



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Avasthātraya: Deeper insights

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## Abstract

The *Upaniṣad* or *Vedānta* is certainly the most brilliant expression of Indian wisdom. From time immemorial, it has been the driving force behind all intellectual and spiritual pursuits of the seers. The crowning glory of the *Upaniṣad* lies in its spirit of inquiry into the nature of truth. It has not only impacted the knowledge systems of India but has gained global recognition for its consistently significant contribution to the development of the science of consciousness, in addition to the value-based knowledge it imparts. It conceives of pure consciousness to be the eternal, all-pervasive and transcendental reality which is termed *Ātman* or *Brahman*. The individual being is the worldly manifestation of the pure consciousness and it is ignorant of its real nature owing to its association with the limiting adjuncts. According to a few principal *Upaniṣads*, real nature, as pure consciousness, can be intuited by an individual after transcending three intermediate states *Jāgaritasthāna*, *Svapnasthāna*, and *Suṣuptasthāna*. These three consecutive states do not refer only to the ordinary states of sleep and wakefulness but may be regarded as the steps towards the realization of supreme reality. An in-depth analysis reveals a close correspondence of these three states with the states of *Samādhi* as mentioned in the *Pātañjala Yogasūtra*. The paper offers a deeper insight into the nature of these three intermediate states through which absolute consciousness can be perfectly realized in its entirety.

**Keywords:** Jāgaritasthāna, Svapnasthāna, Suṣuptasthāna, Samādhi, EEG Response.

## Introduction

### The Ultimate Goal

The aspiring soul finds contentment neither in the mere fulfillment of worldly ambitions nor in the assurance of enormous prosperity and enjoyment in heaven after death. It has been searching for the eternal Truth both within and beyond that which is ephemeral. *Upaniṣads* have termed it *Om*, *Brahman*, *Ātman* etcetera, and consider it as the ultimate goal to be attained by an individual. Such attainment results not only in the union of mortal individuals with the eternal absolute but dissolution of individuality into the infinite ocean of eternity. The *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* puts—

*praṇavo dhanuḥ śaro hy ātmā  
brahma tallakṣyam ucyaite/  
apramattena vedhyavyaṃ  
śaravat tanmayo bhavet// 2/2/4*

[The *Praṇava* (*Om*) is the bow, the Self is the arrow, and the *Brahman* is the target. It is to be shot by an un baffled person. One should become one with it just like an arrow] (Gambhirananda, 2000).

'Self' here means an individual self, who should aspire to hit the *Brahman*, the absolute, and to dissolve within the same, retiring from all conditions.

The famous teaching of Yājñavalkya to her wife Maitreyī as recorded in the *Bṛhadaraṇyakopaniṣad* (2/4/5) is as follows— *ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ* (Madhavananda, 1950) [The self, should be realised, is to be heard, should be reflected on through reasoning and to be meditated].

Actually, the ultimate goal is the realization of the *Ātman*, the self and the means to the same are *Śravaṇa*, *Manana*, and *Nididhyāsana*. *Śravaṇa* means a general understanding of the target issue through the process of methodical listening, *Manana* means reflection on the Absolute through reasoning and *Nididhyāsana* means the uninterrupted stream of meditation (Sadānanda-yogindra, 1998). So, a three-tier scheme has been prescribed here for the attainment of the absolute.

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### The Three States

The *Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad* has defined *Ātman* as *catuspāt*, which apparently means one having four feet. But it actually refers to that reality which expresses itself through four states. Among these four states, the fourth is absolute, which is the highest goal – *sa ātmā sa vijñeyah* (7) – That is the self (*Ātman*), that is to be known. (Gambhirananda, 2000)

It is the journey of the individual towards his final destination, the abode of absolute.

Therefore, to attain the fourth which is the final state, an individual needs to pass through and experience three consecutive states, namely *Jāgaritasthāna* (the *Ātman*, having waking as his sphere), *Svapnasthāna* (the *Ātman*, having *Svapna* as his sphere) and *Suṣuptasthāna* (the *Ātman*, having *Suṣupta* as his sphere).

### Jāgaritasthāna Ātman

According to the *Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad*–  
*jāgaritasthāno bahiḥprajñah saptāṅga ekonaviṁśatimukhaḥ*  
*sthūlabhug vaiśvānarah prathamah pādaḥ// 3//*

[One having the waking state, whose cognition is based on the perception of the outward universe, who is possessed of seven limbs and nineteen doors, and experiences gross objects, is the *Vaiśvānara* (One who is present within all creatures) – the first state.] (Gambhirananda, 2000)

In fact, the journey of an individual towards the realization of the self initiates from his waking state. As upheld in the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, Maitreyī initiates her journey towards the knowledge of the absolute with *Śravaṇa* or mindful listening to the words of her husband Yājñavalkya, through the process of identifying the nature of waking state of the self. Such a realisation through mindful listening would not be possible unless the aspirant remains stationed in the waking state.

So, the knowledge of *Ātman*, manifesting as *Vaiśvānara*, is the first step towards the realization of the absolute self.

- *Śravaṇa* or mindful listening of the teachings about the supreme reality may be considered as the *sine qua non* of self-realization. In fact, perception of the sound in gross form (even the teachings about the supreme Self) in the external world is possible only during the waking state of an individual.
- *Jāgaritasthāna Ātman* can also be equated with the *Savitarka* and *Nirvitarka* state of *Samprajñāta Samādhi*, because in *Savitarka* and *Nirvitarka Samādhi*, external gross elements are the objects of meditation [Cf. Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtra* 1/17 along with its commentary of Vyāsa and Swami Vivekananda]. (Hariharananda, 2015) (Vivekananda, 2013).

### Svapnasthāna Ātman

The *Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad* defines *Svapnasthāna Ātman* as–  
*svapnasthāno ntaḥprajñah saptāṅga ekonaviṁśatimukhaḥ*  
*praviviktabhuk dvitiyah pādaḥ//4//*

[One having the dreaming or dreamlike status, whose cognition is based on the experience of the inward impressions, who is possessed of seven limbs and nineteen doors, and experiences the discriminating elements, is the *Taijasa* (the Luminous One) – the second state] (Gambhirananda, 2000).

The *Svapnasthāna Ātman*, the *Ātman* having the dreaming or dreamlike state as his sphere, is the second step towards the attainment of the supreme truth. The self manifesting through this state is named as *Taijasa*.

When the self is associated with the *Svapna* state, the mind being decked with several impressions accumulated in the waking state, appears to be as luminous as it is manifested during the waking state of the individual. Owing to the luminosity of the mind in the *Svapna* state, the self associated with this state is named as *Taijasa*. Ācārya Śaṅkara commented– *viśayaśūnyāyām prajñāyām kevalaparakāśasvarūpāyām viśayitvena bhavati taijasaḥ* – He is *Taijasa* (luminous), since he is the seer of cognition that is bereft of objects and appears merely as something possessing of the nature of effulgence.

The self, manifesting in the *Svapna* state is defined as *Antaḥprajñā* and *Praviviktabhuk*. Since, in this state, any form of cognition is based on the inward impressions only, the self, manifesting through this state is considered as *Antaḥprajñā*. The inward impressions are nothing but the alienated essence of the outward objects; [Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 4/3/9] (Madhavananda, 1950) and it is the object of cognition and enjoyment. That is why the self, appearing in the *Svapna* state is regarded as *Praviviktabhuk*.

*Does Svapnasthāna mean merely a dream state?*

Although the term *Svapnasthāna* is very commonly translated as the *dream state*, intensive study unravels the actual connotation. Now a question may be raised as to whether the dream state, understood in the worldly context, can be instrumental in realisation of the supreme self. The ascertainment of the actual connotation of *Svapnasthāna* reveals that it should not be simply considered as the dream state in the worldly sense.

In the state of dream, the mind projects the dream world which is influenced by the impressions collected by the mind in the state of wakefulness. The dream world which is usually incoherent and chaotic in nature hardly remains under the control of the mind. Therefore, the mapping of the mind with the dream state is an utter impossibility and contradicts the incandescent nature of the mind.

On the other hand, in the state of *Dhyāna* or meditation, the mind can alienate the essence of a cognition achieved through worldly perception and can project and witness the same. Then in the true sense, it can be defined as *Praviviktabhuk*. The dream state is not as profound as the meditative state.

- Further, if corresponding context from the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* is taken into account, it could be understood that the second step towards the attainment of knowledge of *Ātman* is *Manana*, which means reflection or mindful logical thinking of the knowledge acquired through the act of *Śravaṇa* or listening [Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 2/4/5 and 4/5/6] (Madhavananda, 1950). Such *Manana* can be considered as a form of meditation.
- Moreover, in the *Kaṭhcopaniṣad* (1/1/7) (Gambhirananda, 2000), it has been narrated: *vaiśvānaraḥ praviśaty atithir brāhmaṇo gṛhān...* *Vaiśvānara*, here is none but, Naciketā– the embodiment of a waking individual (as it has been stated already that the *Ātman* having the waking state as his sphere is defined as *Vaiśvānara*), who is supposed to enter the abode. And here abode may be suggestive of the inward world.

The *Praśnopaniṣad* (4/5) while explaining the nature of the state of *Svapna* records: *Atraīṣa devaḥ svapne mahimānam anubhavati* (Gambhirananda, 2000). Therefore, it is anticipated that this deity (mind/the mind-conditioned self) experiences greatness in the state of *Svapna*. Ācārya Śaṅkara comments: *vibhūtiṃ viśayaviśayilakṣaṇam anekātmabhāvagamanam anubhavati pratipadyate* (V. Sadanand, 1999). He uses the synonym *Vibhūti* for the term *Mahimā*, and explains it as having the distinctive knowledge of subject and object. Therefore, the cognitive discrimination between the subject and object is said to be present in the *Svapna* state and the mind-conditioned self experiences its own glory.

- In fact, certain states of *Samprajñāta Samādhi* of *Pātāñjala Yoga* system resemble the state of *Svapna*, as the subtle form of five basic elements, senses, and the subtle ego have been described as the objects of concentration in the *Savicāra*, *Nirvicāra*, *Sānanda*, and *Sāsmīta Samādhi* respectively [Cf. Pātāñjali's *Yoga-sūtra* 1/17, 42-45, 3/1-3 and their commentaries of Vyāsa and Swami Vivekananda] (Hariharānanda, 2015) (Vivekananda, 2013).

And definitely, such a state is a magnificent expression (*Vibhūti*) of a controlled and concentrated mind. On the contrary, the impressions of a sleeping individual in the dream state, referred to in the worldly context, are jumbled up resulting in the projection of a vague and false image, which can never be considered as an expression of *Mahimā* or *Vibhūti*.

### **Suṣuptasthāna Ātman**

The *Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad* defines *Suṣuptasthāna Ātman* as follows: *Yatra supto na kaṁ cana kāmāṁ kāmāyate, na kaṁ cana svapnaṁ paśyati, tat suṣuptam. suṣuptasthāna ekībhūtaḥ prajñānaghana evānandamayo hy ānandabhuk cetomukhaḥ prajñāsa ṛṭīyaḥ pādaḥ//5// eṣa sarveśvara eṣa*

*sarvajña eṣo 'ntaryāmy eṣa yoniḥ sarvasya prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām//6//*

[When a sleeping person neither craves for any desirable objects or feelings, nor experiences any dream, that is (considered as) *Suṣupta*– the state of deep sleep. One, having the status of deep sleep, who has become unified, who is a mass of consciousness, who is full of bliss, who is verily the enjoyer of bliss, who is the doorway of cognition, is the *Prājña* (the Intelligent One) – the third state (Gambhirananda, 2000).

This is the Lord of all, this is omniscient, this is the inner controller, this is the womb of all, this is verily the cause of origin and dissolution of beings.]

The *Ātman* associated with the third state is defined as *Supta*, the connotation of which may be obtained from the etymology recorded in the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*: *Yatraitat puruṣaḥ svapiti nāma, satā somya tadā sampanno bhavati- svam apīto bhavati, tasmād enaṁ svapitīty ācakṣate...* 6/8/1 (V. Sadanand, 1999).

In this state, the individual becomes merged in the absolute existence, which is of the nature of his own self.

So, the state *Supti* actually refers to the dissolution of the mind, i.e., the mind-bound individual in the supreme self. As the mind gets dissolved, the individual neither yearns for any desirable object nor does he witness any dream, caused out of the impressions on the mind [Cf. *sthānadvayaspaṇḍitam manaḥspaṇḍitam dvaitajātam/ tathā rūpāparityāgenāvivekāpannam naiśatamograstam ivāha saprapaṅcam ekībhūtam ity ucyate/* (Śaṅkara's commentary on *Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad* 5)] (V. Sadanand, 1999). Every form of duality is the modification of mind occurs during the first two states. (During *Suṣupti*) although the diversified forms are not lost, they seem to be unified along with the entire phenomenal world as everything seems to be dissolved in the nocturnal darkness.]

This state is named as *Suṣupta*. The self, who has the *Suṣupta* as his sphere, is the third step towards the realisation of the supreme self. In this self everything including mind gets absorbed and he manifests as the condensed and unified mass of consciousness, because it is free from the discrimination of the subject, object and, instrument etcetera of a knowledge. It is engrossed with bliss and enjoyer of bliss. As the absorbed mind again can emerge from the same to project images of several objects immediately, the self, while revealing through this state of *Suṣupta*, is regarded as the doorway of experience– the *Cetomukha*. On the other hand, the term *Cetomukha* may also bear an inherent suggestion of its awareness of the supreme self. Being at the threshold of the highest experience, it is simultaneously aware of the relative universe as well as the world of pure consciousness. The self, in this state is denoted as the *Prājña* or the Intelligent one. This *Prājña*, further has been described as the Lord of all, omniscient, inner controller, the source of all, and the harbour of origin and dissolution of all beings.

*Does Suṣuptasthāna mean merely the state of deep sleep?*

This state of *Suṣupta*, is very often interpreted merely as the state of *deep sleep*. But such a notion contradicts the description of the self associated with this state. Among the fourth series of questions of the *Praśnapaniṣad*, one question is very profound: *kasyaitat sukhaṁ bhavati?* (4/1) [To whom does this happiness occur?] (Gambhirananda, 2000)

The answer is as follows: *sa yadā tejasābhibhūto bhavati/ atraiṣa devaḥ svapnān na paśyaty atha tadaitasmin śarira etat sukhaṁ bhavati* (4/6) [When he (the mind) becomes overwhelmed by the (solar) radiance, then this deity does not dream the dreams. Then, in this body there arises this happiness.] (Gambhirananda, (2000)

- Since in the Yoga tradition, sleep (*Nidrā*) is defined as a modification of mind which embraces the feeling of voidness- *abhāvapratyayā lambanā vṛttir nidrā* (*Yoga-sūtra* 1/10) and according to the texts of *Āyurveda*, sleep is the result of dominance of the attribute *Tamas*, [Cf. *lokadisargaprabhavā tamomūlā tamomayī/ bāhulyāt tamaso rātrau nidrā prāyeṇa jāyate// Aṣṭāṅga-Hṛdaya* of Vāgbhaṭa], which contradicts the concept of dominance of solar radiance during the so-called sleep state, called *Suṣupti*.
- According to Ācārya Śaṁkara the meaning of the word *tejasā* is *saureṇa pittākhyena tejasā*, [Cf. Śaṁkara's commentary on *Praśnopaniṣad* 4/6] (V. Sadanand, 1999) which implies that predominance of *Pitta* is the cause behind deep sleep. Such interpretation is opposed to *Āyurveda* as the related texts mainly claim the predominance of *Pitta* as responsible for insomnia. None of the *Upaniṣadic* texts even refer to that *Tejas* or *Saura Tejas* as *Pitta*. It is believed in the vedic tradition that the solar energy is all-pervading. And at the state of *Suṣupti* the whole body of an individual is permeated with the solar radiance or consciousness.
- This state with the exuberance of radiance closely resembles *Asamprajñāta Samādhi*- the advanced stage of *Sabija Samādhi* that culminates in *Nirbija Samādhi*. That state could be justified as the penultimate state towards the supreme state. [Cf. "...The state of mind devoid of all *vṛttis*, including *prajñā-vṛtti*, is known as *Asamprajñāta-yoga*. At first, the *saṁskāras* of *prajñā-vṛtti* will remain in the depths of the mind; such a state is called *sabija-asamprajñāta*. When even the *prajñā-saṁskāras* are deactivated, the resulting state of mind is known as *nirbija-asamprajñāta*." pp 92-94] (Bhajananda, 2010)
- The state of *Nirbija Samādhi* seems to reflect the state of *Asamjñā* as described in the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* (2/4/12)- *na pretya saṁjñāsti*. (Madhavananda, 1950)
- The possibility of the re-emergence of the mind for the projection of images of several objects from the state of *Suṣupti* reminds of the concept of *Vyutthāna Saṁskāra*

of Yoga philosophy. [Cf. Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtra* 3/9 along with its commentary of Vyāsa and Swami Vivekananda. & "These *saṁskāras* may force the mind of the yogi to come back to the *samprajñāta* state (or, perhaps, even to the ordinary empirical plane of consciousness). This return to the plane of awareness is known as *vyutthāna*. pp 92-94] (Bhajananda, 2010).

- Alternatively, it can be put that the *Suṣupti* is equivalent to *Nididhyāsana*, the stream of meditation on only One Object- the *Brahman* or *Ātman*. This presupposes the exclusion of all foreign ideas.
- The definition of *Nididhyāsana* or the mentioned stage of *Samādhi* may be metaphorically expressed as the absorption of Śrī-Rādhikā into Śrī Kṛṣṇa owing to her deep meditation on Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In that stage, the mind seems to be dissolved in the essence of the object of meditation and assumes the form of the said object [Cf. The commentary of Vyāsa on the *Yoga-sūtra*- *tad evārthamātranirbhāsam svarūpaśūnyam iva samādhiḥ* (3/3)] (Hariharananda, 2015) (Vivekananda, 2013).
- So, the dissolution of Śrī-Rādhikā, the personification of the mind-bound individuality in Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the supreme consciousness, results in the exuberance of consciousness all around. It exactly represents the state of the *Suṣuptasthāna Ātman* as elucidated by Śaṁkara in the commentary- *manaso viṣayaviṣayākāraspandanāyāsaduḥkḥābhāvād ānandamaya ānandaprāyaḥ*, i.e., he is nearly the bliss itself, he is enshrined with bliss, because of the absence of the misery associated with the effort of the mind vibrating as the objects and the subject.

### **Samādhi vis-à-vis Suṣupti/Nidrā**

In this context, it is pertinent to mention that later texts of the Advaita Vedānta philosophy discuss extensively the difference between *Samādhi* and *Suṣupti/Nidrā*. As for instance, Gauḍapāda in the *Advaita-prakaraṇa* of his *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* elucidates: *liyate hi suṣupte tannigṛhītaṁ na liyate/tad eva nirbhayaṁ brahma jñānālokaṁ samantataḥ*// (3/35)

For the mind merges during deep sleep, but being controlled, it does not merge (during *Samādhi*). The very mind becomes the fearless Brahman, possessed of the radiance of consciousness all around (Gambhirananda, 2000).

In the same spirit, Sadānanda-yogindra in *Vedāntasāra* (199) also explains: *ubhayatra vṛttyabhāve samāne 'pi tatsadbhāvāsadbhāvamātreṇānāyora bhedopapatteḥ* – Though the absence of mental modification is common in both the spheres, the difference between them is also pronounced. The mind exists in the *Samādhi*, having assumed the form of the *Ātman*, whereas in deep sleep the mind is absent (being merged in its cause, the primordial ignorance, which is called *Māyā*) (Sadānanda-yogindra, 1998)



- These are certainly rational explanations, nevertheless, the concept of *Suṣupti* as demonstrated in the texts of the principal *Upaniṣads* like *Māṇḍūkya*, *Praśna*, *Chāndogya* etcetera, does not suggest merely the state of *deep sleep*. The *Upaniṣads* suggest that even when the mind merges in the absolute, it does not get destroyed, instead it assumes the form of the Brahman. Such a state is characterised by the manifestation of the state of *Suṣupti* state. That is why, the self, having the said state could be defined as *Ānandamaya* (full of bliss), *Ānandabhuk* (enjoyer of bliss), *Prājña* (Intelligent), *Sarvajña* (Omniscient), *Sarveśvara* (Lord of all) and *Antaryāmin* (inner Controller). If the mind would have merged in ignorance during the *Suṣupti*, manifestation of the self as the knower would have become impossible. Moreover, such a state associated can hardly be considered as the threshold of ultimate realization. However, none of the two texts, cited earlier, are explicit about the locus of absorption of the mind during the state of deep sleep.
- It is remarkable that, Ācārya Śaṅkara, in his commentaries on the *Upaniṣads*, has never equated the term *Suṣupti* with any other term representing worldly sleep, like *Nidrā* etcetera.
- Contextually, the clarification offered by Srimat Anirban regarding the distinctive features of sleep, death and *Samādhi* may be aptly cited here. According to him, the mind dissolves both in sleep and death. However, in death, the life-force or the *Prāṇa* also terminates. But during *Samādhi*, one's mind dissolves, and sometimes the *Prāṇa* also. But despite the dissolution of the mind the *Prajñā* or consciousness remains effulgent. During the sleep and death of common people, awareness is absent; but during the same of a Yogin, the light of consciousness within is refulgent [Cf. *Mṛtyu O Janmāntara-Prasaṅga*, p. 15].
- From that perspective, a Yogin, absorbed in profound meditation or *Yoganidrā*, may be identified with the *Suṣuptasthāna Ātman*.

### Turiya

The absolute, has been defined as the fourth and ultimate state in the context of one's highest realisation. The *Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad* explains:

nāntaḥprajñam na bahiprajñam nobhayataḥprajñam na prajñānaghanam na prajñam nāprajñam/adṛśyam avyavahāryam agrāhyam alakṣaṇam acintyam avyapadeśyam ekātmapratyayasāraṁ prapañcopaśamaṁ śāntam śivamadvaitam caturtham manyante, sa ātmā, sa vijñeyaḥ//7// [They consider the fourth as neither conscious of the internal objects, nor that of the external objects, neither conscious of the both (internal and external objects), nor a mass of consciousness, neither the intelligent, nor the non-intelligent, as unseen, incommunicable, neither as

conscious of the internal objects, nor as that of the external objects, neither as conscious of the both (internal and external objects), nor as a mass of consciousness, neither as the intelligent, nor as the non-intelligent, who is regarded as unseen, incommunicable, ungraspable, featureless, unthinkable, indescribable, whose essential nature is the knowledge and the sole *Ātman*, in ungraspable, featureless, unthinkable, indescribable, whose essential nature is the knowledge regarding the sole *Ātman*, in whom the entire manifest universe dissolves, the serene, auspicious, and non-dual. That is the self (*Ātman*), that is to be known.] (Gambhirananda, 2000)

Beyond all these three states exists the supreme one. The self, when is considered whom the entire manifest universe dissolves, the serene, auspicious, and non-dual. That is the self (*Ātman*), That is to be known— *sa ātmā, sa vijñeyaḥ*. This echoes the famous instruction of the sage Yājñavalkya, mentioned earlier, imparted to his wife Maitreyī – *ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ*... [Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyakaopaniṣad* 2/4/5 and 4/5/6] (Madhavananda, 1950). This state is considered as the fourth one merely from the perspective of the three primary steps. In fact, this *Ātman* is the only reality, which is beyond all relative manifestations.

- It really resembles the state of *Kaivalya* as upheld by Patanjali [Cf. *Yoga-sūtra* 4/33 with the commentary of Vyāsa] (Vivekananda, 2013) (Hariharananda, 2015).

### Observations

This article aims to clarify the three *Sthānas*, *Avasthās* or states that lead an individual towards the realization of the absolute.

- It possibly suggests the three consecutive stages of spiritual upgradation of an aspirant, and does not merely intend to highlight several states of consciousness of an ordinary man.
- Especially, it seems illogical to denote *Svapnasthāna* and *Suṣuptasthāna Ātman* as the Self, merely belonging to the dreaming and sleeping state respectively; rather, it is wise to conclude that certain contemplative states have been suggested by these two terms.
- *Svapnasthāna* and *Suṣuptasthāna Ātman* could have been taken simply as dreaming and sleeping individual, if the text of the *Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad* would have asserted that the supreme reality can be attained simply on the annihilation of the states of *Jāgrat*, *Svapna* and *Suṣupti*. On the contrary, the *Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad* records these three as essential and supportive steps towards self-realization, because the word *Pāda* means, *through which something is attained – padyate anena iti pādaḥ* (Table 1).
- The philosophical disquisition upholds that these three relative states termed technically, *Avasthātraya*, namely, *Jāgrat*, *Svapna* and *Suṣupti* are the three profound states of consciousness, which in some way or other bear the

Table 1: Signatures of the various states of human consciousness

State of Ātman	Nature	Associated activity and/or Corresponding state in the perspective of Yoga	Associated body	Associated sheaths
Turiya Ātman	<p><i>nāntaḥprajñānāṃ na bahiprajñānāṃ nobhayataḥprajñānāṃ na prajñānaghanānāṃ na prajñānāṃ nāprajñānāṃ/ adṛśyam avyavahāryam agrāhyam alakṣaṇam acīntyam avyapadeśyam ekātmapratyayasāraṃ prapañcopaśamaṃ śāntaṃ śivamadvaitaṃ caturthaṃ manyante, <b>sa ātmā, sa vijñeyaḥ</b>//</i></p> <p>[They consider the fourth as neither conscious of the internal objects, nor that of the external objects, neither conscious of the both (internal and external objects), nor a mass of consciousness, neither the intelligent, nor the non-intelligent, as unseen, incommunicable, ungraspable, featureless, unthinkable, indescribable, whose essential nature is the knowledge regarding the sole Ātman, in whom the entire manifest universe dissolves, the serene, auspicious, and non-dual. That is the Self (Ātman), That is to be known.]</p> <p><i>sa ātmā, <b>sa vijñeyaḥ</b>/ ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ/ brahman tal <b>lakṣyam</b> ucyate/</i></p> <p>[That is the Self (Ātman), That is to be known / The Self, should be realised / the Brahman is the target]</p>	<p><i>Darśana</i> or <i>Jñāna</i> (knowledge of the Absolute) <i>Kaivalya</i></p>	Aśarīra	Ānanda
Suṣuptasthāna Ātman	<p><i>yatra supto na kaṃ cana kāmaṃ kāmayate, na kaṃ cana svapnaṃ paśyati, tat suṣuptam. suṣuptasthāna <b>ekibhūtaḥ prajñānaghana evānandamayo hy ānandabhuk cetomukhaḥ prajñānā</b> tṛtīyaḥ pādaḥ//<b>eṣa sarveśvara eṣa sarvajña eṣo 'ntaryāmy eṣa yoniḥ sarvasya prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām</b>//</i></p> <p>[When a sleeping person neither craves for any desirable objects or feeling, nor experiences any dream, that is (considered as) <i>Suṣupta</i>– the state of deep sleep. One, having the status of deep sleep, who has become unified, who is a mass of consciousness, who is full of bliss, who is verily the enjoyer of bliss, who is the doorway of cognition, is the <i>Prājñā</i> (the Intelligent One) – the third state. This is the Lord of all, this is Omniscient, this is the inner Controller, this is the Womb of all, this is verily the cause of origin and dissolution of beings.]</p>	<p><i>Nididhyāsana</i>–the stream of meditation on the only One Object– the <i>Brahman</i> or <i>Ātman Saṃskāraśeṣo 'anya (Asaṃprajñāta)</i>/ advanced stage of <i>Sabija Samādhi</i> that culminates in ` <i>Nirbija Samādhi</i> [Cf. Śaṅkara's commentary on <i>Prāśnopaniṣad</i> 4/6. &amp; "...The state of mind devoid of all <i>vṛttis</i>, including <i>prajñā-vṛtti</i>, is known as <i>Asaṃprajñāta-yoga</i>. At first the <i>saṃskāras</i> of <i>prajñā-vṛtti</i> will remain in the depths of the mind; such a state is called <i>sabija-asaṃprajñāta</i>. When even the <i>prajñā-saṃskāras</i> are deactivated, the resulting state of mind is known as <i>nirbija-asaṃprajñāta</i>." In 'Basic Principles of Patañjali's <i>Yoga-Sūtras</i>' by Swami Bhajananda, in <i>Some Responses to Classical Yoga in the Modern Period</i>, p. 94. Gol Park: RMIC, 2010.]</p>	Kāraṇa	Ānandamaya
Svapnasthāna Ātman	<p><i>svapnasthāno 'ntaḥprajñāḥ saptāṅga ekonaviṃśatimukhaḥ <b>praviviktabhuk</b> dvitīyaḥ pādaḥ//</i></p> <p>[One having the dreaming or dreamlike status, whose cognition is based on the experience of the inward impressions, who is possessed of seven limbs and nineteen doors, and experiences the discriminating elements, is the <i>Taijasa</i> (the Luminous One) – the second state.]</p>	<p><i>Manana</i> or reflection or mindful logical thinking of the knowledge acquired through the act of <i>Śravaṇa</i> or listening <i>Savicāra, Nirvicāra, Sānanda</i> and <i>Sāsmīta Samādhi</i> (<i>sūkṣmaviśayatvaś cālīṅgaparyavasānam</i>)</p> <p>[Cf. Patañjali's <i>Yoga-sūtra</i> 1/17, 42-45 along with the commentaries of Vyāsa and Swami Vivekananda.]</p>	Sūkṣma	<i>Prāṇamaya Manomaya Vijñānamaya</i>
Jāgaritasthāna Ātman	<p><i>jāgaritasthāno bahiḥprajñāḥ saptāṅga ekonaviṃśatimukhaḥ <b>sthūlabhug vaiśvānaraḥ</b> prathamaḥ pādaḥ//</i></p> <p>[One having the waking state, whose cognition is based on the perception of the outward universe, who is possessed of seven limbs and nineteen doors, and experiences gross objects, is the <i>Vaiśvānara</i> (One Who is present within all creatures) – the first state.]</p>	<p><i>Śravaṇa</i> or mindful listening about the nature of the Absolute from outside <i>Savitarka</i> and <i>Nirvitarka Samādhi</i> (<i>vitarkaḥ cittasya ālambane sthūlaḥ ābhogaḥ</i>)</p> <p>[Cf. Patañjali's <i>Yoga-sūtra</i> 1/17 along with its commentaries of Vyāsa and Swami Vivekananda.]</p>	Sthūla	Annamaya

**Table 2:** Characteristic features of the human brain-rhythms

Brain Wave	Frequency (Hz)	Amplitude (Mtr)	Characteristics
Gamma	>30	Lowest	Heightened perception state Motor function, meditation
Beta	12 – 30	Lowest	Active conversation Making decisions Solving a problem Focusing on a task Learning a new concept
Alpha	8 -12	Low	Being creative and artistic Relaxed Light meditation Conscious
Theta	4 – 8	High	Dreaming in our sleep Light Sleep Deep meditation Daydreaming/Internal focussing
Delta	0.5 – 4	Highest	Dreamless sleep Deep sleep Unconscious

awareness of the supreme self. Tradition corresponds these three states with the three bodies, *Sthūla Sukṣma* and *Kāraṇa* and five sheaths, *Annamaya*, *Prāṇamaya*, *Manomaya*, *Vijñānamaya* and *Ānandamaya*. The *Upaniṣads* explicitly consider these bodies and sheaths as the manifestation of Brahman at the relative level. Therefore, it is beyond doubt that each of the three states represents the different levels of awareness of *Brahman*. The different states of mindful awareness are equated with different states of *Samādhi* in the yoga tradition (Table 2).

- It is observed that the different states of human consciousness are characterized by the rhythms of the brain captured as the EEG responses, which are representative of the electrical activity of the cortical neurons. These EEG responses, popularly known as the brain waves, are classified into different frequency bands corresponding to the different states of consciousness. The alpha wave (8 to 12 Hz),

theta wave (4 to 8 Hz), and delta wave (0.5 to 4 Hz) are observed to characterize the restive wakeful state, dream state, and the state of dreamless sleep respectively along with some other additional features. It is conspicuously observed that the same alpha, theta, waves also characterize different states of meditation (Tang, Rothbart, M. K., & Posner, 2019) (Harmony, 2013). So, the similarity of the brain responses during meditation with the various states of sleep evinces that sleep-like states may be experienced by meditative practices. To put it qualitatively, the bliss obtained during the different stages of sleep can be simulated through meditation.

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