

#### 4. The Nature and Form of *Māyā*, *Jīva* and *Īśvara*

The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta upholds the reality of five eternal ontological entities, *jīva*, *īśvara*, *māyā*, Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. Having expounded on the entities of Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman, the *Swaminarayan-Siddhānta-Sudhā* discusses the nature and form of *jīva*, *īśvara* and *māyā*. Each of these three entities forms a separate chapter in the *Sudhā* as “Māyādhārā,” “Jīvadhārā,” and “Īśvaradhārā,” respectively. The nature and form of these entities, along with their relationship with Akṣara-Parabrahman, is essential to gain a holistic understanding of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta.

This chapter of the thesis begins by elucidating the nature of *māyā* as a distinct ontological entity. It then discusses the manifestation of *māyā* as the cosmic creation and the various elements that arise to form the phenomenal world. The chapter also focuses on the concept of time and throws light on *Sudhā*’s unique understanding. The section on *māyā* ends with the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta’s response to other theories of creation prevalent across the schools of Indian philosophy.

The chapter also examines the nature of *jīva*, which remains influenced by *māyā*. The section on *jīva* begins by elucidating the nature of *jīva* and its essential qualities of knowledge and bliss (*sat-cit-ānanda*). The section then sheds light on the discussion of the measure of *jīva* and arguments offered to validate its atomic form. It examines the various arguments offered to dismiss the non-existence of *jīva* and its equivalence to the body or the senses. This is followed by the elucidation of the nature of the three bodies and states that are ever associated with *jīva*. This leads to the discussion of the *jīva*’s agency that enables it to perform various actions through these bodies and states. The section then focuses on the multiplicity of *jīvas* and difficulties in the Advaitin concept of a singular *jīva*. The section ends with a discussion on the relationship between the *jīva* and Parabrahman and *jīva* and Akṣarabrahman. It draws attention to *Sudhā*’s understanding of the *Upaniṣadic* aphorisms on the oneness between *jīva* and Parabrahman.

The last section of the chapter elucidates the nature of *īśvara*, its similarity and ontological distinction with *jīva*. It ends with the discussion on the relation between *īśvara* and Parabrahman, the ontological distinction between the two and the *īśvara*’s eternal subordination to Parabrahman. It also examines the concepts of *avatāra* and *avatārī* in the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta.

Through the discussion of the nature and form of these ontological entities, the chapter focuses on the *Upaniṣadic* exegesis offered in the *Sudhā* and thereby understands the position of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta in various prevalent philosophical debates.

## 4.1. *Māyā*

### 4.1.1. Nature of *Māyā*

The term ‘*māyā*’ has its roots in the *Vedas*, where it has several meanings but is primarily used to denote the power of the deities and, at times, deception or that which is not.<sup>497</sup> The term soon came to be systematised as a technical philosophical term by the schools of Vedānta. The most popular amongst these is the Advaitin concept of *māyā* that is used to explain the relationship between the unchanging reality Brahman and the multiplicity of name and form. This multiplicity as the material world is essentially *māyā* or an illusory manifestation. Thus, the Advaitin dictum states that the world is a mere appearance; only Brahman is the true reality (*brahma satya jagat mithyā*). Paul Deussen explains this understanding:

[t]he Upaniṣads teach that this universe is not the *ātman*, the proper “self” of things, but a mere *māyā*, a deception, an illusion and that the empirical knowledge of it yields no *vidyā*, no true knowledge, but remains entangled in *avidyā* in ignorance.<sup>498</sup>

*Māyā* is often understood as synonymous with nescience or *avidyā*. Due to ignorance, name and form are superimposed on the otherwise attributeless Brahman. Thus, *māyā* is described as deceptive that obscures the self from the true reality. The nature of this *māyā* is deemed as indescribable, for it is neither real nor unreal (*sad-asad-vilakṣaṇa*). It is real as it is perceived, but it is also unreal as it is sublated with the knowledge of Brahman. This mysterious nature of *māyā* leads Shankar to conclude, “*Māyā* is the most strange. Her nature is inexplicable.”<sup>499</sup>

Unlike the Advaita Vedānta, the other schools of Vedānta accept the reality of the world. The world is not a mere appearance but a creation of the Supreme where he immanently resides.

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<sup>497</sup> (P. D. Shastri 10)

<sup>498</sup> (Deussen 227–28)

<sup>499</sup> (Prabhavananda and Isherwood 59)

The Ramanuja tradition strongly opposes the *māyāvāda* of the Advaitins. It denies the existence of any such indefinable nescience, which is both real and unreal, in the scriptures and claims *māyā* as primarily denoting *prakṛti*, the creation of Lord:

For this text [the *Śvetāśvetara Upaniṣad*] declares that Prakṛti—there called Māyā—produces manifold wonderful creations, and the highest Person is there called ‘māyin’ because he possesses that power of māyā; not on account of any ignorance or nescience on his part.<sup>500</sup>

Thus, *māyā* as *prakṛti* is the material cause of the universe and the source of the various wonderful creations.

The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta uses the term ‘māyā’ to denote one of the five ontological entities. It is not merely a concept but a distinct ontological entity that is real and eternal. The *Sudhā* also cites the *Śvetāśvetara Upaniṣad*, “māyām tu prakṛtiṁ vidyamānmāyinaṁ ca maheśvaram.”<sup>501</sup> *Māyā* is *prakṛti*, possessing the three qualities or *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Sadhu Bhadresdhas defines *prakṛti* as not just the world but the world created with the will of Parabrahman (*prakriyate parabrahmaṇā*). According to his will, this world changes from its latent to its manifest form.<sup>502</sup> Thus, *māyā* is the material cause of the universe and is ever subordinate to the will of Parabrahman.

*Māyā* is essentially non-sentient (*jaḍa*), but it is also referred to as ‘jaḍacidātmikā,’ having the sentient as its *ātman*. This denotation is explained in two ways: the sentient Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman regulate the unfolding of *māyā*, and secondly, the sentient *jīva* and *īśvara* remain dormant in it after dissolution.<sup>503</sup> Thus, though *māyā* encompasses various sentient *jīva* and *īśvara*, it is essentially non-sentient and can only transform into the manifold universe by Parabrahman. Moreover, *Sudhā* notes that Parabrahman is absolutely independent and can engage in creation without *māyā*. However, Parabrahman by his own will uses *māyā* as the material for creation and thus is referred to as ‘paramātmāśakti,’ the power of Paramātmā.<sup>504</sup>

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<sup>500</sup> (Thibaut 126)

<sup>501</sup> “Know māyā as prakṛti and the supreme as master of māyā.” (Sv. Up. 4.10)

<sup>502</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 196)

<sup>503</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 197)

<sup>504</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 196–97)

*Māyā* is also described as ‘vismayakāriṇī’ for it is experienced as having various name and form which evokes wonder.<sup>505</sup> *Māyā*, as possessing the three *guṇas*, constantly changes with varying proportions to form different objects. For this reason, the eternality of *māyā* is termed as ‘pariṇāmi,’<sup>506</sup> that is, eternally transforming. The three *guṇas* are ever mutually intertwined,<sup>507</sup> though any one of the three may have greater dominance at a given time. The predominant *guṇa* governs one’s actions and thoughts at that particular time. The predominance of *sattva guṇa*, unlike the *rajas* and *tamas guṇas*, motivates one to engage in noble and virtuous actions. However, even such actions alone performed under the influence of *sattva guṇa*, a quality of *māyā*, do not release one from transmigration. The *Sudhā* compares the actions of *sattva guṇas* with a chain made of gold (*suvarṇaśṛṅkhalā*), implying its force to bind and cause attachment.<sup>508</sup>

Sadhu Bhadreshdas endorses *māyā* as the source of nescience or *avidyā*. He writes:

*Anādyajñānarupeyaṁ vikṣepamohakāriṇī |*  
*Pramādo laukike rāgaḥ prākṛtā dhīrharau gurau||*<sup>509</sup>

Though *māyā* is described as *avidyā*, this nature of *avidyā* is not of creating an illusion of the existence of the world as claimed by the Advaitins. Rather, *māyā* is *avidyā* because it hinders the knowledge of the forms of Parabrahman and the Akṣarabrahman Guru. It is due to *māyā* that one perceives Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman as ordinary beings. In fact, all those aspects that hinder true knowledge, such as laziness, attachment to worldly objects, sense of oneness with the body, are deemed as *māyā*. All such worldly desires and attachments are expressed through the term ‘vāsanā.’ ‘Vāsanā’ is derived from the verb ‘vāsayati’ meaning *that which clothes or covers*. Accordingly, *māyā* as *vāsanā* covers the *ātman* and obstructs its realisation of Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman.

Thus, the term ‘*māyā*’ in the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta, unlike the Advaitin tradition, denotes a distinct ontological entity that is eternal, real, and essentially non-sentient. It

<sup>505</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 197)

<sup>506</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 198)

<sup>507</sup> Here again, Sadhu Bhadreshdas while describing the eternal inter-connection of the *guṇas*, denies the existence of *śuddha sattva* that is completely independent of *rajas* and *tamas guṇas*.

<sup>508</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 200) The *Sudhā*, thus, states that association with the Akṣarabrahman Guru, who is eternally beyond the three *guṇas*, leads one to transcend all the three *guṇas* and attain the supreme bliss of Parabrahman. This aspect is discussed in the next chapter of the thesis.

<sup>509</sup> “[*Māyā* is] eternal and characterised as ignorance. It hinders and deludes by instigating carelessness, attachment in worldly objects and showcasing worldliness in Hari and Guru.” (*Kārikā* 281)

possesses the three *guṇas* that transform into the universe by the will of Parabrahman and thus is known as the power of Parabrahman. It is also the cause of the ignorance that covers the *ātman* and hinders the knowledge of the forms of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman.

#### 4.1.2. Process of Creation

*Māyā*, when unfolded from its latent to manifest state, progressively transforms into various elements. This section traces this transformation of *māyā* as understood in the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta. It elucidates the nature of each element and discusses concepts such as *satkāryavāda* and *pañcīkaraṇa*.

The *Sudhā* offers a systematic and elaborate enumeration of the successive stages involved in the process of creation. This systematised order and an analysis of each element of creation are enumerated, as explained in the *sampradāyic* literature.

*lakṣaṇam mahadādestu jñānyād harivākyataḥ |*  
*prṭhak prṭhaktayā proktaṁ yathārtham vacanāmṛte||*<sup>510</sup>

The *sampradāyic* text *Vacanāmṛta*<sup>511</sup> is taken as a primary source of the process of cosmic creation. Sadhu Bhadreshdas provides *Upaniṣadic* and other such references while discussing the nature of each element of this process.

The *Sudhā* begins by outlining the entire process, which is rooted in Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman and progressively results in the creation of all mobile and immobile life forms as we perceive.

Parabrahman, being the cause of all causes, looks with the purpose of creation at Akṣarabrahman. Akṣarabrahman then inspires one of the countless *akṣara-muktas* that are present in the divine abode, who is then known as *mūla-puruṣa*. This *mūla-puruṣa* stirs the *mūla-prakṛti* (*māyā*) from its dormant state, and then together produce countless pairs called *pradhāna-puruṣa*. Each pair of *pradhāna-puruṣa* produces one *brahmāṇḍa*. Now, from the pair of *pradhāna-puruṣa* proceeds the *mahatattva*; from the *mahatattva* proceeds the three types of *ahankāras*, that is, *sāttvic ahankāra*, *rājasic ahankāra* and *tāmasic ahankāra*. From

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<sup>510</sup> “Know the nature of mahat and other elements through the words of Hari. They are explained separately and truly in the *Vacanāmṛta*.” (*Kārikā* 293)

<sup>511</sup> (Vac. Gadhada I.12, 13 and 41)

the various products of *ahankāra* proceeds *vairāja-puruṣa*, from whom Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa are produced. From Brahmā again Marici and other Prajāpatis are produced, from them Kaśyapa and other Prajāpatis are produced and from them Indra, and other devas, the demons and all mobile and immobile life forms are produced.<sup>512</sup> At each stage, Parabrahman manifests and empowers each new element of this cosmic creation. This comic process is illustrated in the table below.

The 24 elements that the Sāṅkhya School recognises are part of *māyā* and its transformation into various elements. The fundamental difference between the creation process of Sāṅkhya and the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta is that in the latter, these elements are rooted and governed by the will of Parabrahman. There is no separate cosmic *puruṣa* that remains inactive as a mere witness.

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<sup>512</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 199)

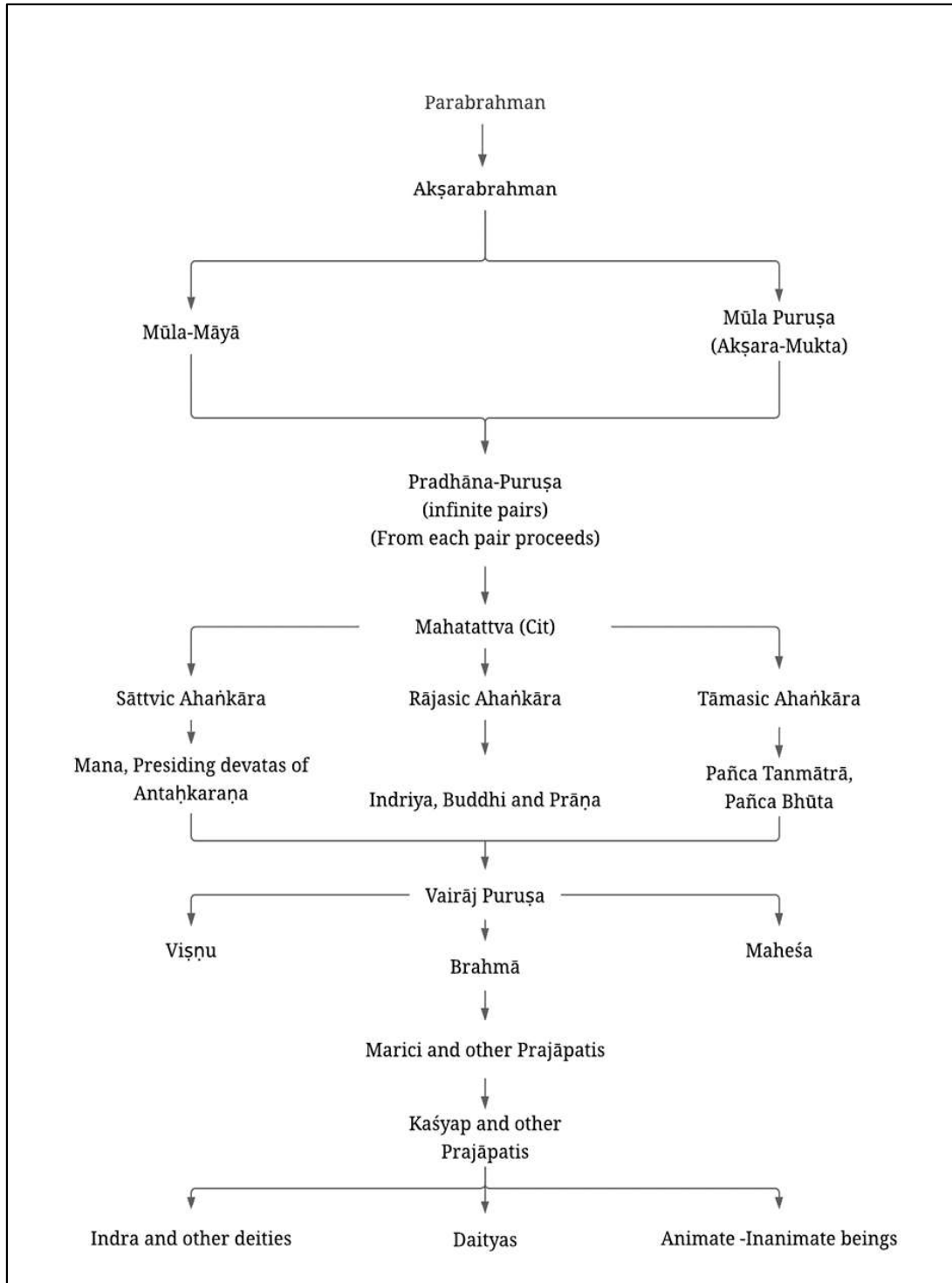


Figure 4-1 Process of Cosmic Creation

The *Sudhā* emphasises that this transformation of *māyā* is based on the concept of causality.<sup>513</sup> Like Sāṅkhya, the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta also accepts *satkāryavāda* as

<sup>513</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 202)

the theory of causation. Each element that arises is not a new creation but is already latently manifest in its preceding element. But, unlike Sāṅkhya's *prakṛti-pariṇāma-vāda*, the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta submits that the transformation of the non-sentient elements of *prakṛti* is only possible when Parabrahman enters or pervades each element. *Prakṛti* being essentially inert, cannot transform on its own. Parabrahman then, as discussed in the previous chapter, acts as the instrumental cause (*nimit kāraṇa*) that initiates and pervades creation without undergoing any modification.

The first element that proceeds from the *pradhāna-puruṣa* is *mahat*. Sāṅkhya equates *mahat* with *buddhi* or intellect:

From Prakṛti issues Mahat (or Buddhi); from this Mahat again issues Self-consciousness (Ahankāra) from which proceeds the set of sixteen;<sup>514</sup> from five<sup>515</sup> of these sixteen, proceed the five gross elements.<sup>516</sup>

Thus, Sadhu Bhadresdhas in arguing against *mahat* as *buddhi* responds to the Sāṅkhya school. In his argument, Sadhu Bhadresdhas disapproves of those who call *mahat* as *buddhi* and highlights the distinction between these two elements by stating *buddhi* as a product of *ahankāra*, which in turn proceeds from the element *mahat*. *Mahat*, as described in the *Sudhā*, is predominated by the *sattva guṇa*, while the *rajas* and *tamas guṇas* latently prevail. It is non-sentient in nature, but it appears sentient as it brings forth or issues an effect (*kārya*) in the form of *ahankāra*. For this reason, *mahat* is also known as *cit*. *Mahat*, thus, is the material cause of *ahankāra* wherein all the three *guṇas* become manifest.<sup>517</sup>

Within *ahankāra*, the *sattva guṇa* proceeds to form the *mana* (mind). Though Sāṅkhya accepts *mana* as the product of *sattva guṇa*, they explain it as a part of the *indriyas* (senses).<sup>518</sup> Sadhu Bhadresdhas specifies that the *mana* is the one that controls the *indriyas*. This is explained through the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, which illustrates, “*manaḥ pragrahameva ca indriyāṇi hayānāhuḥ*.”<sup>519</sup> Here, in the analogy of the body as a chariot, the *mana* or the mind

<sup>514</sup> These sixteen are listed to include the eleven sense-organs, that is, the Eye, Ear, Nose, Tongue, Skin, speech, hand, feet, excretory and reproductive organs, and the mind; along with the five primarily elements of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell.

<sup>515</sup> The five primary elements of sound, touch, colour, taste, and smell.

<sup>516</sup> (*Tattva Kaumudī*, *Kārikā* XXII)

<sup>517</sup> (Bhadresdhas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 203)

<sup>518</sup> (*Tattva Kaumudī*, *Kārikā* XXVII)

<sup>519</sup> “The mind is verily the reins, and the senses are the horses.” (Ka. Up. 3.3,4)



is compared to the reins of the chariot, and the *indriyas* or the senses are the horses that it controls. Only when the *mana* aligns with the *indriyas* can they enjoy the various sense objects.

While discussing the nature of the *indriyas*, Sadhu Bhadreshdas notes that the *mana*, though different from the ten external *indriyas*, is often referred to as the internal *indriya*.<sup>520</sup> For this reason, in some places, the *mana* is mentioned along with other external *indriyas*. For instance, the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* mentions *mana* along with other *indriyas* during the explication of the nature of *prāṇa*.<sup>521</sup> In such cases, Sadhu Bhadreshdas insists that the context must be taken into consideration during interpretation. When there is a mention of eleven *indriyas*, one should infer the inclusion of the internal *indriya*, *mana*.

The distinguishing attribute of *mana* is generating desires and influencing the external *indriyas* towards their respective sense objects. The *indriyas* are thereby governed by the inclination of the *mana*. The *mana* is restless by nature as it constantly desires to experience different sense objects. The *mana* not only directs the *indriyas* towards the objects before one's eyes but also desires to experience objects that are not present before one's eyes. For instance, upon perceiving one object, the *mana* desires to see, smell or taste other objects associated with the object perceived. It may also desire to see, smell or taste objects without the perception of any object. The *mana*, thus, is never stable but constantly inspires new thoughts and desires. It is accordingly described as “of great speed” (*vegātīśayatva*)<sup>522</sup> as it rapidly moves from one thought to another and within moments pictures a distant unperceived object before the eyes.

The *mana* is considered the ground of pain and sorrow. This aspect is developed through the illustration of a child—whether the child is prevented from touching fire, snake or sword, the child will experience pain. Similarly, whether the desires of the mind are fulfilled, it will disrupt one's peace of mind and obstruct the path of liberation.<sup>523</sup> If the desires of the mind have not been fulfilled, one invariably experiences pain. But even when they are fulfilled, it takes one away from liberation and eventually causes pain. For this reason, the mind is called ‘powerful,’ for it can delude and misguide even the learned. Thus, the *Sudhā* addresses *mana*

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<sup>520</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 207)

<sup>521</sup> (Ai. Up. 1.3.2)

<sup>522</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 204)

<sup>523</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 204–05)

as “saṁsārakam”<sup>524</sup> or “worldly” for it draws one to worldly objects; disrupts one’s understanding of and conviction in the Supreme.

Unlike Sāṅkhya, the *Sudhā* explains *mana* not only as an element that enables an experience of an object but also as the cause of misunderstanding of the true form of Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman.

*Buddhi* proceeds from the *rajas guṇa* of *ahankāra*. Sāṅkhya defines it as the “determining principle” or “Will.”<sup>525</sup> The *Sudhā* defines it as the facilitator of knowledge (*sakalabodhakaraṇatvād buddhiḥ*).<sup>526</sup> It is also popularly known as ‘jñāna’ or knowledge. The Naiyāyikas also define *buddhi* in terms of knowledge and highlight that the *buddhi* of Sāṅkhya is altogether different from *jñāna*.<sup>527</sup> Moreover, the *Sudhā* makes a distinction between *sādhana buddhi* or the *buddhi* within the *antaḥkaraṇa* and *phala* or *jñāna buddhi*. A clear perception, assurance, belief, anticipation or understanding of any aspect is known as *jñāna buddhi*, while anything that facilitates such clarity is known as *antaḥkaraṇa buddhi*. This way, the medium and its resultant knowledge are both attributed to *buddhi*. Definite and indefinite knowledge, doubt, memory are all aspects of *buddhi*.

The ten external *indriyas* are divided into faculties of action (*karma indriya*) and faculties of perception (*jñāna indriya*). The five intellect-based sense organs are the ear, skin, eyes, tongue, and nose. The five action-based sense organs are arms, legs, speech, reproductive and excretory organs. These ten external sense organs also proceed from the *rajas guṇa* of *ahankāra* and act as aids (*sādhana*) for experiencing their respective sense-objects.

Sadhu Bhadreshdas argues against the permanency of these sense organs.<sup>528</sup> He notes that the *indriyas* cannot be permanent as they are products of creation. This is explained through the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, “etasmājjāyate prāṇo manaḥ sarvendriyāṇi ca kham vāyurjyotirāpaḥ.”<sup>529</sup> Here, the word ‘jāyate’ or ‘is born’ is applied to each element—vital air (*prāṇa*), mind (*mana*), senses (*indriyas*), ether (*kham*), air (*vāyu*) and fire (*jyoti*). Hence, like other elements, the senses also arise with the creation and dissolve with dissolution.

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<sup>524</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 205)

<sup>525</sup> (*Tattva Kaumudī*, *Kārikā* XXIII)

<sup>526</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 205)

<sup>527</sup> (Vidyabhushan 6)

<sup>528</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 207)

<sup>529</sup> “From Paramātmā is born the vital breath, mind, senses, ether, wind, water.” (Mu. Up. 2.1.3)

Further, the *Sudhā* also denies the claim of the Naiyāyikas that the *indriyas* are born from the five gross elements.<sup>530</sup> This assertion is based on their allegiance to the atomic theory as opposed to the *pañcīkaraṇa* theory. The atomic position contends that all gross objects are a compound of atoms, which are eternal and indivisible. An atom combines with another to form a dyad, with the increase in dyads into triads and so forth, increasing the dimension of the object.<sup>531</sup> This theory has been rejected by certain schools of Indian Philosophy, such as Sāṅkhya and Vedānta. Shankar, for instance, questions the logical coherency of the theory by challenging the combination of partless atoms and noting that those atoms can neither be active nor inactive. If they are actively combining, dissolution would not be possible, whilst their inactivity would withhold creation.<sup>532</sup> Shankar ultimately rejects the theory as baseless, lacking any *Vedic* support. Sadhu Bhadresdhas also raises such logical inconsistencies of the atomic theory later in the *Sudhā*. Here, he simply rejects the theory as “avedic.”<sup>533</sup>

In this way, the *Sudhā* submits that all sense-organs are impermanent as they arise from the *rajas ahaṅkāra*. Ramanuja, as also discussed in the earlier chapters, accepts the existence of not just *māyika indriyas* (*aśuddha sattva*) but also of *amāyika indriyas* (*śuddha sattva*). Sadhu Bhadresdhas denies this distinction, for he rejects the concept of *śuddha sattva* as implausible. He, as discussed in the chapter on Akṣarabrahman, argues that all the three *guṇas* are essentially part of *māyā* and only on transcending them can one become *amāyika*.<sup>534</sup> Thus, there is no substance as “*amāyika śuddha sattva*” as *amāyika* necessarily implies the absence of all *guṇas*.

*Rajas ahaṅkāra* is also the source of the vital airs (*prāṇa*). The vital airs are distinguished from the gross element “*vāyu*” and are referred to as “*vāyu viśeṣa*” (special kind of *vāyu*). They are also “*avasthā viśeṣa*,” that is, specific to certain areas of the body. Moreover, like the *indriyas*, they proceed from *rajas ahaṅkāra* and hence are not eternal. The *Sudhā* validates this through the same *Upaniṣadic* aphorism illustrated for the creation of the *indriyas*, “*etasmājjāyate prāṇa*.”<sup>535</sup> The *Sudhā* specifies that in those *Vedic* or *Upaniṣadic* statements affirming the eternality of “*prāṇa*,” the term ‘*prāṇa*’ denotes the eternally existent Parabrahman who is the source of all life.

<sup>530</sup> (Vidyabhushan 5)

<sup>531</sup> (Jha, *Padārthadharmaśāstra of Praśastapāda with the Nyāyakundali of Śrīdhara* 75)

<sup>532</sup> (Keith 217)

<sup>533</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 208)

<sup>534</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 65,208)

<sup>535</sup> “From Paramātmā is born the vital breath.” (Mu. Up. 2.1.3)

The *Upaniṣads* identify five vital airs on the basis of varying functionality, “prāṇo'pāno vyāna udānaḥ samano'na ityetatsarvaṁ prāṇa eva.”<sup>536</sup> The air regulating the region of the mouth and neck is known as “prāṇa.” The air regulating the disposal of waste from the body through the excretory organs is known as “apāna.” The air between *prāṇa* and *apāna*, regulating digestion is known as “samāna.” The air that regulates both *prāṇa* and *apāna*, and vitalises the whole body is known as “vyāna.” The air that moves upward in the body is known as “udāna.” These five are collectively called “prāṇa.” Five other vital airs are also recognised, namely, *nāga*, *kurma*, *kṛkara*, *devadatta* and *dhananjaya*. These are referred to as “upaprāṇa” or auxiliary airs and are often incorporated within the first five *prāṇa*.

Sadhu Bhadresdhas emphasises the distinction between the *prāṇa* and the *indriyas*. Though they both proceed from *rajas ahaṅkāra*, they perform distinct functions. The *indriyas* experience their respective sense-objects, while *prāṇa* is the support of *indriyas*. Moreover, in the state of dream and deep sleep, the *indriyas* become dormant while the *prāṇa* continues to actively function.<sup>537</sup> The *prāṇa* is recognised as the essence of the body. This is explained by referring to the allegory presented in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* – the presiding deities of their respective sense-organs recite a mantra in order to defeat the evil *asuras*. However, they are defeated only when *prāṇa*, the source and support of all *indriyas*, recites the *mantra*.<sup>538</sup> This way, *prāṇa* is identified as the substratum of all organs of the body.

The *tamas ahaṅkāra* is the source of five *tan mātrās* or subtle elements of speech (*śabda*), touch (*sparsa*), form (*rūpa*), taste (*rasa*) and smell (*gandha*). From each of these subtle elements arise the five *pañca bhūtas*, namely, ether (*ākāśa*), air (*vāyu*), fire (*teja*), water (*jala*) and earth (*prthvi*) respectively. Further, each of the *pañca bhūtas* has a quality known as the *pañca viśayas*, namely, speech (*śabda*), touch (*sparsa*), form (*rūpa*), taste (*rasa*) and smell (*gandha*) respectively. This process can be illustrated as follows:

<sup>536</sup> “Prāṇa, apāna, vyāna, udāna, samāna are all verily prāṇa.” (Br. Up. 1.5.3)

<sup>537</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 214)

<sup>538</sup> (Br. Up. 1.3.2-9)

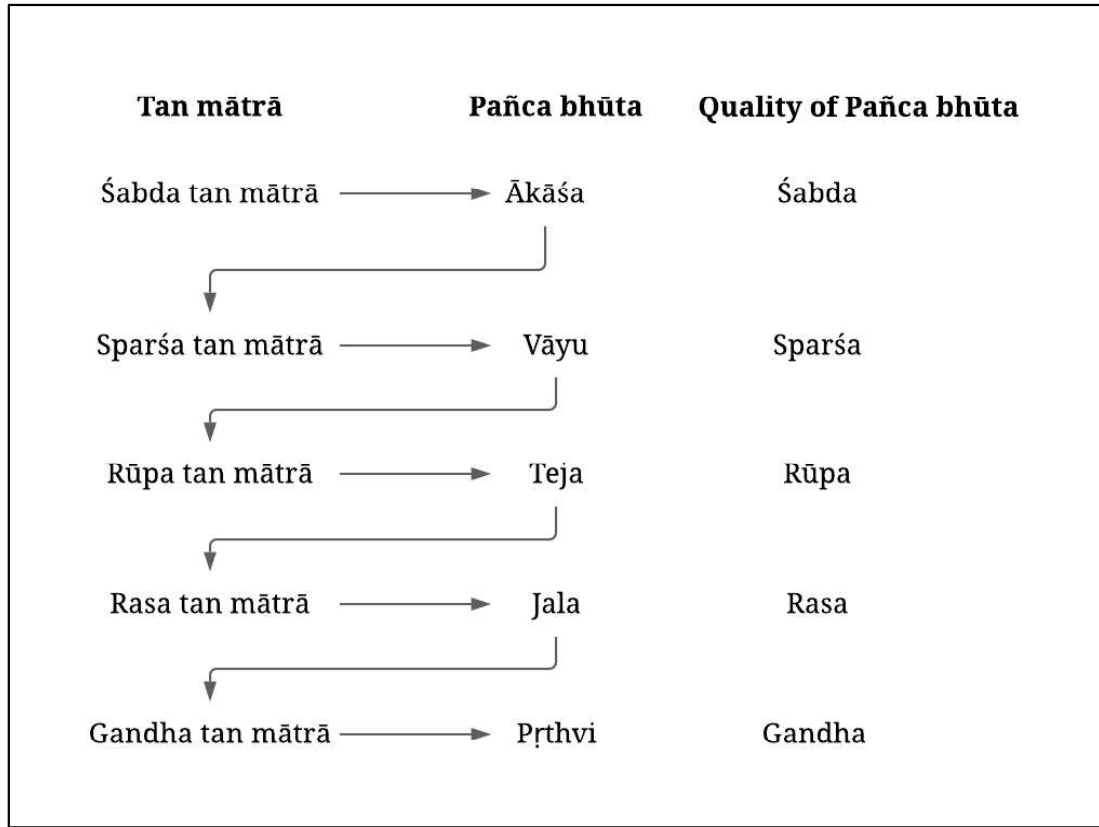


Figure 4-2 Creation of *Tan mātrās* and *Pañca bhūtas*

It is only through the five *pañca bhūtas* that one can experience the various sense-objects (*viśayas*). Sadhu Bhadresdhas explains that though these *pañca bhūtas* proceed from the *tamas ahankāra*, there also contain aspects of *sattva* and *rajas guṇas*.<sup>539</sup> For this reason, each element may at different times cause happiness, pain and even bewilderment. Further, the gross objects are said to come to existence through the quintuplicating (*pañcikaraṇa*) of these five *bhūtas*. Accordingly, every gross object is not only composed of its predominant *bhūta* but also has traces of the remaining four *bhūtas*. Each *bhūta* is divided into two parts. The first half is its own element, while the second half constitutes 1/8<sup>th</sup> part of the remaining four elements.

<sup>539</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 211)

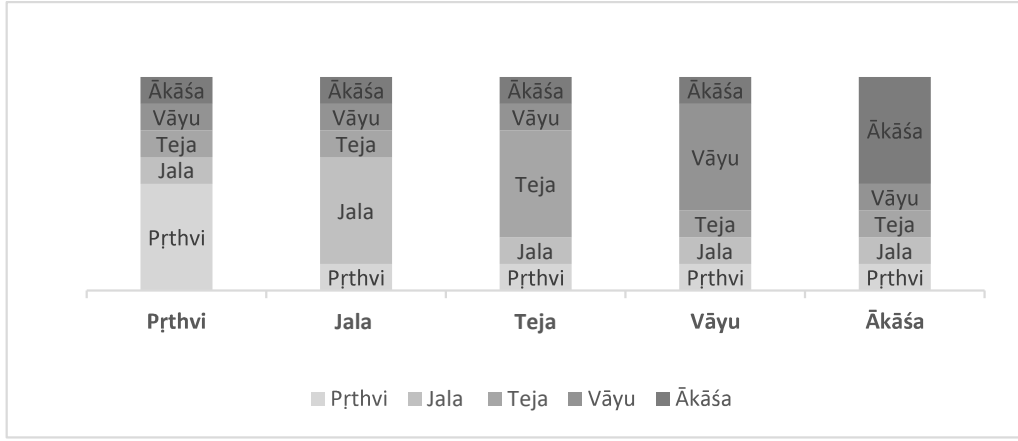


Figure 4-3 Process of *Pañcikaraṇa*

This process of quintuplication of the *pañca bhūtas* is recognised to be rooted in the *Upaniṣads*. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* asserted the triplication of the three elements, namely, *teja*, *jala* and *pṛthvi*, “tāsām trivṛtaṁ trivṛtamekaikāṁ karavāṇi.”<sup>540</sup> These three are then reconciled with the remaining two elements that are mentioned in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, “ākāśād vāyuh.”<sup>541</sup> Such a wholistic reading (*sarva śākhā nyāya*) of the authoritative texts leads the commentators of the Vedāntic tradition to admit not just triplication, but quintuplication. This is in response to the atomic theory advocated by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools, according to which gross objects of *pṛthvi* are made of atomic particles of primarily *pṛthvi*:

It is assumed that there are four classes of *paramāṇus*, answering to the four great classes of material objects, earth, water, light and air...though the qualities of earthly things, as colour, taste, smell, tangibility, vanish on the destruction of the thing itself, they are always found in their respective atoms.<sup>542</sup>

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools explain the relation of the material objects of earth to the atoms of earth through a necessary connection (*samavāya*) and their relation to the atoms of other elements through accidental conjunction (*samyoga*). Sadhu Bhadreshdas argues such

<sup>540</sup> “Divide these three three-fold.” (Ch. Up. 6.3.3)

<sup>541</sup> “From ether arises wind.” (Tai. Up. 2.1.1)

<sup>542</sup> (Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* 196)

relations to be without any logical basis.<sup>543</sup> Moreover, while describing the interpenetration among elements, the Naiyāyikas state:

[t]he earth really possesses four qualities, water three, fire two, air one and ether one.<sup>544</sup>

Accordingly, the earth possesses the qualities of colour, taste, smell, and tangibility; water possesses qualities of taste, colour and tangibility; fire possesses qualities of colour and tangibility; air possesses the quality of tangibility and ether that of sound. On the other hand, the process of *pañcīkaraṇa*, as described above, accepts the existence of all qualities in each element. As a result, Sadhu Bhadresdhas, disagreeing with Naiyāyikas, warns against admitting the absence of the quality of smell in water.<sup>545</sup> In each of the five elements, the quality of the predominant element is manifest (*udbhūta*), while the qualities of all the remaining four elements may manifest at times, but at other times remains latent (*anudbhūta*). Thus, the latency of the qualities is not to be misconstrued as their absence.

The element of *ākāśa*, however, is claimed by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools, to be eternal (*nitya*) and all-pervasive (*vyāpaka*).<sup>546</sup> This again goes against the Vedāntic perspective of the *pañca bhūtas*, according to which each of these five elements has been created and hence are not eternal. Sadhu Bhadresdhas, referring to the entire process of creation, accentuates the formation of *mahatattva*, *ahankāra*, *mana*, *buddhi*, *tan mātrās*, *pañca bhūta* etc. as a process occurring for each universe. Subsequently, with the dissolution of that particular universe, its respective elements also dissolve regressively.

Besides, the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* is stated as endorsing the same, “*tasmādvā etasmādātmana ākāśah sambhūtaḥ*.”<sup>547</sup> *Ākāśa*, here, is explained as arising from both, Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. The pronoun ‘*tasmāt*’ is identified as “from Parabrahman” and ‘*etasmāt*’ as “from Akṣarabrahman.”<sup>548</sup> The *ākāśa*, thus, arises from Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman who pervade the creation and dwell in every animate and inanimate being. A similar assertion is found in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, “*etasmājjāyate prāṇo manaḥ sarvendriyāṇi ca kham*

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<sup>543</sup> *Sudhā*’s arguments disapproving the Naiyāyikas are explained in the section titled “Refuting the Theories of Creation.”

<sup>544</sup> (Vidyabhushan 80)

<sup>545</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 217)

<sup>546</sup> (Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* 193)

<sup>547</sup> “From that and this verily originates ether.” (Tai. Up. 2.1.1)

<sup>548</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Īśadyaṣṭopaniṣatsvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 263–64)

vāyurjyotirāpaḥ.”<sup>549</sup> “Kham,” meaning *ākāśa*, like other elements, is created. Furthermore, in line with the Viśiṣṭādvaita tradition, the *Sudhā* argues against understanding *ākāśa* as “amṛta” (eternal) on the basis of the statement, “vāyuścā’ntarikṣam caitadamṛtam.”<sup>550</sup>

The Śruti statement ‘*Vāyuścā’ntarikṣam caitadamṛtam*’ indicating eternity of Vāyu and Ākāśa is to be understood in the manner in which the Celestials (Devas) are stated to be immortal and eternal. The eternity is relative and not absolute.<sup>551</sup>

Sadhu Bhadreshdas, through a similar argument, explains the term ‘amarāḥ’ (eternal) to denote the deities as they live longer than ordinary beings. Similarly, *vāyu* and *ākāśa* prevail longer than the other three elements, *jala*, *teja* and *pṛthvi*. Hence, they are claimed to be eternal in relation to the latter three.<sup>552</sup> But one may further argue with the *Upaniṣadic* statements that affirm *ākāśa* as the ultimate source and substratum, “asya lokasya kā gatirityākāśa iti hovāca sarvāṇi ha vā imāni bhūtānyākāśādeva samutpadyanta ākāśam pratyastaṁ yantyākāśo hyevaibhyo jyāyānakāśaḥ parāyaṇam.”<sup>553</sup> The same *Upaniṣad* also claims *ākāśa* as being the basis of all name and form, “ākāśo vai nāma nāmarūpayornirvahitā te yadantarā tadbrahma tadamṛtaṁ sa ātmā.”<sup>554</sup>

The *Sudhā* responds by specifying the context of these statements according to which the term ‘ākāśa’ in the first statement denotes Parabrahman and in the second statement denotes Akṣarabrahman.<sup>555</sup> The first statement, Ch. Up. 1.9.1, states “ākāśa” as the source from which all animate and inanimate beings are born. This ‘ākāśa’ cannot refer to the *pañca bhūta ākāśa*, which is a created element and therefore cannot be the source and substratum of all creation. This ‘ākāśa’ is thereby Parabrahman, who is the eternal source of creation. In his commentary, Sadhu Bhadreshdas splits the term ‘ākāśa’ as the verb ‘kāśate’ meaning *one who is ever luminous* to which the prefix ‘ā’ is added that suggests *from all sides* (*āsamantāt*).<sup>556</sup> The second statement, Ch. Up. 8.14.1, describes ‘ākāśa’ as the basis of all

<sup>549</sup> “From Paramātmā is born the vital breath, mind, senses, ether, wind, water.” (Mu. Up. 2.1.3)

<sup>550</sup> “The wind and ether are immortal.” (Br. Up. 2.3.3)

<sup>551</sup> (Acharya Narasimha 312)

<sup>552</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 215)

<sup>553</sup> “What is the cause of this world? The ākāśa. All these beings are born from ākāśa and dissolve in ākāśa. Ākāśa is the greatest. Ākāśa is the support of all.” (Ch. Up. 1.9.1)

<sup>554</sup> “Ākāśa is the cause of all name and form. It lies within them. It is brahman, it is immortal, he is ātmā.” (Ch. Up. 8.14.1)

<sup>555</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 216)

<sup>556</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Chāndogyaopaniṣatsvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 49)



name and form. This ‘ākāśa’ cannot be the *pañca bhūta ākāśa* for the statement then denotes it as “brahman” and “ātmā.” Sadhu Bhadreshdas notes that the eighth chapter begins with the elucidation of the *Cidākāśa* form of Akṣarabrahman. In this context, the term ‘ākāśa’ here denotes Akṣarabrahman.

Another quality of *ākāśa* admitted by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools is of its all-pervasiveness. Against this, the *Sudhā* argues that since the *pañca bhūta ākāśa* prevails only within the respective universe, it is circumscribed within the limits of that universe.<sup>557</sup> The *ākāśa* pervades only the expanse of its universe. In this way, the *Sudhā* establishes *ākāśa* as analogous to the other four elements in being transient and limited in nature.

Thus, the process of creation, as explained in the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta, begins with the Parabrahman who, by his will, looks at Akṣarabrahman who then inspires the *mūla-puruṣa* to associate with *mūla-prakṛti* to unfold the universe. Each universe unfolds with the transformation of subtle elements, which further transform into gross elements leading to the production of various gross objects through the process of *pañcikaraṇa*. Each of these subtle and gross elements is transient and sequentially dissolve again in *mūla-prakṛti* during the process of dissolution.

#### 4.1.3. Concept of Time

Time has no substantial existence in the creative process evolving from the metaphysical entity *māyā*. It is not a separate substance or entity but exists only in relation to particular objects. The *Sudhā* asserts:

*Sarvopyaupādhikāḥ kālāḥ samayā'rtho dīnādikāḥ |*  
*Vastukriyādyapekṣaḥ sa janecchāparikalpitaḥ ||*<sup>558</sup>

‘Kāla,’ as understood in terms of span or duration, is explained as a concept created or imagined (*parikalpita*) by the inhabitants of the material world. It is merely an instrument of measurement (*upādhi*) used to measure an action or object. Time is, thus, neither real nor eternal.

<sup>557</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 216)

<sup>558</sup> “Kāla in terms samaya, denoted by the words such as ‘day,’ is a measure. It is based on the object or activity and created by the will of people.” (*Kārikā* 294)

This understanding of time remarkably differs from several other schools of Indian Philosophy. The Viśiṣṭādvaita school, for instance, claims time as an independent and real substance that is one and infinite. In fact, it is given the same metaphysical status as *jīva* and *prakṛti*. Like the latter two entities, time is also related to the Supreme Being like the body is to the *ātman*.<sup>559</sup> The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools also admit time as a real and eternal substance.<sup>560</sup> However, while the Viśiṣṭādvaitin admits time as a physical attribute of an object, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika accepts time as a quality that can only be inferred. This inference is made on the basis of the revolutions of the Sun:

An object is called temporally prior (*para*), if it has a large number of contacts with the revolutions of the Sun in its life, while that which has smaller number of contacts is called temporarily posterior (*apara*).<sup>561</sup>

Sadhu Bhadreshdas offers the same illustration of the revolution of the Sun but does so only to strengthen his argument of time being dependent or relative to objects, such as the Sun.

He further argues that the term ‘*nitya*’ (eternal) cannot be used as an adjective for time.<sup>562</sup> Anything that is *nitya* implies it to be beyond the framework of time. As per the metaphysics of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta, only the five eternal entities of Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman, *jīva*, *īśvara* and *māyā* can be described as ‘*nitya*’ or beyond time. This is affirmed through the *Māndukya Upaniṣad*, “*trikālātītaṁ tadapyomkāra eva*.”<sup>563</sup> Here, the term “*trikālātītaṁ*” is explained to show the difference between the material objects that continue to transform and gradually wither with the past, present and future, and the eternal entities of *jīva*, *īśvara*, Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman that are beyond this tripartite division of time.<sup>564</sup>

Further, time seems eternal as the flow of the phenomenal world is eternal. *Māyā*, by the will of Parabrahman, transforms, and subsequently, the world is incessantly created and dissolved. Such an eternal flow of the cosmic creation offers an illusion of the eternality of time. Moreover, the framework of time is specific to its respective phenomenal world:

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<sup>559</sup> (S. Chari 337)

<sup>560</sup> (H. S. Prasad 235)

<sup>561</sup> (H. S. Prasad 237)

<sup>562</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 219)

<sup>563</sup> “That Om is verily above the tripartite time.” (Ma. Up. 1.1)

<sup>564</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Īśadyaṣṭopaniṣatsvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 312)

*Pralayakāla ityādi sṛṣṭimapekṣya prāgbhavām |*  
*Agra ityādiśabdo'pi sānpratasṛṣṭyapekṣitaḥ ||*<sup>565</sup>

Thereby, *Upaniṣadic* statements such as “sadeva somyedamagra āsit”<sup>566</sup> that allude to “the beginning” (*agra*) imply the beginning of this particular cosmic creation. With this creation gradually came the creation of time, direction etc. Accordingly, time is not one and eternal but is a fabrication by the inhabitants of each phenomenal world.

Though time is not eternal, it does seem to be a *guṇa* or quality as one generally refers to auspicious time or inauspicious time. The *Sudhā* does not deny this but once again claims such characterisation of time as showcasing its relativity. Time be auspicious or inauspicious only with reference to some object or place, or event. Moreover, the same object or place may be auspicious for one while inauspicious for another. Thus, time is merely a concept fabricated in the phenomenal world for the smooth functioning of day-to-day events. It may not be wrong to term such an understanding of time as “vyavahārika satya.”

For practical purposes, time is systematically divided and broken down into several parts-ranging from one twinkling (*nimeṣa*) to one Eon (*kalpa*; also known as one day of Brahmā) to the end of hundred years of Brahma. These divisions are enumerated with great precision in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and are even used by other branches like astronomy, such as in *Surya Siddhānta*.<sup>567</sup>

These texts mention four types of dissolutions (*pralaya*), namely, *Nitya Pralaya*, *Naimitika Pralaya*, *Prākṛta Pralaya* and *Ātyāntika Pralaya*. *Nitya Pralaya* refers to the daily fatalities and deaths of people occurring due to natural and unnatural events. *Naimitika Pralaya* marks the end of one day of Brahmā, that is, 8 billion 64 crore mortal years. *Prākṛta Pralaya* marks the end of hundred years of Brahmā and thereby the end of that particular world. *Ātyāntika Pralaya* marks the end of all existent worlds.

Sadhu Bhadreshdas specifies that during *Ātyāntika Pralaya*, all existing worlds dissolve in the *mūla-prakṛti* which then dissolves into one portion of the *Cidākāśa* form of

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<sup>565</sup> “The words like ‘dissolution’ imply an earlier universe. Words like ‘beginning’ imply this universe.” (*Kārikā* 298)

<sup>566</sup> “In the beginning there was only sat.” (Ch. Up. 6.2.1)

<sup>567</sup> (Burgess 6–12)

Akṣarabrahman.<sup>568</sup> This is affirmed through the aphorism of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, “akṣarādvividhāḥ somya bhāvāḥ prajāyante tatra caivāpiyanti.”<sup>569</sup> The various animate and inanimate beings, by the will of Parabrahman, arise from and dissolve in the eternal all-pervading Akṣarabrahman. *Ātyāntika Pralaya*, thereby, is not a destruction of all individual *ātmā*. Instead, all *ātmā* become latent in *mūla-prakṛti*, which dissolves in Akṣarabrahman, and manifest only during another cycle of cosmic creation. Moreover, the *Sudhā* argues against the general understanding of *Ātyāntika Pralaya* as signifying the liberation of all individual *ātmā*. They remain latent in *mūla-prakṛti* with *sanskāras* of all their actions, which bear fruit once they become manifest. Additionally, the eternal process of creation and dissolution also showcases the eternal manifestation of countless *ātmā*, which would be rendered implausible upon liberation, a state from which there is no return.

The *Sudhā* introduces an intellectual or conceptual counterpart to the physical occurrence of the *Ātyāntika Pralaya*, which is termed as “jñāna pralaya.”<sup>570</sup> It is characterised as being constantly aware of the temporality of the universe. One remains cognizant of the universe arising and dissolving upon the will and regulation of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. Such a thought process enables one’s profound attachment to the Akṣarabrahman Guru and the Supreme Being, Parabrahman. Thus, *Jñāna Pralaya* can be considered tantamount to *jīvana-mukti*, a state wherein one remains unattached to the material world.

#### 4.1.4. Refuting Other Theories of Creation

Various schools of Indian philosophy offer their own theories of creation. This section elucidates each of these prevalent theories and discusses *Sudhā*’s response to their claims and arguments.

The Cārvāka school explains the existence of the material world through the theory of *svabhāva-vāda*, which suggests that the world and all the objects encompassing it are self-existence. They thereby deny the cause-effect relationship and the process of creation. As is stated:

The fire is hot, the water is cold, refreshing cool the breeze of morn,

<sup>568</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 224)

<sup>569</sup> “O Somya! From Akṣara originates the manifold creation. There it dissolves.” (Mu. Up. 2.1.1)

<sup>570</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 224)

By whom came this variety? from their own nature was it born.<sup>571</sup>

The Cārvāka school raises several arguments that attempt to disprove the existence of causation. The *Sudhā* presents this *prima facie* perspective in great detail.<sup>572</sup> The materialists deny the existence of a cause prior to any effect. They argue that the conditions (*upādhi*) that generally accompany the effect prior to an effect cannot be denoted as the cause as it would lead to the fallacy of reciprocal dependence (*anyonyāśraya*). If time is dependent on *upādhi*, then how can the *upādhi* be dependent on time? Moreover, if the conditions do not form the cause, then one would require another cause and then require the cause of that cause regressing *ad infinitum*.

The *Sudhā* responds by challenging their foundational principle of imperceptibility of cause and effect. Not perceiving the order of the cause and effect would inevitably mean not perceiving the various events occurring in this material world. This would disprove the world, which the materialists otherwise accept through the means of perception. In this way, denying the order of causation would render all that exists to be unfounded.

The Cārvākas further argue that the cause is destroyed with the rise of the effect and hence cannot be a cause. Upholding such a cause would lead to upholding all that has been destroyed ages ago as a cause. The *Sudhā* disagrees with the destruction of the cause but instead affirms that the rise of the effect merely changes the state (*avasthā*) of the cause. Negating such a change would render all those changes perceived in the world meaningless. In this way, Sadhu Bhadreshdas challenges various arguments raised against causation.

The *Sudhā* also firmly rejects *svabhāvavāda* as a valid explanation of all existence. If the inherent nature of an object, say clay, is to become a pot, then why did it become a pot at a particular time and not at any other time. Moreover, it questions the materialists about whether creation, sustenance or dissolution is the *svabhāva* of objects.<sup>573</sup> It cannot be all the three together as these processes have contradictory natures and would result in a chaotic world order. If it is neither, then the object ceases to possess a *svabhāva* and thereby contradicts the fundamental principle of the Cārvākas. Thus, *svabhāvavāda* is showcased as being replete with inconsistencies and thereby stands invalid.

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<sup>571</sup> (Madhavacharya 10)

<sup>572</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 228–30)

<sup>573</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 230)

The *Sudhā* further refutes *pradhāna* as the sole cause of creation. The Sāṅkhya school endorses the creation as a product of the transformation of the non-sentient *pradhāna* (*prakṛti*) composed of the triad, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, while the *puruṣa* exists merely as an inactive sentient witness. *Sudhā* argues that no object can be produced without a maker that has the desire and knowledge to produce it. Against this, Sāṅkhya puts forth examples of milk and water. Just as the milk transforms to curd and water comes out as sour and sweet juice in fruits, likewise *pradhāna* transforms on its own to form the universe. *Sudhā* notes that curd forms only when a person mixes culture with milk, and water changes to juice when mixed with elements of earth. Debunking various such examples offered by Sāṅkhya, Sadhu Bhadreshdas rejects the ability of *pradhāna* to self-transform and break the equilibrium of the three *guṇas* to form the phenomenal world. Such activity can only be attributed to a sentient entity.

The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta asserts that the *prakṛti* can unfold only by and with the will of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. The *Sudhā* reminds one of the various aphorisms that affirm Puruṣottama as the inner being and ruler of all that prevails, the earth, water, sky, moon etc.<sup>574</sup> The same *Upaniṣad* also affirms Akṣara as the cause and regulator of the universe.<sup>575</sup> Moreover, asserting the passive presence of the conscious *puruṣa* as the cause of the disturbance of the equilibrium also generates difficulties, such as that of constant creation. Such difficulties can be avoided by explaining the working of the *prakṛti* under the regulation of the sentient entities, Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman.

The Vaiśeṣika theory of atoms as the fundamental cause of the universe is also revealed to comprise inconsistencies. Sadhu Bhadreshdas notes that creation cannot occur through atoms as they lack dimensions and would simply become one with another without resulting in any expansion. Admitting atoms with dimensions would permit them to have parts and thus contradict the fundamental principle of partless atoms. The *Sudhā* shows the untenability of concepts, such as that of “*adr̥ṣṭa*” or the unseen principle as the inspirer of change in atoms and of the *samavāya* relation as an explanation for the inseparability amongst atoms.

*Sudhā* denies the origin of the *adr̥ṣṭa* in the performance of the various actions performed by the individual *ātman*. This would lead to the difficulty of constant creation, for the flow of the

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<sup>574</sup> (Br. Up. 3.7.3-23)

<sup>575</sup> (Br. Up. 3.8.9)

actions is eternal. *Samavāya* or the relation of inherence is admitted as an eternal independent *padārtha* for explaining the relation between *avyava* and *avyavī*, *guṇa* and *guṇī*, *jāti* and *vyakti*, *kriyā* and *kriyāvat*. *Sudhā* notes that *samavāya* as an independent entity requires a separate entity to explain the relation between *samavāya* and the *dravya*. This new entity would again require another entity and so forth, regressing *ad infinitum*. Moreover, *samavāya* cannot be eternal as it would mean the eternality of the various atom compounds and thus would restrict dissolution. In this way, Sadhu Bhadreshdas questions their theory and insists on the primacy of the authoritative scriptures.<sup>576</sup> The *Upaniṣads* assert that Akṣarabrahman<sup>577</sup> and Parabrahman<sup>578</sup> pervade even the atoms and hence are their cause and controller.

Sadhu Bhadreshdas also presents an objection to Mādhyamika's *śūnyavāda*, the theory that understands all existence as nothingness. He contends the theory to be logically invalid, for if it is proved through *pramāṇa*, it will contradict the theory's principle of everything being *śūnya*. If it cannot be so proved, the theory loses validity. He further argues that one's knowledge of an object is dependent on certain conditions (*avasthā viśeṣa*). Accordingly, the presence of a particular object is dependent on the absence of other objects. Likewise, knowledge of 'nothing' is dependent on the knowledge of 'something.' In other words, one can only be aware of nothingness in the presence of an existent something.

Reducing worldly objects to mere cognitions of the mind, as presented by the Buddhist idealists, is also rejected, for such a thesis stands at a loss to explain the variety perceived and is also unverifiable. Any alleged root cause of the universe, whether *ajñāna* or *vāsanā*, remains a challenge before universal momentariness, a fundamental principle admitted by all Buddhist schools. Such a principle reduces any root cause of the universe to be momentary. The *Sudhā* also directs these arguments against the Advaita tradition, which reduces the world to a mere appearance or falsity arising due to ignorance (*avidyā*).

The Jain theory of relative pluralism (*anekāntavāda*) and the resulting seven judgments (*saptabhanginaya*) also fail to provide an adequate explanation of creation. Firstly, it approves the contradictories of existence and non-existence simultaneously. Further, relative pluralism boomerangs and questions the absoluteness of their own theory. Even the

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<sup>576</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 240)

<sup>577</sup> (Mu. Up. 2.2.2)

<sup>578</sup> (Ka. Up. 2.20)

authoritative scriptures and teachers of Jainism would suffer the loss of any kind of absolute validity.

This way, Sadhu Bhadreshdas establishes Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman as the sole cause for the unfolding of the universe. Any other cause is ruled out on the grounds of logical and scriptural reasoning. Accentuating the truth and reality of its creation process, the *Sudhā* submits:

Satyaiva jaḍā prakṛtiḥ satyameva tasyāḥ sadā'kṣarapuruṣottamaniḥ satyameva  
satyā jīvaḥ satyā īśvarāḥ satyameva teṣāṃ bandhanam satyaiva teṣāṃ muktiḥ  
satyameva puṇyapāpādi satyameva teṣāṃ jīveśvarāṇāṃ karmaphalabhokṛtvaṃ  
satyameva tatphalopabhogaprayojanakamidaṃ jagat satyamevā'sya  
jagato'kṣarapuruṣottamakāraṇatvamityādīn bahūn satyasiddhāntānudarīkurute |<sup>579</sup>

Through this enumeration, Sadhu Bhadreshdas insists on the truth of the universe, which is thereby not false or nothingness, and the truth of its cause Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. The universe thereby does not self-transform or have any such *svabhāva* but is created by the eternal sentient entities Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. Everything that they regulate within the universe, the actions, fruits and liberation of *jīva* and *īśvara*, and outside the universe is true. Thus, every aspect of this cosmic creation of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta is submitted to be eternally true and real.

## 4.2. Jīva

### 4.2.1. Nature of Jīva

*Jīva*, in the *Sudhā*, is described as an eternal sentient ontological entity that is atomic (*aṇu*) in nature. This entity is not only conscious but also pure and blissful (*sat-cit-ānanda*). The term 'jīva' is derived from the verbal root 'jīv,' to live. *Jīva*, thus, is that which lives (*jīvati*) and keeps the body living (*jīvayati*). The *jīva*, also referred to as the individual *ātman*, is self-luminous, and its faculties pervade the material body. This *jīvātman*, along with the

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<sup>579</sup> "True is the non-sentient prakṛti, true is its regulation by Akṣara and Puruṣottama, true are the jīvas, true are the īśvaras, true is their bondage, true is their liberation, true are the good and bad actions, true are the fruits experienced by jīva and īśvara, true is the world created to experience these fruits, true is the Akṣara and Puruṣottama as the cause of this world, true is every aspect of this Siddhānta." (Bhadreshdas, *Svāmīnārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 227)



*īśvarātman*, are the recipients of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta. Each *ātman* is capable (*adhikārī*) to acquire this knowledge and attain release from the cycles of birth and death. In every state, whether bound or liberated, the *jīva* remains ontologically distinct from *īśvara*, Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman.<sup>580</sup>

*Jīva* constitutes knowledge (*jñāna-svarūpa*). This knowledge is explained to be two-fold, knowledge of itself (*svarūpa-bhūta jñāna*) and knowledge of other objects such as pot, cloth etc. (*guṇa-bhūta jñāna*). This dual aspect of knowledge is also admitted in the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta:

Though *jīva* is of the nature of knowledge, it is also the substrate of knowledge, emphasizing the fact that it is the knowing subject (*jñātā*).<sup>581</sup>

While explaining the difference between *jīva*'s two-fold knowledge, Sadhu Bhadreshdas specifies that both cases contain a subject (*viśaya*) to be known.<sup>582</sup> Knowing oneself as *ātman* or the sentient *jīva* without any intermediaries (self-aware) is *svarūpa-bhūta jñāna* while knowing objects other than oneself through various means of knowledge is *guṇa-bhūta jñāna*. In the former, there lies no distinction between the knower and the known, but in the latter, a clear distinction surfaces between oneself and the objects known by oneself. Thus, *svarūpa-bhūta jñāna* results in the statement “I am *ātman*,” while *guṇa-bhūta jñāna* results in the statement “I possess knowledge of the pot.”

Schools such as Sāṅkhya accept *jīva* only as pure consciousness and denies any attribute to it.<sup>583</sup> In response to this understanding, *Sudhā* offers scriptural validation of *jīva* as the knower, such as “eṣa hi dṛṣṭā spraṣṭā śrotā ghrātā rasayitā mantā boddhā kartā.”<sup>584</sup> Here, the *ātman* or *jīva* is asserted as the one who sees, feels, hears, smells etc. Through such means, it grasps the world around and, thus, is the knower. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* is also cited, “atha yo vededaṁ jighrāṇīti sa ātmā.”<sup>585</sup> The *ātman* is the one who smells through the nose and thereby knows the smell.<sup>586</sup>

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<sup>580</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 250)

<sup>581</sup> (S. Chari 187)

<sup>582</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 253)

<sup>583</sup> (Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* 281)

<sup>584</sup> “This is known as the seer, toucher, hearer, smeller, taster, the thinker, the knower, the doer.” (Pr. Up. 4.9)

<sup>585</sup> “That who knows “I am smelling this” is the ātmā.” (Ch. Up. 8.12.4)

<sup>586</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 254)

Against this, the challenger may put forward *Upaniṣadic* statements affirming *jīva* as pure consciousness or knowledge, such as “vijñānam yajñam tanute.”<sup>587</sup> The *Sudhā* does not deny this aspect of the *jīva* but notes that such statements do not negate its character as the knower. Vedānta Deśika argues in the same vein:

[t]he description of *ātman* by the Upaniṣads as *jñāna* does not exclude its other characteristics such as knowership.<sup>588</sup>

Further, Sadhu Bhadresdhas offers various *Upaniṣadic* aphorisms that instruct one to learn, “nibodhata,”<sup>589</sup> and strive to know, “vijijñāśasva;”<sup>590</sup> “vijijñāśitavyam,”<sup>591</sup> which would become irrelevant if *jīva* is not accepted as the knower.

The Sāṅkhya school also presents what is known as the ‘*japakusum nyāya*’—the analogy of the crystal and the Hibiscus flower. Just as the crystal appears red when the Hibiscus flower is seen through it, likewise, the *jīva* appears as the knower due to its conjunction with *buddhi*. The *jīva*, like the crystal, itself remains unchanged and unaffected.<sup>592</sup> The *Sudhā* denies such reasoning by arguing that *buddhi*, as a product of *prakṛti*, is non-sentient in nature. It emphasises: “prakṛtistatkāryamātram ca kevalam jñeyam jaḍatvāt.”<sup>593</sup> *Prakṛti* and its products are not self-aware or conscious elements. Thereby they can only be the subject of knowledge, not the knower. In this way, Sadhu Bhadresdhas explains *jīva* not only as *jñāna-svarūpa* but also as *jñātā*.

*Jīva*, being *jñāna-svarūpa*, is never devoid of knowledge. Some amount of knowledge content always prevails. This is reflected in:

*Nityam tajjiñānavattvam na jñānavattvam tu sarvadā |*  
*Jñānasāmānyaśūṇyatvam ātmano naiva sambhavam ||*<sup>594</sup>

<sup>587</sup> “Knowledge performs sacrifices.” (Tai. Up. 2.5.1)

<sup>588</sup> (S. Chari 193)

<sup>589</sup> (Ka. Up.3.14)

<sup>590</sup> (Tai. Up. 3.1.1)

<sup>591</sup> (Ch. Up. 8.1.1)

<sup>592</sup> (Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* 287)

<sup>593</sup> “Every effect of *prakṛti* can only be known due to non-sentiency.” (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 255)

<sup>594</sup> “Always with knowledge, never without knowledge. Absence of any knowledge in the *ātman* is not possible.” (*Kārikā* 317)

Knowledge is inseparable from *jīva*. Though knowledge of specific material objects may contract or expand, knowledge in general (*jñāna-sāmānya*) is eternal. This is so as *jīva* is a self-aware, conscious entity. Here, Sadhu Bhadreshdas seems to be countering the Naiyāyika view of consciousness being a mere sporadic quality of the *ātman*. According to the Naiyāyika:

It follows that the soul which is the substratum of consciousness need not always be conscious. As a matter of fact, it is an unconscious (*jaḍa*) principle capable of being qualified by states of consciousness.<sup>595</sup>

This view of the *ātman* as an unconscious principle is denied in the *Sudhā* as it repeatedly accentuates the self-consciousness and self-luminosity of *jīva*.

While the *jīva* is self-conscious, it also acquires new knowledge of objects and, more importantly, of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. The knowledge of the true forms of Akṣara and Puruṣottama is novel and not already known by the *jīva*. On attaining this knowledge, the *jīva* transcends the material world. Thus, knowledge is not merely of discovery, as claimed by some like the Advaitin tradition, but also an attainment.

After distinguishing between the *svarūpa-bhūta jñāna* and the *guṇa-bhūta jñāna* of the *jīva*, Sadhu Bhadreshdas clarifies that such distinction can be made only for those *ātmā* that are influenced by *māyā*.<sup>596</sup> The released *ātmā* (*mukta*), Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman are omniscient, and thereby do not gain new knowledge of material objects (*guṇa-bhūta jñāna*). They are aware of the past, present and future. In fact, the *Sudhā*, at the beginning of its chapter on epistemology, demonstrates the independence of the *muktātmās*, Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman from all means of knowledge.<sup>597</sup> Though they possess a divine body with two arms, legs etc., they are not dependent on it for knowledge.

The *jīva* is not just sentient (*cit*) and intelligent but also blissful in nature. Not all schools of Indian philosophy admit this as part of *jīva*'s essential form. Sāṅkhya school, for instance, denies pure intelligence and bliss to *puruṣa*.<sup>598</sup> Even some Vedānta schools such as Śuddhādvaita of Vallabhacharya assert the *jīva* as endowed with only *cit* while the *ānanda*

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<sup>595</sup> (Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* 149)

<sup>596</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 255)

<sup>597</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 146)

<sup>598</sup> (Dasgupta 238)

aspect is concealed due to ignorance.<sup>599</sup> The *Sudhā*, however, informs of a two-fold aspect of *jīva*'s blissful nature. Just like the *svarūpa-bhūta* and *guṇa-bhūta jñāna*, *jīva* is essentially blissful,<sup>600</sup> *sukharūpa*, and also attains bliss, *sukhavān*.<sup>601</sup> The *jīva* thereby not only enjoys its own blissful nature but also enjoys the sense-objects and the divine bliss of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. Amongst all these, the bliss of one's own nature is ranked higher than that of the sense-objects but lower to the bliss of the form and association of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. However, the bliss of the form and association of Parabrahman is the highest, infinitely greater than even that of Akṣarabrahman.

Bliss or *sukha* in the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana is viewed as a positive experience and not merely as an absence of pain. In the state of liberation, the released *ātmā* are described as being ever immersed in the divine bliss of Parabrahman. This is in contrast to the Nyāya conception of release: “tadatyantavimokṣaḥ apavargaḥ.”<sup>602</sup> In response, Sadhu Bhadreshdas points out the distinction between the absence of pain and the attainment of happiness. Not every instance of happiness is preceded by some kind of pain. On all happy occasions, one does not necessarily reflect that “I am without pain.” This is so because the experience of the release from pain is different from that of the attainment of bliss. Moreover, in the state of liberation, the bliss of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman is a novel experience for the hitherto bound *ātman*. Thus, this experience is much greater and momentous than merely an absence of pain.

The nature of *jīva*, thus, eternally constitutes knowledge and bliss. As a conscious entity, *jīva* enjoys the knowledge and bliss of its own form and gains knowledge and bliss of other entities. It is both the knower and the known, the enjoyed and the enjoyer. However, the knowledge and bliss of the forms of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman are much greater than that of its own form and the other objects of the material world.

#### 4.2.2. Measure of *Jīva*

Different schools of Indian Philosophy offer different theories that comprehend the measure of the *jīva*. Some claim *jīva* to be atomic (*aṇuparimāṇa*), some affirm *jīva* as equal to the size

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<sup>599</sup> (Swami Tapasyananda 226)

<sup>600</sup> This blissful form that belongs to *jīva* is supported by the supremely blissful Parabrahman.

<sup>601</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 290)

<sup>602</sup> “Release is absolute deliverance from pain.” (Vidyabhushan 7)

of its respective body (*madyamaparimāṇa*), while others believe it to be all-pervasive (*vibhu*). The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta, along with certain schools of Vedānta, endorses *jīva* to be atomic in size. This is validated primarily through scriptural references. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* lucidly states, “eṣo'ṇurātmā cetasā veditavyaḥ.”<sup>603</sup> Here the word “aṇu ātmā” clearly denotes the atomic *jīva*. Moreover, *Sudhā* argues that the movement of the *jīva*, moving out from one body and moving into another, also showcases the atomic measure of *jīva*, as opposed to its all-pervasiveness. Such movement is affirmed through the verbs that suggest “going” from one place to another, such as in “tān sa gacchati tā dadat”<sup>604</sup> and “tasmāllokātpunaraityasmai lokāya karmaṇe.”<sup>605</sup> Certain *Upaniṣadic* statements use the verb that suggests a “coming out” from the body, such as in “sa etena prajñenātmanā'smāllokāt utkramya.”<sup>606</sup> If *jīva* is all-pervasive, such movement of going and coming out will become irrelevant.

However, those who admit the theory of *jīva* as all-pervasive, such as the Nyāya and the Sāṅkhya schools, may put forward counter *Upaniṣadic* statements, such as “sarvamidamabhyatto'vākyanādarah,”<sup>607</sup> “mahānaja ātmā.”<sup>608</sup> In both these cases, Sadhu Bhadrashdas exhibits the contextual incorrectness of such an interpretation. The referent in both cases is not the *ātman*. In the first case, he argues that the prior verse 3.14.1, “sarvaṁ khalvidaṁ brahma,”<sup>609</sup> refers to both Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. In the succeeding two mantras, both these entities are described as being all-pervasive and residing in one's *ātman*. Likewise, in the second case, the prior verses, such as 4.4.22, asserts Parabrahman as ruler and controller of all. In continuation, he is described as vast or infinite. Accordingly, the referent of “mahānaja ātmā” is Paramātman and not the individual *ātman*.

However, the Naiyāyikas refute the *jīva* of atomic measure that is situated in one place as it does not answer our experiences of other parts of the body:

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<sup>603</sup> “This is the atomic ātmā known by the mind.” (Mu. Up. 3.1.9)

<sup>604</sup> “He who gives attains them.” (Ka. Up. 1.3)

<sup>605</sup> “He returns from that realm for performing actions.” (Br. Up.4.4.6)

<sup>606</sup> “He comes out of the body with Akṣarabrahman.” (Ai. Up. 3.4)

<sup>607</sup> “He is everywhere, has no speech and no desires.” (Ch. Up. 3.14.2)

<sup>608</sup> “Ātmā is infinite.” (Br. Up. 4.4.25)

<sup>609</sup> “All this is verily Brahman.” (Ch. Up. 3.14.1)

If it were atomic it would impossible to account for the cognition which extends all over the body.<sup>610</sup>

Sadhu Bhadreshdas responds to this contention with Bādarāyaṇa's analogy of the sandalwood paste.<sup>611</sup> Unlike other commentators, Sadhu Bhadreshdas centres this analogy on the form of God. Just as the mark (*tilaka*) of sandalwood paste, when applied to God's murti, spreads its fragrance everywhere, in the same manner, the presence of the atomic *jīva* as situated in one place in the body is felt throughout the body.<sup>612</sup> This way, the *aṇuparimāṇavādins* understand the *jīva* to be residing in one place, but it pervades the whole body through its knowledge. As Vedānta Deśika echoes the same:

[t]hough *jīva* is monadic in substance, its *jñāna* is infinite and all-pervasive. *Jīva* can control the activities of the different parts of the body through the *jñāna*.<sup>613</sup>

Moreover, *Sudhā* argues that if the *jīva* is not considered atomic, it would be difficult to understand the entering of the *jīva* into other's body through yogic powers as alleged in the case of Saubhari and other ṛṣis.<sup>614</sup> Such movement will also be difficult to explain if the *jīva*, as the Jains assert, is the size of the body (*madyamaparimāṇa*). For movement from one body to another would then cause contraction and expansion of the *jīva*. *Sudhā*, following Bādarāyaṇa's reasoning,<sup>615</sup> notes that movement of the *jīva* from a large body, like an elephant, to a small body, like an ant, will amount to change in the size of *jīva*. Such modification contradicts the scriptures that claim the *jīva* as changeless (*nirvikāri*).<sup>616</sup>

These arguments thereby maintain the viability of *jīva* being atomic in measure. This atomic *jīva* is, as vouchsafed by the *aṇuparimāṇavādins*, located in the heart from where it regulates and pervades the whole body. This location of the *jīva* is pronounced in the *Upaniṣads*

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<sup>610</sup> (Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* 148)

<sup>611</sup> (BS 2.3.24)

<sup>612</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 259)

<sup>613</sup> (S. Chari 209–10)

<sup>614</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 259; S. Chari 210)

<sup>615</sup> (BS 2.2.24)

<sup>616</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 260)

through the words like ‘hṛdyi’ (in the heart)<sup>617</sup>, ‘guhām praviśya’<sup>618</sup> (having entered the heart), ‘ekaśataṁ nādinām’<sup>619</sup> (where there are several nerves).

*Sudhā* notes that the *jīva* resides in the heart in its *vyatireka* form. As explained in the earlier chapters, each ontological entity has its *anvaya* (immanent) and *vyatireka* (transcendental) form. The *jīva*’s essential form as atomic, knower and enjoyer (*sat-cit-ānanda*), located in the heart, is characterised as its *vyatireka* form. Its immanence or pervasion in the body through its knowledge is the *jīva*’s *anvaya* form. The *jīva*, thus, is compared to a lamp in a mandir. The lamp, whilst located in one place, lights the mandir, likewise the *jīva*, whilst located in the heart in its *vyatireka* form, pervades the body in its *anvaya* form.

Sadhu Bhadresdhas further specifies that the *jīva* always has a form (*sākāra*).<sup>620</sup> It may be referred to as being formless (*nirākāra*), in the sense of not possessing any parts like arms, legs etc. But such a description cannot negate its essential form as an *aṇu*.

#### 4.2.3. *Jīva* Distinct from Body and Senses

The *Sudhā* begins the chapter “Jīvadhārā” by dismissing the materialist perspective on *jīva* as being nothing other than the body—a view denied by most schools of Indian Philosophy. The arguments of the *purvapakṣa* are first satisfactorily laid down and then are adequately countered. One of the most famous arguments is of aggregation—the *jīva* is nothing but the aggregate of the four gross elements namely, *jala* (water), *teja* (fire), *vāyu* (air) and *pṛthvi* (earth). Consciousness is a result of the aggregation of these four non-sentient elements.

Sadhu Bhadresdhas counters this through a simple logic—after death, these four elements are still present, yet consciousness is absent. Also, as none of the parts is sentient, they as a whole cannot produce consciousness. Further, this aggregation argument lacks a universal application as the same four elements are also the material cause of other objects, such as pot etc., yet they are not suffused with consciousness. Thereby, *Sudhā* accepts the aggregation of these elements but denies the consequent production of consciousness. It notes that consciousness as a compound of these elements will also be subject to destruction.<sup>621</sup> The

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<sup>617</sup> (Pr. Up 3.6)

<sup>618</sup> (Ch. Up. 8.1.1)

<sup>619</sup> (Pr. Up. 3.6)

<sup>620</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 260)

<sup>621</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 251)

dissolution of the elements will result in the destruction of consciousness and thus contradict the scriptures. Moreover, such aggregation as the source makes it difficult to explain the various faculties of cognition, volition etc. It would demand a specification on which element engages in which of these faculties.

The materialists claim that *jīva* cannot be known to exist as it cannot be perceived. Sadhu Bhadrashdas, here, opposes the acceptance of *pratyakṣa* as the only valid means of knowledge. He argues that though the movement of the baby in the womb is not directly perceived yet is commonly accepted. Such movement can be admitted only on the grounds of inference. Thus, the materialists are mistaken in their very means of grasping the existence of the *jīva*.

The *Sudhā* denies equating *jīva* with the senses, both external and internal. This denial is supported by the argument of memory. If the senses were the *jīva*, then a failure in the functioning of any sense-organs should eliminate all the memories associated with it. Moreover, experience through the various sense-organs leads to knowledge of the same object. This experience is often known as recognition or *pratyabhijñā*:

If sense organs were the *jīva*, then the organ of touch should be separate from the organ of vision and the experience of the same object by two different sense organs which are supposed to be *jīvas* would not be one and the same. The recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of what is already experienced points out that it is one and the same individual self that sees as well as touches the object.<sup>622</sup>

Likewise, *Sudhā* also rejects the internal senses, such as the mind or intellect, as the doer of actions. They serve only as instruments (*sādhana*) that enable the doer to assimilate and recollect experiences. They themselves cannot operate but need an agent for making them operative. This is accentuated with an illustration of the potter and the stick—the stick in itself is simply inert; it is the potter who utilises the stick for shaping the pot that makes it useful.<sup>623</sup> Such a difference between oneself and one's apparatus is asserted through the *Upaniṣadic* references, such as “*ātmā mahānparaḥ*.”<sup>624</sup> Here, the *Upaniṣad* offers a hierarchy—the mind is superior to the sense-organs, the intellect is superior to the mind, and

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<sup>622</sup> (S. Chari 190)

<sup>623</sup> (Bhadrashdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 252)

<sup>624</sup> “Superior is the great ātman.” (Ka. Up. 3.10)



the *ātman* is superior to the intellect. This hierarchical enumeration is cited to highlight the distinction of the sense-organs, mind, and intellect from the *ātman*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, in stating “*manasā hyeva paśyati*,”<sup>625</sup> not only showcases the distinction between oneself and the senses but also affirms the senses as mere instruments.

Sadhu Bhadreshdas concludes his rejection of *jīva* as the body or senses by enumerating the fundamental differences between them. The body and its senses are essentially non-sentient, subject to birth and death, undergoes modifications, has parts. The *jīva*, on the other hand, is essentially sentient, eternal, unchanging and atomic. Thus, the *jīva* cannot be equated with its parallel opposite.

#### 4.2.4. Refuting Non-Existence of *Jīva*

The debate on the existence and nature of *jīva* would remain incomplete without putting the Buddhist view into perspective. *Vijñānavāda* is a school of the Buddhist philosophy that claims the existence of only consciousness or *vijñāna*. In one of his works, Vasubandhu specifies, “*ātmadharmoupcāro hi vividho yaḥ pravartate vijñāna-pariṇāme*’sau.”<sup>626</sup> This consciousness is explained as a stream of moments, thereby refuting the existence of a permanent entity like the self.<sup>627</sup>

Such universal momentariness is refuted as it negates not just the experiences of memory, happiness and the like but also the possibility of attaining any kind of knowledge. If one who attains knowledge is destroyed every moment, then the knowledge attained is also destroyed. Statements such as “I have knowledge of the pot” will not be possible since every moment witnesses a different person.<sup>628</sup> The Buddhists admit memory on the basis of the impressions (*samskāras*) generated from one’s actions. This claim is seen to contradict the notion of universal momentariness. If everything is momentary, then why is there a need to assume a continuance of the impressions. Moreover, the reduction of *jīva* to nothingness (*śūnya*) by the Buddhist *Śūnyavādins* is also turned down by admitting its existence through inference. One

<sup>625</sup> “Sees through the mind.” (Br. Up. 4.3.1)

<sup>626</sup> “The various constructions (or impositions) as the soul or the elements (which are) prevalent amongst the people and in the sastras are but the development of vijñāna or consciousness.” (Chatterjee 33)

<sup>627</sup> (Pruden 241)

<sup>628</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 252–53)

can infer the existence of *jīva*, just as one infers the existence of *ākāśa*. Through such arguments, Sadhu Bhadresdhas validates the existence of *jīva* as a permanent entity.

#### 4.2.5. Eternality, Purity and Luminosity

While the Buddhists deny the existence of any eternal entities, many *āstika* schools affirm *jīva* as *anādi*, bereft of any changes in its essential form. Even those who claim the *jīva* residing in the body as an *aṇu* specify that the *jīva* is untouched by the changes occurring in the body. The *jīva* is never destroyed, irrespective of being in the state of bondage or release. When in bondage, on the occurrence of final dissolution (*ātyāntika pralaya*), it rests in the *mūla-māyā* in its latent form. In this state, the *jīva* does not experience any fruits of actions but simply rests till the next cycle of creation.

However, various *Upaniṣadic* statements affirm the birth or creation of *jīva*, such as “yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante.”<sup>629</sup> The *Sudhā*, here, agrees with the Viśiṣṭādvaitins in interpreting such statements as the *jīva* when associated with the body. Vedānta Deśika submits:

Such texts have to be understood to mean that *jīvas* are born in the sense that they become associated with the physical bodies.<sup>630</sup>

Sadhu Bhadresdhas further adds that even in the state of release, when the *jīva* becomes *brahmarūpa*, it does not undergo any change. He defines change as any modification in its essential being (*vikāro nāma svarupā'nyathābhāvaḥ*).<sup>631</sup> In the state of release, the *jīva* acquires the qualities of Akṣarabrahman and thereby does not encounter any change in its form as an ontological entity.

The purity of *jīva* is also explained in terms of its unchanging essential form (*śuddhatvamiha svarupā'nyathā'bhāvarupam*).<sup>632</sup> In this manner, even in the state of bondage, the *jīva* remains pure. While retaining its purity, the bound *ātman* tends to misunderstand the form of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman due to the influence of *māyā*.

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<sup>629</sup> “From where all diverse beings originate.” (Tai. Up. 3.1.1)

<sup>630</sup> (S. Chari 196)

<sup>631</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 288)

<sup>632</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 292)

The eternal and pure *jīva* illuminates (*prakāśaka*) the body and its senses. This illumination is not in the literal sense of “light,” but in the sense of being the cause for the functioning of the body and its senses. Through the functioning of the body, the *jīva* is able to acquire knowledge (*guṇa-bhūta jñāna*).

#### 4.2.6. *Jīva* and the Three Bodies

The Vedāntic Philosophy upholds the doctrine of “deha traya” or the three kinds of bodies, namely, *sthūla deha* (gross body), *sukṣma deha* (astral or subtle body) and the *kāraṇa deha* (causal body). These bodies shroud the *jīva* and cause bondage in the material world (*māyā*), rendering the *jīva* as bound (*baddha jīva*). The *Sudhā* describes the nature of each of the three and introduces the fourth body that the *jīva* attains with the release from these three bodies.

The *sthūla deha* is composed of the five gross elements, *prthvi* (earth), *jala* (water), *teja* (fire), *vāyu* (air) and *ākāśa* (ether). These elements go on to constitute blood, flesh, muscles, fat, hair, and bones. The gross body so formed is classified under four categories on the basis of the various modes of production, that is, through seed, sweat, eggs and womb.<sup>633</sup> More than six million eight hundred thousand species are believed to exist among these four categories, across which the *jīva* transmigrates.

This transmigration principle is complemented with the karma principle as it is on the basis of one’s actions that one attains a particular gross body. The *Sudhā* thus cites “yathākārī yathācārī tathā bhavati sādhuḥkārī sādhubhavadī pāpakārī pāpo bhavati.”<sup>634</sup> In his commentary on this verse of the *Upaniṣad*, Sadhu Bhadreshdas defines the term ‘sādhuḥkārī’ or good actions as those that abide by the words of the Satpuruṣa and the scriptures.<sup>635</sup> He mentions the Satpuruṣa separately as the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta maintains that the true meaning of the scriptures can truly be understood only through the Satpuruṣa (Akṣarabrahman Guru). The “good” that such actions reap is said to involve “utkṛṣṭaguṇaka” (virtues), “utkṛṣṭaśarīra” (body of a high degree) and “utkṛṣṭaloka” (good abode). Subsequently, the “bad” that bad actions reap involve “nikṛṣṭaguṇaka” (demerits), “nikṛṣṭaśarīra” (body of a lower degree) and “nikṛṣṭaloka” (low abode).

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<sup>633</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 261)

<sup>634</sup> “One becomes as one acts and practices—by doing good, one becomes good, and by doing bad one becomes bad.” (Br. Up. 4.4.5)

<sup>635</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopiṣatsvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 270)

To specify what the “utkr̥ṣṭaśarira” and “nikr̥ṣṭaśarira” entails, the *Sudhā* also cites, “tadya iha ramaṇīyacaraṇā.”<sup>636</sup> This verse specifies that ‘ramaṇīya’ (good or auspicious) actions lead to a human birth.<sup>637</sup> Accordingly, birth as a human being is considered a body of a high degree and birth as animals, such as a dog or a swine, is a body of a lower degree. The latter does not enable the capacity to cultivate virtues and abide by the commands of the Satpuruṣa and the scriptures. The *Sudhā*, as always, does not overlook the primacy of Parabrahman. Parabrahman bestows the fruit of all actions performed by the *jīva* in its respective gross body.

The *sthūla deha* functions together with *sukṣma deha*, which comprises of nineteen elements, namely, the five *jñāna indriyas* (cognitive senses of sight, smell, touch, taste and sound), five *karma indriyas* (the faculties of speech, dexterity, locomotion, excretion and reproduction), four *antaḥkaraṇa* (inner faculties of thought, intellect, contemplation and identity) and five *prāṇas* (inward moving air or *prāṇa*, downward-moving air or *apāna*, upward-moving air or *upāna*, the balancing air or *samāna* and the outward-moving air or *vyāna*). The subtle body is not destroyed with the death of the gross body. Thereby *jīva*, along with its subtle body, transmigrates to another gross body.

The *Sudhā* mentions “amutrāmantam prāṇo'nūtrāmati prāṇamanūtrāmantam sarve prāṇā anūtrāmanti.”<sup>638</sup> Once the *jīva* departs from the gross body, the vital air or *prāṇa* (one among the five *prāṇas*) follows. It is followed by the remaining *prāṇas*. Sadhu Bhadreshdas remarks that “sarve prāṇā” alludes to all the remaining elements of the subtle body.<sup>639</sup> The continuance of the subtle body is the reason one remains associated with past impressions and skills. This *Upaniṣadic* verse also uses the term ‘purvaprajñā.’ Sadhu Bhadreshdas does not interpret it as ‘consciousness’ (like Shankaracharya), but as ‘purvavasanā’ meaning *past desires, passions etc.*<sup>640</sup> The *jīva*, thus, not only remains associated with past impressions but also with the past yearnings. These past yearnings constitute the *kāraṇa deha* or causal body of the *jīva*. This verse, hence, reveals that both, the subtle and the causal bodies, continue to transmigrate with the *jīva*.

<sup>636</sup> “Those who do good work.” (Ch. Up. 5.10.7)

<sup>637</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Chāndogyaopaniṣatsvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 225)

<sup>638</sup> “When it comes out, prāṇa also comes out, and with prāṇa all prāṇas come out.” (Br. Up. 4.4.2)

<sup>639</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopiṣatsvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 267)

<sup>640</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopiṣatsvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 267)

The *kāraṇa deha* or the causal body, as the name suggests, is the seed or the root cause for *jīva*'s bondage leading to incessant cycles of birth and death. It causes inverse knowledge (*viparita jñāna*) and is also referred to as one's desires, passions, inherent nature, *prakṛti*, *linga* etc. The *sukṣma deha* is destroyed with the destruction of the material world (*ātyāntika pralaya*), but the *kāraṇa deha* continues even beyond that and thus is termed as 'anādi' (without a beginning).<sup>641</sup> The *Sudhā* submits:

*Pralaye na layo yasya karaṇam sthūlasūkṣmayoḥ |*  
*Anādyāmukti samśliṣṭam muktau tu nā'vaśiṣyate ||*<sup>642</sup>

The cause or *kāraṇa* of both gross and subtle bodies prevails even beyond the dissolution of the universe. During creation, once again, the gross and subtle bodies arise from the existing causal body.

These three bodies firmly cover the *jīva*. The *Sudhā* explains this firmness through an illustration of a tamarind seed offered by Swaminarayan. Just as the skin of a tamarind seed is firmly attached to the seed, the three bodies are attached to the *jīva*. The only way to remove the skin is to roast the seed, such that it gets loosened and peels off easily. Likewise, Swaminarayan explains:

[w]hen the *kāraṇa* body is 'roasted' by the meditation and words of God, it becomes separated from the *jīva* just as easily as one rubs off the skin of a roasted tamarind seed. However, even if one were to try a million other methods, one could not destroy the *jīva*'s ignorance in the form of the *kāraṇa* body.<sup>643</sup>

The *Sudhā* offers other analogies such as that of the iron ball and the fire—when an iron ball is extremely heated, it is difficult to distinguish between the iron ball and the fire. Similarly, it is difficult to distinguish between the *jīva* and its three bodies. The distinction and separation between the two are claimed to be possible only through a deep association with the Akṣarabrahman Guru and selfless devotion to Parabrahman.<sup>644</sup> In other words, the

<sup>641</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 263–64)

<sup>642</sup> "During dissolution, the *kāraṇa deha* does not dissolve, which is the cause of *sthūla* and *sukṣma*. It is beginningless and only gets destroyed with liberation." (*Kārikā* 325)

<sup>643</sup> (Vac. Kāriyāṇī 12)

<sup>644</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 264)

journey to liberation releases their hold over the *jīva*. Thus, though the causal body is beginningless, it can be destroyed upon attaining *mokṣa*.

Despite such constant ensnarement, the *jīva* remains essentially distinct from all these bodies. After its release, the *jīva* attains a fourth body known as the *brāhmī-tanu*, the nature of which will be discussed in the next chapter.

#### 4.2.7. Three States of *Jīva*

The *jīva*, while enveloped in its three bodies, performs various actions. It is said to experience the fruits of its current and past actions while passing through three states (*avasthā*). The *Sudhā* defines ‘*avasthā*’ as “*avasthīyate yāsu bhogārtham*,” that in which the *jīva* enjoys the fruits.<sup>645</sup> The three states are *jāgrata* (waking state), *svapna* (dream state) and *suṣupti* (deep sleep state). The *Māndukya Upaniṣad* enumerates and describes the nature of each of these states.<sup>646</sup> It also mentions a fourth state, *turiya*. But the *Sudhā* does not engage with it here as this state can only be attained by the released *ātman*.<sup>647</sup>

In the waking state, the *jīva* is primarily influenced by the *sattva guṇa*. It has awareness predominantly of the *sthūla* or gross body and thereby engages the ten senses, four *antaḥkaraṇas* and five *prāṇas* towards the sense-objects of the material world. During this state, the *jīva* is said to reside in the eye and is titled “*Vaiśvānara*.”

In the dream state, the *jīva* is primarily influenced by the *rajas guṇa*. It has awareness predominantly of the *sūkṣma* or the subtle body, and thereby the outer sense-organs become inactive. During this state, the *jīva* is said to reside in the throat and is titled “*Taijasa*.”<sup>648</sup> However, the status of this dream state is disputed amongst philosophers—some claim it to be unreal, while others claim it to be real. Shankar, for instance, does not admit the reality of even the external world, let alone the dream world. Ramanuja, on the other hand, vouches for the reality of not just the external world but also the experience of the dream world. He contends:

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<sup>645</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 267)

<sup>646</sup> (Ma. Up. 2.1-4)

<sup>647</sup> It is discussed in the next chapter on Liberation.

<sup>648</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 268)

The conscious states experienced in dreams are *not* unreal; it is only their objects that are false; these objects only, not the conscious states, are sublated by the waking consciousness.<sup>649</sup>

Sadhu Bhadreshdas agrees with Ramanuja in denying the dream world as unreal or a recollection and asserts it as a real experience.

Another point of contention is about the creator of this dream world—is it the *jīva* or someone else who structures it? The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* affirms its creator in “sṛjate sa hi kartā.”<sup>650</sup> Shankar interprets the word ‘sa’ (he) as the *jīva*. He claims that the *jīva* itself creates and structures the dream world on the basis of its experiences in the waking state.

When he (the individual *ātman*) dreams, he takes away a little of the impressions of this all-embracing world (the waking state), himself puts the body aside and himself creates.<sup>651</sup>

Sadhu Bhadreshdas argues against this and identifies ‘sa’ as Paramātmān (*saḥ paramātmāiva kartetyarthaḥ*).<sup>652</sup> Paramātmān, based on the past actions of the *jīva*, structures the dream world such that it can experience the corresponding fruits. The *jīva*, influenced by *māyā*, cannot be the doer of the dream world.

Further, Sadhu Bhadreshdas argues against *jīva* as the creator of dreams through logical and scriptural reasoning. He constructs his logical argument by asking a simple question—why would one create horrific dreams for oneself? At times, one has bad dreams, commonly known as nightmares, often comprising frightening or horrifying images, such as death or burning bodies. Why would one inflict such troubling incidents on oneself? Additionally, the scriptures classify dreams as being auspicious and inauspicious. For instance, the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* mentions witnessing a woman in one’s dream as auspicious.<sup>653</sup> Such affirmation implies the existence of inauspicious dreams. Again, why would one want to bring ill fate upon oneself by creating inauspicious dreams?

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<sup>649</sup> (Thibaut 75)

<sup>650</sup> “Creates one who is the doer.” (Br. Up. 4.3.10)

<sup>651</sup> (Swami Madhavananda 631)

<sup>652</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 268)

<sup>653</sup> (Ch. Up. 5.2.9)

Moreover, dreams also evince prior to unseen or unheard-of objects or incidents, which may not be associated with memory. This is shown in the *Praśna Upaniṣad*, “dṛṣṭam cādṛṣṭam ca śrutam cāśrutam.”<sup>654</sup> In such cases, how can the *jīva* construct the dreams of places or scenes not witnessed by itself? In this way, Sadhu Bhadreshdas establishes Paramātman alone as the creator of the dream world.

In the state of deep sleep, the *jīva* is primarily influenced by *tamas guṇa*. It has awareness predominantly of the *kāraṇa* or the causal body, thereby all the outer and inward senses along with the notion of doership or knowership are merged in the causal body. During this state, the *jīva* is said to reside in the “puritad nādi” (one that pulls the body) within the heart. The *jīva*, in this state, is given the title “Prājña.”<sup>655</sup> Situated in the *puritad nādi*, the *jīva* incurs no demerits and enjoys the bliss of the Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman, “tadā nāḍīṣu sṛpto bhavati tam na kaścana pāpmā sprśati tejasā hi tadā sampanno bhavati.”<sup>656</sup> Sadhu Bhadreshdas understands the term ‘tejasā’ not simply as light but as the divine light of the Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. He justifies this explanation on the basis of a similar reference earlier in “yatra itatpuruṣaḥ svapiti nāma satā somya tadā sampanno bhavati.”<sup>657</sup> Here, instead of ‘tejasā,’ the term used is ‘satā,’ which is the instrumental form of ‘sat’ mentioned at the beginning of the sixth chapter, “sat eva āsit.”<sup>658</sup> In both these cases, the term ‘sat’ is interpreted as alluding to both, Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. Thus,

(sat) satā = tejasā = Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman

*Jīva* as being with the Highest Being, Parabrahman, in the *susupti avasthā* is admitted by many Vedāntic philosophers. But Sadhu Bhadreshdas stresses that it enjoys the bliss of not just Parabrahman but also Akṣarabrahman. He substantiates the same through the *Upaniṣadic* aphorism “ya eṣo’ntarhṛdaya ākāśaḥ”<sup>659</sup> The *jīva* resides in the ‘hṛdayākāśa,’ which is identified as the *Cidākāśa* form of Akṣarabrahman. This explanation is consistent with other aphorisms which also state the *Cidākāśa* Akṣarabrahman, within whom dwells the Supreme Parabrahman, such as in “sa ya eṣo’ntarhṛdaya ākāśaḥ tasminnayaṁ puruṣo manomayaḥ.”<sup>660</sup>

<sup>654</sup> “Sees the unseen, hears the unheard.” (Pr. Up. 4.5)

<sup>655</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 270)

<sup>656</sup> “When in the veins he sleeps, no actions affect him; he is surrounded by light.” (Ch. Up. 8.6.3)

<sup>657</sup> “There the puruṣa sleeps, O Somya, and is surrounded by sat.” (Ch. Up. 6.8.1)

<sup>658</sup> “There was only sat.” (Ch. Up. 6.2.1)

<sup>659</sup> “The ākāśa that resides within the heart.” (Br. Up. 2.1.17)

<sup>660</sup> “In the heart lies the ākāśa; within which prevail the Paramātman with a divine mind.” (Tai. Up. 1.6.1)



Even though the *jīva* is affirmed as enjoying the bliss of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman, it returns to the waking state. The *suṣupti avasthā* is predominated by *tamas guṇa* and thus greatly differs from the state of liberation, also referred to as the *tūrīya avasthā*, which transcends all *guṇas* of *māyā* and from where there is no return. The return of the *jīva* from deep sleep is stated in “aharahargacchantya,”<sup>661</sup> which affirms regularly going and coming back. Thus, the same *jīva* immerses and returns from the states of dream and deep sleep.

However, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* declares, “atha yadā suṣupto bhavati, yadā na kasyacana veda.”<sup>662</sup> This statement is asserted by some, such as the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools, to prove that the knowledge is not the essential nature of *jīva*. It is merely its adventitious quality. In response, Sadhu Bhadreshdas argues that such a contention would render the statements of satisfaction, such as “I slept well,” uttered after returning from the deep sleep state as meaningless. Moreover, though this *avasthā* is influenced primarily by *tamas guṇa*, the other two *guṇas* latently prevail. Thereby, knowledge, which is the effect of *sattva guṇa*, is inevitably present.<sup>663</sup> Here, Sadhu Bhadreshdas seems to be alluding to a similar argument given in the *Brahma-Sūtra* 2.3.31. In this *sūtra*, the presence of knowledge in the state of deep sleep is presented through an illustration. Just as virility that is latently present in the male child becomes manifest only in his youth, the knowledge that latently prevails in deep sleep becomes manifest only in the waking state.<sup>664</sup> Thus, knowledge is the essential nature of the *jīva*.

Furthermore, the *Sudhā* insists on reading the Br. Up. 2.1.19 in its totality, and not simply parts of it out of context. The aphorism compares the bliss experienced in the state of deep sleep with that of a prosperous king or a learned Brahmin. The bliss with which the latter sleep, not affected by any misery or pain, is similar to the bliss experienced by the *jīva* in deep sleep. The presence of *ānanda* or bliss implies the presence of knowledge.<sup>665</sup> Both bliss and knowledge are effects of *sattva guṇa*.

The *jīva*, thus, experiences the fruits of its actions through the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep. The experience of each state is real. In every state, including the states of dream and deep sleep, the *jīva* has the essential nature of knowledge.

<sup>661</sup> “Everyday comes back.” (Ch. Up. 8.3.2)

<sup>662</sup> “When in the state of deep sleep, there he knows nothing.” (Br. Up. 2.1.19)

<sup>663</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 272)

<sup>664</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Brahmasūtrasvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 238–39)

<sup>665</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 272)

#### 4.2.8. Doership

The *jīva*, as discussed earlier, has knowledge as its essential nature but also is a knower. Knowership, the *Sudhā* suggests, implies doership (*kartā*), and doership implies enjoyership (*bhoktā*). Denying doership to the *jīva* negates scriptural injunctions and renders them irrelevant.<sup>666</sup> This argument is made in the *Brahma Sūtra* 2.3.33. In his commentary, Sadhu Bhadreshdas notes that the *sūtrakāra* here alludes to those who claim *jīva*'s knowership but deny its doership.<sup>667</sup> The Sāṅkhya school, for instance, admits *puruṣa* only as pure consciousness and attributes agency to *prakṛti*. Such a contention is viewed as problematic, one of the claims being that it attributes agency to a non-sentient entity.

The *Sudhā* also cites “eṣa hi dṛṣṭā spraṣṭā śrotā grātā rasayitā mantā boddhā kartā vijñānātmā.”<sup>668</sup> This aphorism not only affirms the *jīva* as the substratum of knowledge but also the “kartā” or the doer.

However, though the *Sudhā* argues for *jīva*'s doership, it confers this doership as dependent on both Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. Going and returning from one state to another is possible only through the will of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. For the *jīva* by itself cannot fall asleep, dream or even return from it. The scriptures echo the same, such as in “parāttu tacchruteḥ.”<sup>669</sup> Here, the term ‘para’ is identified to refer to both Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. This identification is explained by noting that the *Upaniṣads* at several places use the term ‘para’ to also refer to Akṣarabrahman, as in “etaddhyevākṣaram param.”<sup>670</sup> Sadhu Bhadreshdas identifies the term ‘akṣara’ as the eternal ontological entity Akṣarabrahman; and not as a ‘word’ (like Shankaracharya<sup>671</sup>) or as the Supreme Being (like in the Ramanuja tradition<sup>672</sup>). Accordingly, both Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman regulate the *jīva*.

The dependency of *jīva*'s doership is explained through an illustration of the king and his ministers. Just as the king allocates the administration of a region to his minister,

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<sup>666</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 296)

<sup>667</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Brahmasūtrasvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 240)

<sup>668</sup> “The ātmā is the seer, toucher, hearer, smeller, taster, thinker, knower and the doer.” (Pr. Up.4.9)

<sup>669</sup> “Even that [agency] is from the supreme as declared in the scriptures.” (BS 2.3.41)

<sup>670</sup> “That Akṣara is supreme.” (Ka. Up. 2.16)

<sup>671</sup> (S. Shastri, *The Katha and Prasna Upanishads and Sri Sankara's Commentary* 35)

<sup>672</sup> (Acharya Narasimha 185)

Parabrahman imparts agency to the *jīva*.<sup>673</sup> Thus, Parabrahman and, by his will, Akṣarabrahman bestows the faculties of cognition, volition, and implementation to the *jīva* on the basis of which it can think, desire and act. *Sudhā* submits:

*Katṛtvamasya vijñeyam śubhā'śubhakriyāḥ prati |*  
*Tacca punaḥ parā'dhīnam yataḥ syāt phalanirṇayaḥ ||*<sup>674</sup>

Here, the performance of “śubha” actions is defined as those done in accordance with the words of the Satpuruṣa and the scriptures; consequently, “aśubha” actions are those done unheedingly. Parabrahman and, by his will, Akṣarabrahman grant the fruits of all such good and bad actions.

#### 4.2.9. *Jīva* in Relation to Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman

*Jīva* as the agent and the enjoyer, Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman as the bestowers of agency, highlights the essential ontological distinction between *jīva* and Parabrahman, and also *jīva* and Akṣarabrahman. The *Sudhā* describes the relation between *jīva* and Parabrahman through four correlates:

<i>Jīva</i>	Parabrahman
<i>Śarīra</i>	<i>Śarīrī</i>
<i>Vyāpya</i>	<i>Vyāpaka</i>
<i>Praśāsya</i>	<i>Praśāsaka</i>
<i>Upāsaka</i>	<i>Upāsya</i>

Table 4.2-1 Relationship between *Jīva* and Parabrahman

The *jīva* is the *śarīra* or body of the Paramātmā, while Paramātmā resides in this body as its *śarīrī* or *ātman*. The *Upaniṣad* cited to explain this is “yasya vijñānam śarīram.”<sup>675</sup> Here,

<sup>673</sup> This illustration is explained in detail in the chapter on Parabrahman.

<sup>674</sup> “Know the doership through the prescription of good and bad actions. Yet is dependent; gains fruits based on the doership.” (*Kārikā* 333)

<sup>675</sup> “The ātmā is the body of that.” (Br. Up. 3.7.22)

Sadhu Bhadreshdas identifies the term ‘vijñānam’ as ‘the *ātman*’ and ‘yasya’ as ‘of Paramātmān.’ This explanation remarkably differs from that of Shankar, who translates this statement as “the intellect is the body of the Self”<sup>676</sup> as he does not admit the distinction between the Self and Brahman (*jīvo brahmeva na paraḥ*). However, this *śarīra-śarīrī sambandha* is also advocated by the Viśiṣṭādvaitins in order to explain the relation of *īśvara* with the individual *ātman* (*cit*) and the material world (*acit*). Despite the similarity in the terminology, that there are differences in the understandings of the Viśiṣṭādvaita and the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. Firstly, the difference lies in the nature of the relationship.<sup>677</sup> The Viśiṣṭādvaitins admit the body-ātman analogy within the framework of *Aprthak Siddhi* according to which *īśvara* and *jīva* are like substance (*aśī*) and its attribute (*aśī*) respectively, that cannot exist as separate (*aprthak*) entities. But the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta, on the other hand, endorses the ontological distinction between *jīva* and Parabrahman. While remaining ever ontologically distinct, Parabrahman pervades *jīva* just as the *ātman* pervades the body.

Secondly, while the Viśiṣṭādvaitins uphold only the individual *ātmā* and the material world as the body of *īśvara*, the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana upholds:

[A]kṣarabrahman as also the body or *śarīra* of Parabrahman. As the *ātman* or *śarīrin*, Parabrahman is recognized as residing within all *jīvātmans* and *īśvarātmans*, the liberated (*muktātmans*), *māyā* and Akṣarabrahman.<sup>678</sup>

Thus, Parabrahman reigns supreme over all the five ontological entities. The other correlates that describe the relation between *jīva* and Parabrahman are centred on this framework. The *Sudhā* asserts that since Parabrahman is the *ātman* of the *jīva*, the former is eternally the pervader (*vyāpaka*) and the latter is the pervaded (*vyāpya*). As its in-dweller, Parabrahman controls the actions of the *jīva*. Thereby, the former is the controller (*praśāsaka*), and the latter is the controlled (*praśāsyā*). Moreover, the *jīva*, in order to attain release from *māyā*, worships Parabrahman while maintaining a master-servant relationship. The *jīva* is thus the worshipper (*upāsaka*), while Parabrahman is the worshipped (*upāsyā*).<sup>679</sup> This last correlate

<sup>676</sup> (Swami Madhavananda 509)

<sup>677</sup> (Thacker 90)

<sup>678</sup> (Thacker 90)

<sup>679</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 281)

is significant, as it accentuates that Jīva ultimately worships no other entity apart from the Supreme Being.

Since the *jīva* is essentially different from Parabrahman, it seems to contradict all those statements that purport apposition (*sāmānyadhikaraṇa*), such as “tat tvam asi,”<sup>680</sup> “aham brahmāsmi,”<sup>681</sup> “āyāmātmā brahman,”<sup>682</sup> “brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati.”<sup>683</sup> These are the foundational aphorisms of Shankar’s Advaita Darśana. They all seem to direct one towards the non-dualism of the *ātman* and Brahman. The *ātman* is nothing but an adjunct (*aṁśa*) of Brahman that is limited by ignorance (*avidyā*). This is explained through the illustration of ether and a pot—just as the ether seems to be limited in a pot, the *ātman* is limited by ignorance.<sup>684</sup> Once the ignorance is removed, *ātman* realises its true self, Brahman. To elucidate the same, the *ātman* is also described as a reflection of Brahman. From the absolute point of view, only Brahman prevails. But from the empirical perspective, various *ātmā* seem to exist like the sun and its reflection in water.<sup>685</sup> These two illustrations later became crucial in founding of two different perspectives within Advaita Darśana—the *Avaccedavāda* attributed to Vācaspati Miśra, and *Bimb-Pratibimbavāda* attributed to Prakāśātman.

The *Sudhā* argues against both these perspectives. Against *Avaccedavāda*, which understands the *jīva* as an aspect or adjunct of Brahman, *Sudhā* notes that that aspect of Brahman would come under the spell of *māyā*. This would impose defects to the nature of Brahman.<sup>686</sup> However, the *jīva* as an *aṁśa* of Brahman is also asserted by the *Śrīti* (such as BS 2.3.43). The *Sudhā* responds to such statements by offering a distinctive definition of the term ‘aṁśa.’ The Jīva is an *aṁśa* of Brahman in the sense that it acquires the various divine virtues of Akṣarabrahman such as truth, compassion, and the like, and has overcome *māyā* by conquering one’s base instincts.<sup>687</sup> Sadhu Bhadreshdas enforces that being an *aṁśa* does not imply an ontological oneness but a qualitative oneness.

Further, against *Bimb-Pratibimbavāda*, the *Sudhā* notes that the reflection of Brahman that takes place due to *avidyā* posits a dualism of Brahman and *māyā*. Thus, it annuls the very

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<sup>680</sup>“You are that.” (Ch. Up. 6.8.7)

<sup>681</sup> “I am Brahman.” (Br. Up. 1.4.10)

<sup>682</sup> “This ātmā is Brahman.” (Ma. Up. 1.2)

<sup>683</sup>“Knowing Brahman, one becomes Brahman.” (Mu. Up. 3.2.9)

<sup>684</sup> (Swami Vireswarananda 264)

<sup>685</sup> (Swami Vireswarananda 326)

<sup>686</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 282)

<sup>687</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 283)

foundation of Advaita Darśana. Moreover, the Advaita Darśana endorses an attributeless Brahman devoid of all determinations, which cannot serve as a prototype for reflection. The *Avaccedavādin*s make a similar criticism:

[t]here is stated an impossibility of reflection, since, just as in the case of the sun that has colour, water is apprehended as capable of generating a reflection, being at a distance from that (sun) and (itself) possessing colour, there is no similarity in the case of the omnipresent self anything at a distance from it capable of generating a reflection.<sup>688</sup>

Even if Brahman is assumed as capable of generating a reflection, it cannot generate the reflection of *jīva*. The nature of a reflection is as that of its prototype, but the *jīva* is conditioned by *avidyā* and thereby differs from its prototype, Brahman.<sup>689</sup> Through such reasoning, Sadhu Bhadreshdas refutes the varying claims that admit the qualitative oneness of *jīva* and Brahman.

For the Advaitins, the *jīva* seems to be different from Brahman due to the presence of *avidyā*. The question posed by other schools is regarding the locus of this *avidyā*—is the locus of *avidyā* Brahman or *jīva*? The *Sudhā* refutes both these possibilities. Brahman, conspicuously, cannot be the locus of *avidyā* as Brahman is pure and ever untouched by *avidyā*. *Jīva* as a locus is also ousted as it leads to the fallacy of reciprocal dependence (*anyonyāśraya*).<sup>690</sup> If *jīva* is claimed to exist due to the presence of *avidyā*, how can *jīva* be the locus of *avidyā*?

The Advaitins respond by offering the *bija-ankura nyāya* to explain the relationship between *jīva* and *avidyā*. Vācaspati Miśra remarks:

True, there is reciprocal dependence, but it is not a defect because of beginninglessness as between seed and sprout.<sup>691</sup>

Sadhu Bhadreshdas counters the same by noting that such an explanation would make both *jīva* and *avidyā* absolute (*pāramārthika*).<sup>692</sup> The beginninglessness of *jīva* and *avidyā* implies

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<sup>688</sup> (Sastri 175)

<sup>689</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 283)

<sup>690</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 282)

<sup>691</sup> (Sastri and Raja 234)

<sup>692</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 286)

their eternality like the absolute entity Brahman and thereby goes against the very fundamental proposition of Advaita Darśana.

While discussing the relation of *jīva* and Brahman, the *Sudhā* also denies the relation between the two as that of the spark and fire. Such a relationship is endorsed by the Śuddhādvaita school, which holds individual *ātman* as a part (*aṁśa*) of the larger whole, Brahman.<sup>693</sup> Sadhu Bhadresdhas argues that fire is ignited through the coming together of certain elements. When these elements disseminate, the fire extinguishes. In the same manner, Brahman and the agglomeration of the individual *ātman* also have the potential of being destroyed.<sup>694</sup> This way, the *Sudhā* refutes various ontological associations between *jīva* and Brahman.

The *Upaniṣadic* statements that showcase apposition are interpreted as affirming the qualitative oneness of the *jīva* with Akṣarabrahman. For instance, in “brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati,”<sup>695</sup> the term ‘brahman’ is understood as referring to the manifest Akṣarabrahman Guru, and ‘veda’ is realising his nature and virtues through his profound association. Sadhu Bhadresdhas, thus, concludes “parabrahmopāsanaupayikabrahmaguṇasāmyanibandhanā sāmānādhī karaṇyoktiḥ na tu svarupā'bhedā'bhiprāyikā.”<sup>696</sup>

In the backdrop of such an interpretation, the *Sudhā* elucidates the relationship of *jīva* and Akṣarabrahman. This relationship is termed as “tādātmya sambandha,”<sup>697</sup> the relation of becoming alike, of emulation. In order to attain release from the material world, the *jīva* must cultivate this relationship and become like the Akṣarabrahman Guru. However, as expounded in the chapter on Akṣarabrahman, the Guru is the human-abode of Parabrahman. Therefore, the *Sudhā* integrates one more aspect to this relationship between *jīva* and Akṣarabrahman. When the *jīva* realises the Akṣarabrahman Guru as the upholder of Parabrahman in entirety (*samyak*), it cultivates the relationship of a master and servant, *svāmi-sevaka bhāva sambandha*, with Parabrahman. Thus, the relationship of *jīva* and Akṣarabrahman is two-

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<sup>693</sup> (Vallabhacharya 69)

<sup>694</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 288)

<sup>695</sup> “Knowing Brahman, one becomes Brahman.” (Mu. Up. 3.2.9)

<sup>696</sup> “Sāmānādhikaraṇa denotes the qualitative likeness with Akṣarabrahman for the worship of Parabrahman. It does not denote a metaphysical non-duality.” (Bhadreshdas, *Īśadyaṣṭopaniṣatsvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 299)

<sup>697</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 281) The *tādātmya sambandha* mentioned here is different from the *tādātmya sambandha* of the Naiyāyikas. The Naiyāyikas explain *tādātmya sambandha* in terms of *abhed sambandha* whereby the object is always absolutely identical with itself. (Ingalalli, *Tādātmya Sambandha: A Study in Relation of Identity* 47)

fold—the *jīva* not only attains the purity and virtues of the Akṣarabrahman Guru through the *tādātmya sambandha* but also worships Parabrahman manifest in and by him through the *svāmi-sevaka bhāva sambandha*. This two-fold relationship maintains Parabrahman as the sole entity worthy of worship and Akṣarabrahman as the ideal devotee worthy of emulation.

#### 4.2.10. Multiplicity

The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta endorses the multiplicity of the sentient entity *jīva*. Though being ontologically identical, each individual *ātman* is mutually distinct. Such multiplicity is in direct opposition to the Advaitin view of one *ātman*, for it is ultimately non-different from Brahman. Shankar explains the multiplicity to be merely apparent:

[t]hey (the various individual *ātmā*) are like reflections in water of the one sun, meaning thereby that these forms are unreal, being due only to limiting adjuncts.<sup>698</sup>

Here again, the *Bimb-Pratibimbavādins* and the *Avaccedavādins* adopt different perspectives and imagery. While the former claim that just as the reflection of the sun seems to be manifold due to reflections in different water bodies, Brahman appears to be manifold in the form of various individual *ātmā*. The latter accentuates the notion of “limiting adjuncts” through the illustration of ether—just as ether appears to be many when limited by various objects such as pot etc., Brahman appears to be limited due to ignorance (*avidyā*). The *Sudhā* responds to the Advaitins, including these perspectives, by reducing them to the *vibhuparimāṇavādins*.<sup>699</sup> Since the individual *ātmā* are merely reflections or adjuncts of Brahman, they would be endowed with the all-pervasiveness of Brahman. Accordingly, the criticism charged against the *vibhuparimāṇavādins* would also apply to the Advaita Darśana.

Sadhu Bhadreshdas ratifies the multiplicity to *jīva* systematically on the basis of perception and scriptural references. He notes that differences in individual *ātmā* are reflected in differences commonly perceived in experience, nature, activity, fruits of activity, ultimate destination:

*Jīvā nānā tu vijñeyāḥ pratyakṣabhedapratyayāt |*

<sup>698</sup> (Swami Vireswarananda 326)

<sup>699</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 283)



The *Sudhā* begins by pointing out the commonly perceived differences, such as different persons engaging in diverse activities at a particular moment. Sadhu Bhadreshdas provides a guru-centric illustration for the same, revealing, as in many other instances, his profound connection with his guru. While one may be engaged in *darśana* of the guru, one in listening to the verses glorifying the guru, one in writing such a verse, yet another in sketching his divine form.<sup>701</sup> All these various activities are performed simultaneously by different persons, thereby showcasing their multiplicity. Moreover, the experiences of happiness and pain also differ for each individual. The *Upaniṣads* also affirm this multiplicity, as there are terms such as ‘bahavaḥ,’<sup>702</sup> (many beings), ‘cetanānām’<sup>703</sup> (various sentient beings) that refer to all animate and inanimate beings encompassing all *jīvas* and *īśvaras*.<sup>704</sup>

Since each individual performs different activities, the consequences of these activities also differ, as said in “ye tadviduramṛtāste bhavanti athetare duḥkhamevāpiyanti.”<sup>705</sup> Thereby, those who engage in the realisation of Brahman overcome the cycles of birth and death, while those who do not remain immersed in this endless cycle. If *jīva* were not plural, such a distinction would lose relevance. Further, the *Upaniṣads* also mention the path of light and darkness.<sup>706</sup> Those who attain the path of light never return to the material world. These and many such references are cited to establish the existence of multiple *jīvas*.

The *Sudhā* clarifies that the mutual distinction amongst *jīvas* prevails even after the ultimate abode. They do not merge with Brahman but ever remain ontologically distinct. Sadhu Bhadreshdas defines “anekatva” of *jīvas* as the presence of infinite individual *ātmā*.<sup>707</sup> It is not possible to denominate the “first” *ātman* that was created or liberated, for infinite *ātmā* are part of this eternal path of creation and liberation.

These multiple *ātmā* that are in bondage are classified under two categories, *daivi* or those *jīvas* on the path of acquiring divine virtues and *āsuri* or those *jīvas* that have taken the path

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<sup>700</sup> “Jīva are many in number, know this through the differences perceived. These various actions bear respective fruits of happiness etc.” (*Kārikā* 339)

<sup>701</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 285)

<sup>702</sup> (Ka. Up. 2.7)

<sup>703</sup> (Ka. Up. 5.13)

<sup>704</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Īśadyaṣṭopaniṣatsvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 155)

<sup>705</sup> “Those who know attain immortality, while others remain in misery.” (Br. Up. 4.4.14)

<sup>706</sup> (Ch. Up. 5.10.2-3)

<sup>707</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 287)

of vices.<sup>708</sup> Unlike some Vedānta schools, such as that of Nimbarka, Madhva and Vallabh, the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana does not accept the notion of the *nitya-saṃsārī* or the eternally damned. All *jīvas* are entitled and capable of attaining liberation. However, the classification of *daivi* and *āsuri jīvas* is primarily to highlight the distinction between those in association with the Akṣarabrahman Guru and on the path of liberation from those who have been misled due to their association with vices. This classification is not deemed to be eternal and, thus, even *āsuri jīvas* can become virtuous and attain liberation through the association with the Akṣarabrahman Guru.

### 4.3. *Īśvara*

#### 4.3.1. Nature and Form of *Īśvara*

The term ‘*Īśvara*’ is derived from the verb ‘*īśa*,’ which means *to rule, govern, or command* (*īśati*). Accordingly, it is variously applied to denote that which rules the universe, that is, Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman (as in the *Īśa Up.* 1), or at times to denote the creator Brahmā. It is also used to suggest one who owns something in abundance or, at times, also signifies the “master of” or “husband of,” such as in “*rameśa*,” the husband of *Ramā*.<sup>709</sup>

The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta uses the term ‘*Īśvara*’ to denote a distinct ontological entity. *Īśvara* is a real eternal sentient entity which, like *jīva*, prevails within the realm of *māyā*. Thus, *Īśvara* is similar to *jīva* in its nature and form, yet they remain ontologically distinct. By the will of Parabrahman, *īśvaras* possess greater powers or enhanced faculties and knowledge for the purpose of carrying out various administrative functions of a particular universe. *Īśvara*, like *jīva*, are multiple, has an atomic form, is essentially *sat-cit-ānanda*, perform good or bad actions, experience the fruits of such actions, is entitled to liberation through the association and qualitative oneness with the Akṣarabrahman Guru, and herewith worship of Parabrahman. Thus, the greater power does not exempt *īśvara* from the prerequisites of liberation.

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<sup>708</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 292)

<sup>709</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 294–95)

Sadhu Bhadreshdas presents scriptural evidence to support the ontological reality of *īśvara*, such as “*tamīśvarāṇām param maheśvaram.*”<sup>710</sup> Here, Parabrahman is described as the ruler and cause of all *īśvaras*. In another such aphorism from the *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, “*lokapālannu sṛjā iti,*”<sup>711</sup> Sadhu Bhadreshdas notes that the Parabrahman not only creates the phenomenal worlds but also regulates the world through the guardians.<sup>712</sup> He argues that all such statements would lose relevance by denying the reality of *īśvara*.

Since *īśvaras* are influenced by *māyā*, they are associated with its three bodies and states. The *Sudhā* elucidates each of these based on the teachings of Swaminarayan.

*Virāḍatha sūtrātmā tutiyo'vyākṛtastathā |*  
*īśvarasya trayo dehāḥ sahaḥjānandabodhitāḥ ||*<sup>713</sup>

Accordingly, the three bodies of *īśvara* are, namely, *virāṭ*, *sūtrātmā* and *avyākṛta*. They are composed of elements that proceed from *māyā*. However, these bodies cannot enable *īśvara* in performing service and devotion towards the manifest forms of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. It is only when, by the will of Parabrahman, the *īśvara* attains the *sthūla* and *sukṣma* bodies of the *jīva* can it engage in such service and devotion and attain the state of *brahmabhāva*.<sup>714</sup>

The *īśvara* enjoys the fruits of various activities through three states, *sthiti*, *utpatti* and *pralaya*, which correspond to the *jīva*'s *jāgrata*, *svapna* and *suṣupti* states, respectively. In the state of *sthiti*, *īśvara* is primarily influenced by *sattva guṇa*. It has awareness predominantly of the *virāṭ* body and is known as “Vairāja.” In the state of *utpatti*, *īśvara* is primarily influenced by *rajas*. It has awareness predominantly of the *sūtrātmā* body and is known as “Hiraṇyagarbha.” In the state of *pralaya*, *īśvara* is primarily influenced by *tamas*. It has awareness predominantly of the *avyākṛta* body and is known as “*īśvara*.” Further, Sadhu Bhadreshdas specifies that the dream-world of *īśvara*, like that of *jīva*, is also created by Paramātmā.<sup>715</sup> Thereby, the arguments raised for the same in the case of *jīva* also hold true here.

<sup>710</sup> “Supreme is the *īśvara* of all *īśvaras*.” (Sve. Up. 6.9)

<sup>711</sup> “Created the guardians of the world.” (Ai. Up. 1.1.2)

<sup>712</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Īsadyaṣṭopaniṣatsvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 418–19)

<sup>713</sup> “*Virāṭ*, *sūtrātmā* and *avyākṛta* are the three bodies of *īśvara* as explained by Sahajanand.” (*Kārikā* 350)

<sup>714</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 296)

<sup>715</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 296–97)

The association and disassociation of the *jīva* and *īśvara* with their three bodies inform their *anvaya* and *vyatireka* forms.<sup>716</sup> The *anvaya* form of *jīva* and *īśvara* is their association with the three bodies, *sthūla*, *sukṣma* and *kāraṇa*, and *virāt*, *sūtrātmā* and *avyākṛta* respectively. However, their essential form as sentient, intelligent, pure and blissful, distinct from their respective bodies, is called the *vyatireka* form of *jīva* and *īśvara*.

#### 4.3.2. *Jīva* and *īśvara*

*īśvara*, like *jīva*, are many and mutually distinct. The entity *īśvara* comprises primarily sentient beings involved in the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the material world. It includes *pradhāna-puruṣa*, the master (*adhipati*) of each world as nominated by Akṣara and Puruṣottama, *vairāja-puruṣa* proceeds from *pradhāna-puruṣa*, the four *vyuhas*, Vāsudeva, Śankarasana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha along with Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa that proceed from *vairāja-puruṣa*, the various *avatāras* and deities such as Sūrya, Varuṇa etc.<sup>717</sup> The *Sudhā* informs that these sentient beings cannot be deemed as *daivi jīvas* as *īśvara* essentially, by nature, possess supernatural powers.<sup>718</sup> Though a *jīva* may attain such or similar powers as a result of performing certain austerities, these powers would remain “accidental” (*āgantuka*) as opposed to “essential” (*svābhāvika*).

The distinction between *jīva* and *īśvara* is real and eternal. No *jīva* can ever become *pradhāna-puruṣa*, *vairāja-puruṣa*, Brahmā or any other such *īśvara*. The *jīva* will always retain its essential nature and form. Swaminarayan enforces the distinction between *jīva* and *īśvara*:

The five *bhūtas* residing in the body of *īśvara* are known as *mahā bhūtas*, and those *bhūtas* sustain the bodies of all *jīvas*. On the other hand, the five *bhūtas* in the body of the *jīva* are minor and incapable of sustaining others. Also, the *jīva* possesses limited knowledge compared to *īśvara*, who is all-knowing. One should learn such a method of interpretation so that the *jīva* and *īśvara* are not understood to be equal to each other.<sup>719</sup>

<sup>716</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 275, 297)

<sup>717</sup> [See table of Cosmic creation in the section of *Māyā*]

<sup>718</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 300)

<sup>719</sup> (Vac. Pancālā 2)

Such clarity in the distinction seems to rule out discrepancies in understanding *jīva* and *īśvara* as separate ontological entities.

Even when *īśvara* acquires the *sthūla* and *sukṣma* bodies of *jīva*, it never essentially becomes *jīva*. Though *īśvara* is superior to *jīva* in terms of powers, knowledge and bliss, it needs to acquire a birth in the material world for attaining *brahmabhāva*. Thus, it can be said that from the soteriological perspective, *jīva*, when in a human body, is fortunate to attain the association with the Akṣarabrahman Guru. This fortune is extolled in various devotional songs (*bhajans*) of the *sampradāya*.

#### 4.3.3. Parabrahman and *īśvara*

The various functions of creation, sustenance etc. that *īśvara* engages in are possible only through the will and grace of Parabrahman. The *Sudhā* affirms the superiority of Parabrahman over *īśvara* through the *Upaniṣadic* statements, such as “*tamīśvarāṇām param mahēśvaram.*”<sup>720</sup> Moreover, the bliss of Paramātmā is stated to be infinitely greater than that of *īśvara*. The *Sudhā* validates this through the *Vacanāmṛta* where Swaminarayan compares the bliss of Parabrahman and *īśvara* with a rich philanthropic merchant and the poor for whom he donates.<sup>721</sup> This echoes the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.8.2 which describes the degree of bliss in an ascending order starting from humans to *Gandharvas*, gods of the Devaloka, Indra, Bṛhaspati, Prajāpati and Akṣarabrahman. The bliss of Akṣarabrahman is stated as equal to a hundred Prajāpatīs, while the bliss of Parabrahman is infinitely greater than that of Akṣarabrahman. Thus, *īśvara* is not just ontologically distinct from Parabrahman but also subordinate to Parabrahman in every way.

Parabrahman voluntarily engages in creation through the various sentient beings that belong to the category *īśvara*. The *Sudhā* specifies that Parabrahman is neither dependent on the process of cosmic creation nor on any *īśvara* for unfolding and regulating the universe. But he does so only by his sovereign will.<sup>722</sup> If he so wills, he can surpass the entire cosmological process and create or dissolve the world independently.

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<sup>720</sup> “Supreme is the *īśvara* of all *īśvaras*.” (Sve. Up. 6.9)

<sup>721</sup> (Vac. Pancālā 1)

<sup>722</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 300)

Another important topic that the *Sudhā* discusses under the relation between Parabrahman and *īśvara* is on the notion of “avatāra.” Sadhu Bhadreshdas throws light on the three related yet different etymological meanings of the term ‘avatāra.’ All the three meanings stem from the verbal root ‘ṭṛ’ when attached to the prefix ‘ava’ and the suffix ‘ghañ.’ The first meaning refers to the descend of Parabrahman himself (*avataraṇam*), the second refers to that *through* which Parabrahman descends (*avatarati anena*; instrumental case), and the third refers to that *in* whom Parabrahman descends (*avatarati asmin*; locative case).<sup>723</sup> Accordingly, not just Parabrahman, but also the instrument through which he descends, such as his divine body and those in whom he descends, come under the umbrella of *avatāras*.<sup>724</sup>

With reference to the third meaning, Parabrahman is stated to manifest or “anupraveśa” (literally meaning *an entry*) with greater powers for a particular purpose. For this, he may voluntarily manifest in such a manner in either *īśvara* or even *jīva*. In either case, the *Sudhā* warns against confounding *īśvara* or *jīva* with Parabrahman, as *anupraveśa* does not change the essential form of the entity.<sup>725</sup> Thus, Parabrahman, at his will, incarnates through any *īśvara* or *jīva* resulting in many *avatāras*.

The released *ātmā* are superior to the *avatāras* as they have transcended *māyā* and worship Parabrahman in that state of transcendence. Even greater than the released *ātmā* is the Akṣarabrahman as it is in constant communion of Parabrahman who manifests within Akṣarabrahman in entirety at all times (*samyak*). For this reason, the “avataraṇa” or descend of Akṣarabrahman on earth as the Akṣarabrahman Guru is distinct from “avatāra.” Parabrahman manifests within the Akṣarabrahman Guru with all his virtues and powers but manifests only temporally in the *avatāras* for fulfilling a particular purpose.

Parabrahman ever remains the supreme, the cause of all *avatāras*, and thus is referred to as “avatārī.”<sup>726</sup> The term ‘avatārī’ is commonly used in the *sampradāya* to denote Swaminarayan as one who descended on earth without any *anupraveśa* in or through *jīva* or *īśvara*. It is used primarily to distinguish Parabrahman Swaminarayan from other *avatāras*, of whom he is the cause and regulator. This distinction can be observed in the invocation of this chapter:

<sup>723</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 303)

<sup>724</sup> This understanding of *avatāravāda* is elucidated in great detail in a *sampradāyic*, yet academic, work titled ‘*Śrī Swaminarayan Sampradāya mā Avatāra-Avatārī Nirupāṇa*’ by scholar Sadhu Shrutiprakashadas (2005).

<sup>725</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 302–03)

<sup>726</sup> (Bhadreshdas, *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā* 303)

*Īśvara īśvarāṇām yaḥ sarvā'vatārakāraṇam |*  
*Tamaham sahaṇānandam svāminārāyaṇam bhaje ||*<sup>727</sup>

Here, the words ‘sarvā'vatārakāraṇam’ imply Swaminarayan as the “avatārī.” The relation between the *avatāra* and *avatārī* is primarily that of a cause-and-effect (*kārya-kāraṇa bhāva*).<sup>728</sup> The *avatārī* is ever the cause, regulator, and controller of the *avatāra*. The *avatāra*, thereby, is neither a *svarūpa* nor *aṁśa* of the *avatārī*.

#### 4.4. Summary

*Māyā* is an eternal non-sentient ontological entity possessing the three *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, and forms the material cause of the universe. It is also known as “prakṛti” and “paramātmaśakti,” for *māyā* unfolds with power and will of Parabrahman. This creation that takes various shapes and forms evokes wonder and deludes the knowledge of the forms of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. In this sense, *māyā* is also referred to as *avidyā* and *vāsanā* that generates attachment to the material world.

*Māyā* unfolds and transforms into various elements. Each element is an effect of its preceding element within which it prevails in a latent form. Thus, Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta upholds the *satkāryavāda* theory of causation. The cosmic process begins with Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman, who then inspire *mūla-puruṣa* and *mūla-prakṛti* to form the various pairs of *pradhāna-puruṣa*. From each *pradhāna-puruṣa* proceed *mahat (cit)*, *sattva ahaṅkāra*, *rajas ahaṅkāra* and *tamas ahaṅkāra*, respectively. This process leads to the rise of *mana*, *buddhi*, *indriyas*, *prāṇa*, and *tan mātrās* that form the subtle part of the body. Each *tan mātrā* transforms into its respective gross element, which together forms the various material objects through the process of quintuplication (*pañcikaṇa*). Each element of this cosmic process is essentially non-sentient and temporary and dissolves into *mūla-prakṛti* during the process of dissolution.

This process differs from other theories of creation like the *svabhāvavāda* of the Cārvāka, *aṇuvāda* of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools, *prakṛtivāda* of the classical (*nirbij*) Sāṅkhya, and *śūnyavāda* of the Mādhyamikas.

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<sup>727</sup> “The one who is the Īśvara of the Īśvaras and the cause of all avatāras; to you Sahajanand Swaminarayan, I bow in reverence.” (*Kārikā* 294)

<sup>728</sup> (Shrutiprakashdas, *Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya mā Avatāra-Avatārī Nirupāṇa* 96)

Time (*kāla*) is explained as a created concept. Time is not an independent eternal entity but is a degree of measure (*upādhi*) created for day-to-day purposes. It is dependent or relative to a particular object or activity. It seems to be eternal due to the eternal process of creation and dissolution. The process of dissolution is of four kinds, *Nitya Pralaya*, *Naimitika Pralaya*, *Prakṛti Pralaya* and *Ātyāntika Pralaya*. *Ātyāntika Pralaya* marks the dissolution of the entire universe. As a thought process, *Ātyāntika Pralaya* is also referred to as *Jñāna Pralaya*, which entails constant thought of the temporality of creation. This thought avoids attachment to the various material objects and cultivates attachment with the eternally pure Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman.

*Jīva* and *īśvara* are sentient ontologically entities that are ever influenced by the power of *māyā*. The nature of *jīva* and *īśvara* essentially constitutes knowledge. They are not only self-aware (*sva rūpa-bhūta jñāna*) but also acquire knowledge of other objects (*guṇa-bhūta jñāna*). They are also essentially pure and blissful whilst enjoying the bliss of other objects. They are entitled to acquire and enjoy the knowledge of the forms of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman through the association with the Akṣarabrahman Guru. This attainment does not change the essential nature of *jīva* and *īśvara* but enables them to transcend *māyā* and realise the ultimate goal of liberation.

The form of *jīva* and *īśvara* is atomic. It resides in the heart in its essential nature of *sat-cit-ānanda*. This is known as the *vyatireka* form of *jīva* and *īśvara*. Through its knowledge, the *ātman* pervades across the body and engages in various actions, which is known as the *anvaya* form of *jīva* and *īśvara*.

The three bodies that are firmly attached to *jīva* are the gross (*sthūla*), subtle (*sūkṣma*) and the causal (*kāraṇa*). The gross body is made of the gross elements and destroys upon death. The subtle body comprises of the various sensory organs, including the four *antaḥkaraṇas* and the five *prāṇas*. This body, along with the causal body, transmigrates with the *ātman* to the next body. The causal body is the root of the gross and subtle bodies and is the cause of the *jīva's* bondage in the cycle of birth and death. While the subtle body is destroyed with *Ātyāntika Pralaya*, the causal body continues and remains dormant in *mūla-prakṛti*. It is only destroyed with the attainment of liberation. The corresponding bodies of *īśvara* are *virāṭ*, *sūtrātmā* and *avyākṛta*. However, *īśvara* can only attain liberation when it acquires the subtle and gross bodies of *jīva* and associates with the Akṣarabrahman Guru.



The *jīva* and *īśvara* experience fruits of their actions through the three states (*avasthā*). The three states of the *jīva* are waking, dream and deep sleep. The corresponding states of *īśvara* are *sthiti*, *utpatti* and *pralaya*. Despite the association with these bodies and states, the *jīva* and *īśvara* remain essentially pure and distinct from them. Upon liberation, the *jīva* and *īśvara*, while retaining their essential distinction, attain the fourth body known as the *brāhmī-tanu* and experience the fourth state, *turīya avasthā*.

Both *jīva* and *īśvara* are multiple in number and mutually distinct. The *jīvas* comprise of the countless animate and inanimate beings on earth, while *īśvaras* comprise of *pradhāna-puruṣa*, *vairāja-puruṣa*, the four *Vyūhas* including Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa, and other deities. These *īśvaras*, by the will and power of Parabrahman, engage in the various administrative tasks of a particular universe. They are endowed with greater powers and knowledge than *jīva*.

Parabrahman pervades both *jīva* and *īśvara* and dwells in them as their *śarīrī*. He bestows them the faculties of thinking, feeling and acting; hence the *jīva* and *īśvara* are ever dependent and subordinate to Parabrahman. Even after liberation, the *jīva* and *īśvara* never become Parabrahman but serve him by maintaining a master-servant relationship. The *jīva* and *īśvara* also never become Akṣarabrahman but acquire the auspicious virtues like Akṣarabrahman through the association with the Akṣarabrahman Guru.

Parabrahman, by his will, may incarnate by manifesting greater power in *īśvara* or *jīva* for performing certain functions. Such incarnation of Parabrahman is known as an “*avatāra*.” Parabrahman, as the cause of the *avatāra*, is referred to as the “*avatārī*.” The *avatāra* and *avatārī*, thus, remain ontologically distinct.

Entity	Nature and Form	Upaniṣadic References
<b><i>Māyā</i></b>	<i>Māyā</i> as <i>prakṛti</i> and the power of Parabrahman	“māyāṁ tu prakṛtiṁ vidyamānmāyinaṁ ca maheśvaram.” (Sve. Up. 4.10)
	Temporality of all elements of creation	“etasmājjāyate prāṇo manaḥ sarvendriyāṇi ca khaṁ

		vāyurjyotirāpaḥ" (Mu. Up. 2.1.3)
	The five <i>prāṇas</i>	"prāṇo'pāno vyāna udānaḥ samano'na ityetatsarvaṁ prāṇa eva" (1.5.3)
	Dissolution of creation in Akṣarabrahman	"akṣarādvividhāḥ somya bhāvāḥ prajāyante tatra caivāpiyanti" (Mu. Up. 2.1.1)
<b><i>Jīvātman and Īśvarātman</i></b>	<i>Ātman</i> as a knower and agent	"esa hi dṛṣṭā spraṣṭā śrotā grātā rasayitā mantā boddhā kartā" (Pr. Up. 4.9)
	Senses as instruments for knowledge	"ātha yo vededaṁ jigrāṇīti sa ātmā" (Ch. Up. 8.12.4)
	<i>Ātman</i> as <i>aṇu</i>	"eṣo'nurātmā chetsā veditavyaḥ" (Mu. Up 3.1.9)
	Resides in the heart	"guhāṁ praviśya" (Ch. Up. 8.1.1)
	Parabrahman creates the dream world	"sṛjate sa hi kartā" (Br. Up. 4.3.10)
	Experience of the bliss of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman in deep sleep	"tadā nādiṣu sṛpto bhavati tam na kaścana pāpmā spṛṣati tejasā hi sampanno bhavati" (Ch. Up. 8.6.3)
	Parabrahman as residing in the <i>ātman</i>	"yasya vijñānaṁ śarīram" (Br. Up. 3.7.22)
	Multiplicity	"cetanānām" (Ka. Up. 2.7)
	Parabrahman as cause of	"tamīśvarāṇām paraṁ

	<i>īśvaras</i>	maheśvaram” (Sv. Up. 6.9)
	Parabrahman regulates through <i>īśvara</i>	"lokapālannu sṛjā iti"(Ai. Up. 3.4)

Table 4.4-1 *Māyā, Jīva and Īśvara: Upaniṣadic References*