

Vedic Maps of Consciousness

4 States of Consciousness (Mandukya Upanishad)	3 planes of consciousness (Triloka)	7 planes of consciousness (14 planes here)	Beings in each plane	5 Sheaths (Taittiriya Upanishad)	3 Bodies (Sharira Traya)
Waking Jāgrt-avasthā	Physical Plane Bhurloka	Physical Plane Bhurloka	Embodied Souls	Food Sheath Annamaya kosha <i>Physical body</i>	Gross Body Sthula Śarīra
Dreaming Svapna-avasthā	Subtle planes Antarloka contains both the heavenly and hellish realms (hellish realms not listed here)	Atmospheric Plane Bhuvarloka	(Pretaloka)- earth-bound ghosts (Pitāloka) Ancestors, Nature Spirits	Vital Sheath Pranamaya kosha <i>Prana, or energy body</i>	Subtle Body (astral body) Sūkṣma Śarīra or <i>Linga śarīra</i>
		Celestial Plane Svarloka	Celestial Beings Gandharvas, Apsaras	Mental Sheath Manomaya kosha <i>Manas, or mind</i>	
		Great Plane Maharloka (devaloka)	Angels, Devas	Intellect Sheath Vijnanamaya kosha <i>Buddhi, or intellect</i>	
		Creative Plane Jana Loka			
		Plane of Austerity Tapaloka			
Deep Sleep Suṣupti-avasthā	Causal Plane Satya Loka (also Brahma Loka, or Shiva Loka)	Plane of Truth Satyaloka	God with attributes Saguna Brahman (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Devi)	Bliss Sheath Anandamaya kosha <i>Chitta, or storage of impressions.</i>	Causal Body Karana Śarīra
4th state Turiya <i>Beyond the Beyond</i>	Nirguna Brahman God without attributes			Atman The Self	

***The above chart has been compiled from various sources, references to online sources are at the links above. There is some disagreement about the placement of some of these maps in relation to the others. This is not meant to be an exact, 1-1 relationship, but rather a general comparison of the various maps of consciousness from Vedic thought. It is my hope that, rather than satisfying curiosity, it inspires more of it.**

The Atman, or consciousness itself, is covered by 5 sheaths. The bliss Sheath, or Anandamaya Kosha, is the subtlest and innermost layer, and each one after it grows in density until the topmost sheath of Annamaya kosha gives us our physical shell of a human body and provides us with physical reality. This has been likened to an onion, in that each sheath is really just an organizing force of consciousness itself. Just as an onion organises itself in layers, with the innermost layer being “layerless”, so too does consciousness form itself in 5 layers, the innermost layer being pure, undifferentiated consciousness itself.

Our physical body is the outermost layer of this onion. It lives in this physical world and is associated with the waking state of consciousness.

The subtle body is the body of our dreams, and is what lives on after the physical body dies, in the realm of antarloka. It is not made up of physical matter, but exists in an astral form. When the physical sheath is pulled away, this body is underneath it, and it is made up of the next three sheaths. These are the vital sheath, or the sheath of our lifeforce and animating energy, the mental sheath, which is the surface level of thought and imagination, and then the intellect sheath, which is the deeper mind of discernment and wisdom. As we peel back these layers of consciousness, we enter subtler and subtler worlds, until we reach the subtlest dance of pure energy, but beyond that is an even more subtle world of form.

Peel back one more layer of the onion and we are at the final layer of form. This “Bliss Sheath” is the Causal body, and it is associated with the state of deep sleep. This is the potential for form. On an individual level, this is where our samskaras, or the deep impressions of the mind are stored. It’s the blueprint for everything about us. On the macrolevel, this contains the seed for all of existence. Consciousness is not manifest, but has the potential for manifestation in it. This is often called Brahma Loka, and when we think of God as the Creator, this is the place. This is the seed that grows all of the other worlds, ultimately responsible for creating this physical world itself.

But if we strip away this last sheath, we go beyond the world of form. Here is Brahman, Atman, Sat Chit Ananada. This is the Ground of Being, Consciousness itself. This is the fabric of everything, and yet is beyond all of it. It is indescribable, so much so that the Mandukya Upanishad simply calls it Turiya, or the fourth state of consciousness, beyond the physical, subtle and causal planes.