MULTIPLE STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS: ANCIENT HINDU SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

This paper presents an analysis from the perspectives of ancient Hindu scriptures on the three states of consciousness namely, the waking state, dreaming state and the deep sleep state, commonly accepted in contemporary neuroscience and psychology. In doing so, the authors have taken verses from two ancient Hindu scriptures, the Mandukya Upanishad (4th-5th century BCE), a Sanskrit Vedic scripture and the Tirumandiram (5th century CE) a Tamil scripture to elucidate the remarkable correlation between the verses in these scriptures and the contemporary thinking in this field. The paper goes on to cite the scriptural references that go beyond the three states of consciousness into the fourth and then to an array of multiple states of consciousness. The authors hope with sincerity that this paper serves not only to shed light on the advanced findings of the ancient Hindu scriptures, but also provides a basis for future research in this fertile field of study.

Key words: Consciousness, Waking state, Dreaming State, Deep-sleep state, Turiya, Tirumandiram, Mandukya Upanishad, ancient Hindu scriptures, Sanskrit, Saivite, Tamil scripture

Introduction

The term ‘consciousness’ can be defined from various perspectives. Evan Thompsons is of the opinion that the oldest answer to what consciousness is can be found in Yajnavalkya’s
conversation with King Janaka some three thousand years ago. He further explains that according to Yajnavalkya, there is an inner light in every person which illuminates or reveals things so they can be known. The “inner light” that Yajnavalkya is talking about is what we would call “consciousness” (Thompson, 2014, p. 3). Plum and Posner (2007) defined consciousness as our awareness of ourselves and our environment. There is a clear agreement between these two opinions as they conclude that consciousness illuminates ones inner and outer world. Conscious processing of information enables us to exercise control and communicate our mental states to others. Beneath the surface, the unconscious processing occurs simultaneously at many layers, most of which still remains to be studied and understood by modern science (Augusto & Luigi, 2011; Pekala, 2013).

Science has always tried to eliminate the subjects from its description of the world. But what if subjectivity itself is the subject? Roots of modern study of consciousness can be traced to the research studies on our awareness of our environment in the early part of the 20th century. However, these studies took transformation into behavioural sciences. Only in the 1960s that formal studies began on the concept of multiple mental states, as a prelude to the formal studies on the consciousness (Yuh & Lily, 2010). The advancements in the field of neuroscience in the 21st century has taken the study of consciousness to the forefront by relating it to the brain activities associating it with multiple states, broadly categorised into three – waking, dreaming and sleeping (Beauregard & O’Leary, 2007).

The true picture of consciousness now seems to be getting rather murkier, challenging the notions of the neuroscientists and the psychologists. People used to think just three states of consciousness existed namely, waking, sleeping and deep sleep, but brain imaging suggests there are more states of consciousness than the three.

In the ancient Hindu spiritual traditions, the subject of multiple states of the consciousness has played a central role. For example, scriptures that have been in existence for thousands of years have clearly elaborated on the transformation of the spiritual aspirant’s consciousness through its multiple states as an essential prerequisite in his progression towards enlightenment (Aurobindo, 1971). The essence of these scriptures along with many such ancient Hindu scriptures constitutes what stands today as the Hindu spirituality.

This paper explores the Hindu spiritual views on the multiple states of consciousness. In doing so, it analyses selected stanzas from two ancient Hindu scriptures, namely, the Mandukya Upanishad (4th or 5th Century BCE) a Sanskrit Vedic scripture which deals with 4 states of consciousness (Ranade, 1926) and then the Tirumandiram (5th Century CE), a Tamil Saivite scripture that elaborates on 20 states of consciousness (Varatarasan, 1993).

Consciousness in Science

The study of consciousness has not been without scientific debates and doubts. In the past, it was the exclusive domain of the philosophers and mystics. But in the recent times, both
psychologists and neuroscientists have begun focusing strongly on this subject. In the 1600, with his famous line, *cogito ergo sum* – “I think therefore I am”, in his *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*, Rene Descartes inaugurated the dualism between physical events and mental events (Descartes & Lawrence, 1960). Thus he proposed that a clear division between mind and physical matter or between soul and body was needed in order to gain a system of fundamental knowledge about our outer world. Therefore, he proposed a real compartmentalisation of thought wherein consciousness was not an experimental variable of relevance in science. Overtime, it became an unstated assumption of science that no human qualities of consciousness can influence a well-designed scientific experiment.

Unfortunately, over time, scientists seemed to have forgotten that this was just a useful assumption that was fairly valid in the 1600s and 1700s for building reliable experiments. Hence, for a long time, the study of consciousness remained an area of scepticism outside the bounds of the scientific community (Chalmers, 2010). Huxley (1990), for example, took a mechanistic view of the consciousness when he stated,

“consciousness would appear to be related to the mechanism of the body simply as a collateral product of its working, and to be completely without any power to modifying that working as the steam whistle that accompanies the working of a locomotive engine is without influence upon its machinery”


Other positions insist that although consciousness is generated by physical events in the brain, it is not reduced to them but rather, arises from them. Advancements in neuroscience continue to challenge the boundaries of the field of consciousness, thereby challenging the previous mechanistic views and discovering its complexity with multiple states. For example, in 2010, researchers manoeuvred a sleep walker into a brain scanner and while they saw that much of the cortex, the part of the brain responsible for awareness, was off-line, they also noted that the other brain areas were active, including those linked with emotion. It is scientific view that similar overlaps might explain other states of consciousness.

Even though, historically, the scientific way of thinking has discounted the wisdom of the ancient spiritual traditions, especially, with respect to the human consciousness, this trend has started slowly changing with the advancement in the fields of neuroscience - brain studies, and relatively indirectly, in the fields of quantum physics and nuclear physics. For example, Newton’s laws of physics forming the foundation of what is called as, the classical physics were found to be not working in the 1900s when the scientific experiments fuelled by Einstein’s theories of relativity, started focussing on massive objects and extremely minuscule particles (Hawking, 2010).

In order to merge two very different kinds of physics into a single unified description of the universe, something is seen to be missing – something that fills the gaps in the universe. Although traditional science has not yet allowed for that ‘something’, the ancient spiritual
traditions have consciousness as a concept and reality is fast filing this gap and becoming the new frontier of science.

**Scientific view on the states of consciousness**

Consciousness and its different states etc. are now subjects of well accepted studies in many fields of science especially those in psychology and neuroscience. In the 1900s, William James suggested that the spiritual experience is but another state of consciousness. This is not merely an isolated view (James, 1982). The expanding field of study in consciousness and the increasing complexity in defining the number of different states of the same are being put to significant studies by modern day psychologists and neuroscientists. This explosion of studies have opened vast studies on topics like the Altered States of Consciousness (ASC), factoring in the changing states achieved through psychedelic drugs, state of near-death experiences, state of sleep walking, comatose etc. (Dreter et al., 2005).

Whilst the shift of attention to the states of consciousness among the scientific community is itself a point of study on its own, the focus of this paper is only aimed at bringing out the perspectives of the states of consciousness as presented in two ancient Hindu scriptures. As such, the authors feel that it is paramount in this section of the paper to establishing a common ground between the modern scientific findings and the ancient scriptural analysis before exploring the aforesaid scriptures.

In its broadest sense, the most commonly established framework on the states of consciousness, starts with the three broad categories of waking state and the other two distinct states when we go to sleep. The division of the sleeping states are, namely, the dreaming state, also known as the REM sleep state (Rapid Eye Movement that happens during this state) (Wilber, 2000) and the deep sleep state. The three states are briefly explained below:

a. **Waking State**: In the waking state of consciousness, the three layers of conscious, unconscious and subconscious are put to use. This is the state what we are in when we are awake, up and about.

b. **Dreaming State**: In this state of consciousness, the conscious layer is said to have receded to sub-dormancy - into the field of the mind from which it arose. Only the unconscious and subconscious layers remain active. At this state of consciousness, scientifically called as the REM state, some of the short term and/ or long term the impressions in the mind come to the forefront, thus producing the dream process.

   c. **Deep Sleep State**: This state of consciousness is where both the conscious and the unconscious layers have gone back into the field of the mind that gives rise to the impressions from our life experiences. Only the subconscious layer remains as an active witness.

These three levels are based on the nature of activeness of (a) conscious, (b) subconscious and (c) unconscious layers (Mlodinow, 2012) as follows:
1. Conscious level: Where we are aware of what is happening inside or outside us. We control at this level.

2. Subconscious level: Where we are not directly aware of, but we know must exist due to our collective experience and behaviour. We have some control at this level; and

3. Unconscious level: Where we can have no direct knowledge of. We have little control at this level.

Neuroscientists and psychologists cannot tell what you are thinking of in the waking dreaming or in deep sleep states. But they are able to clearly distinguish between these three major states of consciousness. These states can be identified by a unique style of psychological functioning, especially by the particular metabolic rate and brain activities represented by (Mahesh Yogi, 1965). The:

- Beta waves - rapid brain waves; appear when a person is awake;
- Alpha waves – fairly relaxed brain waves occurring during the REM state; and
- Delta waves – slow, lazy, deep waves during the sleep state.

Until recent times of the present century, the prevailing view was that the subconscious level in the consciousness is the brain’s dumb autopilot behind repetitive tasks, ‘Freudian slips’ and all the other things we do without thinking. But this view has lately changed significantly amongst the leading brain scientists. The subconscious layer takes the centre stage in creativity providing the eureka moment to the problem solving. And it is even better at making tough decisions than the rational analysis of the conscious layer. In the 1980s, neuroscientist Benjamin Libet observed in an experiment, a spark of brain activity 300 milliseconds before his subject consciously chose to twitch a finger indicating that the consciousness decision to doing something is preceded by the subconscious layer. In 2008, John-Dylan Haynes at the Bernstein Centre for computational neuroscience in Berlin, found brain activity happening up to 10 seconds before a conscious decision to move (Eun-Mi Hur & Feng-Quan Zhou, 2010)

Similarly, the French Cognitive Neuro-Imaging Unit director Stanislas Dehaene, revealed the interplay between subconscious and conscious layers of the brain. In his experiment, volunteers saw a word flashed on a screen a word flashing onto a screen, followed almost immediately by a picture which makes conscious perception of the word. As the time interval between the two increases, the word suddenly pops into consciousness, accompanied by a characteristic activity on the brain scan. This usually happened when the interval reached 50 milliseconds, but when emotional words like, ‘love’, or ‘fear’ were used, it happened a few milliseconds earlier. It is as though the decision about the word’s importance and attention worthiness was taken by the subconscious itself (*PloS Biology*, Vol.5, 260). Experiments like these have changed our views about the relationship between the conscious and subconscious layers of the consciousness, putting latter firmly in charge.

Interestingly, the ancient spiritual masters have given utmost focus to the taming of the subconsciousness as the very key to their ultimate goal of enlightenment of freedom from the attachments. Their various advanced meditation techniques, Yoga sequences, ascetic practices
etc. are all aimed at this objective of silencing their inner being by silencing their subconsciousness. Different traditions have called this by different names – state of no mind, Zen mind, Sivahood, merged with the One, Tao state etc. (Huxley, 1970).

Hindu scriptures have used the vivid example of the mahout and the elephant to elucidate the power of sub-consciousness, where the mahout is the consciousness layer and the elephant is the subconscious layer (Kandasamy, 2010). Where the elephant is not conditioned through spiritual means, no matter how efficient and effective the mahout-the conscious layer is, it will succumb to the power and force of the former.

According to the meditation techniques of these traditions, when a person turns his attention within and begins to observe his consciousness, one of the first things he confronts is the almost incessant flow of thoughts and inner dialogue of his mind (Suzuki, 1993). This internal noise continually distracts the attention from the subject of investigation – the consciousness itself. When this inner chatter is reduced, the subtler aspects of the consciousness come into focus, opening the practitioner to new insights into the very nature of the consciousness itself (Brian, 2009; Banani & Amit, 2010).

In the 60s, experimental psychology made some early forays into the study of spiritual experiences when researchers in Asia and the US investigated Hindu yogis and Buddhist monks during mediation. One practice in particular – the Transcendental Meditation (known as the TM meditation) taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi gained a lot of interest (Mahesh Yogi, 2001).

The benefit that TM practitioners were claiming caught the attention of a number of brain researchers. Some of their studies in TM broke new grounds showing an increased coherence between the activities of the left and right brain, positive metabolic changes etc. that suggested that meditation was producing the opposite reaction to the stress response (Mahesh Yogi, 1965).

Over the years, these experiments have continued and the interest grown allowing employment of new technologies such as Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) to explore and understand this state of consciousness. What they found did thus indicate a unique state of consciousness different from the waking, sleeping and the deep sleep states – a fourth state, called by some scientists as, the state of restful alertness (Self-Recovery: Treating Addictions Using Transcendental Meditation and Maharishi Ayur-Veda, 2014, & The Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology and Behavioral Science, 2002, Vol.4,1705).

‘TU RIYA’, THE FOURTH STATE

Exploring the consciousness and its different states has been the focus of many spiritual traditions. Throughout human history, many sages, saints, adept yogis, samurai worriers and Zen masters have delved into the mysteries of the states of consciousness (Lao-tzu & Tao-te-ching, 1998). They have presented their findings in The Upanishads, The Tao te Ching etc. Studying them show a remarkable consistency – a common theme of describing the advanced states of consciousness towards – what Aldous Huxley called, the Perennial Philosophy (1970), that there
being an ultimate consciousness of all individual beings - the wisdom that reappears time and again across the ancient spiritual traditions of the world.

Hindu scriptures say in addition to the three states of consciousness namely, waking, dreaming and deep sleep, there is the fourth state called, **Turiya or Chaturtha** (simply, the ‘fourth’). It is a state of consciousness where one is rid of mental impressions and bondages. At this state, the individual’s mind is just a medium between himself and the universe (Ramanamaharishi, 1970). Once the mind stops throwing the dust of thoughts, ideas, impressions, memories, and all mental jargon, there is clarity and stillness.

Through this clarity one sees and feels the universal power. In this transcendent state of consciousness all thoughts, feelings and memories by which we usually define ourselves have fallen away, the sense of a separate self dissolves. Instead there is an identity with the essence of being. This state of pure consciousness is **Turiya**. It is beyond the other three states (Varghese, 2008).

Ramana Maharshi, a famous Indian saint stated,

> “Turiya, awareness of the Self. Turiya literally means the fourth state, the supreme consciousness, as distinct from the other three states: waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep. The fourth state is eternal and the other three states come and go in it. In Turiya there is the awareness that the mind has merged in its source”

(Ramanamaharishi, 1970, p.72).

In the next section of this paper, we will see with citing from two ancient Hindu scriptures, how the ancient spiritual masters have defined the three states of consciousness and the fourth state, which they have referred to as, **Turiya**. The most significant aspect of the note is how the latest scientific conclusions are corroborating the claims from the ancient spiritual scriptures.

**MANDUKYA UPANISHAD ON THE STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

Hindu Vedic tradition goes back to 1500 BCE. The Holy Vedas, the “revealed wisdom” of the ancient Hindu sages stand to-date as one of the earliest spiritual scriptures in the world (Muller, 1988). Composed over centuries, the Vedas are categorised into four based on their period, content, authorship and format. These four Vedas namely, **Rig Veda, Sāma Veda, Yajur Veda** and
Atharvana Veda, along with other ancient scriptures of the similar era, are collectively known as, the Vedic scripture.

The four Vedic scriptures are divided broadly into four parts. The Samhitas earliest portion, are hymns expressing the religious principles that are in shruti form (Panikkar, 1979). The Brāhmanas constitute the second part, these are detailed instructions needed to perform various rituals and religious rights. The third part, the Āranyakas, explains the spiritual principles of the incantations’ inner meaning (Morgan, 1953). The fourth part, the Upanishads expressing the spiritual principles that espouses new insights and subject of higher philosophies, deep spiritual contemplation and discourses (Radakrishnan, 1977).

Etymologically, the term Upa–ni–shad, refers to ‘being seated at the feet of the master in order to receive his wisdom’. Upanishads along with some of the ancient Tamil Saivite scriptures decisively launched the Hindu philosophy. Early Upanishads (800 BCE to 300 BCE) represent a break from the previous Vedic literature in the freeing of an abstract intellect from the myth and ritual. The Upanishads represent a time when the Brāhmanic ritualism had reached saturation point and the age of the inner spirituality commenced (Muller, 1993). The Upanishadic tradition is much oriented towards ‘spirituality’ ‘interiority’ ‘self–realisation’ and it is a reaction to an overemphasis on ritualism in religion. Instead of an external rituals and sacrifices, it emphasized on the intuitive and experiential knowledge of God – the Brahman.

The central message of the Hindus scriptures including the Upanishads is that the essence of all beings could be traced to a single source, named variously in different scriptures as God, Universal Intelligence, Siva or Brahman. The immanent dimension forbids identification of this dimension of oneness due to differentiation (Panikkar, 1979). The essence of the Upanishads is the intuition of non-duality and the inner correspondence between the Atman, the individual consciousness and Brahman, the universal consciousness (Easwaran, 2009).

There are about 112 Upanishads and some of the oldest ones are Brahadaranyaka, Chandogya and Isa Upanishads. The Mandukyka Upanishad, explained in this paper, came much later (400 - 500 BCE). This Upanishad is considered as holding the distillation of Hindu spirituality that it is stated by that this scripture alone is sufficient for the deliverance of the spiritual aspirant (Deussen, 1997).

The main thrust of the Mandukya Upanishad is to sum up the totality of the Universal Consciousness as being represented through the mystical syllable mantra AUM (pronounced ‘Om’) which is also described by the Hindu scriptures as Nada, the first vibration that produced the entire universe (Deussen, 1997). In doing so, it starts with this proposition as an undisputable truth and builds through the different states of consciousness of the individual being, Atman, leading once again to this proposition that, Brahman, the Universal Consciousness is the ultimate state of consciousness.
The 12-stanzas of *Mandukya Upanishad* are logically grouped into the first half describing the different states of consciousness and the second half associating each state to the components of the spiritual syllable AUM (Krishnananda, 1996). The following table 1 depicts this structure.

Table 1: The Different States of Consciousness & Components Of The Spiritual Syllable AUM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Stanzas</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Stanzas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>All is AUM: Individual and Universal Consciousness - Atman – Brahman</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>A, U, M as the states of consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Waking state of consciousness – Jāgrat or Vaisvānara</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>A - Waking state of consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dreaming state of consciousness – Swapna or Taijasa</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>U - Dreaming state of consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Deep Sleep state of consciousness – Susupti or Prājna</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>M - Deep Sleep state of consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Experience of the three states of consciousness</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Eternal Silence after AUM - Fourth state of consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fourth state of consciousness – Turiya</td>
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</table>

The starting verses of the *Mandukya Upanishad* (Krishnananda, 1996) elaborate on the syllable AUM as follows:

\[ Ōmityetadaksharamidam sarvam, tasyopavyākhyanam, bhūtam bhavatbhavishyadīti sarvamomkāra eva; yaccānyat trikālātītam tadapyomkāra eva. (1) \]

AUM! - This Imperishable Word is the whole of this visible universe. Its explanation is as follows: What has become, what is becoming, what will become, - verily, all of this is AUM. And what is beyond these three states of the world of time, - that too, verily, is AUM.

\[ Sarvam hyeted brahma; ayamātmā brahma; soyamātmā chatushpāt.(2) \]

All this, verily, is Brahman. The Self is Brahman. This Self has four quarters.
Thus opening with the supremacy of the syllable it goes on to link this mantra with Brahman, the Universal Consciousness. Meditating on AUM is thus proposed as a way to expanding one’s consciousness from hitherto its limited state. The opening stanzas highlight that consciousness has four states of the Atman individualised through his ignorance and ego namely waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and the Turiya states. The term, chatushpāt alludes to the explanation coming in the subsequent stanzas where the sounds of the three letters ‘AUM’ to the first three states of consciousness, and it’s the silent entirety to the fourth state.

Jāgaritastrhāno bahihprajnah saptānga
ekonavimsatimukhah sthūlabhug vaiśvānarah
prathamah pādah.(3)

The first quarter is Jāgrat or Vaisvānara. Its field is the waking state. Its consciousness is outward-turned. It is seven-limbed and nineteen-mouthed. It enjoys gross objects.

The waking state called Jāgrat or Vaisvānara is a state with its impressions based on the outward perception of the Atman. This state is represented by the ‘A’ of the AUM syllable. The waker, Visvā, is a consumer of experience. The next stanza deals with the dreaming state:

Svapnāsthāno prajñāh saptānga ekonavimsatimukhah
praviviktabhuk taijasa dvītiyah pādah.(4)

The second quarter is Swapna or taijasa. Its field is the dream state. Its consciousness is inward-turned. It is seven-limbed and nineteen-mouthed. It enjoys subtle objects.

The second state of consciousness is Taijasa also known as Swapna. It is the dreaming state where the individual Atman perceives inward. It is represented by the ‘U’ of the of the AUM syllable. The stanza goes on to highlight that in this state of consciousness, the impressions formed in the conscious and subconscious layers based on the past and reset deeds come to light – Taijasa (Deussen, 1997)

Yatra supto na kancana kāman kāmayate;
na kancana svapnam pasyati tat sushuptam.
sushuptasthāna ekabhūtā prajñānāghana evānandamayo
hyāṇandabhuk cetomukhah prājñās-trīyāḥ pādah. (5)

The third quarter is prājna, where one asleep neither desires anything nor beholds any dream: that is deep sleep. In this field of dreamless sleep, one becomes undivided, an undifferentiated mass of consciousness, consisting of bliss and feeding on bliss. His mouth is consciousness.
In this state, the sleeper is called prājna or storage of consciousness. In the other states, consciousness flows outward and inward but in sleep it loses direction and becomes formless. The sleeper ego is extremely subtle, its presence indicated by the fact that we experience limitlessness and bliss. This state of consciousness is denoted by the letter ‘M’ of the AUM syllable. This is the beginning and the end of the consciousness of the Atman, the individual being. It leads to the fourth state of the consciousness explained in the following stanzas of the Mandukya Upanishad:

\[ \text{Esha sarveśvara esha sarvajna eshontaryāmyesha} \\
\text{yonih sarvasya prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānam. (6)} \]

This is the Lord of All; the Omniscient; the Indwelling Controller; the Source of All. This is the beginning and end of all beings.

\[ \text{Nāntah-prajnam, na bahih prajnam, nobhayatah-prajnam na} \\
\text{prājanāghanam, na prajñam, na-aprajñam;} \\
\text{adrishtam-avyavahārayam-agrahyam-alakshanam-acintyam} \\
\text{avyapadesyam-ekāmnapratyasāram prapancopasamam} \\
\text{sāntam, sīvam-advaitam caturtham} \\
\text{manyante, sa ātmā sa vijneyah.(7)} \]

That is known as the fourth quarter: neither inward-turned nor outward-turned consciousness, nor the two together; not an undifferentiated mass of consciousness; neither knowing, nor unknowing; invisible, ineffable, intangible, devoid of characteristics, inconceivable, indefinable, its sole essence being the consciousness of its own Self; the coming to rest of all relative existence; utterly quiet; peaceful; blissful: without a second: this is the Ātman, the Self; this is to be realised.

This state, Turiya or Chaturtha is the fourth state of consciousness is the lord of all states of consciousness. It is the state where the individual becomes the knower of all. In this state, the individual becomes the controller and he is full of bliss. This state is represented by the eternal silence – ajapa, arising out of AUM syllable (Krishnananda, 1996). In this state, the Atman, the individual consciousness becomes extinct and one with Brahman, the Universal Consciousness. The remarkable identity of the wisdom of the ancient Hindu sages on the different states of consciousness as explained in the Mandukya Upanishads is further expanded to a more advanced level in the Tirumanthiram, another great ancient Hindu scripture. The states of consciousness as explained in this scripture are explained with citations in the next section.

‘Tirumanthiram’ on the states of consciousness
Tirumanthiram – the subject of this research study is an ancient Hindu spiritual scripture, with its date of origin going back to 5th century CE. It is authored by the Siddha Saint Tirumūlar, one of the most mystical and foremost sages of the Tamil Hindu Saints. Consisting of the spiritual framework of Hinduism and most specifically that of Saivism in its 3,047 stanzas, each of which is called, a Manthiram, grouped into nine logical volumes, called, Tanthiram (Tantras), Tirumanthiram is pregnant with spiritual principles, models and concepts including, advanced techniques, thus catering for both a spiritual novice as well as an adept (Ramanatha & Chidambaranar, 1989). It is also important to point out that Tirumanthiram is a unique scripture of dynamic nature presenting itself with different perspectives including, Theistic, Yoga, Tantric, Siddha, Linguistic etc.

Tirumanthiram is one of the Tirumurai, most revered collection of 12 spiritual works of the Tamil Hindu Saivite tradition called Siava Siddhanta. Citations from this scripture are provided as the second source of ancient Hindu scriptures on the subject of the different states of consciousness (Kandasamy, 2010).

Tirumanthiram collectively calls the states of consciousness as Avasthas, or states of being that an individual undergoes in his spiritual progression. Expanding further on the Mandukya Upanishad, this scripture goes into a mind-blowing level of detail in peeling out the different permutations and combinations of the four primary states of consciousness, thereby arriving with twenty different states. It also goes beyond the four states and highlights the fifth state of consciousness called, Turiyatīta – beyond Turiya. (Kandasamy, 2010). In this state of consciousness, the separateness of the individual being completely disappears and there is only the pure ever-present non-dual Universal Consciousness.

This section of the paper cites 6 stanzas (2201-2206) from the 3047 stanzas for the Tirumanthiram to elaborate on how this ancient scripture deals with the different states of consciousness. The table 2 depicts the permutations and combinations of the four states of consciousness explained in the Mandukya Upanishad in the previous section, along with those of the fifth state – Turiyatīta:

### Table 2: The Permutations And Combinations Of The Jāgrat, Swapna, Susupti, Turiya And Turiyatīta States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avasthas - States of Consciousness according to the Tirumanthiram</th>
<th>Waking State</th>
<th>Dreaming State</th>
<th>Deep Sleep State</th>
<th>Fourth State</th>
<th>Fifth State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dreaming Jāgrat</td>
<td>Dreaming Swapna</td>
<td>Dreaming Deep Jāgrat –</td>
<td>Dreaming Turiya</td>
<td>Dreaming Turiyatīta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth State Jāgrat</td>
<td>Fourth Jāgrat –</td>
<td>Fourth Swapna</td>
<td>Fourth Turiya</td>
<td>Fourth Turiyatīta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth State Jāgrat</td>
<td>Fifth Jāgrat –</td>
<td>Fifth Swapna</td>
<td>Fifth Turiya</td>
<td>Fifth Turiyatīta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the stanza 2201, it first defines the composite subtle body as *Puriyashtakāyam* (Kandasamy, 2010) literally meaning the (subtle) body of 8 elements. These eight elements being:

1. five senses – *Tanmātras*: sound, touch, vision, smell and taste
2. three inner organs – *Antakaranas*: mind, intellect and ego

Depending on the progression of the individual being, *Atma*, the stanza relates a reducing collection of these elements to each of the four primary states of consciousness as follows:

- The state of soul (with all eight of the) puriyashtakāyam is *Jāgrat*,
- its state with three of puriyashtakāyam is *Swapna*,
- its state with two of puriyashtakāyam is *Susupti*,
- its state with one of puriyashtakāyam is turiya. (Kandasamy, 2010, p.2416)

According to the above stanza, in *Jāgrat*, the waking state of consciousness, all the elements of the *Puriyashtakāyam* i.e. the five senses and the three inner organs are said to function. In *Swapna*, the dreaming state of consciousness, only the three elements - mind intellect and ego, are said to function. In *Susupti*, the deep sleep state of consciousness, only the intellect and ego function. Finally, in *Tuirya*, the fourth state only ego functions.

*Jāgrat in Jāgrat concerns with the sense functions*
Swapna in Jāgrat is thinking of impressions
Susupti in Jāgrat is forgetting them
Turiya is nonseeking

(Kandasamy, 2010, p.2417)

This stanza explains the four states of the consciousness in the waking state. In the waking state of the waking state of consciousness (Jāgrat – Jāgrat), all the five senses organs subtle elements are active. In the dreaming of the waking state (Swapna - Jāgrat), thought of past impressions are said to occur. In the sleeping state of the waking state of consciousness (Susupti - Jāgrat) the soul seeks inwardly, forgetting the past impressions. In the Turiya state of the waking state of consciousness (Turiya- Jāgrat) the soul is said to experience Siva, the Universal Consciousness.

Jāgrat in Swapna is seeing in dream as if in Jāgrat
Swapna in Swapna is seeing and forgetting the dreams
Susupti in Swapna is absence of seeing
Turiya in Swapna is the inference through perception

(Kandasamy, 2010, p.2418)

This stanza outlines the four states of consciousness in the dream state. In the waking state of the dreaming state of consciousness (Jāgrat – Swapna) dreams arises as real in the waking state. In the dreaming state of the dreaming state of consciousness (Swapna – Swapna) all the dreams are forgotten. There is no permanent impression of dream in the individual. In the sleeping state of the dreaming state of consciousness (Susupti– Swapna) the individual being stops seeing anything hence there is absence of awareness. In Turiya state of the dreaming state of consciousness (Turiya– Swapna) the individual becomes silently cognisant of the past perception through inference.

Jāgrat in Susupti is deep sleep, nothing appearing
Swapna in Susupti is the soul’s realisation of its own reality
Susupti in Susupti is the destruction of knowledge by knowledge
Turiya in Susupti is the void, transcending description

(Kandasamy, 2010, p.2419)

This stanza from the Tirumanthiram explains the four states of consciousness within the deep sleeping state of consciousness. First combination is characterized by the waking state within the deep sleeping state of consciousness (Jāgrat – Susupti). This state is devoid of any individualised appearance. In the dreaming state of deep sleep state of consciousness (Swapna – Susupti) soul comes to know of its own reality. In the next state, deep sleeping state of the deep sleeping state of consciousness (Susupti – Susupti), there is dissolution of one’s knowledge called jivabhodham. The Turya state of the deep sleep state (Tiruiya – Susupti), is devoid of any attribute or adjunct and hence known as Śūnya, that which cannot be described

Jāgrat in Turiya is the knowledge of Sivabodham
Swapnain Turiyais the knowledge of the self
Susupti in Turiya is the experience of vyoma
Turiya in Turiya is the knowledge of the self as Siva
This stanza explains the four states of consciousness within the *Turiya*, the fourth state of consciousness. First combination is characterised by the waking state within the *Turiya* state of consciousness (*Jāgrat – Turiya*). This state expresses the knowledge of the Universal Consciousness - *Sivabodham* or *Sivajnana*. In the dreaming state within the *Turiya* state of consciousness (*Swapna – Turiya*) one comes to know his true self as being part of the Universal Consciousness. In the deep sleeping state within the *Turiya* state of consciousness (*Susupti – Turiya*) one experiences the *Vyoma* – the cusp of connection between the individual being - *Atman* and the Universal being – *Siva*. The *Turiya* state within the *Turiya* state of consciousness (*Turiya – Turiya*) is the most supreme experience departing from all attachments and separateness from the source – the realisation of *Siva*.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Atma jnana cognizing sivajnana is Jāgrat} \\
\text{Atma jnana reaching ignorance is Swapna} \\
\text{Atma jnana associating with Siva jnana forgetting itself is Susupti} \\
\text{Atma jnana becoming Siva jnana is Turiya}
\end{align*}
\]

(Kandasamy, 2010, p.2421)

This stanza from the *Tirumanthiram* explains the four states of consciousness within the *Turiyatīta* state of consciousness, the enlightenment of the individual soul. First combination is characterised by the waking state within the *Turiyatīta* state of consciousness (*Jāgrat – Turiyatīta*) where the individual becomes aware that his true knowledge is the limitless knowledge of the Universal being – *Siva Jnana*. In the dreaming state within the *Turiyatīta* state of consciousness (*Swapna – Turiyatīta*) the individual loses his feeling that knows *Siva Jnana*. In the deep sleeping state within the *Turiyatīta* state of consciousness (*Susupti – Turiyatīta*), the individual immerses himself in *Siva Jnana*, forgetting his individuality. Finally, in the *Turiya* state within the *Turiyatīta* state of consciousness (*Turiya – Turiyatīta*), the individual being’s knowledge assimilates the knowledge of *Siva, Siva Jnana* resulting in a state of consciousness where the individual being is in absolute oneness with *Siva*, the Universal Consciousness. According to the *Tirumandiram*, there is no state of consciousness beyond this as what remains is only the infinite Universal Consciousness.

**Conclusion**

Science and spirituality have remained to a great some extent, irreconcilable fields in the past. The challenges I the past were not without basis. Lack of scientific, technological, cultural and advancements to even comprehend, let alone prove what the ancient spiritual seers have seen and said has been a strong case for this challenge. However, the recent advancements, especially I the field of quantum physics, neuroscience and psychology coupled with the technological breakthrough in these fields have started bridging the gap between the two fields.
The most significant aspect of the current scientific studies and spiritual experiences is not that they are in agreement. It is rather that the recent scientific studies are beginning to corroborate the claims of many spiritual teachings. No longer can sceptics sit back and say that what the ancient spiritual masters saw were all just vivid imagination. It is a sincere wish of the authors that this paper has just added another step to this process of corroboration.
References


