

VEDANTA CONCEPTS

*Sarada Cottage
Cedar Rapids
September 17, 2017*

Peace Chanting (ShAnti PAtha)

Sanskrit	Transliteration	Meaning
<p>ॐ गुरुभ्यो नमः हरी ओम् ।</p> <p>सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै । तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः । हरी ओम् ॥</p>	<p>Om Gurubhyo Namah Hari Om </p> <p>Saha Nau-Avatu Saha Nau Bhunaktu Saha Viiryam Karavaavahai Tejasvi Nau-Adhiitam-Astu Maa Vidvissaavahai Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih Hari Om </p>	<p>Salutations to the Guru.</p> <p>May God Protect us Both, May God Nourish us Both, May we Work Together with Energy and Vigour, May our Study be Enlightening and not give rise to Hostility Om, Peace, Peace, Peace. Salutations to the Lord.</p>

Our Quest

➤ **Goal:**

- Eternal Happiness
- End of All Sufferings
- Transcending Birth & Death

➤ **Problem:**

- Fleeting Happiness
- Endless Suffering
- Cycle of Birth & Death

Vedanta - Introduction

Definition:

- Veda = Knowledge, Anta = End
- End of Vedas
- Culmination or Essence of Vedas
- Leads to God (Truth) Realization

Truth:

- Never changes; beyond Time-Space-Causation
- Is One
- Is Beneficial
- Transforms us
- Leads from Truth Speaking-> Truth Seeking-> Truth Seeing

Vedantic Solution To Our Quest

Our Quest:

Goal:

- Eternal Happiness
- End of All Sufferings
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Problem:

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Vedantic Solution:

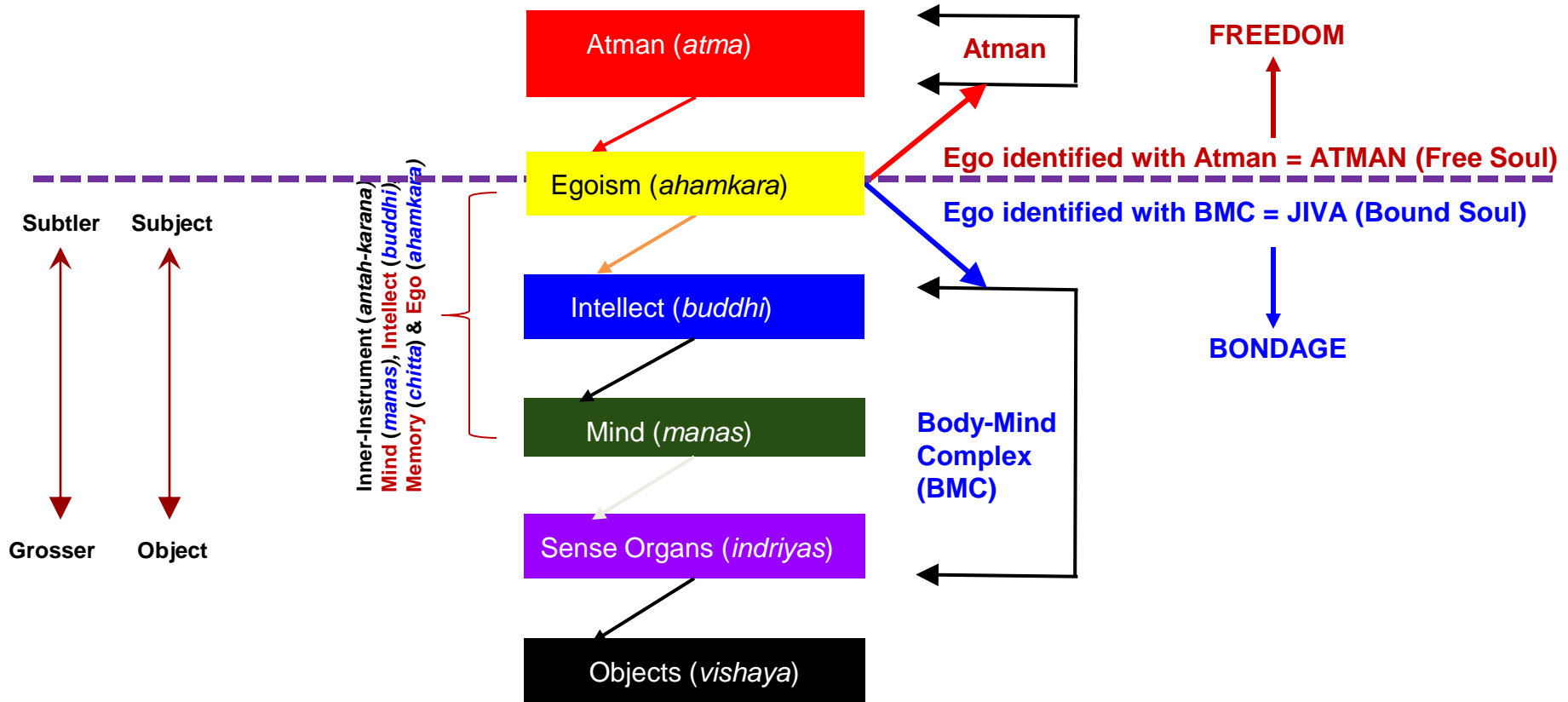
Cause of Problem:

- Ignorance (*avidya*) of our Real Nature
- Attachment (*ragah, sangah*) to fleeting Objects & Relations

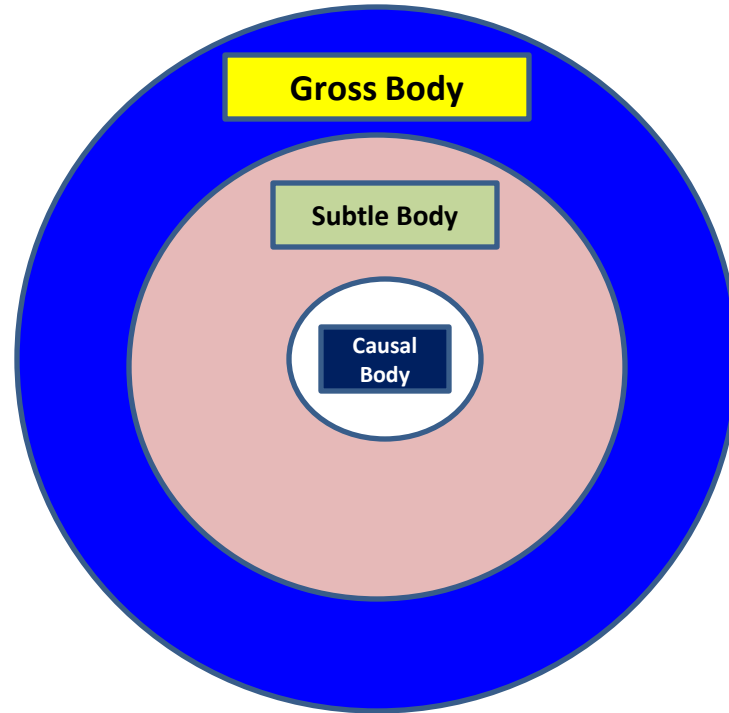
Remedy:

- Intense Spiritual Practice (*sadhana*)
- Liberation (*mukti/moksha*)

Identification & Hierarchy in Embodied Soul



Three Bodies (*Sharira Traya*)



Three Bodies (*Sharira Traya*)

- 1) Extremely Subtle & not externally visible
- 2) Cause of Gross & Subtle Body
- 3) State of Ignorance (*avidya*), Indescribable, Beginningless

Causal Body
(*kaarana sarira*)

creates

merges

- 1) Subtle & externally not visible
- 2) Product of 5 Subtle Elements
 - 5 Organs of Perception (*jnanendriya*)
 - 5 Organs of Action (*karmandriya*)
 - 5 Vital Forces (*prana*)
 - Mind, Intellect, Memory & Ego
- 3) Instrumental in gathering experience

Subtle Body
(*sukshma sarira*)

creates

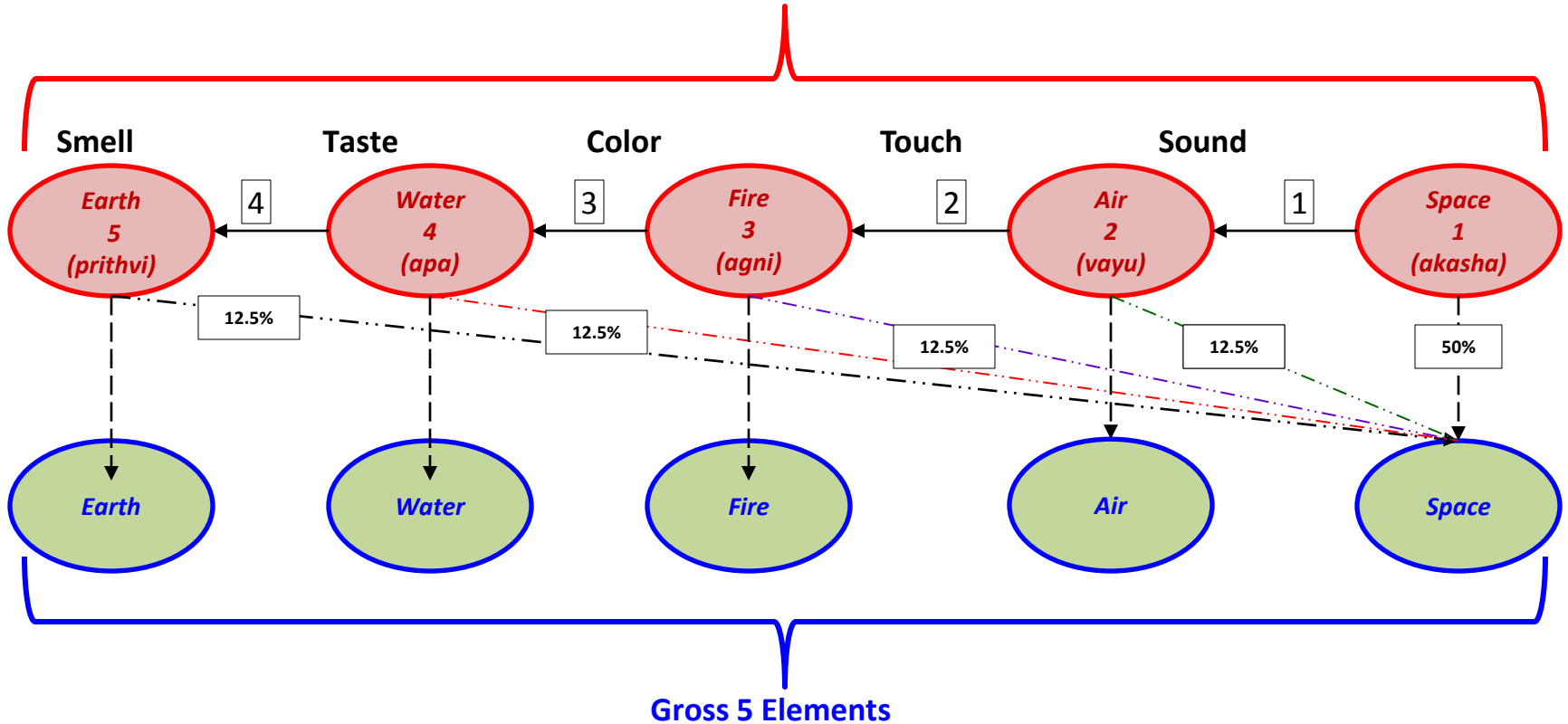
merges

Gross Body
(*sthula sarira*)

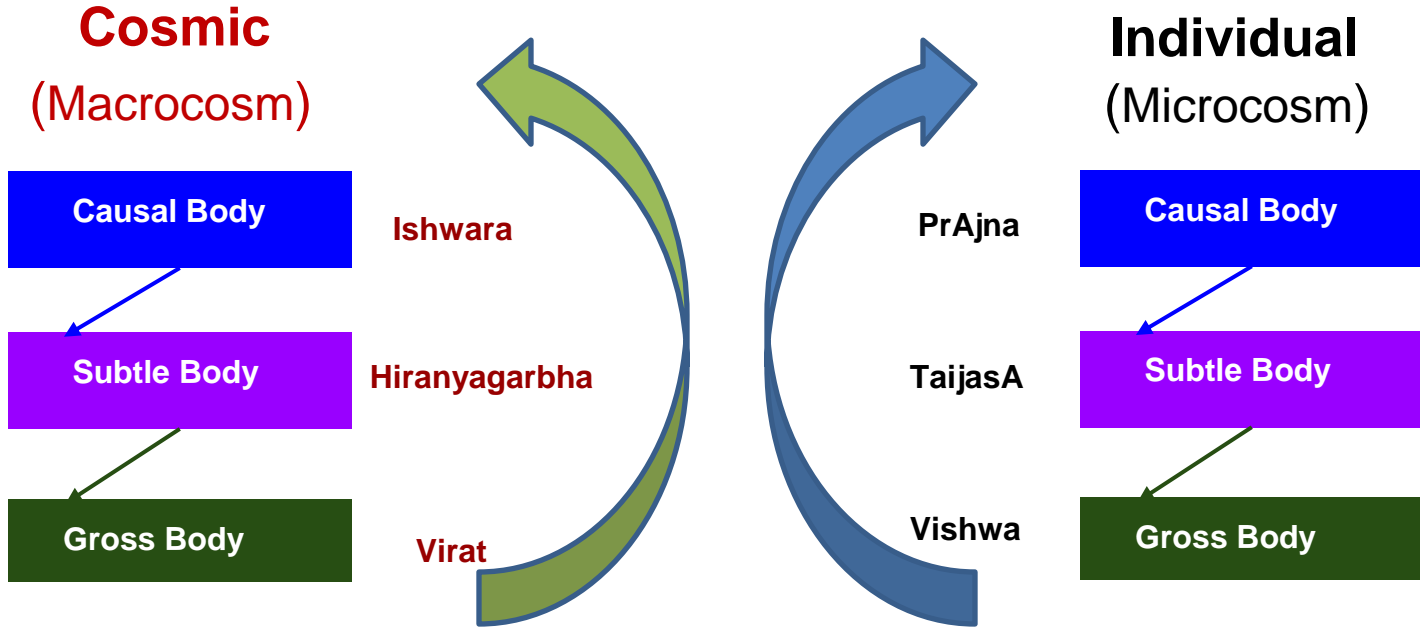
- 1) Gross and externally visible
- 2) Product of 5 Gross Elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Space)
- 3) Subject to 6 changes (Existence, Birth, Growth, Change, Decay & Death)
- 4) Physical medium to experience pain & pleasure

Gross-Subtle Elements Formation

Subtle 5-Elements



Cosmic Body & Individual Body



Ishwara = Sum Total of all Causal Bodies

Hiranyagarbha = Sum Total of all Subtle Bodies

Virat = Sum Total of Gross Bodies

What is Causal Body (*karana sarira*)?

Why Causal?

- It's the Cause (or Seed) of the Subtle & Gross Body

What's Body?

- Body in Sanskrit is '*sharira*' which means perishable

Characteristics :

- Originates with *Avidya* (ignorance) of the real identity of the Atman
- No objective experience possible with Causal Body
- Contains the Body in Seed form in Dream-less Deep Sleep (*sushupti – nitya pralaya*)
- Contains the Body in Seed form in Cosmic Dissolution (*sushupti – maha pralaya*)
- Maya at the Individual Level

What are Dissolutions (*Pralayas*)?

Pralaya: Cessation of All Activities; Dissipation of Material World

Nitya Pralaya (Constant/Continuing Dissolution):

- When Jiva (Individual) goes into dream-less deep sleep (*Sushupti*)
- Individual Body/Mind remains dormant as Seed in the Causal Body temporarily until Dream or Waking

Maha Pralaya (Cosmic Dissolution):

- When everything material merges into its source, Prakriti
- Individual Body/Mind remains in the form of Seed until the next Cycle of Cosmic Creation

Atyantik Pralaya (Final Dissolution):

- When Jiva (Individual) attains God-realization aka Liberation aka Moksha
- Dissolution of Individual Body/Mind - Seed of Ignorance is burnt forever
- *Jivatma* merges into *Paramatma*

What is Maya?

Maya:

- That which is Not (Ma = “Not”, Ya = “That”)
- By which One becomes Many
- By which World (*jagat*) appears to be Real (*satyam*)
- By which Impermanent (*anityam*) appears to be Permanent (*nityam*)
- Functions in the world of Duality (*vyavaharika*)
- Functions not in Non-dual (*paramarthika*) state
- Creative capacity of the Ishwara
- Ishwara controls Maya, but Jiva is controlled by Maya
- “Maya is a statement of fact” – Swami Vivekananda

How Maya affects:

- Is Real to those => who are in it
- Is Indescribable to those => who try to understand it
- Is Non-existent to those => who have gone beyond it

MAYA (COSMIC & INDIVIDUAL)

BRAHMAN



MAYA



ISHWARA

COSMIC

ATMAN



MAYA



JIVA

INDIVIDUAL

BRAHMAN (ATMAN)

- = Pure Consciousness
- = Sat-Chit-Ananda
- = Changeless
- = Real
- = One (Substance)
- = Impersonal God

MAYA (COSMIC/INDIVIDUAL)

- = Cosmic & Individual Mind
- = Time-Space-Causation
- = Changeful (Ephemeral)
- = Neither Real nor Unreal
- = Creates Many-ness

ISHWARA (COSMIC)

- = Reflected Consciousness
- = Saguna Brahman/Mahamaya
- = Cosmic Body/Mind Complex
- = Experience of "I am"
- = Personal God with Attribute
(*suddha sattva guna*)

JIVA (INDIVIDUAL)

- = Reflected Consciousness
- = Experience of "I am X", "I am Y" etc
- = Embodied Soul with Attribute
(mixed *sattva, rajas & tamas guna*)

Brahman (Consciousness) associated with Cosmic Maya = Ishwara
Brahman (Consciousness) associated with Individual Maya = Jiva
Brahman (Consciousness) is the substratum of Maya

What are the Powers of Maya?

Veiling Power (*Avarana-Sakti*):

- Conceals our Real Nature (i.e. *nitya, shuddha, buddha, mukta svarupaya*)
- Experience of “I did not know anything” (ex: in Deep-sleep)

Projecting Power (*Vikshepa-Sakti*):

- Creates the illusion of Multiplicity (separation from Brahman or Atman)
- Falsely superimposes Body-Mind on Atman and experiences Body-Mind as Reality
- Falsely superimposes Universe on Brahman and experiences Universe as Reality
- Experience of “I am so and so”, “I am sick” “I am old” (ex: in Waking & Dream State)

Levels of Maya?

Higher (*Vidya*) & Lower (*Avidya*) Maya :

- *Avidya* & *Vidya* are both within *Maya*
- In absence of *Vidya* (knowledge of **One**), *Avidya* (knowledge of **Many**) becomes Reality
- *Avidya Maya* is to be conquered by *Vidya Maya*
- *Vidya Maya* is to be conquered by Knowledge of Reality

Characteristics of *Avidya Maya* :

- To see separation as the Reality
- Leads to Selfishness, Attachment, Desire, Anger, Greed, Delusion, Loss of Memory etc.
- Leads to Manifoltness
- Binds us

Characteristics of *Vidya Maya* :

- Truthfulness, Unselfishness, Contentment, Self-restraint, Forbearance, Discrimination, Dispassion etc.
- Leads to Oneness
- Releases us (from *Bondage*)

Three States of Mind (*Avastha Traya*)

THREE STATES	EXPERIENCER	EXPERIENCED	POWER of MAYA	
			CONCEALING <i>(avarani shakti)</i>	PROJECTING <i>(vikshepa shakti)</i>
THE FOURTH <i>(Turiya)</i>	ATMAN		NO	NO
3. DEEP-SLEEP <i>(Sushupti)</i>	SLEEPER <i>(PrAjna)</i>	CAUSAL BLANKNESS	YES	NO
2. DREAM <i>(Svapna)</i>	DREAMER <i>(Taijasa)</i>	SUBTLE WORLD	YES	YES
1. WAKING <i>(JAgrata)</i>	WAKER <i>(Viswa)</i>	EXTERNAL WORLD	YES	YES

Comparative Analysis of 3 States of Mind (Avashtha Traya)

Waking State (*JAgrata Avastha*):

Mind:

- ❖ Fully Functional (*purna vikAsah*)
- ❖ Emotional, Rational, Memory & Ego
- ❖ Fresh knowledge/experience gathering

Nature:

- ❖ External, Concrete, Objective & Sense Organ based Experience

Medium:

- ❖ Gross Body

Dream State (*SvapnA Avastha*):

Mind:

- ❖ Partially Functional (*ardha vikAsah*)
- ❖ Memory faculty only functioning
- ❖ Replaying the recorded emotions

Nature:

- ❖ Internal, Abstract, Subjective & Non-Sense Organ based Experience

Medium:

- ❖ Subtle Body

Deep-Sleep State (*Sushupti Avastha*):

Mind:

- ❖ Almost Non-Functional (*avikAsah*)
- ❖ Experience of Nothingness
- ❖ Neither fresh nor past

Nature:

- ❖ Neither External nor Internal

Medium:

- ❖ Causal Body

Nature of Turiya (Atman)

- Nature of Consciousness Itself (*Chaitanya Svarupah*)
- Independent (*Svatantrah*)
- Non-Material, Attributeless (*Nirgunah*)
- Ever-existent (*Nityah*)
- All-Pervading (*Sarvagatah*)
- One (*Ekah*)

Pancha Kosha (Five Sheaths) - 1

What is a Kosha?

- Covering/Sheaths
- Limitation

What does it limit ?

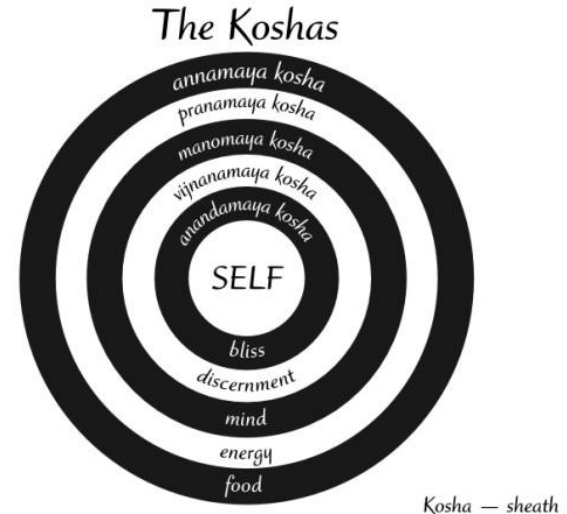
- Limits Bliss (Ananda)

How does it limit ?

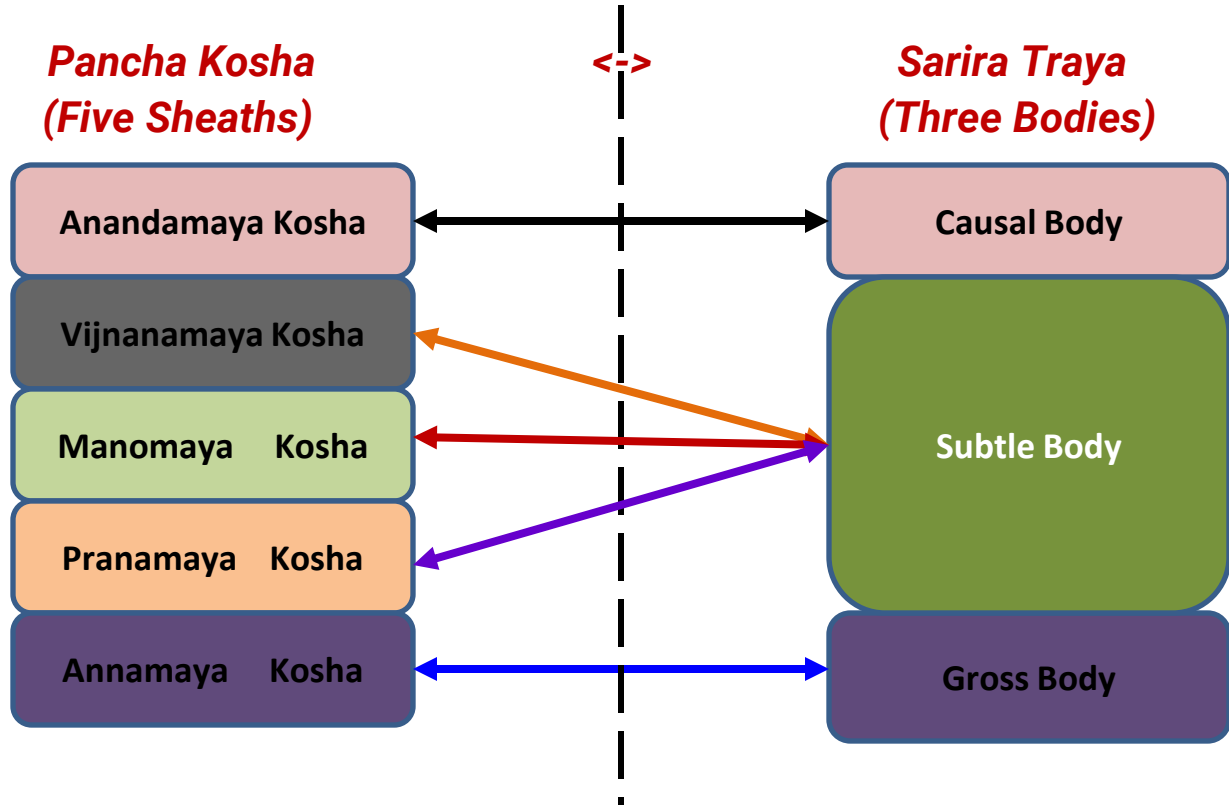
- Creates (chain) Dependencies
- Separation from Self

What are the Koshas?

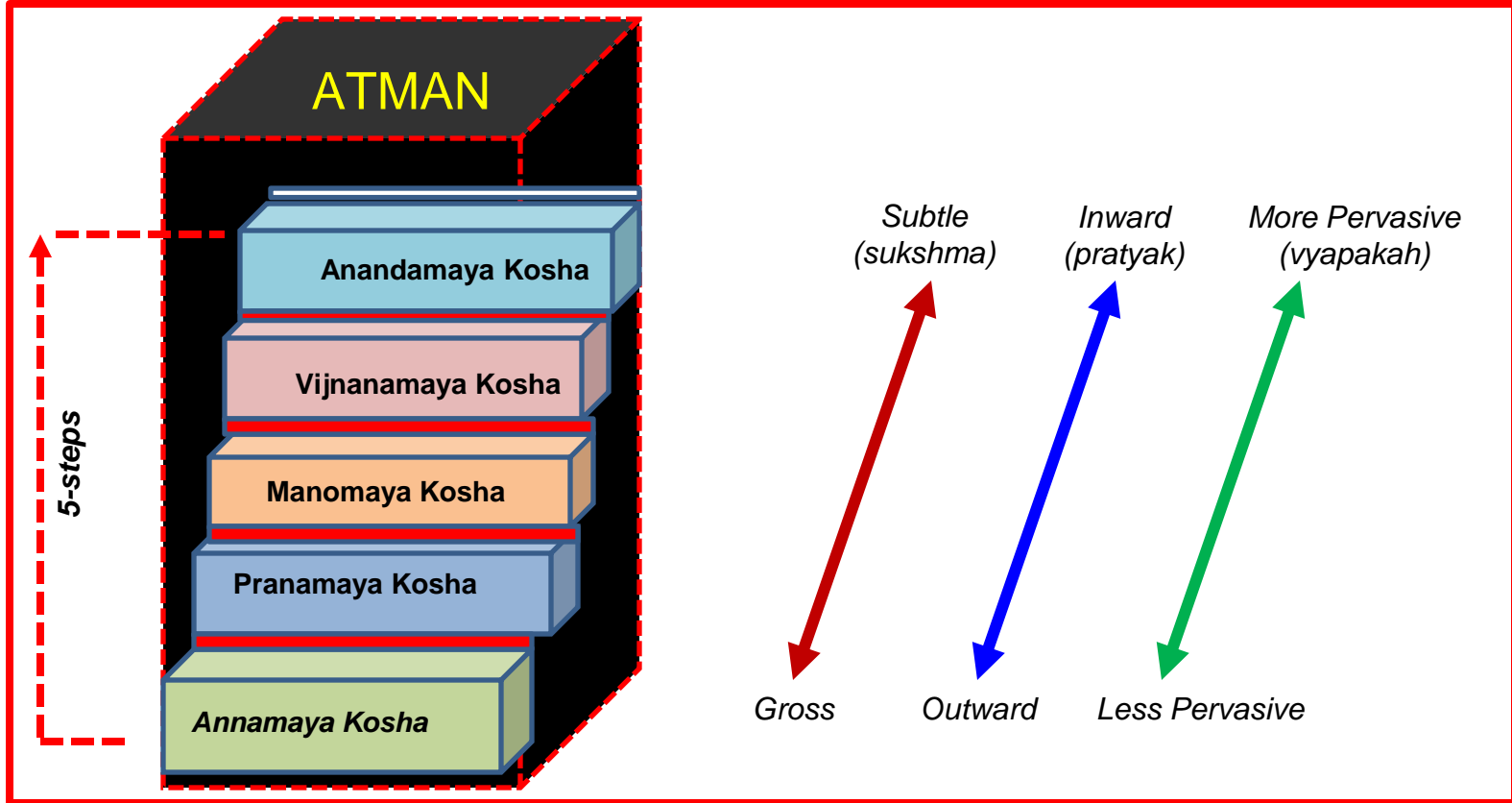
- Annamaya (Physical or Material or Food)
- Pranamaya (Vital Forces/Energy)
- Manomaya (Thoughts, Ideas, Attachments, Aversion etc.)
- Vijnanmaya (Knowledge, Understanding, Decision, Discernment etc.)
- Anandamaya (Blissful)



Pancha Kosha - Sarira Traya Mapping



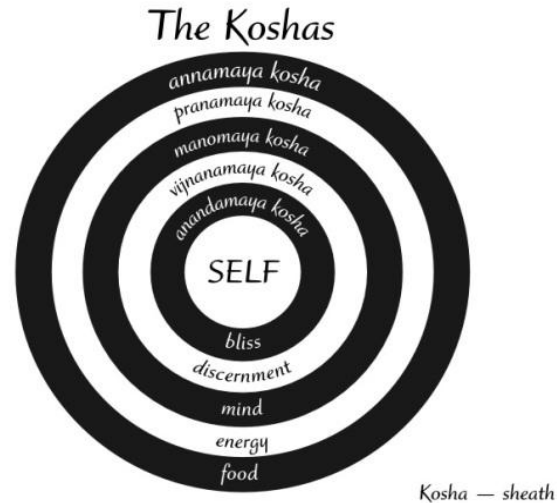
Five Layers to Transcend



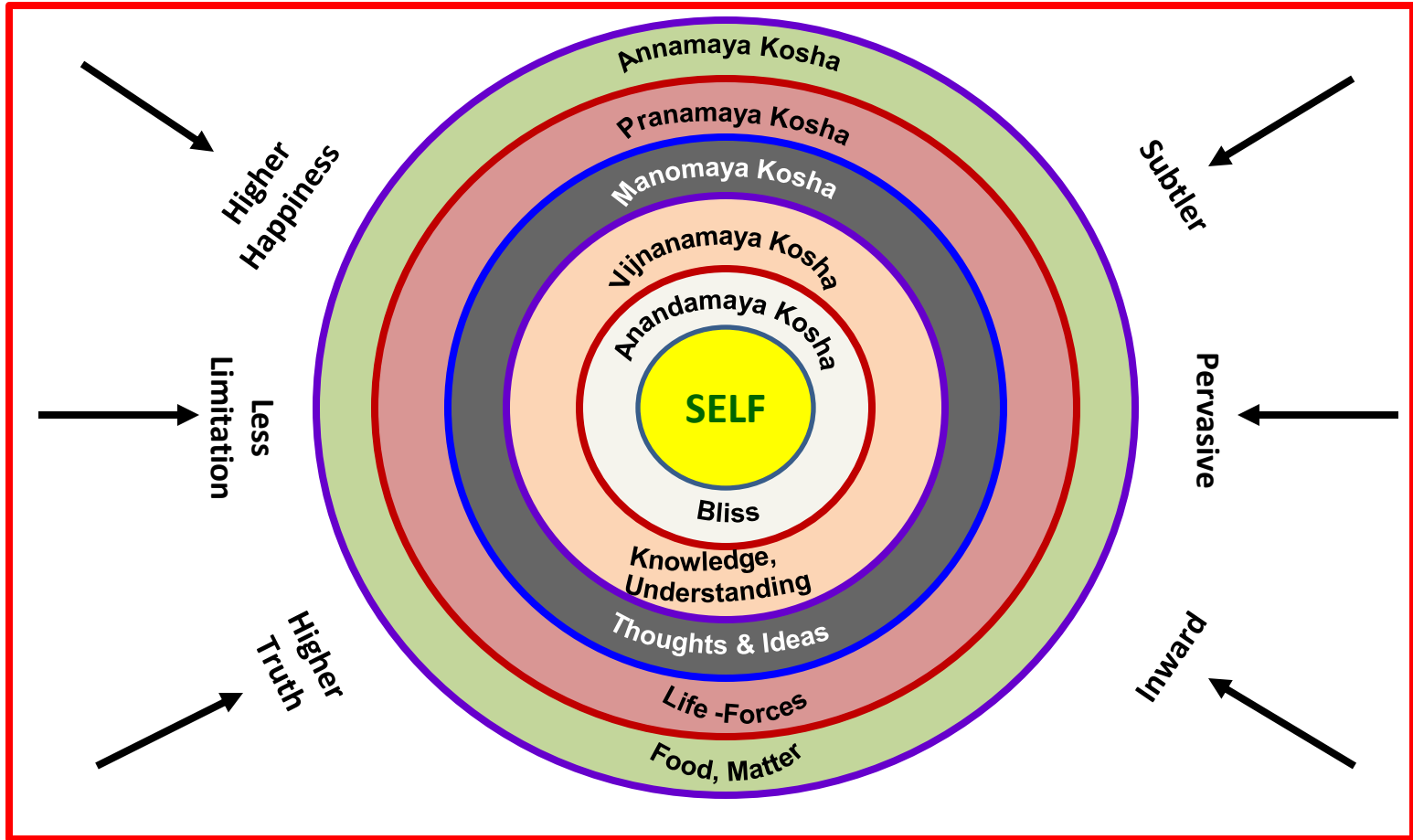
Nature & Relationship between Sheaths

What's the nature of the Koshas?

- Grosser the Kosha -> More Limitation-> Less Happiness
- Subtler the Kosha -> Less Limitation -> More Happiness
- Every Kosha is intimately related to every other Koshas
- For every action/reaction all 5 Koshas work



Nature of the Five Sheaths



Analysis of Five Sheaths - I

➤ Why Analysis of Five Sheaths Important?

- Positive experience ('iti iti' – not 'neti neti')
- Doors to Realization of Brahman
- Deals exclusively with Eternal Happiness (**Ananda**) which is our Goal
- Step-by-step Analysis of:
 - Degrees of Ananda
 - How to Maximize Happiness
- Extremely Rational/Scientific
- Jnana (Knowledge) mixed with Bhakti (Devotion)
- Aligned with Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings

➤ Psychology of Happiness (**Ananda**):

- How do we become Happy?
- Objective & Subjective Happiness
- Defects of Objective Happiness

Pancha Kosha Analysis - II

➤ **Teachings of Varuna To Bhrgu:**

- That From Which Everything Has Come
- That In Which Everything Abides
- That To Which Everything Returns
- That is Brahman; Seek to Know That
- Practise Meditation (Upasana) & Self-Restraint (*Tapas*)

“yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante; yena jātāni jīvanti; yat prayanty
abhisamviśanti; tad vijijñāsasva; tad brahmeti” – Taittiriya Up. 3.1.1

➤ **Techniques of Analysis Used:**

- Arundhati (*Darshana*) Nyaya
- From Gross to Subtle
- From Known to Unknown
- Individual Objectivity -> Universal Objectivity
- Universal Objectivity -> Universal Subjectivity

Pancha Kosha Analysis - III

- **Results of Meditation on Universal (*Upasana*):**
- Purification, Concentration, Expansion of Mind
 - Individual Ego (*vyasti abhimana*) replaced by Universal Ego (*samasti abhimana*)
 - Satiation of the Present Layer comes
 - Seeks for more Quantitative and Qualitative Happiness
 - Awareness of the Higher, Subtler, Inward & more Pervading Reality Comes
 - Previous Reality (ex: Annamaya Atma) becomes a Limitation (ex: Annamaya Kosha)
 - Reality shifts to the next Higher/Subtler Layer (ex: Pranamaya Atma)

Pancha Kosha Analysis - IV

➤ Starts from Annamaya - the Grossest Sheath:

[

- Guru instructs to practice Self-Restraint (*Tapas*), Meditation (*Upasana*)
- Disciple Meditates on the Source (Universal) of all Material/Physical/Gross Body
- Individual Objectivity is merged in the Universal Objectivity
- Realizes Annam is Brahman (“***Annam Brahmeti Vyajanat***”)
- Disciple Goes back to Guru
- Guru instructs to practice further Self-Restraint (*Tapas*), Meditation (*Upasana*)
- Further Meditation reveals Higher, Subtler, Inward & More Pervading Reality
- Realizes Prana is Brahman (“***Prano Brahmeti Vyajanat***”)
- Disciple sees **Anna** as the Seen, Insentient, Impermanent compared to **Prana**
- Annamaya Atma becomes Annamaya Kosha

.....
.....(continues for other Layers)

]

➤ Ultimately Realizes:

- Even *Anandamaya* is a *Kosha* (Limitation)
- *Brahmakara Vritti* remains
- Self/Atman/Brahman is the only Reality

Three Gunas (*Gunatrayas*)

Two Principles of Sankhya Philosophy

- Purusha: Conscious, Intelligent & Inactive
- Prakriti: Unconscious, Non-intelligent & Active

Interdependence of Purusha & Prakriti

- Activity of Prakriti – Influenced by the Intelligence of Purusha
- Cooperation between P & P - Necessary for Evolution

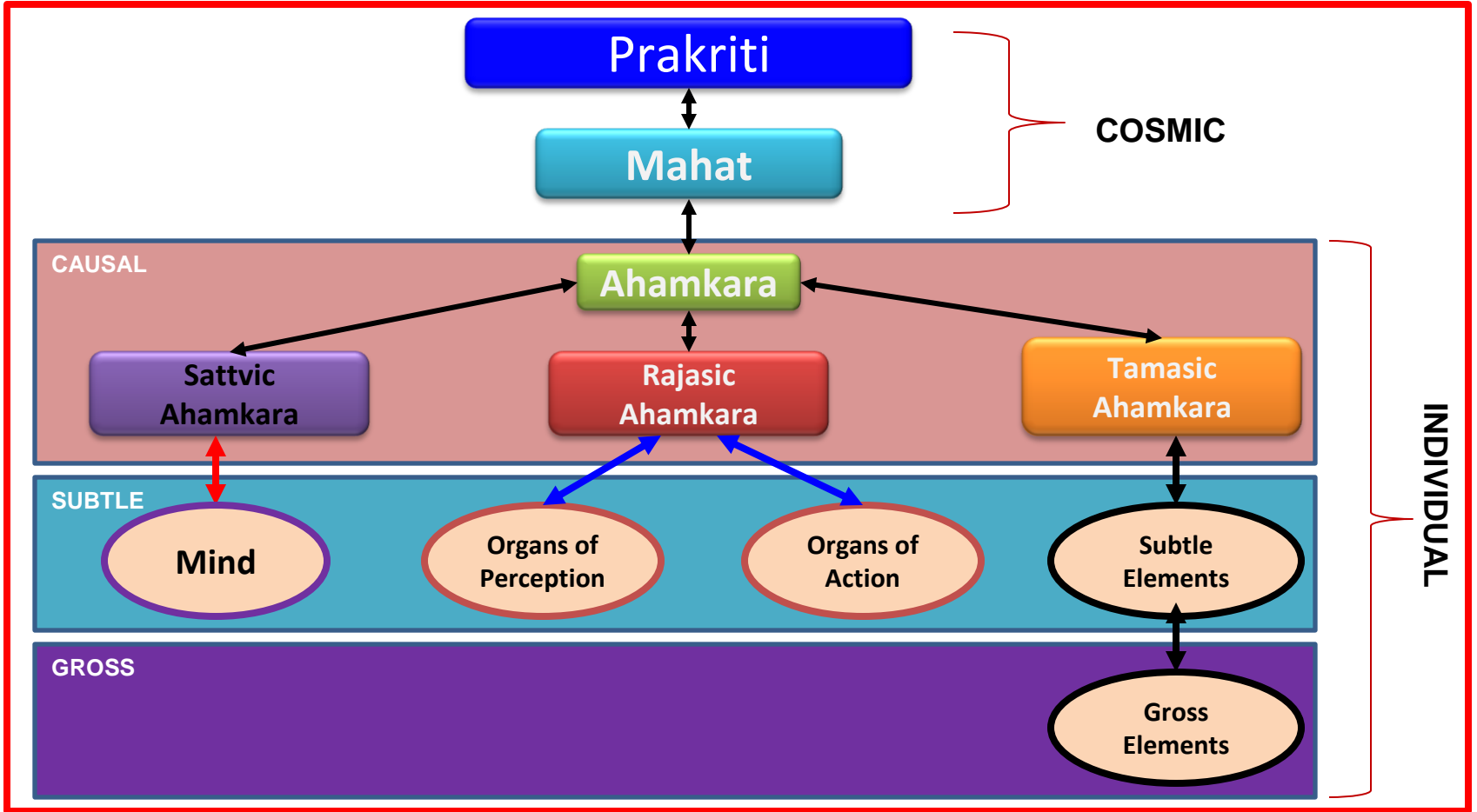
What are ‘Gunas’?

- Constituent Elements of Prakriti viz. Sattva, Rajas & Tamas
- That which binds Soul to the World
- Imperceptible – only known from their Effects
- Gunas are Always together, can never be separated

What is the Goal?

- Outgrow the Inferior Gunas, Ascend to the Superior Gunas
- Transcend Gunas, to be one with Purusha

Gunas & 24-Cosmic Principles



Nature of Three Gunas

Sattva	Rajas	Tamas
Nature of Pleasure	Nature of Pain	Nature of neither Pleasure nor Pain
Pure, Bright, Revealing	Impure, Active, Projecting	Impure, Veiling & Inactive
Sharpness, Alertness, Precision, Calmness, Clarity of Understanding, Fearlessness, Contentment	Greed, Cruelty, Desire to obtain Fruit of Action, Unrest	Indiscrimination, Lethargy, Inattentiveness, Sleep, Despondence, Procrastination
Attachment To Happiness Attachment To Knowledge	Attachment To Action Sense of Agency	Attachment To Heedlessness Attachment To Ignorance

Goal : Overcome Tamas with Rajas, Rajas with Sattva. Sattva leading to Purusha.

5-Types of Action

Nitya Karma:

- Daily Obligatory Duties
- Scripture-prescribed Daily Actions
- Prayers, Worship, Japa, Meditation, Study of Scripture, Serving Others, Singing etc.

Naimittika Karma:

- Occasional Obligatory Duties
- Special Worships, Special Occasion/Observance, Rites for the Ancestors etc.

Prayaschitta Karma:

- Actions due to Repentance; Counteracts the effects of sins incurred
- Pilgrimages, Severe Austerities, Confession etc.

Kamya Karma:

- Performed with a motive of acquiring specific Merits/Fruits of Action
- Hankering after Health/Wealth/Long-life/Progeny/Name/Fame/Title/Social Status etc.

Nishiddha Karma:

- Forbidden Actions
- Suicide, Homicide, Promiscuity, Drugs or Alcohol Addiction etc.

3-Types of Results of Action

Sanchita Karma:

- Accumulated Results of Actions performed in previous births
- Stored in Seed Form
- Destroyed by Knowledge

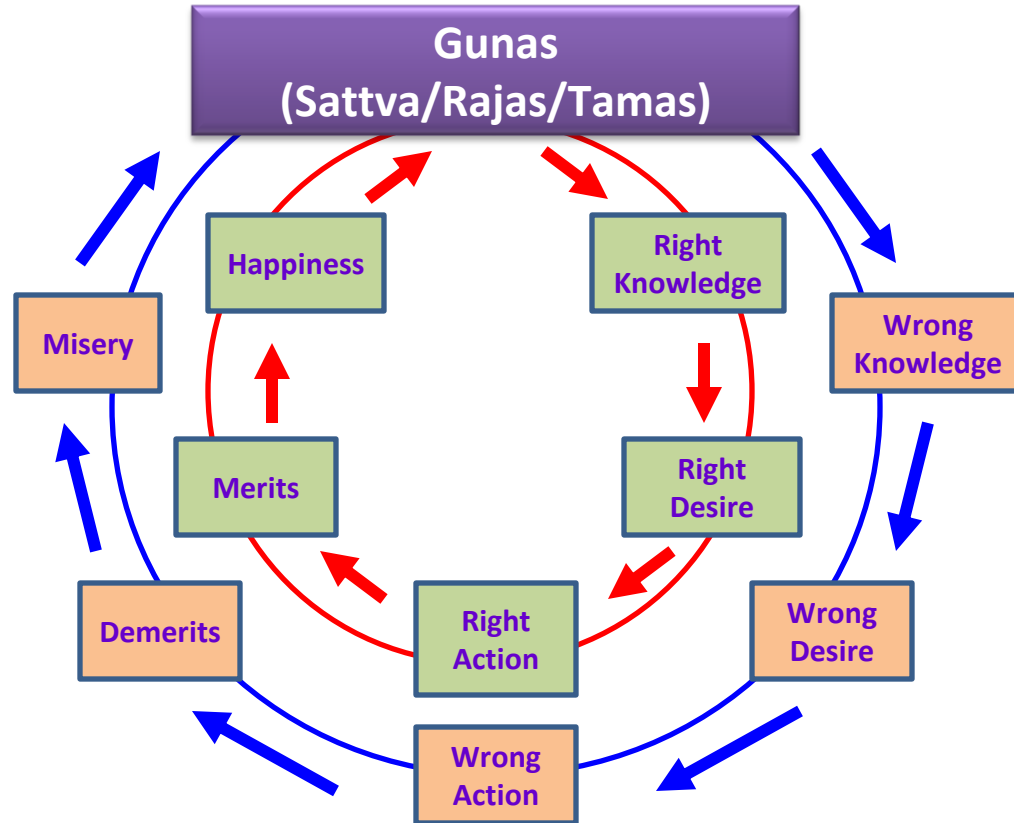
Prarabdha Karma:

- Part of *Sanchita Karma* that has begun to bear fruit
- Past Karma responsible for the present body
- Cannot be avoided or changed
- Destroyed by enjoying or suffering only

Kriyamana /Agami Karma:

- That which is being accumulated now that will affect future births.
- *Kriyamana* is everything that we produce in current life
- Flow in to *Sanchita Karma* and consequently shape our future lives
- Destroyed by Knowledge

Cyclic Human Development



Ultimate Expression of Gunas & Freedom

There is no possibility of ever having pleasure without pain, good without evil; for life itself is just lost equilibrium. What we want is freedom — not life, nor pleasure, nor good. Creation is infinite, without beginning and without end — the ever-moving ripple in an infinite lake. There are yet unreached depths in this lake where equilibrium has been regained; but the ripple on the surface is always there. The struggle to regain the balance is eternal.

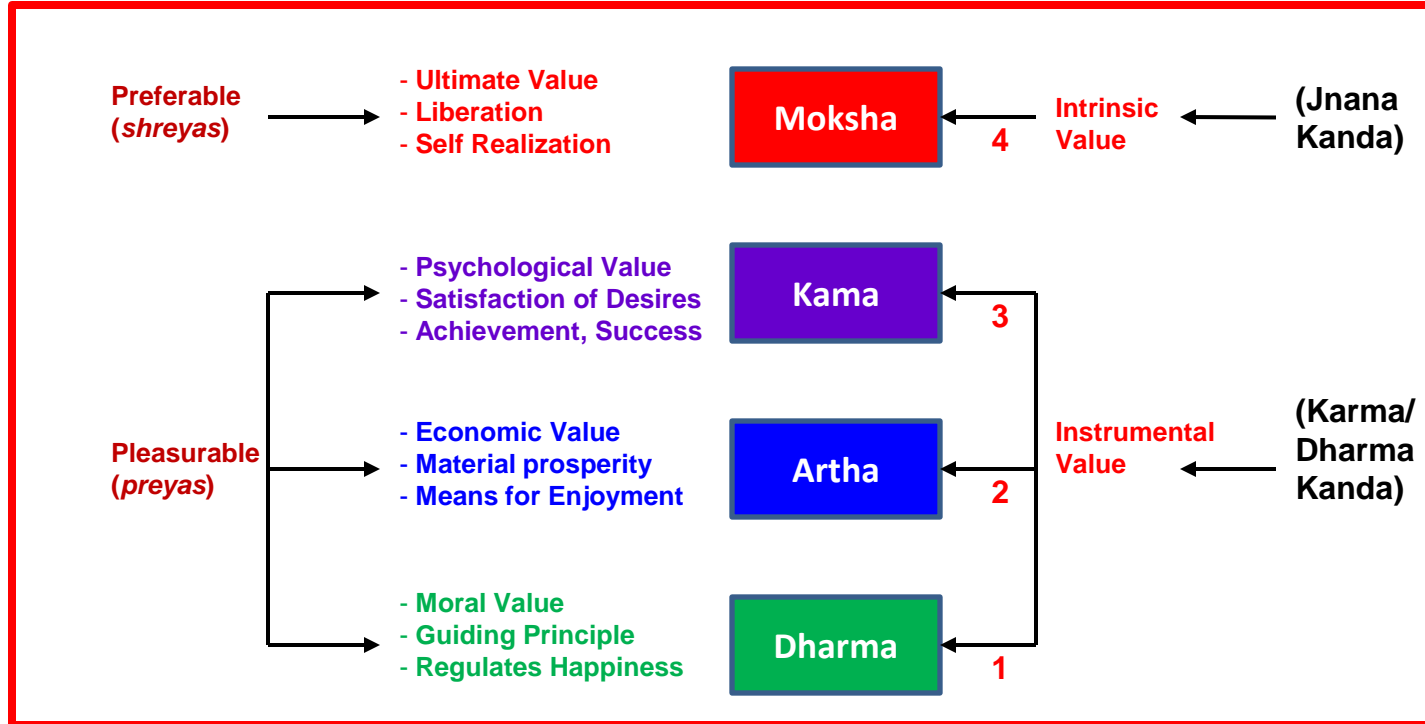
To regain the balance we must counteract tamas by rajas, then conquer rajas by sattva, the calm, beautiful state that will grow and grow until all else is gone. Give up bondage. Become a son of God, be free, and then you can “see the Father,” as did Jesus. Infinite strength is religion and God. Avoid weakness and slavery. You are the Soul only if you are free; there is immortality for you only if you are free; there is God only if He is free.



Swami Vivekananda

*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,
Vol. 7, Page 12 & 13*

Four Human Values (*Purusartha*)



“Life is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down”
- Swami Vivekananda

Three Schools of Vedanta

Dualistic School (Dvaita) of Shri MadvAcharya

- God = Creator, Everything Else = Creation
- Creation is Eternally Separate from Creator
- Method: Karma Yoga followed by Bhakti Yoga

Qualified Non-Dualistic School (Visistha-Advaita) of Shri RamanujAcharya

- God = Creator, Everything Else = Creation
- God = Whole; Creation = Part of God
- Method: Karma Yoga followed by Bhakti Yoga

Non-Dualistic School (advaita) of Adi ShankarAcharya

- God = Brahman = Everything
- No Creation (only Projection)
- Method: Karma Yoga followed by Jnana Yoga

Neo-Vedanta of Sri Ramakrishna

- 3 Stages of Spiritual Development: Dvaita To Visistha Advaita To Advaita
- Method: Karma Yoga or Bhakti Yoga or Jana Yoga or Raja Yoga or any combinations
- Goal: Advaita

Shankara Jayanti Celebration in Belur Math



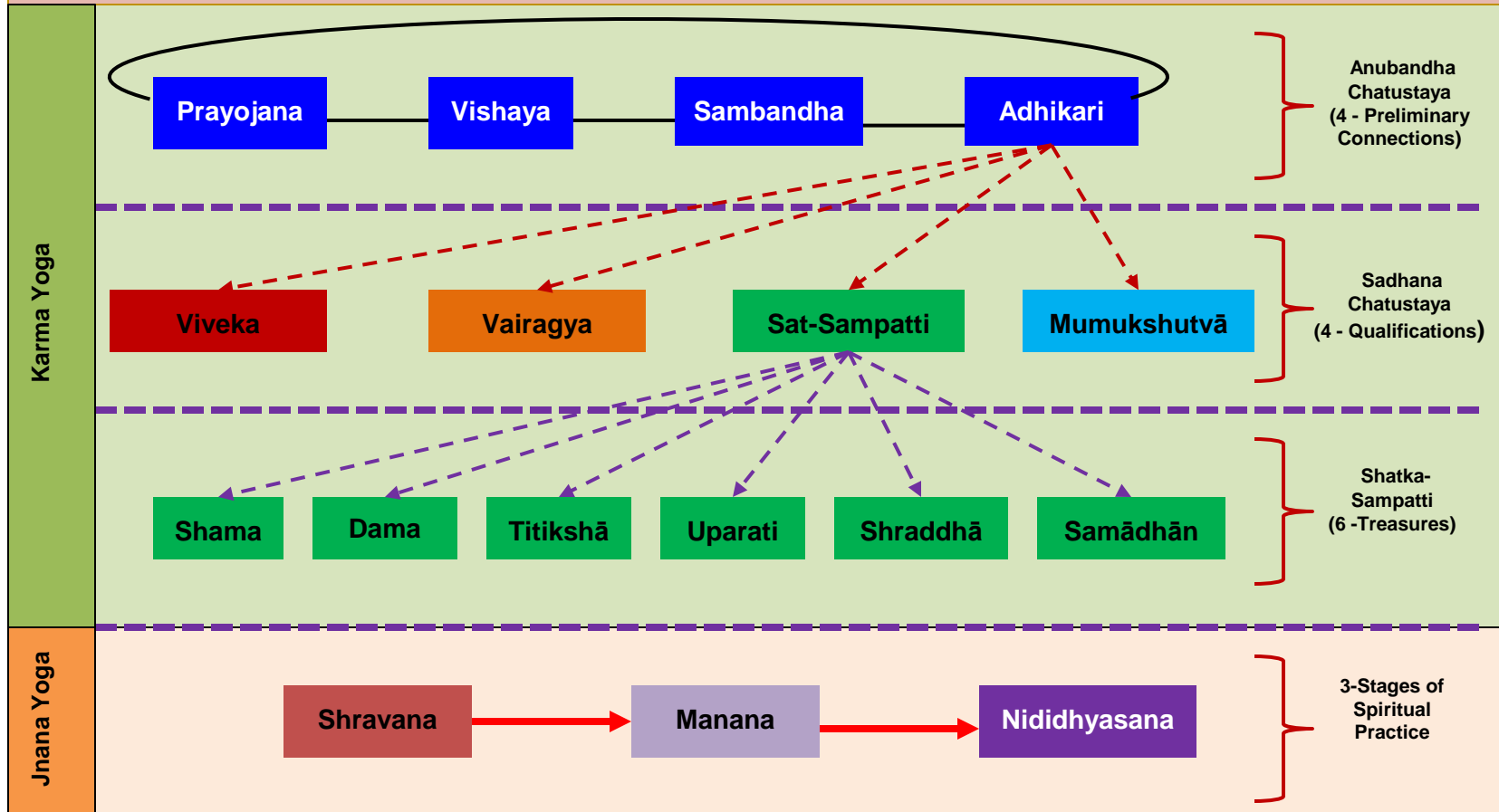
Adi Shankaracharya – Short Biography

- Born (788 AD) in a Pious Brahmin Family in Kalady, Kerala, India
- Known as the Incarnation of Shiva, Father of the Advaita Doctrine
- Mastered All Four Vedas at the age of 8
- Possessed Extraordinary Power of Reasoning & Intellect
- Attracted to the Life of Sannyasa from Childhood
- One of the Greatest Philosophers of Vedanta
- Studied Scriptures under His Guru, Govindapada (Disciple of Gaurapada)
- Defeated Mimamsa scholar, Mandana Mishra to re-establish Vedanta

Adi Shankaracharya – Short Biography (contd.)

- **Written Masterpiece Commentaries on Vedic Canon:**
 - 11 Principal Upanishads, Brahma-Sutras, Bhagavad Gita etc.
- **Written Numerous Treatises:**
 - Viveka Chudamani, Upadesha Sahasra, Aparoksha Anubhuti, Atma Bodha etc.
- **Composed Hymns:**
 - Dakshinamurty, Shivanandalahari, Nirvana Shatakam, Bhavani Ashtakam, AnnapoornaStotram, Bhajagovindam etc.
- **Established 4 Matthas at 4 Corners of India:**
 - Sringeri (South), Puri (East) , Jotirmatha (North), Dwaraka (West)
- **Established Hindu ‘Monastic Traditions of Ten Names’**
 - *DashanAmi Sampradaya*
- **Left his body at the age of 32 in Kedarnath, Uttarkhand, India**

Adi Shankaracharya's Teaching Methods – At a Glance



Adi Shankaracharya's Teachings (Essence)

(In Sanskrit):

“ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या
जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः”

(In English):

“***Brahman alone is Real, World is Illusory***”
“***Individual Self & Brahman are One and the Same***”

Four Preliminary Connections

➤ Prayojana (Realizable Purpose)

- Cessation of all Miseries
- Attainment of Supreme Bliss
- Freedom from bondage

➤ Vishaya (Subject Matter)

- Self Knowledge
- Oneness of Individual Soul & Brahman

➤ Sambandha (Relationship)

- Relationship between the Texts, Subject Matter, Purpose & Competency

➤ Adhikari (Competent Spiritual Seekers)

- One with Capability, Interest & Right Attitude
- Performed Scripture Ordained Actions
- Endowed with Four Means of Salvation

Sadhana Chatustaya - I

1. Viveka (Discrimination): Discerning Permanent from Impermanent

➤ Self-Questioning:

- What causes Happiness & What causes Misery?
- What is Temporary and what is Permanent?
- Is what I'm undertaking necessary for my Spiritual Growth?
(‘Spiritual Growth’: Growing in Goodness, Wisdom & Happiness)

➤ Self-Reasoning/Understanding:

- World of Objects/Relations can give me Pleasure/Success/Name/Fame/Money etc.
- God/Brahman Alone can give me Permanent Happiness/Security

➤ Firm Self-Resolve:

- I want to apply my Energy & Time in Positive Thoughts/Activities
- I want to live in the Present (not in Past or Future)
- I want to follow Instructions of my Guru & Scriptures

- 4th Commandment of Sri Ramakrishna - “Practise discrimination”

- “Lust & Greed” is Impermanent, God alone is Eternal ” – Sri Ramakrishna

Sadhana Chatustaya – II

2. **Vairagya (Dispassion):** Giving up the Lower for the Higher

- Turning towards God/Brahman
- Turning away from Sense Objects & Pleasure
- Relying on God Only (Not on the World) for Security/Support
- Becoming Truthful & Unselfish
- Giving up Inner Desires for the Worldly Fruits
- Utilizing Energy & Time in Positive Thoughts/Activities
- Living in the Present (not in Past/Future)
- Following the Instructions of Guru & Scriptures

“Live like a maid-servant in a rich man’s house” - 5th Commandment of Sri Ramakrishna
“Renunciation Alone is Fearless” – Swami Vivekananda

Sadhana Chatustaya – III

3a. Shama (Mind-Control):

- Not Allowing the Mind to Externalize
- Practicing Inner discipline of Tranquility

3b. Dama (Sense-Control):

- Restraining the External Instruments
- Responsible use of Senses in Positive Direction

3c. Uparati (Withdrawal):

- Not thinking of Things of the Senses
- Withdrawal from the Thoughts of Past or Future

Sadhana Chatustaya – IV

3d. Titikshā (Forbearance):

- Forbearance of all misery without any painful feeling or remorse
- Mental Toughness to withstand all Challenges of Life
- “Resist not Evil”

3e. Shraddhā (Faith, Reverence, Eagerness):

- Unwavering Faith in the Words of Guru & Scriptures
(गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुर्गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः। गुरुरेव परं ब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः)
Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Gurudeva is Maheswara (Shiva),
Guru is Verily the Supreme Brahman; Salutations to the Guru!
- Eagerness to Reach God

3f. Samādhān (Concentration):

- Constant Practice of holding the Mind on God
- Harmonizing and integrating mind & speech
- Pursuit of the Depth of Inner Exploration and Realization

Sadhana Chatustaya - V

4. Mumukshutvam (Longing for Liberation):

- Intense Desire to be Free from Bondage, Slavery

- Constant Prayer:
 - “ Oh Lord!
 - Lead us From Unreal To Real
 - Lead us From Darkness To Light
 - Lead us From Death To Immortality”

3- Stages Of Spiritual Practice

1. Shravana (Hearing):

- Listening to the Mahavakyas from the Guru

2. Manana (Reflection):

- Reflection on what's heard from Guru/Scriptures
- Reflection & sincere questioning until doubts are removed

3. Nididhyasana (Contemplation):

- Deep Meditation
- Complete absorption/assimilation of the Mahavakyas
- Aspirant becomes one with the Knowledge

Song sung by Sw. Vivekananda

(Mon Chalo Nijo Niketane (Bengali: মন চলো নিজ নিকেতনে))

- 1:** *“Let us go back, O mind, to our own abode!
Here in this foreign land why should we wander
aimlessly in stranger’s guise?
Let us go back, O mind, to our own abode!*
- 2:** *These living beings and the five elements;
Are strangers to you; none is your own.
Why do you thus forget yourself,
In love with strangers, O my mind?
Why do you thus forget your own?*
- 3:** *Ascend the path of Truth, O mind!
With Love as the lamp to light your way.
As your provision for the journey, bring with you
The virtues, carefully concealed;
for, like two highwaymen, Greed and delusion
wait to rob you of your wealth.*

- 4:** *And keep beside you constantly,
as guards to shelter you from harm,
Mind-control (shama) and Sense-control (dama).*
- 5:** *Companionship with holy men will be for you
A welcome rest-house by the road;
There rest your weary limbs awhile, asking your way,
If ever you should be in doubt, of him who are there.*
- 6:** *If anything along the path should frighten you,
Then loudly shout the name of the Lord;
For He is Ruler of that road,
And even Death must bow to Him.”*

“Let us go back, O mind, to our own abode!

Sri Bhagavad Ramanujacharya



Sri Ramanujacharya - Short Biography

- Born (1017-1137AD) as Illaya Perumal in a Tamil Brahmin Family in Tamil Nadu
- Mastered all Vedas & Sastras at the Age of 16
- Took Sannyas at Age 30 with the name of 'Ramanuja Muni'
- Known as the Incarnation of Vishnu or Adishesha
- Chief Proponent of Qualified Non-Dualism & Sri Vaishnavism
- Prescribed 'devotion & self-surrender to Vishnu' as means to Liberation
- Was a Priest of Kanchipuram Lord Varadaraja Temple
- Studied Scriptures under His Gurus (Nathamuni & Yamunacharya)
- Wrote commentaries on:
 - Upanishads
 - Brahma Sutras (Sri Bhashyam)
 - Bhagavad Gita

Principles of Visisthadvaita (Qualified Non-Dualism)

- **Brahman/God**
 - Is with Qualities (*Saguna Brahman*) - Ishwara
 - Is the Whole and all Sentient/Insentient beings are part of *Brahman/Ishwara*
- **Tattva (Ultimate Truth)**
 - Knowledge of Jiva, Jagat & Ishwara
- **Purusartha (Goal to attain)**
 - Liberation (*moskha*) from Bondage (*bandhan*)
- **Hita (Means to attain the Goal)**
 - Karma and Jnana leads to Bhakti
 - Liberation is attained through Bhakti (devotion) & Prapatti (self-surrender)

Ramanuja's Concept of God/Brahman

God/Brahman:

- The Only Reality
- Both Immanent & Transcendent
- Possess Consciousness & Gigantic Will Power
- Comprised of both Matter (Unconscious) & Finite Spirits (Conscious) entities
- Devoid of *Vijatiya* and *Sajatiya Bheda*, possessed of *Svagata Bheda*
- Possessed of Qualities (Saguna) : All-Knowing, All-Powerful, All-Pervading & All-Compassionate
- Creates, Sustains & Withdraws the World
- Exist as both Un-manifested Cause and Manifested Effect
- Individual Soul controls Individual Body/Mind, God controls Universal Body/Mind
- Object of Worship and the Goal of Spiritual Aspirations
- By Pleasing God thru Prayer & Surrender, Liberation can be Obtained thru His Mercy

Ramanuja's Concept of the World

World:

- God creates the manifold world out of Himself by gracious act of His Will
- By Will of God, Undifferentiated Subtle Matter Transformed into Fire, Water & Earth
- Differentiated Elements manifest 3 kinds of Qualities – Sattva, Rajas & Tamas
- Every Object in the World is a mixture of 3 Elements – Triplication (trivitkarana)
- Created World is as Real (not illusory) as Brahman
- Maya is the inscrutable power of God

Individual:

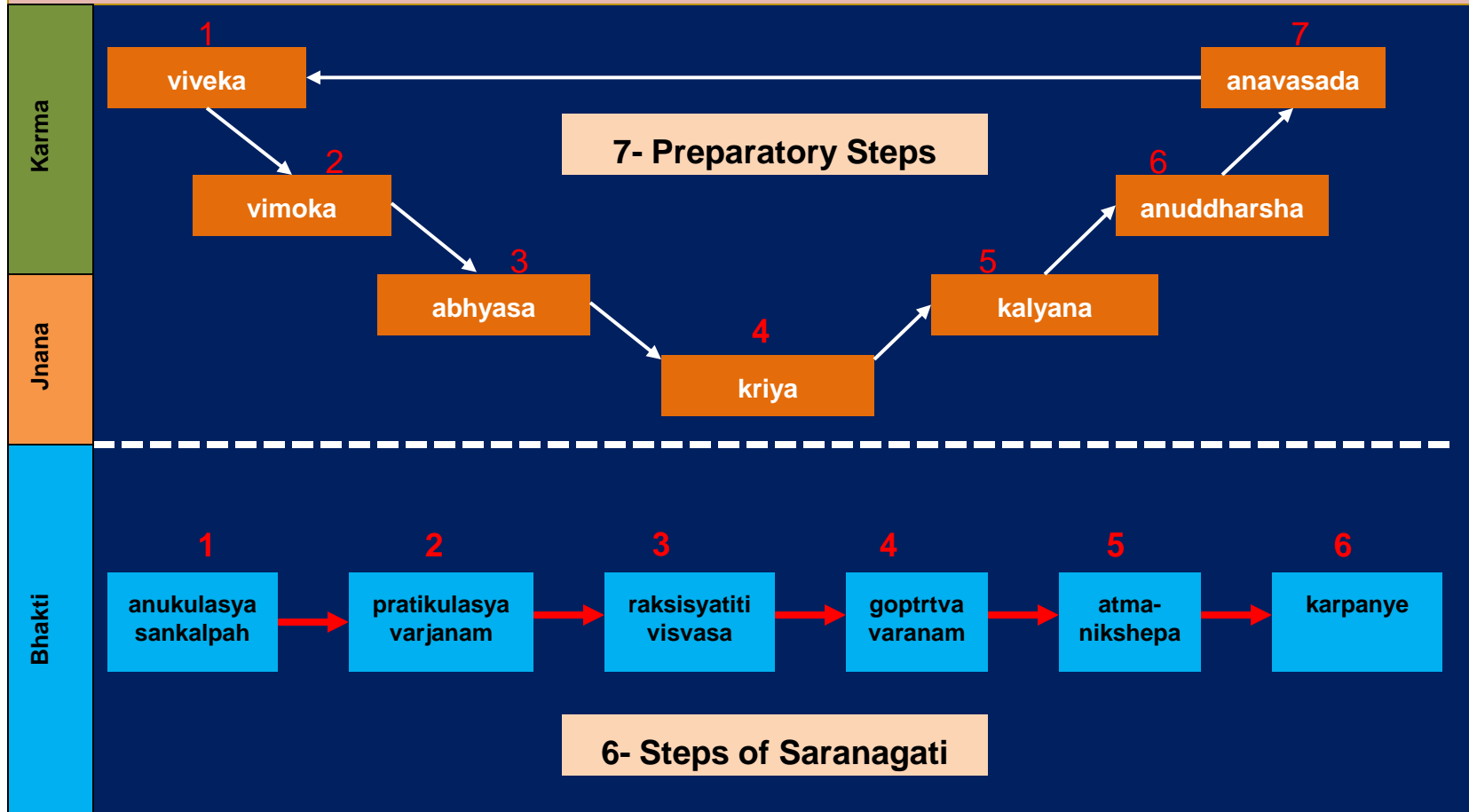
- Individual has a Body and a Soul
- Body is Matter (Finite) - part of God
- Soul Eternally Existing (Finite) - part of God
- Consciousness of Soul is independent of its connection with Body
- Consciousness not Essence, but Eternal Quality of Soul

Ramanuja's Concept of the Liberation

Liberation (*Mukti*):

- Sought through Karma & Jnana leading to Bhakti (Devotion/Surrender to God)
 - Karma (Work): Obligatory Duties
 - Jnana (Knowledge): Understanding the Nature of God, Individual Soul & Universe
 - Bhakti (Devotion): Pure love of God leading to the self-surrender to God
- Obtained only if God is pleased
- Intense Remembrance of God, Meditation & Prayers lead to 'Vision of God'
- *Ajnana & Karmas* (by which the Body is caused) to be destroyed
- Obtained through complete self-surrender (God is the only object of Love)

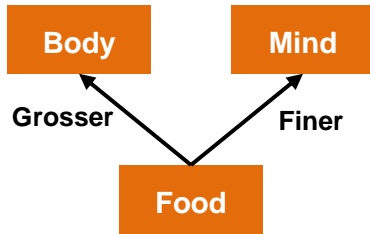
Sri Ramanujacharya's Teaching Methods – At a Glance



Preparatory Steps for Devotion – Step #1

1. *viveka* (discrimination):

- Acharya Ramanuja emphasized on the Discrimination of Food



- Both Thoughts & Instruments (of Thoughts) are influenced by Food
- Three (3) types of defects (*doshā*) in Food to be avoided
 - *JAti* - By it's very Nature Impure (Meat, Alcohol, Nicotine, Narcotics etc.)
 - *Ashraya* - Person from whom the food comes, who touches the food
 - *Nimitta* - Contaminated/Unwashed/Half-eaten/Dirty/Dusty Food
- Pure Food -> leads to -> Pure Mind -> leads to -> Constant Memory of God

Preparatory Steps for Devotion – Step #2

2. *vimoka* (freedom from desire):

- Lovers of God must give up extreme desires
- Desire nothing except God
- Know that this **World** is:
 - A 'means to an end'
 - Not an 'end in itself'
- Wife/Husband/Children/Money – good so long as they help us forward
- Have Mind & Sense-control to contain desires

Preparatory Steps for Devotion – Step #3

3. *abhyasa* (Practice):

- No other thoughts have rights to withhold us from the Thought of God
- Present = Result of our Past Practice, Future = Result of our Current Practice
- Thinking of the Senses brought us down here - turn the other way round!
- Give it a good blow if the mind wants to think of sense enjoyments
- Both Mind and Senses should be under control
- Hear what's auspicious, Talk what's auspicious, Read what's auspicious
- Music is a great aid to the practice of keeping God in memory

Preparatory Steps for Devotion – Step #4

4. *kriya* (actions):

- Doing good to others purifies our Mind
- Lead an **Unselfish Life**
- Perform 5-Great Sacrifices or 5-Debts (*Pancha Maha-Yagna*)
 - *Deva-rina* - debts to **Gods**
 - *Rishi-rina* - debts to **Sages**
 - *Pitri-rina* - debts to **Ancestors**
 - *Nara-rina* - debts to **Human Beings**
 - *Bhuta-rina* - debts to **Nature, Animals, Plants, Insects etc.**

Preparatory Steps for Devotion – Step #5

5. *kalyana* (purifying act):

- Practice :
 - *Satya* - Truthfulness
 - *Arjava* - Straightforwardness (no double dealing)
 - *Daya* - Compassion
 - *Dana* - Charity
 - *Ahimsa* - Not hurting others by thought, word or deed

Preparatory Steps for Devotion – Step #6 & #7

6. *anavasada* (avoid despondency):

- Despondency is not Religion
- By Being Pleasant & Smiling takes one nearer to God
- Minds that are Gloomy & Dull cannot love God
- It's diabolism to say " I'm so miserable'
- God is not to be reached by the weak, one must be strong

7. *anuddharsha* (avoid excessive merriment):

- Mind in excessive merriment becomes fickle, never becomes calm
- Every excesses will have their reactions
- Tears & Laughter are too extreme – be Cheerful but Calm

Self-Surrender (*sharanagati*) – Step #1

1. *anukulasya samkalpah:*

- Entertaining thoughts favorable to devotion
- Willing to do anything that pleases the Lord
 - Willing to make oneself fit to receive His Grace
 - Following Instructions of Guru
 - Attending *Satsang*
 - Doing regular spiritual practice

Self-Surrender (*sharanagati*) – Step #2

2. *pratikulasya varjanam*:

- Rejecting thoughts unfavorable to devotion
- Willing to give up anything that displeases the Lord
 - Willing to give up obstacles: pleasures/name/fame/power
 - Willing to give up attachment to objects & associations
 - Willing to give up useless worldly talks
 - Willing to give up anger, jealousy, pride, hypocrisy etc.

Self-Surrender (*sharanagati*) – Step #3

3. *raksisyati iti visvasah:*

- Having firm conviction that:
 - God is my only Protector
 - God is protecting me All-the-Time
 - God is not just ‘Wish-fulfiller’ but my ‘Well-wisher’
 - God is Kind & Compassionate
 - His Love for me is Unconditional
 - I’m his child, He will never abandon me
 - I don’t have to worry – I’m protected by His blessings despite what I’m (“janaki natha sahaya kare jaba, kaun bigad kare nara tero....”)

Self-Surrender (*sharanagati*) – Step #4

4. *goptritva varanam*:

- Actually seeking refuge in the Lord
- Praying for God's Protection, Blessings & Grace
- “You've guided me thus far, take me further, guide me to Truth”
- “I've come to You as I am, make me what You want me to be”

Self-Surrender (*sharanagati*) – Step #5

5. *atma-niksepa*:

- Completely surrendering oneself to God
- Falling at the feet of the Lord and surrendering to the Lord
- “I’ve no will/wish of my own – I’m like the flute in your hands”
- No resistance or reservations that obstructs total surrender
- Giving up everything to the Lord including the ego

Self-Surrender (*sharanagati*) – Step #6

6. *karpanyea*:

- To know that Steps 1 thru 5 are possible ONLY by God's Grace
- So long as we think we can do things by our own effort, Lord does not interfere
- As soon as we seek refuge, surrender and reveal our helplessness, Lord comes forward and lifts us

Peace Chanting (*ShAnti Patha*)

Sanskrit	Transliteration	Meaning
<p>ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमदच्यते पूर्णश्च पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः । हरी ओम् तत् सत् ॥</p>	<p>Om Puurnnam-Adah Puurnnam-Idam Puurnnaat- Purnnam-Udacyate Puurnnashya Puurnnam- Aadaaya Puurnnam-Eva- Avashissyate Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih Hari Aum Tat Sat ॥</p>	<p>Om, That (Outer World) is Purna (Full with Divine Consciousness); This (Inner World) is also Purna (Full with Pure Consciousness); From Purna comes Purna (From the Fullness of Pure Consciousness the World is manifested) , Taking Purna from Purna, Purna Indeed Remains (Because Pure Consciousness is Non-Dual and Infinite). Om Peace, Peace, Peace. Supreme Absolute Truth.</p>

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- IX. *Saranagati by Swami Tejomayananda*
- X. *Lectures of Revd. Swami Dayatmananda on Spiritual Progress, Hinduism, Karma Yoga, Upanishads, Patanjali etc.*
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