



# International Journal of Sanskrit Research

अनन्ता

ISSN: 2394-7519

IJSR 2020; 6(2): 211-216

© 2020 IJSR

www.anantaajournal.com

Received: 07-01-2020

Accepted: 09-02-2020

**Dr. Govindaraja Setty AG**

PhD(Yoga), #617, D Main,  
Shāntiniketan, Arekere,  
Bannerghatta Road, Bengaluru,  
Karnataka, India

## कोहम् – Who am I?

**Dr. Govindaraja Setty AG**

### Abstract

Scientists study objective phenomenal world by questioning, hypothesizing, researching, investigating and logically concluding, which forms the enormous treasure of our empirical or pragmatic knowledge base. But the insightful enquiry 'WHO AM I?' is beyond the scope of science as the science deals only with objective world with reductionist, materialistic approach. Or at the most, science may say, 'I am the conglomeration of body and mind'; and treats mind just a function of brain. However, from time immemorial, the *jijñāsus* (true seekers – Indian scientists – *ṛṣis*) have raised this pertinent question forming the very nucleus of Indian *Upaniṣadic* knowledge base, the true investigation into oneself – Self Enquiry. Nothing can be the greatest purifier than the Self knowledge, say the *Upaniṣads*. Thus, it is a journey from ignorance to subjective knowledge. When all the scriptures of the world say what all they want to say and finish, the profoundest *Vedānta* message begins, makes the reader अन्तर्मुखि, concludes decisively, and there is nothing beyond to know. The upshot of this insightful knowledge is आत्यन्तिक दुःख निवृत्तिः ब्रह्मानन्द प्राप्तिश्च। *Vedānta* also says तत् ज्ञात्वा पुमान् धीरो भवति शान्तो भवति अमृतो भवति। This article discusses the Indian *Upaniṣadic* model of wisdom to answer the question 'Who am I?'- A truly commendable enquiry.

**Key words:** Upaniṣad, Māṇḍūkya, Taittirīya, Avasthātrīyas, Pañcakośa, Vedānta.

### Introduction

*Swāmi Vivekananda* says, 'you are not the human being having spiritual experiences, but you are the spiritual being having human experiences; listen (*śravaṇa*) to this, dwell upon (*manana*), and get convinced with this (*nididhyāsana*)'. *Vedānta* says, देहं नाहं कोहं सोहम् - 'I am not the body; then what am I? I am that Supreme *Brahman*'. Further, *Vedānta* emphasizes that you are the 'Existence, Consciousness, Bliss (सत्यं ज्ञानम् अनन्तम् ब्रह्म)' i.e., you are *Brahman* and nothing less than *Brahman* (Lokesvarānanda, 1996). A Sūfī saint says, 'When I searched for *Allāh*, I found myself; when I searched for myself, I found *Allāh*'.

To underscore the significance of 'Self Knowledge', *śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* says:

यदा चर्मवद् आकाशं वेष्टयिष्यन्ति मानवाः।  
तदा देवम् अविज्ञाय दुःखस्यान्तो भविष्यन्ति॥६.२०॥

When human beings can roll up the sky like a piece of leather, then there will be an end to their misery without the knowledge of the Consciousness or the Self (I.e., without the Self knowledge, there is no end to the misery).

*Bhagavad Gītā* brings out the whole lot of confusion in 'Self Knowledge':

आश्चर्यवत्पश्यति कश्चिदेनमाश्चर्यवद्ब्रूदति तथैव चान्यः।  
आश्चर्यवच्चैनमन्यः श्रुणोति श्रुत्वाप्येनं वेद न चैव कश्चित्।।भगवद् गीता २.२९॥

Some see the Self as amazing, some describe as amazing, some hear of the Self as amazing, whereas, some fail to understand even after hearing about this Self(Goyandaka J. , 1999).

**Corresponding Author:**

**Dr. Govindaraja Setty AG**  
PhD(Yoga), #617, D Main,  
Shāntiniketan, Arekere,  
Bannerghatta Road, Bengaluru,  
Karnataka, India

Unequivocal and emphatic pointers of the Indian *Upaniṣads* are:

**Table 1:**

<i>Veda-Mahāvākya</i> s (Vedic-Dictums) - ब्रह्मत्व ऐक्य बोधकम्			
<i>Aitareya Upaniṣad R̥gveda</i>	<i>Cāndogya Upaniṣad Sāmaveda</i>	<i>Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Atharvaveda</i>	<i>Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad Yajurveda</i>
प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म॥ <i>Prajñānaṁ Brahma</i> All Pervading Consciousness is <i>Brahman</i>	तत् त्वम् असि॥ <i>Tat Tvam Asi</i> That Thou Art	अयम् आत्मा ब्रह्म॥ <i>Ayam ātmā Brahma</i> This ātman is <i>Brahman</i>	अहं ब्रह्मास्मि॥ <i>Aham Brahmāsmi</i> I am <i>Brahman</i>
<i>Veda Ghoṣaṇa Vākya</i>	<i>Gurūpadeśa Vākya</i> श्रवणं by <i>śiṣya</i>	Upon Reflection (मननं) by <i>śiṣya</i>	Upon Realization (निदिध्यासनं) by <i>śiṣya</i>
<i>śaṅkarācārya (Nirvāṇaśatkaṁ):</i> चिदानन्द रूपः शिवोऽहं शिवोऽहम्॥ 'I am indeed Eternal Bliss, <i>śiva</i> , Love and Pure Consciousness'			

Thus the whole of Indian *Vedāntic* teaching revolves round one nucleus 'Who Am I?' This being the categorical and uncompromising importance involved in *Upaniṣadic* knowledge base to understand the 'Self', It is better to bring out the very relevant, logical and interesting methodology employed by the *Vedānta* philosophy based on *Upaniṣads*:

**1. Arundhati Nyāya:** The methodology is to know something unknown through the Known. The trajectory chosen is known to reach/know the UNKNOWN. In Hindu marriage rituals, the newly wedded girl would be shown the *Arundhati Nakṣatra* (Star). This being a very feeble star, it is very difficult to make out directly. Thus the *Purohit* (who leads the marriage rituals by chanting Vedic verses) first shows a tall building/tree/electrical pole and then says, 'look at the topmost point of the pole (KNOWN). Do you see that? Yes. Just over that point, go straight up. Do you see the bright star? Yes. From there, move to the left to see a small star. Did you get that? Yes. From that, slightly come down. Did you see that very feeble star? Yes, that is *Arundhati Nakṣatra* (UNKNOWN)'. Thus the unknown is known through the known. This methodology is used in many of our daily life events also. Sometimes, in a social gathering, you will see a stranger. You will approach him and ask him 'who you are?' Let us say, the person knows who you are. He may say, 'Your brother *Rām*'s wife is *Sītā*. *Sītā*'s sister is *ūrmilā*. I am *ūrmilā*'s son.

**2. Dṛśya and Dṛṣṭha:** *Dṛśya* is what is seen or perceived or known; and *Dṛṣṭha* is the seer or perceiver or knower.

### Levels of Understanding:

**I)** In a broader sense, *Dṛśya* is all that I perceive through my *pañcendriyas* (sense organs). The tree I see through my eyes is an object for my eyes and hence *Dṛśya*. The music I hear is an object for my ears. The sweetness is an object for my tongue. The fragrance of jasmine is an object for my nose. The softness of a flower is an object for my skin. Hence, in the objective

world, all that I see, hear, taste, smell, and touch is *Dṛśya*, because they are all objects for my senses. That means, *Dṛśya* and *Dṛṣṭha* must be different, only then *Dṛṣṭha* can perceive the *Dṛśya*, not otherwise. For example, my eyes can see everything other than my own eyes (here, I do not consider seeing one's own eyes in a mirror). Further, because of the presence of the *Dṛṣṭha*, the *Dṛśya* is perceived; and because of presence of *Dṛśya*, *Dṛṣṭha* perceives. I.e., in the absence of any one of these, perception is not possible (साङ्ख्य).

**II)** I can feel my sense organs through my mind. My mind can perceive whatever is happening to my sense organs. Hence, the sense organs are *Dṛśya* and mind is *Dṛṣṭha*.

**III)** I can know what is happening in my mind. Mind could be happy or depressed, calm or agitated. I know when my mind was foolish or ignorant; I know now that my mind is little wise and inquisitive. I am the same unchanging, imperishable 'I' perceiving all that is happening in my mind. Hence mind is *Dṛśya* (object) and 'I' am the *Dṛṣṭha* (Subject-Consciousness).

**IV) Dṛṣṭha – Indestructible, Dṛśya – Subject to śaḍvikāras:** Everything in this universe (Seen or *Dṛśya*) is subject to *śaḍvikāras* (six kinds of changes)<sup>1</sup> But, there must be something witnessing all these changing objects; existing forever (अनादि) and constantly illumining the objective world to witness the changes. That is infinite (अनन्त), imperishable (अच्युत), indivisible (अखण्ड), one and only *Dṛṣṭha* pervading and perceiving the entire objective universe. No one can destroy this imperishable (अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हति॥ *Gītā* 2.17॥ *avināśi tu tadviddhi yena sarvamidaṁ tatam vināśamavyayasyāsyā na kaścitkartumarhati*)).

**3. Neti Vāda:** English translation could be 'Not This logic' (also called 'Residual methodology'), that logically explains 'You are not this, not this, not this .....'. Finally what remains (if at all), IS YOU (*Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*).

### Nucleus

Great sage *Śri Ramaṇa Maharṣi*'s entire philosophy of teaching is based on the question 'Who am I?' He considered this quest a very significant one for any true spiritual seeker (*Jijñāsu*), forming the quintessence of Indian *Vedānta*. Once, a devotee approached *Śri Ramaṇa Maharṣi* and said:

Devotee: The deep logic of Non-Dualism, *Aham Brahmāsmi, Tatvam asi, Ayamātmā Brahma*, You are That, Who am I? Who are you? is beyond my comprehension. I know only *Bhakti* (Love for the Supreme Lord) and nothing else. Will that be sufficient?

*Śri Ramaṇa Maharṣi*: Yes, it is sufficient.

Devotee: It is sufficient! Oh, very nice! With this, can I go to *Vaikunṭha*?

*Śri Ramaṇa Maharṣi*: Yes, you can.

Devotee: Can I see *Nārāyaṇa* in *Vaikunṭha*?

*Śri Ramaṇa Maharṣi*: Yes, you can.

Devotee: Can I speak to Him?

*Śri Ramaṇa Maharṣi*: Yes, you can.

Devotee: Will He speak to me?

<sup>1</sup> *Jāyate* (Birth – comes into being), *Asti* (Exists), *Vardhate* (Grows), *Vipariṇamate* (Changes), *Apakṣyate* (Decays), *Vinaśyati* (Dies – cease to exist).

Śrī Ramaṇa Maharṣi: Why not? He would speak to you.  
Devotee: Wow, excellent! What would He speak to me? What would He tell me?

Śrī Ramaṇa Maharṣi: He would say, ‘Go and find out ‘Who You Are?’

Thus the quest “Who Am I?” is the ultimate a *Vedāntin* should know.

### Who am I? Perspective of *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* (Table 2):

*Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* has wonderfully answered this ‘Self-Enquiry’ – ‘Who am I?’ from the perspective of ‘*Avasthātrīyas*’:

Table 2:

<i>Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad</i> - ‘ <i>Avasthātrīyas</i> ’ – Three Experiences		
<i>Jāgrt</i> ( <i>viśva</i> )	<i>Svapna</i> ( <i>taijasa</i> )	<i>Suṣupti</i> ( <i>prājña</i> )
Waking	Dreaming Rapid Eye Movement-REM	Dreamless Deep Sleep Non-REM
<i>Bāhyaprajña</i> <i>Laukika</i> ( <i>Sthūlabhogi</i> ) कार्यकारण बहः	<i>Antahprajña</i> <i>śuddhalaukika</i> ( <i>Sūkṣmabhogi</i> ) कार्यकारण बहः	<i>Prajñānaghana</i> <i>Lokottara</i> ( <i>ānandamaya</i> , <i>ānandabhogi</i> ) कारण बहः
<i>Jñānendriyas</i> functional	<i>Jñānendriyas</i> functional	<i>Jñānendriyas</i> not functional
<i>Antahkaraṇas</i> functional	Among <i>Antahkaraṇas</i> only <i>manas</i> is functional	<i>Antahkaraṇas</i> not functional Causal body is functional
<i>Karmendriyas</i> functional	<i>Karmendriyas</i> functional	<i>Karmendriyas</i> functional
Presence of Experience Presence of Free-will (कर्तुम् अकर्तुम् अन्यथा कर्तुम्॥)	Presence of Experience Absence of Free- will	Absence of experience Absence of Free- will

Having any one of these three experiences at any given point of time, we identify ourselves to *avasthās* as explained in the following anecdote very meaningfully:

*Janaka Mahārāja* saw a dream, where he was completely defeated by an enemy king and was exiled. Having badly wounded, shattered by hunger, thirst and torn clothes, in utter disgrace he was aimlessly wandering in the forest. With great difficulty, he reaches a nearby hamlet where ‘*Annadānam*’ (free-food serving counters - *annasatram*) was being done for the poor and the needy. Happily he stood in the queue waiting for his turn. Unfortunately, just before he could get the food from the person serving, the food container fell down and he could not get the food. Utterly frustrated and cursing his ill-luck, he collapses to the ground and starts lamenting. Suddenly he wakes up from that horrendous nightmare. Being bewildered, he looks around. He was in his royal palace, on his majestic bed, surrounded by magnificently decorated walls. He started murmuring – ‘Whether this is true or that is true?’ Hearing the murmur, the attendant comes running. The king was in a state of disorientation and the attendant could not understand what he was muttering, hence calls the queen. The queen comes running and finds the king in a state of sheer perplexity. Not understanding what the king was murmuring, she calls the ‘*Rājaguru śukamaharṣi*’ (godly personality who advises the king on spirituality, dharma and safety of kingdom). *Rājaguru* carefully listens to what the king was murmuring and says loudly, ‘Oh King, neither this is true nor that is true’. ‘This’ is the waking world and ‘That’ is the dream world.

### Analysis of three *Avasthas*:

- 1. *Jāgrta*:** This is our waking *avastha*, where *Jñānendriyas*, *antahkaraṇas*, and *karmendriyas* are functional. There is free will in our transactions with the external world. *Śaṅkarācārya* calls this state ‘*Laukika*’ as the man is aware of the *vastu prapañca*.
- 2. *Svapna*:** (REM - Rapid Eye Movement phase in sleep): This being our dreaming state the *Jñānendriyas* and *Karmendriyas* are functional. Among *antahkaraṇas* only mind is functional. However, influenced by the experiences of *Jāgrtāvastha*, the mind recreates and projects dream experiences like a projector projecting the film on a screen. But the free will in our dealings is absent; I cannot decide the nature of dream I want to witness; or I may not behave sensible in my dream. *Śaṅkarācārya* calls this *avastha* ‘*śuddha Laukika*’, as one experiences the *vastu prapañca* even in its absence.
- 3. *Suṣupti*:** (Non-REM): This is deep sleep state where there is absence of experience; *Karmendriyas* are functional, *jñānendriyas* and *antahkaraṇas* are not functional. As the man experiences nothing related to *Jāgrtāvastha* or *Svapnāvastha*, *Śaṅkarācārya* calls this *avastha* ‘*Lokottara*’ (beyond *vastu prapañca*).

### Why I am not what I am in *Jāgrta* and *Svapna*?

It is clear that only in *Jāgrtāvastha*, *Svapna* and *Suṣupti* are understandable. However, from *Upaniṣadic* perspective, even *Jāgrta*, an outcome of our ignorance, is not our waking state. This is understandable only by a realized *sādhaka*, says the *Upaniṣad*. *Svapna jagat* is experienced only in *svapna*; neither before nor after. Similarly *Jāgrta jagat* is experienced only in *Jāgrta*; neither before nor after. That which has a beginning and end is not existence absolute. Further, the experiences of *svapnāvastha* are not true for *Jāgrtāvastha*; and the experiences of *Jāgrtāvastha* are not true in *svapnāvastha*. That which is changing cannot be existence absolute, and hence we are not what we are in *Jāgrta* and *Svapna*. But wait, don’t jump to the conclusion.

### Why I am not what I am in *Suṣupti*?

This also being a changing phase, in *suṣupti*, there is ‘absence of experience’ (Table 2). ‘I’ am the experienter of this ‘absence of experience’. That is the reason, after waking up from *suṣupti*, ‘I’ say, ‘I had a deep, very relaxing sleep’. That means, ‘I’ am the unchanging experienter of this *suṣupti*. Further, *suṣupti* has a beginning and an end. That which has a beginning and an end cannot be existence absolute; hence I am not what I experience in *suṣupti*. But wait, don’t jump to the conclusion.

### If I am not these three *Avasthas*, what am I?

Let us consider three jewels – a golden ring, a golden bangle, and a golden chain. These jewels have different forms, different names and different uses – one is for the finger, other for the wrist, and the third for neck. Names and uses of these jewels cannot be interchanged. Each has a unique name, unique form and a unique use. However, what is common in all these is ‘Gold’; nothing but gold. Gold is the quintessence in all these jewels. Gold is all pervading in all the jewels. Without gold, they don’t have existence at all. If the gold is removed these cannot exist. Thus, the names, forms and uses are all borrowed existences from the gold. I.e., jewels don’t have independent existence of their own. However, gold has existence independent of these jewels – we can change the ring into a

bangle, bangle into chain, and chain into a ring or we can keep the gold as a lump. Excepting the name, form and use, the gold remains unchanged - intrinsically.

With this basic conception, let us understand what *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* (Nikhilānanda, 2000) has got to say. The *Vedānta* uses the word 'Avasthātrīyas' (Table 2). English translation could be 'three shapes'. That means there is something taking the shapes or forms namely *Jāgṛt*, *Svapna* and *Suṣupti*. *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* calls this 'something' as चतुर्थम् (Fourth). This 'Fourth' is different from all the three 'avasthās', as there must be an unchanging substratum for any change to be recognized. That is nothing but *Turīya* or *Deva* or *Vibhu* according to *Gauḍapāda* and that is our true nature. I am not the waker (*Jāgṛt*), not the dreamer (*Svapna*), not the sleeper (*Suṣupti*); instead, I am the unchanging, Non-Dual (अद्वैत), the Fourth – the 'Consciousness Absolute'. This Consciousness or *Turīya* is the changeless substratum that witnesses and experiences the changes (सर्वदृक्), and forms the background underlying the *avasthātrīyas* like gold the underlying reality of the jewels. Hence our true nature is 'Turīya – the Consciousness Absolute', says *Upaniṣad*. If you want to treat *Turīya* as a state different from the first three states (though it is wrong to treat so), I put it this way: *Turīya* is that state where there is absolute cessation of delusion. *Vidyāranya* very meaningfully narrates in *Dṛg Dṛśya Vivēka* (Tejomayānanda S., 1994):

नोदेति नास्तमेत्येषा न वृद्धिं याति न क्षयम्  
स्वयं विभात्यथान्यानि भासयेत् साधनं विना॥५॥

*nodēti nāstamētyēṣā na vṛddhiṁ yāti na kṣayam.*  
*svayam vibhātyathānyāni bhāsayēt sādhanam*  
*vinā॥5॥*

**Meaning:** Consciousness doesn't rise (unborn) and set (doesn't die). It doesn't enlarge or perish (is immutable). It shines on its own and illumines others without any assistance.

*Dṛg Dṛśya Vivēka* also says, 'I am like sky; sometimes bright and effulgent like a day, sometimes cloudy and over casting the true nature of sun; sometimes dark and mysterious like a dark night. In fact, I am subtler than the sky'.

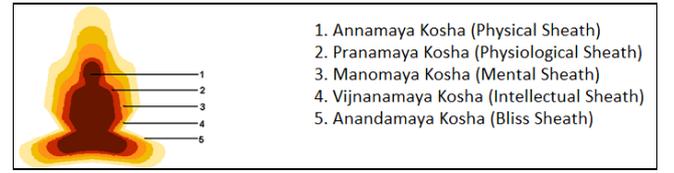
Table 3:

Turīya or Consciousness	
Not antahprajñā	Avyapadeśya (cannot be defined)
Not bahihprajñā	Adṛśya
Not ubhayaprajñā	Agrāhya
Not prajñānaghana	Acintya
Not prajñā	Nirguna
Not aprajñā	Nirākāra
Forming all the three avasthas	

### Who am I? Perspective of *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (Table 4)

In *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 'What am I?' is very well explained through 'Pañcakośa Viveka'. Referring to the *Brahman*, the *Upaniṣad* says, 'Yo veda nihitam guhāyām' – 'You understand 'That' which is hidden in the cave of the heart' (Lokeswārānanda, 1992). Then the *Upaniṣad* moves on to explain the astounding philosophy of *Pañcakośa Viveka* to inform us 'who am I?'.

Table 4: *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* - Pañcakośa Viveka



**1. Annamayakośa** (Food Sheath – Gross Physical body): The great sage *Aṣṭāvakra* had eight deformities on his body, hence the name (*Aṣṭa* = eight; *Vakra* = deformities). Once he went to the court (*āsthāna*) of *Janaka Mahārāja*. The scholars assembled there started laughing sarcastically at him. Annoyed sage said, '*Janaka Mahārāja*, I thought here are great scholars. But unfortunately, I see only cobblers, for they are conditioned to understand me only as physical body (*Annamayakośa*) made of skin and bones. *Deśa Kāla Vastu Pariccheda* is the phrase used in *Vedānta* to explain why we are conditioned to feel that we are just the limited mortal physical body; i.e., we always think of space, time and objects and never think of anything beyond. The conviction with which I say 'I am not this glass of water', with the same conviction, I never say 'I am not this body'. Here arises the conditioning that I am the body.

*Annamayakośa* is the grossest (*Sthūla*) layer of our personality. It is said that our physical body is nothing but food re-arranged. On the table, the food I want to eat is arranged on a plate in a particular style. After eating, the food is arranged in another style and that is nothing but my physical body. We normally identify ourselves with our physical body – if the body is good, I am good; if the body is suffering, I am suffering. But am I this body? No, says *Vedānta*. Why? It is because like any other object I can see or perceive my body. Thus body is *Dṛśya* and I am the *Dṛṣṭha*. Further, my body is subject to *śadvikāras*. There were days, when I was a small kid playing with my grand-father on his lap. My body grew gradually and became a teen-aged and started playing with my teen-aged friends. My body further grew and became an adult, then a middle aged man, then an old man, and now my grandchild is playing on my lap. I perceived all these bodily changes. I am the same unchanging 'I' perceiving my baby body, teen-aged body, adult body, middle aged body, and the aged body. Thus, my body is the *Dṛśya* and I am the unchanging *Dṛṣṭha*; I am not the body.

Then the *Upaniṣad* instructs: तपसा विजिज्ञासस्वा॥

Meaning: Try to know through austerities.

**2. Prāṇamayakośa** (Energy Sheath – Subtler body 1): Exactly in the shape and size of *annamayakośa* (*पुरुषविध एव - Taittirīya Upaniṣad*), there is subtler body called *prāṇamayakośa* (or physiological body) controlled by *pañca prāṇas*<sup>2</sup> and *pañca upaprāṇas*<sup>3</sup>. Am I this *prāṇamayakośa*? No, says *Vedānta*, because my energy levels are subject to changes. There were days, when my body was strong with peak energy levels; now here are the days, where my energy levels are low. I am the same unchanging 'I' perceiving my peak energy levels then, and the low energy levels now. Further, like any other object, I can perceive the *prāṇa*. Thus, my *prāṇa* is the *Dṛśya* and I am the unchanging *Dṛṣṭha*; I am not the *prāṇamayakośa*.

Then the *Upaniṣad* instructs: तपसा विजिज्ञासस्वा॥

Meaning: Try to know through austerities.

<sup>2</sup> *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *vyāna*, *udāna*, *samāna*

<sup>3</sup> *nāga*, *kūrma*, *kṛkara*, *devadatta*, *dhananājaya*

**3. Manomayakośa** (Sheath of likes and dislikes – Subtler body 2): Having the exact shape and size of *prāṇamayakośa*, there is *manomayakośa*, i.e., the sheath of likes and dislikes. I am not the *manas* (mind), because, even *manomayakośa* is subject to changes. Sometimes mind is delightful, sometimes depressed; sometimes calm and cool, sometimes worried and anxious. Yes, mind is subject to innumerable changes. Further, like any other object, I can perceive my mind; I can understand the changes taking place in my mind. I am the unchanging 'I' observing all these changes in my mind. Thus, I am the unchanging *Dr̥ṣṭha* and my mind is ever changing *Dr̥śya*.

Then the *Upaniṣad* says: तपसा विजिज्ञासस्व॥

Meaning: Try to know through austerities.

**4. Vijñānamayakośa** (Intellectual Sheath – Subtler body 3): This is just the higher mind or *manomayakośa* endowed with the wisdom of discrimination power. If the *manomayakośa* is wild and unguided, *vijñānamayakośa* is tamed and guided by wisdom owing to maturity and *swādhyāya sādhana*. Am I this *vijñānamayakośa*? No, says *Vedānta*. The reason is *vijñānamayakośa* is also subject to changes. For instance, in deep sleep (*Suṣupti*) I cease to have any *jñāna*; there were days where my wisdom was not evolved, I was ignorant of many things. Of late, I have learnt a lot and still there is lot to learn or perhaps, I may lose my wisdom over a period of time in this ageing process. Further, like any other object I can perceive my wisdom. I am the unchanging 'I' observing all these changes in the *vijñānamayakośa*. Thus, I am the unchanging *Dr̥ṣṭha* and my *vijñānamayakośa* is ever changing *Dr̥śya*.

Then the *Upaniṣad* says: तपसा विजिज्ञासस्व॥

Meaning: Try to know through austerities.

**5. Ānandamayakośa** (Bliss Sheath – Causal body): My quest for happiness guides all my actions, thoughts and words; all my actions finally boil down to my pursuit of happiness. Hence, this is called *Kāraṇa śarīra* measuring my happiness or bliss derived from various aspects or activities of my life. Some things bring me highest levels of bliss, some things the least or nothing or negative. In *suṣupti*, for example, having complete blankness, I get supreme bliss. But am I this *Ānandamayakośa*? No, says *Vedānta*. Because, being subject to changes, my happiness has a beginning and an end; whereas I am the unchanging 'I' experiencing and observing all these changes in my happiness. Hence, I am not the *Ānandamayakośa*. I am the unchanging *Dr̥ṣṭha* and my *Ānandamayakośa* is ever changing *Dr̥śya*. Thus all the *pañcakośas* are in my awareness; but I am not them.

Then the *Upaniṣad* says: तपसा विजिज्ञासस्व॥

Meaning: Try to know through strict austerities.

This explanation gives an impression that as individual, I am wearing five shirts - one over the other and I am none of these five *kośas*. This argument leads to *bhedabhāva*. Then who am I? *Brahmabhāva* has a different level of understanding. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* gives a wonderful reply and it is truly the zenith. These *pañcakośas* are just the appearances in Consciousness, comparable to waves appearing in water of the ocean. The waves do not have independent existence of their own, but depend on the water for their momentary existence.

*Vedānta* puts it very logically - water is existence absolute whereas, the waves' existence is borrowed existence from the water. Waves seem to exist but if the water is removed, they cease to exist. But without waves water has its absolute existence.

If so, can I say, 'Go deeper and deeper by transcending the *pañcakośas* to get the 'I' or that unchanging 'Consciousness' or '*Dr̥ṣṭha*' or 'Seer'? It sounds ridiculous. Why? Can I say, 'Go deeper and deeper into the wave to find the water? No, that is wrong. The wave itself is water. Without water, wave has no existence. Wave is nothing but and not different from water. If not in wave, where else can I get water? Similarly the Consciousness is all pervading like wood pervading the entire table, or gold pervading the entire bangle. If not jewels, where else can I get gold? Similarly the *pañcakośas* are nothing but Consciousness or Seer or Perceiver or *Dr̥ṣṭha* or *Brahman* according to *Vedānta*.

यथा न तोयतो भिन्नास्तरङ्गाः फेन बुद्बुदाः। आत्मनो न तथा  
भिन्नं विश्वमात्मविनिर्गतम्॥ अष्टावक्र गीता २.४॥

As waves, foam and bubbles are not different from water, the world emanating from Self is not different from Self  
॥*Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* 2.4॥

### Conclusion

Thus there are two levels of understanding:

In the first level, applying the '*Neti Vāda*', *Vedānta* logically says, 'I am not this, not this .....'. As *śaṅkarācārya* puts it:

मनोबुद्ध्यहङ्कार-चित्तानि नाहं न च श्रोत्र जिह्वे न च घ्राणनेत्रे  
न च व्योमभूमिर्न तेजो न वायुः। चिदानन्द रूपः शिवोऽहं  
शिवोऽहम्॥ आत्मषट्कम्॥

I am not the mind, nor intellect, nor ego, nor the memory, nor the five senses, nor the *pañca bhūtas*<sup>4</sup>. These are just *अध्यारोपाः* (wrong attributions). My pure consciousness is the one existing without these *अध्यारोपाः*. I am indeed that eternal knowing and bliss, *śiva*, love and pure consciousness.

Second level of understanding is - there is nothing in the universe that is not *ātman*. If *ātman* is ocean, *Avasthātrīyas*, *pañcakośas*, sentient and insentient things are nothing but waves appearing in the ocean. Just as wave has no independent existence, this objective world has no independent existence; it is just borrowed existence from *ātman*. *ātman* coupled with *अज्ञान* is objective world. Emphatic pointer (*lakṣyārtha*) is - *Jīvātma* is *Paramātma* i.e., *ब्रह्मात्म ऐक्य बोधकम्* imparted by *Veda Mahāvākyas* (Table 1). I am 'Existence Consciousness Bliss - *Paramātma*'. *Paramātma* coupled with ignorance (*अज्ञान*) is *Jīvātma*. Once that *अज्ञान* is annihilated, *Jīvātma* realizes identity or oneness with *Paramātma*.

कोहम्? अहं ब्रह्मास्मि॥

What one gains from this knowledge? नद्यो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा गत  
सन्देहः भवति॥ A musician finds music in every sound in the universe; a poet finds beauty in everything in the universe; a

<sup>4</sup> ether, wind, fire, water and earth

*vedāntin* perceives only God in the universe (भिक्षु पाद प्रसारण न्याय). There cannot be a more insightful divine perception than this.

### References

1. Goyandaka, Jaya Dayāla. *Śrimadbhagavadgītā*. Fourth Edition. Gorakhpur: Govind Bhavan Kāryālaya, Gītā Press, Gorakhpur, 1999, 52-53.
2. Lokeswarānanda, Swāmi. *Kena Upaniṣad*. First Edition. Kolkata: Swāmi Prabhānanda, Secretary, The Rāmakṛṣṇa Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata-700029, 1992, 4.
3. Narasimha, Shriman Bhāragava. *Upanishad Sarvasya*. [ed.] First. Bangalore : Tirupati Tirumala Pratiṣṭhānam (R), Hanumantanagar, Bangalore - 560050, 2013
4. Nikhilānanda, Swāmi. *Māndūkya Upaniṣad with Gauḍapāda Kārikā and Śaṅkara's Commentary*. Seventh Edition. Calcutta. Advaita Āśrama, Māyāvati, Champavat, Himālayās, 2000, 7-17.
5. Tejomayānanda, Swāmi. *Dṛg Dṛśya Viveka*. Third Edition. Mumbai: Chinmaya Prakāśana, 1994, 72.