

परस्परांशैर्मिलितानि भूत्वा स्थूलानि च स्थूलशरीरहेतवः ।
मात्रास्तदीया विषया भवन्ति शब्दादयः पञ्च सुखाय भोक्तुः ॥ ७४ ॥

*parasparāṁśairmilitāni bhūtvā sthūlāni ca sthūlaśarīrahetaḥ,
mātrāstadiyā viṣayā bhavanti śabdādayaḥ pañca sukhāya bhoktuḥ.* (74)

74. Having united with parts of one other, they become gross and become the cause for the formation of the gross body. Their subtle essence constitutes the sense objects, five in number such as sound and so on, which contribute to the enjoyment of the experiencer, the individual ego.

A mention has already been made of the subtle elements and now we are told how they, by a process of mutual combination, condense to a grossness sufficient to become perceptible to the sense organs. The process, by which the subtle elements become the five gross elements which are accepted even by modern scientists as the unit of matter in the world, is called in Sanskrit, ‘pañcikaraṇam’, a pentamerous self duplication and mutual combination.

This process is explained in Vedānta as taking place in four distinct stages of self division and mutual combinations. The rudimentary subtle elements are constituted of units called ‘tanmātrās’. There are five distinct tanmātrās each for the five great elements – ether, air, fire water and earth. Each tanmātrā (unit of each of the five elements), in the first stage of its grossification, shows a tendency to divide itself into two halves. In the second stage, each tanmātrā of the five elements bifurcates and separates into two equal parts.

In the third stage, one half of all the five elements remains intact¹ while the other half (of each element) gets divided into four equal parts. Thus under the column ‘ether’ we have in its third stage, half a tanmātrā remaining intact (the dark half), and the other half divided into four equal parts, each constituting, therefore, 1/8th of the original tanmātrā.

¹ Ātmabodha – 12