

The Four States Of Consciousness

By Nithyananda Paramahansa

(Source: Gita 8.7 to 8.10 – Page 511)

In our life, we experience two states of being and two levels of mind. For examples, now, while we are awake, we have thoughts. In deep sleep, do we have thoughts? No! So the two possibilities for the mind are with thought and without thought. In the same way, in the being, there can be 'I' consciousness and no 'I' consciousness. As of now, while we are awake and talking and moving, we have the idea of 'I' all the time, that of 'I' consciousness. In deep sleep, the 'I' consciousness does not exist. These two levels of consciousness and the two levels of mind and thought overlap each other and create four states of being in us.

The state with thoughts and with 'I' consciousness is the waking state, jagrat, in which most of us are now (not all, some of us are in the dream state – sleeping already!) The next state is when we have thoughts, but 'I' consciousness is absent. This is the dream state – svapna. In the dream state, the frequency of thoughts will be more than the frequency of 'I' consciousness. That is why we are not able to control our dreams. When we are awake, the frequency of 'I' is more, and that is why we can control our thoughts; we can do anything we want. If we can have dreams of our choice, we know what kind of dreams we will have! Dreams are not in our control. So we have thoughts but no 'I' consciousness. The flow of thoughts happening in our being is the dream state.

In the next state, neither 'I' consciousness nor the flow of thoughts exists. This is deep sleep or susupti. The three states are jagrat, svapna, and susupti – conscious, sub-conscious, unconscious. There is a fourth state that we have not experienced in our life, where we have no flow of thoughts yet we have 'I' consciousness. This is Samadhi, thoughtless awareness, turiya avastha, atma jnana, Brahma jnana, self realization, nirvana, alma bhutiand state of the divine, nitya consciousness, and eternal bliss!

All these words refer to the state where we have pure awareness but no thoughts, where we exist without body and mind. In jagrat, svapna, susupti, we live with the body and mind. In jagrat, we live with the sthula sarira or gross body. In svapna, we live with the suksma sarira or subtle body; understand in the dream state also we assume a body. That is why we are able to travel in our dreams. For example, we fall asleep in Los Angeles but suddenly dream we are in India! In deep sleep, we assume the casual body or karana sarina. In turiya state, we experience boundarylessness, bodylessness. We have pure 'I' consciousness, but without thoughts. Vivekananda says, 'if you experience even a single glimpse of this consciousness when you are alive, the same thing automatically repeats when you leave the body. You leave the body in Samadhi.

All spiritual practices directly or indirectly aim at achieving this state where we exist with the awareness of 'I', but without the consciousness of body and mind. That is why Krsnya says that if we experience at least one moment of consciousness beyond the body and mind, we can choose our next life in a relaxed way. If we have not lived a single moment of our life without the feeling of being the body and mind, we cannot be without the body and mind once we die. So once we die, we are immediately tried to catch hold of another body without bothering about which body we are getting into. It's like we are late for a train, so we run and jump onto the first train that we see, not thinking about where it's headed. We rush and get into some body or the other and come down to planet earth yet another time.

After coming down, we again forget the purpose of assuming the body. The whole thing is confusion leading to confusion and more confusion. If we have experienced a single moment of complete rest and thoughtless awareness, naturally when we leave the body, we will be in the same state. This state I also called 'bodyless' awareness because when we are in turiya state, all the three bodies do not touch us; neither the gross body nor the subtle body nor the casual body touches us. We experience awareness that is beyond the three bodies. If we have experienced this thoughtless awareness for even a single moment earlier, we will have the required clarity in the end. We will have the patience to work with our data files before assuming the next body. Sometimes, if we decide to take birth, we can even take a conscious birth, like the great masters! Krsna says yogabrahma. We take birth on a family that will be conducive to our spiritual growth. Krsna says that only very rarely do souls take birth in this type of family. I have

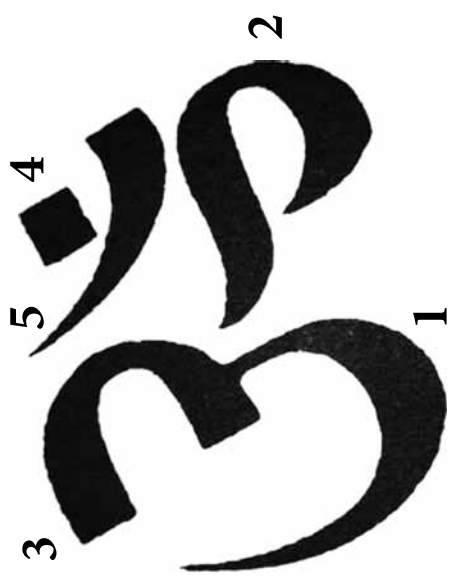
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	With Thoughts	Without Thoughts
With "I" Consciousness	<p>Jagrat Wakeful State Thinking</p>	<p>Turiya Blissful State Full Awareness</p>
Without "I" Consciousness	<p>Swapna Dream State Dreaming</p>	<p>Sushupti Deep Sleep State Unconscious</p>

****Source:** BhagavadGita demystified by Nithyananda Paramahansa, 2011, Page 511

The visual elements of the Sanskrit symbol represent the four states of consciousness (1-4), and the world of illusion (5):



1. Waking (jagrat)
2. Dreaming (swapna)
3. Deep sleep (sushupti)
4. Transcendental state (turiya)
5. World of illusion (maya) that veils true awareness

rarely seen parents who do not object when the son does spiritual practice. If your family does not object, then be very clear, there is every chance of your being a yogabrahma! Otherwise, I have seen even religious parents creating obstacles if their son wants to enter into spiritual life. They say, 'Go to temples but not to ashrams!' as long as you go to temples, it is ok because you grow to the level where your parents are. But if you grow beyond the maturity of the parents, it is something that they cannot digest. Very rarely do souls take birth in families where they will not be disturbed. When I left home for my parivrajaka (wandering sanyas life), I was just 17 years old. I told my mother that I was going, that I wanted to live the parivrajaka life, I wanted to taste sanyas life.

She started weeping. So I asked her, 'do you mean that I should not go?' She said beautifully, 'No, I don't want to stop you. But I am not able to digest the idea of your leaving, so I am weeping.' Even today I am grateful to my parents because they did not stop me. Not only that, from young age I did all sorts of things. Sometimes I used to spend the night meditating in the graveyard in the outskirts of my village! Any other parents could not have tolerated it yet somehow the atmosphere was such that I was able to continue my spiritual practice.

If your family and surroundings do not disturb you, then, you have taken a conscious birth – you are a yogabrahma. But if you have not experienced a single glimpse, a single moment of thoughtless awareness, you cannot live without the body and mind once you die. So within three ksanas, you take birth in some way or the other. Even one glimpse of consciousness, when you live without the body and mind is enough. All I try to do is give you a single glimpse of consciousness, thoughtless awareness. Actually, if you achieve one glimpse of thoughtless awareness, you achieve whatever has to be achieved in life. If you have not achieved that, then whatever else you achieve is not ultimately useful.

The Supreme Witness

The next question: 'How can I be in the witnessing mode when I live my regular life?'

Start in a simple way. When you drive, when you sit, when you talk, see what is happening inside and outside you. You don't need to close your eyes, At least while driving, please don't close your eyes! Just move away from your body and see what is going on in your mind and your being.

When you talk to someone, witness how he talks and how you respond. Even before he finishes his statement, notice how you are ready to jump on him with your own opinions! See how you prepare your speech before he finishes his statement. Witness continuously. You will see the influence of desires, guilt and pain on your being automatically disappears.

The moment you create a gap between you and your body-mind, the suffering disappears. Suffering is due to attachment to your body and mind. All your sufferings disappear the moment you witness. Actually, you may fail the first few times. After you face failure, you think, 'It is difficult, I cannot do it,' and you create an idea that it is difficult.

Somebody goes to Ramana Maharshi, the enlightened saint from India, and asks, 'master, is atma vidya (knowledge of the self) difficult?' He says, 'The word difficult is the only difficulty.' He sings beautifully in Tamil, 'aiyye ati sulabham atma viddai, ayye ati sulabham' –Oh! The knowledge of the self is so easy! He sings beautifully, 'To achieve money you must work, to achieve name and fame you must work, to achieve anything else you must work. To achieve the knowledge of the Self, you need to just keep quiet. Nothing else needs to be done.' Such a simple thing; a few moments of witnessing consciousness is enough.

Now don't start calculating, 'from tomorrow onwards, 24 hours a day I will be in the witnessing consciousness.' Then you will become frustrated if you are unable to be that way. Even if you stay in that consciousness for five minutes, it is a big blessing. When you experience the relief that happens when you remain as the witness, even once or twice, you can see how the stress disappears from your being. Then you will automatically stay in that same state, because now you have tasted it. Then you will come back to the same mood again and again.

Ramakrishna says, 'If you give a little bit of abhin (an opium variant) to a peacock one evening at four o'clock, the next day exactly at four o'clock, it will be in front of your house!' In North India they give abhin to peacocks to make them dance. Similarly, if we experience the relaxation that happens when we witness the body and mind, we will automatically come back for that peace, again and again. If we feel witnessing is difficult, witness that thought also.

Go into the conscious of your being. Experience samaghi so that all hindrances disappear. You will experience the ultimate, eternal consciousness.

In the next verse Krsna says, 'At the time of death, fix your mind between the eyebrows.' He adds, 'without being distracted and with devotion.' See, all this is not in our control at the time when the life force is about to leave the body. But if we have led a life in such higher consciousness, this automatically happens at the time when krsna talks about the space between the eyebrows, He speaks of the higher cakra or energy center in the body.

Our mind is nothing but a bunch of conditionings. All these conditionings influence us at the time of death. How do we condition our mind? If we think that eating is the best thing in life, when we leave the body, what comes in front of us! All kinds of food and the McDonalds arches!

If we are taught that eating is the greatest pleasure in life, we would only see food when we leave this body. Then the last thought will be, 'let me take a body that will be given food, where I will not have any other responsibility.'

We call for the archived files. From all the experiences of our past, we choose what we think is best and what we have worked for all our life. Based on that, we make a decision, 'Alright, if I want to eat, this is the right country.' There we will spend our next life, in dullness, not doing anything, in just pure laziness.

A small story:

A man goes to a doctor and says, 'doctor, please examine me. I don't feel like doing anything. I feel dull.' The doctor thoroughly examines him. The man says, 'Doctor, please tell me in plain English, what is my problem?' The doctor says, 'If you ask me, in plain English, what is my problem?' The man says, 'Ok now tell me the medical term for it; I will go and tell my wife!'

If we have lived that kind of a life, that same laziness will make the choice for us when we take the next body. If you want to see the ultimate laziness, come to the Himalayas. You can see strange kinds of laziness. That is why Vivekananda says openly in his lectures, 'the people who eat and sleep in the name of sanyas... make them stand up, and simply beat them!' Pure laziness!

A man tells his friend, 'If only someone would invent a machine that does all our work when switched on: laundry, cleaning, cooking, iron, giving us a bath and putting on clothes! How nice it would be if the machine did everything at the flick of a switch!'

His friend replies, 'How much nicer would it be if the machine also automatically switched itself on and off?'

This is what I call the peak of laziness! Be very clear, we actually spend energy when we are lazy. Don't think we are not spending energy. Have you heard the phrase, 'tired of sleeping?' Many people are tired of taking a rest. If we sleep for more than ten hours, we will be tired of taking rest.

To be tired of taking rest is *tamas*. If we have lived life completely in *tamas*, we naturally decide, 'anyhow, the ultimate thing in life is sleep. Now what type of body is the right body - whether pig or buffalo or human being? What type of family should I take birth in?' We make a decision. The whole calculation happens based on your own data, the data that we have collected.

As I said, at the time of leaving the body, the whole data appears before us in a single flash – *agamya* (acquired) file, *sancita* (bank balance) file and *prarabdha* (current) file. Based on the files, we decided, 'What should be my next birth?' The moment we decide, we enter that kind of body. Because we are so attached to the body and mind, we cannot live without a body for more than three *ksanas*. *Ksana* is not chronological time. It is the gap between one thought and the next thought. For the most of us, *Ksana* will be a few microseconds because of our endless stream of thought. For most of us, *ksana* will be a few microseconds because of our endless stream of thoughts.

While still in the body, if we have experienced 'thoughtlessness' at least once, (thoughtlessness means being alive without sense of body and mind), if we have experienced thoughtless awareness, if we have been in universal consciousness for a single moment without the body and mind, that is what I call *Samadhi*.

Source: *Bhagavad Gita* by Nithananda Paramahansa, Pages 507-514