Introduction

The term Sukṣma-srṣṭi literally means the 'Creation of the subtle', as compared to the term Sthula-srṣṭi which is the creation of the gross world that is perceived through the senses. 'Subtle' by definition is that which is not perceived by the senses – yad indriyaiḥ na upalabhyate tatsukṣmam. The following four fall under the category of subtle:

1. Jñānendriyas - the organs of knowledge like the ears, eyes etc.,
2. Antahkarana - the inner instruments of mind, intellect, memory and ego,
3. Karmendriyas - the organs of action like the hands, legs etc.,
4. Prāṇās or the vital airs.

Also, all the above four are created from the sukṣma-bhūtās (subtle elements or tanmātras) and hence they fall under the category of sukṣma-srṣṭi. This is in contrast to the gross world which is created from the sthūla-bhūtās.

In this essay we shall elaborate on the first two aspects of the sukṣma-srṣṭi - the jñānendriyas and antahkaraṇa.

The Creation from the Tanmatras

The tanmātras or the subtle elements are born from māyā that has a predominance of tāmas. The general rule of causation is — 'as the cause so the effect'. Hence the tanmātras of ākāśa, vāyu, agni, āpaḥ and prthivī also have a preponderance of tāmas with a lesser proportion of rajas and a still lesser proportion of sattva. From the tāmasic aspect of the tanmātra after grossification through the pāñcikaraṇa process is born the gross world; from the rajasic

1For sukṣma-bhūtās or tanmātras refer to November 2003 issue of Tapovan Prasad.
2The pāñcikaraṇa process will be elaborated in the later essays in the context of sthūla-srṣṭi.
aspect is born the prānas and the organs of action and from the sattvic aspect is born the antahkaraṇa and the organs of knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Aspect Of The Tanmātra</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tamas</td>
<td>Gross World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rajas</td>
<td>Karmendriyas &amp; Prānas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sattva</td>
<td>Jñānendriyas &amp; Antahkarana</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Tamas* is of the nature of inertia (*jadalakṣaṇā*). The gross world is inert and insentient and is hence said to arise from the *tamas* aspect of the tanmātras. *Rajas* is of the nature of action (*pṛavr̥ttilakṣaṇā*) and since the *karmendriyas* (hands, legs etc) and the five vital airs (*prānas*) are intent on activity, they are said to be born from the *rajas* aspect of the *tanmātras*. *Sattva* is of the nature of knowledge (*jñānalakṣaṇa*) and it is from *sattva* that knowledge arises — *sattvāt sañjāyate jñānam*. Hence both these faculties of knowledge — the *jñānendriyas* and the *antahkaraṇa* (inner equipment of mind + intellect + memory + ego) are said to originate from the *sattva* aspect of the *tanmātras*.

**The *jñānendriyas***

The word *‘jñānendriya’* means organ (*indriya*) of knowledge (*jñāna*). They are totally five in number as enumerated in *Vedānta-Sūtra*:

*Jñānendriyāṇi śrotra-tvaś-cakṣuḥ-jihoā-ghrāṇa-ākhyāṇi  |

The five organs of knowledge are ear, skin, eye, tongue and the nose.

It is to be noted that the organs of knowledge that are being spoken of in *Vedānta* are not the external ears, skin, eyes etc., that we can perceive through the senses. In *Vedānta*, these external ones are called ‘bāhya-golaka’ or ‘the orifices’. These external appendages are only ‘outposts’ so to say for the *indriyas* which are

Tapovan Prasad 33
the true faculties of knowledge — which are internal and subtle and cannot be perceived through the senses. These external ‘outposts’ only serve as mediums through which the internal indriyas act and should not be taken as the jñānendriyas per se. Hence if a person is blind it does not mean that he does not have the jñānendriya eye or that his jñānendriya eye does not work but it only means that something has gone amiss with his bāhya-golaka and hence once that is set right the jñānendriya eye finds a medium to act again. Thus all have the jñānendriya eye, even if blind, and all have the jñānendriya ear, even if deaf. This is true with the other indriyas also. When a person becomes old the bāhya-golaka alone becomes weak or non-functional but never the jñānendriyas themselves.

It is through this clarity in defining the jñānendriyas that Vedānta establishes that even snakes have ears unlike the present day science which believes in the opposite. Snakes have the internal faculty of hearing and that expresses by a special feature of nature through the external golaka of skin. Just as the external tongue becomes a medium in a human being to taste as well as to feel, so too for a snake, the external skin becomes the medium for the jñānendriya (the faculty) of feeling touch as well as hearing.

The jñānendriya sṛṣṭi

Talking about the creation (sṛṣṭi) of the jñānendriyas, Vedānta-Sāra explains:

एतानि आकाशादीनां सत्त्विकांशेष्यो व्यस्तेम्य: पृथक पृथक क्रमेण उत्पद्यन्ते।
Etāni ākāśadānāṁ sattvikāmśebhyo vyastebhyah pṛthak pṛthak kramena utpadyante|

These (jñānendriyas) are produced separately in consecutive order from the sattva aspect of space etc.

What is meant by the above statement is that the sattva aspect of each of the tānmātras produces a particular jñānendriya. Thus from the sattva aspect of the ākāśa (space) tānmātra is born the jñānendriya śrotra or ear; from the sattva aspect of the vāyu (air)
The tanmātra is born the jñānendriya tvak or the skin; from the sattva aspect of the āgni (fire) tanmātra is born the jñānendriya cakṣuh or the eye; from the sattva aspect of the jala (water) tanmātra is born the jihvā or the tongue and finally from the sattva aspect of the prthivī (earth) tanmātra is born the ghrāna or the nose. The well known functions of the jñānendriyas – ears, skin, eye, tongue and nose are hearing, feeling, seeing, tasting and smelling respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sattva Aspect of Tanmātra</th>
<th>Jñānendriya</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ākāśa</td>
<td>Śrotra</td>
<td>to hear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vāyu</td>
<td>Tvak</td>
<td>to feel, touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agni</td>
<td>Cakṣuh</td>
<td>to see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jala</td>
<td>Jihvā</td>
<td>to taste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prthivī</td>
<td>Ghrāna</td>
<td>to smell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we see the connection between the tanmātra, its guṇa (quality)³ and the indriya which is born from it, the whole analysis clearly becomes a very logical and systematic presentation of the jñānendriya creation. From ākāśa (space) which has śabda (sound) as its guṇa (quality) is born śrotra (ear) and hence the ear has the capacity to hear sound. From vāyu (air) which has sparśa (touch) as its guṇa is born the skin which thus has the capacity to feel touch. From āgni (fire) which has the guṇa of rūpa (form) is born the cakṣuh (eye) which naturally has the capacity to perceive forms and colours. From āpāḥ (water) which has rasa (taste) as its guṇa is born jihvā (tongue) which has the capacity to taste and in the same way from prthivī (earth) which has gandha (smell) as its guṇa is born ghrāna (nose) which has the capacity of smell.

³For the description of the individual qualities of the tanmātras refer to the November 2003 issue of Tapovan Prasad
Antahkarana

The word antah-karana means the inner-equipment. It comprises the following four – manas or mind, buddhi or the intellect, chitta or memory and ahaṅkāra or the ego. These four are collectively called the inner equipment or antahkarana (antaḥ – inner and karaṇa – instrument) in comparison with the jñānendriyas (organs of knowledge) and karmendriyas (organs of action), which are relatively outer. Vedānta Śrāvaṇa defines all these four aspects of the antahkarana:

1. **Manas or mind**

Mano nāma saṅkalpavikalpātmika-antahkarāṇavṛttih,
Manas is that modification of the internal instrument which considers the pros and cons of a particular subject.

2. **Buddhi or intellect**

Buddhiḥ nāma niścayātmika-antahkarāṇavṛttih |
Buddhi is that modification of the internal instrument which determines or makes decisions.

3. **Chitta or memory**

Ānusandhānātmika – antahkarāṇavṛttih | Chitta is that modification of the inner instrument which remembers.

4. **Ahaṅkāra or the ego**

Abhimānātmika-antahkarāṇavṛttih ahaṅkāraḥ | Ahaṅkāra is that modification of the inner instrument which is of the nature of ownership.

*This modification of the 'mental stuff' is technically called vyātiḥ antahkarāṇaparināma*
One thing common to all these four mental faculties is that they are the modification of one and the same ‘mental stuff’ which is called antahkarana. If it is one and the same ‘mental stuff’ why call it by different names? The same person is called differently as ‘writer’, ‘reader’, ‘eater’ and so on depending upon the type of work he does. So too depending on the function of the ‘mental stuff’ it is called variously – when it is in the mode of vacillation – it is called manas; when in the mode of decision – it is called buddhi; when in the mode of remembrance – it is called memory and when the same ‘mental stuff’ is engaged in the identification mode as ‘I’ or ‘Mine’, it is called ahaṅkāra.

To explain with an example — when the antahkarana has the thought structure, say for example a vacillation – ‘is it good to do that action or not’ then it is called manas. When the same antahkarana remembers the last instance when it had done that very act and the nature of the result which had ensued, then it is called chitta and when it arrives at a decision – ‘yes, it is right to do it’, then the antahkarana is called buddhi or the intellect. In and through all these there is the abhimāna or ego associated with each and every thought process. — ‘I have not yet decided’, ‘I am remembering the last time I did this same action’, ‘I have decided’, ‘this is my conclusion’, ‘I have acted rightly’ etc. This ‘I’ and ‘my’ thought which is also a modification of the same mental stuff is called the ahaṅkāra. Thus the four aspects — manas, buddhi, chitta and ahaṅkāra are only functional names for the one antahkarana.

One may wonder if there are only four aspects to this complex subtle equipment, the antahkarana. What about other functional aspects like comparison, intuition etc. But on analysis we find that they can all be incorporated within these four basic heads — like

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Be independent. All relationships toss up and down and can never be steady. Your relationship with Him, in your heart, alone can be the same.

Swami Chinmayananda

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Tapovan Prasad 37
comparison within *manas*, intuition within *buddhi* etc. Hence we find that *Vedānta* texts highlight these alone as the four components of the *antaḥkaraṇa*.

**Antaḥkaraṇa srṣṭi**

How is the *antaḥkaraṇa* created? *Vedānta Sūtra* explains:

> एते पुनः आकाशात्ििगत-सत्त्विक-अंकोभ्यो मिलितेभ्य उत्पद्यन्ते।
> 
> Ete punah ākāśādīgata-sāttvika-anśeobyo militebhya utpadyante.1

These (*manas*, *buddhi* etc.) are produced from the combination of the *sattva* aspect of space etc.

If the *jñānendriyas* are produced individually from the *sattva* aspect of each individual element viz., ears from space, skin from the air, eyes from fire, tongue from the water and nose from the earth, the *antaḥkaraṇa* as a whole is created from the collective *sattva* aspect of all the five elements. That is to say that the *sattva* aspect of each of the five elements together produce the *antaḥkaraṇa*. What is the logic behind this assertion of *Vedānta*?

1. It is because all the four aspects of *antaḥkaraṇa* — *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahānkāra* without any exception, co-operate, co-ordinate and participate with all the five senses in their function of knowledge. There can be vacillation about an object, remembrance about the same object, decision about it as well as owning up of the object as ‘mine’. Hence all the four aspects of the *antaḥkaraṇa* are connected with the senses.

2. The *antaḥkaraṇa* which is connected with all the *jñānendriyas* collates the various information procured by the individual *jñānendriyas* into one single unit called the *vṛtti*. To explain — the eye recognises only the form and colour of the object — say that of a rose as red. The nose can only smell the fragrance of it. So too the skin perceives only the soft touch of it. The eye cannot smell the rose and the nose cannot perceive its form. The function of each of the *jñānendriyas* is different and unique to itself and one cannot do the work of the other. The speciality

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1It is to be noted that the *antaḥkaraṇa* is also called ‘*sattva*’. 

December 2003
of the antahkarana is that it collates all the various separate perceptions of the individual jñānendriyas into one single vṛtti of the rose – ‘This is a red, soft and sweet smelling rose’.

Because of these two reasons we are led to infer that the antahkarana should partake of the character of all the five elements which taken singly give rise to the individual jñānendriyas.

Conclusion

Let us conclude this essay by summarising the essential points that we have seen in this essay:

- The sūkṣma-sṛṣṭi refers to the creation of jñānendriyas, antahkarana, karmendriyas and the prānas.
- The jñānendriyas are produced separately from each of the sattva aspect of the tanmātrās.
- The antahkarana has four functional aspects – manas, buddhi, chitta and ahaṅkāra.
- The antahkarana is created from the collective sattva aspect of all the five tanmātrās.

In the next essay, sūkṣma-sṛṣṭi part II, we shall elaborate upon the creation of the karmendriyas and prānas.

Caution Notice

It has come to our knowledge that some parties have started educational institutes/spiritual centres using Pujya Gurudev, H.H. Swami Chinmayananda’s name. This is illegal. Hence we would like to inform all concerned that the name “CHINMAYA” and Pujya Gurudev’s photograph are patented and registered with the Registrar of Trade Marks, like other Mission Logos. Anyone attempting to misuse these registered trade marks is liable for legal action under the Trade Marks and Copy Rights Act.

Narain Bhatia
Chief Executive Officer