

## The Vedic Conception of Sound

Sabda (sound) is the guna (quality) of Aakaasa (the element of space). Its organ is the ear. Sabda may be spiritual or material. In both cases, it is made up of Aksharas (syllables).

The Aksharas are made up of Sabda (sound) and Artha (meaning). The Akshara is made of an immutable substance. The most famous Akshara is the sacred syllable Aum, which is called ekākṣara (i.e. eka-akṣara), which can be translated as 'the sole imperishable thing' or 'the single syllable'.

In the Tantras (Vedic Scriptures) the Aksharas are traced back to a Shakti, the female cosmic power responsible for the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe.

According to Vedic Philosophy when we have the urge to speak, our life force in the form of Vaayu (the element of air/wind) is activated at the root chakra. Vaayu brings Paraa (subtle sound) up to the navel chakra as Pasyanti and then to the heart chakra as Madhyamaa. It then comes to the throat, mouth, teeth and tongue as Vaikhari and comes out as speech / sound at the gross level.

Just as a Samkalpa (a pure thought) has to pass through several stages before it actually manifests as a concrete creative force, so Sabda (sound) also has to pass through several stages before it is finally audible at the gross level. These stages are termed Paraa, Pasyanti, Madhyamaa and Vaikhari. Each level of sound corresponds to a different level of existence. Our experience of sound depends upon the refinement of our consciousness.

During the process of creation Purusha combines with Prakrti to form the first principal Avyakta (meaning 'not manifest, or devoid of form').

Purusha is the Universal principle that is unchanging, uncaused but is present everywhere. Purusha is what connects everything and everyone. Prakrti, is everything that is subject to change and is governed by the law of cause and effect. Prakrti is in a state of constant change and is evolving all the time.

According to Vedic Philosophy from the first principle Avyakta came Mahat or Buddhi, the intelligence principle. Then from Buddhi came Ahankaara (the ego principle).

Ahankaara then expanded into three Gunas (qualities) namely Satva, Rajas and Tamas. The three gunas are Satva (goodness, constructive, harmonious), Rajas (passion, active, confused), and Tamas (darkness, destructive, chaotic). From the three Gunas evolved the sensory and motor organs, the mind and the subtle form of the five elements 'Tanmaatras'.

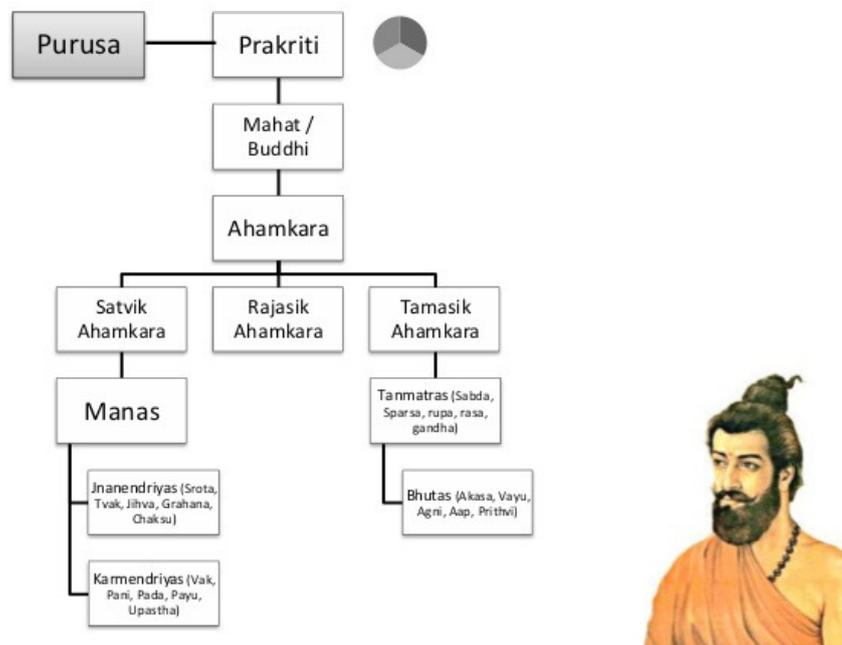
The five elements correspond to these five sense perceptions and five sense organs. The five sense perceptions are hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell.

The five elements combine and re-combine in different ways to produce the gross elements – earth, water, fire, air and ether, which make up the universe perceived by

our senses. The senses come into contact with the objects and carry impressions of the objects to the Manas which receives these impressions and arranges them into a concepts.

Manas is the faculty that co-ordinates sensory impressions before they are presented to the consciousness. It is one of the inner instruments that receive information from the external world with the help of the senses. The Manas presents the information to the higher faculty of Buddhi (the intellect).

## Theory of Evolution



According to Vedic Philosophy Manas is one of the four parts of the Antahkarana ("inner conscience" or "the manifest mind") and the other three parts are Buddhi (the intellect), Chitta (the memory) and Ahankara (the ego).

The Aakaasa in its subtle form is called Aakaasa Tanmatra and Sabda (sound) is its quality. According to the Taitreeya Upanishad, Aakaasa evolved first, from Aakaasa (the Space/Ether element ) came Vaayu (the Air element), from Vaayu came Agni (the Fire element), from Agni came Jala (the Water element) and from Jala came Prithvi (the Earth element).

### Paraa

Aakaasa is called Param, as it was the first element to form at the time of creation. According to Vedic Philosophy Paraa expressed itself as a Bindu (subtle particle). It is also called Kaarana Bindu, (Causal Particle) as it is the cause of all sound manifestations within and outside our body.

In Sanskrit the word Paraa means the highest or the farthest. Para Vaak is the sound beyond the perception of our senses. Paraa is the first stage of sound in its unmanifest

stage and is the source of all root ideas and germ thoughts. At the stage of Para Vaak there is no distinction between the object and the sound. The sound contains within it all the qualities of the object.

According to Vedic Philosophy the root chakra (Mooladhara) is the abode of Paraa. Nada Yogis claim that Paraa Nada is a high frequency sound, so high that it does not produce any vibrations. The urge to speak causes Paraa to move from the Root chakra up to the navel chakra (Manipura) where it gets transformed into Pasyanti.

The Paraa, kindled by Vaayu (the air element) in the root chakra, rises up to transform itself into Bindu (dot) at the navel chakra (Manipura). Naada (inner sound) is heard at the heart chakra (Anaahata) Vaayu then rises up to transform itself into a Bija (seed) at the throat chakra (Vishudha) and expresses itself as sound at a gross level.

Just as a seed soaked in water bursts out to express itself as leaf, flower, fruit and a tree, Paraa in the navel chakra expresses its subtle modifications by transforming into Pasyanti.

### **Pasyanti**

Pasyanti literally means 'observing' or 'seeing one's self'. In the Pasyanti stage sound possesses qualities such as colour and form. Yogis who have subtle inner vision experience the Pasyanti state of a word as having colour and form, which is common for all languages.

Pasyanti is a mental sound not heard by the ears.. Its frequency is lower than the high frequency sound of Para Naada. When sound goes up to the navel chakra (Manipura) it has no particular Varna (syllable) it is known as Pashyanti Vaak. Pasyanti moves to the heart chakra where the sound becomes audible to the inner ear.

### **Madhyama**

Pasyanti on reaching the heart chakra (Anaahata), transforms into Madhyama Vaak (power of speech). Madhyama literally means 'in between' or 'middle'. Here there is a clear distinction between the sound and the object it denotes. Madhyama Vaak is more mental speech than audible speech. The heart chakra (Anaahata ) is the domicile of internal sounds called Naada, which can only be heard by our inner ear.

The word Aahata means 'struck' or 'beaten'. The sound produced by beating a drum is an example of Aahata Sabda (struck sound). In the heart chakra (Anaahata), Naada (a kind of melodious sound) can be heard without any external source.

The sounds heard in heart chakra (Anaahata) are not audible to the external ear. The Anaahata Naada ("Unmade Sound") can be heard in deep meditation. When a Yogi hears these sounds, they become adept at knowing hidden things, they develop the divine eye and eventually become one with Para Brahman (the supreme reality).

## **Vaikhari**

The sound which has come all the way from the root chakra by the force of Vaayu, travels further upwards to the throat, mouth, teeth and tongue, to become an articulate sound, audible to the external ear. This is called Vaikhari.

The Vaayu that brings the sound from the heart chakra (Anahata) to the throat chakra is called Vaikhara. Vaikhara is the last stage of sound that is the source of all that is spoken and heard at the gross level. When Shabda (sound) is spoken through the mouth with the help of syllables, that speech is called Vaikhari Vaak.

## **Four States of Consciousness**

The four levels of sound correspond to the four states of consciousness.

**Paraa** - transcendental consciousness (Turiya) - the transcendental state

**Pasyanti** - the intellectual consciousness (Sushupti) - the dreamless state

**Madhyamaa** - the mental consciousness (Svapna) - the dreaming state

**Vaikhari** - the physical consciousness (Jagrat) - the wakeful state

Within the Pasyanti-vaak exists Iccha-shakti, or the power of will.

Within the Madhyama-vaak exists Jnana-shakti, or the power of knowledge.

Within the Vaikhari-vaak exists Kriya-shakti, or power of action.

These four stages of sound also correspond to the four of bodies.

**The Atman**, or Universal Soul is that in which everything exists, which permeates everything, which is the essence of all bliss and is beyond description. Atman is the essence that is eternal, unchanging, and indistinguishable from the essence of the universe. The Para Vaak is manifested through the fourth state of consciousness, known as Turiya.

**The Kaarana Sarira**, or causal body, operates in the state of Sushupti, or deep sleep. It is in this realm of consciousness, and through this body, that the Pashyanti Vaak is manifested.

**The Sukshma Sarira**, the subtle or psychic body, operates in the state of Svapna. It is in this realm of consciousness, and through this body, that the Madhyama Vaak is manifested.

**The Sthula Sarira**, or physical body, operates in the state of Jagrat (wakeful state). It is in this realm of consciousness, and through this body, that the Vaikhari Vaak is manifested.

The following table illustrates the relationship between the four stages of sound, the energy centres involved, the state of consciousness they represent, the type of body and the nature's power of will, knowledge and action.

Stages of Sound	Chakra / organ involved	State of consciousness	Type of body	Nature's power
<u>Paraa</u>	<u>Moolaadhaara</u>	<u>Turiya - transcendental</u>	-----	-----
<u>Pasvanti</u>	<u>Manipooraka</u>	<u>Sushupti - deep sleep</u>	<u>Kaarana- causal</u>	<u>iccha sakti - the power of will</u>
<u>Madhyamaa</u>	<u>Anaahata</u>	<u>Svapna - dreamful</u>	<u>Sukshma- psychic</u>	<u>Jnana sakti - the power of knowledge</u>
<u>Vaikhari</u>	Throat	<u>Jaagrat - wakeful</u>	<u>Sthula- physical</u>	<u>Kriya sakti - the power of action</u>

## References

<http://www.hindupedia.com/en/Sound>

## Glossary

**Akshara** (Sanskrit from ‘a’ meaning ‘not’ and ‘kṣar’ meaning ‘to melt away, perish’). Akshara menas ‘imperishable, indestructible, fixed, immutable’.

**Manas** (Sanskrit from the root ‘man’, ‘to think’ or ‘mind’) is the recording faculty; it receives impressions gathered by the senses from the outside world. It is bound to the senses and yields Vijnana (information) rather than Jnana (wisdom) or Vidya (understanding).

**Samkalpa** (Sanskrit from ‘sam-klrip’ meaning to ‘be brought into existence, wish, produce’) is a conception or idea formed in the mind or heart; thought, ideation or desire. The Vedas say that the whole universe is evolved through Samkalpa. The ceaselessly acting impulse of karma driven by cosmic Kama and hence it is only through Samkalpa that the universe retains its karmic structure, appearances, and continuance.