foundation to rest upon and establish itself. These four worlds are the dwelling places of the macrocosmic Brahm in the form of four types of creatures that inhabit this creation—the earth for terrestrial creatures, the solar system for planets, the heavens for Gods, and the mythological ocean for the marine creatures represented by the distant visible or non-visible stars. The four type of creatures are also the following—those born from embryo, those from an egg, those from seeds and those from sweat or humidity on the skin. Since all entities of the creation, animate as

well as inanimate, are a manifestation of Brahm and they live in these four worlds, it is a symbolic representation of the foot or leg or pedestal on which the entire creation represented by Brahm rests. (ii) The cosmos is infinite, fathomless and endless. Hence the word *Anant* is used to describe it. Knowledge has no end, and neither are the good qualities expected in a man limited by number or immensity. So, a wise, learned and enlightened man is like an endless ocean or sky.]”

*The 3<sup>rd</sup> leg of Brahm* (canto 4, section 7)—“Verse no. 1—The Fire-God said to Satyakam that a swan would tell him about the 3<sup>rd</sup> leg or pedestal of Brahm. The next morning, he drove the cattle further towards the hermitage of the sage (Gautam). When evening fell, he stopped them, lit a fire, offered oblations to it and sat down to its west, facing east (1).

“Verse no. 2—A swan came down near the fire and called out three times to Satyakam. The latter replied, ‘Yes Lord!’ (2).

“Verse no. 3—The swan said to him, ‘Oh gentleman! Should I tell you about the 3<sup>rd</sup> leg of Brahm?’ He (Satyakam) replied, ‘Yes Lord, surely’. Then the swan replied, ‘The four aspects of the 3<sup>rd</sup> leg or pedestal of Brahm are the following —the fire, the sun, the moon and the electric. Oh gentleman! This 3<sup>rd</sup> leg of Brahm having these four aspects or forms or divisions or manifestations is known by the name of ‘Jyotishman’, i.e. that which emanates radiance, light, splendour, brightness, illumination, shine, dazzle and glitter’ (3).

“Verse no. 4—A wise, erudite and scholarly person who worships, adores, reveres, contemplates upon and praises this Brahm having these aforesaid four forms as delineated in verse no. 3 above as a constituent part of his 3<sup>rd</sup> leg which is known by the name of ‘Jyotishman’, i.e. one which is radiant, lighted, splendourous, brilliant, illuminated, bright and dazzling —such a person becomes endowed with the same brilliance, radiance, light and splendour (i.e. he has glory, fame, renown, majesty, scholarship, erudition, magnificence, enlightenment etc.) as that possessed by the Brahm while that person is alive in this world, and is also able to attain victory (i.e. reach and establish his authority) over those worlds which have these qualities, i.e. the heavens after his death. In this way, a wise person who worships, adores, honours and contemplates upon that ‘Jyotishman’ form of Brahm indeed becomes one like him (i.e. he obtains a stature which is as exalted, superior and majestic as Brahm, who is the brilliant, illuminated and enlightened One)” (4).

*The 4<sup>th</sup> leg of Brahm* (canto 4, section 8)—“Verse no. 1—The swan said to Satyakam that a bird called ‘Madgu’ (a kind of water bird, generally referred to as a Pelican) shall tell him about the 4<sup>th</sup> leg or pedestal or aspect of Brahm. The next morning, Satyakam drove the cows ahead towards the hermitage of the sage (Gautam). When evening fell, he stopped them, lit a fire, offered oblations to it and sat down near it to its west, facing east (1).

“Verse no. 2—A wise ‘Madgu’ approached him and called out his name three times. Satyakam responded, ‘Yes Lord!’ (2).

“Verse no. 3—Then ‘Madgu’ said to him, ‘Oh gentleman! Should I tell you about Brahm’s 4th leg or pedestal?’ Satyakam replied, ‘Yes Lord, do tell me’. Madgu said, ‘The Pran (vital wind which sustains life; breath), eyes, ears and Mana (heart, mind and intellect complex)—these are the four aspects or divisions or forms or manifestations of the 4<sup>th</sup> leg of Brahm. Oh gentleman! This 4<sup>th</sup> foot or pedestal of Brahm is known by the name of ‘Ayatan’ which means ‘an abode, a dwelling, a resting place, a house, a mansion, and an altar’. The word ‘Ayatan’ also means a unit of measure, a dimension. Therefore, the entities mentioned in this verse are used to recognise, to measure and define Brahm. They are the 4<sup>th</sup> dimension of Brahm. These are the places where Brahm symbolically resides, and by understanding them and being able to measure their impact upon the life of a creature, one can have an idea of the greatness and infinity of Brahm as all these four entities (Pran, eyes, ears and Mana) have an infinite reach (3).

“Verse no. 4—A wise, erudite and scholarly person who worships, adores, praises, reveres and contemplates upon this Brahm who has his 4th leg or resting place having the four aspects or manifestation as delineated above (as in verse no. 3), and who is known by the name of ‘Ayatan’ —such a person becomes an ‘Ayatan’ himself in this world while he is alive (i.e. he acquires the potentials and powers possessed by the Pran and the mind-intellect complex; he acquires deep insight into the greatest of mysteries because he has the powers of the subtle eye to see, and he becomes well informed and learned because the ears gather information from all the directions. Consequentially, his glories and fame spread far and wide with no end). After death, he attains the other world (i.e. heaven, which gives ‘Ayatan’ or rest, dwelling, refuge and shelter to him and which is infinite, endless, measureless and fathomless in its measurement and dimension)<sup>1</sup>. In this way, a person who worships, adores, honours and contemplates upon that quality of Brahm known as ‘Ayatan’ (i.e. the virtue of having the stupendous powers associated with the mind-intellect complex, called the Mana, having the majestic powers possessed by Pran which can make even a dead body alive and which is adored and worshiped as being an exalted element possessing the powers similar to Brahma, having the glorious illumination of the Sun-God symbolically present in the eye, and having the vastness and expanse of the cosmos denoted by the various directions which have no end. Besides this, the Moon-God has his residence in the heart, also a part of the ‘Mana’. Such a Brahm possesses the attributes of infinity, endlessness, eternity, being without any measurement and having no dimensions), attains that noble stature himself (i.e. he is able to acquire these virtues for himself) (4).

[Note :- <sup>1</sup>That is, a person who recognises the subtle and sublime 4th form of Brahm does not have to become a ghost or an aimlessly wandering spirit in search of a resting place or dwelling place after the person’s death, and subjected to all difficulties associated with the lack of a shelter. While he is alive, such a person will never face problems of shelter and refuge; he will always have a comfortable dwelling for him, and when he dies, he will have comfortable dwelling in heaven. Further, such a person’s fame and glory spreads far and wide while he is alive, and upon his death he is remembered till eternity.]”

The *Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, in its Canto 4, verse nos. 4-7 describe the four Paads of Brahm in the context of Lord Nrisingh/Narsingh being a manifestation of Brahm as follows—

“Verse no. 4 = [This verse describes the first Paad of Lord Nrisingh in the context of the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness.]

He who pervades uniformly and universally in the visible world seen or witnessed or experienced or perceived during the waking state of consciousness called the Jagrat state, he who makes this external visible world the subject matter of perception done by the organs of the body (such as the eye, the nose, the tongue, the ears and the skin), he whose cosmic body consists of all the seven Lokas<sup>1</sup> as its organs, he whose nineteen mouth consists of the five organs of perception, five organs of action, five Prans (vital winds or airs) and four Antahakarans (the inner self and its four aspects)<sup>2</sup>, he who is the de-facto enjoyer and lord of this material world, and he who is called ‘Vaishwanar’<sup>3</sup> because his body consists of the entire creation and his ‘true self’ called the Atma that lives in this cosmic body is the cosmic Consciousness that pervades uniformly in this creation—verily, this macrocosmic form of Supreme Being known as the Vaishwanar is the symbolic first Paad or aspect or facet of Lord Nrisingh (4).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The *seven Lokas* are the following— The *seven Bhuvans* or Lokas according to the Purans are the following:--According to Brahmaand Puran (BP) and Vaaman Puran (VP) there are the following lokas-- ‘Bhu’ (भुः) or earth [BP-3,4,2-18]; ‘Bhuvaha’ (भुवः) or the space between the earth and the heaven [BP-3,4,2-19]; ‘Swaha’ (स्वः) or the heavens known as Brahma’s abode; the space beyond the earth’s atmosphere; cosmic wind represented by the solar wind blows here [BP-3,4,2-20]; ‘Maha’ (महः) or the world created by Brahma pronouncing the divine word Maha meaning the great heaven or the outer space; it is believed that great sages and seers stay here; it is 1000 Yojans or appx. 8000 miles away from the Swaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-21; VP-52,21-22]; ‘Janaha’ (जनः), so called because it was to be inhabited by the humans and the cows [BP-3,4,2-22; VP-52, 22]; ‘Tapaha’ (तपः) or the Loka where great amount of austerity and penances are done; it is said to be 60 million Yojans or appx. 60 x 8 million miles away from the Janaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-24; VP-52, 23]; and ‘Satyam’ (सत्यम्) or the truthful heaven where the supreme Lord has his abode; it is 300 million Yojans or appx. 300 x 8 million miles beyond the Tapaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-25; VP-52, 24].

The seven Bhuvans or Lokas according to the Vedantic view are the following:-- the seven organs of perception situated in the region of the head —viz. the two eyes + two ears + two nostrils + one tongue/mouth = seven. Refer *Mundak Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 2, section 1, verse no. 8.

<sup>2</sup>The *five organs of perception* are the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the skin.

The *five organs of action* are the hand, the leg, the mouth, the excretory and the reproductive.

The *five Prans* are the vital airs or winds such as Pran, Apan, Samaan, Vyan and Udaan. These five winds control all the functions of the body. These have been elaborately described in all the Upanishads dealing with Yoga.

The *four Antahakarans*—The word Antahakaran literally means the ‘inner instrument’ of the creature by which his mind works and receives the world. The word has two components—viz. ‘Antaha’ meaning ‘inner’, and ‘Karan’ meaning ‘instrument that causes the mind to work’. The external organs of the body such as the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin which are the organs of perception physically receive the inputs from the external world, but their actual functioning is due to this Antahakaran or the inner instrument of the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect complex because if the latter malfunctions the former are useless.

Out the three states of existence of the creature, viz. the waking, the dreaming and the deep sleep states, the mind is active in the first two states only, and therefore the

Antahakaran is related to only the first two states of existence. But even here its main field of activity is internal and not external as is implied in the word 'Antaha' itself which means 'inner'. Therefore, the external organs of the body such as the organs of perception and action are only subsidiary and play an ancillary role only vis-à-vis the activity of the 'inner self' consisting of the mind, intellect and sub-conscious as well as the subtle heart which is the seat of various sentiments and emotions. This is simply because the inner self receives inputs from the outside world through the instrument of the external organs, and all the activity of the inner self in relation to the world in which the creature lives depend upon these external organs directly or indirectly.

The Antahakaran functions in four different ways and gets four different names according to these four functions. (1) It is called Chitta or sub-conscious mind and its ability to receive information and remember while performing the function of reception and retention. (2) It is called Mana or logical mind when it performs the function of questioning, doubting and willing. (3) It is called Buddhi or intellect when deducing, deciding and determining. And (4) it is called Ahankar or ego, self pride, arrogance of knowledge when it identifies itself with each of these functions—when it thinks that it has the ability to remember, to question and debate, to decide and will.

The word would therefore briefly mean the inner self of the creature consisting of the subtle body rather than the outer self consisting of the gross body. It is said to be one of the 19 Tattwas or essential elements that came into being at the very commencement of creation.

The Antahakaran with four dimensions is described in Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 4.

<sup>3</sup>*Vaishwanar*—The term Vaishwanar in simple words means the form of Brahm that is as large and as vast as the universe, enclosing it from all sides like a moat of a fort, and even existing beyond it. This all-inclusive, all-pervading and all-encompassing macrocosmic form of Brahm is the 'Vishwa' or the world because this world is a manifestation of Brahm, it is Brahm revealed in its myriad and diverse forms, and it is the glory of Brahm on display. In fact, if one wishes to witness Brahm, he must observe Brahm at play in this world itself. The physical aspect of Brahm in the form of the visible world is equivalent to the Jagrat state of consciousness because it is in this state that the creature sees the world. Here the word 'creature' refers to his Atma or soul which is pure consciousness and his true self. This Atma is called Vaishwanar because, like Brahm, it is manifested as all forms of life in this world. Refer Mandukya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, verse no. 3.

The word 'Vaishwanar' has many connotations as follows—(i) It is the fire used in sacrificial rituals. (ii) The microcosmic pure consciousness that resides inside the body of the creature, providing it with life, vitality and energy which helps it to digest food. (iii) Vedanta says that it is the pure consciousness that is a fraction of the Supreme Consciousness, and it resides in the body of the creature even as the Supreme Consciousness resides in the macrocosmic vast body of Nature or creation. It is representative of the supreme, transcendental entity that is the Lord and the primary cause and the governing authority of the whole creation. (iv) Since the creatures have myriad forms, it has as many forms as the creatures themselves, incorporating all of them in it. Hence, it is also called 'Viraat Purush' (which means the vast, colossus, all incorporating, all-pervading, almighty form of the microcosmic Atma of the creature as well as the macrocosmic Atma of the creation; it is measureless, infinite and eternal). This is the subtle form of 'Vaishwanar'. (v) The gross manifestations of this 'Vaishwanar' is the 'Annamaya Kosh' or the food sheath which is one of the five sheaths enclosing the Atma of the creature. This is because, as the Vaishwanar Agni (fire), it helps in digestion of food. (vi) Its state of existence is defined as the 'waking state of consciousness' (refer

Brahma Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 21). (vii) The word also means—relating to or belonging to all men, omnipresent, known and worshipped everywhere, universal, general, common, complete, immutable, full in number, a collective noun for all the Gods, one who is all commanding and almighty.

The word Vaishwanar refers to the universal fire element because the fire provides the light with which the creature sees the world. The fire removes darkness and illuminates the realm with its light. In this context, the Sun is the eye of Brahm in the sky because it is through this Sun and its fire that the world is lighted and energized. The faculty of sight in the eye of the creature is thus a symbolic presence of this Vaishwanar at the macro level of creation.

The Atma is called a Vaishwanar because the man becomes aware of the world when he sees it with his own eyes. This is why it is called the ‘waking’ state of consciousness. The presence of the consciousness known as the Vaishwanar in the eye is a metaphor for this waking state because when a man ‘sees’ anything only when he is awake and not while he sleeps.]

“Verse no. 5 = [This verse describes the second Paad of Lord Nrisingh in the context of the Swapna or dreaming state of consciousness.]

He who lives and pervades in the Swapna or dreaming state of consciousness and its subtle world of dreams, he who quietly knows everything that occurs in the dream or he who makes the creature subtly aware of what is perceived in one’s dreams, he who had seven organs<sup>1</sup> and nineteen mouths (as described in verse no. 4), he who is the Lord and enjoyer of the subtle world that exists in the Swapna state of existence—verily, that cosmic form is known as Hiranyagarbha<sup>2</sup>, and it represents the second Paad or limb or aspect of Lord Nrisingh’s cosmic form (5).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The seven organs refer to the following—the five Prans (Pran, Apan, Samaan, Udan and Vyan) + the mind + the intellect = 7.

It might also refer to the seven states of consciousness as described in Mahopanishad, canto 5, verse nos. 8-20 of Sam Veda tradition. Briefly they are the following--(i) ‘Beej Jagrat’ (the elementary waking state of consciousness), (ii) ‘Jagrat’ (or normal waking state of consciousness), (iii) ‘Maha Jagrat’ (or a greater waking state), (iv) ‘Jagrat Swapna’ (or a state in which a person is misled to erroneously believe in anything while he is wide awake in this world; literally meaning to ‘day dream’, or dream of imaginary things while a man is wide awake), (v) ‘Swapna’ (or a dreaming state of consciousness), (vi) ‘Swapna-Jagrat’ (or a state when a person’s dreams last long enough to influence him and he lives in his dreams so much so that they affect his mind while he is awake), (vii) ‘Sushupta’ (or the deep sleep state of consciousness).

<sup>2</sup>*Hiranyagarbha* is the cosmic subtle body of Brahm. It is from this Hiranyagarbha that the rest of creation came into being. The word also refers to the creator Brahma.]

“Verse no. 6 = [This verse describes the third Paad of Lord Nrisingh in the context of the Sushupta or deep sleep state of consciousness.]

The third state of consciousness is called Sushupta or deep sleep state of consciousness. During this state a sleeping creature neither sees any dreams nor has any desires. He who lives and pervades in this Sushupta or deep sleep state of existence when the world exists in a state of complete dissolution or a virtual state of non-existence and no activity, he who is uniform, one, steady, unchanging and immutable, he who is Vigyan or complete knowledge personified, he who is blissful and self-illuminated with an eternal light of knowledge and enlightenment, he who remains the only one to enjoy the

eternal fount of bliss, beatitude and felicity which are his own divine virtues, and he who is knowledge personified—verily, this is the third Paad or aspect or facet or form or limb of Lord Nrisingh (who is none but the supreme Brahm) (6).

“Verse no. 7 = [This verse describes the fourth Paad of Lord Nrisingh in the context of the Turiya or the post-Sushupta state of consciousness, i.e. the state when Sushupta becomes perpetual.]

He who has no awareness of the gross or the subtle, and at the same time knows everything (being omniscient and all-knowing), or in other words, he who is so mysterious and enigmatic that it is not possible to say that he knows anything or does not know anything (i.e. whether he is knowledgeable or ignorant), he who is not a grosser form of knowledge and enlightenment (i.e. he who does not represent the grosser aspects of creation that one comes to be aware of or enlightened about), he who is not visible (because he is not gross but most subtle like the air), he who cannot be held, caught or grasped (i.e. cannot be comprehended or perceived), he who cannot be used in practice (i.e. he is not a material thing or substance), he who is formless and without any attributes, he who is beyond imagination and conception, he who cannot be felt or perceived, he who cannot be defined or described, he who can only be experienced in the form of the pure Consciousness that is known as the Atma, he who is auspicious, munificent and a provider of all round welfare and well being to all the creatures, he who is free from deceit, conceit, falsehood, impersonation and illusions, he who is eternally calm, peaceful, serene and tranquil, and he who is a unique entity that has no parallel—verily, such a divine and glorious entity represents the fourth Paad or limb or aspect of the cosmic form of Lord Nrisingh.

This is what those who are wise and learned believe. It is this Lord in the form of the Atma (the pure conscious ‘self’) that is worthy to be known (7).”

The four Paads of Brahm have been described in the *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, paragraph no. 5; Canto 4, paragraph nos. 3, 6; and Canto 8, paragraph no. 4.

Now let us examine what they have to say—

“Canto 1, paragraph no. 5 = Brahm has four Paads (literally meaning limbs, but implying sublime aspects, facets or forms)<sup>1</sup>. [Refer also Canto 4, paragraph nos. 3-6.]

What are the four Paads of Brahm? They are—Avidya-Paad, Suvidya-Paad, Anand-Paad, and Turiya-Paad. The Turiya-Paad includes the higher echelons of the transcendental state of existence of Consciousness.

What is the difference between these four Paads, or how can one distinguish between them, or what do they signify?

Well, Avidya-Paad is the first Paad, Vidya-Paad is the second, Anand-Paad is the third, and Turiya-Paad is the fourth.

Mool Avidya (or primary lack of knowledge; primary ignorance) is present only in the first Paad (i.e. the Avidya-Paad), and none of the other three Paads have any trace of it. Some Fraction of Vidya (knowledge), Anand (bliss) and Turiya (transcendental state) exist in all the four Paads to a certain given extent. [That is, all the four Paads (or aspects or facets) of creation or existence have certain degree of Vidya (knowledge or wisdom or awareness), Anand (bliss or happiness or joys), and Turiya state (of total

dispassion and detachment that comes when one is fully satisfied with certain thing and wants no more of it, or when one is even fed-up of too much of anything) in them. The degree of their presence may vary from one aspect to another, but it cannot be said that any one aspect is completely devoid of any one of them. Even the first aspect of total Avidya or ignorance has them—viz. the realisation that there is ignorance is a Vidya or knowledge in itself; it is said that ‘ignorance is bliss’ because an ignorant person is not aware of the hidden dangers or problems, and so remains happy—that is Anand is present; and ignorance of the pleasures, charms and comforts of something eliminates the rising of desires for acquiring it, which indirectly means being disinterested in it or remaining dispassionate towards it—which is equivalent to the Turiya state. If this is the condition of the state of Avidya or utter stupidity or being inane, then surely the other three states which are more evolved would surely have Vidya or knowledge, Anand or bliss and Turiya or contentedness leading to detachment in them in varying degrees.]

If this is the case then what is the difference between the three aspects of Vidya, Anand and Turiya? Well, these three Paads are given these names because they have the relevant virtues as a dominant factor or main virtue. [That is, the Vidya Paad has Vidya or knowledge as the dominant factor or virtue; Anand Paad has bliss and happiness as the dominant factor or virtue; and Turiya Paad has the transcendental state of existence wherein the creature is totally detached from this material world as the dominant factor or virtue.]

In actuality, there is no difference between them. [This is because Brahm who pervades universally in this creation is a uniform entity that is always immutable, indivisible, steady, constant and unchanging.]

Out of these four, it is only the lowest one that is tainted by Avidya, for the rest of them are higher in stature and are marked by purity of knowledge, wisdom and erudition that are eternal, constant and truthful. These three Paads of Brahm are an embodiment of rare and transcendental level of bliss, are immutable and indivisible, and are illuminated as a fount of radiance and splendour of magnificent proportions.

These three exalted Paads of Brahm (i.e. the Vidya Paad, the Anand Paad and the Turiya Paad) are very enigmatic, esoteric, indescribable, indefinable, immutable and indivisible besides being highly eclectic and blissful.

Out of these three, the central Paad known as the Anand Paad has the eternal Vaikunth (the divine abode of Lord Vishnu) in its center. This Vaikunth is like a magnificent current of immense glory, divinity, radiance and splendour.

There is a central figure or an image in this Vaikunth which is brilliantly self-illuminated and an embodiment of Anand (bliss and happiness, beatitude and felicity). The brilliant illumination emanating from this central figure or image radiates out from it in all directions like waves of brilliant light and splendour, and it illuminates the Vaikunth. [Since this Upanishad is dedicated to Lord Vishnu, this central figure or central Authority residing in Vaikunth is Vishnu himself. In fact, Vaikunth is the divine abode of Vishnu, and is also known as heaven. Lord Vishnu is radiant like the sun, and his radiance illuminates the Vaikunth much like the sky surrounding the sun is illuminated by the latter. In the context of Vedanta, this central figure would be the pure conscious Atma which is an image of Brahm and which resides in the subtle heart of all living beings. This Atma is the central Authority that exhibits the glorious virtues described

here in relation to Vishnu who lives in Vaikunth. The Vaikunth then would be the heart of the creature as well as his subtle body consisting of the mind and the intellect.]

Just like one sees numerous stars in the sky indicating the presence of uncountable universes, there are a number of divine abodes and forms that the brilliantly illuminated and radiant Lord Vishnu has taken. But the chief central Authority that lives in them and which is the source of all glories and illumination is known as Maha Vishnu. [There are countless stars in the sky, and each star is illuminated. There is a world around each of them, much like our own sun, which is also a star in the cosmic plane, having its own solar system. But the common denominator in all the stars is the ‘light and energy’ that emanates from them to illuminate and energise their worlds. Similarly, Maha Vishnu is the central Authority around which the entire creation revolves. According to Vedanta, this central Authority is Brahm, but since this Upanishad is dedicated to Lord Vishnu the former is treated as being synonymous with the latter.]

The divine and supreme abode of Lord Vishnu is visualised as being present in the center of the celestial ocean called Kshir Sagar (or the eternal celestial ocean of milk), and it resembles a pitcher of Amrit (ambrosia).

Just like the glorious patron deity of the majestic Sudarshan Chakra (a disc-like weapon of Lord Vishnu and an instrument of worship) resides in the center (or core) of it, and just like the Sun lives in the center of the solar system, the Adi-Narayan (i.e. Lord Maha Vishnu, the primordial Lord of creation, the Primal Purush from whom the creation, including its creator Brahm, is said to be born) appears to reside in the center of the Kshir Sagar too<sup>2</sup> (5).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The four Paads of Brahm are the four limbs, legs, aspects, facets or pedestals of Brahm—The four ‘Paads’ of Brahm are the four legs upon which Brahm stands. These four Paads symbolically establish the greatness and supremacy of Brahm as the all-powerful and all-controlling Authority in this creation. Since Brahm is the supreme Divinity that has revealed itself in the form of this creation, since each and every unit of creation is a manifestation of Brahm and without Brahm nothing exists, nothing has any relevance and truth (refer Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph 1), it follows that the entire creation represents Brahm’s four cosmic forms or aspects or facets—which are called the four legs or Paads of Brahm. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the supreme Brahm has manifested himself and is made known to this world by the means of these four mediums. These four Paads of Brahm have been explained in (i) Sam Veda’s Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 3, section 18, verse nos. 2-6, Canto 4, Section 5, verse no. 2, Canto 4, Section 6, verse no. 3, Canto 4, Section 7, verse no. 3, and Canto 4, Section 8, verse no. 3. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 1. (iii) Atharva Veda’s Mandukya Upanishad, verse nos. 3-7; Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 4-7.

<sup>2</sup>If this is extended further it would imply that the supreme Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, lives in the core of this creation, and it is around Brahm that this creation is woven. The ‘Sudarshan Chakra’ is described in detail in Canto 7, paragraph 3-14 of this Upanishad. The different Vaikunths that are being referred to here as a metaphor for various universes have been described in Canto 6, paragraphs 15-20, and Canto 7, paragraph 16-18 of this Upanishad. These Vaikunths are ordinary Vaikunth, Brahm Vidya Vaikunth, Tulsi Vaikunth, Bodhanand Maye Vaikunth, and Tripadvibhut Vaikunth.]

“Canto 4, paragraph no. 3 = The various forms in which Brahm is said to exist, the different Paads or aspects of Brahm are simply conceptualisations just to visualise and help understand about something that is primarily beyond the scope of the mind and the intellect to understand and analyse. All attempts to describe Brahm with attributes are just efforts to somehow understand something as divine, esoteric, enigmatic and mysterious as Brahm which actually has no attributes. Therefore, Brahm showing duality is non-existent; it is Brahm that is non-dual that actually exists.

So, understand things in the correct perspective and context.

It is said that Brahm has four Paads. Out of them, one Paad (aspect or limb or branch) of Brahm is known as Avidya (lack of true knowledge), and the other three Paads are like Amrit. [Amrit is the ambrosia of eternity. Hence, the other three major aspects of Brahm are eternal and free from ignorance and its accompanying delusions. Refer Canto 1, paragraph nos. 4-6 which describes the four Paads of Brahm. Refer also to Canto 2, paragraph nos. 1-7, 12, and Canto 3, paragraph nos. 1-6, 16 which emphasise the non-dual nature of Brahm.]

The divine form of Brahm as having four Paads on the one hand, and as being a non-dual Advaita entity on the other hand as narrated in this Upanishad is in accordance with the tenets and axiomatic maxims of other Upanishads. They do not clash with each other. [That is, if you analyse the teachings of the previous Cantos, the main point which is stressed is that notwithstanding what Brahm looks like due to the influence of Maya and Avidya, its primary form is the same. Or, that it is the same Brahm which assumes both the Saguna form and the Nirguna form. Since ‘truth’ is always the same in whatever form or shape it exists, it follows that Brahm which refers to the ‘cosmic and universal truth’ will always be the same, or be non-dual. If there is any confusion of duality in Brahm it is out of Maya (delusions) and Avidya (ignorance). Refer Canto 1, paragraph 6; Canto 2, paragraphs 1-8, 12; Canto 3, paragraphs 1-6, 16.] (3).

“Canto 4, paragraph no. 6 = All the Bhuts (living creation) combined represent only one Paad (limb, aspect, version, form and manifestation) of the supreme Brahm.

The other remaining three Paads of Brahm are like Amrit; they are equivalent to the ambrosia of truthfulness, eternity and imperishability, the elixir of bliss, beatitude and felicity. [That is, the Tripada Brahm, the transcendental aspect of Brahm that is much more subtle, sublime and exalted than the one represented by the Bhuts with their limiting effects and comparative grossness, is so divine and holy, so rejuvenating and invigorating spiritually that it is equivalent to Amrit, the ambrosia that is nectar-like and gives eternal peace and bliss to the spiritual aspirant who accesses it. The ‘Bhuts’ refer to the five primary elements of creation from which the creation, both the visible as well as the invisible, has come into being. The creation referred to as Bhut is mortal and transient, and therefore it is not true, it is not eternal, and it is not constant. Hence it is also not the truthful form of Brahm as the latter is eternal, truthful and constant. The world or creation covered under the category of ‘Bhut’ and which therefore represents the fourth Paad of Brahm is the one that is described in Canto 3, paragraph nos. 7-16. This is obviously because all the entities mentioned there are perishable and come to an end—Brahma, Maha Vishnu, Adi-Viraat and Adi-Narayan all come to an end. The Mool Avidya and Avyakta also come to an end. What remains at the end of the sequence is ‘Brahm’, the ‘Tattva’.]

The Brahm represented by the three divine Paads, known as the Tripada Brahm, is established in the 'Param Vyom', the supreme Heaven. [(i) The word 'Vyom' means the sky, and so it refers to the subtle sky where the supreme Brahm resides. (ii) The three Paads referred to are the 'Satya' or truthful aspect of Brahm. This aspect of Brahm is regarded as also being equivalent to Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity and bliss of the highest degree. (Refer paragraph no. 3 of the present Canto no. 4.) It is also like the fount of 'light'. (Refer paragraph nos. 4-5 of the present Canto no. 4.) It is a combination of Vidya or true knowledge, Anand or bliss and happiness, and Turiya or the transcendental state of consciousness. (Refer paragraph no. 5 of Canto 1.)]

The Supreme Being known as Brahm who is recognised as having the three divine Paads (referring to the qualities of Vidya, Anand and Turiya; the virtues of Satya, Amrit and Jyoti) is established high above and shines from there to illuminate the rest of the world (much like the celestial Sun that shines in the heaven to illuminate the entire solar system). The remaining one Paad of Brahm (i.e. the one aspect of Brahm that is represented by the Bhuts) has revealed itself as the lower world where all the creatures live.

When this lower world having two dimensions, the movable and the immovable, came into being, the Supreme Being secretly entered it as the all-pervading consciousness. [That is, once the lower world moulded from the Bhuts, or primary elements such as sky, air, fire, water and earth, came into being, the primary source of life known as 'Brahm' entered into it as the vital spark of life called 'consciousness'. It was like giving the gross organ of sight, the eye, the ability to see. Just like the eye without its ability to see is as good as dead, the world consisting of Bhuts without this vital factor of 'consciousness' is as good as dead. Anything 'dead' is worthless and decay-able. That is why when this consciousness leaves the gross body of the creature, the body begins to decay rapidly at the time of death. Since this world is subject to change, decay, death and final end, it cannot be a true form of Brahm which is an eternal entity that remains unchanging and is imperishable. Hence, this mortal world consisting of perishable gross bodies and its inherent transient nature is not the real thing, and to treat it as the truthful Brahm is indeed fallacious and highly erroneous. But then, why is this world usually regarded as 'true'? Well, the answer is it is due to the fact that this aspect of creation has been created by the fourth Paad of Brahm in which the primary ingredients are Avidya and Maya. What more can one expect from something having its genesis in ignorance and delusions? Refer Canto 1, paragraph 5; Canto 3, paragraph 1-7; Canto 4, paragraph 3.]

Indeed, the three Paads characterised by the auspicious and grand virtues of Vidya, Anand and Turiya are eternal, truthful and imperishable, while the remainder fourth Paad consisting of Avidya is mortal, cause of miseries and is perishable (6).

"Canto 8, paragraph no. 4 = 'Thousands of Brahmaands (universes or worlds) are said to exist in only one Paad of Brahm known as the Avidya Paad. [Refer Canto 6, paragraph nos. 2-14. The Avidya Paad is the lowest aspect or limb of Brahm and it is mentioned along with the other three Paads in Canto 1, paragraph no. 5; Canto 4, paragraph no. 3, 6.]

Even as the presence of countless worlds do not affect the basic characteristic of the fourth Paad of Brahm as being dominated by Maya (delusions) and Avidya

(ignorance and lack of knowledge of the Truth), the presence of countless Lokas (worlds), numerous Vaikunths (heavens) and as many countless Vibhuti (glorious virtues and magnificent aspects of this creation) in the 'Anda' (the cosmic egg; the greater Universe) do not affect its basic nature and virtue (which is that it harbours the magical spark of life called 'consciousness' that cannot be defined or replicated).

All the Brahmaands have countless Lokas and Vaikunths, and all of them are accepted by the scriptures. [And this is why this present Upanishad has enumerated many Vaikunths and other Lokas in earlier Cantos while it narrates the journey of the spiritual aspirant to the supreme Vaikunth where he would finally find his Param Moksha.]

When this is the state of affairs of only one Paad of Brahm known as Avidya Paad, then one can well imagine the situation of other Paads as well—they would also be the same. [The other three Paads are known as Vidya Paad or Gyan Paad, Anand Paad and Turiya Paad—refer Canto 1, paragraph no. 5; Canto 4, paragraph no. 3, 6.]

The emergence of an extreme sense of vibrant Anand (surging and un-inhibited spiritual bliss, ecstasy, beatitude and felicity) is the hallmark of Moksha (spiritual liberation and deliverance; salvation and emancipation). [When one reaches one's avowed destination after an arduous journey and great efforts, overcoming numerous temptations, hurdles and handicaps en-route, it is natural and obvious that unbound exhilaration and profound ecstasy would overwhelm him when success is finally achieved. So, the spontaneous sprouting of extreme Anand is a sign of the spiritual aspirant having attained Moksha.]

Since extreme Anand is obtained in all the three Paads of Brahm, they are all equivalent to the 'Param Moksha Dhaam'—i.e. to the supreme destination of the soul where it finds freedom from the horrors and torments of this world.

All the three Paads are equivalent in nature to the Kaivalya state of existence. [The word Kaivalya refers to non-dual existence because literally it means 'one of its kind; the only one'. Since only the Absolute Truth can be 'Kaivalya', it follows that these three states of Brahm are the 'truthful' form of Divinity. Again, since Brahm is synonymous with 'consciousness', it also follows that Anand is the only true state of existence or the natural state of consciousness. Any other state that is not Anand is therefore not the truthful and natural state of existence of consciousness. Since 'consciousness' is the 'true self' of the spiritual aspirant, when the latter finds Anand he is deemed to have found out who or what his 'real and truthful self' is, and then he discovers the universal Atma or soul which is his 'true self'. This Atma is eternal, imperishable, blissful, enlightened and always liberated. It is a sublime and subtle entity, and not the gross body with which the aspirant had identified himself all along till the time he had made this discovery. It is the body that suffers, that does deeds, gets entangled in the world because it relates to its gross aspects and sense objects, and not the Atma which is distinct from the gross body and separate from it. When the spiritual aspirant thus becomes 'self-realised', he is filled with Anand. This 'self-realisation' is a metaphoric way of saying that the aspirant has reached the 'Vidya Paad or Gyan Paad' of Brahm. Since he is filled with ecstasy and feels exhilarated, he has also reached the 'Anand Paad'. When he has become firmly established in these two Paads and there is no scope of his ever reverting back to the first Paad of Avidya, it is said that he has reached the Turiya Paad of transcendental existence. Spiritually speaking, he has obtained 'Moksha', or he has obtained liberation and deliverance from the troubles that are caused

to him due to horrible delusions and ignorance that had swirled around him while he was still in the world and confused about the Truth—i.e. till he was living in the ‘Avidya Paad’ of Brahm.]

In this eclectic higher state of existence of consciousness, everything becomes full of Anand, i.e. the aspirant is so detached from the world in higher states of spiritual realisation that he is oblivious of anything that may be the cause of any miseries or troubles for him. As a result, he is always submerged in an endless ocean of Anand; he is unconcerned with anything else.

Hence, he always experiences the vast expanse of the eternal and truthful Brahm’s equally eternal and truthful Anand, with its countless shades of ecstasy and bliss that this realisation brings in its wake, spread all around him. In other words, he observes Anant Vaikunths (i.e. Vaikunths that have no end, and are therefore eternal) and Anant oceans of Param Anand (i.e. endless oceans of supreme bliss) which are actually metaphoric ways of depicting the same thing that is stated above (4).”

The four Paads of Brahm have been elaborately described in Atharva Veda’s *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse nos. 5-8. These verses describe how the four Paads of Brahm, the supreme transcendental divine Being, correspond to the four subtle sounds of the ethereal word OM. These sounds correspond to the four letters A, O, U and M that together constitute OM. Since the Atma, the pure conscious ‘self’ of the Jiva, the living being, is a microcosmic form of the Supreme Being, and since everything in creation is a manifestation of Brahm and nothing else, this Upanishad then goes on to explain how the four states of existence in this creation—known as the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or the dreaming state, the Sushupta or the deep sleep state, and the Turiya or the post-Sushupta or the transcendental state—correspond to these four letters of OM as well as to the four Paads of Brahm.

To understand Brahm in a holistic way, all of them have to be understood in a comprehensive and integrated manner, and not in a fractured manner. It is important to note here that OM is a monosyllabic sound, like a continuous rumble of distant thunder or the trundling sound of a running train, or the continuous notes played on the harmonium. But even as a musician knows the finer notes and tones being played on the harmonium although the general sound produced by the instrument appear to be one continuous stream of music, those sages and seers of the past who were highly realised and expert in meditation and contemplation could discern the finer sound components of the otherwise uniform sound of the ethereal word OM that has its genesis in the vibrations produced in the cosmic ether signaling the presence of energy and dynamism in a most subtle and sublime form in the background of creation. This they named Pranav or the cosmic vibration of life that generated the energy that drives the dynamo of life in this creation. This was also called the cosmic Consciousness because it was able to inject vibrancy, dynamism and life into the otherwise inane and lifeless primary ingredients of creation.

The four components of OM were envisioned as the four phonetic sounds of the Sanskrit language corresponding to the alphabets A, O, U and M of the English language. Since everything in this creation is a revelation of one Brahm, it follows that the entire creation represents these four components of OM, and that the entire creation also represents the four Paads of Brahm.

Further, the Consciousness is regarded as having four primary states of existence—viz. the Jagrat or waking, Swapna or dreaming, Sushupta or deep sleep, and Turiya or transcendental state beyond the Sushupta. Therefore, these four letter-components of OM as well as the four Paads of Brahm are represented by these four states of existence of Consciousness.

These are the basic points that are being elucidated and expounded upon in the following verses of this Canto.

Now, let us quote this great Upanishad—

“Verse no. 5 = The cosmic, divine, sublime and ethereal monosyllabic word OM is known as ‘Akshar’ as it is imperishable and immortal. [The Sanskrit word ‘Akshar’ has two meanings—one is a ‘letter’ and the other is something that ‘does not decay, is imperishable and eternal’. OM is likened to a ‘letter’ because it is a monosyllabic sound. For the purpose of study and analysis of its magnificent divine aspects it is hypothetically split into three (A, U, M), four (A, O, U, M) and even six (A, O, U, M, Chandra Bindu and Ardha Maatra) components. It ought to be remembered that OM is not an ordinary monosyllable, but it is the Beej Mantra for the supreme transcendental Authority of creation and the cosmic Consciousness known as ‘Brahm’ that is at the root of everything that exists. This ‘cosmic Consciousness’ is known as Parmatma, the supreme Atma, the Brahm, the Supreme Being, at the macrocosmic level of creation, and as the Atma, the individual soul of the creature known as the Jiva, the living being, at the microcosmic level of creation.]

The entire visible world is but a manifestation/revelation of OM. In other words, the world is a visible form of the various aspects of OM (and since OM is the Beej Mantra for Brahm, this world is a visible manifestation of the latter). The visible physical world establishes and makes evident or visible the magnificent and stupendous glory of that invisible supreme Authority of creation known as the sublime Consciousness or the divine Brahm that is represented by the ethereal sound of OM.

Whatever existed, whatever exists and whatever shall ever exist in the future, as well as any other dimension or aspect of time and space which is beyond these three, are also nothing else but a manifestation or an extension of OM as a representative of Brahm. It is all-inclusive and comprehensive in nature.

Surely, everything is Brahm and a manifestation of Brahm, and nothing else. Therefore, it is also OM in a visible and manifested form. [Since everything is a manifestation of Brahm, and OM is a word used to indicate Brahm as it is a Beej Mantra of Brahm, it follows that the entire creation is a symbol of OM in its physical form. This eclectic world view of creation creates a high level of equanimity of thought, and establishes uniformity and universality in this creation. It removes all causes or basis of dichotomies, schisms, frictions, ill-will and jealousy, thereby instilling harmony and calmness in the entire creation just like the case of the word OM which is treated as a monosyllabic sound though it has four sound components that are perfectly integrated in its sound structure.

Hence, though we assign different names and categories to different units of creation for the purpose of dealing with them in day-to-day life, it will be wise and enlightened to regard them as an integral and an inseparable part of one wholesome cosmic entity for all practical purposes.

As has been said above, OM is the Beej Mantra of Brahm. Brahm is known and recognized by this word OM. They are synonymous with each other. If this world is a visible manifestation of Brahm and an extension of its glory, it follows that the world is actually a manifestation and an extension of OM and its glory. Again, since Brahm is pure Consciousness, it follows that what is basic to this world is 'consciousness' and nothing else. In other words, if 'Brahm' and 'consciousness' are removed from this world, nothing worthy remains in it. Hence, Brahm or cosmic Consciousness is the 'Tattwa' of creation; it is the essential and basis unit of creation around which the rest of the edifice of creation is moulded.

OM has four basic sounds—viz. the sound of the letter 'A' (as in *son*) which represents the first aspect of Brahm symbolizing the initiation of creation, 'Oo or U' (like the letter 'O' in the word *go*) stands for the second aspect of Brahm and corresponds to the development, expansion and growth of the world, 'M' (as in *mum*) stands for the third aspect of Brahm and corresponds to the conclusion of the world, and finally the prolonged nasal sound of 'M' that is made after OM has been pronounced completely and the mouth closed stands for the fourth aspect of Brahm, and it corresponds to the time between the last creation and the beginning of a new phase. Hence, it naturally follows that the entire creation is nothing but a revelation of the four subtle and most esoteric aspects of the supreme Consciousness known as Brahm that is envisioned in the form of a sound equivalent to that made by saying the monosyllabic word 'OM'. This is why OM is regarded as the Beej Mantra for Brahm just like we have the monosyllabic word 'Raam/Raan(g)' as the Beej Mantra for Lord Ram because the Lord's name 'Ram' is based on a single Sanskrit letter 'Ra' as in the word *run*.

The four letters of OM, i.e. A, O, U and M, exist only in a hypothetical plane and are employed for the express purpose of analysis and study. It must be remembered that OM is a monosyllabic sound that is one, continuous, and unbroken sound. These letters have been imagined just for the purpose of understand OM. This instance is cited to explain how the entire creation and the four states of existence of consciousness are indistinguishable from one another when we consider the entire creation in a holistic and wholesome manner. Similarly, this also explains how Brahm is one single indivisible and immutable whole though it has been said to have four Paads in the present Upanishad as well as in other Upanishads.]

The world is a visible and gross manifestation of what is essentially invisible, sublime, subtle and supreme entity—i.e. the visible gross physical world is a manifestation of Brahm who is invisible, subtle, sublime and supreme. The visible and verifiable world proves that there is something beyond the spectrum of visibility that is real and truthful, and of which it is an image. That essential element which forms the 'soul' and the 'basic identity' of the world is called its 'Atma'. Since it is Brahm that is at the core of all aspects of creation, it follows that Brahm is also the 'Atma or soul' or 'essence and fundamental aspect' of creation, or the 'Tattwa' of creation—both at the macrocosmic level of creation, in which case it is called the 'Paramatma' (the supreme and transcendental Atma), as well as at the microcosmic level of creation, in which case it is simply called the Atma of the individual creature.

This Atma or Parmatma has four Paads or limbs or aspects corresponding to the four Paads of Brahm represented by the four sounds of OM. Again, since the Atma is

nothing but pure consciousness, it follows that the four Paads of the Atma or Brahm represent the four states of existence of the ‘consciousness’<sup>1</sup>.

[Although the supreme Brahm is indivisible, immutable and eternal, and it cannot be fractioned or partitioned, we hypothetically divide its entire being into four stages or states of existence just in order to understand or grasp its full form or nature like the monosyllabic sound OM that has been split into four components just for the purpose of study and analysis. That is, this division is done to facilitate study and comprehension of an entity that is usually beyond the reach of the mind and the senses.

The universal sound OM is split into four components A, O, U and M. These are regarded as being representatives of the four aspects of creation—viz. the origin, the development, the expansion and growth, and the conclusion respectively. They also respectively represent the four states of existence of consciousness—viz. the Jagrat or waking state, Swapna or dreaming state, Sushupta or deep sleep state, and Turiya or post-Sushupta state. This latter concept is explained below.]

The supreme transcendental Atma or the cosmic Consciousness, also known as ‘Brahm’ and represented by the word OM, has so-called four states of existence—viz. (a) The waking state of consciousness called ‘Jagrat’ (or Vishwa), (b) the dream state of consciousness called ‘Swapna’ (or Taijasa), (c) the deep sleep state of consciousness called ‘Pragna’, and (d) the ‘Turiya’ state of consciousness which is synonymous with the supreme blissful state of consciousness called ‘pure Brahm’, and which is beyond the earlier three states of existence of consciousness.

To begin with, the 1st state of consciousness, called the ‘First Paad’ or the first leg of the conscious Atma, is being described here in this verse as follows—

During the waking state of consciousness, the entire manifest gross world is the Atma’s play-ground. The consciousness is spread in all the directions of the gross world because during this waking state of its existence it is aware of the entire length and breath of this world and all its happenings. Since this world is gross, the Atma during this waking state also becomes gross in nature because of its association with this gross world. The Atma assumes the basic gross character of this world as it is invariably influenced by the gross nature of its surrounding habitat with which it has to keep constant contact. During the Jagrat state, the Atma of the creature interacts with the physical gross world in which the creature lives. The Atma keeps company with the material sense objects of this world through the sense organs of the body of the creature. This contact is bound to have its influence upon the Atma, and since the world is gross and artificial, since it is dominated by the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) in varying proportions, as well as by Maya (delusions) along with its own array of problems, it follows that this influence is not positive at all, it is not conducive to the Atma’s welfare and peace. Such is the influence of the Jagrat state that the Atma becomes restless and agitated; it forgets that its primary nature is one of being eternally peaceful and rested. In brief, the Atma acquires some degree of grossness and a tainted character so typical of this world.

From another angle this concept can be understood as follows—the conscious Atma, which essentially has no form and attributes, manifests its self in the form of the visible world, and resides in all the forms that this world takes. This is because Atma and Brahm are synonymous, and it is Brahm that is revealed in the form of the world. That is, all the living creatures of the world have the same Atma or pure consciousness in them.

In other words, the Atma assumes the gross body of all the living beings, and it is with these bodies that the Atma of the individual interacts with the world of material sense objects. The Atma becomes aware of the presence of the various sense objects of the world by the medium of the sense organs of the gross body. These organs help the Atma to perceive the world and respond to it. That is why they are called organs of perception and organs of action of the Atma. The Atma is linked to the world through the sense organs that collectively make up the gross body of the creature.

Hence, during the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness, the Atma has spread its tentacles in the external material world and its sense objects which are primarily gross in nature. It lives in this world just like it lives inside the body of the individual creature. Therefore, the gross world becomes its de-facto body while the Atma exists in the Jagrat (waking) state. It begins to identify its self with the gross body (and forgets that it is most sublime and subtle in nature, and is the invisible consciousness that has no form). During the Jagrat state, the Atma is not only aware of the gross world but relates to it very intimately.

Hence, it is metaphorically said that the seven worlds<sup>2</sup> are the Atma's gross body during the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness—it physically lives in them, it mentally and emotionally relates to them, it is involved in them, and it is attached to them. During the Jagrat state, the Atma thinks that the external world is all that there is to it in existence, that the truth about which the scriptures speak is the external physical world with which it physically interacts during this state. But the deluded Atma forgets that the scriptures also speak that this world is an imagination of the mind because it has its origin in the mental wish of the supreme Creator to create something, that therefore it is artificial, deceptive, deluding and entrapping by its inherent nature. It becomes difficult for the Atma to realise the truth of this conclusion of the scriptures as it physically interacts with the gross world and feels its present in tangible terms. Therefore, the Atma takes to this world like fish to water, not realizing that this plunge would land it in a grave bog of slush and quicksand. Therefore, the otherwise immaculate and untainted Atma, which is regarded as the pure consciousness personified, becomes tainted and corrupted by all the characteristic negativities, unholy influences and demeaning qualities typical of this world.

[The seven worlds represent all forms of the living creation, and all forms of creatures that live in them. Hence, they symbolically refer to all forms of life where the Atma or the pure consciousness is aware of the existence of the external gross world—even in a rudimentary form.]

The Atma uses its nineteen symbolic 'mouths'<sup>3</sup> to eagerly devour or passionately taste and imbibe the sweetness of the external world and the numerous comforts and pleasures it has to offer.

[Even as a man uses his mouth to partake delicious eatables, this Atma uses its so-called mouths to 'taste or sample' the extraordinary charms and juicy succulence of the external world, its material comforts and the pleasures of the sense objects. And just like the man gets addicted to some tasty eatable, the Atma gets hooked to the world and its charms. It then goes out to hammer and tong to grasp the world and 'devour it' in a symbolic manner by remaining engrossed in it and thinking of nothing else but this world like a hungry man let loose on a dining table. The Atma gets hooked to the world and its material sense objects. Rather, the world attaches itself to the Atma like the leech which

sucks the blood of wisdom, erudition, rationality, enlightenment and truthfulness out of the Atma, making the latter lose its pristine pure, uncorrupted and blissful nature. The Atma acts like a greedy bee that hops from flower to flower sucking a bit of nectar from this and a bit from that. It also behaves like a greedy bird that hops from one fruit to another on a tree, nibbling a bit of all of them till the end of the day, resulting in destroying all the fruits, littering the ground under the tree, but still remaining unsatisfied, and feeling tired at the end of the day.]

That supreme and sovereign entity which enjoys this gross world and is aware of its existence is called 'Vaishwanar'<sup>4</sup>. This is the supreme Brahm's first Paad or aspect. It is also the first form or state of existence of the Atma. (5).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The *four Paads of Brahm* is a subject of discussion, exposition and elucidation in a number of Upanishads. These four Paads of Brahm have been explained in (i) Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 3, section 18, verse nos. 2-6, Canto 4, Section 5, verse no. 2, Canto 4, Section 6, verse no. 3, Canto 4, Section 7, verse no. 3, and Canto 4, Section 8, verse no. 3. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 1. (iii) Atharva Veda's Mandukya Upanishad, verse nos. 3-7; Nrisingh Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 4-7; Tripadvibhuta Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph 5; Canto 4, paragraph nos. 2-3, 6; Canto 8, paragraph no. 4; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 5-8; Par Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 5; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8, verse nos. 9-19.

<sup>2</sup>The *seven subtle forms of the world* are represented by the seven words pronounced by Brahma, the creator, at the time of creation. They are the following—Bhu (भूः), Bhuvaha (भुवः), Swaha (स्वः), Maha (महः), Janaha (जनः), Tapaha (तपः), Satyamaha (सत्यमः).

According to Brahmaand Puran (BP) and Vaaman Puran (VP) there are the following lokas— 'Bhu' (भूः) or earth [BP-3,4,2-18]; 'Bhuvaha' (भुवः) or the space between the earth and the heaven [BP-3,4,2-19]; 'Swaha' (स्वः) or the heavens known as Brahma's abode; the space beyond the earth's atmosphere; cosmic wind represented by the solar wind blows here [BP-3,4,2-20]; 'Maha' (महः) or the world created by Brahma pronouncing the divine word Maha meaning the great heaven or the outer space; it is believed that great sages and seers stay here; it is 1000 Yojans or appx. 8000 miles away from the Swaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-21; VP-52,21-22]; 'Janaha' (जनः), so called because it was to be inhabited by the humans and the cows [BP-3,4,2-22; VP-52, 22]; 'Tapaha' (तपः) or the Loka where great amount of austerity and penances are done; it is said to be 60 million Yojans or appx. 60 x 8 million miles away from the Janaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-24; VP-52, 23]; and 'Satyam' (सत्यम्) or the truthful heaven where the supreme Lord has his abode; it is 300 million Yojans or appx. 300 x 8 million miles beyond the Tapaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-25; VP-52, 24].

According to some legends, the distances of various mythological Lokas from the earth or Bhu Loka is as follows—the Bhuvha Loka is situated at a distance of 25 Lakh Yojans from earth, the Swaha Loka is situated at a distance of 50 Lakh Yojans from earth, the Maharloka is situated at a distance of 1 Crore Yojans from earth, the Jana Loka is situated at a distance of 2 Crore Yojans from earth, the Tapa Loka is situated at a distance of 4 Crore Yojans from earth, and the Satya Loka is situated at a distance of 8 Crore Yojans from earth.

1 Yojan = a distance of 4, 8 and 16 miles according to different calculations. It is usually taken to be equivalent to 8 miles.

1 Lakh = one hundred thousand (1,00,000). 1 Crore = ten Lakhs (10 x 1,00,000).

The seven Bhuvans or Lokas according to the Vedantic view are the following:-- the seven organs of perception situated in the region of the head —viz. the two eyes + two

ears + two nostrils + one tongue/mouth = seven. Refer *Mundak Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 2, section 1, verse no. 8.

The *Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 4, verse no. 4 also refers to these seven Lokas as being a part of the first Paad or leg or limb or aspect or facet of the cosmic Brahm.

<sup>3</sup>The *nineteen symbolic mouths* of the Atma are the different organs, both gross and the subtle through which it interacts with the external world and recognizes it at all. These are as follows—(a) the five organs of perception such as eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin; (b) the five organs of action such as the hand, leg, mouth, anus/excretory and genitals; (c) the five Prans or the vital winds such as the main Pran which controls the very life of the creature and all other functions including the other Prans or vital winds, the Apaana which controls digestion and excretion, the Samaana which helps in distribution of nourishment and blood equally throughout the body, the Vyaana which control the activities of other winds and helps in maintaining pressure and balance in the body, and the Udaana which controls the power to rise and move around; and (d) the four ‘Antahakarans’ are the four sheaths that surround the Atma and form its subtle forms; these are the food sheath, the vital air sheath, the mental sheath and the intellectual sheath. [According to the Shaarirak Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 4, the four aspects of the ‘Antahakaran’ (the inner-self consisting of the subtle body; the conscience; the sub-conscious) consists of the following four units—viz. the Mana (mind), the Buddhi (intellect), the Chitta (the faculty of reasoning, thought, understanding, attention, the sub-conscious etc.), and Ahankar (ego, pride, haughtiness and the accompanying arrogance and hypocrisy; lack of humility, simplicity and piety).]

These are called the so-called ‘mouths’ of the soul because it is through them that the soul partakes of this world. The entity whose gross body enjoys and experiences this world is called the ‘Viraat’ at the macrocosmic level and ‘Vishwa’ at the microcosmic level. This is the 1st step to understand the supreme Soul called ‘Parmeshwar’ or the supreme Lord known as Brahm.

<sup>4</sup>*Vaishwanar Atma*—References: (a) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Brahma-panishad, verse no. 21; Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse no. 15. (b) Atharva Veda’s Mandukya Upanishad, verse no. 3.

The term *Vaishwanar* in simple words means the form of Brahm that is as large and as vast as the universe, enclosing it from all sides like a moat of a fort, and even existing beyond it. This all-inclusive, all-pervading and all-encompassing macrocosmic form of Brahm is the ‘Vishwa’ or the world because this world is a manifestation of Brahm, it is Brahm revealed in its myriad and diverse forms, and it is the glory of Brahm on display. In fact, if one wishes to witness Brahm, he must observe Brahm at play in this world itself. The physical aspect of Brahm in the form of the visible world is equivalent to the Jagrat state of consciousness because it is in this state that the creature sees the world. Here the word ‘creature’ refers to his Atma or soul which is pure consciousness and his true self. This Atma is called Vaishwanar because, like Brahm, it is manifested as all forms of life in this world. [Refer Mandukya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, verse no. 3.]

The Atma is called a Vaishwanar because the man becomes aware of the world when he sees it with his own eyes. This is why it is called the ‘waking’ state of consciousness. The presence of the consciousness known as the Vaishwanar in the eye is a metaphor for this waking state because when a man ‘sees’ anything only when he is awake and not while he sleeps.

The word ‘Vaishwanar’ has many connotations as follows—(i) The fire used in sacrificial rituals. (ii) The microcosmic pure consciousness that resides inside the body of the creature and helps it to digest food. (iii) Vedanta says that it is the pure consciousness that is a fraction of the Supreme Consciousness, and it resides in the body of the creature

even as the Supreme Consciousness resides in the macrocosmic vast body of Nature or creation. It is representative of the supreme, transcendental entity that is the Lord and the primary cause and the governing authority of the whole creation. (iv) Since creatures have myriad forms, it has as many forms as the creatures themselves, incorporating all of them in it. Hence, it is also called 'Viraat Purush' (which means the vast, colossus, all incorporating, all-pervading, almighty form of the microcosmic Atma of the creature as well as the macrocosmic Atma of the creation; it is measureless, infinite and eternal). This is the subtle form of 'Vaishwanar'. (v) The gross manifestation of this 'Vaishwanar' is the 'Annamaya Kosh' or the food sheath which is one of the five sheaths enclosing the Atma of the creature. (vi) Its state of existence is defined as the 'waking state of consciousness'. (vii) The word also means—relating to or belonging to all men, omnipresent, known and worshipped everywhere, universal, general, common, complete, immutable, full in number, a collective noun for all the Gods, one who is all commanding and almighty.

In verse no. 1 it has been said the *Laxman* is equivalent to the Jagrat state of consciousness. Now let us examine the similarity between Laxman and this state. Laxman is an incarnation of the Seshnath, the legendary serpent who holds the world on its hood. Hence Laxman is the bearer of the world, and therefore called the Vaishwanar. By extension he also holds the seven worlds; their very existence depends upon them being supported by the Seshnath or Laxman—hence, these seven worlds are like part of his vast macrocosmic body.

He is always vigilant and alert, ever ready to serve Lord Ram and take care of his needs; he is well aware of the happenings in this world, and the Lord is made aware of them through Laxman—hence he represents awareness of the external world by the Atma, and therefore symbolizes the Jagrat state or the waking state of consciousness.

Laxman is well versed in all the spheres of knowledge which is said to have nineteen branches, hence he has nineteen mouths which imply that he has the ability to learn and teach others all these nineteen branches of knowledge. They are the following—the four Vedas such as Rik/Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva, the five sub-Vedas such as Aurveda (knowledge of herbal medicines), Dhanurveda (the science of warfare and archery), Gandharva-veda (the skills of music and dance), Artha-shastra (economics and public administration) and Darshan-shastra (philosophy), Purans and Itihasas (ancient mythological histories), Dharm-shastras (various scriptures), Nyaya (law; jurisprudence), Mimamsa (investigation, analysis and determination), , Vyakaran (grammar), Jyotish (astronomy and astrology based on mathematics), Chanda (poetry and prose), Kalpa (rituals associated with formal worship and fire sacrifices), Shiksha (education) and Nirukta (commentaries or exposition on the Vedas).

The word 'Laxman' means 'one who can see'—this is because this brother of Lord Ram can 'see' this world in its actual form, in its truthful shape, and is well-versed in all the knowledge pertaining to this creation that has taken a visible form. This means two things—one, that Laxman was well aware of the falsehood of this physical external world of sense objects, and was therefore never attracted to them. He rather preferred to serve Lord Ram with full devotion as he knew the truth of who he actually was—that Lord Ram was none else but the Supreme Being himself personified.

The second interpretation is that Laxman was the eye and ear of Lord Ram; it was Laxman who guarded the Lord from all enemies and predators while the Lord slept in his hut during his forest sojourn; it was Laxman who accompanied the Lord to the forest to act as his bodyguard and caretaker, always vigilant and careful in his duties as the Lord's watchman and lookout. It was Laxman who acted as the symbolic sense organ of perception of the Supreme Being manifested as Lord Ram during his journey through this material world of gross objects. Just like the case of the Atma that uses the sense organs

of the body to reconnoiter the world and interact with it, Ram used Laxman in all his dealings with the world. The Lord's dependence upon Laxman is highlighted on numerous occasions in the epic story of Ramayana, such as for example when Sita was stolen, it was Laxman who had encouraged Ram to make efforts to find her instead of getting depressed and dejected at this loss. Even a cursory reading of the epic would make it clear that if there was no Laxman accompanying Lord Ram, then perhaps the Lord would not have been able either to kill Ravana and retrieve Sita or even return safely back to his kingdom after the harrowing events during his forest exile.

The idea of Laxman being an equivalent of the Jagrat state of the Atma fits in well with all the events of the epic story if interpreted with metaphysical perspective. For instance, Laxman is described as getting angry quickly—this is in consonance with the the practical experience we all have in this world. When a man interacts with the world, he is bound to face certain instances when he loses his cool and gets angry, because everything cannot be according to one's wishes or expectations. Hence, the character of Laxman fits in well with the state of the Atma or the Jiva during the waking state of consciousness.

Again, in the forest when Lord Ram slept peacefully inside his hermitage, Laxman guarded the outside, and it is believed that he did not sleep a wink during the fourteen long years of exile. Similarly, the Atma remains ensconced comfortably inside the gross body of the Jiva (living being), while the sense organs are the ones that reconnoiter the world outside and keep an eye on the affairs of the physical world on behalf of the Jiva.

Being an incarnation of the Seshnath, the cosmic serpent on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines in the cosmic ocean known as Kshirsagar, Laxman symbolically devours the entire creation by the fierce fire spewing from his mouth at the time of dooms-day. Hence, he is called 'Sankarshan'. Perhaps this is the reason why Laxman had accompanied the Lord to the forest to ensure that the evil demons were eliminated from earth.]

“Verse no. 6 = The 2nd state of existence of the Atma, the pure consciousness, is called the ‘Swapna state’ of existence, or the dreaming state. The imaginary world that is visualized by the latent ‘Vasanas’ (passions, desires and yearnings) that are inherently present in the sub-conscious of the creature is called a ‘dream’. This is an imaginary world inspired by the Vasanas present in the bosom of the creature.

During this state, the man is virtually lying unconscious and completely inactive in the physical sense as his gross physical body is completely inactive and lying like a log of wood. He lies on the ground as if he had no life in him, and was like a dead man as far as his external activities pertaining to his gross body and its organs are concerned. But during this state of existence known as Swapna (dreaming), the mind remains very much active though the external gross body and its sense organs are completely inactive. During this state, the mind, accompanied by the sub-conscious, is as active as it was during the Jagrat (waking) state, the only difference being in the level of its activity. So, while in the Jagrat state its activity pertained to the gross world, during the Swapna state this activity is happening in a subtle level. A man dreams because the mind and the sub-conscious conjure up a most fascinating world in which the Atma lives during this phase of existence. To a great extent, the capacity of the mind to ‘imagine and fly’ is fully unleashed and tapped in one's dreams as opposed to the physical world while the man was awake—because while the latter phase presents many physical barriers of practical nature, none such obstacles are there in one's dreams. In some senses, the world of dreams is fancier and more charming than that of the physical world of the waking state

simply because in this subtle state of existence the mind is given wings to imagine and fly according to its wishes without having to cope with any limitations of the physical gross world. [For instance, a man cannot fly in practical terms when he is awake, or he cannot physically jump from a tall building without aid and survive as this would be nothing less than a suicidal jump, he can indeed attempt such feats while dreaming. In fact, the full potentials of the mind and the sub-conscious are unlocked during the dreaming phase—as is proved occasionally when insurmountable problems of daily life face by a harried man find their solutions when he sleeps, leading him to wake up with answers to the same problems that had defied all attempts to solve them earlier.]

It is the mind that imagines, and not the gross body. Therefore, during the Swapna or dreaming state of existence of consciousness, the Atma is very much active and aware of the happenings around it, but instead of them being related to the gross plane of existence they are now confined to an imaginary world conceived in a 'dream'. Hence, 'dream' or the Swapna state of existence of the consciousness is synonymous with that which is an 'imaginary' conception of the mind without any physical gross dimension. It is something that has no real physical existence and pith. In other words, the Atma or the consciousness exists in its 'Sukshma' or the subtle form now in the dreaming state.

For all practical purposes, the Atma (or the creature's 'self' or his consciousness) interacts with this imaginary world of dreams during the 'Swapna' state of existence in the same way as it had been doing in the gross world while it was awake during the waking state called 'Jagrat'. That is, even during a dream, as long as it lasts, the Atma thinks that it is actually interacting with all the participants of that dream; it weeps, it laughs, it plays and it talks with them all as if they were alive and for real in the virtual world. For this purpose, the Atma uses its 'virtual' nineteen organs or mouths as it had been doing while it was interacting with the physical gross world while awake, though now they are in their 'subtle forms' instead of their gross forms.

Therefore, even in the dream state of existence of the Atma, there are seven worlds and nineteen mouths, though they exist in a subtle form, and not in their gross forms. The Atma lives in this subtle world of dreams, is an integral part of it, identifies its self with it, is influenced by it and is as involved and attached to its components in the same way as it did during the waking state.

That Atma which exists in this subtle form, that Atma which exists in the subtle world, and that Atma which uses the subtle organs to interact with this subtle world, is called 'Taijas'. This Taijas is the microcosmic subtle form of the Atma which has its counterpart at the macrocosmic level of creation in the 'Hiranyagarbha'. The latter therefore is the macrocosmic subtle aspect of the cosmic Consciousness very much like the Taijas is at the microcosmic level.

The Taijas has all the constituent parts of the 1st step or stage (called the 'Vishwa') as described in the preceding verse, but instead of being gross by the virtue of its association with the external gross world of material sense objects it now is in a subtle form as it is associated with a subtle world. Instead of being in contact with the deluding outside world involving its gross organs of action and perception, it is now more subtle in nature being based on the mind and its capacity to imagine and fly. [But it must nevertheless be noted that the Atma, the pure consciousness, still does not find pure peace and happiness as it is still buffeted by waves of emotions and the influence of Vasanas in the subtle level of its existence during the dreaming state of its existence as much as it

was distracted and influenced by the physical world during the waking state. The only obvious difference is that during the dreaming state there is no physical barriers and limitations that are natural to the gross body and the gross physical world which has limited the stupendous potentials of the Atma. As compared to the physical gross body, the subtle mind has stupendous powers and potentials—the mind can fly and imagine things that were simply incredulous to even speak of during the waking state of the body, thereby lending the Atma with equal potentials to imagine and reach those realms where it could not ever hope to do while awake. In brief, the Swapna is called ‘subtle’ as it gives ‘wings to the Atma’ and enables it to perform deeds that it was unable to in the Jagrat state. The physical world that exists during the waking state imposes certain inhibitions on the Atma, but all such fetters are removed while it dreams, and therefore it can do unimaginable things during its dream which would be unthinkable for it to do during its interaction with the world while in its waking state of existence.

During the Swapna or dreaming state of existence, the external stimuli from the outside world cease to affect the mind, but the latent and inherent tendencies, called the various ‘Vasanas’, create an imaginary world of perceptions and actions which are far more colourful than the actual world of the waking state, and which form an independent world of their own, called the world of dreams. This state of the Atma is not gross like the 1st stage, but it is a subtle state of existence of the consciousness, the state known as the Taijas state.

The word ‘Taijas’ is derived from the root ‘Tej’ meaning ‘energetic, fast, dynamic, agile, full of vigour and vitality’. It is obvious from the above discussion that the Atma does indeed possess these potentials during the dreaming state of its existence. The word ‘Taijas’ also refers to light and its illumination. Hence, the Atma in this state is illuminated by the virtue of its inherent ability to create something from nothing—i.e. to ‘dream’ of things that do not have any substance and then be convinced that this imaginary world is truthful.] (6).

[Note—This Swapna or dreaming state of consciousness is equivalent to the second Paad or limb or aspect of Brahm. It is represented by *Shatrughan*, the second brother of Lord Ram. Refer verse no. 1 of this Canto 3. Shatrughan is an incarnation of Pradumna, the personified form of Kaam, the patron deity of passion and yearnings or Vasanas. The Vasanas reside in the heart of a creature, hence Shatrughan lives in the heart of all the creatures as their inherent desires and passions to overcome all hurdles and obtain their objective. The word ‘Shatrughan’ means ‘one who crushes all enemies’—i.e. the Atma is able to overcome all restrictions imposed by the gross physical world in order to reach its target determined by the Vasanas during the dreaming state.

Since during the Swapna state of existence only Mana, i.e. the sub-conscious aspect of the mind and the subtle aspect of the heart, are active while the gross body sleeps or is absent, and that this Mana acts silently without any outwardly show of action, Shatrughan too lived a silent life and worked behind the curtain by carrying on with his assigned job of taking care of the daily affairs of the kingdom while Lord Ram was in the forest, and even later on after the Lord’s return. The Ramayan, the epic story of Ram, has only few references to Shatrughan while it copiously praises Laxman for taking an active part in the deeds done by Lord Ram, especially the main purpose of overcoming the demons, and Bharat for his unwavering and untainted devotion for the Lord. The role of Shatrughan is of immense importance if one were to ponder who ran the kingdom while the Lord was away in the forest and also when he returned and was crowned. The nitty-gritty of administration of the vast empire was the responsibility of Shatrughan, but since

he represented the ‘Swapna’ state of the cosmic Consciousness he preferred to word quietly and subtly behind the curtains instead of attempting to hog the limelight.

Since he resides in the Mana, he is aware of the inner thoughts of all the creatures and is the patron deity of the Mana. He represents that aspect of the supreme Brahm that enables the Lord to know the inner thoughts of all living beings as well as to control these thoughts.

Just the physical world is borne by Laxman in his primary form of Seshnath, the subtle world is borne by Shatrughan in his primary form as Pradumna or Kaam (in the form of Vasanas—inherent desires, yearnings and passions hidden in a man’s inner self).

The deity who is the patron of the subtle world would also be responsible for its upkeep, and would also enjoy the things of this subtle world. Hence, the subtle aspects of the seven worlds as described in note of verse no. 5 have Shatrughan as their patron deity and sustainer. Shatrughan interacts with them by employing the subtle aspects of the nineteen entities, called metaphorically as the ‘nineteen mouths’, as described for Laxman in note of verse no. 5.

Since Praduman is another form of Kaam-deo (cupid), the deity of love and passions, he is deemed to be very charming, handsome and attractive—or he has a radiance of charm, majesty and glory effusing out of him in the form of Tajjas (glow, radiance, light, illumination, halo).]

“Verse no. 7 = The ‘sleeping state’ during which the person does not desire/wish to enjoy any of the objects of this materialistic world and is neither conscious of their existence, a state when he does not even dream of any imaginary non-existent world—such a state of existence of consciousness is called ‘Sushupta’ or the deep sleep state of consciousness. This state is beyond the dream state, and is the third state in the hierarchy of existences in which the Atma or the pure consciousness lives. It corresponds to the third Paad or limb or aspect of the supreme Brahm who is the cosmic Consciousness personified.

Where the gross organs of the gross body represented by the organs of perception (eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin) and action (hand, leg, mouth, genitals and excretory), as well as the subtle organ represented by the mind, the sub-conscious and the intellect have become defunct or stand eliminated, that eclectic state of existence of the consciousness is called Sushupta.

The body which houses this state of the Atma is called the ‘causal body’. It is so-called because the Atma or pure consciousness that lives in this state is the entity that is the ‘cause’ of the creation of both the world of dreams in the Swapna state as well as the world of material sense objects during the Jagrat state. During this Sushupta state of consciousness, the entire world, both the real as well as the imaginary, coalesce and merge into nothingness or non-being. They are now most quietly and imperceptibly shrunk into the entity that was the ‘cause’ of their existence at all in the first place. That is why it is called the ‘causal’ body.

The wise entity that was empowered with the knowledge that enabled it to create something and then sustain it is called ‘Pragya’. It lives in this causal body. This Pragya is none other than the Atma or the pure consciousness, also called the ‘true self’ of the creature. This Atma of the individual is the microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic Atma of creation. At the individual level of the creature, it is called ‘Pragya’, while the same entity in its macrocosmic level is called ‘Ishwar’—or the supreme Lord. It is ‘Lord’ as it is the central Authority that not only determines the existence of both the worlds—the

Swapna as well as the Jagrat—but presides over them, enjoys what they have to offer or suffers from them, and then decides when to get rid of them.

This state of Sushupta is indicative of the dissolution of creation as nothing then remains. Then two options are available—either the Atma reverts back to the earlier two states of existence, or proceed ahead to the fourth state of Turiya which is actually a permanent state of Sushupta.

The entity living in the causal body and known as Pragya is one of its kinds; it has no duality and no parallels. It is an image of eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity, and it is wise, enlightened, realised and truthful. It is this entity that enjoys this world of eternal bliss and tranquility. It is pure consciousness and enlightenment personified. These virtues are its ‘mouth’, i.e. it accepts anything using these virtues as its accepting organs. In other words, it judges the world using the yardstick of enlightened consciousness, and not the way the mind had been judging it previously. The mind has a tendency to ‘fly’ in the vast sky of imagination, while the intellect ‘moves’ on sound ground of logic and rationality. Wisdom and erudition weighs everything and makes the creature aware that what he believes to be real is actually false and misleading. This is the function of the enlightened Atma. Once the sun of wisdom and enlightenment dawns on the creature’s spiritual horizon, he finds immense peace and tranquility because all ghosts and phantoms arising in the darkness created by delusions and ignorance are eliminated for good.

In terms of Vedanta, the causal body encloses the Atma which is surrounded by the bliss sheath. When this Atma is not disturbed by constant interference by the mind and the intellect, it remains oblivious of the outside world, and being comfortably ensconced in the bliss sheath, it remains blissful and peaceful.

This Pragya (wise, enlightened, knowledgeable, erudite and sagacious) aspect of the Atma, which is pure consciousness, is the symbolic third Paad or limb or aspect of Brahm.

[The Atma or the soul of the creature is trapped in a body having these three layers of the body that are like sheaths that surround the soul—the gross body (verse no. 5), the subtle body (verse no. 6) and the causal body (verse no. 7). As soon as these are dissolved or removed or done away with, the Atma enjoys a state of merger with the eternal Atma of the cosmos. Or in other words, the individual Atma of the creature becomes one with the Parmatma, the supreme transcendental Atma. This Parmatma is also known as the Supreme Being, the supreme Brahm, and the cosmic Consciousness in the form of the cosmic Soul of creation.] (7).

[Note—This third state of existence called Sushupta corresponds to *Bharat*, the third brother of Ram. Refer verse no. 2 of this Canto 3. He epitomizes the virtues of devotion, faith, humility, probity, propriety, righteousness and conscientiousness, besides total detachment towards the material charms of the material world. He also exemplifies the virtues of Vairagya (renunciation, detachment, non-involvement with the material world and the charms of its sense objects), Yoga (meditation and concentration of one’s faculties on the objective selected) and Tapa (sufferance, austerity, penance, self-control etc. for some great cause).

Hence he shows what is needed if one is to achieve the goal of reaching the Lord—i.e. he shows by example the virtues one must inculcate to obtain Mukti and Mokha. Therefore he is called the ‘Paad’ or limb of Lord Ram who is Brahm personified. He is the ‘third Paad’ (limb) as the minimum number of legs required for anything, such as a stool, to be stabilized is ‘three’. In other words, if a spiritual aspirant desires to be

established in his spiritual path he must follow the example of Bharat and inculcate the noble virtues which the latter implemented in his life.

Where the gross organs represented by the organs of perception and action of the gross body, as well as the subtle organ represented by the mind and the intellect have become defunct or stand eliminated, this state of existence of the consciousness is called the Sushupta. During this state the person does not have any desire for enjoying the material objects of the external gross world nor of the subtle world that exists in one's dreams. That is, he is completely in a state of Vairagya or renunciation—this is how Bharat lived in the middle of pomp and pelf of a flourishing kingdom. Hence he corresponds to the third state of Sushupta.

He is not at all moved by the ups and downs of administrating a vast kingdom, remaining focused on meditation and contemplation. Hence he remains perpetually blissful and happy—the characteristic feature of the Sushupta state.

He is an incarnation of Aniruddha because he enjoys uninterrupted bliss and continuous meditation. The word 'Aniruddha' means 'without any obstacles; unhindered and unstopped'.

Since he was most wise and thoughtful, he personified the Pragya aspect of the Atma in the third state of its existence.]

“Verse no. 8 = The supreme Atma or Consciousness that exists beyond the third state of Sushupta, i.e. that state of consciousness which transcends the earlier three states related to this world, is said to be the fourth Paad or aspect of Brahm. It is called the Turiya state.

The Atma that exists in this fourth state called the Turiya or transcendental state is the one that is said to be the creator or progenitor of the other three states. [When the pure consciousness decides that it wishes to interact with the world, it would have to retrace the path followed by it to reach this higher spiritual state of Turiya—i.e. it would have to pass through all the three stages mentioned in verse no. 5-7. But if it decides to get rid of the world and find eternal peace, it will not do so. Then in such a case, the person who has reached this fourth state of consciousness, called the Turiya, would remain in this world like other men do, but would be a totally changed and transformed man—he would be totally immune to this world and its charms and temptations, as well as its pains, miseries and sufferings. He would seem to be awake and going about his normal duties, but internally he would be in the state of deep sleep, not at all being aware of or interested in what the body, both its gross components as well as its subtle components, do. He would be virtually 'sleep walking' as far as the world is concerned. All the characteristics that are enumerated below in this verse are of the Turiya state of consciousness.]

The Atma in this Turiya or fourth state of existence is called the 'Parmatma' or the supreme Atma—for now it is not an ordinary Atma of the creature that is affected by the deluding influences of the world, but beyond such considerations. It is also known as the 'Ishwar' or the Lord of the creation—for now it has reached the state when it no longer relates its self with the mundane world of material sense objects, it does not wish its comforts and pleasures, but has risen high up to occupy a much exalted stature that makes it 'superior' to all the rest in creation. Such a high Atma is Parmatma and it is also the Ishwar or Lord of creation. It is called 'Ishwar' because it is the undisputed Lord of all that exists. It is this Atma that has not only created everything but also enjoys them and eliminates them should it want to do so. In other words, if a wise man so wishes and is firmly determined, then he can easily forgo the attractions of the world in a moment by

just making a firm decision that he is not interested in them. This world exists only because the Atma, or the consciousness which is the ‘true self’ of a creature, wishes it to exist.

[According to Vedanta, Ishwar represents the sum-total of all the causal bodies in this creation. This is because Ishwar is the ‘cause’ of coming into being of whatever that exists in this creation. Anything, no matter how inconsequential and miniscule, that has an existence owes its presence to the Ishwar. It is like the case of line or any other figure drawn on a piece of paper. Its origin is in the first ‘dot’ that was formed when the tip of the pen had first touched the paper. The line or the figure is merely an extension of this dot. If the line is retracted and seeks its original point it will come back to this dot. If there is no dot, the line cannot be drawn. Similarly, everything in this world has its origin in this single ‘Ishwar’, and the rest is simply an extension of this Ishwar.]

The supreme macrocosmic Atma, the cosmic Consciousness, is the Soul or essence or the Tattwa of creation, and like its counterpart present in the causal body of the individual creature, it is also Pragma—i.e. it is wise, enlightened, awake, conscious, realised, intelligent, sagacious and erudite.

This Parmatma is all-knowing and omniscient as it lives inside the secret inner chambers of the creation in the form of the Atma of all the creatures. Being an ‘insider’, he knows everything; he is privy to the inner thoughts and ideas of the mind, the sub-conscious and the intellect of the creature; nothing is hidden or out of sight of him.

Being a resident inside the bosom of all the creatures in the form of their Atma, and being all-pervading, immanent and omnipresent by the virtue of it being the most subtle and sublime entity known as ‘consciousness’ in creation, this Parmatma is known as ‘Antaryaami’—one who lives inside everything and knows even that which is not known to the outside world.

Parmatma or the cosmic Atma is the cause of everything in existence—hence it is the ‘supreme Creator’. It is this Atma that is the origin of all the Bhuts (elements), their sustenance and growth, and their final resting place. [This can be easily visualized by a simple illustration. When we wish to draw any figure on paper—say a line or a circle, we use a pencil or pen which makes a ‘dot’ at the spot where it first touches the paper. This ‘dot’ is then virtually stretched in all imaginable directions on the surface of the paper to make the desired shapes visualized by the mind—whether it is a circle or a triangle. If we retrace the lines the way they were drawn, we come back to the original dot. This symbolically depicts the way the creation is regressed.]

Since the Parmatma (Supreme Being) is ‘consciousness’ itself personified, it follows that he does not need any other thing to be the cause of his own origin—simply because it is ‘consciousness’ that makes ‘life’ possible in creation, it is ‘consciousness’ that magically transforms a lifeless gross body into an active and vigorous creature. If ‘consciousness’ is removed from this world, the latter would be absolutely worthless and lifeless. Left to its own accord, this world would not be able to remain alive or revive its self in case ‘consciousness’ decides to abandon it. This quintessential factor of life in this creation is known as the ‘Atma’.

The cosmic Atma or the cosmic Consciousness is a complete neutral entity and characterized by paradoxes. For instance, it is neither introvert nor extrovert. It is an embodiment and a fount of wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity and knowledge on the one hand, but ironically the same Atma appears to exhibit the opposite virtues by

allowing it's self to be accompanied or engulfed by Maya (delusions) that has helped this Atma to create the world of artificiality and entrapments.

This cosmic Atma is all-knowing as well as ignorant. It is omniscient on the one hand, but remains indifferent and neutral to all forms of knowledge on the other hand. It remains merely a mute spectator, a mere witness and a neutral observer of all that is happening around it, giving the impression that it is gross, blockhead, ignorant and dumb. Its neutral and dispassionate state is often misinterpreted in this wrong way. The neutrality of the Atma is due to the fact that it is renunciation and dispassion personified; it remains indifferent to all delusions and hallucinations that are the hallmarks of this creation. But since it has to remain in this world, it appears to be influenced by all the taints and shortcomings that characterize this world.

This state of the Atma whereby it appears to exhibit dual characteristics which lead to confusions about its truthful form and nature as a sublime and subtle entity that is free from all grossness and delusions is known as the Jagrat as well as the Swapna states of consciousness depending upon the level of grossness or subtlety exhibited by the Atma respectively. This happens because during both these two states of existence, the Atma appears to be involved head on in the affairs of the world, whether this involvement is at the physical level of the gross world as it happens during the Jagrat state, or at the subtle level as it happens during the Swapna state.

The same Consciousness is uniformly and universally present in all the creatures of creation as their Atma, and in fact the entire creation is nothing but its image, but still each individual creature is unique and different from the other. Many factors that are extraneous to the Atma—such as the characteristic attributes of the gross body, the presence of the various Gunas in different and varying proportions, the level of mental and intellectual development, the Vasanas and Vrittis (inbuilt desires and passions, as well as natural tendencies and inclinations) that an individual possesses—go collectively to make an individual unique inspite of the same Atma living in them. [A person fights others as if they were different from his own self, and there is so much diversity and dichotomy in creation that it becomes impossible to reconcile what is said in the Upanishads and what is actually observed in the practical world.]

The Atma is said to be almighty so much so that its mere wish can create and destroy the world, but ironically it requires the aid of the 'Shakti' or energy and power and dynamism of Nature to do anything at all. [This is best understood by the story of Ramayana itself. Lord Ram was Brahm personified, and therefore he should have killed the demon king Ravana by mere wish, instead of having to go to Lanka to do so. Then there are versions of Ramayana, such as the Adbhut Ramayana of Valmiki and Adhyatma Ramayana of Veda Vyas which tell how it was Sita, an incarnation of Brahm's Shakti, that had actually helped the Lord accomplish the astounding deeds that he is credited for.]

This Atma is so small and subtle as well as sublime that it cannot be heard, seen, felt, touched, smelt or held. It is not an object that can be used in the conventional sense a man uses other entities of creation.

The Atma has no attributes, qualifications and dimensions that can be quantified and measured. It has never been visibly seen or observed, it has never been practically used and experimented with, and it has never been comprehended, grasped or caught either by the mind-intellect complex or by the sense organs of perception and action.

The Atma has no specific characteristics, qualities, virtues or attributes that can be used to define and qualify it. It is such a miraculous and inexplicable entity that it cannot be incorporated as a subject that can be comprehended by deep research and ponderings. It is beyond the purview of thought, imagination, intellect and conception. [That is, this supreme entity cannot be reduced to any physical matter that can be researched and experimented in a laboratory. It cannot be made a subject to be judged by the calculating mind which has a natural tendency to reduce everything to logic and rationality.]

The Atma cannot be even indicated or represented by indirect methods, such as by the use of signs, formulas, symbolism, metaphors, similes, analogues and examples. The only holistic and comprehensive proof of its existence and truthfulness is the ethereal experience that one has upon attaining self-realisation obtained when one reaches the higher states of super conscious existence known as the state of Samadhi. It is experienced only by attained and self-realised seekers. This supreme, ethereal, divine and holy entity is completely devoid of any delusions and falsehoods, any deceit and artificiality.

The Atma cannot be comprehended as it is beyond the scope of the mind and intellect. There is nothing in existence that can be used to compare the Atma with. There is no sign that can be used to indicate anything about the Atma. The only way to know the Atma is to 'experience and witness its presence' in the form of the 'super consciousness', and other vital life-factors of existence such as the Pran (or the vital winds). [That is, if one was to search an entity known as the Atma with the help of certain characters or virtues, no matter how great and magnificent they may be, one would fail in his search. This is because the Atma is extremely subtle and sublime by nature, and it has no grossness and density whatsoever that can be perceived by the sense organs of the body, including the mind and the intellect. That is why it is said that the Atma is beyond comprehension and reach of the sense organs of the creature. However, the existence of the Atma can be experienced during higher levels of existence which are in consonance with the plane in which the Atma actually exists. It is just like the case of modern radio communication where one can listen to a particular station only when he is tuned to that frequency.]

It is absolutely calm, peaceful, serene and tranquil; it is beautiful and auspicious; it is the ultimate Truth and Reality; it is the benevolent benefactor of all and provides all auspiciousness and welfares (i.e. it is 'Shiva').

Such a unique, divine, incomprehensible and incomparable cosmic Consciousness is regarded by those who are wise and in the know of things as the 'Advaita Brahm'. This Brahm is an eternal, majestic, powerful, sublime, fascinating, almighty and stupendously magnificent entity.

[That is, the supreme entity known as Brahm has unique and apparently paradoxical characteristics enumerated here. This makes Brahm one of its kinds, because it is impossible to duplicate them. Advaita means non-dual. Hence the Brahm that is unique and without parallel is 'Advaita'. The Brahm that is uniform and universal, that is irrefutably and unequivocally one, and not two, in spite of the countless forms in which it has revealed itself in this creation—is 'Advaita'. The Brahm that is both visible as well as invisible, that is here as well as there—is known as 'Advaita Brahm'. The Brahm that is in the present as it was in the past, and would remain the same in the future—is 'Advaita Brahm'.]

Those who are well-versed in the essence of all spiritual and metaphysical knowledge, those who are blessed with wisdom and erudition of the highest order that has enabled them to have deep insight into the fundamental universal truth of everything in creation in its essential form, call this supreme transcendental Truth and the ultimate Reality of creation as 'Brahm' and the 'cosmic Atma' or 'Consciousness'. It is the fourth Paad or limb or step or form of Brahm.

In other words, the wisdom to understand what has been said of Brahm in this verse is the fourth and the last step to realise the truthful and essential nature of the supreme transcendental Brahm, about the Atma, about the pure consciousness that exists at both the macrocosmic as well as the microcosmic levels of creation at the same time. The fourth Paad of Brahm is the latter's cosmic transcendental form that goes beyond the gross and the ordinary level of the subtle that borders the gross level of existence. It corresponds to the higher level of existence of super consciousness that is all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent, that is all-knowing and omniscient, that is almighty and supreme. [This fourth Paad is equivalent to the Turiya state of consciousness because it transcends the mundane and moribund existence of the Atma in this physical gross body that is bound to this physical gross world of material sense objects, thereby forcing the otherwise eternally free, ethereal, sublime and subtle Atma (the consciousness) to lead a trapped and deluded existence as long as it remains confined to this gross body and attracted to the gross world. and forced to live in and interact with and .] (8).

[Note—The fourth Paad or aspect of Brahm is personified as Lord Ram. All the characteristics described in this verse are reflected in the life of Lord Ram. For instance, in the story of Ramayana we find that though Lord Ram was an incarnation of the all-knowing and omniscient Brahm but still he had searched for Sita like an ordinary man when she was abducted by Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. Though he is almighty, he had to take the help of the monkey army to conquer Lanka and retrieve Sita. Though he is Advaita and single, he was always accompanied by Sita and one of his companions, such as his brothers, or one of the monkey or demon friends that he had made during his trip to Lanka. Though he is neutral and dispassionate, he had wailed for Sita when she was kidnapped like an ordinary man who loses his dear wife.

From the metaphysical perspective, all the events in the life of Lord Ram teach a wise man how the immaculate Atma gets mired in this world if it allows itself to get involved in its mundane affairs. Even a cursory reading of the story of Ramayana would show how Lord Ram, who was none else but the Supreme Being himself, was subjected to all the experiences that a common human being goes through in the course of his life in this world simply because the Lord had allowed himself to be involved in the affairs of the physical world by assuming a gross body. When this analogy is applied to the Atma it is easy to see how and why the Atma gets sucked in the affairs of the world if it allows itself to be identified with the gross body (of the creature) in which it lives. Though the Atma of the creature is well aware that the world and all its material sense objects are false, entrapping and deluding by nature because the Atma is inherently all-knowing, wise and enlightened, but still it remains engrossed in it as if it did not know the truth. Every man knows that he would die, but still he continuous to hoard wealth for the 'future' which might never come.

Therefore, the entanglements of the Atma in the world are its own creation. Even the Supreme Being himself had to undergo all sorts of worldly sufferings when he assumed a human form as Lord Ram, so the sufferance of the Atma by its involvement in the world is of no wonder.]

**The 3 Paads of Brahm**—References: Atharva Veda’s Par Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 2.

The *Par Brahm Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 2 describes the Tripaad Brahm as being equivalent to the three states of existence of consciousness—viz. the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or dreaming state, and the Sushupta or deep sleep state. These three states respectively symbolize that Brahm who remains engaged in the process of creation, its systematic development and growth, till its conclusion. Thus, the Jagrat state represents creation when the Atma takes new birth and wakes up to the realities of this world, Swapna state is the actual life of the creature in this artificial world where he lives like one lives in his dreams, and the Sushupta state is the conclusion of creation or one’s renunciation of it when the creature finds rest and peace from the constant turmoil of the physical world.

‘Conclusion’ of the world is not the actual end of the story, for the world is re-created by the Supreme Being once again, and the cycle is repeated. This is because at the point of time when the present creation is concluded, not all the creatures have found their final Mukti or spiritual emancipation and salvation, for there are countless ones who still are entangled in the cycle of doing deeds, in enjoying the fruits of their deeds, waiting out their turn for the deeds to fructify, taking new births to fulfill their unfulfilled tasks and desires, etc. So, to end the creation once and for all would be upsetting the laws and upturning the apple-cart that the Supreme Being had himself laid out. Thus, he re-creates this world after some cooling-in period when he retires to take stock of the situation and rest.

But it is to be noted that the Brahm maintains his ‘supreme stature’ inspite of this willful engagement in the world because of his being totally neutral and dispassionate in the job at hand as explained in verse no. 1 above. In fact, even during the actual process of creation he was dispassionate. He created the world simply because the latter had to be created as it was the time for its coming into being. It was destined to be created because there were so many countless creatures who had not yet finished the cycle of birth and death depending upon the deeds that were done by them before the creation suddenly ended at the time of dooms-day. Hence, the ‘end’ had to be reversed, and creation ‘started afresh’.

Now let us see what this Upanishad has to say on this subject—“The Pran (the vital life-bearing wind or air) that pervades throughout the living creation has four aspects or dimensions. The Naadis (literally tubular ducts in the body through which life or consciousness flows inside the creature) through which this Pran flows are also of four types. These four principal types of Naadis are Rama, Arama, Ichha, and Purnarbhava.

When the Pran gets tired or weary of wandering between the Rama and Arama Naadis during the two states of existence of the creature, such as the Jagrat or the waking state and the Swpana or the dreaming state respectively, tired like a kite or an eagle flying high in the sky, it wants to rest. For this rest, the Pran enters the Sushupta or deep sleep state (which comes after the dreaming state is crossed).

The Pran, which is a personified form of the divine Lord (because it infuses life and consciousness into the otherwise lifeless, inert and inane gross body) moves unhindered in the body of the living being through the medium (channel; route) of the three Naadis. It pervades or moves throughout the brightly illuminated sky represented by

the inner-self of the creature (like the eagle or kite flying in the sky that is brightly lit during the daytime).

[Here, the 'sky' is the subtle sky present in the body of the creature, especially the one surrounding the heart which is called the 'Hridaya Akash'. The adjectives 'illuminated or brightly lit sky' refers to the factor of consciousness and wisdom that is the characteristic feature of all living beings, and which distinguishes them from non-living aspects of creation. Hence, the word 'Pran' here refers to the pure consciousness that lives in the subtle heart of the creature as his Atma. This 'Pran' is a personified form of Brahm that lives inside the creature as his Atma.

Previously only two Naadis, i.e. the Rama and the Arama, were mentioned, but now three are cited. Hence, the third Naadi would be the Iccha Naadi. This relates to the Sushupta state of deep sleep. The word 'Iccha' literally means a wish or desire. Hence, when the Pran wishes to rest, it moves through this Iccha Naadi.]

When the Pran (consciousness; the subtle dimension of the creature) enters this third state of existence known as the Sushupta, it finds rest and peace, which is however its natural state. Hence, it is deemed to have attained its primary form—of being at complete rest, peace, serenity and tranquility; of being fully blissful.

These three stages of the Pran (life) are representative of the three aspects of Brahm, called the 'Tripaad Brahm'. [This is because of two reasons—(i) all living beings pass through these three stages in life, i.e. they wake up, they dream, and they sleep soundly, and (ii) the fact that all living beings are visible images of the invisible Brahm. So the three stages of the living world are three dimensions of existence of Brahm.]

In spite of flying high in the illuminated sky, the creature continues to fall and get trapped in the valley represented by these three stages. [The 'creature' here refers to the Atma, and the 'illuminated sky' refers to the inherent wisdom that the Atma possesses. The 'falling from the sky' refers to the high-flying bird who can easily avoid getting trapped by a bird-catcher's net, but out of greed and ignorance it voluntarily gets ensnared. Say, who is to blame for the bird's predicament except it alone? Similarly, who is to be blamed for the creature getting trapped in the world other than himself?]

Just like a man named Devdutta is beaten by a stick and wounded while he was asleep gets so terrified at the prospect of sleeping again after he wakes up, a wise man who is 'awakened' or enlightened about the truth of existence, about the truth of the world and his own self by means of studying of the scriptures or when taught by the Guru (spiritual advisor), he too would shun falling in the trap of this gross world and its equally gross mundane life characterized by the three states of existence in which the Pran (consciousness) oscillates as narrated above.

Therefore, such an awakened and enlightened man would not allow himself to get trapped in the cycle of deeds, either auspicious or inauspicious deeds, whether good deed or bad deed in order to achieve any worldly objective. He knows that merely doing deeds with emotional involvement and with expectation of results would be sufficient to automatically trap him in the world from where it would be difficult for him to extricate himself later on. [In the opening lines of this verse, the example of the bird flying high is cited. This bird either gets tired by continuous flying during the day in search of prey, swooping down on it when cited and running away from its enemies in hot pursuit, or it gets trapped by the bird-catcher's net in its greed for prey. On the other hand, had the bird not wished to catch a prey, it would not have ventured out of its nest, and consequentially

would have both rested and be freed from the fear of its enemies or getting caught in bird catcher's net. Likewise, a wise man who remains contented and fulfilled is always at peace with himself.]

Such a wise and enlightened man finds comfort, happiness, peace and contentedness in any situation he lives in just like an innocent child who feels comfortable and happy in any toy it finds to play with without having preference for any particular thing. [He is not perturbed and affected at all by the troubles and tribulations of the physical world which he faces and interacts with during his waking state. He is not at all concerned with what he imagines in his dreams; he does not wish that what he sees in his dreams impact his waking life. And of course he remains peaceful like one sleeping soundly during the deep sleep state. In other words, his composure and poise is perpetual and steady.]”

**The Panch Brahm**—The word ‘Panch’ means five. Hence, Panch Brahm refers to the five cosmic aspects or facets or corners of Brahm. It is to be visualized as a pentagon that encloses everything in existence. The phrase refers to the five subtle forms of the same supreme transcendental Consciousness that is known as Brahm as well as the Supreme Being. There are two different versions of these five subtle forms of Brahm in relation with the genesis of creation. Both these versions will be narrated below.

From the ritualistic point of view, the sacred ash that is smeared on the body by an ascetic represents this Panch Brahm. This has been described in the *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition.

References: (i) Krishna Yajur Veda's Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 1 and 5-23. (ii) Atharva Veda's Brihajjabal Upanishad, Brahman 1; Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 5.

*Panch Brahm*—The creation has been visualised as a pentagon, with the overall structure resembling a shrine—with the two vertical lines of the pentagon as its walls, the base as the floor, and the two slanting lines meeting at the top as the sloping roof of the shrine. The apex point of the pentagon is like the top of the shrine, the pinnacle of the structure where usually a flag or cupola is placed. This point is represented by Ishan Brahm, the form of Brahm that acts as the flag or insignia atop this shrine, thereby symbolically establishing its supremacy and authority over the entire structure known as creation.

From the philosophical point of view of Vedanta and metaphysics, the five faces of Brahm represent the five aspects, facades or facets of creation and are symbolisms of the entire gamut that is known as this creation, with all its glories and warts. We shall now have a bird's eye-view of what these ‘five symbolic aspects of Brahm’ stand for.

(1) Panch Maha Yagya (the five great sacrifices)—The entire life of a religious and pious spiritual aspirant is regarded as one big wholesome fire sacrifice, and thus it is ordained that he must diligently perform the five Panch Maha Yagyas as the components that would complete this holistic sacrifice in its entirety. They consists of five great noble deeds that a householder is ordained and expected to do that have the same sanctity and holiness as doing a formal fire sacrifice. They are the following—(a) Brahma Yagya—study and teaching of the Vedas and other scriptures that enlighten the man about the ultimate Truth known as Brahm, (b) Deva Yagya—the performance of fire sacrifices in

which offerings are given to the sacred fire which are meant for the divine Gods and are done to honour them, (c) Pitri Yagya—paying homage to the spirit of dead ancestors, offering oblations to them and doing religious activities for the peace of their souls, (d) Service to mankind called ‘Jiva Yagya’, and (e) Bhut Yagya—service to all the creatures including animals, insects, plants etc., such as giving them food, shelter and protection, i.e. taking general care of them. These five sacrifices have been described in Ashramopanishad, verse no. 3.

(2) The five sacraments—They are the five deemed sacred sacrifices as follows-- (a) doing Japa which is repeating/chanting/reciting of the divine Mantra called the Gayatri Mantra which is especially prescribed for renunciate ascetics (see verse no. 14 below), (b) doing Yoga or meditation and contemplation upon divinity, (c) doing Tapa or observing austerities, doing penances, suffering hardships for spiritual enhancement, having noble thoughts and following virtuous path inspite of all the hurdles and inconveniences, (d) doing Swadhyaya or self study which entails the deep study of the scriptures and contemplating upon their teachings as well as meditating upon the Atma which is pure consciousness and the pure self, and (e) endeavouring to acquire Gyan which is the truthful knowledge about the ultimate Truth and Reality in the creation, a knowledge that would help to dispel the dark veil of ignorance and delusions that surrounds the creature from all the sides, almost suffocating and pinning him down.

(3) According to another version, these Panch Brahms are the five manifestation of the Supreme Being, and they are Sun God, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, Shiva the concluder and annihilator, Ganesh the most revered deity in the Hindu pantheon who is invoked at the beginning of any auspicious effort, and Shakti or the divine Goddess personifying the stupendous energy in Nature.

(4) Again, since everything in existence has been created from the five basic elements, it follows that Panch Brahm also refers to the five sheaths or Koshas that surround the pure conscious Atma which is the truthful identity of the creature. These five Koshas are the following-- ‘Annamaye Kosh’ or the food sheath, ‘Pranmaye Kosh’ or the vital wind sheath, ‘Manomaye Kosh’ or the mental sheath, ‘Vigyanmaye Kosh’ or the intellect sheath, and ‘Anandmaye Kosh’ or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma or pure conscious self like various coverings or shrouds wrapping any object. They are also called the five Kalaas of Man.

The Annamaye Kosh is that which was created by the intake of food, was nourished and developed by food, and at the end it finally disintegrates into the basic ingredients that constitutes food and merges with the earth element from where the food has derived its original ingredients. This forms the gross body of the creature.

The Pranmaye Kosh consists of the five vital winds (Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaana, and Samaan) along with the five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, excretory and reproductive).

The Manomaye Kosh consists of the mind and the five organs of perceptions (ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin), while the Vigyanmaye Kosh consists of the combined apparatus made of the intellect and these five organs of perception.

A combination of these three sheaths, i.e. Pranmaye Kosh (vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mental sheath) and Vigyanmaye Kosh (the intellect sheath) is what is known as the ‘Ling Deha’ of a creature, or the ethereal form of the corporeal body. This is the subtle body of the creature.

The sheath in which the pure conscious self is not aware of the ‘Ling Deha’ is called Anandmaye Kosh. This forms the causal body of the creature”.

These five sheaths are called the ‘Panch Kosha’.

(5) Life in this creation is sustained by the wind or air element, as is evident from the fact that it is possible to survive for a reasonable time without water and food but one immediately suffocates to death if there is no air. These vital winds or air element takes five principal forms, called the Panch Prans which are personifications of the magnificent abilities of the supreme Brahm to sustain life in a quiet and subtle manner. These primary and principal vital wind called Pran lives in a subtle form in the subtle space of the heart (and keeps this organ functioning); the vital wind called Apaana lives in the region of the anus (and is responsible for excretion of the residue from the intestines); the Samaana wind is found in the navel region (because it is from here that all the nerves and veins in the body radiate out from the nerve center or core called the ‘Nabhi Kand’, and ensure that nutrients and other essential supplies are equally distributed in the body); the Udaana wind lives in the region of the throat (because this wind is synonymous with the notion of ‘getting up’ or ‘rising’, so it symbolises the creature’s state of wakefulness when he speaks out, and at the same time it helps it to ‘raise’ and spit out cough present in the lungs); and Vyaana spreads through the body (as it helps in maintaining equilibrium). These vital winds have been described in Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 35-38 of Krishna Yajur Veda. These five manifestations of the wind or air element are also called the five ‘Kalaas of Pran’.

(6) Panch Varga consists of the following group of subtle elements that constitutes the body of all living beings—viz. (a) the Mana or mind along with its other companions (i.e. the mind, the intellect, the Ahankar or the sense of ego, pride and self righteousness), (b) the Pran or vital winds that sustain life in the body and its various forms (such as Apaana, Vyaana, Samaana, Udaana etc.), (c) the ability of the creature to have Ichha or to have desires, wishes, passions and aspirations, along with their astounding powers and potentials, (d) the three Gunas or qualities that are inherent to all the living beings and which determine the character and behaviour of the individual, such as the quality called Sata (which is the best of the three qualities and gives rise to noble aspirations and makes the creature righteous and upright), Raja (which is the medium quality creating worldly passions and the tendency to delve into things worldly) and Tama (which is the lowest quality creating a sinful tendency and a predominance of inertia and indolence), and (e) the various deeds broadly classified into those that are righteous, noble and auspicious, and those that are the opposite.

The Sarvasaaro-panishad, verse no. 7 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes them.

(7) (a) They are the five Gods worshipped by Hindus. They are Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, Shiva the concluder, Aditya the Sun God, and Ganesh the son of Shiva and the God who is worshipped before all other Gods in the Hindu pantheon of Gods.

(7) (b) According to another version, these Panch Brahms are the five manifestation of the Supreme Being, and they are Sun God, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, Shiva the concluder and annihilator, Ganesh the most revered deity in the Hindu pantheon who is invoked at the beginning of any auspicious effort, and Shakti or the divine Goddess personifying the stupendous energy in Nature.

(8) The five elements called the Panch Bhuts—earth, water, fire, air and sky. The Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition verse nos. 85-99 describe the various elements, their location in the body and their patron deities. Refer also Sharrirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 1-2. The Mantras pertaining to these elements are mentioned in Kalagni-rudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 3. They are the following--‘Agniriti Bhasm’ for the fire element, ‘Vayuriti Bhasm’ for the air or wind element, ‘Jalmiti Bhasm’ for the water element, ‘Sthalmityi Bhasm’ for the earth element, and ‘Vyomriti Bhasm’ for the sky element.

These are the personification of the stupendous divine powers and potentials of the Supreme Being as manifested in the form of the ‘five basic elements of creation’ such as the sky, air, fire, water and earth. The word Panch refers to the numeral five, while Brahm refers to the supreme cosmic Consciousness which is at the core of the coming into being of the entire creation.

(9) The five sense organs of perceptions—ears, nose, eyes, tongue and skin.

(10) The five sense perceptions, called Tanmatras—hearing, smelling, seeing, tasting and feeling.

(11) The five organs of action—hands, legs, mouth, anus and genitals.

(12) The five states of existence of the consciousness—Jagrat or waking, Swapna or dreaming, Sushupta or deep sleeping, Turiya or post deep sleep, and Turiyateet or the transcendental state beyond Turiya which corresponds to ultimate enlightened state of perpetual Samadhi.

(13) The five auspicious times, called Panchaanga, when fire sacrifices could be held. The word literally means ‘the five limbs’ and these five limbs are the following—Vaara or the day of the week—the solar day, Tithi or the lunar day, Nakshatra or the lunar mansion, Karana or half of Tithi, and Yoga or the time when all auspicious signs are in conjunction, or when the sun and the moon together accomplish 13 degrees and 20 minutes of space.

(14) The Panch Bhedas or the doctrine of five-fold differences which pertain to the branch of Vedanta philosophy called the ‘Dvaita Vedanta’ whose strongest exponent was Madhavacharya (1238-1317 A.D.). According to this theory, Brahm is different from the Jiva, the living being, as well as the Prakriti or Nature. All the Jivas are different from one another and from the Prakriti. All the objects that evolve out of Prakriti (Nature) are also different from one another. It therefore recognises five aspects of creation—(i) Brahm or the Supreme Being who is also known as Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation as well as its concluder and creator, (ii) Maya which is the indescribable and inconceivable cosmic power that Brahm employs to create delusions and which has revealed as Laxmi, the divine consort of Vishnu, who presides over all worldly assets, (iii) Prakriti or Nature in its all-encompassing connotations, (iv) Jiva or the individual soul or the individual creature, and (v) the inanimate world of non-living things.

(15) The five types or kinds of living beings (people)—These term has many variations. In the Rig Veda, 10/53/4, the five types of creatures that the Hota priest appeals to accept his offerings—The Devtas (Gods), Manushya (human beings), Pitras (spirits of dead ancestors), Pashus (animals) and Pakshis (birds).

According to another interpretation, they are the four Varnas or classes in the society and the sub-class, viz. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras and Nishads (boatman and hunters).

(16) The Mantra of five syllables—(a) The five syllable Mantra dedicated to the Lord Shiva in his form as ‘Panch Brahm’ is the following—‘OM Namaha Shivaye’. [Na + Maha + Shi + Vaa + Ye = 5; the word OM is used as a salutation only.] (b) The five syllable Mantra dedicated to Vishnu is the following—‘OM Vishnave Namaha’. [Vi + Shna + Ve + Na + Maha = 5; the word OM is used as a salutation.]

(17) The five cardinal rules of political conduct—Mitrabheda or breaking of friendship, Mitralaabh or making of friendship, Kaakolukiye or to the attempt to forge friendship between two natural enemies, Labdhapraanasha or to lose something that was acquired with difficulty, and Aparikshikt-karitum or the results of inconsiderate and reckless action.

(18) The five modes of offering worship to the deity—offering of Gandha or sandalwood paste or fragrance, offering Pushpa or flowers, offering of Dhupa or incense, offering of Dipa or lighted lamp, and offering of Naivedya or sweet foods.

(19) The five holy fires--(a) ‘Garhyapatya’—the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies), (b) ‘Dakshinagni’—the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end), (c) ‘Ahawaniya’—the fire lit to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice), (d) ‘Sabhya’—the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit) and (e) ‘Awasathya’—the fire of the later Smriti period).

(20) The five Tormentors--The five ‘tormenters’ are the following— (a) Avidya (ignorance); (b) Asmita (vanity, ego, pride, arrogance, hypocrisy and haughtiness; according to the philosophy of non-duality, to regard the Atma and the subtle body consisting of mind-intellect complex as one); (c) Raag (attachment, infatuation, desire etc.); (d) Dwesh (ill-will, enmity, malice, hatred, confrontationist attitude etc.) and (e) Abhinivesh (fear of death). Refer Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Lanka Kanda, canto 10, verse no.61.]

(21) The five Vikaars or faults or shortcomings or imperfections of the body—According to Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahman 1, section 2, verse nos.1, there are following—viz. (1) Kaam (worldly lust, desires, passions and yearnings), (2) Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness), (3) Asthma or obstruction of breath, (4) Bhaya (fear of physical harm), and (5) Nidra (sleep, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties) (verse no. 1).

(22) The five phases through which the creation passes—conception, creation, expansion and development, existence and sustenance, and conclusion or end.

(23) Panchak—The combination of Daan (giving of alms, making of charities and donation), Laabh (gain or profit or reward), Bhog (enjoyment and sufferance), Upbhog (consumption) and Virya (semen and potency; virility, stamina, strength and vigour).

(24) Panch Kaval—The five mouthfuls of food that are set aside before one begins to eat, and are meant for the dog, some lowly person, a leprosy patient, a sick man, and a crow. This has a symbolic importance—it teaches the man to take care of the downtrodden and the underdogs of society as much as he takes care of himself because

the same Brahm that resides in the body of the person who has sat down to eat a gourmet meal also resides in the lowest of the lowly in this creation.

(25) Panch Ganga—The five holy rivers of India, viz. Ganges, Yamuna, Saraswati, Kirnaa, and Dhutpaapaa.

(26) Panch Nad—The five rivers that flow into the Arabian ocean—viz. Satlaj, Vyas, Ravi, Chenav and Jhelam.

(27) Panch Gabya—The five things regarded as sanctified and used during fire sacrifices and other religious ceremonies—milk, curd, clarified butter called Ghee, cow's dung and cow urine.

(28) Panchaamrit—A concoction made of five things considered as holy and auspicious as nectar, and hence the name 'Panch Amirt' which is prepared by mixing the following five—milk, curd, clarified butter, sugar/treacle and honey.

(29) Panch Kanya—The five women mentioned in the Purans who are regarded as eternally chaste, and therefore called 'Kanya', literally 'a virgin girl'—Ahilya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara and Mandodari.

(30) Panch Gaur—The five sub-castes amongst the Brahmins who inhabited the area north of the Vindhya Mountains—Saaraswat, Kaanyakunj, Gaur, Maithil and Utkal.

(31) Panch Dravid—The five sub-castes of Brahmins who lived south of the Vindhya Mountains—Maharashtra, Tailang, Karnaat, Gurjur and Dravid.

(32) Panch Jan—The following five categories of creatures—Gandharva (a semi-god), Pittar (spirit of dead ancestor), Deva (higher Gods; the creatures with auspicious nature), Asur (non-Gods; the demons; creatures with inauspicious nature) and Rakshas (flesh eating demons; the ogres and cannibals; those who are cruel and merciless).

(33) Panch Tikta—The five bitter herbs used for their medicinal properties—viz. (i) Kantakir (a prickly plant; the silk cotton tree; solanum jacquint), (ii) Saunth (dried ginger), (iii) Kuta in all its three forms (e.g. one called Kutaj—meaning the medicinal plant with the name echites unitedysenterica; the second called White Kutaki—meaning the plant called Helle Bore or picrorrhiza kurrrooa; and the third called Black Kutaki—meaning the plant black Helle Bore or hellborus niger), (iv) Chiraayataa (wormwood plant; gentiana cheratta), and (v) Giloya or Guruch (a medicinal creeper that grows around the Neem tree—the margosa tree).

(34) Panch Naath—The five holy pilgrim sites where five forms of Lord Vishnu are established—Badrinath in the northern Himalayan mountain range, Dwarkanath on the west coast, Jagganath on the eastern coast, Rangnath in the south of India, and Srinath in the western part of India (in the state of Rajasthan).

(35) Panch Pallav—The leave of the following trees which are regarded as sanctified and used in religious ceremonies—'Aam' or mango, 'Jamun' or the rose apple tree which is a kind of black plum, the two types of the wood apple tree—viz. 'Bel' or aegle marmelos and 'Kaith' or feronia elephantum, and 'Bijaura Nimbu' or lime, especially the variety called citrus medica typica.

(36) Panch Paatak—The five great sins are the following—killing a Brahmin, getting intoxicated by drinking wine, theft, sex with a teacher's wife, and company of such people.

(37) Panch Maha Vrat—These are the five great vows, e.g. non-violence and non-killing; truth and non-pretension; not stealing or even eyeing other's property; celibacy, abstinence and self control in all matters; and non-acceptance as well as non-expectation.

(38) Panch Ratna—The five gems such as gold, diamond, blue sapphire, ruby and pearl.

(39) Panch Shabda—The five types of sounds—that made while chanting or reciting the hymns of the Vedas, that made by heralds, that made at the time of cheering victory or applauding any success, that made by blowing the conch shell, and that made by the musical instrument called Nisan, i.e. the kettle drum.

Thus we see that the term Panch Brahm would include a wide swathe of various hues of existential life in this world. These five forms of Brahm known as ‘Panch Brahm’ are nothing but one single Brahm revealed in these forms to carry out the complexities of the varied tasks associated with the governing of creation.

The *Panch Brahm Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda deals with the concept of Panch Brahm in its entirety. It assigns five names to Brahm and then goes on to elaborately explain their significance and relevance to the doctrine that whatever that exists is a manifestation of one single Divinity known as Brahm that is supreme and transcendental. The five names assigned to Brahm in this Upanishad are—Saddyojat, Aghor, Vamdeo, Tat-purush and Ishan. All these names belong to Lord Shiva, so this Upanishad essentially asserts that Shiva—the great Lord called Mahadev—is a personification of all the grand virtues represented by Brahm. Shiva in this manifestation is known as ‘Panchaanam’, the five faced one.

Now, let us analyse the significance of each of these names. The first revelation of Brahm is known as *Saddyojat*—the ‘first one’. Now, at the macrocosmic level of creation from the Vedantic view this would refer to the Hiranyagarbha, the subtle body of Brahm, and from the Puranic view as Brahma the creator from whom the rest of creation was created. In physical terms it would be represented by the ‘earth’ element because whatever was created needed a base to rest and stand upon. Therefore, Saddyojat refers to the powers of Brahm to create. Iconographically, this form is represented by the face of Shiva facing west. This form has been described in verse nos. 5-6.

The second form of Brahm is called *Aghor*, the formidable and awe inspiring one. He symbolises the power of the water element and rules over it—i.e. he is the Lord who is responsible for preservation and nourishing the creation just like water. In other words, the Aghor Brahm symbolises the preservative forces of Nature represented by the water element. Iconographically, his face is pointing towards the south, because in the context of the Indian land mass the vast Indian Ocean is to the south. This form has been described in verse nos. 7-9.

The third form is known as *Vamdeo*—basically because Lord Shiva’s general demeanours are at odds with the way the world likes to live. He is a renunciate par-excellence and lives completely submerged in perpetual meditation, not at all bothered by the niceties and attractions of this material world. This life style would be treated as unconventional and odd by the less-enlightened creatures of the world who remain submerged, neck-deep, in enjoying the material comforts and pleasures of this world. So it is natural they would call him ‘Vamdeo’—the odd, weird, strange and anomalous God. This would be very evident if Shiva is compared with Vishnu and Brahma, the other two Gods of the Trinity. Vishnu is very much engrossed in the upkeep of this world because it is part of his duties—as he is the protector, sustainer and nourisher of this creation. Brahma also remains neck-deep involved in this creation—because had it not been so he

would never have explored means to create creatures who would copulate to propagate themselves. It is only Shiva who remains aloof from this swamp. Further, the word 'Shiva' itself means 'one who is auspicious, beautiful, truthful, enlightened and eternal'. Iconographically, the face of Shiva pointing to the north is called Vamdeo. This form of Brahm is a symbol of the fire element and stands for the power to purify, absorb and purge everything that comes in contact with it—like the fire that burns all impurities and brings out the inherent natural shine in an entity. He is said to rule over this element. This form of Brahm is described in verse nos. 10-14.

The fourth form is called *Tat-purush*—literally 'that Purush', the cosmic form of Brahm known as the Viraat Purush at the macro level of creation. At the physical level, it is represented by the air element because the Viraat Purush is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent and omnipotent as the air element. Iconographically, he is depicted as facing east—primarily because the wind blowing from east to west brings in the moisture laden rain clouds in the context of the Indian land mass, a sign of life and rejuvenation. This form of Brahm is described in verse nos. 15-18.

Finally, the fifth form of Brahm is the best and the most exalted form known as *Ishan*—literally the form which is symbolically the flag bearer, the symbol and emblem of Brahm's supreme sway over the entire creation as well as a mark of Brahm's unequivocal, irrefutable and unalienable power and authority over it. The only God who has been called 'Maha Dev'—the Great Lord—in the scriptures is Shiva; even Vishnu and Brahma do not have the privilege to be honoured by this title. Therefore it follows logically that this supreme Authority is Shiva. *Ishan*—which is Shiva's one name—is also called Sadaa Shiva, the eternal, auspicious and truthful Being; he is the one who gives liberation and deliverance to the creature and lives high in the citadel of the Zenith, the legendary heaven. At the micro level of creation, this form of Brahm refers to the sky element which harbours each single unit of creation that exists, as nothing lives outside 'space'. This face of Shiva has been depicted iconographically in images as facing upwards—towards the Zenith, signifying the highest level of spiritual quest and the most exalted nature of this form of Brahm. The allusion to the sky element also symbolises this citadel along with the fact that one who lives high up in the sky is the senior most God who rules over and controls the entire creation. Further, the sky is regarded as the subtlest of the five elements of creation and the nearest analogue to Brahm. This form of Brahm is described in verse nos. 19-23.

The case of one Brahm revealing in so many forms and assuming as many names can be understood if we take a simple everyday example of the water assuming so many forms and names—viz. ocean, river, rivulet, stream, brook, lake, pond, puddle, well, rain, cloud, ice, glacier, vapour, moisture, steam, mist, dew, nectar etc. Then we have the water which is cold, hot, warm, boiling, frigid; water in a cup and a pitcher; water that is salty, sweet, clean, dirty, murky; water that flows in a river, that is static in a pot, that heaves as huge ocean waves, that is boiling in a pan, that is solid as ice and floats as huge glaciers, that is raining from the sky, that is swirling in a whirlpool etc. Taken fundamentally, there are nothing but molecules of water consisting of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen.

Now, let us examine elaborately how the *Panch Brahm Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, describes the five aspects of Brahm in its verse nos. 5-23. To quote—

“Verse no. 5-6. [These two verses describes the first form of Brahm—Saddyojat.]

Oh Shaakalya! Listen about the most mysterious, enigmatic and esoteric entity that exists in this world—listen carefully. It is known as ‘Saddyojat’ Brahm.

Every sort of mystical powers and authority that exist in this creation, each single unit of creation, each single factor that make up the pieces of the mosaic that complete the composite picture that is acknowledged as this world, is a manifestation of the multifaceted and astoundingly varied personality of the majestic, the stupendous and the supreme cosmic Authority known as the Saddyojat Brahm.

Some of these majestic manifestations of this single Brahm are the following—the Mahi (earth—one of the five elements of creation, the grossest and most evident of the elements; the one which acts as the foundation and base of everything that lives), Pusha (one of the twelve names of Aditya, the Sun God; here symbolising the source of light, heat and energy that injects, fosters and sustains life on earth), Rama (Goddess Laxmi standing for all material wealth in existence), Brahma (the creator of this physical world as well as of the knowledge that exists as he had also created the Vedas which are repositories of all knowledge), Trivit (the triad or triumvirate of creation; the three symbolic corners that enclose the entire creation like the three corners of the triangle—the Trinity Gods such as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, the three Gunas such as Sata, Raja and Tama, etc.)<sup>1</sup>, the Swars (notes of sound which form the basis of the spoken word and which are represented by the vowels and nasal sounds of the Sanskrit language), the Rig Veda<sup>2</sup>, the Grihapatya fire (the holy fire lit in each household and is one of the three divine fires)<sup>3</sup>, the various Mantras (mystical spiritual formulas consisting of syllables, letters, words or phrases having divine powers), the seven Swars (notes of classical Indian music which are used to recite the hymns of the scriptures—viz. Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni), the Varnas (classes in society) such as those who are yellow-complexioned or fair-complexioned<sup>4</sup>, all the activities in this world—called Kriya, as well as the strength, the vitality, the stamina and the ability to carry out these activities—called Shakti (symbolising dynamism of Brahm)\* (5-6).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The *triad or triumvirate* of creation has many connotations as follows—(a) Creation, sustenance and conclusion.

(b) The Trinity Gods—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder.

(c) The three worlds called Triloki—terrestrial, subterranean and celestial; also the Bhu Loka or the earth where we live, the Bhuvha Loka or the sky immediately above the earth where those creatures which fly live, such as the birds, as well as where the spirits live, and Swaha Loka or the far away heaven where the Gods live.

(d) The three Yugs or Eras —Sat Yug or the age when righteousness and virtuousness was at its zenith, Treta Yug when Lord Ram had made his manifestation, and Dwapar Yug when Lord Krishna came.

(e) The three chief human pursuits —love, wealth and duty.

(f) The three qualities that a creature possesses and which determine his temperament and behavioral pattern —‘Sata’ which is the most auspicious noble and righteous of the three qualities, ‘Raja’ where worldly passion and desire are predominant factors, and ‘Tama’ where lowly qualities marked by perversion, evil and sins are the dominant feature.

(g) The three chief tribes or classes into which the human race was divided by the ancients —the Brahmins who were the learned class, the Kshatriyas who were the warrior

class assigned the task of giving protection to the society, and the Vaishyas who did commerce and took care of the societies material needs.

(h) The three primary colours —black, red and yellow.

(i) The three primary scriptures —the Rig Veda, the Sam Veda, and the Yajur Veda.

(j) The *Trivikram*— the word ‘Tri’ is a prefix meaning ‘three’, and ‘Vikram’ means ‘brave, courageous, bold, heroic, powerful, valorous, valiant, strong, best and excellent’. It also refers to Vishnu because he has all these qualities. According to the Puranic concept, Trivikram refers to Lord Vishnu in his manifestation as the dwarf mendicant called Vaaman who had begged the demon king Baali for land measuring three steps as charity. When Baali had agreed, Vaaman revealed his true identity as Vishnu, who was the Viraat Purush who encompassed the whole creation in his own body. So, in one foot Vishnu measured the whole earth, in the second, the whole sky, and in the third the king’s head was measured, symbolically defeating and subjugating him. So, Trivikram refers to the Viraat Purush or Lord Vishnu from whose navel even the creator Brahma was produced aloft a divine lotus with a long stem, and the holy river Ganges emerged from the toe nails of his divine feet. According to Vedas, this Viraat Purush is a manifestation of the supreme, transcendental, attributeless, all-pervading and all-encompassing authority of the universe, known as Brahm. Rig Veda, 10/90/4, states that this Brahm has three legs (Tri) established in the heavens. The macrocosmic male, called Purush, is its first manifestation; from this Purush came into being this creation consisting of ‘those who eat food’ (the living creatures of the zoological realm) and ‘those who do not eat’ (the plants and vegetables of the botanical realm). These three —the Viraat Purush, the living creatures and the non-living things —formed the three legs of Brahm.

(k) The three Divine Shaktis-- The three cosmic energies referred here pertain to the three forms that the supreme Brahm had taken for the purpose of creation. ‘Brahmi’ is the energy with which Brahma creates, and its relevant subtle counterpart here is the power to wish and aspire for and expect something. ‘Rudrani’ is the cosmic energy by which Shiva/Rudra ends this creation, or brings to a conclusion the creation which Brahma had made possible. ‘Vaishanvi’ is the cosmic energy by which Vishnu sustains and nourishes the creation, and its subtle counterpart is taking actions and doing deeds because without actions and deeds, the creation cannot be sustained. For all these activities—creation, sustenance and conclusion, knowledge, wisdom and intelligence are needed because success in any of these requires the requisite expertise and the ability to use and apply it judiciously.

In other words, Brahma makes this creation possible by wishing to do so in his mind. If the creation is righteous and virtuous, it is sustained and nourished by Vishnu, but if it goes wayward and starts committing evil and sins, Rudra takes charge and uses his energy called ‘Rudrani’ to destroy that evil part of the creation. Extending this logic further, we deduce that when the evil tendencies in the world will almost eclipse or outweigh the good qualities, Rudra would completely annihilate the creation, but the remnants of good elements left behind will help Brahma to re-start the cycle of creation once again.

The ‘triad of powers and strengths’ called the Trishaktis that a man possesses are the following—(a) the power to wish and have determination, called ‘Ichha-Shakti’, because it is only when one wishes to do anything and has the determination to do so that he actually does anything at all and strives hard to get success in it; (b) the power, strength and empowerment obtained as a result of acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity, scholarship and expertise. This is called ‘Gyan Shakti’, simply because merely wish and determination wouldn’t suffice if a person does not have the required knowledge and skill, the expertise and wisdom to accomplish his objectives successfully, and (c) the actual ability to carryout his plans to their successful completion,

i.e. the ability to do deeds and perform, to take actions and enter into enterprise, called the ‘Kriya Shakti’, because simply sitting and procrastinating endlessly wouldn’t give success unless there is assiduous activity and diligent effort, no matter how wise a man is and how determined he might be. Besides these three, the following are also called Trishakti or the potential powers present in a man— (a) to have influence, impact, affect and sway upon others, (b) to have enthusiasm, zeal, flourish, drive and courage, and (c) to have a good advise in this world as well as the support of divine intercession or intervention of Gods who should be benign and favorably inclined towards him. Further, the three Goddesses— Kali (the black complexioned goddess of war), Tara, and Tripura also known as Tripur Sundari, are also called the Trishaktis, or the divine cosmic energy which has revealed itself in the form of these three divine Goddesses. These Goddesses are the various manifestation of Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva. Parvati is usually referred to by one single epithet— Shakti —which literally means energy, vitality, strength and powers.

(l) The ‘Trividya’ or the triad of knowledge pertaining to creation has many hues or shades of meanings as follows— (i) It refers to the legendary rewards of righteousness— ‘Artha’ or material well being and prosperity, ‘Dharma’ or possessing righteous qualities, being virtuous and noble, and ‘Kaam’ or being successful in fulfilling all desires; (ii) the creation, sustenance and annihilation of creation; (iii) the three qualities called ‘Sata’ or noble, ‘Raja’ or mundane, and ‘Tama’ or mean and base; (iv) the three classes of society—viz. Brahmin or the learned class who are generally teachers and priests, Kshatriyas or the warrior class, and Vaishyas or the trading and farming class; (v) the three periods of time—the past, the present and the future; (vi) the three states of existence of pure consciousness—the waking state called ‘Jagrat’, the dreaming state called ‘Swapna’, and the deep sleep state of existence called ‘Sushupta’ of the creature; (vii) the three types of bodies of a creature— (a) the gross body consisting of the five organs of perception, e.g. eyes, nose, tongue, ears and skin, as well as the five organs of action, e.g. the hand, the leg, the mouth, the anus, and the excretory organs, (b) the subtle body consisting of the mind intellect complex, and (c) the causal body consisting of the pure conscious Atma. (viii) The ‘Trividya’ is that knowledge which is enshrined in the three Vedas— the Rig, the Sam and the Yajur. This Trividya has been dealt widely in the different Upanishads.

(m) According to the revered sage Adi Shankarcharya’s commentary on Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 7, the *three fundamental aspects of the world* which give the latter three distinct characteristic forms are (1) ‘Bhokta’ or the one who enjoys or suffers, or the consumer who finds pleasure in the objects of this material world as well as the one who has to suffer the consequences of his actions, i.e. the living creature, (2) ‘Bhogya’ or that which is enjoyed or suffered from, or consumed in one form or the other, i.e. the material objects of this consumable world, and (3) ‘Niyanta’ or the one who controls and rules over the other two, i.e. the Supreme Being.

(n) The Triad of Ishwar or the supreme Lord of all that exists, Jiva or the living being or the creature, and Prakriti or Nature—these also form the apex of the triangle which is called the world. [Refer verse no. 9, canto 1 of Shwetashwatar Upanishad.]

(o) According to Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 36, of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the Supreme Being (Brahm) resides in the Triad of creation. Let us see what this verse says in this connection—“36. A person who is aware of the presence of the supreme transcendental Being, the Supreme Being, in all the three places<sup>1</sup>, the three paths<sup>2</sup>, the three forms of Brahm<sup>3</sup>, the three Akchars or letters<sup>4</sup>, the three Matras<sup>5</sup>, as well as in the ‘Ardha Matra’ or the half-syllable<sup>6</sup>, is the one who is deemed to be truthfully wise, erudite and enlightened about the fundamental tenets of the Vedas and the essence

of their teachings (in the form of the great sayings called the Mahavakyas and other maxims and axioms of the scriptures).”

{<sup>1</sup>The *three places* where Brahm resides are the three states in which consciousness exists, viz. the waking state, the dreaming state, and the deep sleep states of consciousness. The three places also refer to the three worlds called Triloki—viz. the terrestrial world represented by the word ‘Bhu’, the sky above the earth represented by the word ‘Bhuvaha’, and the heavens represented by the word ‘Swaha’. Besides these interpretations, the three places refer to the three planes of time—viz. the past, the present and the future. <sup>2</sup>The *three paths* are the following—the two extreme paths, one that leads to his pomp, reputation, glory and fame, and the other that causes just the opposite to happen, leading to his ill-fame, ignominy and degradation, and the third path is the median one of moderation marked by detachment, dispassion and non-involvement. According to some versions, these three paths are represented by the three aspects of the fire sacrifice by which the Supreme Being is worshipped, viz. ‘Dhum’ or the aspect of the fire sacrifice when there is smoke and much sputtering and crackling of the firewood before it catches fire properly, ‘Archi’ or the aspect of the fire sacrifice when the flames are burning brightly and brilliantly, and ‘Agati’ or the concluding part of the sacrifice when some firewood or other offerings remain half-burnt or incompletely burnt, leading to either smoldering pieces of leftovers or the residue of the extinguished fire. <sup>3</sup>The three forms of Brahm are the following—the ‘Vishwa’ representing the gross form of the visible world in which the individual creature lives in his waking state of consciousness, the ‘Viraat Purush’ representing the gross form of the invisible cosmic parent body in its cosmic plane of waking state from which all the individual creatures of this world have come into being, and ‘Brahm or Ishwar’ which that entity from which even this Viraat has evolved. Another interpretation of these three forms of Brahm is its manifestation as the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder. <sup>4</sup>The *three letters* are the three letters of OM, i.e. A, U and M. These three letters cover in their ambit the entire gamut of creation, viz. ‘A’ covers birth, ‘U’ covers growth and development, and ‘M’ indicated death or conclusion.

<sup>5</sup>The *three Matras* of Brahm are represented by the three phases in which this creation has evolved as a fraction of Brahm. These are called ‘Hrisva/Hrasva’ or the small beginning indicating the primary forms of life such as algae and fungi, the ‘Dirgha’ or the most evolved and wide spread form such higher animals and humans, and ‘Plut’ symbolising the rudimentary forms left after the creation come to the end, or the conclusion of the creation itself. If these are applied to the divine word OM standing for Brahm, then the letter ‘A’ stands for Hrisva/Hrasva, the letter ‘U’ for Dirgha, and the letter ‘M’ for Plut.

<sup>6</sup>The *half-syllable* stands for the incomplete sound of M pronounced at the fag end of saying OM when the mouth is closed, thereby denying the letter ‘M’ to be pronounced with its full glory with an open mouth as in ‘mouth’.

<sup>2</sup>There are four Vedas—the Rig is said to be the first, followed by Sam, Yajur and Atharva.

<sup>3</sup>The *holy fires* are the said to three in number and they are the following—(a) ‘Garhyapatya’—the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies, (b) ‘Dakshinagni’—the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end, (c) ‘Ahawaniya’—the fire lit to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice. The three aspects of fire are said to be the following—the terrestrial fire that sustains life on the earth, the fire of the heavens which is used by the Gods, and the fire of the nether worlds

or hell which is used to punish sinners. Worship of the three important fires have been described in *Chandogya Upanishad*, canto 2, section 24, while canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24 explain their great symbolic metaphysical significance.

<sup>4</sup>The *Varnas* in the society are the following—The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are—(a) Brahmins<sup>1</sup>—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras —the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged. {<sup>1</sup>The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) ‘Riju’-be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) ‘Tapa’-should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) ‘Santosh’-be contented and satisfied, (4) ‘Kshamaa’-to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) ‘Sheel’-to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) ‘Jitendriya’-to have self control over the sense organs, (7) ‘Data’-to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of others, (8) ‘Gyani’-one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) ‘Dayaalu’-to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahmin.] An entire Upanishad called Vajra-shuchiko-panishad, belonging to the Sam Veda tradition is devoted to the subject. The eclectic virtues of Brahmins have been expounded in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahman 5 as well as in Canto 3, Brahman 8, verse no. 10.]

These four classes of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped as well as feels the pain equally if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. The four classes had specific jobs cut for them so that the society could function smoothly.

The Brahmins have their origin from the mouth of Brahma the creator. Since the mouth is used to give advice and teach others, the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as moral guide to their brethren. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exist, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas, who were created from the arms of Brahma, were those sons of his who would give the needed protection and security to their other brethren. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour to provide for the maintenance and financial and material well being of the society for merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life. So he created the Vaishyas from his thighs, symbolising labour, to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life. But there must be someone who would

do the daily chores, such as tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras created from Brahma's feet symbolising service.

The reasons for classification has been laid out in Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 10, which states that—"The skin, blood, flesh, bones and the Atma/soul have no caste, creed, colour or race. These have been conceived as a practical measure to regulate and control our day to day behaviours and interactions with each other."

The Subalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse 6, and Canto 2, verse 1 describes the origin of these four classes in society.

The Paingalo-panishad of the same Veda, in its Canto 1, verse no. 7 and Canto 2, verse nos. 3, describes how the three basic Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama were used by the supreme Brahm to create different types of creatures in this creation.

None of these classes were meant to be inferior or superior to one another; they were all parts of the body of the same Brahm. See also Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 1/4/11-15 which describes their origin in graphic details, and also Aetereyo-panishad, 1/1/4.

Colour of the skin—It ought to be noted here that the genesis of creation as outlined by the Upanishads describe the colour of the skin of the creatures that came into being. The colour of the skin was used symbolically to indicate the dominance of one or the other of the three basic Gunas, the Sata, the Raja and the Tama, in a particular individual that determines to which class of society he belongs, and which formed the basis of this classification which depend heavily on the quality displayed by an individual to become eligible to belong to one or the other class. The Gunas displayed by him holds a greater importance than his mere birth in a particular section.

For example, in Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 5 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition it is said that Maya, which has created this entire world by its delusion creating powers, has the following three colours—white (fair; grey; all the light shades), dark (brown, black, yellowish and all shades of colours that are not essentially white) and blood red (or copper colour). Since the offspring gets the colour of the skin of the parent because the colour often is indicative of the race to which a particular species belongs, there would therefore be creatures having these three basic colours in varying hues and shades. Now what is the significance of these three colours? These *three colours* represent the three basic qualities, called Gunas, present in all the creatures. Even as an offspring gets the colour of the skin of the race to which it belongs, the inherent characters of all creatures are inherited from their mother, and this mother is Maya. The white colour stands for the best category of qualities called Sata Guna, the red colour stands for the second and medium quality called Raja, and the dark colour stands for the meanest quality called Tama. The word Tam itself means 'dark' and it stands for the worst type of qualities leading to sinful and pervert nature in a man which makes his life hellish; the word 'red' is a metaphor for anger, vehemence, vengeance, agitations, restlessness, short temper, strife, hatred, envy, jealousy and the other such negative worldly characteristics in a person; the colour 'white' stands for peace, tranquility, prosperity, happiness and wisdom, all of which are the characters of noble and gentlemanly persons. Refer also Shewata-shwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse 4-5; Paingalo-panishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3; Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 5 in this context.

\*It would be noted that all the entities listed in these verses pertain to the life on earth. The sun, material wealth, the three Gunas, Brahma the forefather of creation represented by the man, the Rig Veda which was primarily used to do the rituals of the fire sacrifice, the Garhyapatya Agni or the household fire, the Mantra used for rituals etc.—all of them without exception. That is, this form of Brahm, the Saddyojat Brahm, relates to that aspect of Brahm that creates.]

“Verse no. 7-9 = [These three verses describe the second form of Brahm—the Aghor.]

The next form of Brahm is known as ‘Aghor Brahm’. It assumes these forms—Salil (water—the second gross element after earth; the nectar which preserves and fosters life), Chandra (the moon), Gauri (the divine consort of Shiva; the cosmic Mother), the Yajur Veda which has the epithet ‘Nirdhava’ (the dark colour like that of the dark rain-bearing cloud)—i.e. the Krishna Yajur Veda, Swar (here meaning the vowel sound ‘Oo’ as in ‘full’ which is the fifth vowel of the Sanskrit language), Sandra (that which is smooth and lubricating; the virtues of affection, warmth and friendliness), and Dakshinagni (the fire lit as a witness to making charities and other offerings at the time of a fire sacrifice)<sup>1</sup> [7].

Besides this, the entire living world which has a name and attributes, complete with all its characteristics and features are symbolically encrypted in the fifty alphabets of the Sanskrit language (including the vowels and consonants). Nothing exists with a name and attribute that does not come within the ambit of these alphabets. All the activities of this world also come within the ambit of the alphabets. [Since the alphabets are the building blocks of the language, everything that can be defined and described must come within this periphery. Here it refers to the visible and mortal world that is describable and definable by words. In other words, this entire world which is ‘visible, known, living, describable and definable’, the world whose ‘deeds and activities can be described and known by the use of words’, the auspicious as well as the inauspicious things that can be clearly explained and cited for future reference—they are all manifestations of Brahm. Since this world is a ‘formidable and awe inspiring’ proposition, it is indeed the ‘Aghor’ Brahm revealed in this form.]

This Aghor Brahm is possessed with the stupendous powers to preserve and give protection to those who take his shelter, those who are tormented and seek solace. [This is done by good advice and words of wisdom which are given by the medium of words which in turn need alphabets and the expertise with language and expression. That is why emphasis is laid not only on the alphabets but the other aspect of this virtue—the ability to speak pleasant words, words that can be understood and welcome as is made evident when it is said that Aghor Brahm is revealed in the form of *Swar*—meaning, among other things, a melodious voice and its sweet and endearing tenor. The Aghor Brahm is preservative in nature as it is revealed in the form of water element.]

This Aghor Brahm is able to eliminate all sorts of miseries and fears. He can destroy all evil and malignant forces. He can bestow all the glories and fortunes in the world to the creatures. [This is because a wise man who speaks auspicious words is like a beacon of good hope for the society—removing its miseries, giving solace, helping it to overcome evil and malignant forces, and generally spreading prosperity and goodwill.] [8-9]. (7-9).

[Note--<sup>1</sup>In other words, all these elements of creation and the virtues that they stand for are manifestations of the same virtues that are inherently present in the cosmic Authority known as Brahm, the Supreme Being. The word *Aghor* means someone who is formidable and awe inspiring. All these revelations of Brahm are indeed such.

For example, on the one hand *Salil* (water) is most fearsome awe inspiring when one sees its ferocious and ruthless form in a deep ocean during storms or any severe storm for that matter accompanied by dark foreboding clouds that thunder, rumble and show their anger by streaks of blinding lightening—symbolising the quality of *Nirdhava*, while on

the other hand it is the nectar of life—soothing and lubricating, or possessed of the quality of *Sandra*. The same thing would apply to the rain bearing clouds called Nirdhava because of their dark colour, or to all the forces of Nature which are benevolent as well as malevolent at one time or the other.

The *Chandra* (moon) is beautiful to look at, but the same full moon is the harbinger of tides and evil spirits; it is the time when thieves and evil messengers of the night go out on prowl. The dark disc of the moon caused chill in the spine when one, for example, has to cross a dangerous country in the night. No one can rely on the moon for showing direction in the night because not only it changes shape but the location in the sky—shifting every day and even changing the time of its rising and setting.

The goddess *Gauri*, as the name suggests, is fair complexioned, most affectionate and docile in appearance, but her formidable and merciless nature cannot be underestimated—it was she who had revealed as the most potent of the pantheon of goddesses in her manifestation as Kaali and Durga, the ferocious slayers of demons in the battle field. Besides this, Gauri is the goddess who personifies Mother Nature in all her glorious magnificence.

The sound of *Oo* is generally uttered when one is overcome with sudden exhilarating emotions or when is utterly surprised. It is even euphuism for disgust and dismay. That is, it is a sound that depicts astonishment, awe, dread, wonder and fear of something.

The *Dakshinagni* is usually lit at the end of a ritual as charities, donations or alms are given at end of ceremony. Hence, it is also feared because it is a witness to these noble deeds, and any deed stands fast in the court of law if the witnesses to the deed ratify that they were indeed done. So more than the deed, it is the witness that has to be kept in good humour.]

“Verse no. 10-14 = [These five verses describe the third form of Brahm called ‘Vamdeo’.]

The form of Brahm as ‘Vamdeo’ has the following grand virtues—he is a bestower of great knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment; he is like fire personified (i.e. he has the astounding potential and vigour as possessed by the fire, he is as powerful and potent as fire, as purifying and rejuvenating as the fire which is the third element of creation after earth and water).

He is illuminated with the light that is a metaphor for knowledge and wisdom. It is as brilliant and splendid as millions of suns (signifying the power of knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment) [10].

He is a personification of the virtues of Anand (extreme sense of bliss, happiness and joys, of ecstasy and exhilaration, of beatitude and felicity). The Sam Veda with all its melodious connotations and singing patterns is its revealed form. [The Sam Veda is usually sung melodiously, set to beautiful music with all its captivating charm, as opposed to other Vedas which are chanted or recited in unison or even read quietly in seclusion, and therefore it fits in well with the observation that this form of Brahm is a personification of Anand—for music is indeed exhilarating and uplifting for the soul.]

Since singing obliges one to have a soothing and melodious voice, a voice which is sweet and pleasant, is mellowed and steady, and is able to sustain long notes and tones while singing, this form of Brahm is a personification of these virtues. [A melodious, pleasant, welcoming and sweet voice is the best gift that a man possesses; it endears him to everyone and at all places and time. Further, singing of the Sam Veda requires special skills, and all these qualities would distinguish a man from the rest. In other words,

Brahm is not an ordinary God, but it is the sweetest, the most skilled, and the wisest entity in creation. Another connotations is this—‘the mellowed from of sound as indicated by the first vowels of Sanskrit language—viz. ‘A’ as in ‘a man’, and ‘Aa’ as in ‘master’ are indicative of Brahm’s virtues that signify the origin of creation. This is because to pronounce the letters ‘A’ and ‘Aa’ one has to open one’s mouth which symbolise the start of the process of creation.]

He is revealed in the form of the Ahavaniya holy fire, the best of the fires. [This fire is lit at the beginning to invoke the Gods and welcome them, hence is like the herald of good and auspicious intentions in creation.] [11].

Since Gyan is a personified form of this Brahm, it is very potent and powerful in slaying one’s enemies (represented by ignorance and delusions). It is empowered with great authority, strength and potentials in this respect.

This Brahm is ‘Avaya’, i.e. it is imperishable, undiminished and infinite, and a personification of unmatched Shakti, i.e. it is a fount of divine cosmic energy, stupendous strength, great powers and astounding potentials.

His complexion is Shukla (white) in colour. [This word is indicative of, one, semen which is a metaphor for vitality, potency and stamina, symbolising its ability to create and propagate the creation, and second, the Sata Guna which is the best, the most auspicious and noblest virtue in creation. This word ‘Shukla’ also refers to the Shukla Yajur Veda.]

Inspite of the fact that he is such an exalted entity, he has the low quality called Tama in him. [This is because if we are expected to take it for granted that everything in existence is Brahm personified, then it obviously includes the darker side of creation along with the brighter side. The darker side is symbolised by the word ‘Tama’—meaning dark, while the brighter side is symbolised by the word ‘Shukla’—meaning white. In other words, Vamdeo Brahm possesses the unique and often paradoxical qualities that defy understanding. It is not without reason that Brahm has not been able to be defined even by the Vedas, and they threw up the towel, saying ‘Neti Neti’—not this not this.]

He (Vamdeo Brahm) is completely enlightened, wise and realised. No knowledge escapes it; it is a personification of these auspicious virtues [12].

He (Vamdeo Brahm) is not only the regulator and controller of the three worlds, but also has revealed himself in the form of these three worlds. [The three worlds are the ones revealed in the form of the three words uttered by the creator at the time of creation—viz. ‘Bhu’ referring to the terrestrial world, ‘Bhuvaha’ to the world above the earth, i.e. the sky, and ‘Swaha’ meaning the heavens where the Gods live. These three worlds also symbolically refer to the three states in which the consciousness exists—viz. the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or the dreaming state, and Sushupta or the deep sleep state which correspond to the Vishwa, Taijas and Pragya forms of existence.]

He is a bestower of all good fortunes and auspiciousness to all the creatures in creation. He gives the rewards to all according to the deeds done by them [13].

He is honoured by the eight ‘Akchars’. [That is, he is praised by a Mantra having eight letters or syllables. This Mantra is ‘OM Namoha Mahadevaye’.] It also means that he has revealed himself as the eight elements<sup>1</sup> of creation that are ‘imperishable, eternal and infinite’ by nature—i.e. are ‘Akchar’.

This supreme Divinity lives in the heart that is symbolically like a divine lotus with eight petals. [This vision of the heart as a lotus of eight petals is expounded in the Upanishads dealing with Yoga and Tantra.] [14]. (10-14).

[Note--<sup>1</sup>According to the definition of Prakriti as described in the standard Sanskrit-English Dictionary of Sir Monier Monier-Williams, M.A., K.C.I.E., the *eight* fundamental Elements or Tattwas are the following—one Avyakta (that supreme entity that is un-manifest and untangible but nevertheless at the basis of everything that exist) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (the inherent nature of having ego and pride) + and five Tanmatras or the subtle bodies consisting of the five sense perceptions, such as the faculties of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. These are also called the Prakriti or nature of an individual creature at the micro level as well as of the creation at the macro level.

According to the philosophy of Vedanta, these *eight* fundamental Elements or Tattwas in creation are the following—earth, water, fire, wind and sky constituting the gross body of the creature, and the two other subtle elements consisting of the Mana (mind and intellect) and ‘Ahankar’ (ego, pride) which constitute the subtle body of the creature.]

“Verse no. 15-18 = [These five verses describe the fourth form of Brahm called ‘Tat-purush’.]

The form of Brahm that has been described as ‘Tat-purush’—literally ‘that Purush’—is manifested in the form of the air element; he wears the body of the air element. [The ‘Purush’ here refers to the Viraat Purush who is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. He is all-pervading and all-encompassing, all-powerful and omnipresent like the air or wind element. At the same time, this Purush is invisible and imperceptible but nonetheless all-important like the air element without which life is impossible to imagine. The air is the second subtlest element in existence after the sky element, and therefore occupies the second place away from Brahm—just like the Viraat Purush who represents the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm and who is two steps away from Brahm, the first place being occupied by Hiranyagarbha which is the subtle body of Brahm.]

This form of Brahm (i.e. as the air), in association with the five forms<sup>1</sup> of the subtle fire element, controls the effectiveness of the various Mantras and infuses these Mantras with their stupendous mystical and dynamic powers. [The Mantras are basically letters or words that are injected with astounding cosmic dynamic forces of Nature in coded form, which when decoded and harnessed can produce magnificent and magical results—both in terms of obtaining spiritual benefit as well as to gain temporal rewards. The Mantras need the force of the vital winds present inside the body, called the Pran, in order to be empowered and activated. They are said to embody the five fire elements because they are ‘very hot, powerful, potent, unrelenting, unforgiving and effective like the fire element’ when employed for any purpose. The Mantras have to be ‘said’—uttered, chanted, recited or spoken aloud—to make them effective in a religious ceremony, such as the fire sacrifice. Speaking and hearing needs air, either as the breath which creates sound in the throat and empowers the man to chant the Mantras, or as the medium through which sound travels. Therefore, the Mantras are said to be wearing the body of the air element.] [15].

This form of Brahm is revealed in the form of all the fifty letters of the Sanskrit language—inclusive of the vowels and consonants. The Atharva Veda is also its

manifestations. [Every form of Veda needs words to be expressed and preached, and therefore the need for letters. Since the Vedas are repositories of all knowledge, they are embodiments of Brahm, who is the eclectic virtues of wisdom, erudition, sagacity, knowledge, enlightenment, expertise and skill personified.]

He is the Lord of all living beings, and the entire world is his body [17].

His countenance/complexion is red like blood. ['Blood' is a symbol of life and its vibrant energy. The colour 'red' is regarded as the auspicious colour in Hinduism, and along with yellow and green form the metaphoric colour for auspiciousness, vitality, virility, vibrancy and potency. That is why it is used as a dot worn on the forehead by married women as well as Brahmins and other noble classes in Hinduism. It is a sign of their higher status—not caste-wise but in practical terms to indicate that they are believers and follow the tenets of good living as laid down in the scriptural canons.]

He is the fulfiller of all wishes and aspirations; he is the eliminator of all torments and miseries. He is the only cause that is behind the coming into existence of this creation, is responsible for its sustenance and protection, and is the one cause of its final dissolution.

He is the bearer of all Shaktis, all the dynamic forces of Nature, visible or invisible [17].

He is established and symbolises the fourth state of existence of consciousness, called the Turiya state, which goes beyond the other three states (called Jagrat—the waking state, Swapna—the dreaming state, and Sushupta—the deep sleep state of existence). That is why he is honoured and lauded by the grand and majestic epithet of 'Brahm'.

He is the one who creates everything in existence so much so that he is the one who is served and praised by such exalted Gods as Brahma the creator and Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation [18] (15-18).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The five forms of the divine fires are the following-- The *five holy fires* have been elaborately described in *Chandogya Upanishad*, canto 4, section 10 to 13. There are five formal divine fires—(a) 'Garhyapatya'—the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies, (b) 'Dakshinagni'—the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end, (c) 'Ahawaniya'—the fire lit to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice, (d) 'Sabhya'—the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit, and (e) 'Awasathya'—the fire of the later Smriti period.]

“Verse no. 19-23 = [These five verses describe the fifth form of Brahm called 'Ishan'.]

The fifth form of the supreme transcendental Brahm known as Ishan should be regarded as the one who inspires the greatest of wisdom and enlightenment in the creature. He is the Lord who is personified as 'Buddhi'—the higher level of the mind, the 'intellect and intelligent thinking' (that distinguishes an ordinary man from an enlightened, wise and erudite one who is analytical and balanced in his approach to the problems of life and who would rather ponder and see deep into things to unravel the secret truth behind the external façade which might be misleading to say the least).

He is merely a witness to what is happening around him. [That is, the supreme Brahm is dispassionate towards everything. He would not take sides with anyone, and

would judge the creature and determine his destiny in a cool fashion according to the latter's deeds and actions. In his manifestation as the intellect of the creature, he remains neutral and disassociated with the deeds and actions of the body and what happens in the surrounding world so that the information collected by the mind can be dispassionately analysed by it and a well-considered judgment be given. The intellect is supposed to be unbiased and uninvolved like a judge in a court of law to ensure that the decisions and deductions that a man makes are up to the mark, free from any bias and pre-conceived ideas.]

He is manifested in the form of the sky; is as invisible and without any specific attributes as the sky. [The sky is the subtlest of the five elements that came into existence, and is the nearest analogue to Brahm. Brahm has all the qualities typical of the sky—viz. the sky is vast, fathomless, infinite, colourless, taintless, all-pervading, all-enclosing, omnipresent, attributeless, indefinable, and beyond reach. Everything that exists is within the boundary of the sky, for there is nothing beyond the sky. All these qualities are suggestive of Brahm.]

He is revealed in the form of the cosmic all-pervading ethereal background sound called Omkar or Pranav that permeates throughout the sky; the sky is pregnant with it. This Omkar was the seed from which all forms of Swars (sounds and languages, the power to speak and the faculty that governs it in the mind) were born. That is, Brahm is revealed in the form of the sound element that originates in the space of the sky and then spreads out in it to finally fade and merge into the vast bowls of the sky, leaving no trace whatsoever<sup>1</sup>. [The implication is this—If everything that exists is within the periphery of the sky representing Brahm, then it must have a point source of origin just like the sound which originates from one given source, spreads out to cover the entire space available to it, dissipates its energy and then fades into oblivion or disappears into the same space of the sky from which it originated, without leaving a trace. No one can hear that sound any more. Likewise, the world originates from this Brahm, evolves and develops into its present and future forms that covers the entire space of the sky, and then collapses and merges into this singular Brahm represented by the open space of the sky when it (the world; the creation) has run its full course and dissipated all its energy.] [19].

He embodies all the divine forces of creation called Gods—or conversely, all the Gods are his manifestations. He is calm and quiet, tranquil and serene—in fact, he not only epitomizes these virtues but transcends them. [This is because he is present in the period when the creation has ended and before the new wave of creation starts. This is the period of silence and peace that cannot be achieved once the process of creation starts, because then Omkar or the ethereal sound would have come into existence, and till it lasts for life and sound are synonymous. There he represents that calmness that precedes and proceeds sound—the phase of transcendental peace.]

He is manifested in the form of the first signs of life represented by the first alphabet of the Sanskrit language, i.e. the letter 'A' as in the words 'son or done'. [There is another connotation of this—the letter A is the first syllable of the word OM representing the ethereal cosmic sound called Pranav. To pronounce this letter, one has to open one's mouth, which is a metaphoric way of saying that the creation of the world has just took off.]

Similarly, he is manifested as the sky which forms his body, and therefore is as vast and colossus, as measureless and fathomless, as eternal, infinite and imperishable, as

taintless and attributeless, as all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent, and as majestic and grand as the sky. Nothing exists that is beyond Brahm in the form of the sky. Besides this, he is as subtle and indefinable as the sky element. He survives this creation and precedes it like the sky which remains even after this world comes to an end and from which it re-emerges in the next phase of creation [20].

He is the controller of this creation having five aspects, facades or facets. In fact, all these five are symbolic faces of the same cosmic all-pervading Brahm who is supreme and transcendental. In other words, the entire creation is a manifestation of this all-incorporating and all-encompassing Brahm [21].

This supreme Panch Brahm concludes his own creation revealed in his own likeness and which is his own body, both at the macrocosmic level of creation as well as at the microcosmic level, by withdrawing it in him self (like the octopus withdrawing its tentacles). He concludes the expansion of his own Maya (which is the delusion creating power of Brahm and revealed as Prakriti or Nature) and remains perpetually established in his eternal self [22].

The primary form of Brahm, i.e. Ishan, is supreme and he transcends all the manifestations in which he has revealed himself, first as the five-faced or five-faceted Panch Brahm, and then expanded his own self to form the five-folded creation<sup>2</sup>.

He shines with his own light (like the sun); he requires no extraneous source of light to shine. The radiance and splendour that emanates from him is self effusing and come out uniformly from all parts in equal intensity—whether it is the periphery or the center. That is why he is called the self-illuminated and self-created Supreme Being [23]. (19-23).

[Note--<sup>1</sup>The first evidence of life was represented by the sound that was produced due to vibrations created in the cosmic ether present in the primordial space. The energy generated by these vibrations was the first spark that set off a chain reaction. Since sound needs a medium to travel, this space was deemed to be filled by the cosmic fluid, the ether that metamorphosed into the primordial jelly as time progressed which in turn transformed into the cosmic embryo, the Hiranyagarbha, lodged in the cosmic womb of the sky. That is why the infant born from it was called Viraat—one that is vast and colossus like its parent. Silence is the opposite of life that is vibrant and boisterous; silence is eerie and tantamount to death--that is why we have the phrase ‘the silence of death’. So therefore, Omkar or Pranav marks the presence of a vibrant and robust life full of vibe and energy—which are metaphors for the creative and energetic aspects of Brahm.]”

In *Kalagni Rudra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 3 there is a reference of the Panch Brahm in the context of the Tripundra (the three horizontal lines) worn by the religious Hindu on his body (forehead, chest and shoulder) when the Mantras of the Panch Brahm are invoked by making these lines.

The *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, in its Brahman 1 describes these five forms of Brahm but in a different way in the context of creation. Let us examine what it has to say—

“When there was only water everywhere, it was from the Shakti or dynamic powers of Brahm in his cosmic first subtle form as Saddyojaat Shiva that earth came into existence. The earth emerged from this all-encompassing fluid water as a solid ground.

Upon this earth was then created the benevolent and merciful cow known as 'Kapilaa'. This is because her skin was reddish-brown with white spots, and also because she was most docile, simple and harmless. It is from its dung that the Vibhuti was created. [The word *Vibhuti* has two meanings—one refers to the ash of the fire sacrifice, and the second meaning refers to the virtues of excellence, dignity, majesty, glory, prosperity, wealth, riches, and supernatural powers such as the many Siddhis etc. that made their appearance on earth at the beginning of creation. According to the first meaning, the cow produced dung which upon drying up was reduced to coarse powder because of the natural disintegration process. This was like the ash of the sacrificial fire pit. According to the second interpretation, the word Vibhuti would mean the virtues mentioned above. She represented all the excellent things that the creator was so considerate to create before he created other living beings so that when they were eventually born they would have no shortage of anything. As an example he gave milk to this cow so that before the creature learnt to hunt for food he would have a ready-made supply of nourishment for his survival ready at hand. This is the reason why the cow is so revered amongst the Hindus because of the fact that not only was it first born or preceded human beings thereby becoming their ancestor but also embodied all the glorious virtues that were ever created on earth.]

The second subtle form of Shiva is called Vamdeo who produced a sweet fluid which was like sweet water, and the earth was floated on it. [In other words, the first primordial 'water' from which the earth emerged refers to the vast cosmic ether that is symbolised by the salty ocean, and this second sweet 'water' refers to the underground water that is found under the solid surface of the earth. It is this water that is found in wells and springs. Since it surrounds the earth as a ring underneath the surface, the solid outer surface of the earth where terrestrial creatures and trees grow is virtually floating on this inner ring of sweet water. The salty water of the ocean floats on the surface of the earth and not vice versa.]

The next to come into existence was the cow with a dark skin, and it was called 'Bhadra'. [The word Bhadra refers to the female gender and implies a creature that is most gentle, courteous, noble, calm, poised, sober, modest and humble.]

It was from the dung of this cow that Bhaasit (dried form of the dung as powder symbolising the sacred ash of the fire sacrifice) was created. [This is the second type of ash.]

From the third subtle form of Shiva known as Aghor was created the fire. He produced Vidya or knowledge and the cow with a red (copper-coloured; dark brown) skin. The Bhasma was produced by its dung when it dried up. [This is the third type of ash.]

From the fourth subtle form of Shiva called the Tat-Purush was created the air or wind. From the air/wind was created the virtue of 'Shanti' meaning peace, calmness, restfulness and tranquility, and the next form of cow with a white complexioned skin. This cow was called 'Sushila'. [The word Sushila is the female gender of the virtues of being sober, courteous, pleasant in one's demeanours, gentle, amiable, affable, modest, polite, suave, obliging, cordial and naturally good.]

It is from her dung that saltiness and alkaline things (chemical) called Kshar were created.

From the fifth form of Shiva called the Ishan was created the sky. He also produced Shakti or the dynamism that could overcome Shanti. [In other, peace and tranquility can be disturbed by use of force by an intruder. This intruder is likened to the sky because he comes in suddenly as if from the ‘blue sky’ like lightning striking upon the earth from the sky and causing unwarranted havoc.] The next cow having multi-coloured skin was then created. Her dung produced ‘Raksha’—literally meaning the capacity to give protection. [The significance of the ‘ability to protect’ having its origin in the cow of ‘multi-coloured skin’ is that only a society with versatile qualities and abilities would be able to protect itself and survive in the face of harsh existential conditions.]”

The *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, paragraph no. 5 says that the sacred ash of the fire sacrifice, known as the ‘Bhasma’, should be accepted by the worshipper by saying the Mantra ‘Maanastak Saddyo-jat’ etc. dedicated to the Panch Brahm. It says—“The Bhasma (the ash) should be accepted by saying the Mantra ‘Maanastok Sadyo-jaat’ etc. that is dedicated to the Panch Brahms (the five divine subtle forms of the supreme Brahm).

The worshipper should pay his respects to the Bhasma and bow his head to it by saying the Mantra ‘Agniriti Bhasma; Vayuriti Bhasma; Jalmiti Bhasma; Sthalmityi Bhasma; Vyomiti Bhasma; Deva Bhasma. Sarwa Ha Va Atadidum Bhasma Putam Pavanam Namaami’. [Briefly, this Mantra means that the sacred Bhasma is an embodiment of the supreme Brahm in the five subtle forms or elements of creation such as the fire, the air, the water, the earth and the sky. The Bhasma symbolizes all the divine Gods at once. It is as holy and divine as these Gods and the elements representing Brahm. The Bhasma represents the glories and divinity of all the forms of Brahm at once. I bow my head most reverentially before such a glorious and divine Bhasma’.]

This Bhasma is empowered with mystical and supernatural powers that fulfills all the desires of the worshipper and helps him be successful in all his endeavours (5).”

These five forms of Brahm are invoked at the time of applying the sacred Bhasma (ash of the fire sacrifice) on the various parts of the body be an ascetic as described in the *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Brahmam 3, verse nos.31-32 as follows—“31-32. Clean water is then added in drops seven times by saying the Mantra ‘OM’ (representing Pranav or Brahm).

The Bhasma prepared as above should be applied on the various parts of the body along with the pronouncing of the relevant Mantras as follows—On the head by saying the Mantra for Ishan, on the forehead and other frontal parts of the head by saying the Mantra ‘Tatpurush’, on the thighs by saying the Mantra of Lord Aghor, on the genitals by saying the Mantra for Lord Vamdeo, and on the legs by saying the Mantra for Saddyojat\*.

Thereafter, the supreme Mantra OM which precedes all the Mantras and is the crown jewel of a Mantra (as it directly relates to the supreme transcendental Brahm) is pronounced while applying (smearing, spreading) the Bhasma on all the organs of the body. [That is, after it has been applied to the specific places mentioned above, the remainder of the Bhasma is picked up in the fingers and spread over the body while saying OM.]

In the above described method, the sacred and consecrated Bhasma should be applied to all the organs of the body from the leg to the head (31-32).”

**The 16, 64 and 128 Matras or aspects or Kalaas of Brahm—**

References = (i) Atharva Veda’s Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8, verse no. 3; Param Hans Upanishad, verse no. 6.

(i) The *Param Hans Parivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, verse no. 6 describes 16 Matras or aspects of Brahm in the context of the four states of existence of consciousness and its sub-divisions. Now, let us examine what it has to say on the subject—

“verse no. 6 = ‘Pranav Brahm has sixteen Matras or aspects. [These ‘Matras’ of Brahm are also known as ‘Kalaas’ of Brahm.]

There are four states of existence of consciousness, and each of them has four aspects, bringing the total to sixteen.

There are said to be four primary states of existence of consciousness—viz. Jagrat or waking state, Swapna or dreaming state, Sushupta or deep sleep state, and Turiya or post Sushupta state of existence of consciousness<sup>1</sup>. Each of these primary states is further divided into four more subtle sub-classes of existence bearing the same names as the four primary states.

Hence, the first primary state of existence known as ‘Jagrat’ or waking state of consciousness has four subtle secondary states as sub-divisions or sub-classes known as Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya.

Similarly, the second primary state of existence known as ‘Swapna’ or dreaming state of consciousness has four subtle secondary states as sub-divisions or sub-classes known as Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya.

Likewise, the third primary state of existence known as ‘Sushupta’ or deep sleep state of consciousness has four subtle secondary states as sub-divisions or sub-classes known as Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya.

And finally, the fourth primary state of existence known as ‘Turiya’ or trans-Sushupta state of consciousness has four subtle secondary states as sub-divisions or sub-classes known as Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya.

Thus, the first primary state of consciousness known as ‘Jagrat’, when considered on a macro plane or level of existence, produces the vast external ‘Vishwa’ or the gross world of material sense objects. This state in which the consciousness becomes aware of the external world includes four sub-levels, and each exists as a world in its own right. Hence, during the ‘Jagrat’ state we have the following four classes of Vishwa (external visible, gross world) known as ‘Vishwa-Vishwa’, ‘Vishwa-Taijas’, ‘Vishwa-Pragya’, and ‘Vishwa-Turiya’.<sup>2</sup>

The same principle is applied to the other three states.

Therefore, the second primary state of consciousness known as ‘Swapna’, when considered on a macro plane or level of existence, produces the subtle world known as ‘Taijas’ (literally meaning an entity that is glorious, effulgent, radiant and splendorous; here referring to the world of dreams which is more splendorous, charming, magnificent and fascinating than the real gross world of physical gross existence). This state in which the consciousness becomes aware of the subtle world that is imaginary but appears to be true as it is created by the glorious creative abilities of the mind and the sub-conscious

includes four sub-levels, and each exists in its own right. Hence, during the ‘Swapna’ state we have the following four classes of existence of Taijas world—‘Taijas-Vishwa’, ‘Taijas-Taijas’, ‘Taijas-Pragya’, and ‘Taijas-Turiya’.

Similarly, the third primary state of consciousness known as ‘Sushupta’, when considered on a macro plane or level of existence, produces the subtler world known as ‘Pragya’ (literally meaning an entity that is inherently wise, all-knowing, omniscient, enlightened and erudite). In this state the consciousness is free to see its own self because it is freed from the distractions caused to it by constant inputs from the gross organs of the body in relation to the external world and from the mind and its sub-conscious engaged in imagining a fascinating world of dreams. Hence, the consciousness is able to turn peacefully inwards and see the world of its own, and it is therefore called ‘Pragya’ as it is the world of enlightenment, wisdom, knowledge and erudition as opposed to the gross world known as Vishwa of the Jagrat state, and the subtle world known as Taijas of the Swapna state. Now, as in the previous cases, this Pragya also has four categories as follows—‘Pragya-Vishwa’, ‘Pragya-Taijas’, ‘Pragya-Pragya’, and ‘Pragya-Turiya’.

Finally, the fourth primary state of consciousness known as ‘Turiya’, when considered on a macro plane or level of existence, produces the subtlest form in which the consciousness exists, the world known as the transcendental world or Turiya world. It is so-called because it crosses the outer limit of Sushupta in the sense that having reached this state, the consciousness does not have to revert back to the earlier three states of Sushupta, Swapna and Jagrat. It’s virtually a permanent state of bliss and ecstasy when no awareness of any thing in its gross form exists, and the bliss and ecstasy are irreversible. Like the earlier three cases, this state is also sub-divided into four categories as follows—‘Turiya-Vishwa’, ‘Turiya-Taijas’, ‘Turiya-Pragya’, and ‘Turiya-Turiya’.

Since consciousness and all forms of existence are nothing but Brahm, the super-consciousness, in all these forms, it follows that Brahm has sixteen Matras or forms or aspects.

[Now, this concept of sixteen Matras of existence of consciousness of an ordinary Jiva or living being in this creation is applied to the grand metaphysical concepts of OM as well as the various states in which consciousness exists when an aspirant is engaged in meditation and contemplation. This helps to draw a parallel between them and establish a sense of seamless uniformity in creation. It also establishes the principle of non-duality by proving that it is the same Brahm that exists in all planes of existence, whether gross or subtle, where micro or macro level of creation is taken into consideration.]

The first letter ‘A’ of the divine word OM<sup>3</sup> standing for Pranav is equivalent to the ‘Jagrat-Vishwa’ form of Brahm which is the latter’s first aspect. [This refers to the first step of the Jagrat or waking state of existence of consciousness.]

The second letter ‘U’ of the divine word OM standing for Pranav is equivalent to the ‘Jagrat-Taijas’ form of Brahm which is the latter’s second aspect. [This refers to the second step of the Jagrat or waking state of existence of consciousness.]

The third letter ‘M’ of the divine word OM standing for Pranav is equivalent to the ‘Jagrat-Pragya’ form of Brahm which is the latter’s third aspect. [This refers to the third step of the Jagrat or waking state of existence of consciousness.]

The ‘Ardha Matra<sup>4</sup>’ (half-syllable) of the divine word OM standing for Pranav is equivalent to the ‘Jagrat-Turiya’ form of Brahm which is the latter’s fourth aspect. [This

refers to the fourth and final step of the Jagrat or waking state of existence of consciousness, and precedes the Swapna state.]

The ‘Bindu’<sup>5</sup> (the dot; the point-source of creation) of the divine word OM standing for Pranav is equivalent to the ‘Swapna-Vishwa’ form of Brahm which is the latter’s fifth aspect. [This refers to the first step of the Swapna or dreaming state of existence of consciousness.]

The ‘Naad’<sup>6</sup> (the cosmic sound of creation; the dish-like sign placed below the dot on the top of a letter to represent the crucible of creation) of the divine word OM standing for Pranav is equivalent to the ‘Swapna-Taijas’ form of Brahm which is the latter’s sixth aspect. [This refers to the second step of the Swapna or dreaming state of existence of consciousness.]

The ‘Kalaa’ (the various forms or aspects of the gross creation when considered in a holistic and comprehensive manner) is equivalent to the ‘Swapna-Pragya’ form of Brahm which is the latter’s seventh aspect. [This refers to the third step of the Swapna or dreaming state of existence of consciousness.]

The ‘Kalaa-teet’ (the various forms or aspects of creation that transcends the known world and pertains to the subtle world) is equivalent to the ‘Swapna-Turiya’ form of Brahm which is the latter’s eighth aspect. [This refers to the fourth and final step of the Swapna or dreaming state of existence of consciousness just prior to the Sushupta state.]

The ‘Shanti’ (the peace, calmness, serenity and tranquility that is obtained when the consciousness reaches the Sushupta state) is equivalent to the ‘Sushupta-Vishwa’ form of Brahm which is the latter’s ninth aspect. [This refers to the first step of the Sushupta state of existence of consciousness.]

The ‘Shanti-Ateet’ (the peace, calmness, serenity and tranquility that is obtained when the consciousness reaches the higher state of Sushupta) is equivalent to the ‘Sushupta-Taijas’ form of Brahm which is the latter’s tenth aspect. [This refers to the second step of the Sushupta state of existence of consciousness.]

The ‘Unmani’ (the state of existence in which the mind has lost all interests in the gross world and the gross body; it is usually employed in the context of Yoga—refer Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 7, verse nos. 17) is equivalent to the ‘Sushupta-Pragya’ form of Brahm which is the latter’s eleventh aspect. [This refers to the third step of the Sushupta state of existence of consciousness.]

The ‘Mano-mani’ (the higher state of existence in which the mind has lost all interests in the gross world and the gross body; it is usually employed in the context of Yoga—refer Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 7, verse nos. 10) is equivalent to the ‘Sushupta-Turiya’ form of Brahm which is the latter’s twelfth aspect. [This refers to the fourth and the last step of the Sushupta state of existence of consciousness.]

The ‘Turyaa’ (the first stage of Turiya state of existence that transcends the Sushupta state; the transcendental state of the mind and the sub-conscious; the so-called Vaikhari state in which a self-realised ascetic or hermit exists) is equivalent to the ‘Turiya-Vishwa’ form of Brahm which is the latter’s thirteenth aspect. [This refers to the first step of the transcendental state of existence of consciousness known as Turiya.]

The ‘Madhyamaa’ (the second stage of Turiya state of existence) is equivalent to the ‘Turiya-Taijas’ form of Brahm which is the latter’s fourteenth aspect. [This refers to the second step of the transcendental state of existence of consciousness known as Turiya.]

The 'Pashyanti' (the third stage of Turiya state of existence) is equivalent to the 'Turiya-Pragya' form of Brahm which is the latter's fifteenth aspect. [This refers to the third step of the transcendental state of existence of consciousness known as Turiya.]

The 'Paraa' (the fourth and the final stage of Turiya state of existence that is the 'supreme and most exalted' state; the word 'paraa' means one that is supreme, most exalted and transcendental) is equivalent to the 'Turiya-Turiya' form of Brahm which is the latter's sixteenth and final aspect. [This refers to the fourth and the ultimate step of the transcendental state of existence of consciousness known as Turiya.]

[Now, this concept is being explained in the context of OM. If it is deemed that the entire creation is incorporated in the ethereal word OM that is synonymous with Pranav and Brahm, then these sixteen Matras of Brahm vis-à-vis the four states of consciousness as narrated above can be applied to the different aspects of OM as follows—]

The four Matras or aspects in which the Jagrat state exists represents the four fractions of the first letter 'A' of the word OM. [These four Matras are 'Jagrat-Vishwa', 'Jagrat-Taijas', 'Jagrat-Pragya' and 'Jagrat-Turiya'. Hence, the first aspect or Matra of OM represented by its first letter 'A' symbolizes these four sub-divisions of the Jagrat or the waking state of consciousness in this creation.]

The four Matras or aspects in which the Swapna state exists represents the four fractions of the second letter 'U' of the word OM. [These four Matras are 'Swapna-Vishwa', 'Swapna-Taijas', 'Swapna-Pragya' and 'Swapna-Turiya'. Hence, the second aspect or Matra of OM represented by its second letter 'U' symbolizes these four sub-divisions of the Swapna or the dreaming state of consciousness in this creation.]

The four Matras or aspects in which the Sushupta state exists represents the four fractions of the third letter 'M' of the word OM. [These four Matras are 'Sushupta-Vishwa', 'Sushupta-Taijas', 'Sushupta-Pragya' and 'Sushupta-Turiya'. Hence, the third aspect or Matra of OM represented by its third letter 'M' symbolizes these four sub-divisions of the Sushupta or the deep sleep state of consciousness in this creation.]

And finally, the four Matras or aspects in which the Turiya state exists represents the four fractions of the Ardha Matra of the word OM. [These four Matras are 'Turiya-Vishwa', 'Turiya-Taijas', 'Turiya-Pragya' and 'Turiya-Turiya'. Hence, the fourth and final aspect or Matra of OM represented by its Ardha Matra symbolizes these four sub-divisions of the Turiya or the transcendental state of consciousness in this creation.]

The 'Brahm' that has been described above is known as 'Pranav' or cosmic Consciousness that is all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-knowing and the supreme transcendental Authority and the absolute Truth in creation.

It is this supreme transcendental Brahm that is worthy of being worshipped and sought by Param Hans Avadhuts (higher categories of Sanyasis or Parivrajaks) who have reached the transcendental stage of existence.

This transcendental knowledge is able to reveal the secrets and mysteries of Brahm; it virtually 'illuminates' Brahm and makes it known or accessible by way of realisation and enlightenment.

It is the way that leads to 'Videha Mukti'—or the form of spiritual liberation that transcends the level of gross existence and is not limited to just discarding the gross body

upon death but actually being separate from the body even while living in it. Of course, the word 'Videha' means 'without the body'—but here it means to live in such a way that spiritual aspirant is completely unaware of the existence or non-existence of the body. Since he has become exemplarily self-realised and enlightened, he has understood that his 'true self' is not the gross body but the Atma which is pure consciousness personified. This Atma, he realises, is different, distinct and independent from the body. [He thus feels no physical pain or discomfort; he feels no thirst or hunger; he has no attractions for the sense objects of the world simply because these are the functions of the body; he has no friends or enemies for they are also limited to the body.] (6).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The *four states of existence* have been explained in great detail in a number of Upanishads.

The Atma or the soul which is pure consciousness and true self of the creature has many states of existence according to metaphysics—e.g. the 1<sup>st</sup> state called the waking state or 'Jagrat', the 2<sup>nd</sup> state called the dreaming or 'Swapna', and the 3<sup>rd</sup> called the deep sleep state of consciousness or 'Sushupta'. There is a 4<sup>th</sup> state also, and it is called 'Turiya', which is obtained as a result of going beyond the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of deep sleep, and it is a permanent state of bliss and felicity in which the conscious Atma usually lives in ordinary people who are said to be self-realised. Beyond this 4<sup>th</sup> state is the Turiyateet, literally the state which is beyond the Turiya state and in which the Atma (pure consciousness) is free from all the encumbrances and characters displayed by it during the other four states. Therefore, Turiyateet would be the 5<sup>th</sup> state of existence of the Atma, and the higher transcendental state when the spiritual aspirant experiences oneness with Brahm. Whereas the Turiya state is the hallmark of those who are self-realised, the Turiyateet state is the benchmark for those who are Brahm-realised.

To start with the understanding of these different states of existences of the consciousness, we have to begin with the fundamental two states in which the creature lives in this world. These two are the following—(1) the *waking* and (2) the *sleeping* states. For the purposes of analyzing the behaviour and existential states of the creature during these two fundamental stages, they have been classified into three distinct states as follows—the waking state called 'Jagrat', the dream state called 'Swapna', and the deep sleep state called 'Sushupta. Beyond these three, there are two transcendental states called Turiya and Turiyateet states of existence of the consciousness in which self-realisation and Brahm-realisation are possible, or which mark the state in which those who are self-realised and Brahm-realised exist. We will now endeavour to analyse all these five states of existence of the conscious Atma in simple terms in brief.

According to the Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 11, there are three types of world that the Jiva lives in. They pertain to the three states of consciousness in this world. They are Vishwa (the world as the individual creature perceives it in its waking state of consciousness), Taijas (the world as the individual creature perceives it in its dreaming state of consciousness), and Pragya (the world as the individual creature perceives it in its deep sleep state of consciousness).

(a) The 1<sup>st</sup> stage is called waking or *Jagrat*. During this state, a creature's sense organs that constitute its gross body are active and they receive inputs from the physical material world outside which they in turn transfer to the mind which forms the creature's subtle body. This mind then filters through the clutter of information, then either orders the organs of action to respond accordingly, or it consults its supervisor, the intellect, for advice. Meanwhile, the mind stores all the information in its data bank for future reference much like the record room of an office. The true self of the creature, the pure conscious Atma, is like the King in whose secretariat the mind and intellect work, and therefore the Atma is the final Authority which takes the final decision and is responsible

for all the things done by each of these individual entities. Even as the King cannot absolve himself for the sins committed by his subjects during his rule or plead ignorance of whatever is happening in his kingdom though he is not directly involved in them or in the day to day routine work of the kingdom as he stays in his palace and cannot be practically expected to control each movement in his kingdom, but he is morally responsible for them and cannot deny this responsibility. Similarly, the Atma of the creature is responsible for each and every thing that the creature does though the Atma is limited to its palace-like residence in the heart of the creature. So, the otherwise immaculate Atma is accused of things that body or mind of the creature does because the Atma is at the helm of affairs.

During this Jagrat state, the Atma interacts with the outside world through the medium of the sense organs of the gross body (i.e. the physical body). The sense organs of perception of the body collect information from the external world and pass them over to the mind, which in turn processes them and passes necessary instructions to the organs of action on the one hand, and files data for future reference in its memory bank on the other hand. The mind would also refer to the intellect those things which are not routine in nature. It is the transcendental state of supreme enlightenment and self-realisation.

The Jagrat state is when the consciousness is aware of the external world of material objects, and this is made possible through the medium of the sense organs of perceptions such as the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin which enables the creature to respectively see, hear, smell, taste and feel this world. The creature's responses are carried out with the help of the organs of action such as the hands which receive, the legs that take him to the desired place, the mouth that helps him to speak and eat, the excretory organs that helps it to eliminate waste from the body, and the genitals which helps him to recreate and enjoy the sensual pleasures of the world. These organs are located in the gross body, and since the world is experienced through them, the latter is also deemed to be gross. The coordination of all the perceptions and actions is done by the mind-intellect which is the subtle part of the body.

The first stage of Jagrat or waking state of consciousness has been beautifully described in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, Brahman 1, verse no. 20; Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 16-19, 31, 34-35.

The Jagrat state of consciousness has also been described in the Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 3, verse no 5.

(b) *Swapna* or dreaming state is the 2<sup>nd</sup> state of consciousness when the latter has withdrawn its self from being actively involved in the outside world through the medium of the sense organs of perception and action. But the mind does not sleep and remains active as before, though this activity is at the subtle level of the sub-conscious. Here, the consciousness remains active through the medium of the vital winds, called the various Prans present inside the body, and moves in the different Naadis (tubular ducts in the body, such as the nerves and veins etc.) which keep the mind working. Refer Shukla Yajur Veda's Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 12, and Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahman 1, verse no. 18; Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse no. 20; Krishna Yajur Veda's Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 58-60; Rig Veda's Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad of Rig Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 19.

This Pran is deemed to be synonymous with the life factors and consciousness in the body as well as with the latent fire element present inside the body which gives the energy, strength and vitality to the body to live and remain active. If it were not for the fire element (Tej) and the wind element (Pran), the consciousness (Atma, the 'self') would have found it difficult to live in the body. In fact, the Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 3 clearly states that the Pran in its manifestation as Agni or fire.

Since no external stimuli is being received from the outside world, the mind begins to replay what is stored in its memory bank and uses its stupendous abilities to imagine and recreate situations and circumstances in an imaginary world of dreams. Since the Atma living in the causal body depends upon the mind living in the subtle body to feel or sense anything pertaining to this world, for all practical purposes therefore the Atma begins to live in this new world of dreams conjured up by the mind and gets as involved in it as it was during the waking state. Since the mind is active here, the man remembers some of his dreams even when he wakes up. So as far as the Atma is concerned, the two states of waking and dreaming means the same—the world exists for it in both these two states.

During the sleeping stage, the Atma sees dreams. This is called Swapna state of existence of the consciousness. In metaphysical terms it is called *Supta*. This is the sleeping state of consciousness. Here, the creature is alive because it's Pran or the vital winds move around and remain active in its different Naadis (tubular ducts in the body such as the nerves which number seventy thousand).

The Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 2 very precisely describes what sleep is.

The Pran oscillates between the Jagrat and Supta states of existences (i.e. between the waking state of consciousness and the sleeping state of consciousness) as described in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse no. 16-18, 34-35.

According to Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 12, when the creature is in dreaming state of existence, his Prans (vital life-consciousness represented by the vital winds) moves along the various Naadis (tubular ducts in the body).

The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in Canto 2, verse no. 61, describes how 'dreams' are seen.

(c) Beyond the second state of existence of consciousness is the third eclectic state called the *Sushupta* or deep sleep state. This has been elaborately dealt with in the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, Brahman 1, verse no. 19; Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 14-15, 19, 21-30. During this stage the creature does not dream.

The Sushupta or the deep sleep state of consciousness is the 3<sup>rd</sup> state in which the mind has also become defunct, and the Atma has withdrawn itself into the exclusive domain of the causal body and lives in seclusion, disconnected with the external world because of the non-involvement of either the gross body or the subtle body. Here it is surrounded by the space of the subtle sky around the heart, called the Hridya Akash. During this state of existence, the vital winds, called the Pran or 'life' of the creature, keep on moving in the different Naadis (various ducts such as nerves and veins etc.) as during the dreaming state so as to keep the body alive as is evident from the fact that all the subtle and imperceptible functions of the inner organs of the body such as the liver, kidneys, heart, pancreas, digestive organs, lungs etc. continue uninterrupted as before, because if they cease to function the body would die. It is the mind now that has gone in a defunct state. But this phase is temporary and shows the true nature and fundamental characteristic of the Atma, which is blissful and peaceful, contented and fulfilled, not feeling restless and perplexed in any manner whatsoever because it is now not being disturbed by the mind's constant nagging. That is why a sound asleep man does not want anything, he does not feel anything, he is not worried about anything, he is not concerned about anything, and he does not remember anything. That is also why one feels very relaxed and refreshed after even a short deep sleep when the mind and the body both find their rest.

The Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 4, verse no. 6 describes in clear terms why a creature stops dreaming.

(d) Then comes the 4<sup>th</sup> state of existence of the Atma, and it is known as *Turiya* state. This state is reached when the third state becomes a perpetual phenomenon instead of being only a temporary phase. Once this state of *Turiya* is reached, then even though the man might wake up from sleep and appears to be going about his normal duties in a routine manner in this world, his pure consciousness remains aloof and distanced from the sense organs of perception and actions as well as from the mind. This is the ‘transcendental state’ of existence of consciousness, and it goes beyond the third state of *Sushupta* or deep sleep state of consciousness. Here the spiritual aspirant lives in a state of perpetual *Samadhi*. That is, he remains in a constant state of blissfulness and meditation though he lives in this physical world and goes about his normal affairs like an ordinary man.

During this 4<sup>th</sup> state called ‘*Turiya*’, the Atma acquires all the characters of the earlier three stages, viz. the waking, the dreaming and the deep sleeping states in their individual form as well as in a combined and composite way. In this state of spiritual existence, the consciousness exhibits all the traits of the earlier three states at the same time along with the unique traits which would obviously be a net result of the combined affect of all the individual traits that are so unique to each of these three earlier states of existence consciousness—viz. the waking state, the dreaming state, and the deep sleep state.

The 4<sup>th</sup> state of existence of the consciousness or Atma is also called the ‘*Turiya Chaitanya* state’. In this state, the creature exists in its purest form as the pure consciousness which is undiluted, uninterrupted and unpolluted by any impulses or inputs from the external world. This results in its pristine and immaculate form as ‘consciousness’ to shine through (much like the flame of the candle which shines with all its brightness and splendour once the tainted glass covering around it is removed). This consciousness is the true ‘self’ of the creature and its real identity.

Thus, it is the Atma or the pure consciousness as the true ‘self’ of the creature that is the witness of the existence of the other three states in which the creature lives. This ‘self’ or Atma is imperishable and without a birth or beginning. This is because the other three states continue to appear and disappear in a rhythmic cycle as the creature wakes up to face the world after his phase of sleep is over, only to go back to sleep again when it is exhausted, and wake up again refreshed and rejuvenated from sleep. But the fourth state is like the Sun in the sky which is steady and shines constantly upon the world and lights it up. This Sun is unaffected by anything happening in this world and to this world, and remains completely dispassionate and detached from anything mundane and terrestrial. Nights and days appear and disappear in a cyclic manner, but the Sun remains the same. During the night it is erroneously assumed that the Sun is no more, but as science has proved the Sun is there in the sky though it might not be visible to the creature during that period of time called the ‘night’ as it is shining on the outer side of the globe. The day is comparable to the waking state of consciousness, the moon-light night to the dreaming state of consciousness when a man is able to see this world but with a different light, while the dark night when nothing is visible is comparable to the deep sleep state of consciousness when nothing of the external world is visible.

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 64, describes what the practical implication of this *Turiya* state of consciousness is.

The *Subalo-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 9, verses 1-7 elaborately describes the fourth state of existence of the consciousness called the *Turiya* state. It says that the bliss and happiness, collectively called ‘*Anand*’, which is found in the 4<sup>th</sup> state of existence of the consciousness called ‘*Turiya*’ when one experiences and witnesses the divine supreme transcendental Being (*Brahm*), also ends with *Turiya*. It is the ‘final frontier’, the ultimate goal that the soul strives to reach. So, when the fount of bliss (*Anand*) is reached in the *Turiya* state, nothing more is left to be achieved or

acquired. As soon as a man abandons this supreme state of existence and wakes up into this mundane existential material world, he immediately loses that bliss which he was enjoying in the Turiya state. The word Turiya means 'fourth quarter', and once this segment is reached after crossing the first three quarters, there is nothing beyond it and the complete cycle is achieved. There is accomplishment of all that has to be accomplished; there is the 'final coming home, full cycle' for the soul. Everything comes to a full stop.

Being thus enlightened about the truth, the man moves ahead to the next phase called 'Turiya' state of existence. In this state, there is no fear of death, no sorrows, no torments, no sufferings and no perplexities pertaining to this world. It is marked by eternal bliss, peace, tranquility and happiness. In this state the man realises his truthful form, and thus all the causes for his taking birth are rendered null and void. That is, the seed in the form of his unfilled desires and hopes as well as the consequences of his past deeds is made sterile. The 'seed' does not find compatible ground to survive and sprout into new shoots. Therefore, the 'tree' in the form of this world and representing the endless cycle of 'tree-seed-tree' symbolising birth and death is uprooted from its roots for ever.

This final quarter or state of existence called Turiya is marked by glorious virtues, such as of being equivalent to Amrit (the ambrosia of eternity and bliss), of being fearless, of being without any sufferings, pains, sorrows, torments, anguish, grief and distress of any kind, of being eternal, infinite and without an end and limitations, and of being in a state that has no 'seed' or cause from which a person would have to take any birth again. Such a person is called 'Turiya', i.e. one who has crossed the barrier, one who has traveled full circle and has attained final liberation and deliverance. Hence, he attains the supreme transcendental Brahm. [In other words, as has been said above, he comes home after having traveled full circle, and therefore has no need to go over it once again in order to find his home where he would ultimately retire and take his final rest!]

<sup>2</sup>This concept can be understood by a simple illustration. Suppose there are four types of bottles marked A, B, C and D. Each type has four bottles, hence we have four bottles of type A, four of B, four of C, and four of D, bringing the total number of bottles to sixteen. Now we are provided with four coloured liquids marked L1, L2, L3 and L4, and are asked to fill the four bottles of each category with each of these four liquids. When the filling is completed and the bottles are lined up and labeled, we will have a total of sixteen filled bottles, grouped in four categories of four bottles in each category as follows—

Bottle of type 'A' having liquid 'L1'; bottle of type 'A' having liquid 'L2'; bottle of type 'A' having liquid 'L3'; bottle of type 'A' having liquid 'L4'; bottle of type 'B' having liquid 'L1'; bottle of type 'B' having liquid 'L2'; bottle of type 'B' having liquid 'L3'; bottle of type 'B' having liquid 'L4'; bottle of type 'C' having liquid 'L1'; bottle of type 'C' having liquid 'L2'; bottle of type 'C' having liquid 'L3'; bottle of type 'C' having liquid 'L4'; bottle of type 'D' having liquid 'L1'; bottle of type 'D' having liquid 'L2'; bottle of type 'D' having liquid 'L3'; and bottle of type 'D' having liquid 'L4' = 16 bottles.

In this example, suppose the four types of bottles stand for the four states of existence of consciousness—viz. bottle of type 'A' represents Jagrat, bottle of type 'B' represents Swapna, bottle of type 'C' represents Sushupta, and bottle of type 'D' represents Turiya.

Similarly, suppose the four coloured liquids stand the name assigned to this consciousness in each of these states—viz. liquid of type L1 represents Vishwa, liquid of type L2 represents Taijas, liquid of type L3 represents Pragya, and liquid of type L4 represents Turiya.

Therefore, we will have the following sequence—(i) Category A = ‘Jagrat-Vishwa’; ‘Jagrat-Tijas’; ‘Jagrat-Pragya’; ‘Jagrat-Turiya’; (ii) Category B = ‘Swapna-Vishwa’; ‘Swapna-Tijas’; ‘Swapna-Pragya’; ‘Swapna-Turiya’; (iii) Category C = ‘Sushupta-Vishwa’; ‘Sushupta-Tijas’; ‘Sushupta-Pragya’; ‘Sushupta-Turiya’; and finally (iv) Category D = ‘Turiya-Vishwa’; ‘Turiya-Tijas’; ‘Turiya-Pragya’; ‘Turiya-Turiya’ = 16 states or aspects of the same consciousness.

An important point to note is that the existence of four sub-divisions in any one state of existence is a system adopted of grading the same consciousness into different subtle levels within the same state. It is like the system of grading students in school or college—those within the general grade ‘A’ are sub-divided into two or more categories such as A++, A+, A and A—.

<sup>3</sup>Briefly, the monosyllabic word OM actually consists of three letters when analysed—viz. A, U and M. The letter ‘A’ stands for the origin of creation, the letter ‘U’ signifies the development and expansion of this creation, while the letter ‘M’ stands for conclusion. Other metaphysical connotations of these three letters have been elaborately described in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 74-79 and Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 6, verse nos. 3-10 of Sam Veda.

<sup>4</sup>The *Ardha Matras*/Maatraas—The Ardha Matras are the half-syllables used in Sanskrit language and placed above, below, before and after an alphabet to give it a proper sound. It gives the concerned alphabet a proper form besides giving a meaning to the word of which the alphabet with its Ardha Matras is a constituent part. According to the Ram Uttar-Tapini Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 4/40, Lord Ram has been viewed as a personification of this ‘Ardha Matras’. It symbolises the fact that without him the creation loses its meaning, glory and existence even as a word loses its meaning and impact without the alphabets having proper Ardha Matras.

In the context of OM, the Ardha Matra refers to a half-syllable placed at the end of the third letter ‘M’ of OM in the form of a ‘Halant’ or a mark of an oblique line placed below M. In the symbol of OM, it is represented by a horizontal ‘S’ sign placed to the right groove of the symbol which represents the long vowel sound of ‘Ooo’ in Sanskrit (like in *boot*). Normally, the letter ‘M’ of the word OM is to be hummed in a prolonged sound stretching into infinity. But since it is not done and the worshipper becomes silent, it is called ‘half Matra’ or half syllable. It is tantamount to conclusion of the word OM, and since OM is envisioned as representing the whole gamut of creation, this Ardha Matra is symbolic of conclusion of creation. That is why it is accompanied by the universal fire of destruction called the Samvartak Agni.

The Atharva-shikha Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Kandika 1 says that the Ardha Matra of OM represents the Moon God, the Mantras of the Atharva Veda, the Maruts (the Wind God), the Viraat Chanda and the Samvartak Agni. It is the fourth leg or Paad of Brahm and follows the third letter ‘M’ of OM.

The Tripadvibhuti Maha-Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 7, paragraph no. 68 says that Lord Vishnu represents the Ardha Matra.

<sup>5-6</sup>The Bindu and Naad—The word ‘Bindu’ ordinarily refers to a ‘dot’ placed on the top of a Sanskrit alphabet to produce the nasal sound of a resonating ‘N’ or of ‘M’—as in *ring* or *rim*. It is equivalent to the reverberations of primordial sound created at the beginning of creation, and from which the rest of the subtle forms of sound were generated. It is called Naad in this context of creation.

The Naad and Bindu are collectively called the ‘Chandra Bindu’. It is a sign resembling a concave crucible or shallow plate over which is placed a dot at its focal

point. It is a 'moon-like spot' and hence called the 'Chandra' (moon) 'Bindu' (a dot). It is a nasal sound equivalent to the letter 'N' as in the words *can't*, *mount*, *taint* or *taunt*. The Moon is regarded as the heavenly pitcher of Amrit, the elixir of life and the ambrosial fluid of eternity and bliss. The Bindu is a drop of this Amrit. Hence, in metaphysics the term Chandra Bindu is used to refer to the supreme transcendental Brahm and the spiritual state of realisation of pure conscious 'self' when the aspirant enjoys bliss and experiences a surge of ecstasy. This is a metaphoric way of saying that he tastes Amrit dripping from the Moon.

The concept of *Bindu* (a 'dot' or a 'drop') and *Naad* (the cosmic 'sound') have a close association with the concept of OM (the ethereal word representing the supreme transcendental Brahm) and its iconographic depiction as a symbol in the form of the sixth alphabet of the Sanskrit language, i.e. the long vowel sound 'Ooo' as in 'boot or root'. Amongst the various Upanishads that describe this concept are Naad Bindu, Dhyan Bindu, Tejo Bindu and Yogshikha (Canto 3, verse nos. 2-11).

This OM is a representative of the supreme transcendental divine entity known as Brahm which predates this existence and lasts even after this world is concluded. In fact, this creation would fall back to merge into this Brahm and re-emerge from it at the time of a new beginning much like waves in an ocean rising and falling into the water again and again. This Brahm is in a neutral, a-dynamic and attributeless state in the period before the process of creation began. Then when the time came for the creation to come forth, energy and necessary strength and relevant power were needed. This is called 'Shakti' aspect of Brahm which was inherent to Brahm but in a latent form. The 'point' whereby this Brahm revealed his Shakti is called a 'Bindu'. It is also like a 'drop' of the cosmic sperm emerging from the cosmic Purush, the invisible Father of creation, which contain all the necessary energy, strength, vigour and vitality needed to initiate the process of creation. Hence, Bindu is Brahm's 'Shakti' aspect; it represents the 'dynamic principle of Brahm'. In Tantra literature, Brahm is treated as Shiva, and his energy is called a Shakti represented by the Bindu. Since OM is a symbol for Brahm, this Shakti was put on top of this symbol in iconography to depict this fact in visual term.

Now came the revelation of this Shakti—and that was done in the form of Naad, the 'cosmic sound'. Since only the invisible ether was present in the beginning, this Shakti caused a ripple in it which spread in the form of waves. Waves have kinetic energy and this set in 'motion' the process of creation. Modern science has shown that the origin of this universe was in a Big Bang, and this means that there was a 'single point' where this 'explosive bang' occurred—a clear reference to the concept of a 'Bindu' (point) and its accompanying 'Naad' (sound). It was from this Bindu that the cosmic debris spread out by the force of this explosion to distant corners of the available space to act as nuclei for the umpteen numbers of planets and star systems that would eventually evolve to form the universe as we know of it today.

Since Bindu was the energy of Brahm that was not visible, it is therefore the un-manifest dynamic force of Brahm and very closely associated with the latter; it is a part of Brahm. The Naad is a revealed form of this Shakti as it is the cosmic sound which can be actually heard. Since Naad had its origin in Brahm and is a manifested form of the stupendous energy contained in an un-manifested form in the Bindu, it is constantly associated with them much like the electromagnetic waves (Naad) of a radio broadcasting station, the speaker (Brahm, the consciousness) who broadcasts the news and the transmitter tower (the Bindu) are inseparable from one another.

The concept of 'Bindu' and 'Naad' can be understood in another plane also. The cosmic process of creation needed the injection of a cosmic sperm to initiate the process of the creation of the cosmic embryo. This sperm would come from the cosmic Father, i.e. Brahm. Brahm in the context of metaphysical interpretation of creation would be the

‘causal body of the cosmos’ because it is the ‘cause’ of it all. The ‘drop’ of sperm ejaculated by this Father (Brahm) had the stupendous creative power and energy that provided the necessary spark. The word ‘Naad’, in addition to its conventional meaning of ‘sound’, also means a big open concave ‘bowl or dish or crucible’ for storing liquid, which in the context of creation meant the cosmic womb of Nature. So, when the cosmic Father (Brahm) dropped one ‘drop’ of his sperm (Bindu) into the crucible (Naad), the cosmic conception was affected and the process was initiated. From this conception there emerged the Hiranyagarbha, the yellow egg of the cosmos, which in terms of Vedanta would be the macrocosmic ‘subtle body’ of creation. When this cosmic egg matured, the macrocosmic gross body emerged in the form of the Viraat Purush.

The stupendous and astounding powers that Brahm inherently possesses are highlighted in the context of the most fascinating, majestic and magnificently wondrous world it has created using its own energy called Shakti. Had this creation not been in existence, the powers of Brahm would not have come to the fore. In other words, the active principle of Brahm is revealed in the form of the Shakti.

Since the Bindu is regarded as the Shakti principle of Brahm in Tantra literature because it is this principal point from where the primary form of active and dynamic Brahm started to reveal its self in the form of Naad, it is likened to the ‘fire element’. The Naad itself is sound and the latter needs the medium of ether to travel as waves and spread in all the directions. Therefore, Naad is likened to the ‘wind element’.

For the purpose of Yoga practice, the Bindu is depicted as the dot present on the top of the symbol of Naad, i.e. the sixth Sanskrit alphabet ‘Ooo’, symbolising the focal point in the cosmic bowl from where this sound is generated and where the mind is supposed to be focused during meditation so that Naad can be heard. The location of this Bindu in the body is the center of the two eyebrows where a practitioner of Yoga is supposed to focus his attention during meditation.

The Naad is the cosmic sound heard by an ascetic when he is in deep meditation mode. As any sound originates from a source and then radiates out in the form of waves much like ripples created on the surface of a calm lake when a stone is thrown in it, the Naad has its cosmic origin in the one-point source of sound energy called Bindu that has Brahm as its principal base.

From the perspective of the meaning of Naad as ‘sound’ we can have the following interpretation—all sounds have a ‘point’ of origin, the Bindu of origin. From this point source the sound waves spread out in waves in the ether present in space at the macro level of creation, and in the air in the immediate surrounding space at the micro level of creation. It can be compared to ripples arising on the surface of a calm lake when a stone is thrown on it. ‘Energy’ waves are created from the ‘point’ of impact and spread out in concentric layers just like the waves of sound travel in ether. This example would prove why and how the origin of Naad was envisioned in the Bindu (dot) by the ancient sage who had first visualised it.

The Bindu means a ‘point source’, and Naad refers to the ‘un-manifest energy in the form of sound’ that radiated out in the cosmic ether from this point source. Therefore, the Bindu would refer to the passive Brahm and the Naad would mean in this context the dynamic and active energy of this Brahm radiating out from this point source to all the directions of creation.

This Bindu or dot is the focal point from which the cosmic Naad or sound originated when the process of creation first started in what the modern science recognizes as the ‘Big Bang’. This sound spread to all corners of the cosmos. The human skull is also slightly concave from the inner side, and the brain is located just below it. The implication is very obvious—this Bindu or ‘dot’ generated the cosmic Naad which is heard by the ascetic when he focuses his entire concentration in the head by diverting all

his senses away from the external world and fixing their attention on one point in the head, called the Agya Chakra or still higher up in the Brahm Randhra Chakra.

It is just like fine tuning the antenna of the modern satellite discs used in television reception. The reverberation and vibrations caused by this cosmic Naad is very overwhelming for the ascetic and he literally drowns in its sound. The vibrations massage his nerves and relaxes them; he feels a sense of extreme ecstasy and bliss due to this, and that is comparable to the one obtained at the time of ejaculation of sperm during intercourse—hence the reference to the male phallus and the semen dripping from it. There is no vulgarity in this explanation. This citation is used to give a physical and verifiable idea of the extent of bliss and ecstasy obtained when the ascetic reaches the climax of Yoga so that he can hear the Naad.

This is also why this condition is compared to the ‘cosmic union’ of Shiva representing Brahm and his own energy personified as Shakti which produced this sound energy called Naad in the ethereal space of the cosmos. It was Brahm’s ecstasy and bliss of self-realisation that produced a cosmic vibration which in turn set in motion the process of creation. According to Vedanta, Shiva is known as Brahm, while this Shakti is known as Maya. According to the Sankhya philosophy, this Shakti is called Prakriti in the context of Brahm who is called Purush here.

In Tantra worship, Bindu is regarded as Shakti, the dynamic aspect of Shiva, and the Peeth is the seat of this Shakti. There is another way at looking at these two words—Bindu represents the cosmic sperm which represents the dynamic energy, potentials and powers of Shiva, and the Peeth would then be the seat of this Shiva energy, i.e. the base of the Shakti.

Naad is a form of cosmic sound, and this sound is a form of energy created by vibrations in ether. In other words, during the process of Yoga, when the vital winds, especially the Apan wind is made to activate the Mooladhar Chakra by literally vibrating or shaking it into action, the latent energy trapped inside it is activated to produce the sound much like striking of the tuning fork produces sound in a school physics laboratory.

This is another interesting analogy. The seed is round and small—almost like a Bindu or dot—when compared to the huge tree that it would produce. The sprout is like a Lingam or phallus coming out of it. [Refer Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 3.] The Naad or cosmic sound that is physically heard during Yoga is a manifestation of the dynamic forces or Shakti of Brahm, the energy present in this Naad is that dynamic force or Shakti itself. Taking a parallel from the physical world, the Naad is like the eye of the body but the eye function only because it has the energy to do so and has been empowered by the faculty of sight to see. In other words, the ascetic sees this living world characterised by the presence of sound as a revelation of Brahm who is universally and uniformly present throughout it in an imperceptible and subtle form. The fact that ‘sound characterizes this world as living as opposite to being dead’ is proved by the fact that there is utter silence in a morgue or grave yard whereas there is hustle and bustle of life in a busy city. For all practical purposes of Yoga as described in the Yogshiksha Upanishad, this Naad and its subtle energy called Pashyanti is located in the Mooladhar Chakra. [Refer Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 178, Canto 3, verse nos. 2-3.]

The concept of Naad and Bindu has been explained at length in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 105, 167, 178; Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 3, verse nos. 2-3, 11; Canto 4, verse no. 47; Canto 5, verse no. 28; and Canto 6, verse nos. 48-49, 71-73.

The relationship between Naad and Bindu has been elucidated in great detail in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 178, Canto 3, verse nos. 3, 11, and Canto 4, verse no. 47.

The relationship between the Bindu, Naad and the Mana has been described in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 178, Canto 6, verse nos. 71-73.

*Naad Shakti* or the majestic, dynamic and profound mystical and spiritual energy, powers and potentials of Naad have been expounded in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 105, 178, Canto 6, verse nos. 21, 48, 72.

The *Bindu Shakti* or the majestic mystical energy and spiritual potentials of the point-source from where the cosmic Naad is envisioned to have had its origin has been described in Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 6, verse nos. 49, 71, 73.]

The *Naradparivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, in its Canto 8, verse no. 3 describes the *64 and 128 Matras of Brahm* in the context of the ethereal sound OM or Pranav that is regarded as being a synonym for Brahm. Let us see what it has to say—  
“verse no. 3 = The Viraat Pranav (i.e. the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm that personifies the sum total of all the gross bodies of this creation) consists of, or is endowed with, all the sixteen Matras<sup>1</sup>. [The sixteen Matras are enumerated below. In the context of the sound of OM, the sixteen Matras refer to the different vowel and basic consonant sounds of the Sanskrit language.]

This Viraat Pranav is said to transcend and go beyond the thirty-six Tattvas of creation<sup>2</sup>.

The letter ‘A’ is the first Matra of OM, ‘U’ is the second Matra, ‘M’ is the third Matra, the ‘Ardha Matra’, or the half-syllable represented by the long-drawn humming sound made at the end of OM when the mouth closes, is the fourth Matra, the ‘Naad’ (the crescent-shaped moon placed on the top of the symbol of OM) is the fifth Matra, the ‘Bindu’ (the dot placed on the top of the Naad at its focal point) is the sixth Matra, the Kalaa (the various aspects of OM or Brahm) is its seventh Matra, the Kalatit (the transcendental aspect of OM or Brahm) is its eighth Matra, the virtue of Shanti (peace and tranquillity) is its ninth Matra, the Shantitya (the state that goes beyond ordinary peace; the transcendental state of blissfulness) is its tenth Matra, the Unmani (a state of mental non-attachment, detachment, non-involvement and renunciation) is its eleventh Matra, the Manomani (the higher state of Unmani when the sub-conscious too becomes defunct) is its twelfth Matra, the Puri or Vaikhari (i.e. the transcendental state reached by a hermit in the higher stages of spiritual progress; the state when the reverberations of OM are clearly heard as a resonance that submerges the aspirant and when he can distinguish between its various shades of sound—represented by its initial letter ‘A’) is its thirteenth Matra, the Madhyama (the median or middle stage of the sound of OM—represented by its letter ‘U’) is its fourteenth Matra, the Pashyanti (the stage of Naad or the sound of OM when it rises from the Mooladhar Chakra located at the lower end of the body and enters the heart—represented by its letter ‘M’) is its fifteenth Matra, and the Para (the transcendental state when the resonance of OM is heard in the head—represented by its half-syllable called the Ardha Matra) is its sixteenth Matra.

The Pranav Brahm, or the supreme transcendental Consciousness that exists in the form of the ethereal sound OM and its awareness, having the above described sixteen Matras or aspects is distinct and beyond the purview of the Turiyatit state of existence. [That is, to say that Brahm is definable or understandable even by the transcendental state of consciousness known as Turiyateet is a grave mistake.]

The Turiyatit state of existence has four divisions or aspects—viz. Ot, Anugyat, Anugya and Avikalp. [The word ‘Ot’ means comfort, peace, bliss as well as little, frugal; the word ‘Anugyat’ means one that is known by mandate, by the command or orders given by the scriptures; the word ‘Anugya’ means command, order, mandate, permission; and the word ‘Avikalp’ means that which is certain, is doubtless, that which has no alternatives or choices. Hence, Turiyatit state of existence refers to that state in which one can obtain certain bliss that comes with realising one’s true divine nature and form as conscious Atma as narrated or taught by the scriptures. In the context of what is said here, refer also to verse no. 20 of Canto 8 of this Upanishad.]

Now since Brahm having sixteen Matras or Kalaas pervades in all these four states or divisions of Turiyatit, it follows that the total number of Matras or Kalaas of Brahm are sixty-four in all. [The 16 Matras or Kalaas of Brahm as described in stanza 1 and 3 of this verse multiplied by the 4 aspects of Turiyatit as described above =  $16 \times 4 = 64$ .]

Again, the Pranav Brahm (i.e. the attribute-less and formless cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm) is revealed in two forms—viz. the Purush (the primordial Male) and Prakriti (the primordial Nature). Since Pranav Brahm in its primary form is said to have sixty-four Kalaas or Matras (as discussed above), we conclude that the total number of Matras or Kalaas of Brahm would be one hundred and twenty-eight. [ $64 \times 2 = 128$ .] Thus, Brahm is said to have one hundred and twenty-eight Matras or Kalaas.

Thus we conclude that the same sublime Brahm, inspite of being one, immutable, indivisible and non-dual, appears to have so many varied forms, depicting so many varied characteristics, attributes and properties, and seemingly having so many existences, all of them depending upon how and from which angle one looks at this divine non-dual entity. This is also the reason why the same Brahm has two basic forms of existence—one is the Saguna or the form which has specific attributes and is visible, and the other is Nirguna or the form which has no attributes and which is invisible (3).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The word *Matra* literally means amount, volume, quantity, magnitude, ingredient, part, section, aspect, facet or dimension of anything. The creation has been divided into sixteen parts or sections. These are also called the sixteen Kalaas of creation. Since Brahm is the sum total of creation, the former is also said to have sixteen Kalaas. The word ‘Kalaas’ literally refers to the special qualities, attributes, virtues, strengths, powers and potentials possessed by an entity. Its other connotations include—(a) shape, form, contours of a thing; (b) special qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc. that one possesses; the shades or aspects of one’s overall personality; (c) a division, portion, fraction, phase or degree of anything.

The word *Pranav* is a synonym for the cosmic sound known as Naad which is the reverberating sound in the cosmic ether that fills the space of the sky. This Naad is regarded as being the closest analogue of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness. This sound is homogenous and all-pervading. It is from this Naad that the first signs of life in the form of sound waves having energy were generated. It is from this Naad that all forms of sounds, having all shades of notes, meters and tunes were created. These primary forms of sound evolved into different phonetic alphabets of so many different languages and spoken tongue which all have the same set of primary sounds as their base. The language may be intelligible or not, such as those spoken by the modern man and those spoken by the primitive man and the animals respectively, but all of them have one common denominator—and it is the basic sound of OM or Naad having the sixteen Matras as

enumerated in this Upanishad. It's almost like music that is played by so many instruments—though each instrument appears to produce different type of sound but basically all of these genres of instruments have one single language, and it is the language of 'music'.

The word 'Matra' also refers to the vowel sounds of the Sanskrit language. Since the entire gamut of creation is said to have its origin in the cosmic vibration that was generated in ether at the initial stage of creation, and these vibrations created sound, it follows that Brahm which symbolically stands for this entire creation would naturally consist of the entire spectrum of sound as represented by the sixteen sounds of the Sanskrit vowels.

In the context of OM, which is the cosmic ethereal sound of space, it refers to the different shades, hues, tones and aspects in which OM is known to exist. In essence it means that the macrocosmic form of Brahm that is also known as the 'Viraat Purush' encompasses all shades of knowledge encrypted in words that are formed out of the basic sound of creation, called the various Matras of OM.

<sup>2</sup>The thirty-six *Tattvas* of creation— The word *Tattvas* literally means the essence, the reality, the true state and the basic principle of anything. It also implies the principal elements of creation. The *Tattvas* are the primary or fundamental elements or units or dimensions or aspects of creation which act as the building blocks of creation, not only as its brickwork but also to decide its exterior façade and interior character. We have *primary elements* that were formed at the time of creation, and the *secondary elements* that developed later on as the creation evolved, and finally there were the tertiary elements which were the offshoots to the process of creation when the complexities of the latter increased.

A word may have different connotations according to the context in which it is used. For example, we speak of a flower's *Tattva*, i.e. the volatile liquid extracted from the flowers and used as various scents and perfumes. It is called the 'essence' of the flower. Even the nectar is called 'essence' or *Tattva* of the flower. The oil extracted from seeds and herbs are also called their *Tattva* or essential extracts. The common factor in all these is the 'liquid or fluid' nature of the *Tattva*. It is this reason why life is said to have emerged in water, a fluid and elixir of life and vitality, the 'essence' or *Tattva* that sustains and protects life. The primary essence of creation was not some liquid as we understand the term; it was 'ethereal', more like the air or wind element, resembling more closely to the something that fills the outer space above the surface of the earth. It must be understood that though 'air' does not exist outside the atmosphere of the earth, it is not an absolute vacuum, for there is something that lies between any two celestial bodies or planets, separating them and preventing them from colliding with each other. All celestial bodies are dipped in this cosmic liquid which is like a 'volatile essence' drawn from flowers. It is 'volatile' because it is never the same, and that is why we say that the creation is continuously and perpetually changing and evolving. Had it not been so, had that *Tattva* been a solid, everything in creation would have been cast in one fixed mould for eternity.

According to the philosophy of *Tantra Shastra* dedicated to the worship of divinity in the form of Shiva and Shakti, the process of creation took the following initial steps. Before anything came into being, Brahm, the supreme consciousness and the ultimate truth of creation, known as Shiva, was established in his own radiant effulgence or self-illumination symbolising his splendourous glory, majesty and divinity. Hence he was called 'Prakash', literally meaning light. When he decided to deliberate and actually started the process of deliberation in order to start the process of creation, there was a subtle 'spandan' or a slight throb or imperceptible movement which transformed into a vibration. The waves generated by this initial vibration developed in the cosmic ether and

gradually coalesced with each other to give rise to higher waves of higher amplitudes. This produced the cosmic sound called the Naad. Since the creation was conceived in the bowl of the cosmic ether, the energy of the initial sound was focused at a central point, called the focal point or the dot or 'Bindu'. This Bindu contained the combined powers of both the male Shiva and the female Shakti like a dicotyledonous seed which produced the two separate entities called Shiva and Shakti. The union of these two resulted in the unfolding of the rest of the creation. Thus it will be observed that whatever exists in this creation can be traced back to this primeval Naad. Hence, the latter is called 'Shabda Brahm', or the Brahm as sound. Therefore it is very natural to assume that all Mantras dedicated to any divine entity and consisting of the sound element (because Mantra consist of letters and words, and are chanted or repeated to make them effective) has its origin in this Shabda Brahm and gets its powers and energy from this Shabda Brahm. In other words, the Mantra contains in itself the essential meaning, form and spirit of the deity whose Mantra it is, and which is being worshipped and invoked. Constant repetition of the Mantra generates so much energy in due course of time that the deity being worshipped is revealed. This is because the sound has great powers and energy as is evident when reverberation of sound waves and the resonance created by them are so powerful and forceful that they can shatter sheet glass in windows when an explosion occurs near a building.

Primarily there were five basic elements or Tattvas of creation—such as the sky, air or wind, fire or energy, water and earth in increasing order of density or grossness. From them came the secondary elements—they are the various Tattvas of creation. These latter vary according to the level and dynamics of creation one is dealing with in terms of metaphysics. Finally came the tertiary elements—they are the various Anatahakarans, the various Vikaars and Vrittis, the three Gunas etc. that would form the third layer of elements or Tattvas of creation.

These elements can be compared to the elements of material science of the modern world, such as the elements calcium, magnesium, potassium, selenium etc. which are heavier and grosser in nature as compared to other elements such as the gases oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, helium etc. which are lighter and subtler. Then there is carbon which is the base of an entire field of chemistry called organic chemistry, much like we have Atma which in association of different other elements form a vast array of organic chemicals and material products of daily use. If carbon is compared to the basic unit called Atma in metaphysics, then the other elements that combine with it are the various Gunas, Vikaars, Vasanas and Vrittis that surround this Atma to give rise to an uncountable number of creatures of different nature, temperaments, character and personalities.

In this scenario, Brahm would be like the primary Atom which left to itself is neutral and inactive. It is only when certain changes take place in its core, such as the shift in the position of its electron etc. that the chain of reaction starts that would ultimately result in not only producing newer elements but releasing energy or absorbing matter from the surrounding atmosphere. The Atma would be more like the atom of the carbon atom which is at the heart of all organic compounds.

The thirty-six Tattvas are the following—the 25 Tattvas as described in Shankhya philosophy<sup>1\*</sup> + 1 Iswar (of Patanjali's Yoga Darshan) + the 8 Vikaars or faults<sup>2\*</sup> + 1 Vyakta (that which is visible and has attributes, i.e. the Sanguna aspect of Viraat Pranav or Brahm) + 1 Avyakta (that which is not visible, not having any attributes and characteristics, i.e. the Nirguna aspect of the Viraat Pranav or Brahm) = total 36 Tattvas. {<sup>1\*</sup>The 25 Tattvas according to the Sankhya philosophy are the following—Purush (the primary Male), Prakrit (Nature), Mahtattva (the powerful Buddhi or intellect), Ahankar (ego, pride), the five organs of perception (i.e. the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin), the

five organs of action (i.e. the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals), the Mana (mind), the five perceptions (such as the spoken word or speech, sight, smell, touch and taste), the five Bhuts (i.e. the five primary elements, the earth, water, fire, air and space or sky) = 25. <sup>2\*</sup>The eight Vikaars according to verse no. 17 of the Shaarirak Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, they are the following—They are the following—one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature.}}”

**The 64 Kalaas of Brahm**—It is said that the complete Brahm has sixty four Kalaas. If these are divided into four quarters or quadrants or aspects or symbolic legs of Brahm, three-fourths is in the realm of the unknown (heaven) and only one-fourth is in the form of the visible creation (world). Therefore, if Brahm is a complete cycle of sixty four Kalaas, then the known physical world has  $64/4 = 16$  Kalaas. It is a quadrant of Brahm. (Rig Veda, 10/90/4).

It is said that Brahm has four ‘Paads’ or legs which symbolise the four corners of creation. That is, Brahm surrounds this entire creation from all sides. Out of these four legs, the visible world represents one. The rest of the creation stands for the remaining three legs. According to another theory, Brahm is said to have sixty four Kalaas or aspects or levels. Out of these, the known world is represents Brahm’s sixteen Kalaas, i.e. this world is only one fourth aspect of the entire Brahm—a fact metaphorically depicted by saying that Brahm can measure this world in one step. The rest is the invisible macrocosmic aspect of Brahm which is beyond imagination and comprehension. This is obvious because if one fourth is so difficult to understand, one can easily understand the astounding nature and stupendity of the remaining three fourths.

**The 3 paths leading to Brahm**—The three paths that a spiritual seeker seeking to know Brahm follows are the following--(i) Karma Yoga, (ii) Gyan Yoga, and (iii) Bhakti Yoga.

(i) Karma Yoga expounds on the importance of doing deeds and taking actions, but with a different attitude. It stresses that we must not get ‘involved or attached’ to those deeds or action in as much as we shouldn’t be bothered about the rewards or punishments incumbent on such deeds or actions. We must do them dispassionately and with detachment. The action or deed should be treated as one’s offering to the God as well as an offering to the sacred fire sacrifice. This will ensure that the actions or deeds are not unrighteousness, corrupt or evil. On the contrary, whatever is done in which a person’s subtle sub-conscious says is not the correct thing to do will be deemed to be unrighteous, unethical and unlawful, and therefore cannot be an offering to either the God or the sacred fire sacrifice.

The concept of Karma Yoga has been elaborately explained in Krishna Yajur Veda’s *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 35.

(ii) Gyan Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be ‘real’ but is actually like a ‘shadow of the truth’. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called ‘seers’ because they can ‘see’ beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature.

(iii) Bhakti Yoga refers to having devotion for a chosen Godhead who is a person's ideal, on whom he showers all his adoration, and on whom he focuses his attention. He is emotionally and sentimentally involved with his deity. Hence, the heart is the realm of Bhakti Yoga; it helps to commune with the divine.

**Brahm Vidya**—The main Vidya as far as a spiritual aspirant is concerned is the one which pertains to the supreme transcendental Truth of creation known as Consciousness or Brahm. It is called *Brahm Vidya*. Basically it means the most eclectic, the most esoteric and the profoundest of knowledge pertaining to supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm.

The concept of Brahm Vidya has been the chief subject of discussion of a number of Upanishads, especially the following:--

(a) Krishna Yajur Veda's = Kaivalya Upanishad, Brahm Upanishad, Panch Brahm Upanishad, Akchyu Upanishad, Tejobindu Upanishad, Varaaha Upanishad, Cantos 1-5, and Brahm Vidya Upanishad.

(b) Atharva Veda's = Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 1, section 1; Mundak (Canto) 2, section 1; Mundak (Canto) 3, section 1-2; Shandilya Upanishad, Cantos 2-3; Atma Upanishad; Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 4; Canto 4, paragraph no. 1; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 17-57; Canto 2, verse no. 37; Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 19; Hayagriva Upanishad (verse no. 1, 15-19).

(c) Sam Veda's = Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 7-8; Keno-panishad; Avyakta Upanishad.

(d) Shukla Yajur Veda's = Brihad Aranyak Upanishad; Isha Vasya Upanishad, Adhyatma Upanishad. (e) Rig Veda's Mudgal Upanishad; Atma Prabodh Upanishad.

The Atharva Veda's *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 2, paragraph no. 19 defines succinctly what constitutes 'Brahm Vidya' as follows—

“The devotee is liberated and delivered from his gross body in the ethereal form of OM.

[OM refers to Pranav, the cosmic sound that represents Brahm. Since the cosmic sound of OM and the air or wind element are the two sides of the same coin and synonymous with each other—because the cosmic sound represented by OM was produced due to friction in the waves in ether, and it needed air to be propagated for the simple reason that sound cannot travel in vacuum—it follows that when the devotee dies, his Pran, which is another synonym of the air or wind element representing the vital spark of life present inside his body, escapes into the outer space to merge with the cosmic Pran, i.e. the air or wind element present in the vast and fathomless space of the sky outside the body.

In simple terms it means that the individual's Pran which inspires the inane gross body to make a sound as evident from the fact that all living beings make a sound or speak as long as they are alive, or have Pran in their bodies, assumes the form of the cosmic Pran represented by the ethereal word OM when the Pran leaves the confines of the gross body when the latter dies, to escape into the vast open space of the sky. The previously trapped or incarcerated air element manifested as the 'Pran' or the life of a living being has now been 'freed' from the confines of a gross body and restored to its primary cosmic form as the all-pervading and infinite air element that fills the space of the sky outside the limits of the gross body of any individual creature. This is

synonymous with the creature obtaining his Mukti—because the ‘Pran’ and the ‘Atma’ are regarded as being synonymous with each other.

Further, it has been described in Yoga Upanishads how the Pran escapes from the body through the Brahm-Randhra, the hair-like slit on the top of the head, at the climax of Pranayam, and as it escapes it takes the Atma, the life-consciousness present inside the body, along with it. This is described as the Kaivalya Mukti in terms of metaphysics, and it is the sort of Mukti aspired for by ascetics.]

Those devotees who offer all their deeds (and their fruits or rewards) to me, are devoted to me, and keep their attention on me, well, they are liberated and become one with me; they assume my true form upon leaving their gross bodies.

This is known as *Brahm-Vidya*, i.e. it is the knowledge pertaining to Brahm, the transcendental Supreme Being. It is meant for those who are my sincere devotees, and not for others.

[This is because such people see no difference between Shiva and Brahm. When they worship Shiva, they are actually worshipping Brahm. Those who are not so enlightened and spiritually wise would treat Shiva as one of the Trinity Gods and only recognize him as the concluder of creation. They would not know that Shiva is not an ordinary God but a ‘Maha-Deva’, the ‘Great God’, an epithet not even shared by Brahma the creator or Vishnu the sustainer.]

Those who reside in the holy pilgrim city of Kashi with the desire of attaining Mukti are empowered by mystical powers and blessed with spiritual insights and knowledge, making them enlightened and self-realised. [19]”

In the *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 17, sage Nidagh has asked the great sage Ribhu to preach him ‘Brahm Vidya’. As an answer, sage Ribhu has taught him the eclectic and divine knowledge pertaining to the Atma along with a brief reference to Brahm. The reason is that the Brahm Vidya, or the knowledge of the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, and Atma Vidya, or the knowledge of the Atma which is the same ‘consciousness’ that resides in the body of the individual creature, are intricately and inseparably linked with each other so much so that acquisition of the knowledge of any one automatically means the acquisition of the knowledge of the other, the only difference between them being the plane of existence at which these two terms refer, for while the term ‘Brahm’ refers to the cosmic and all-encompassing macrocosmic level of creation, the term ‘Atma’ refers to the same divine entity that pertains to an individual creature at the microcosmic level. But then since this individual creature is an image of the entire cosmos, it follows that knowing the Atma, the truthful ‘self’ of one’s existence one is able to know the spiritual truths of the entire creation. Brahm Vidya is essentially an exposition of the knowledge of the Atma Tattwa, and vice versa.

What is *Brahm-realisation* has been briefly narrated in the *Mundak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Mundak (Canto) 3, section 1, verse nos. 3-4, 8 as follows—  
“Verse no. 3= When a wise and Brahm realised man is able to see or become acquainted with the supreme Brahm who is the neutral and dispassionate witness to all and everything in this creation, who is self-illuminated, who is the Supreme Being, and who is the supreme creator and the ultimate progenitor of the entire universe, including Brahma the creator (who created this visible world where the mortal creature lives)—it is

then that such a wise and enlightened man abandons all sorts of involvements in any kind of thing, whether it is auspicious or inauspicious. [That is, he does not get sucked in the vortex of getting mentally and emotionally involved in doing worldly deeds at all. He does them but with total detachment from them, and with a sense of non-involvement in their fruits or rewards.]

Such a man attains the eclectic stature of being calm and equitable in his approach to life. He becomes pure and untainted as his inner self is not polluted by any of the contaminants or impurities that are by-products of getting engrossed in this world. (3).

“verse no. 4 = [This verse clearly asserts that a truly wise and Brahm realised person is one who continues to do his duties in this world without getting involved in them. This gives him honour and an exalted place amongst those who are called Brahm realised.]

The supreme Brahm is the one who is revealed in the form of Pran or life consciousness in all the living beings<sup>1</sup>. A person who knows this universal truth has no sense of Ahankar, or ego and self pride in him. [This is because he realises that whatever the body does is not as a result of his own effort but due to the fact that the Pran that lives in this body is making the body do what the latter does, and this Pran is Brahm personified. So, there is no scope of ‘his’ being proud of anything because ‘he’ is not the doer. ‘He’ is not the one who is empowering the body to do anything, but it is some different mystical power that is known as Brahm that empowers the body.]

Such a wise and erudite person who knows the eclectic truth about the Atma, i.e. about the supreme Brahm residing in his own bosom as the pure consciousness and his true ‘self’, knows that it is this Brahm in the form of the Atma that drives the body and all its activities<sup>2</sup>. It is the Brahm that is the Pran or life consciousness in the body of all living beings.

Such a person is called ‘Brahm realised’. He continues to do his duties in this world and acquires an exalted and honourably position in the society of learned and enlightened men who are categorized as Brahm realised<sup>3</sup>. (4).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Some of the other Upanishads that affirm that the Pran is a manifestation of Brahm—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 4, verse no. 17; Taittiriya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Valli 3, Anuvak 3.

<sup>2</sup>It is the reason why the Kosha or cell where the Atma lives in the body, i.e. the subtle heart, is called the ‘causal body’ because it is the ‘cause’ of everything in this world. Refer verse no. 9 of Canto 2, section 2 of this Upanishad above.

<sup>3</sup>That is, a wise person does not run away from the world or from doing his duties, but his attitude changes. Instead of getting neck-deep involved in the deeds and their results, he does them in a dispassionate and detached manner. He does not get hooked to the deeds and their results; he does not bother what the world says or whether or not success is attained. He does the deeds absolutely dispassionately and in a neutral fashion. This is the eclectic theory of selfless and dispassionate Karma.

This concept of *Karma* or deeds has been explained in a number of Upanishads. For instance, the Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 67 describes succinctly how Karma or deeds and their consequences can be overcome. The Varaaha Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48, and Canto 4, verse no. 35 describe the relationship between the deed, the doer and the cause. The Adhyatma Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the concept of doing deeds and its effect on the spiritual liberation or bondage of the creature in fine detail in its verse nos. 49-60.

The Kathrudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 13 asserts that the supreme transcendental Brahm or the quintessential spiritual Truth of creation as well as Mukti or liberation and deliverance is not possible by merely doing various deeds in this mortal world. This same idea is endorsed in Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 35, which asserts that deeds or Karma do not provide the Atma of the creature with liberation and deliverance from this world, but it is Gyan (truthful knowledge of the spiritual truths) that does so.

The 'Karma Chakra' or the giant wheel of deeds and their consequences has been described in the Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 6, verse no. 3. The three Paths followed by a creature according to the deeds done by him are referred to in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 4/7. The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48 describes how one can become free from the fetters created by 'deeds'. The Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 11-12 describes the concept of Karma. The Sarwasaar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 6 describes the concept of how and why the creature becomes the doer of deeds

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1. The Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26 defines what constitutes of true 'Karma Yoga'. The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/4/2-3 describes the philosophy of Deeds. The Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 67 describes succinctly how Karma or deeds and their consequences can be overcome.]

“Verse no. 8 = That enigmatic, esoteric and mystical Brahm (and its manifestation as the Atma) is not seen by the eyes (as it does not have any physical form, colour and contour), is not understood or grasped by the speech (i.e. it is not possible to describe or learn about Brahm with words), is not perceived by any of the other sense organs of perception (such as the ear, nose, tongue and skin—i.e. it is not possible to learn about Brahm's existence by hearing Brahm, by smelling Brahm, by tasting Brahm or by feeling or touching Brahm).

That Brahm is not accessible either by doing Tapa (austerity, penance, sufferance) or doing Karma (literally deeds, but here referring to the performance of fire sacrifices—refer Canto 1, section 2, or doing numerous other auspicious deeds such as making charities, going on pilgrims etc.).

[Then, how is it possible to access Brahm? It is being narrated now--] That Brahm who has no attributes and aspects that can be ordinarily discerned is accessible to only those wise ones who have cleansed their inner self of all evils, contaminations and impurities, and then meditate and contemplate diligently and sincerely upon Brahm, the 'Truth', with great conviction, devotion and firmness of faith (8).”

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2 says that there are four paths to acquiring this Brahm Vidya. To quote this verse—

“Verse no. 2 = There are four known mainstream aids or paths<sup>1</sup> by which this great knowledge called Brahm Vidya that you seek can be obtained. This knowledge helps the spiritual aspirant in his pursuit of the eclectic knowledge pertaining to the universal Divinity known as the supreme transcendental Brahm. In the process it also enlightens him about himself and his true identity known as the Atma.

These paths are the following—(a) To have profound Vairagya—i.e. to have great renunciation, total detachment, complete dispassion and absolute non-involvement with

anything pertaining to this material world of sense objects, anything that is not eternal and imperishable, anything that is not the truth and real in the spiritual perspective. [This concept has been described in verse nos. 4 and 37 below of this Canto 2].

(b) To strictly adhere to the laws and diligently follow the tenets as laid down in the scriptures and established by tradition that describe how this Brahm Vidya can be accessed. It also entails following and believing in the principles and paths as shown by ancient tradition because they are time-tested and advised by those who had treaded on this path earlier, and therefore are based on real time experience. This also ensures that all the pitfalls and problems that the aspirant can expect to encounter are made known to him in advance along with the precautionary steps that he ought to take or the way to overcome them should he encounter them on the way. The ancient scriptures and traditions have clearly laid down codes to be followed by various Varnas or sections of society, and they have also determined how easily one can obtain an exalted stature in life by honestly following them. Like the more mundane example of a ‘doctor knowing what is best for his patient’, these ancient scriptures and traditions are the best guides one should rely on if one wishes to attain the knowledge of the ultimate Truth, a knowledge that is known as Brahm Vidya, without much effort and confusion.

(c) To do Tapa—that is, by doing hard practice that might involve a lot of sufferance undertaken for a noble cause, observing sincere austerity and doing steady penance, being steadfast and unrelenting in one’s noble pursuit inspite of the greatest of hardships that are encountered, making great sacrifices and forsaking pleasures and comforts in order to ensure that one can reach one’s goal in life. This path of Tapa is indispensable if one wishes to succeed in any venture, be it related to the world or the spiritual. [Even an ordinary student knows how much sacrifices he has had to make to excel in his studies; every householder knows how much he sacrifices for the welfare of his family.]

(d) To serve one’s Guru (a moral teacher, preceptor and spiritual guide) with great sincerity and diligence. This service would naturally please the Guru and he would be inspired and willing to divulge the greatest of secrets and to teach his trusted and devoted disciple the most esoteric aspects of the body of knowledge in which is he is an expert. He would do so out of his love and affection for the disciple, and he would not hesitate to explain the intricacies of the body of knowledge to the best of his abilities. [A wise Guru would have a natural affinity for the student who is obedient and helpful and devoted to him as well as is committed to his studies as compared to those whom he feels are not up to the mark, are insincere in studies, are disobedient and wayward, and therefore the effort needed for teaching them is not the worth. His love and affection for the former type of disciple or student might be even greater than for his own off spring, and he would prefer to pass on his legacy to such an accomplished student instead of to his own son.]

Brahm Vidya is available to an aspirant as a reward of following these spiritual paths or taking the helps of these aids in his spiritual pursuit. These paths are not excluding but inclusive; they are to be followed simultaneously and with due diligence in order to be successful in a comprehensive manner (2).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The four well established and known paths to being acquainted with Brahm Vidya which relates to the divine Principal of creation known as the supreme transcendental Brahm, and which enables the spiritual aspirant to successfully understand the underlying eclectic principles of this Divinity, are the following—(i) Vairagya which

broadly means renunciation, dispassion and total detachment from anything that is related to the gross world and its material sense objects, anything that is not eternal and imperishable, anything that is not the truth and real in the spiritual perspective—refer all the Upanishads that deal with the concept of Sanyas, specifically such as the Avadhut Upanishad, verse no. 6. (ii) Control of the Mana (mind)—refer Brahm Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 5. (iii) Doing internal form of fire sacrifice—refer Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 53, and Pran Agnihotra Upanishad. (iv) Meditation and contemplation—refer Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 78-110.]

**Brahm Sandhya** –The Atharva Veda’s *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Purva Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 18 refers to a term known as ‘Brahm Sandhya’. It means remembering Brahm, offering oblations and prayers to him silently by meditation and contemplation at least three times a day—at dawn, at noon and at dusk. It is the way of doing the mental or internal form of the fire sacrifice.

The doing of this Brahm Sandhya is a sign that the person is remembering Brahm internally (i.e. he is meditating and contemplating upon the cosmic Consciousness residing in his inner-self as the Atma; it is a sign that he has become self and Brahm realised).

**(a) Brahm Randhra; (b) Brahm Vivar; (c) Brahm Dwar; (d) Maha Dwar; (e) Brahm Kosh—**

(a) This *Brahm Randhra* is a hair-like joint or slit on the top of the skull where the two parts of it are joined. It is believed that the supreme Brahm had entered the creature’s body at the time of creation through this slit. [Refer Aeiteriya Upanishad of the Rig Veda, Section 1, Canto 3, verse no. 12; Paingal Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 11.] Great ascetics aspire to access Brahm by concentrating their attention here; at the time of death their Pran or the vital wind leaves the body through this opening by splitting it.

(b) The *Brahm Vivar* is literally a hole like aperture present at the back of the mouth where it opens into the wind pipe which connects the lungs to the nose. This is the location of the ‘Talu Chakra’ or the swirling subtle energy center located at the back of the palate. It has a direct link to the Brahm Randhra present in the cranium at the top of the head, and is the hair-like slit marking the joint between the two parts of the skull.

(c) This Brahm Vivar is also called *Brahm Dwar* or the ‘doorway to Brahm’ because it opens directly into the duct that connect the lower part of the body to the Brahm Randhra and through which the vital winds called Pran travel during the practice of Yoga (such as Pranayam, Kundalini and Sushumna Naadi activation, various Aasans and Bandhas etc.).

The *Brahm-Dwar* is the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi, the tubular duct running through the center of the spine and is regarded as the only duct that helps the expert ascetic to divert his vital winds upwards along with the subtle cosmic energy released from the Kundalini, upwards so that they reach the top of the head where the Brahm-Randhra is located. This Brahm-Randhra is the hair-like slit on the top of the skull from where the supreme transcendental Brahm is said to have entered the gross body of the creature at the time of creation and had taken up his abode in the creature’s mind and intellect in order to control his creation at the gross level and material plane of physical existence from there. According to the philosophy of Yoga, when an acclaimed

practitioner of meditation and contemplation is able to concentrate his vital forces of life, i.e. the Pran and Atma, there, he experiences a closeness with this Supreme Being present in a subtle and imperceptible form at this spot. Finally, at the time of death, his Pran makes its exit, along with the Atma, his pure self or consciousness, from this point to merge with the wind or air element present in the vast cosmos outside the physical body. This is tantamount to the aspirant's final liberation and deliverance because then this Pran would not have to reenter any other body as it has merged and got itself lost permanently in the elements of Nature, losing its individuality.

Usually the lower end of this Brahm-Dwar (represented by the Sushumna Naadi) is blocked by the mouth of the Kundalini. The thrust of Yoga practice, especially the Vahni Yoga is to un-block it by opening the Kundalini's mouth and releasing the latter's cosmic energy into this pathway.

Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 36 of Sam Veda tradition and Dyanbindu Upanishad, verse no. 66 describe this pathway.

It is called *Maha Dwar* in a metaphoric sense because it is the 'great doorway' that leads to one's final liberation and deliverance. It is the great door that helps the Atma to escape from the confines of the gross body and find freedom from its entrapment once and for all.

According to Yoga philosophy, the Sushumna Naadi, the nerve that passes through the center of the spinal cord, goes straight up to the Brahm Randhra. This nerve is blocked at its base by the tip of the Kundalini. When the latter is activated, the block is removed, and the energy trapped in the body rises up this nerve to stimulate the brain, giving the aspirant a sense of accomplishment.

The opening at the lower part of the abdomen, in the region of the Mool Kand or the groins, from where the Apaana wind enters the Kundalini to ignite it is also called the lower Brahm Randhra because it is an 'opening or aperture' through which the vital winds enter the Kundalini and move up the Sushumna Naadi to reach the top of the head to find an access to the cosmic consciousness and its attendant sense of extreme ecstasy and bliss.

This Mukti (or liberation and deliverance) by the *escape of the Pran (the vital winds) along with the Atma (the consciousness) through the Brahm Randhra* has been described in (i) Atharva Veda = Tripadvibhuti Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 5, paragraph no. 15. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 18-20; Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 27; Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17; Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 103-106.

Now let us examine some of the Upanishads which describe how Mukti is obtained by the Pran escaping through the Brahm Randhra:--

(i) The *Tripadvibhuti Maha-Narayan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 5, paragraph no. 15 says that "The devotee focuses his attention on the Lord and contemplates that his inner self, his 'true self', is nothing but the 'Atma-Tattva' (i.e. the essential element of life and existence which is pure consciousness) that is present in the subtle space of his Lotus-like heart (which is compared with a divine Lotus to indicate its purity and immaculacy).

With this eclectic and enlightened view about himself, the devotee worships and honours the Lord. He worships and honours the Lord internally by offering his 'true self'

at his service. [That is, he does not offer any form of external worship or offers verbal prayers or physical oblations as is usually done during formal process of worshipping. Instead, he prays and worships the Lord internally. This is the most sincere, highly evolved, most extolled and a true form of worship because it involves one's inner being, one's 'true self', one's Atma, one's subtle body, and excludes the gross body and the fallacious notion of it being the 'self' who is worshipping the Lord. The latter is a false form of worship because the instrument used for worship—i.e. the gross body—is false!]

Then he continues to say the 'Hans Mantra'—which is 'So-a-Ham' (literally meaning 'That essence and truth is me'—while he exercises full control over all his sense organs and their natural tendency to be extrovert (i.e. run towards their respective sense objects in the material world) and tames the mind. At the same time, silently pronounces the divine Mantra of Pranav (Brahm) which is OM and focuses his mind on it. While doing this he also simultaneously but gradually controls and harnesses the vital winds in the body called Prans (by practicing Pranayam or breath control, Bandha or closure of all the subtle apertures of the body, etc.), and diverts them upwards. He (here meaning his 'true self', his Atma, his pure 'consciousness', his vital life forces) moves up with the Pran and ultimately makes his exit from the gross body through the Brahm-Randhra present on the top of the head. [Yoga Upanishads describe in graphic detail how the Pran makes its exit thorough the Brahm-Randhra which is a hair-like slit on the top of the head on the cranium. The Atma rides piggy back on the Pran and escapes from the body along with the Pran. This form of Mukti is described as Kaivalya Mukti because once the Pran escapes in the outer atmosphere, it merges with the parent air element and never re-enters the body. The rest of the body disintegrates into its other components—the earth, water, fire and sky.]'

(ii) The *Kshuriko-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 18-20 describe the concept of obtaining Mukti or liberation and deliverance by the Pran escaping through the Brahm Randhra. To quote—

“Verse nos. 18-19 = 'Dhyan Yoga', literally meaning meditative exercises done by intense concentration of the mind and use its energy as if it were a sharp-edged knife (much like the use of laser beams to perform complicated surgery in modern medicine), can be employed by the practitioner of Yoga (i.e. by the seeker of true liberation and deliverance) to rupture or pierce through or bore into all the Naadis and let the Pran enter them. But the Sushumna Naadi is the only one which cannot be broken through or its sanctity violated<sup>1</sup>.

A wise and sagacious person is one who pierces all the Naadis in this life itself. This is to ensure that his Pran or vital winds and life forces present in his body, which had been till now wandering aimlessly in the subtle space inside the gross body, is able to enter into these ducts and move up the correct path that can lead to its proper destination. Since the wind trapped inside the body has originated from the all-pervading free wind or air element present in the cosmic space, its 'natural destination' is this cosmic space, and its 'liberation' is its escape from the enclosure of the gross body and mingling with the parent body of the cosmic wind outside. This is its final 'deliverance' from all artificial entrapments created by the gross body because once outside, the air element would merge indistinguishably with the cosmic wind element and lose its independent identity. A realised ascetic allows this to happen when he uses the will power and determination of

his mind to forcefully make his Pran to bore into the various Naadis, and move inside them. Once inside, the energised and heated Pran unclogs all the veins and nerves by its mere power of force and de-toxifying abilities, and moves freely inside them. It gradually moves up the body much like hot air, allowed to enter a network of tubes, has a propensity to move freely inside them and head upwards because of the fact that any hot air moves up and not down. Pran, being lighter or 'subtler' than all the other elements in the body because it now resembles hot and energised air or vital wind element, has overcome all resistance and is able to enter that path that leads to arousal of the hitherto dormant spiritual energy lying trapped in the heart as the pure consciousness of the creature. Determined and steadfast practice of meditation, along with contemplation on the main objective of doing Yoga and concentrating upon the Truth, keeps the ascetic firmly on his path.

In its final leg, the Pran is able to sufficiently gather enough energy and force and momentum to unfurl the energy in the coiled Kundalini<sup>2</sup> at the bottom of the spine. When the Pran sneaks into it, it finds entry into the Sushumna Naadi which has its lower end blocked by this Kundalini. Heated vital winds then snake up this tube, much like mercury moving up the thermometer, and finally reach the top of the head at the spot called the Brahm-Randhra. When the pressure builds up, the final explosion occurs, and this Brahm-Randhra splits open, allowing the Pran to escape into the outer space for ever. This stage is called 'Kaivalya Mukti', or the 'one of its kind' of liberation and deliverance for the aspirant seeking freedom, because once the Pran merges with the cosmic wind or air element, there is no question of its re-entering the body. This is because the body of such an ascetic is allowed to disintegrate into its basic elements, such as the earth, water and fire. The subtle space inside the body would then automatically coalesce with the open space outside. No trace of the earlier creature remains. This is obviously the final closure of the scene for him.

Thus, the wise and sagacious practitioner of Yoga should use the inviolable authority and majestic influence of his Atma, i.e. the astounding supernatural power of the pure conscious 'self', to firmly direct and strictly order the mind and the intellect to use their stupendous abilities and skills along with the energised and heated vital winds called Pran present inside the body to jointly rupture and bore through the different Naadis and penetrate them. That is, the wise ascetic uses the stupendous and powerful authority inherently bestowed in his own 'self', called his pure conscious Atma, to diligently and purposefully divert all the efforts of the two powerful instruments that he has at his disposal, i.e. the Mana (mind) and the Pran (vital winds and other life forces inside the body), to actively practice strict Yoga (as described in this Upanishad).

This Yoga practice then becomes as powerful and effective as a heated sharp-edged knife or 'Kshuri' that enables the ascetic to symbolically cut through the Naadis in a surgical and precise fashion. The revitalizing Pran then enters them and completely fills them. Then the Naadis become as vibrant and invigorated as the healthy Jasmine flower which gives out a sweet fragrance typical of it (18-19).

[Note--<sup>1</sup>In other words, since this Sushumna Naadi symbolically represents the eternal and irrefutable Truth in creation, and remains soaked in its exuberant glory as mentioned in verse no. 16 above, it is impossible to subdue it and cause any disturbance in its serenity. This is a metaphoric way of saying that once the ascetic reaches that stage of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation when he has realised the actual Truth and the eternal fount of beatitude and felicity attendant with it, no force in creation can ever sway

him from his exalted stature. He is deemed to have reached the pinnacle of spiritual achievement where he becomes invincible for the myriad temptations and delusions surging in the world which drown all other creatures in their swirling whirlpool.

The word *pierce* when used in the spiritual context is to overcome the resistance of the physical body and its various components, including the Naadis, to any effort that causes inconvenience or discomfort to it. Yoga is a rigorous self-disciplining spiritual exercise that does not compromise on principles. Since the body is accustomed to remaining engrossed in comforts and enjoying pleasures emanating from the material world, it is natural for it to resist any change in the status and be subjected to control and discipline. The Naadis are singled out for such ‘piercing or rupturing’ or vanquishing or overcoming or subduing because it is through the network of Naadis that the body keeps itself alive as consciousness flows through them. The Naadis carry sense impulses from one part of the body to the other; it is through them that the blood flows; it is through the Naadis that the mind is able to receive the sensory inputs from the sense organs located on the surface of the body and then help the body to respond; it is the Naadis which are like the central network of wires and circuits of an electronic equipment. If the Naadis are blocked or made to stop working, the body would be as good as dead. Hence, the best way to control the entire edifice of the body is to control its command and control network in the form of the Naadis.

<sup>2</sup>*Kundalini*—The Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-16 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated entirely on this concept of Kundalini. Other major Upanishads that deal with the topic of Yoga also deal with the concept of Kundalini because both are intertwined concepts.]

“Verse no. 20 = In this way, the wise ascetic should properly understand how to establish his control over the different Naadis, those which are conducive to his spiritual upliftment and therefore considered ‘Shubh’ or auspicious (such as the Virja, Pingla and Ida Naadis mentioned in verse no. 16) as well as those which relate more to his worldly interactions and mundane existence (such as the Naadis that control his digestive, excretory and reproductory functions).

The Sushumna Naadi is superior to all the Naadis in the body, and the wise and sagacious ascetic is one who focuses his attention on this Naadi. That is, he diligently practices to divert his Pran (vital winds and life-infusing conscious factors) into this duct and channelise the Pran’s energy into activating it so that the Pran can ultimately reach the point on the top of the head, the *Brahm-Randhra*, from where it can finally make its exit from the body for good, thereby liberating the ascetic from the shackle of the gross body for ever, and delivering his soul from the compulsion of having to live in this body to the accompaniment of its associated torments.

When his attention is exclusively and firmly fixed on this Sushumna Naadi, he obtains access to the supreme transcendental Brahm representing the eternal fount of truth, beatitude and felicity. This achievement provides him with permanent liberation and deliverance from the body. In other words, he does not have to take birth again with a body<sup>1</sup> (20).

[Note--<sup>1</sup>This is because he has already detached himself from all the deeds done by the body, being totally unattached with the latter, and not-involved in the world in which the body lives, thereby freeing him from either being associated with these deeds and their consequences, whether good or bad, or with any of the entrapments of the world and the latter’s tainting effects. He has also realised the delusory nature of the artificial world of material objects, and therefore has lost all charms and attractions for it along with the

material comforts and sensual pleasures that it offers to the creature. With no baggage of insatiate desires and yearnings, no unfulfilled aspirations and hopes, he has nothing pending and unfulfilled at the time of death for which he would want to take another birth in order to finish off his incomplete tasks or fulfill his dreams. This state of total and sincere renunciation entitles him to become a ‘liberated’ soul, and since ‘soul’ is an disembodied ethereal body of infinite cosmic proportions, being another form of the cosmic wind or air element, it simply coalesces with this element as soon as the ascetic dies and the Pran leaves the gross body by rupturing the skull at the point of the Brahm-Randhra.

In this context, refer Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 27, and Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17 both of which belong to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

(iii) The *Amrit Naad Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 27 describes how the ascetic obtains liberation and deliverance from the entrapment of this body when his Pran escapes through the Brahm Randhra. To quote—“The valves of the subtle heart are like the trap-doors through which the vital winds called ‘Pran’ present in the body enter the path called ‘Sushumna’<sup>1</sup> which snakes upwards (from the bottom of the spinal cord) and reach the top of the head. At this top end is the opening through which the Pran can finally escape from the cage of the body and find permanent liberation, thereby delivering the ascetic for good from the captivity of the body. This opening in the skull is called ‘Brahm-Randhra’, and it is also called the symbolic ‘door of Moksha’, or the door that opens up to enable the Pran or the vital life-bearing winds present in the ascetic’s body to escape from its entrapments and provide the ascetic with final liberation and deliverance for his ‘self’<sup>2</sup>.

Another name for this Brahm-Randhra is ‘Surya Mandal’ or the space around the Sun in the sky. This is a symbolic way of saying that as soon as the vital winds called Pran escape from the body into the outer atmosphere, the sense of liberation and expansion is akin to going up high in the air, much above the gravitational pull of the earth, and feeling a profound sense of weightlessness and expansion so typical in the higher reaches of the solar system. While on the earth the body feels so heavy and constrained by its physical limitations, but higher in the deep recesses of the cosmos the sense and feeling of liberation and expansion is so exhilarating and elating that no words can define them. Similarly, when the expert and wise ascetic practices Yoga and manages to sufficiently control his vital winds so that he can divert them from remaining trapped inside the body and wandering aimlessly in it to moving upwards through the duct in the body called Sushumna, to finally reach the top of the head and then escape from the hair-like slit known as ‘Brahm-Randhra’ present there into the outer space called the ‘Surya Mandal’, it is said that the ascetic has attained liberation and deliverance from the physical limitations imposed on the Pran by the gross body (27).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The *Sushumna* duct is the nerve going from the bottom of the spinal cord, through its central core, right up to the top of the head. According to Yoga philosophy, there is a coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine, and it is called Kundalini. When it is activated, the energy trapped inside it also snakes up this same Sushumna nerve to go up to the top of the head. As hot air is known to rise up in a closed vessel and escape through any opening at the top, like the spout of a kettle, the heated vital winds inside the body also rise up when Pranayam is practiced. The heart is the pump of the body, and it is the subtle sight where the consciousness known as the Atma is present.

The best proof of this is when the heart stops functioning, all other signs of life in the body would also immediately collapse. On the other hand, as long as the heart continues to beat, the man is said to be 'alive' inspite of the fact that his other organs might have ceased to function. For example, a man paralysed in the limbs, or one suffering from the failure of one or the other internal organs such as the liver and kidneys is deemed to be alive as long as the heart beats. Even when the mind and intellect are not working properly, for instance in a mad man or when the man is in comatose state, he is not declared dead because the heart is still functioning.

The heart is the sanctum sanctorum where the revered deity is enshrined. This 'deity' is Brahm in the form of the consciousness known as the Atma which is in turn the 'true self' of the creature. The rest of the body is merely a 'vehicle or a chariot' for this 'self' to reach its destination. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 20.

So, heart is the defining factor which determines whether or not the ascetic is alive. That is why it is the site of the consciousness or Atma. Prans is also synonymous with life, and therefore both the Pran and the Atma co-exist. Now, this Atma or pure consciousness uses the vehicle of the Pran to move out of the body of the ascetic at the time of his death.

The wind needs some opening in the body to go out of it, and these openings are referred to as the *doors* of the body because they facilitate the exit of the vital wind along with the consciousness from the enclosure of the body. According to one version, there are said to be nine doors in the body through which it can move out. These so-called 'nine doors of the body' are two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, and one urethra. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, 3/18.

Besides these nine, there is the 'tenth door' or opening, and it is this 'Brahm Randhra' present at the top of the head.

According to Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 1, there are eleven doors of the body. They are the following—two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one mouth, navel, anus, genitals and Brahm-randhra (the hair like slit on the top of the head).

A practitioner of Yoga or meditation is able to control this exit; he is able to determine how his Atma or consciousness, representing his 'true self', leaves his body along with the Pran by the means of meditative exercises. The escape of the vital winds (Pran) along with the consciousness (Atma) through the hair-like slit called the *Brahm-Randhra* present at the top of the head is considered as the best path to leave the body as compared to other means of leaving it. Since everyone wants the best type of end for himself, it is but natural to expect that the ascetic would endeavour and strive to ensure that he trains himself sufficiently enough to ensure that his Pran, along with his conscious 'self' or Atma, would leave the body by the best path available to it, and it is obviously the top of the head. This word 'top' itself indicates something which is the best, something that is excellent and most desired.

Hence, the end obtained by the conscious Atma by its escape through this symbolically 'highest placed door' in the body is tantamount to its obtaining the most exalted state of permanent deliverance from the entrapments of the body. It is like the Atma of that ascetic being welcomed in the palace of the supreme Emperor where other such noble and liberated souls have their abode.

Refer Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17, and Kshuriko-panishad, verse no. 18-20 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which narrate how Mukti is obtained by the Pran when it escapes through the Brahm Randhra.]”

(iv) The *Yog Kundali Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17 describe how the Pran reaches the Brahm Randhra Chakra, or the subtle energy

center located in the top of the head where the Brahm Randhar is located, and provides liberation to the ascetic. To quote—

“Verse no. 12 = Having acquired the knowledge of these six Chakras, the aspirant should first focus on concentrating the Vayu (i.e. the Pran winds; the vital wind forces in the body which keep the body alive) one by one on these, raising it from the lower level to the next higher level until it reaches the Sahasraar Chakra where the extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy is witnessed by him. But this is not the goal. He should divert it still ahead and push it upwards into the head (so that ultimately it reaches the top of the head to enter the Brahm Randhra Chakra<sup>1</sup>) (12).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The concept of how the ascetic is able to obtain final Mukti or liberation and deliverance when his Pran or vital life-bearing winds representing consciousness reaches the Brahm Randhra have been elaborately explained elsewhere in Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 27, and Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 18-20 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

“Verse no. 13-17 = By this practice, the Pran gets established in the symbolic universe located at the top of the head<sup>1</sup>. In other words, the spiritual aspirant gains knowledge of everything worth knowing in this world.

In this holistic manner, the ascetic is able to have knowledge of and become enlightened about all the vital factors of life present in his body which is treated as a miniature universe—i.e. he acquires knowledge of and gets acquainted with such potentially powerful aspects of the universe as Vayu (the various vital winds and their functions and how to harness their potential powers), the Bindu (literally the ‘drop’ and ‘point’, here referring to his vital forces of life and inherent strength that is represented by the drop of semen which he becomes able to self-control as well as the drop of blood and lymph and other important fluids in the body, and also to the point in the forehead where he experiences the exhilarating sense of extreme bliss and ecstasy when the Pran reaches this point during meditation), the Chakras (the swirling energy centers of his body which were hitherto clogged and unable to release their divine energies but which now have been opened up, empowering the aspirant with stupendous energy and powers), and the Chitta (the subtle aspect of the mind, the sub-conscious mind and its astounding abilities and powers).

This metaphorically makes them aware of the supreme authority and the universal cosmic power that regulates the entire universe, and this knowledge fills them with the ecstasy and a sense of fulfillment that comes with eclectic knowledge of the ‘Supreme’ and being acquainted first hand with the ‘Lord’ of creation. [After all, this is the ultimate aim of all spiritual endeavours—to become acquainted with the supreme Brahm. So, when the ascetic is able to achieve this exalted stage of enlightenment, he indeed becomes Brahm-realised.]

This is the culmination of Yoga—aimed to bring about a union between the individual and the Supreme Being. This is called the state of Samadhi wherein the ascetic tastes the nectar-like bliss of truth realisation and self-realisation [13 ½].

Just like the case wherein the fire inherent in the firewood cannot be brought to light without rubbing the latter vigorously, the astounding potentials and magnificent powers of Yoga cannot be demonstrated without stringent and painstaking practice [14 ½].

Even as a lighted lamp covered by a clay pot cannot show its light unless the pot is broken, the brilliant light of enlightenment and self-realisation that emanates from the knowledge that the ascetic acquires of the supreme Truth of creation known as the cosmic Consciousness when he has successfully completed his Yoga practice and has experienced its attendant bliss and ecstasy that is likened to dripping nectar called Amrit inside his own self (as his pure conscious Atma) cannot be brought to light unless the covering in the form of the pot-like gross body is done away with<sup>2</sup>. This is possible with the help of and guidance from a wise and self-realised Guru (who is a moral preceptor and an expert Yoga teacher) [16 ½].

The Guru is like a ‘Karnadhaar’, i.e. a boatman<sup>3</sup>, who can take a man across this world which is like a deep sea that is choppy and awe inspiring [17]. (13-17).

[Note--<sup>1</sup>Obviously, the skull and its inside do resemble the inverted ‘hemisphere of the sky’ under which the entire universe is located. The brain is also located here, and the latter is the center of knowledge and wisdom without which life would be as good as non-existent. The grosser part of this brain, the tissues etc. are like the lifeless parts of this universe such as rocks and mountains etc., while its subtle part, the thinking and intellectual part—i.e. the mind and intellect, are like ‘life’ personified. ‘Life’ does not simply mean living like an animal, but living a fruitful life of intelligent and auspicious living which is only made possible by the intelligent mind which forms the subtle part of the brain.

<sup>2</sup>The body is a gross thing much like the clay pot, while the consciousness residing in it is like the lighted lamp burning inside the pot. That is why consciousness is often called ‘self-illuminated’ because it gives light. In the present context, the ‘getting rid of the body’ has two connotations—one is to actually leave the body which the ascetic accomplishes by doing Yoga and forcing his Pran to make its exit from the Brahm Randhra at the culmination of Yoga, while the second meaning would be to disassociate detach himself from the physical gross body and realise that his true self is the pure consciousness that is an ethereal Spirit. This Spirit is like the wind or air element that is not limited like the body, and is free from all the encumbrances associated with the gross body. Further, when the ascetic de-links himself from the body, he is not at all affected by the grossness and faults of the latter. This is what is meant here. A truly self-realised and acclaimed ascetic would rise above the grossness and limiting affects of the body and become universal and ethereal like the Spirit that is his Atma.

<sup>3</sup>The word *Karnadhaar* literally means a helmsman, but here the meaning ‘a boatman’ is more apt because he is supposed to take his ward, the spiritual aspirant, across a ‘sea’ represented by this world. Only an expert boatman can do this.]”

(v) The *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes the Brahm Randhra in its verse nos. 103-106. To quote—“103-106. When the practitioner of Yoga is able to concentrate his Pran and Atma in the top of the head (the skull) which is shaped like an inverted hollow bowl, he hears a sound resembling the loud call made by the peacock<sup>1</sup> at the spot called the ‘Vyom Randhra’ which is also known as the Brahm Randhra<sup>2</sup>.

The inverted bowl of the skull has four openings, called the ‘doors’<sup>3</sup>.

The self-illuminated and self-enlightened Atma (here referring to the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm) is present in the subtle space of the hollow of the skull much like the celestial sun is present in the external sky.

The inherent subtle and sublime divine authority, powers and potentials that this Atma (i.e. Brahm) possesses are represented by the ‘Shakti’ (the female personification

of these virtues and qualities) standing at the opening of the 'Brahm Randhra'. This Shakti empowers the practicing ascetic to be able to concentrate his thoughts and focus his attention on realisation of the true 'self' which is the pure conscious Atma personifying the supreme transcendental Brahm in order to facilitate his final liberation and deliverance from this body and the world. This is tantamount to emancipation and salvation of his soul, called 'Kaivalya Mukti' because it is his final dissolution and a unique one at that in as much as he would not have to take birth again. This is possible when true self-realisation and enlightenment dawns upon the intellect and mind of the aspirant ascetic, and this unique achievement is therefore regarded as the crowning glory of all his Yoga practices as well as his spiritual pursuits.

The point in the forehead where the virtual 'third eye of wisdom' is located is like the Chandra Bindu placed on the symbol of OM. [That is, it is like the focal point of the parabolic surface representing the cosmic dish where the practitioner of Yoga can hear the cosmic Naad, the primary sound of ether, resonating in his head.] It symbolically represents the 'sight' that comes with wisdom and enlightenment. Since Lord Shiva is the God who personifies the virtues of wisdom, enlightenment, erudition and self-realisation of the highest order, remaining perpetually in a state of meditation and contemplation, this place in the forehead is said to be his symbolic abode<sup>4</sup>.

Again, since knowledge, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment are like priceless and glittering gems, this place is said to be bejeweled and embellished with brilliantly shining gems.

A person who is well acquainted with the knowledge contained in this Upanishad is deemed to be eligible to attain final emancipation and salvation for his self, called Kaivalya Mukti. Verily, this is what this Upanishad expounds, elucidates, asserts and affirms.

Thus ends this Upanishad (103-106).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>When the vital winds are concentrated on the top of the skull which is like an inverted bowl, the grave and resonating but soothing sound emanating from the Sushumna Naadi is heard louder like a shriek of the peacock because of the acoustic make of this area. The hissing and rustling sound that is made by the movement of the vital airs inside the body is magnified manifold when they enter the Sushumna Naadi and reach the head. The practitioner of Yoga can hear this otherwise very subtle sound that is inaudible under ordinary circumstances in a loud reverberating mode as narrated in verse no. 102.

<sup>2</sup>The *Brahm Randhra* is the hair like slit on the top of the skull from which the Pran and Atma of the Yogi escape to the outside world at the time of his death and his final dissolution into the elements. It is believed that the supreme Brahm had entered the man's body through this aperture at the time of creation.

The word *Vyom* means the sky, and therefore the opening that opens into the sky is known as *Vyom Randhra*. This is also the location of the *Vyom Chakra*.

<sup>3</sup>The four openings or 'doors' of the skull are the following—the two nostrils and two eyes. Through the nostrils the creature inhales and exhales wind which creates a whizzing, hissing or rustling sound when it passes through them; it is symbolically depicted as the sound made when the string of the bow is pulled and released. The other opening, i.e. the eye is the site of all vision and knowledge acquired by the creature when it sees things in the world. It is a metaphor for the subtle quality of wisdom and enlightenment as well as of deep insight and the sixth sense that any creature possesses.

<sup>4</sup>That is why it is called the seat of Lord Shiva and Shakti because Shiva stands for

such virtues as wisdom and enlightenment of the highest order, while Shakti stands for the stupendous authority, powers and potentials that knowledge bestows upon the creature. The forehead is the site of the fore part of the brain much like the headlight on the miner's helmet or the headlight of the car which enables the miner or the driver of the car to see in the darkness. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the practitioner of Yoga who follows the rules and regulations as laid down in this Upanishad is able to see the truth in the light of wisdom and enlightenment that is present in his own head.]”

(d) *Maha Dwar*—Another related word is the ‘Maha Dwar’ or the ‘great door or gate’. In metaphysical terms it refers to the Brahm-Randhra located on the top of the head (cranium) where there is a hair-like micro-fine slit in the skull bone from where it is believed the Pran, or the vital life-giving winds present inside the body, of the ascetic leave when he reaches the climax of meditation. This Pran is accompanied by the Atma on its outward journey from the body. This is because Pran and life are synonymous with each other, and so is the Atma which is synonymous with ‘consciousness’ that prevails in a living being. When the ascetic dies by the exit of his Pran from the body through the Brahm-Randhra, it is obvious that his consciousness also leaves; the body that is rendered lifeless without the Pran becomes unconscious—or ‘without consciousness’. It is believed that the supreme transcendental Brahm entered the body of the man at the time of creation through this Brahm-Randhra, and then took up residence in the head as the man’s eclectic virtues of having wisdom, erudition, sagacity and intellect with its accompanying faculties such as reasoning, rationality, analysis, logic, discrimination, deduction, scientific predictions etc.

Yoga Upanishads describe elaborately how the Pran is channalised through the Sushumna Naadi by activation of the Kundalini and practicing the various Mudras and Aasans along with Pranayam to reach the forehead. It is here that the ascetic experiences the presence of light of wisdom and enlightenment besides accessing the various mystical powers of deep insight into the realm of the unknown and transcendental. Such achievements are truly super-human, and can only be achieved by a Brahm-realised person and not by an ordinary mortal. So when the Atma reaches this area of the head, the spiritual aspirant witnesses the presence of the supreme Divinity known as Brahm.

When the Pran makes its exit through the Brahm-Randhra and merges with the universal air or wind element present outside the gross body of the creature, there is no chance of it ever returning back into the body. This is tantamount to his final liberation and deliverance because the body without life would disintegrate into its basic elements such as the fire, water, sky and earth, leaving nothing behind. This is also called ‘Kaivalya Mukti’ in metaphysical parlance.

It is the final dissolution of the creature when he becomes one with the cosmic elements of creation from where his origin can be traced. This Brahm-Randhra is called the ‘Maha Dwar’ because it is the main gate through which the Pran and the Atma exit from the body to find their liberation and deliverance; it facilitates the exit of the Pran and the Atma from the great prison of the body in which they were trapped. Since freedom from a life of bondage is an exhilarating experience, it is said that the creature experiences extreme sense of bliss when the creature in the form of his Pran (life sustaining forces in his body) and the Atma (pure consciousness) reaches this Maha Dwar.

The Amrit Naad Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 26 asserts that it is the Mana or the mind of a creature that decides the path he should take to reach his goal in life out of the various options available depending upon the natural inclinations, temperaments, objective of life and desires of the creature. So if the creature sincerely wishes to obtain liberation and deliverance from the shackles of the body and the find freedom from the endless cycle of birth and death in the world and its accompanying horrors, then the mind would aid in the process by concentrating all its faculties to help the Atma and Pran reach the Maha Dwar and escape. In other words, the Mana would enable the enlightened creature to find the eternal source of bliss and happiness by becoming ‘self-realised’.

The *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 94 describes this ‘Maha Dwar’ as follows—“When the Atma is accustomed to remaining steady inspite of the buffeting effects of the winds present inside the body which cause undue restlessness to it and hinder its spiritual progress (by causing so many distractions for it as narrated, inter alia, in verse nos. 50, 59-61, 80-81, 93/10-11 of this Upanishad), it acquires sufficient expertise to accompany the vital winds as they move upwards towards the abode of Brahm by the practice of various meditation exercises and concentration of the forceful powers of the mind as described earlier in this Upanishad.

In other words, these four symbolic paths (described in verse no. 93/12—93/15 of this Upanishad) are taken by the Atma (i.e. the pure conscious self of the creature) along with the Pran (i.e. the vital winds that infuse life inside the body) as it moves towards the ‘Maha Dwar’ or the great doorway leading to Brahm-realisation and attaining the final Moksha or liberation and deliverance of the soul. During this journey, it reaches the so-called ‘Ardha Trikona<sup>2</sup>’ or the symbolic half-triangle. Here the Atma is able to witness or ‘see’ the presence of the exalted seat of the divine Being honoured by the epithet ‘Achut<sup>3</sup>’ (94).

Note—<sup>1</sup>The *Maha Dwar* is literally the ‘great doorway or gate’. Another related concept is the *Brahm Vivar*. It is literally a hole like aperture present at the back of the mouth where it opens into the wind pipe which connects the lungs to the nose. This is the location of the ‘Talu Chakra’ or the swirling subtle energy center located at the back of the palate. It has a direct link to the Brahm Randhra present in the cranium at the top of the head, and is the hair-like slit marking the joint between the two parts of the skull.

This Brahm Vivar is also called *Brahm Dwar* or the ‘doorway to Brahm’ because it opens directly into the duct that connect the lower part of the body to the Brahm Randhra and through which the vital winds called Pran travel during the practice of Yoga (such as Pranayam, Kundalini and Sushumna Naadi activation, various Aasans and Bandhas etc.).

Refer verse nos. 103-106 of this Upanishad below in this context. Refer also to Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 27, 39; Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 18-20; Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17 in this context.

<sup>2</sup>The *Ardha Trikona* or the half-triangle refers to the area of the forehead between the hair line and the two eyebrows. The full triangle would consist of the base formed by joining the eyebrows so that the line passes through the base of the root of the nose, and the apex would be the Brahm Randhra described above. This area is said to be the seat of wisdom and enlightenment. Refer verse no. 39 of this Upanishad.

It is here that the creature witnesses the supreme transcendental Brahm’s presence in the form of Achut.

<sup>3</sup>*Achut* means an entity that is exalted, divine, holy, immaculate and incorruptible; that has a high stature, is untainted, imperishable, steady, constant and eternal; an entity

that cannot be demoted, degraded, demeaned or belittled in anyway whatsoever. This epithet applies to the supreme transcendental Brahm present in the creature's inner self as his own Atma or the pure consciousness.]"

(e) Brahm Kosha—The Atharva Veda's *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 20-21 describe the *Brahm Kosh* as follows—

“paragraph no. 20 = The *Brahm-Kosh* is a treasury of Vigyan; it is Vigyan manifested in this form.

[That is, the essence of Brahm, the true knowledge of the supreme transcendental Consciousness, is obtained when one attains high level of wisdom, enlightenment, self-realisation and erudition. It is a knowledge that is not easily available, and comes with sincerity, commitment, faith, devotion, steadfastness, diligence and effort. If one does not possess relevant skills and knowledge, one is unable to do even any mundane thing in this world, so how can he know the most esoteric and enigmatic entity known as 'Brahm' if he does not have the requisite knowledge and skills needed for the purpose?]

The Brahm-Kosh has four nets or meshes that surround it like a ring or cover it a like a sheath.

[The word 'Kosh' refers to the 'cell' where Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, lives inside the body of the creature. This 'Consciousness' is known as the Atma when it resides inside the individual's body. The Atma representing Brahm is surrounded by four rings which are like 'nets or meshes' surrounding some protected entity.

These four nets or meshes are the following four components of the creature's body—(i) the Pran Maye kosh or the subtle vital winds that give the spark of life to the body; (ii) the Mana Maye Kosh which is the subtle mind-intellect-heart complex of the body that controls all thoughts, emotions, sentiments, decisions, power to understand, analyse and deduce, etc.; (iii) the Anna Maye Kosh of the aspect of the body that survives on the food eaten by the creature; and (iv) the Anand Maye Kosh or the component of the body that gives the creature the sensation of bliss, happiness, pleasure and comfort.]

This Brahm-Kosh is not visible to Death; the latter does not casts its glance upon it. [Here, 'death' has been personified.]

[This is a metaphoric way of saying that the Atma is untouched by death; it cannot die or does not die. This is obviously because the Atma is an ethereal entity that is eternal, infinite and imperishable; the Atma is the cosmic Consciousness that is the quintessence of this creation. It is this Atma that lives inside the body of a living being as his 'true self' and as such it represents the cosmic Atma known as Brahm in its microcosmic form. Therefore, the cosmic counterpart of the Atma is Brahm, and like the Atma it is also eternal, infinite, without and end or beginning, indestructible and imperishable—i.e. it is untouched by death. In this context, refer paragraph no. 15 above of this Canto 2.]

It cannot either be seen or visualized by any of the Gods such as Brahma (creator of the visible world), Vishnu (sustainer of the visible world), Indra (the king of Gods who presides over the various functions of the visible world), Agni (Fire God), or Varun (Water God).

[These Gods have limited spiritual vision. They are neck-deep involved in the upkeep of the creation and carrying out their designated duties assigned to them by Brahm so much so that they do not have the time and inclination to meditate and contemplate upon Brahm. This is because Brahm had created 'Maya', the power to create

delusions, at the very outset of the process of creation. No one was exempt from its influences, not even the Gods. This was a powerful and most potent weapon in the hands of the Supreme Being to keep all his assistants, in this case the various Gods named here, busy in their duties. Otherwise, once they actually realised that this world is an illusionary creation of Brahm, they would shun getting involved in looking after something that is merely a smoke-screen of imagination, without any pith and substance. So, it was necessary for Brahm to create Maya to ensure that his attendants keep on running the treadmill without realizing that they are running in futility and pursuing a target that they can never reach. This illusion was an absolute existential necessity and the need of the hour in practical terms for Brahm if he wished to ensure that the wheel of creation and destruction he has set in motion continued to rotate unhindered.

In other words and put simply, the Gods were happy and contented to be Gods and get praise by the lower creatures and humans who offered their oblations, libations and worship to them. They were proud that they were shown so much respect and honour by millions and millions of humble creatures. So where and what was the need for them to search for Brahm when they rolled in the luxury of praise and honour showered upon them by lesser creatures, or when they were fed by the choicest of things when people offered them oblations during fire sacrifices?

Hence, all the Gods remained just what they were, as 'Gods'. They did not achieve immortality and oneness with Brahm; they did not become Brahm-realised. They were just like high-profile ministers of an emperor who relish the privileges, enjoyments, pleasures and comforts that attend high office without realizing that these are transient and at the mercy of the emperor. Once the emperor decides to snatch these privileges from them, they would be like the man on the street, rather worse-off because they have become accustomed to a pampered life-style. The same is the case with these Gods. They are at the mercy of Brahm; they all would perish when the creation comes to an end. In fact, the seemingly senior Gods such a Brahm and Vishnu have a fixed life-span, and this is specifically measured in years, albeit this measurement is in astronomical terms as compared to human years. The specifics have been narrated in detail in Tripadvibhūt Maha-Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, in its Canto 2, paragraph no. 8-16.

On the other hand, self-realised, wise and enlightened sages, seers, hermits and ascetics, who were born as ordinary mortal humans with all the limitations that a human body imposed on them, had attained Brahm-hood even in a small span of time that a human being possesses.] [20]

“paragraph no. 21 = It is in that *Brahm-Kosh* (i.e. the causal body where the Atma resides) where I—who am an embodiment of 'Tej' (represented by the self-radiant and splendid Atma, the pure cosmic Consciousness personified as the glorious and splendid self-illuminated 'Fire element')—sit.

[In other words, the Atma that lives inside the Brahm-Kosh is an image of Lord Maha-Deva, or Lord Shiva, the great and enlightened Lord God who is personification of Brahm. This Atma is self-illuminated because it is an embodiment of the 'Fire element'; it is an embodiment of the 'fire-like virtues' of Brahm.]

I sit close to the daughter of the king of the snow-covered mountains. She has a golden countenance.

[This ‘daughter’ is the divine consort of Lord Shiva known as Parvati who, according to the Purans, is a daughter of the king of snow-covered Himalaya Mountains.]

My countenance glows with the light that is equivalent to countless moons. I wear the moon like a crown on my head. My three eyes are represented by the sun, the moon and the fire<sup>1</sup>.

My divine form is adorned with the sacred Bhasma (ash of the fire sacrifice which is smeared all over his body).

Those devotees who remain concentrated on my divine and holy form, those who meditate and contemplate upon me, become free from sins. They not only find liberation and deliverance from these sins and their horrible consequences, but also find freedom from this entrapping world and its numerous stubborn entanglements. As a reward, they become one with me; they merge in me to become inseparable and indistinguishable from me. [That is, they attain Mukti which is spiritual liberation and deliverance.] [21]

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The three eyes of Lord Shiva— From the metaphysical perspective, his two eyes are the conventional eyes, and his third symbolises his deep insight and great wisdom and enlightenment. Shiva personifies the fire element which also has a symbolic significance. The fire is known to burn all impurities present in gold when it is put into it, thereby purifying the metal. Similarly, fire is used in blast furnaces to extract iron from its ore. Fire has the inherent ability to reduce to ashes all filth and garbage, which is a metaphoric way of saying that a person who has worshipped this element in the form of Shiva is supposed to have burnt all his faults, blemishes and shortcomings that taint his character and soul, thereby purifying his inner self. The ash is indicative of total renunciation and detachment from the world of materialism, because it is indicative of a renunciate way of life and symbolically stands for burning of everything into the fire pit. That is why Lord Shiva has been called the patron God of ascetics, hermits and Sanyasis who worship the fire element only.]

Besides these points, Shiva is the God assigned the task of concluding the world which necessitates his being closely associated with the ‘fire element’ in the sense that he must be as unrelenting, merciless, powerful and ferocious as the latter in order to conclude this creation inspite of all the odds. He must reduce everything to ashes just like the fire does. And it is from this ash that the new creation would emerge in due course. Herein lie the magic of creation and its chief Lord, Brahm, the Supreme Being—the fact that a new creation rises from ashes!

To quote Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 93—“This (i.e. the fire element is the symbolic abode of Lord Rudra or Shiva. [That is, he symbolises the fire element.] One should meditate upon this Lord who has three eyes, who is the one renowned for granting boons (to his followers and devotees, and in the presence case to the ascetic), who is as splendid, illuminated and radiant as a sun which has just risen, and who has the ash of the fire sacrifice smeared all over his body (just like an ascetic, indicating that he is their great icon and patron deity of ascetics) (93).”

The Maho-panishad of Sam Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 7 describes that Shiva was born from the forehead of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, invisible and all-inclusive gross body of Brahm, the Supreme Being.

The Panch Brahm Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 41 espouses that Shiva lives in the heart of the creature as an embodiment of ‘Sat-Chit-Anand’, i.e. as his Atma—“Shiva, as Sat-Chit-Anand personified, always lives in the heart. He is a constant witness of all that is happening. That is why the heart is regarded as the doorway to liberation and deliverance from the traps that have been laid out by this delusory and cunning world of artificiality to ensnare the creature in its tentacles.”]

**The Brahm Sutra**, literally meaning the eclectic secret to Brahm-realisation, is physically symbolized by the Sacred Thread or the Yagyopavit worn by Hindus.

References—(i) Krishna Yajur Veda = Brahmopanishad, verse no. 4-15. (ii) Atharva Veda = Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 14-19, 27; Par Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 3, 5-20; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 17, 79, 80-82, 84-85, 88-89; Canto 4, verse no. 37 (mention the Mantra dedicated to the Yagyopavit); Bhavana Upanishad, verse no. 3/11.

The *Yagyopavit* or the ‘sacred thread’ is given to a Hindu child as part of his baptism rituals. It is a constant reminder to him as he grows up into an adult that he has certain moral obligations to live up to and certain basic standards that he must observe at all costs. He must be constantly on the vigil not to do anything that would undermine the authority and sanctity of this thread which acts as virtual string binding him to the vows of righteousness, auspiciousness and nobility in thought and action. It is his ‘sacred’ duty to uphold this path as laid down in the scriptures to which he had promised to adhere to at the time of his initiation or baptism. If he does not obey these rules and violates them in his life then what is the use of his wearing the Yagyopavit in the first place? It would be deceitful and cheating one’s self. This is precisely the point here. The sacred thread is only an external sign indicating that the wearer occupies a noble stature amongst men, but if he does not live up to the expectations from a man who wears this insignia of holiness and purity then he is only committing a grave sin as he is defiling the very principles upon which the institution of the sacred thread is based.

From the metaphysical and spiritual point of view, the Yagyopavit represents the supreme Brahm. When it is worn by a wise person it serves as a constant reminder to him that he is a personification of Brahm, and therefore he must never do anything that demeans this holy and divine institution. This philosophical interpretation of the sacred thread is the central theme in the *Par Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 3, 5-20 which assert unequivocally that **the sacred thread is a symbol of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the universal Truth of creation.**

The Yagyopavit consists of three interwoven threads, and it is therefore known as the *Trisutra*. It is worn around the neck or slung diagonally across the chest, from the left shoulder to the right side of the hip bone. The word *Sutra* in this term has great metaphysical meaning which has been described in the Atharva Veda’s *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse nos. 83-85 as follows—

“Verse no. 83 = Just like the beads of a garland or a rosary are threaded together and held in place by the string running through them, the entire creation is bound and held in place with all its individual units interlocked to form a complex grid-lock or matrix by the hidden ‘truth’ running imperceptibly through them, and this ‘Truth’ is the ‘Sutra’ which is eternal and truthful essence of existence and the creation. [In other words, the subtle and esoteric but the most eclectic Absolute Truth—which is irrefutable and incontrovertible, which is eternal, infinite, imperishable, universal and uniform—in this creation is the entity that gives credence to this creation and makes its existence possible. In metaphysics this Absolute Truth is known as Brahm. It is this Brahm which is

responsible for shaping this world and keeping its texture sustained. Brahm gives the world its meaning and shape. Without Brahm this world would fall apart and scatter haphazardly into non-entity and non-existence just like the garland or the rosary losing its meaning and existence if the string binding the flowers or the beads together is cut and the latter scatter around. The ‘Sutra’ is responsible for creation having any meaning. Otherwise, the numerous individual units of this creation would have remained scattered units having no meaning and importance. It is this Sutra symbolising Brahm or the universal consciousness running invisibly through the length and breadth of creation that not only binds the countless units together but also gives them their life and identity. So if one wishes to know the secret of this world as it exists in its present shape one must know about Brahm which is the hidden force that has given the world or the creation its meaning, shape and existence just like the case that if one were to recognise an assortment of flowers as a garland or a collection of beads as a rosary one must understand that it is the string running through them that has held together these individual flowers or beads so that they come to be known or recognised as a garland or a rosary. Therefore, the very existence of this creation hinges around the Sutra symbolising Brahm.]

A wise and erudite ascetic is one who realises what this eclectic and most divine and holy Sutra representing the essential secret of existence is (which of course is Brahm, the Absolute Truth, and the cosmic Consciousness). He then enshrines it in his heart, in his inner being, with this understanding, with this wisdom, thereby giving the Sutra (representing Brahm) its due importance, honour, reverence and dignity. [That is, once having known and understood that it is the supreme transcendental Brahm which is the Absolute Truth in creation, a wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant should concentrate his attention on this Truth, and not allow himself to be buffeted (i.e. made restless by being deluded, misled or confused) by numerous ideas and notions, countless theories and doctrines, innumerable philosophies and schools of thoughts which only lead to utter vexation, confusion and perplexity. By concentrating upon one single path or goal it becomes very easy for him to reach it within the limited time span of this short life, and if he does not do so he would be like a man who keeps changing boats every now and then and ultimately sinks mid-stream before he reaches the other shore.] (83).

“Verse no. 84 = A truly wise and learned man should discard the external form of the ‘Sutra’ (i.e. the gross form of the sacred thread or Yagyopavit, which is also called a Sutra, consisting of mere threads woven together into a sling put across the shoulder and the chest), and instead accept the divine principle that this ‘Sutra’ represents—as it is a symbolic form of Brahm, the divine and holy entity that is truthful, all-pervading, all-inclusive, eternal, infinite, supreme and transcendental. This is the true and real meaning of ‘Sutra’ that the spiritual aspirant should wear. It is the essence, the truth, the fundamental aspect and the primary form of the sacred thread, and it is the only form that would be of any spiritual benefit for the aspirant instead of merely wearing it just for the sake of doing so. [Whereas the Sutra made from ordinary thread is just that—‘ordinary’, the symbolism of acceptance of Brahm as the supreme Sutra makes one as glorious, divine and holy as Brahm himself—i.e. the aspirant becomes ‘extraordinary’. He becomes a personified form of Brahm if he is enlightened enough to inculcate all the good virtues that Brahm stands for. By wearing the Sutra on his body, the aspirant is

openly declaring this fact that he has established Brahm on his gross body, and therefore as long as the Sutra is on his body he is obliged to honour its sanctity and act with consonant dignity so that the holy nature of the Sutra is not compromised with and its divinity is not demoted by any of his actions, deeds, words, thoughts, behaviours etc. He has to be extra cautious about being righteous and noble because of the presence of the Sutra on his body.]

Such a Parivrajak (i.e. a Sanyasi) never becomes impure and defiled; he never gets demoted or falls from his exalted stature. [The wearing of the Yagyopavit is a visible sign that the wearer is of a high birth such as a Brahmin or some learned, holy and religious man. It is believed that as long as he wears this Yagyopavit, he is pure, holy and un-corrupt. But since this Yogyopavita is made from ordinary thread, it is subject to all the grossness, impurities, faults, shortcomings and impermanence that are associated with everything that is gross in this transient, faulty, mortal and perishable world. In short, the purity and holiness that the gross form of the Yogyopavita bestows upon the wearer is not permanent in nature because the former itself is not permanent. On the other hand, Brahm is an eternal, infinite, imperishable, truthful and divine entity, and therefore if one is wise enough to accept the Yagyopavit for his spiritual well-being then he must wear it with proper wisdom and understanding as to its symbolic meaning and its subtle import. It is only then that this Yagyopavit would be of any benefit for him and it would bestow holiness and purity to the wearer. Once this actually happens, the wearer becomes a living embodiment of Brahm.] (84).

“verse no. 85 = A wise, erudite and enlightened Parivrajak (a Sanyasi) who has accepted the secret Truth and eclectic knowledge of the divine Brahm as the metaphoric Yagyopavit which he devotedly enshrines in his heart or wears it in his inner being is indeed the one who has understood the reality and the truth of this world as well as worn the Yagyopavit in the correct sense (85).

The Yagyopavit stands for Brahm, and by wearing it on the body the wearer is indicating that he has established the supreme Lord on his own body. Hence, it implies that the body has been granted with the same holiness as that associated with a shrine where Brahm is established as some form of deity. It also symbolises that the wearer is as holy and pure as Brahm itself. If the sacred thread is worn with this wisdom and understanding, it is only then that it has any spiritual value whatsoever, otherwise it is just a thread slung on the body, and then it would be like using some holy symbol to deceive the world by unscrupulous people.

These three threads also stand for the three Gunas or qualities that Brahm possesses. These are the following—‘Sata Guna or quality’ is the noble, virtuous, auspicious and good qualities present in a creature. It is marked by such high standards of ethical existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually uplifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them. (b) ‘Raja Guna or quality’ covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, desires,

selfishness, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being. (c) ‘Tama Guna or quality’ is the third quality; it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, leading him to such negative traits as sins, vices, perversions, greed, avarice, haughtiness, pride, lust, attachments, yearnings, intoxication, wild behaviour, promiscuity, evils, utter disregard for anything which is righteous, ethical and noble etc.—i.e. in brief, immoral, denigrating and depraved behaviour marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness of misdemeanours. It is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of ‘Satvic’ (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of ‘Rajasic’ or ‘Tamasic’ qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of ‘Satvic’ qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of ‘Rajasic’ quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher ‘Tamasic’ quality in them. Since the creation consists of all types of people, Brahm is deemed to possess all these qualities in him.

The sacred thread actually consists of *nine fine threads* (Par Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 5; Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 27) which are intertwined into three strands, each strand having three fine interlocked threads, that are once again knitted together to make up the Yagyopavit or the sacred thread (Par Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 5).

The *Par Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse nos. 3-20 are entirely dedicated to the metaphysical importance of the symbol of the sacred thread and its spiritual value. It lays stress that the potentials of the sacred thread in one’s spiritual endeavour is equivalent to the acquisition of Gyan (wisdom, enlightenment and knowledge), and it is as powerful as Agni (the fire element which burns all spiritual and worldly impurities, and renders the aspirant holy, pure and divine). A true Brahmin and Sanyasi is one who understands the importance of the sacred thread as a symbol of Brahm, and gives more importance to symbolically wearing it by becoming Brahm-realised and self-realised by acquiring truthful knowledge of Brahm, instead of merely wearing some length of thread over his gross body in the false belief that this would help him in his spiritual progress. It would serve no purpose.

The sacred thread is a symbol that stands at once for (i) Brahm represented by Pranav, the cosmic vibration or ethereal sound encapsulated in the word OM, (ii) for the Atma that is also known as Hans, the divine Swan, (iii) for the Fire, and (iv) for Gyan or truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment about the Truth of the self and Brahm. Refer: Atharva Veda = Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Purva kanda/Canto 1, verse nos. 14-19, 27; Par Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 3-14, 16-17.

The sacred thread symbolizes all the subtle aspects of creation, called the Tattwas. These Tattwas are variously said to number ninety-six, twenty-seven, nine etc., and the sacred thread encompasses all of them. It is, in fact, a representative of Brahm in entirety.

These facts are explained in detail in the Atharva Veda's *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 5, and *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 14-15.

Great stress is laid in the Upanishads in getting deep into the hidden meaning of all things visible and understanding their essence and truth rather than being deluded by their external features. This is very evident in the case of the sacred thread where the Upanishad emphasizes that merely wearing the physical kind of the thread to get respect and material benefits in this world by being called a Brahmin (as they are the ones who wear it and are respected in society for their wisdom and high birth) is equivalent to cheating one's own self, and it would only lead to hell and give no real benefits. All external signs or symbols of Brahm-hood can hoodwink the world, but not the inner-self which does not benefit by external show of religiosity and holiness if its profound principles are not imbodyed by the spiritual aspirant. Thus, it is better to discard the external sacred thread and wear it symbolically in the inner-self by understanding who or what is Brahm and Atma. These facts are expressly asserted in *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse nos. 3-4, 6-20; *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 14-21, 26-27.

In this context, the *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 6 says—"Those who are wise and enlightened should cut off their Shikha (tuft of hair on the top of the head) and discard the external form of the Sutra (the sacred thread). Instead, they should accept the imperishable and eternal Brahm in place of the Sutra (6)."

The *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 10 says—"A Brahmin, an expert ascetic who is well-versed in Yoga, and a person who is wise, learned and enlightened should abandon the external sacred thread, because the real thread that bestows spiritual liberation and deliverance is not the external thread made of a gross material (e.g. cotton thread or silk thread) but the symbolic sacred thread representing Brahm that is worn (accepted) internally.

When the sacred thread representing Brahm is symbolically worn internally, there is no fear of it ever getting defiled or polluted; it would permanently be holy and pure (10)."

The *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 13 says—"Those who are wise and enlightened assert that those persons who understand that the Shikha (tuft of hair on the head) is as powerful and potent as the fire element itself are the ones who are true wearers of it. For the rest, they are merely sporting a crop of hair on the head, and nothing more (13)."

The *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 14 is very explicit about Brahmins who merely wear the sacred thread which says—"Those Brahmins who are engrossed merely in performing rituals and observing sacraments, or who are engaged in the mundane affairs of the world are Brahmins only for name's sake (and not true Brahmins), because they live only to fill their stomachs and enjoy the fame, comforts and pleasures that come with worldly respect. Such people go to hell at the end of their lives.

[That is, they continue to take birth and die again, and during each life they undergo sufferings and miseries that are part and parcel of gross mundane existence. They do not find Mukti or spiritual liberation and deliverance, nor do they find peace and bliss that comes with self and Brahm realisation. They do not have true Gyan, and are only pretending to have it to fulfill their worldly desires. In short, they are not true Brahmins, they are imposters, and they do not do justice to the institution of Brahm-hood. They give the holy stature of being a Brahmin a bad name.

The question arises, who then is a true Brahmin? The answer is self-evident in the foregoing as well as the following verses. That is, only those who have true knowledge of Brahm, and the depth of wisdom and enlightenment to understand what the term 'Brahm' is all about, who do not hanker after external purity and formalities but lay stress on inner cleansing and sincerity of purpose are true Brahmins. Such people would not be much bothered about sporting a tuft on the head or wearing the sacred thread to prove that they are Brahmins, but would instead strive to inculcate the glorious virtues that are so typical of those who have become self and Brahm realised, who have really understood the truth and reality of things.] (14).”

The *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 17 says—“A person who knows the esoteric secrets, spiritual importance and metaphysical significance of the Yagyopavit (sacred thread) is the one who can be said to truly wearing it, and therefore is entitled to the benefits that accrue by wearing it, for instance he is entitled to Mukti or spiritual liberation and deliverance (17).”

The *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 16 describes the importance of the Sacred Thread as follows—“The sacred thread known as the Yagyopavit is also known as the Brahm-Sutra<sup>1</sup> (referred to in the closing lines of verse no. 15). This is because it refers to the divine spiritual knowledge that pertains to the supreme transcendental Brahm.

This sacred thread also stands for the different forms of the sacred fire sacrifices; these fire sacrifices can only be done when the person who performs them wears this thread. This is because this thread reminds him that the fire sacrifice is the medium which links him with Brahm.

Again, since the fire sacrifice itself is a personified form of Brahm, it is a natural corollary that the sacred thread also stands for Brahm.

Further, the Sanskrit term for the sacred thread is 'Sutra', literally having two connotations—one obviously means 'a thread', and the other more important meaning is 'a formula, a principle, or a tenet'. Hence, to wear the sacred thread actually means to know the secret tenets of Brahm, to be aware of the principles that pertain to the supreme Truth known as Brahm, to be conversant with the formula which can provide one with access to the pinnacle of spiritual glory and attainment, a knowledge of the Divine that can make one spiritually liberated and emancipated.

The sacred thread that is used (worn) as a symbol of purity during fire sacrifices has a gross form, but its subtler form represents the purity of the fire itself (because there is nothing as powerful as the fire as far as the ability to purify is concerned).

The sacred thread, once again, is used as a symbol of purity and holiness during religious ceremonies because it represents Brahm, the supreme deity worshipped during these ceremonies. It represents the virtues and glories of Brahm, and it is this sublime and subtle aspect of the sacred thread that is the actual one which is of any benefit to the wearer.

It symbolizes the 'Brahm-Sutra'—the esoteric secrets of Brahm, the profound principles of Brahm, the grand tenets of the philosophy of Brahm. It is the link or the bridge between the Jiva who is unaware of Brahm, and the Brahm itself.

The physical form of the sacred thread reminds the wearer constantly that his body is a shrine in which the Supreme Being is consecrated as the Atma, and so he must

be very careful of his thoughts, his deeds and his actions so as not to do anything that undermines or defiles the holy nature of this shrine (body).

Therefore, the sacred thread known as the Yagyopavit and the tenets of Brahm known as the Brahm-Sutra are synonyms of each other (16).”

The Atharva Veda’s *Bhavana Upanishad*, verse no. 3/11 calls the sacred thread the ‘Brahm Sutra’ and uses it in a metaphoric manner to describe how the Pran rises up the Sushumna Naadi to reach the top of the head to enable the ascetic practicing meditation and contemplation to experience the bliss of Brahm-realisation. To quote this Upanishad—“The three Shaktis known as ‘Ichha Shakti’ (the power of desires), ‘Gyan Shakti’ (the power of knowledge), and ‘Kriya Shakti’ (the power of deeds and actions) have three sub-classes each. So, there are a total twenty-seven Shaktis or dynamic powers. These combine to form the ‘Brahm Granthi’. [The word ‘Granthi’ means a knot.]

The Sushumna Naadi (which is the main nerve passing through the spinal cord) passes through this Brahm Granthi. Hence, it is like the sacred thread known as the ‘Brahm Sutra’. (3/11).”

[The word ‘Sutra’ means a thread. Since the Sushumna Naadi is thread-like in appearance, it is called a Sutra. The idea is that the wearing of the sacred thread is merely a formality, and instead if one sincerely wishes to become Brahm-realised he should endeavour to activate the dormant Sushumna Naadi through which he diverts his vital winds towards the Brahm-Randhra situated on the top of the head. When this is successfully accomplished, the aspirant becomes Brahm-realised. The wearing of the sacred thread is necessary for formal forms of worship involving sacrifices and prayers. If its symbolism is understood then the worshipper would treat the activation of the Sushumna Naadi as the truthful wearing of the sacred thread. Otherwise, the physical sacred thread serves no purpose. This fact has also been emphatically stressed in the Brahm Upanishad of the Atharva Veda.]

How the *sacred thread incorporates all the elements* of creation, hence being a sublime as well as subtle metaphor for Brahm is espoused in the Atharva Veda’s Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 14-16, and Par Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 5. Now, we shall examine them one by one:--

(i) *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 14-16—*

“Verse no. 14-15 = [This verse describes the symbolic form of the Hans, the enlightened Atma in its subtle form. In other words, a wise and enlightened creature who has become self-realised understands that Brahm has a subtle body as represented by the entities enumerated in this verse, and not a gross form as represented by the world and the way the different Gods have been depicted to exist. This fact is also endorsed in verse no. 10 which expressly states that none of the Gods are truly holy and divine in the correct sense! Anything that is subtle cannot be visibly seen as opposed to one that is gross, but subtle entities have a wider reach and are inherently free as opposed to those that are gross.]

The ‘Hans’ (Brahm; the cosmic Consciousness; the Atma) is revealed in this creation at a subtle and microcosmic plane in the form of the following—the ninety-six Tattwas (principal elements)<sup>1</sup> of creation, as the eclectic virtues (and the sublime entity represented by them or which is a personification of these virtues) that are compositely

known as 'Chinmaya' (enlightenment, wisdom, consciousness, and bliss), as the three Gunas (inherent qualities in creation, such as Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna), as the nine Tattwas<sup>2</sup>, the three Trinity Gods such as Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder of creation who are manifestations of the three aspects of the dynamic energy (the 'fire power' that drives the dynamo of creation) of this Hans (Brahm), as being tied by the various Granthis on the one hand (which are subtle invisible knots that act as spiritual hurdles that create hindrances in obtaining enlightenment and liberation by a creature)<sup>3</sup>, and possessing the Advaita Granthi (the presence of the non-dual Brahm in the form of the Brahm Granthi) on the other hand (which, when overcome, paves the creature's direct access to Brahm), and as bearing the sacred thread which is represented by the diligent performance of the fire sacrifices<sup>4</sup> (14-15).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The ninety-six Tattwas—refer Krishna Yajur Veda's Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 2-14.

<sup>2</sup>The nine Tattwas—The three fundamental Gunas, i.e. the Sata, the Raja and the Tama, the three basic characters of the Atma known as Sat-Chit-Anand, i.e. Sat (truth), Chitta (consciousness) and Anand (bliss), and the three forms of divinity represented by the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder of creation, represent the nine Tattwas of creation.

<sup>3</sup>Granthis—The word *Granthi* literally means node, a nodule or module or knot or a wart-like or a gland-like structure. It has various connotations depending upon the context in which the word is used. For instance, it might symbolically mean the different gates in a strong fort which must be overcome or broken before one enters the fort or overruns it as done during war times.

The numerous emotional, sentimental and spiritual hurdles that an aspirant faces are also referred to as the Granthi because they are like the hard shell of the nut which is difficult to crack. Only when this shell is cracked can one find the nut. Similarly, only when one overcomes the numerous obstacles and hurdles faced by him in his spiritual pursuit that it is possible for him to have access to the fount of eternal bliss and peace that comes with Brahm realisation which is being aware of the Absolute Truth of existence.

According to the metaphysical interpretation of the term Granthi, it is the various knots present in the heart that shackle the Atma and prevent its liberation and deliverance. These Granthis are called Hridaya Granthis because they stand in the way of a man obtaining freedom from his fetters and keep him tied to this world. Once he is able to rupture them, he finds liberation even while he is still alive in this world. This fact has been clearly emphasized in Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no. 15 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. Refer also to Mundak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto) 2, section 2, verse no. 8.

From anatomical point of view, the Granthis refer to the ganglions that help to coordinate the different nerves just like major junction boxes in the network of electric wires in a building. The word Granthi also refers to the glands that control all the major functions of the body, including those of the nerves and veins. Just like a knot that helps to tie something, these Granthis of the body bind the subtle energy present inside the body and prevent it from being dissipated or going to waste; it helps to preserve energy and stops it from being released if not wanted. If we treat them as representing the ganglions then it means that by the process of Yoga in which the subtle energy of the Kundalini is released in the spinal cord, or the Sushumna Naadi to be precise, these hitherto clogged and inactive ganglions are reactivated and they begin to function in prime shape. If we consider them as glands then it would mean that the functioning of these glands is restored by the process of Yoga, and this in turn helps the body to work properly.

The Granthi symbolises the center of power and authority because it is the nodal point from where all the authority needed for governance of the body spread out. It is also like the seat of power and authority of a king, much like the strong fortress from where he rules over the kingdom. They represent the nodal points in the body where the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva or Rudra the concluder, have their symbolic residence, and it is from here they control the functioning of the body of the individual as well as everything that he thinks and does. If the individual is regarded as the microcosm of the entire creation, then the Atma would be the supreme Brahm, and the various patron deities of the organs would be the different Gods of creation. The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 70-71 describes the three main Granthis where these three Gods have their symbolic abodes in the body of the individual creature—viz. Brahm Granthi, Vishnu Granthi, and Rudra Granthi. They have also been described in (i) Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 86-89; Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 67-68, 85-86.

<sup>4</sup>The sacred thread is worn by Brahmins when they perform a fire sacrifice. Verse no. 11 above has already established the symbolism of the three types of Brahmin priests who perform the fire sacrifice. Since the sacred thread has three intertwined strands, it means here that all the three priests should work in a coordinated manner in order to derive any benefit from the fire sacrifice. Otherwise it loses its relevance and significance just like a sacred thread that is not woven according to a prescribed manner.

Conversely, it means that the honouring of the Trinity Gods and understanding the fact that they represent the supreme Brahm and his dynamism in the cosmic form is equivalent to wearing the sacred thread in a symbolic manner by the spiritual aspirant.]

“Verse no. 16 = The symbolic sacred thread known as the Yagyopavit or Brahm-Sutra (referred in the closing lines of verse no. 15) bears all the signs of the subtle and implied forms of the fire sacrifices in their entirety. Since the fire sacrifice is a personified form of Brahm, it is a natural corollary that the sacred thread stands for Brahm.

Again, since the Sanskrit term for the sacred thread is ‘Sutra’, literally having two connotations—one obviously means a thread, and the other more important meaning is a formula, a secret, a principle or a tenet. Hence, to wear the sacred thread actually means to know the secret tenets of Brahm, to be aware of the principles that pertain to the supreme Truth known as Brahm, to be conversant with the formula which can provide one with the pinnacle of spiritual glory and attainment.

The sacred thread infused with the virtues and glories of Brahm is the actual one that is of any benefit to the wearer. It symbolises the ‘Brahm-Sutra’—the esoteric secrets of Brahm, the profound principles of Brahm, the grand tenets of the philosophy of Brahm.

Therefore, the sacred thread and the tenets of Brahm are metaphors of each other (16).”

(ii) *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 5— “Now, the symbolism of the sacred thread is being discussed because a true Sanyasi (a renunciate ascetic) is expected to wear this thread in order to attain Brahm.

The four states of existence as well as the four Paads of Brahm are represented by the four fingers that are used to weave the sacred thread as well as to sling the physical thread across the shoulder of the wearer.

All the ninety-six elements of creation<sup>3</sup> are equally divided into three divisions and metaphorically incorporated in the three strands that are intertwined to constitute the sacred thread. Therefore, each strand symbolically stands for thirty-two elements. [ $96 / 3 = 32$ .]

Similarly, these three strands symbolize the three basic Gunas that determine the fundamental character of all units of creation (i.e. Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna), the three invisible forms of Brahm known as the Trinity Gods at the macrocosmic level (i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva which have these three Gunas as their dominant characteristics—refer Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 10), and the three visible forms of Brahm at the celestial level such as the sun, the moon and the fire. These three aspects of Brahm are intertwined with one another; they cannot be separated one from the other in order to maintain the texture of the fabric of creation intact. Hence, these represent the twenty-seven elements or Tattwas of creation that the sacred thread represents. [ $3 \times 3 \times 3 = 27$ .]

So, though the sacred thread actually consists of three strands, but they are so much an indivisible and inseparable part of it that when one talks of the sacred thread, all the strands and the entities that they represent are deemed to be included in the meaning.

Therefore, when the sacred thread is worn on the body slung across the chest from the left shoulder to the right side of the hip joint, the wearer is able to cleanse his mind of all delusions and ignorance regarding the metaphysical importance and spiritual benefits of wearing it. He begins to assign deep meaning to the sacred thread instead of it being just worn as matter of routine or because it is traditionally the proper thing to wear it. Wearing it without understanding the hidden significance of the sacred thread would be an exercise in futility as far as Brahm realisation is concerned. [Refer also to Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 25.]

It must be clearly understood that inspite of the sacred thread representing so many various aspects of Tattwas (elements of creation), the basic Tattwas is only one, and it is Brahm for the simple reason that all the Tattwas are one or the other aspect of one single immutable and non-dual Brahm. This can be explained with the instance of the pots and pans made of clay. Just like the case of these pots and pans made of clay having 'clay' as their fundamental element inspite of the diversity of their shapes and sizes, whatever that exists is Brahm, and nothing but Brahm. [Here, the 'clay' is the fundamental element known as the Tattwa, while the various forms that it takes is equivalent to the various forms that the elements have taken, numbering ninety-six, thirty-two, twenty-seven etc., or as the various Gunas, Gods and celestial bodies, whether in a visible form or in the invisible form.]

Hence, the true wearing of the sacred thread is when the spiritual aspirant is enlightened about the fact that he is a personification of the supreme Brahm represented by the Hans (the divine Swan) present in his inner-self as the Atma, the pure consciousness. This enlightenment is the symbolic wearing of the sacred thread internally. This eclectic thought helps one to attain the exalted stature of Brahm-realisation. The real sacred thread and the tuft of hair on the head of such enlightened and realised spiritual aspirants are not physically visible on their bodies (because they discard external signs of Brahm, and convert them into symbols of internal wisdom and enlightenment). These two signs of Brahm (i.e. the sacred thread and the tuft of hair) become an integral part of their inner-self, their personality.

The outer sign of the Shikha (tuft of hair) which represents Karma (rituals, because it was an integral part for the performance of various sacred rites) and the Yagyopavit (sacred thread) which represents Gyan (knowledge, as it was worn at the time of the initiation ceremony of a disciple who resided with his teacher to learn the scriptures) are to be worn by householders only. The tuft of hairs and the sacred thread made of yarn are only signs that a particular person is eligible to perform religious duties and sacred rites (such as the fire sacrifices). That is all. Actually, the sacred thread symbolizes Brahm in its entirety, including the ninety-six Tattwas or fundamental elements in which this Brahm has revealed itself.

Some sacred threads constitute of nine strands. [Refer Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 27.] They also stand for the nine Tattwas or revelations of Brahm.

Brahm is only one, but many people devise many paths for attaining this Brahm. For all wise ones, whether they are learned Brahmins, great Brahm-rishis (sages and seers who have become Brahm-realised) or other men of wisdom and enlightenment, the concepts of Mukti (spiritual liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation), Brahm (the cosmic Consciousness, the existential Truth, the Supreme Being) and Brahmin-hood or Brahm-realisation are one and the same. They are like the three intertwined strands making up the sacred thread. That is, these three things mean the same thing. [In other words, when one becomes Brahm-realised, he is deemed to have obtained Mukti and known the Truth. If one knows the Truth, it is deemed that he is Brahm-realised and has attained Mukti. Similarly, when one attains Mukti, it is deemed that he is Brahm-realised and known the Truth.]

The various Varnas and Ashrams are independent of each other. Their laws and doctrines are separate from one another. But the philosophy of the tuft of hair and the sacred thread applies uniformly to them as it is a universal truth applicable across the spectrum of creation. [The Varnas are the four segments of society, such as the Brahmins or the learned class, the Kshatriyas or the warrior class, the Vaishyas or the trading class, and the Shudras or the serving class, each having codes of conduct that regulates life in these classes of society. Similarly, there are four Ashrams in the society in which the life of a man is divided, each having its own laws and codes of conduct—viz. the Brahmcharya Ashram when he studies, the Grihastha Ashram which is the householder phase, the Vaanprastha Ashram when he hands over the responsibilities of his worldly affairs to his heirs and retires, and the Sanyas Ashram when he totally renounces the world and spends his time as a hermit or recluse.]

For an ascetic who seeks Mukti, the tuft of hair and the sacred thread are represented by the Pranav, the Mantra 'OM'. For them, the true knowledge of the Hans (Brahm) is the symbolic tuft of hair, and the OM representing the Pranav (Brahm) is the symbolic sacred thread. [Refer also to Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 12-22; Canto 2, verse nos. 1-3, 5-7 in this context.]

The Naad helps to establish a union between the ascetic and the supreme Brahm during Yoga. [This is because the cosmic sound that is heard by the ascetic in the higher stages of meditation when his repetition of OM reaches a crescendo and culminates in his nerves and veins resonating with this sound, he experiences extreme thrill and ecstasy. All impulses originating from the external world cease to be registered by his brain (mind and sub-conscious) so much so that he would remain in a state of suspended animation

vis-à-vis this material world of sense object is concerned. This translates to being in a transcendental state of existence that is obtained during the Turiya state. Hence, OM leads one to the Turiya state of transcendental existence when there is no difference between the Hans represented by the Atma, and the Hans represented by the supreme Brahm. They become one and the same.]

Now, the concept of the OM and Hans is applied to the sacred thread. The wearer of the sacred thread is the Hans or the truthful ‘self’ of the creature known as the Atma. The three letters of OM (i.e. A, U and M) represent the three strands of the sacred thread. Since OM represents Pranav or Brahm, it follows that the true wearer of this symbolic sacred thread lives in the heart because the Atma, represented by the metaphoric Hans, lives in the subtle heart of the creature. This Atma is pure consciousness.

Hence, Brahm has two manifestations—viz. one is the all-pervading cosmic form known as Pranav, and the other is the one that lives inside the individual as his Atma.

When one has become wise and enlightened enough to see nothing but the all-pervading ‘consciousness’ known as the Atma everywhere, he should discard the external forms of the sacred thread and the tuft of hair (5).”

The *Brahmo-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda describes in great detail the metaphysical and spiritual importance of the Sacred Thread worn by Hindus, specially the Brahmins in its verse no. 4-15. Let us see what it says—

“Verse no. 4—It is in the heart that all the Gods have their symbolic residence, it is in the heart that the Pran lives (as the heart’s rhythmic beating signifies the presence of ‘life’ in it), and it is in the heart that the glorious self-illuminated fount of light known as ‘consciousness’ resides as the Atma. All these three forms are subtle and sublime revelations of Brahm. That is, Brahm resides in the heart of the individual creature in these three eclectic divine forms.

This fact is symbolised by the three strands of thread used to make the ‘Trivisutra’ or the sacred thread<sup>1</sup> worn by learned people. This sacred thread made up of three intertwined strands of thread is a symbol of the fact that though these above mentioned units of Brahm’s revelations appear to be independent of one another, but they are so inexplicably and inseparably linked or intertwined with each other that if one were to say that Brahm resides in the heart of the creature, the rest of the manifestations of Brahm are deemed to be included in this single statement. This is the considered view of those who are learned and wise about Brahm.

Indeed, this Brahm lives in the form of consciousness in the heart of the individual creature as his Atma (4).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The *sacred thread* worn by Hindus diagonally across the chest consists of three intertwined strands of the sacred thread, each strand signifying one aspect of divinity described in this verse—i.e. the *Gods* symbolising the eclectic virtues and divine forces of Nature that control the functioning of all the organs of the body, the *Pran* symbolising something that is holy and worthy of worship because it is a synonym of life, and the light emanating from the self-illuminated *Atma* which is pure consciousness. These three units form the basis of ‘life’ in the body of the creature.

There is another way of looking at this concept. The *Gods* represent the supreme Brahm’s cosmic powers that regulate and control this creation, and since the creature is a visible and gross manifestation of the same Brahm, the statement that the Gods reside in the heart implies that Brahm has revealed itself in the form of the individual creature,

complete with all its glorious potentials and divine powers for which Brahm is so famous and unique. Similarly, the vital winds of various names that reside inside the body are collectively called *Pran*. They collectively help the body, representing the macrocosmic Brahm in a microcosmic form, to carry on with all its designated functions at the micro level of existence so that these bits and pieces of the cosmic mosaic complete the whole picture that the supreme creator had envisioned. And finally, the *Atma* is the pure consciousness itself without which the entire setup would lose its meaning. The *Atma* is the Emperor at the helm of affairs. All these three individual entities combine to form this creation; none is separable from the other if the creation has to exist in the way it does. The sacred thread also has three strands and all of them are equally important if the thread is to be called 'sacred'. Therefore, this sacred thread is used to constantly remind the wearer of the grand metaphysical truth about his own 'truthful self' as well as about the rest of creation. If he does not pay heed to it, then it is to his own peril. Knowledge has to be voluntarily obtained and used; it cannot be forced down anybody's gullet like medicine.

This sacred thread is called *Trivisutra* because it consists of three strands of thread as much as because of the fact that it is a symbol of these three sublime and subtle forms of Brahm as described in this verse—i.e. of the Gods, *Pran* and *Atma*. The sacred thread is also called *Yagyopavit* (see verse no. 5 below) meaning that which purifies during the performance of a *Yagya* (fire sacrifice), or something that is purified during a *Yagya*. The sacred thread is given to an initiated person during a fire sacrifice, with the sacred fire as a witness and to symbolise that the person who wears this thread is deemed to be purified by the blessing of Brahm which constantly resides in his heart. The thread no longer remains a thread but becomes 'sacred'; it is 'purified and sanctified' during a *Yagya*—and hence it is called a 'Yagyo (fire sacrifice) + Pavit (purified; purifying)'.

The sacred thread is also known by the name of *Brahm Sutra* (refer verse no. 6-11 below) signifying that it is the esoteric 'sutra' or formulae to understand the secrets of Brahm; it is the 'thread' that binds the individual creature to the wholesome divinity of creation known as Brahm as well as to the grand and majestic Truth of creation of which that individual is only a miniscule part.]

“Verse no. 5 = The sacred thread known as *Yagyopavit* made its appearance along with the emergence of *Prajatpati*, the creator of all mortal creatures (along with the other parts of his body). This *Yagyopavit* blesses one with a long life. Oh people! Being aware of this fact, you should wear the *Yagyopavit*. Let this *Yagyopavit* provide you with immense spiritual strength and energy (5).

[Note—The strength and energy mentioned here pertain to that of the 'spirit', because a person is said to be in 'high spirits' when he has attained success in any endeavour. Further, it is said that one should not 'lose one's spirit' (and not 'one's bodily strength or energy') when faced with adversities. In other words, it is the strength and energy of the 'spirit' that is the driving force of all successes in this world; even the body is under the control of the powers of the 'spirit'. So in brief, the *Yagyopavit* provides the wearer the natural blessing that comes with being nearer to the source of all energies and strengths in this creation, i.e. being near to Brahm. This simple and humble three-piece thread becomes a 'garland of victory' around the neck of the wearer, as it were. It acts as a shield against all inauspicious and evil spirits from attacking the wearer; it is like keeping the dynamo of the body charged with the energy effusing from the reassuring knowledge that the supreme Authority of creation and its Lord known as Brahm is protecting the wearer of this sacred thread by remaining constantly with him.]

“Verse no. 6 = Those who have attained a certain level of spiritual elevation and enlightenment based on realisation of the ‘true self’ and of Brahm should shave off their head along with the tuft of hair usually worn on the top of the head as well as this sacred thread (at the time of taking the vows of Sanyas which is the last stage in the life of a wise man when he renounces all worldly formalities and is deemed to be sufficiently spiritually enlightened that he need not bear external signs such as the tuft of hair or even the sacred thread to remind him of the presence of Brahm in him or his spiritually evolved stature)<sup>1</sup>.

At the time when sincere realisation of the irrefutable metaphysical truth that this sacred thread does indeed represent Brahm, the Supreme Being in all his magnificence and glory, and that this Brahm resides in the heart of the aspirant himself (as explicitly declared in verse no. 4 of this Upanishad), the latter finds no need of it (the sacred thread) anymore as he now sees Brahm as being firmly ensconced and honorably enshrined in his own (temple-like) heart, and he is so steadily focused and firmly rooted in this conviction that he has no need for any external signs to remind him of this fact.

So he discards the external sign of Brahm represented by the sacred thread which he has been hitherto wearing on his body ‘over’ his heart, and instead places this thread representing Brahm nearer to his heart by symbolically enshrining it ‘inside’ the heart itself. [That is, Brahm has come closer to him, so to say, with the rise in the degree of his enlightenment when he begins to see the futility of external formalities, and instead peeps inside the secret chambers of his own self to see the radiant light emanating from Brahm present inside his own self.] (6).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>There are many stages in the life of a person who becomes a mendicant, or friar, or monk or a renunciate hermit. In the preliminary stages of Sanyas it is alright to wear the tuft of hair and the sacred thread, but as the aspirant progresses in his spiritual pursuit he should discard external signs of divinity and holiness as being superfluous and non-essential because he is deemed to have reached a level of erudition and enlightenment that he ought to see Brahm even without some external prop or medium such as this sacred thread. In those Upanishads which deal with this theme, it has been explicitly stated that in the higher states of Sanyas, there is no need of any formalities to be observed by the aspirant, and this includes the wearing of the *tuft of hair* and the *sacred thread*. The *shearing of the head* is of course obligatory even at the beginning of Sanyas, or at the time of taking the vows of Sanyas, and the head is kept clean of hairs at all stages of Sanyas because a Sanyasi is not supposed to accept anything that he has once discarded. The same thing applies to the sacred thread.]

“Verse no. 7 = This sacred thread is like a key or formulae to the secret of Brahm; it helps to solve the mystery of Brahm (and where this eclectic divinity resides). That is why it is called a ‘Sutra’, meaning a formulae or key or maxim (much like the ones we have in mathematics or physics that help one solve complex mathematical equations or problems in physics).

This Sutra points to the supreme stature of spiritual enlightenment that the person should aspire to attain. A Brahmin (i.e. a learned and wise person) who has understood this Sutra is able to understand the meaning of the Vedas (just like a student who has mastered the formulas is able to solve the most complex of problems in mathematics or physics). In other words, such a man is called truly wise, learned, sagacious, erudite and skilled in the knowledge contained in the scriptures (such as the Vedas) which teach

about only one Truth and one supreme entity known as Brahm, albeit in different languages and employing different terminology, metaphors and analogues (7).

“Verse no. 8 = Even as the beads of a garland or a rosary are threaded together by the means of the thread which helps to keep these independent and scattered units (beads) together into one composite entity known as the garland or rosary which has its own independent identity much different from its individual units, this entire world consisting of an infinite and uncountable number of independent units, having myriad characteristics, attributes, qualities and virtues, are united and held together into one single whole known as the ‘world or creation’ because they are unified and kept in place by this one universally unifying factor known as Brahm.

That is why Brahm is called a ‘Sutra’, i.e. the ‘thread’ which keeps the creation in place in one piece, unifies its scattered pieces and binds them together into one whole, giving it its unique identity and character but mysteriously remaining hidden from view like the thread of the garland or the rosary that is not visible as it remains hidden from view behind the beads. The Brahm is also called the Sutra because it is the ‘formulae or key’ to understand the mystery of what this creation is all about; it is the ‘maxim’ stressed by the Vedas; it is the ‘code’ to unravel the secrets of creation and the ‘truth’ behind it.

Therefore, those who are expert in the great fundamental tenets of the Vedas as well as those who are firm in the path of Yoga (meditation and contemplation) should enshrine this Brahm—representing the key to spiritual enlightenment and realisation of the ultimate Truth—carefully in the heart (much like a rich man keeps the key to his treasury safely in his breast pocket, or a worshipper keeps the deity enshrined in the inner chambers of his worship room) (8).

“Verse no. 9 = A wise and erudite man who is enlightened enough to realise that the main function of the sacred thread is to bring about a union between the individual creature and the supreme Brahm, to make a man realise the grand truth about his own self and the rest of creation, to establish truth over falsehoods, and to establish a uniformity between formal knowledge of Brahm gained by studying the scriptures and its practical experiment by self awakening or self realisation when the eternal radiance of Brahm-realisation shines and illuminates the inner self of the wise man—when this is brought about, then at that time he should discard the sacred thread because it becomes redundant.

In fact, understanding what is Brahm, realising Brahm’s truthful form and nature is tantamount to understanding the true meaning of the ‘Sutra’ (the sacred thread). That is why it is also called ‘Brahm Sutra’.

That is also why a person who symbolically wears this divine and holy form of Brahm as the Sutra (sacred thread), called the ‘Brahm Sutra’, is said to be truly Brahm-realised and vested with the divine radiance, splendour, magnificence and glory of Brahm. He effuses a divine glow and radiates the light of pure consciousness all around him because Brahm is pure consciousness and brilliantly and radiantly splendid (just like the Sun in the sky). Indeed, this realisation makes the man immune to all forms of decay and degradation while protecting him from all types of impurities and taints so prevalent in this perishable and impure world. [This is because pure consciousness can neither be made impure nor be demoted in any way.] (9).

“Verse no. 10 = Those who have sincerely accepted the divine, eclectic and truthful knowledge pertaining to this symbolic sacred thread called the Sutra or Yagyopavit as representing the key to the great tenets of Brahm realisation are deemed to have enshrined the supreme transcendental Brahm in their own hearts.

Such persons who have understood the symbolism and the hidden meaning behind this sacred thread and why it should be worn are the ones who have actually comprehended its true importance and significance. Such persons are the ones who have truthfully and intelligently worn the sacred thread; such persons are the ones who really benefit from wearing the sacred thread. [For the rest of the people, it is merely a worldly religious formality which would lead them spiritually nowhere. It is like the case of a student mugging up answers in mathematics or the sciences to pass exams, but his mark-sheet would no way reveal his ignorance of the subject. Such a student might land a plump job initially, but he is destined to miserably fail in life because his basics are absolutely weak and ramshackle.] (10).

“Verse no. 11 = Those wise and exalted persons who accept and acknowledge that acquisition of Gyan (truthful knowledge and awareness of reality) is like the symbolic wearing of the ‘Shikha’ (tuft of hair) on the head worn by learned Brahmins, those who have firm faith and unwavering conviction in the strength and potential of Gyan (to provide spiritual attainment as well as emancipation and salvation to the creature), and treat Gyan as being equivalent to the Yagyopavit (the sacred thread)—such persons are made pure and holy by Gyan (11).

[Note—This is because acquisition of *Gyan* implies that such persons have understood the formula that unravels the secrets leading to the realisation of the supreme Truth known as Brahm. After all, the wearing of the Shikha and the Yagyopavit are also intended for this very purpose, and if the aim of realising the Truth is not achieved then the very purpose of wearing them is defeated. They simply become superfluous symbols for misleading the world into believing that the man who sports them is learned and wise. Such persons are imposters who are cheating the world as much as they are cheating themselves.]

“Verse no. 12 = For those wise and enlightened persons who treat the radiant light emanating from Gyan (truthful knowledge and awareness of reality) as being equivalent to the erect flame of the burning fire or like the erect flame surrounding the wick of a burning candle, there is no other entity known as ‘Shikha’<sup>1</sup>.

Indeed, such wise, erudite, learned and enlightened persons who have the Shikha of Gyan with them (i.e. who have the flame of knowledge burning brightly within them) are deemed to be the ones who are wearing the tuft of hair also called the ‘Shikha’. [This is because they have understood the true meaning and significance of having that tuft on the head—for this tuft is a symbol of Brahm-realisation, a sign of their high level of wisdom and erudition which marks their exalted place in society.]

Such persons are recognised as truly wise, learned and enlightened. They are not imposters who have sported this Shikha to fool the world to meet their narrow vested interests for obtaining material gain and false honour. [The knowledge of imposters is just perfunctory and superfluous, and they are hollow from the inside.]

On the contrary, those persons who keep the external tuft of hair known as the ‘Shikha’ but are lacking in actual knowledge called ‘Gyan’ cannot be called wearing this sacred symbol (the Shikha) in the true sense of the word<sup>2</sup> (12).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Here there is a playing on the word *Shikha*, because it means both the tuft of hair worn on the head by a religious Hindu as well as the erect flame of a burning candle. The light of knowledge or Gyan is compared to the flame because not only does it remove the darkness of ignorance that might be shrouding the person but also burns all the impurities that may be present in any form that might tarnish the purity of his ‘self’ and his Atma. The Shikha is always erect, signifying its noble stature and high credentials which at once places the wearer on a high moral and spiritual ground. Similarly, the person who has Gyan is always shown the greatest of respect by the world wherever he goes. Gyan heralds and ensures his high standing in the realm of wise and enlightened men.

<sup>2</sup>It should be noted that the Upanishads forbid deceit, conceit and pretensions of all kinds, and lay great stress on truthfulness and honesty. They emphasize that one should honestly acquire knowledge that is truthful and devoid of all fallacious conceptions and deceit more than anything else. In this context one would realise that the ritualistic wearing of the Shikha or the Yagyopavit are futile exercises if the real meaning in their wearing is not fully understood and put into practice.]

“Verse no. 13 = Brahmins and others who are eligible to participate in formal religious sacrifices are ordained to wear this sacred thread called the Brahm Sutra because it is a necessary formal accoutrement for such religious ceremonies (13).

[Note—These symbols identify the priests and other special persons who are playing an active role in a fire sacrifice like the case where volunteers wear special badges during state functions to help others to identify them in the crowd. It is also like the doctor wearing his apron and the lawyer his coat and tie to help them be easily located and be distinguished in the crowded hospital or court. The fire sacrifice and the external symbol of the Shikha are needed in the earlier stages of spiritual life of an aspirant, but as he progresses ahead and reaches a certain degree of maturity in his spiritual attainment they are to be dispensed with as being superfluous and unnecessary.]

“Verse no. 14 = For those wise and learned persons who wear both the Shikha (tuft of hair) and the Upavit (the sacred thread; the Brahm Sutra; the Yagyopavit) as a symbol of their high degree of metaphysical learning, spiritual standing and level of Brahm-awareness (instead of just a ritualistic wearing because of their chance birth as a upper class Brahmin, though they have no in-depth knowledge of the esoteric and mystical secrets pertaining to the supreme Truth known as Brahm as well as its stupendous and magnificent importance and significance) are the ones who are worthy wearers of these twin symbols of Brahm. Such persons are deemed to be the truthfully learned ones who have acquired the grand and eclectic knowledge pertaining to Brahm and to the pure conscious Atma representing that Brahm.

This fact is asserted and repeatedly reiterated by those who are expert in this field (14).

[Note—This verse essentially says that true Brahmins are those who are well-versed in the knowledge that centers around the profound doctrines of metaphysics and spiritualism not only because they are assigned the job of being moral guides and preceptors for the rest of the society since ancient times and should be themselves competent enough in this field to act as teachers for others but also for their own auspicious life which should be exemplary and like a beacon for the rest to emulate. Pretension is tantamount to cheating

and deceit which are not expected from people who are torch-bearers of high standards of morality and ethics in the society. That is why real 'Brahmins' are the ones who know about 'Brahm' from whom they have derived their name in the first place; if they do not know about their own origin, their parent and their root, if they are callous and ignorant of the basic ground which has given them their respectable position in society, then they should not be looked upon as worthy men deserving honour and respect.

Compared to them, those people who are not fortunate enough to be born as a Brahmin but are truly learned about the mysteries of Brahm are to be actually lauded and revered as true representatives of Brahm. In other words, it is the knowledge and awareness of Brahm and the high degree of such enlightenment that makes a man a Brahmin. Simply being born as a Brahmin would not entitle him for this honour.]

“Verse no. 15 = This Yagyopavit is most holy and auspicious, and a provider of holiness and auspiciousness. That is why only those who are holy and auspicious, those who have an element of divinity and spiritualism flowing in them, those who are learned and wise are the ones who are deemed to eligible wearers of this Yagyopavit<sup>1</sup>. Such persons are embodiments of Yagya (the holy and auspicious fire sacrifice) itself. [That is, such persons are as holy, purified and auspicious as the sacred fire lit in the fire sacrifice.] Such persons are called 'Yajjya' or the ones who perform a fire sacrifice. [That is, such people are regarded as religious persons who adhere to the religious tenets and lead a pious and auspicious life. As part of this life they perform sacred fire sacrifices to honour the Gods collectively as representatives of the supreme Brahm.] (15).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Just like no impurity can come near the fire, no unholy man or those who have corrupt mind and body can wear this symbol of the fire sacrifice. It is precisely for this reason the 'sacred thread' is so called because it is as sacred as the 'sacred' fire. It is also precisely for this reason it is called a 'Yagyopavit'—one that is as pure and purifying as the fire sacrifice. It is not that this thread would burn any one; it is just to stress the point so repeatedly emphasised in this Upanishad that this Yagyopavit is a symbol of the holiest of the holy and the most powerful of entities in creation, so how can lowly and fallen men go near such an exalted entity that is a brand ambassador of Brahm, the supreme Emperor of creation? Is it possible for men to play with fire?]

**Brahm Muhurt**—The *Brahm Murhut* is a period of roughly 48 minutes before the sun rises. This period is very useful and good for health because the air is rich in oxygen and is pollution free. The tongue is moist and its surface dissolves this oxygen in its mucous linings. This helps in oxidizing the blood directly, and the fresh air helps to ventilate the entire system when meditation is done during this period before dawn.

Murhut—This is a time measurement and applied for a short period of time. It is approximately a period of time equivalent to 48 minutes or 1/30th part of the day consisting of 24 hours. Therefore, the day has 15 Murhuts and the night also has 15 Murhuts.

**Atom used as a metaphor for the Atma and Brahm**—The best way to understand the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta would be to understand the basic concept of the *Atom* because the Atma at the individual level of the creation and Brahm at the composite vast level are usually said to like and compared with this 'atom'. So, if one were to understand how this single entity known as the humble, neutral and invisible 'atom' can not only create the uncountable number and variety of material things seen around us but even

embody in its self a hidden source of stupendous energy, called the atomic energy the potential of which is unimaginable to say the least, it would be easy to visualise how this single cosmic entity known as 'Brahm' can reveal itself in this multifarious and diverse world which has no two units exactly alike.

Even elementary knowledge of science tells us that the atom is the fundamental unit in creation that forms the basic building block of life and all things in creation in all their multifarious variations, whether animate or inanimate. The atom has the basic structure called the classical 'planetary' model in which the central core consists of the nucleus made up of electrically neutral neutrons and positively charged protons, and the surrounding cloud of moving negatively charged particles called the electrons. The atom derives its name from the Greek word 'atomos' meaning something that cannot be divided any further, much like the Atma or Brahm. The atom is the smallest unit into which matter can be divided and still retain its characteristic properties of an element. The atom is, left to its own account, neutral and inactive because its protons are neutralized by the electrons. But the same atom becomes positively or negatively charged by losing or gaining an electron, thereby producing enormous amount of energy. This energy is hidden in its bosom, and needs to be activated, and once done its potentials can be simply mind boggling in their reach and application as is amply evident when we consider the powerful energy released when an atom bomb is detonated. This energy can be used for destructive purposes as well as for constructive purposes as in the case of producing electricity with it. The characteristic of a particular element is determined by the number of protons present in the atom, the electrons determine its charge, and the neutrons decide the isotope. The isotope of an element is a form of an atom which has a different atomic weight from other forms of the same atom, but the same chemical structure.

Now this ideal atomic structure can be compared with the supreme Brahm. The various elements formed out of this single atom because of its different number of protons can be likened to the uncountable number of things and creatures that this single Brahm has produced. Each material thing in this creation has its unique molecular formula, and a molecular formula is based on the way the same basic entity known as the atom aligns itself with its various other incarnations or manifestations having slight variations in its basic structure to give rise to different elements which then combine together to produce a certain thing having its distinctive characteristic qualities, virtues and features which would have no resemblance to the parent atoms. This briefly explains how Brahm has revealed its single self in the form of this world of so much diversity and variations but still retaining its unique singular characteristic and making its presence felt as the Atma throughout its length and breadth.

The individual Atma of a creature is like the individual atom present in a particular chemical compound or material thing, while the basic structure of the atom and its fundamental properties and characteristic attributes are like the ubiquitous supreme transcendental Brahm. The variations in individual nature and characteristic features can also be easily understood by this atomic model. The Atma in its various manifestations is almost like the same atom existing variously as different isotopes and molecular structures that give rise to so many variations and diversities in things in this world that no two things are exactly alike.

The hidden spiritual energy present in all living creatures can be compared to the vast reservoir of energy present in the atom, demanding to be tapped and used. Otherwise, it is like wasting away some precious and endless source of strength and vitality inherent in all things that live in this creation. How this concealed reservoir of energy, which we shall call spiritual energy to draw a parallel with the atomic energy, is used depends upon one's own wisdom.

This ability to decide for oneself is the factor which finally sets to rest the distinction between something as material as the atom from that which is called the 'spirit' which is conscious and able to make intelligent decisions, something that the atom can't do of its own. So, inspite of saying that the Atma and Brahm are like the atom, one must be absolutely clear that this is just for the purpose of visualization and understanding the mysteries about the Atma and Brahm, and not an actual description of these two forms of Divinity.

Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 4, verse no. 38 and Canto 6, verse no. 41 asserts that the Atma and Brahm are comparable to the atom if we wish to visualise some of their charactersistic virtues.

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