Chapter Five
Findings

Bhakti Experience: Attempt at an Explanation

Bhakti is an experience and Bhakti poetry is an expression of that experience. Poetry is a category of art and to that extent Bhakti poetry also is a category of art. All art experience is described as being very close to the spiritual experience. According to Prof. R. Sathyanarayana:

Art experience is non referential; that is, it has no referent in the phenomenal world even though its symbolic stuff is derived from physical material. Art experience is different from all other forms of experience and is thus unique. It is perhaps nearer to spiritual experience than to others and is hence sometimes claimed to be coeval with it; this is why it is described in Indian Aesthetics as *brahmaanda sahodarah*. However it differs from spiritual experience in following ways: It is transient and endures only as long as the stimulating art form is present but disappears when the latter ceases to exist. The experience of *moksha* or *brahman*, on the other hand, is by definition, permanent. [Sathyanarayana: 2006:7]

Bhakti poetry is twice as intense in its expression as it is an effect of a spiritual experience into an art form. In fact, the compositions of all saint poets inhere in themselves at least four conceptual categories viz. Poetry, Bhakti, Self-realization (Atma Sakshatkar) and Liberation or ‘Moksha’. These categories are not exclusive of each other. However, except for poetry, the rest of the three categories are non-discursive fields. That is why the vocabulary available to talk about these concepts becomes less and less objective. Amongst these four categories, poetry is most accessible to the conscious mind because objective reference points in terms of name and form are available which help to fathom the depths of a poetic tradition and thereby help to create a poetic context. This is so because poetry is always embedded in a particular culture and that same culture provides the reference points to enter into it and helps to generate meanings out of it. The other three categories are not verbal categories. They are more of mental states than mere
words and meanings, or signifiers and signifieds. In fact, in all the four categories, consciousness seems to assume a kind of modality, which is different in terms of intensity and expansion of awareness.

Consciousness generally operates on rational and non-rational, verbal and non-verbal or discursive and non-discursive (representational) levels. In discursive consciousness, a logical sequence of words or even that of events is followed while in representational consciousness, which is more emotive, all the experience is presented to the mind at the same time. For instance, when we watch a painting, a picture, a landscape or even when we listen to a piece of classical music, the effect or experience is felt in a single stroke or a flash which is much more intense than any linguistic feature can ever hope to capture.

All spiritual and mystical experiences including devotion and Bhakti in the final sense are non-discursive and non-rational. In order to express these experiences in linguistic signs, the language has to continuously break into signs that are ever pregnant with unlimited possibilities.

Here it is important to note that categories of Bhakti, mysticism and self-realization or ‘moksha’ have most often used poetry as one of the important communicative vehicles. Poetic discourse, through its capacity to allow condensed symbols in its structure, provides an appropriate model, that can convey intense and wide ranging experiences. Therefore, Bhakti poetry evidently inheres in its body the other three categories. Bhakti poetry seems to be a very suitable tenor to put across the modes of experience of devotion, self realization and that of liberation or even mysticism. Indira Peterson says something to this effect when she talks about the Bhakti poetry of 6th century Tamil Shaivite saints:

Poetry is the ‘Bhakti’ experience made palpable. The hymn is the embodiment of the unification of emotion and ritual, interior (akam) and exterior (puram)-the experience of love and its expression;... [Indira Peterson: P:40]

It is for this reason that all the sacred classical texts in India from Vedas through Upanishads to the Epics have a chanting or singing tradition associated with them. The theoretical models evolve only after poetry has done its function of sieving down into the cultural consciousness through its intense simplicity.
On the other hand, in spite of the fact, that Bhakti poetry has always been deceptively simple in that it always talked to masses in their idiom, it has without exception invoked very esoteric readings from religious scholars. The perspectives, which these scholars/theologians bring to Bhakti, are often limited to finding mythological parallels in the poems or to reading the poems as symbolic representation of some school of religious philosophy. There had hardly been any attempt to understand or to explain the experience independently of religious ideology, which respective devotional songs apparently convey.

Still, it is important to mention the work of poet, critic and translator A.K.Ramanujan, who has made a successful attempt towards a secular reading of Bhakti poetry in his essays that accompany his translations of Tamil classical as well as Bhakti poetry. A.K. Ramanujan attempts to relate Bhakti poetry to an unbroken classical poetic tradition, thereby ascribing to it a discursive field which is rooted in a register that is not necessarily religious. Especially in his “Afterword” to *Hymns for the Drowning*, Ramanujan relates the special poetic features of the Bhakti and describes how Bhakti poetry draws from the classical tradition. According to him, “Not only the personae, but the landscapes and the situations of classical Tamil love poetry (and heroic poetry) are enlisted as signifiers” for a new “signification”. His lucid list of the signifiers, which are used in Bhakti poetry, is worth quoting:

1. Vedic/Upanishadic concepts and symbols
2. Buddhist and Jaina elements
3. Purana mythologies
4. Love poetry and heroic poetry in Tamil (or Sanskrit poetry, for later Bhakti, and in other regions)
5. Earlier notions of Bhakti from the Gita, Paripatal and Tirumurukarruppatai
6. Folk religion, folk meters, motifs and genres.

Besides enumerating the common signifiers and references that feed the content of Bhakti songs, Ramanujan also talks about those features of Bhakti poetry, that make it different
from other traditional genres of poetry. Among these features, the chief characteristic is that all Bhakti poetry is subjective and intensely personal. Bhakta is the poet, the speaker and the character. The second feature is, that while traditional Indian poetry aims at achieving ‘rasa’ (aesthetic emotion), Bhakti poetry claims no such thing and experience or “anubhava” is the means and the goal. In Ramanujan’s words “we have here a poetics of “bhava” (feeling), not rasa, a poetics of personal feeling whether aesthetic or not”. The next feature of Bhakti poetry is that in Bhakti as in “vedic and epic texts” “Phalashruti” (religious end, lit. fruit) is supposed to be the function of the song rather than the aesthetic function. Another characteristic of Bhakti is the use of everything, that is common and popular in the vocabulary. This is a very important feature of Bhakti poetry and due to this, Bhakti poetry and Bhakti movements became major mass movements in Indian history. And it is due to this particular feature that Bhakti poetry played a very significant role in shaping the regional languages in different parts of the country. According to A.K.Ramanujan:

To the extent that the poetry espouses bhava or “natural,” “spontaneous” feeling, it tends to draw on the common stock of speech, local dialect, colloquial tones, and turns away from the standard literary language or poetic diction – though Bhakti poets will use anything that is sufficiently common and will develop conventions of their own, a rhetoric of their own, a rhetoric of spontaneity, a complex stance of simplicity. Beginning with a first language, they may construct a second. [Ramanujan: 1981: Page: 164.]

**Bhakti Poetry: Towards a Poetics of Experience**

In this section, I am making an attempt to arrive at some explanation about the experience of Bhakti; taking off exactly from where Ramanujan left by stating Bhakti as involving a poetics of ‘Anubhava’ or experience rather than a poetics of aesthetics enjoyment or ‘Rasaanubhuti’.

A.K. Ramanujan’s work on Tamil Bhakti poetry has been a significant move towards the creation of a “New Poetics” or a poetics that can provide a perspective which is more literary and hence different from usually adopted religious perspectives on Bhakti. But
this was not a complete project, as it emphasizes more on content i.e. on the nature of what is expressed than on the nature of the experience itself. The reason behind this may be the incomprehensive nature of the experience of Bhakta and its rich direct ecstatic expression in the songs that flow from him/her. For instance, we do not find any explanation in these theoretical attempts for the experience of ecstasy, something similar to the biblical concept of “epiphany”.48

When studying the poetry of Akka Mahadevi and Andal, I was often questioning myself about what was unique to these poems. Apparently they are also, like all love poetry, narratives of desire for the beloved. And Bhakti poems happen to be extremely simple narrations at that. Then what is the difference except for the fact, that the beloved here happens to be Supreme God. What is it, that makes them the source of intense ecstasy. Is it some different state of being which gave rise to these expressions? What was going on in their mind when these songs came forth? It often seems to be a different state of being, not accessible to a common mind, which was the source of these ecstatic compositions which are so powerful that they have become a part of the cultural consciousness of an entire race.

While looking for various perspectives on human consciousness and for different states of mind, I found, that Indian theories on consciousness provide very comprehensive models of consciousness. These models, if studied carefully, can provide an appropriate framework to study and understand Bhakti phenomena and its effulgent poetic expression.

To begin with, I am trying to suggest that Bhakti is an experience which happens only when the consciousness is operating at a higher level of awareness. Poetic expression of this Bhakti experience is only one phase in a series of various phases that constitute the process of human expression as such. Speech is the most important manifestation of human expression and communication. Indian theories of Cosmogony ascribe a very important status to the concept of “Speech” or “Vac” as it is called in Sanskrit. Mid eleventh century Kashmiri scholar Acharya Abhinavagupta, who is the famous exponent

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48 This concept is very aptly used by British novelist, James Joyce in his novel Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man to represent artist-protagonist’s experience of a sudden flash of illumination
of Kashmir Shaivism and is the author of Tantraloka, has expounded the theory of \textit{Vac} or speech. Accordingly \textit{Vac} is a manifestation of Divine Principle, which is conceived as Shiva in all forms of Shaivism including Kashmir Shaivism in the creation. \textit{Vac} is conceptualized as a goddess or Shakti (lit. power) itself. To quote Motilal Pandit, a modern scholar on Kashmir Shaivism:

Shakti which is the essential nature of Shiva, expresses itself through five functions. These five functions correspond to the four hierarchical manifestations of the Word (\textit{Vac}), which are the Transcendent (Para), Visionary (\textit{Pashyanti}), the Middle (\textit{Madhayama}), and the Gross (\textit{Vaikhari}). The Transcendent and the Visionary stages of the Word represent perfect unity, whereas the Middle denotes the stage of unity in diversity (\textit{bhedabheda}), and the Gross embodies complete diversity (\textit{bheda}). The five functional powers that are associated with the four stages of manifestation of the Word are consciousness (\textit{cit}), bliss (\textit{ananda}), will (\textit{iccha}), knowledge (\textit{jnana}),and action (\textit{kriya}). The first two functions – consciousness and bliss- correspond to the Transcendent stage of pure unity, and so are not at all considered to be a manifestational stage. As this is the stage of unity, so consciousness and bliss are equated with Siva and Shakti. Also at this stage of pure creation no manifestational activity takes place. Accordingly this state or stage has been termed as that of pure “I” (aham), and not of “I am This” (aham idam). In so far as the other three functional powers of the Absolute are concerned, they are seen to be related to the manifestational process of creation. These powers are will, knowledge, and action, and they emerge or become operative when the process of impure creation begins. [Pandit: 2003:184]

In other words, in the above paragraph, we are dealing with the concept of creation itself. In Shaivism, creation is a downward movement of the divine energy (\textit{Shakti}). This \textit{Shakti} which is an undetachable aspect of Shiva is complete and effulgent in itself before the act of creation and this state of being is of Complete Unity (\textit{Abheda}).Here the expression is Transcendent and Visionary. After this when the ‘Ichha’ or the ‘Will’ to create emerges in Shiva, then the expression manifests in Middle (\textit{Madhayama}) phase and after the ‘Ichhal’ comes the ‘Jnana’ (knowledge) and then ‘Kriya’ (action) takes place to effect the
creation. At this final stage, the expression is gross as the idea of creation gets a tangible form and shape in the spatial dimension.

Just as this creation expresses itself in the Cosmic Macrocosm, the creation expresses itself in the human microcosm in the same manner, the major means of expression being the same – Vac Shakti.

Bhakti is an experience of complete unity with the cosmic Self (Abheda) which is Transcendent (para) and Visionary (Pashyanti). As it comes down to tangible expression of, for instance, a poetic form, it undergoes what has been called above as manifestational process where the consciousness relates to Middle (Madhyama) level and finally to Gross (Vaikhari) level of expression.

Now it becomes important to understand the nature of consciousness and the role it plays in the life of an individual. How does consciousness behave when it undergoes different modes of experience? Does Bhakti poetry provide us with a window to those states of consciousness which are far beyond the gross sense- experience?

**Human Consciousness and Human Body (Physio-Psychic Complex)**

Indian cosmogonies do not conceive of the Individual self as an isolated entity, independent of creation that is effected by Cosmic Consciousness. However, they also claim that Individual self is not able to connect and envisage its role in the cosmic plan due to layers of impressions on its awareness. Alain Danielou describes this idea about limited faculties of the individual and expansive nature of the cosmic principle with reference to Shaivite cosmogeny as follows:

> According to the evolution of the cycles, man's pride rises against his instinct, creating artificial mental constructs which oppose his perception of the subtle world. Subsequently the disastrous grandeur of the human species develops on a material level, until Shiva- the prime cause and source of life – appears and teaches men three ways of knowledge and realization, which are Sankhya (cosmology), Yoga (the mastery of subtle man), and Tantra (initiatory and magical rites and practices). Sankhya explains the structure of the world and the system of the creation, the parallelism and interdependence of the various
aspects of matter, life and species, and the fundamental oneness of macrocosm and microcosm of the universe and the living being .... Yoga is a technique in which by means of introspection, man learns to know himself. He is able to silence the digression of his thought, to pass beyond the limits of his senses and go back to the deep sources of his life. Contact is made with the invisible powers hidden within himself, as in all aspects of the created, which constitutes the deepest nature of the living being. The body, including the mental and intellectual faculties is only its support; a sort of clothing. Tantra is the link between Sankhya and Yoga. It teaches the initiatory and magical methods through which man can enter into direct contact with the secret nature of things of the invisible and mysterious world of gods and spirits. [Danielou: 1992: 140]

Individual consciousness is intimately connected with the workings of Cosmic Consciousness. Knowledge of this correlation of Individual consciousness with Higher Consciousness and Its scheme of things in Creation is decided by the sensitivity and expansion of awareness of the Individual consciousness. Individual consciousness can be enlightened by various means. Bhakti, Yoga and Tantra are some of the major paths revealed in Indian philosophical systems. The poets under study use all the three means in their journey to self realization. While Andal is purely a bhakta, Akka Mahadevi is a bhakta, a yogini as well as a tantric. She has been exposed to all the esoteric practices of Yoga and Tantra and she did her sadhana (spiritual practices) on these lines. This is clearly revealed in her works especially in Yoganga Trividhi which is an exposition of the experiences of Kundalini Yoga, which is a part of Tantra.

Indian philosophy, or ‘Darshan’ as it is rightly called, describes the composition of human being by relating it as a microcosm of the bigger macrocosmic Cosmic Consciousness. Therefore, all the elements found in creation as a whole, are also found subtly strewn in the physio-psychic complex of a human individual. Interrelations between these principles are revealed sometimes in tacit and sometimes in explicit ways from Upanishadic tradition onwards.\footnote{Hence the famous expressions from Upanishads like \textit{Aham BrahmasmI} (I am Brahma), \textit{Tat Tvam Asi} (You are That) and \textit{Soham} (I am Him). Mandukya Upanishad, for instance says, “Ayamatma Brahma”. (This Atma is Brahma).} Tantras relate the descent of Divine consciousness into
human consciousness, revealing a very complex yet structured relationship between various elements in the Creation and their corresponding threads in the human complex. To validate this same argument, Alain Danielou quotes French author J.Evola and also Mundaka Upanishad:

"The basis of Yoga is the analogical-magical correspondence of macrocosm and microcosm. All the powers which are manifested and operating in the world are present and active in the body." (J. Evola, Le Yoga Tantrique, p.215) "Further than the farthest, it is very near in the body. For those who are enlightened, it is there in the hollow of the heart." (Mundaka Upanishad, III,1,7)

(Danielou: 1992:145)

Here, for the purpose of expositing Bhakti poetry and Bhakti experience, one can only briefly hint at the inter-connections that are useful.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Human Physio-Psychic Complex</th>
<th>Human Consciousness</th>
<th>Human Experience</th>
<th>Human Expression</th>
<th>Cosmic Mind (in the form of 'Nada', first manifest form of Creation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sthool,Gross body</td>
<td>Jagriti, conscious state</td>
<td>Related to senses, gross and at material plane</td>
<td>Vaikhari (gross, physical speech)</td>
<td>&quot;A&quot; (sound of the syllable “A” has frequencies that relate to conscious state)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sookshm, Subtle body</td>
<td>Svapna, or subconscious state</td>
<td>Mental-related to thoughts and thought constructs</td>
<td>Madyama, (word in its subtle form as existing in ‘Antah Karana’ prior to its gross manifestation)</td>
<td>&quot;U&quot; (sound of the second syllable ‘u’ has frequencies that relate to dream state)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karana, psychic body</td>
<td>Sushupti, or unconscious state</td>
<td>Completely unconnected with senses. Experience of perfect stillness</td>
<td>Pashyanti (going forth as seeing; here there is no difference between ‘vachya’ or object and the ‘vachaka’ or word</td>
<td>&quot;M&quot; (sound of the third syllable ‘m’ has frequencies that relate to subconscious state)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atman,Cosmic or Transcendental body</td>
<td>Turiya or transcendental state</td>
<td>Unity with cosmic consciousness Bhakti experience falls in this category</td>
<td>Para Vac (Spiritual logos in the form of nada)</td>
<td>&quot;AUM&quot; (Primal sound of &quot;AUM&quot; has the frequencies of sound which relate to cosmic consciousness) Ref. Mandukya Upanishad. Note 2.</td>
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Human being is conceived as a uniquely structured dynamic of various energies, which can be tapped by expanding the level of consciousness from gross to subtle and then to psychic and cosmic state. When the awareness starts entering into higher levels, there is more and more harmony between individual self and Cosmic or Transcendental Self. Bhakti is considered to be the easiest and the most accessible path to this kind of liberation.

Bhakti, (keeping in mind that it is said to be a means, a goal as well as a state of mind) Yoga and Tantra offer a well defined path, which makes the experience of different aspects of Cosmic Consciousness possible in human being. This condition, state or concept is known by various names as ‘Atma’ or ‘AUM’ or ‘Turiya’ state. Andal’s ‘Tiruppavai’ and Akka Mahadevi’s ‘Yoganga Trividhi’ and her ‘vachanas’ offer clear examples of this path as well as this condition.

These saints, like all saints, were enlightened beings, who were trying to express the experiences of this Cosmic state (Turiya) of awareness in some form and they found poetry or song compositions to be the most suitable medium to effect that.

**Human Consciousness: Different States**

In India, we find a theory of Individual consciousness, which is as old as the civilization itself. Mandukya Upanishad recognizes and describes four states of consciousness, which are Jagriti, Svapna, Sushupti and Turiya. In the West, nineteenth century Viennese psychologist, Sigmund Freud, studied the composition of human mind and defined three dimensions of consciousness. Freud’s three divisions of Conscious, Subconscious and Unconscious states of mind can be said to be quite in correspondence with the first three states of Jagriti (waking), Svapna (dream) and Sushupti (Sleeping) states as prescribed by
Indian sages. And the fourth stage of *Turiya* (Super consciousness) is an extraordinary state of consciousness, in which the Individual self becomes fully aware of all the three states of consciousness simultaneously.

Human consciousness is intimately connected with various components of the human mind.

Tantra philosophy describes four components of Individual mind, which are collectively known as ‘*Antah Karana*’ (Lit. *Antah* means ‘inner’, *Karana* means ‘instrument’). *Antah Karana* is the instrument of consciousness in an individual. And different states of consciousness described above are a result of the workings of *Antah Karana*. *Antah Karana* or Individual mind functions through its four dimensions – *Manas* (thought constructs), *Buddhi* (intellect), *Chitta* (memory) and *Ahamkara* (ego). To quote Swami Satyasanganandji:

The antah karana functions through the conscious, subconscious and unconscious realms, creating gross, subtle and causal experiences. As the antah karana has evolved out of a combination of the three gunas: sattwa, rajas and tamas, the quality of experience is largely determined by the pervading influence of these cosmic principles. Manas, chitta, buddhi and ahamkara behave differently under the sway of sattwa, as opposed to rajas and tamas, and thus manifest differently in the three states of awareness. [Satyasangananda: 1984:51]

*Manas* (thoughts and counter thoughts) and *chitta* (memory) work in the conscious and subconscious states of mind and hence influence the actions and thoughts in *Jagriti*.

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50 It is interesting to note that while Freud studied and conducted research on human subjects that were abnormal or mentally sick, Indian sages were interested in the supernormal states of awareness in very evolved human beings such as Rishis and Yogis.

51 Swami Niranjanand Saraswati, in a very comprehensive text on yoga, says: Once the nidra(sushupti) has been perceived and there is an extension of the field of awareness, encompassing all three states of jagriti, swapna and nidra, the broad awareness is known as turia. Some people describe turia as super mind, but it does not mean this. Turia means ‘simultaneous awareness of all three states’ which takes us closer to the state of enlightenment. And further: Prajna, the all-knowing, self-contained consciousness, abides in deep sleep, in which all things have vanished. Here, when it is said that things have vanished, it refers to duality ceasing, including the concept of you and me, the body and the experiences of the body. It also means that all the experiences related to name, form and idea, disappear. When everything disappears, one experiences the advaita aspect, unity with the individual soul. (*Yoga Darshan*, Page 263.)
(waking) and Swapna (dream) states. Buddhi (intellect) and Ahamkar (ego) are present in varying degrees in all the three states and so influence the workings in all the three states including Sushupti (sleep).

The Physio-Psychic Complex and Various Levels of Human Experience

The physio-psychic complex or the human body is described as a very sensitive index, which inheres different levels of experiences. It has been divided into ‘sthool’ or gross; ‘sookshm’ or subtle and ‘karana’ or causal bodies. These three components are significant, as they go into making of sense of the individual self in the external material world. Here, I would like to add, that there is a fourth stage also that we can call cosmic body or transcendental body which is named as ‘Atman’ in the classical texts. ‘Atman’ is a holistic state of experience which pervades and watches over the whole being. These states relate to various levels of experiences that are possible for a human being in the body.

To come back to ‘Sthool’ or gross body, this is the physical level of senses and their respective objects where the experience of reality is limited. Limitations in perception arise because of the fact, that the information about the outside world is perceived through five sense faculties, which have their own limitations. This level relates to Jagriti (waking) or conscious state of consciousness. In this state, experience is limited only to the visible or material world of senses.52

The second, ‘Sookshm’ or subtle body is subtler than the physical component. This relates to the mental state and state of dream or ‘Swapna’. This subtle body experiences the reality through the ‘manas’ (thoughts and counter thoughts) and ‘chitta’ (memory and sense impressions). These are subtle tools of the being, which are used to process “vibrations of thoughts, feelings, desires, motivations and actions.” The experiences or in other words, the objects, which the awareness is able to perceive through this state, are invisible as they relate more to the world of energy than the world of matter. In other words, the experiences in this state are subtle and have no material shape or form. The

52 Jnaneindriyas (five sense organs viz. ear, nose, eyes, tongue and skin) and Karamendriyas (five organs of action viz. hands, feet, mouth, reproductive and excretory organs) are the major feeders of information to the individual operating at gross level of being.
thoughts, ideas, emotions, feelings and desires, which form the realm of subconscious, are energies working subtly in the ‘sooksha’ or subtle body. This state of being is described as ‘svapna’ or ‘subconscious’ or dream state.

The third state of being is the ‘karana’ or causal body, where psychic dimension is active. This state is associated with ‘sushupti’ (deep sleep) or ‘unconscious’ level. Here, the senses get completely disconnected from their objects. Therefore, all processing in terms of thoughts and thought constructs stops. The experiences in this state are psychic. In this level of being, there is absolutely no movement or activity, there is perfect stillness.

The fourth state of being, which can be called as cosmic body or transcendental body relates to ‘Turiya’ or superconscious state of being. The awareness in this state is named as Atman. Experience in this state is of perfect enlightenment as the awareness here has become so expansive that it can simultaneously comprehend all the other levels of being i.e. Jagriti, Svaapna and Sushupti. In other words ‘Atma’ the seer at this level is able to perceive the entire range of experiences belonging to the other three states simultaneously. This is the transcendental state, where consciousness gains Cosmic dimensions and flows as a continuous stream connecting all creation. 53

Mandukya Upanishad relates Atman to the Primal sound of ‘Om’ (AUM), the Pranava and other three states of being to various syllables of Om as in A, U, and M. To quote from an English edition of the Upanishad:

This Self, though beyond words, is that supreme word Om; though indivisible, it can be divided in three letters corresponding to the three conditions of the Self, the letter A, the letter U, and the letter M.

53 Mandukya Upanishad describes these four states as follows:
Brahma is all and Atma is Brahma. Atma, the Self, has four conditions. The first condition is the dreaming life of outward-moving consciousness, enjoying the seven gross elements. The second condition is the dreaming life of inner-moving consciousness, enjoying the seven subtle inner elements in its own light and solitude. The third condition is the sleeping life of silent consciousness when a person has no desires and beholds no dream, that condition of deep sleep is one of oneness, a mass of silent consciousness made of peace and enjoying peace. This silent consciousness is all powerful, all knowing, the inner ruler, the source of all, the beginning and end of all beings. The fourth condition is Atma in his own pure state: the awakened life of supreme consciousness. It is neither outer nor inner nor inner consciousness neither semi-consciousness, nor sleeping consciousness, neither consciousness nor unconsciousness. He is Atman, the Spirit himself, that cannot be seen or touched, that is above all distinction, beyond thought and ineffable. (Mandukya Upanishad)
The waking condition, called the material condition, corresponds to the letter A, which leads the alphabet and breathes in all the other letters. He who understands gets all he wants; becomes a leader among men.

The dreaming condition, called the mental condition, corresponds to the second letter U. It upholds; stands between waking and sleeping, He who understands, upholds the tradition of spiritual knowledge; looks upon everything with an imperil eye. No one ignorant of Spirit is born into his family.

Undreaming sleep, called the intellectual condition, corresponds to the third letter, M. It weighs and unites. He who understands, weighs the world: rejects; unites himself with the cause.

The fourth condition of the Self corresponds to Om as One, indivisible Word. He is whole; beyond bargain. The world disappears in Him. He is the good; the one without a second. Thus Om is nothing but Self. He who understands, with the help of his personal self, merges himself into the impersonal Self; He who understands.


Consciousness and Awareness

At this stage, we need to bring in the concept of awareness and also to see the difference between consciousness and awareness. In fact, awareness is the mirror, which makes levels of consciousness visible to the being. Consciousness just is. As said earlier, it is like a continuous stream without a beginning and an end and awareness is like a beam of light, which enlightens this endless stream of being. Paramhansa Swami Niranjananand Saraswati uses following diagram to describe the relationship and notion of consciousness and awareness:
For the sake of analysis, Swami Niranjan has created twenty-six points on this unending line of consciousness dividing them into three sections. Each section relates to a particular dimension of awareness. According to the diagram, our experiences in Jagriti state might range from A to H for instance. In this state, we are fully awake and the experiences are generally gross and relate to senses. Svapna is the state when we are dreaming and subtler experiences flow. This state ranges from H to Q. Nidra or Sushupti state is when we are completely cut off from the material world and enter into a state of deep sleep. This state ranges from Q to Z.

Normally we are aware of only one point at a time in this stream of consciousness until something draws our awareness to itself. This way our awareness is constantly moving from one point to another point. We are not able to expand our awareness enough to take full experience of even Jagriti (waking) state, leave alone the Svapna (dream) and Sushupti (deep sleep) states in one lifetime. However, expansion of awareness is possible by adopting specific Yogic /Bhakti Sadhana. In fact, all our sotoriological theories- of Moksha or Liberation and Salvation- are nothing but description of means to expand the awareness. As, when the awareness has become as expansive as to enlighten all the points from A to Z, from jagriti to sushupti, then the self becomes the image of the Divine. This is a state of self-realization or Moksha that is also understood as a release from binaries such as self/ other, pleasure/pain, subject/ object etc - a state called as the state of 'Jeevan Mukti ' in Bhakti terminology.
While poetry might be an effect of *Jagriti* (conscious), *Svapna* (dream) or *Sushupti* (unconscious) states of mind, Bhakti, Mysticism and *Moksha*, are a product of *Turiya* (super conscious) states of the consciousness. Bhakti poetry then can be taken to be emerging from a very expansive awareness that appears to be mystical to the common mind.

Experience of Bhakti is associated with the fourth state of awareness, that is the state of *Turiya* where all the dualities cease to exist and the Bhakta becomes a reflection of the Cosmic or Divine Consciousness.
References


