

## **The Web of Body, Mind and Spirit**

The Five Koshas - Pancha Kosha - (Five Sheaths of Energy)

In Yoga philosophy the Five Koshas are defined as energy sheaths which function at different levels of vibration and frequency according to the vitality and awareness of our body, mind and spirit. The sheaths have also been coined as 'shadows' and until perceived by oneself the light of intelligence remains hidden from our consciousness.

In that respect there are some people that may operate from the gross aspect of body; consciousness entrenched in the material world of two-dimensional living. Their perspective of life is usually a very impenetrable reality reflecting the old cliché "seeing is believing" and leaves little room for perception of other realities to unfold. Then there are those that being sensitive to the more subtle frequencies and astral realities, can at times 'lose their head in the clouds', so to speak, who find it difficult to cope in the mundane reality of day to day living because they attach themselves to the dream impressions of mind. Both extreme types reflect an imbalance within consciousness that eventually bring a crisis point or imposition into their lives making them re-think who they have become, through their actions and reactions, and what is the key to regaining balance and sound health.

Many scientists agree that there is an invisible organizing pattern inherent in living things, which exists visibly in a high frequency field. They describe a subtle field made up of charged particles that surrounds the physical body just as a halo of light emanates from an electric light bulb. Kirlian photography, by the Kazakh scientists, has proven the auric field surrounding living matter to exist and leaves one wondering what is within this matrix of living energy that is expressed through material matter as we know it.

The five interpenetrating energy sheaths weave the web that connects our three bodies, gross, subtle and etheric, to experience the microcosm of self in relation to the macrocosm of universal consciousness. This understanding comes from having cultivated a deep knowledge and perception of ourselves that moves beyond the realms of physical and material existence. Both perceptions are a reflection of each other and a constant reminder of how we belong within the greater matrix of life in any one given moment.

It is up to us to constantly re assess our habits and bridge the extremities of our nature to create balance, integration and become sound of being. A little awareness of the functions of the Five Energy Sheaths makes us realize that no one area of our being need be neglected. They work to our benefit in reclaiming the soul-self through our non neglect.

**FOOD SHEATH** or **Annamaya Kosha** functions within the physical body via what we eat. Its gross physical form is expressed via constant change such as growth, development and dissolution. Every one has heard the expression 'you are what you eat', so what we take into our body determines the quality of energy that we will sustain.

**ELECTRO-MAGNETIC SHEATH** or **Pranamaya Kosha** functions via the energy derived from breathing which in turn affects the way we assimilate and absorb food. This interpenetration of the food sheath provides the fleshy membrane or the various energy system of the body to expand into the subtle force of 'living energy.'

**MIND AND DESIRE SHEATH** or **Manomaya Kosha** functions to interpenetrate the first two creating relationship between gross form and living energy. It generates the thought patterns of "I" awareness, and motivation based on the reactive nature of emotions. The common error being the pursuit of happiness which ultimately leads to unhappiness is the limitation imposed by ego identification of "I am". The way in which they operate depends on the expression of the mind whether it directs positively or negatively.

WISDOM INTUITIVE SHEATH or **Vijnanamaya Kosha** functions to activate the discerning faculty emanating from the heart -mind. This kosha interpenetrates the other three to activate innate intelligence or what is known as ‘the wisdom of the heart. Vinyanamaya kosha is reflected in the way we sense and perceive the natural laws that exist within in accordance with nature thus broadening ones awareness to the vital health of the three bodies.

SPIRITUAL SHEATH or **Anandamaya Kosha** functions to encompass all the other sheaths and beyond. It is reflected in the joyful disposition in experiencing moment-to-moment awareness of ‘what is’ and pure presence of being, ‘I’ awareness without ego identification. This unadulterated awareness in turn cultivates the ‘liberated self’ in recognizing and elevating spirit to its purest potential.

**“It is prana alone as the conscious self that breathes life into this body. Prana is the essence of the life breath. And what is the life breath? It is pure consciousness. And what is pure consciousness? It is the life breath”** The Kaushitaki Upanishad

It is Prana, life-force, which is the link between the physical and subtle bodies of our being. It stands to reason then that prana, cultivated, is the key to penetrating the ‘shadows’ of our psyche and the balance of body, mind and spirit. When we arrive at a point in our lives that immerses us in what has been coined as the ‘dark night of the soul’ surrender of ego is immanent. All we have arrived at is charged with the life-force that we have created around us and reflected back to us through what we attract into our lives. It is the key to unlocking the inherent truth of whom we are and where we are meant to be going. It is the path to true inner contentment and pure joy.

In yoga practice increasing our prana enlivens the field of energy beyond the gross aspect of the physical body and is sometimes referred to as the auric field of energy or the pranic body. This auric field thus magnified is then gradually internalized through yoga technique and practice to enliven the pranic mind towards discovering our true nature of self to rest with inherent spirit.

Pranamaya kosha energizes and expresses itself through the functions of the sense and motor organs (indriyas) of the physiological body. Through the pranic mind and desire field of Manomaya (sensation and perception) and deeper mind field of Vijnanamaya kosha, (discernment and clarity of mind) energy transmutes into the innate intelligence and wisdom of the soul (jiva).

It is this intelligence, which abides and inherently exists in the natural order within all states of consciousness, universal law (dharma) and allows one to touch the divine Anandamaya kosha (all-pervading spirit.)

It is this intelligence that needs to be re-kindled within ‘the web of body, mind and spirit’ in order that one can experience a life lived to its fullest potential, being able to give and receive unconditionally that one can experience psychic balance and sound health.

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