Introduction

We have seen elaborately in the last two essays
1. The creation of the jñānendriyas and the antahkaranā from the sattva aspect of the five tanmātras.
2. The creation of the karmendriyas and the prāṇas from the rajasic aspect of the five tanmātras.

With this the topic of sūkṣma-srṣṭi i.e., the ‘creation of the subtle’ is complete. But we are yet to explain the various terms like lingaśaritra, sūkṣmaśaritra, prāṇamaya-kośa, manomaya-kośa, viṣṇumaya-kośa, tajasa, hiraṇyagarbha and swapna-avasthā which are associated with the sūkṣma-srṣṭi. These terms shall be the topic of discussion in this essay. It would be better if you have at hand the last two essays¹ on sūkṣma-srṣṭi.

Seventeen Components

The sūkṣmaśaritra, the subtle-body, is described as being made of nineteen components —

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Jñānendriyas</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Karmendriyas</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Prāṇas</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Manas</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Buddhi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Chitta</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Ahaṅkāra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But the subtle-body is described more often as having seventeen components (and not nineteen). In Vedānta-Sūra, Swami Sadananda enumerates these seventeen components:

The components of the subtle-body are the five organs of knowledge, the intellect, the mind, the five organs of action and the five vital forces.

When we say that the sūkṣmaśāriṣra is made of the above seventeen components, a careful student would rightly ask as to why in the above enumeration only two aspects of the antahkarana — manas and buddhi — are included, while chitta and ahaṅkāra which are also equally part of the antahkarana are excluded! Vedanta replies — in the mention of manas, chitta also is included by implication and in the mention of buddhi, ahaṅkāra is included by implication. This kind of inclusion by implication is termed as upalakṣaṇa. Vedanta is justified in including ahaṅkāra in buddhi, as ahaṅkāra is the decisive ‘I thought’ and buddhi is nothing but thoughts in the decisive mode. Chitta, which is memory, is rightly included in the manas, which is thoughts in the vacillation mode.

Liṅgaśāriṣra

The sūkṣma-śāriṣra or the subtle body is also called liṅga-śāriṣra. The word ‘liṅga’, derived from the verbal root ‘lagi’, means a ‘sign’ or ‘pointer’ and ’śāriṣra’ means the ‘body’. But why is the subtle body called a ‘pointing-body’? Since it poignantly points to the existence of the Self, it is called liṅgaśāriṣra. All the seventeen components of the sūkṣma-śāriṣra, be they jñānendriyas, karmendriyas, prāṇas, manas, buddhi, chitta or ahaṅkāra are all inert, being products of the inert tānmātras. But they all act intelligently — does not their intelligence indicate and point out a Higher Intelligence? Vedanta declares that it is by the power and consciousness of the ātman that the inert sūkṣma-śāriṣra is able to perform its function of knowledge and action. Since the sūkṣma-śāriṣra indicates the presence of the ātman, it is called ‘liṅga-śāriṣra’ or the ‘indicating body’.

1. svapratipādakatvam soti svetarapatipādakatvam upalakṣaṇam.
Three śarīras - Five kośas

The śarīras are three in number: 1. kāraṇa-śarīra (causal body), 2. sūkṣma-śarīra (subtle-body) and 3. sthūla-śarīra (gross-body). These three śarīras (bodies) are divided into five kośas (sheaths). Please study the tabular column given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Three śarīras</th>
<th>Five kośas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Kāraṇa-śarīra</td>
<td>Ānandamaya-kośa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Sūkṣma-śarīra</td>
<td>Prāṇamaya-kośa</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Manomaya-kośa</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Sthūla-śarīra</td>
<td>Vijñānamaya-kośa</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Annamaya-kośa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have already discussed the kāraṇa-śarīra which is made of ajñāna\(^3\) or ignorance. Sthūla-śarīra, which is known as annamaya-kośa, from the standpoint of the kośas, will be covered in the future essays. The sūkṣma-śarīra (the topic of the present essay), from the dṛṣṭi or the viewpoint of the kośas, is divided into three kośas – prāṇamaya-kośa, manomaya-kośa and vijñānamaya-kośa.

Kośas - Definitions

Since our topic now is that of sūkṣma-śarīra, we shall see in this essay the definitions of the prāṇamaya-kośa, manomaya-kośa and vijñānamaya-kośa. The following definitions are from Tattva-bodha of Adi Sañkarācārya.

Prāṇamaya-Kośa or the Vital-Air Sheath:

The five prāṇas and the five karmendriyas together form the prāṇamaya-kośa.

प्राणायामः पञ्चकावः वागादिन्द्रियपञ्चकं प्राणमयः कोशः ॥

Prāṇādyāḥ pañcakavyoḥ vāgādindriyapañcakam prāṇamayah kośah ॥

The five physiological functions like prāṇa etc. and the five organs of action like speech etc. together form the prāṇamaya-kośa.

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\(^3\) Refer to July 2003 issue of Tapovan Prasad.
It is to be remembered that the karmendriyas or the organs of action have evolved from the rajas aspect of the individual tanmātras while the five prāṇas have evolved from the collective rajas aspects of all the five tanmātras. Since this sheath has evolved from rajas, it is activity-oriented (kriyāsaktimān).

**Manomaya-Kośa or the Mental Sheath:**

The manas and the five jñānendriyas i.e. śrotra (ear), toak (skin), chakṣuḥ (eye), rasanā (tongue), ghrāṇam (nose) together form the manomaya-kośa.

मनस्तः ज्ञानेन्द्रियपञ्चकं मिलित्तवयो भवति स मनोमयः कोशः।

Manasca jñānendriyapañcakāṁ mīlitvā yō bhavati sā manomayaḥ kośaḥ।

The mind and the five organs of knowledge together form the mental sheath.

Chitta is included by implication (upalakṣana) in the manomaya-kośa. This sheath, because of the presence of the manas, which longs for enjoyments, and the chitta, which remembers past enjoyments and thus causes the mind to long for particular enjoyments, is described as being endowed with the faculty of desiring. Hence it is called icchāsaktimān, i.e. endowed with the power to desire. Further, as it is an instrument for the doer, the ahaṅkāra, it is also described as karaṇa-rūpaḥ (of the nature of instrument).

**Vijñānamaya-Kośa or the Intellectual Sheath:**

This sheath is made of the buddhi and the five jñānendriyas.

बुद्धी-ज्ञानेन्द्रिय-पञ्चकं मिलित्तवयो भवति स विज्ञानमयकोशः।

buddhi-jñānendriya-pañcakāṁ mīlitvā yō bhavati sā vijñānamayakosah।

The intellect and the five organs of knowledge together form the intellectual sheath.

Ahaṅkāra, the thought of doership and enjoyership (karta+bhokta), is also implied (upalakṣana) in the term buddhi and it thus forms part of the vijñānamaya-kośa. It is for this reason that
the vijñānamaya-kośa is described as kurtṛ-rūpah (of the nature of doer). Since it is endowed with the function of knowledge, this sheath is also described as jñānaśaktimān (endowed with the power of knowledge).

Please note that all the five organs of knowledge - ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose - are common to both the manomaya-kośa and vijñānamaya-kośa. This is because perception is vital for both the functions of mind and the intellect which are vacillation and decision respectively. To illustrate — to doubt whether an object is dark-blue or black in colour and then to decide that it is dark-blue and not black — both require co-ordination with the sense organs.

These three kośas — prāṇamaya-kośa, manomaya-kośa and vijñānamaya-kośa — together form the sūkṣma-śarīra or the subtle body. But why are these called kośas? The word kośa means a ‘sheath’ as in the usage — ‘the sword’s sheath’. The job of the sheath is to cover the object. And since these śarīras behave like sheaths veiling our knowledge of the Self, they are called kośas — kośavat ācchādayakato vart kośah. To explain — when I say that ‘I am short, stout and dark’ — this is due to identification with the annamaya-kośa. This identification has veiled our knowledge of the Self, which in its true nature is neither short nor tall, neither stout nor lean and neither dark nor fair. Experiences like ‘I am hungry’, ‘I am thirsty’ are due to veiling by the prāṇamaya-kośa. ‘I am confused’ is caused by identification with the manomaya-kośa. ‘I am intelligent’, ‘I am dull’ arises due to veiling by the vijñānamaya-kośa.

Taijasa and Hiraṇyagarbha

The sūkṣma-śarīra can be viewed from the individual (vyāṣṭi)

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Never sit and cry, “Nobody loves me.” Nobody will, until you start loving others. Give love to get love!

Swami Chinmayananda
as well as the total (samaṣṭi) aspects. To briefly recapitulate the concepts of individual (vyaṣṭi) and total (samaṣṭi) — the vyaṣṭi aspect of the forest is a tree and the samaṣṭi aspect of the tree is a forest. The concepts of vyaṣṭi and samaṣṭi have already been elaborately explained$^4$ and hence we are not attempting once again a full description of these terms here.

The consciousness conditioned by the individual or vyaṣṭi aspect of the sūkṣma-śarīra is called taijasa and the same consciousness conditioned by the collective or the samaṣṭi aspect of the sūkṣma-śarīra is called hiranyagarbha.

**Taijasa**

Sri Swami Sadananda in *Vedānta-Sūtra* elaborates on tajjasā: एतद् व्यास्त-उपहितम् चैतन्त्वं तैःसी भवति तेजोमयान्तः करणोपहितवात्।

Etad vyaṣṭi-upahitam caitanyam taijasa bhavati tejomaya-antahkarana-upahitavat

Consciousness associated with each individual subtle body is known as taijasa (full of light) on account of its being associated with the effulgent inner organ (antahkaraṇa).

Thus, since the Consciousness is associated with the effulgent (tejasvī) antahkaraṇa (manas+buddhi+chiita+ahankaṛa), it is called tajjasa. But why has the antahkaraṇa been described as effulgent?

1. The inner organ (antahkaraṇa) is described as effulgent because of its proximity to the ātman.

2. It is also known to be effulgent because of its knowledge aspect as it is made of the sattva aspect of the tanmātras (satvāt sañjñaye jñānam).

3. Some opine that the antahkaraṇa is considered to be effulgent because it has a greater percentage of the fire element (tejas) as compared with the other four elements — earth, water, air and space$^5$. It is called tajjasa according to the rule — ‘names are given based on the predominant element - prādhānyena vyapadesā bhavanti’.

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$^4$ Refer to August 2003 issue of Tapovan Prasad.
$^5$ Refer to December 2003 issue of Tapovan Prasad for elaboration on antahkaraṇa-ṛṣṭi.
4. There is another reason for calling the antahkaraṇa effulgent. The effulgence is because of its being endowed with vāsanās — tejomayatvam vāsanāmayatvam. The antahkaraṇa being endowed with the vāsanās of the waking state (jāgrtavasthā) is clearly evident in its creation of the whole manifold dream world during the dream state (svapnāvasthā) based on the impressions (vāsanās) of the waking state.

Hiranyagarbha

Consciousness associated with the total sūkṣma-śarīra is called variously as hiranyagarbha, sūtrātmā, prāṇā and so on. Other lesser known appellations for hiranyagarbha are prajāpati and brahma. Swami Sadananda defines:

एतत् समाष्टि-उपहितं चैतन्यं सूत्रात्मा हिरण्यगर्भ: प्राणः च इति उच्यते II

Etat samsāṭi-upahitam ca iti ucyate

Consciousness associated with the totality is called sūtrātmā, hiranyagarbha, prāṇā etc.

Sūtrātmā: Literally, ‘ātman is of the nature of sūtra (thread)’. In a garland of flowers the thread pervades all the various individual flowers. In the same way hiranyagarbha pervades all the different living beings. ‘Sarvatra anusyūtatvāt sūtrātmā – because of its immanence it is called sūtrātmā’.

Hiranyagarbha: The source (garbha) of effulgence (hiranya means gold). Gold is indicative of effulgence and effulgence is suggestive of knowledge. ‘Jñānaśaktimad-antahkaraṇa-upahitatvāt hiranyagarbha—it is called hiranyagarbha because of the condition of the inner-instrument (antahkaraṇa) which is endowed with the power of knowledge’. Antahkaraṇa (manas+buddhi+chitta+aḥaṅkāra) being the receptacle of knowledge is evident to all students of Vedānta.

* Refer to December 2003 issue of Tapecan Prasad for the elaboration of the antahkaraṇa’s function of knowledge.
Prāṇa: The word ‘prāṇa’ is highly suggestive of the power of action. Consciousness associated with the total sūkṣma-śarīra is endowed with the power to act because of its conditioning of the samaśṭi-paṇca-prāṇas⁷— kriyāsaktimad-upahitavāt prāṇaḥ. The prāṇas are endowed with the strength of action since they have evolved from the rajas aspect of the tanmātras.

Svapna-avasthā

The unique state of the experience of sūkṣma-śarīra happens in the svapna-avasthā or the dream state. Here the mind projects a world of its own based on the impressions (vāsanās) of the waking state. The Consciousness identified with the individual subtle body (vyāṣṭi-sūkṣma-śarīra) and the experiencer of svapna-avasthā are called tajasa⁸. The same Consciousness identified with the total subtle body (samaśṭi-sūkṣma-śarīra) experiencing the total subtle world is called hiranyaagarbha. Thus the experience of the tajasa is limited to the individual subtle body but the ambit of experience of the hiranyaagarbha is the whole subtle world making him all-knowledgeable (sarvajña).

Conclusion

With this we have covered in detail all the points regarding sūkṣma-sṛṣṭi. We had seen elaborately the kāraṇa-śarīra⁹ (causal body) and now with this essay, the various points to be studied with regard to the sūkṣma-śarīra (subtle body) are complete. From the next essay onwards we shall enter the topic sthūla-sṛṣṭi (gross-creation) wherein we shall elaborate on the sthūla-śarīra (gross-body). May the Lord’s grace and Pujya Gurudev’s blessings help us to understand this wonderful knowledge of Vedanta.

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⁷ Refer to January 2001 issue of Tapovan Prasad for elaboration on paṇca-prāṇas. They govern the physiological functions of a living being.

⁸ For further elaboration of svapna-avasthā refer to Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda’s commentary on Tatva-bodha – CCMT Publication.

⁹ Please refer to August 2003 issue of Tapovan Prasad for further elaboration.