

2nd Episode - Understanding of wonderful aspect being a Human Being

Following 1st episode of “*Benefits of lighting deepam*” towards Maha Kumbaabishegam of Panching Gua Charas Jalalingeswarar Shivan temple, with good intention and thoughts for all devotees, the following write-up is prepared.

Before we dive into the aspect that we want to share, first let's understand and appreciate the great gift all us as been bestowed – Human Being. Often, we give enough concentration to physical exercises that our body needs, but have any of us have given enough focus towards our subtle body yet?

First let's see what is said in Taittiriya Upanishad. It is important to understand, every one of us has five bodies, each made of increasingly finer grades of energy and if we intend to live a fully balanced, healthy life, it informs us, all our bodies need to be kept in good condition. The followings are summary of pertinent points written in Taittiriya Upanishad.

“Human beings consist of a material body built from the food they eat. Those who care for this body are nourished by the universe itself”

“Inside this is another body made of life energy. It fills the physical body and takes its shape. Those who treat this vital force as divine experience excellent health and longevity because this energy is the source of physical life”

“Within the vital force is yet another body, this one made of thought energy. It fills the two denser bodies and has the same shape. Those who understand and control the mental body are no longer afflicted by fear”.

“Deeper still lies another body comprised of intellect. It permeates the three denser bodies and assumes the same form. Those who establish their awareness here free themselves from unhealthy thoughts and actions, and develop the self-control necessary to achieve their goals”.

“Hidden inside it is yet a subtler body, composed of pure joy. It pervades the other bodies and shares the same shape. It is experienced as happiness, delight, and bliss.”

Annamaya Kosha

These five bodies are called koshas, or “sheaths,” in Sanskrit. Only the densest is made of matter as we know it; the other four are energy states invisible to the physical eye, though we can easily sense their presence inside us when we pay close attention. Since the inner bodies are the source of our well-being during life and are the vehicles we travel in after death, India's ancient yogis developed specific exercises to strengthen and tone each one in turn.

An explanation for this can be done using light bulb. The bulb itself is very nature of our body which we can see and experience it readily. Though what we don't see and experience but indeed exists are the electron, electricity, current that flows and energise the bulb which in turn gives us the light we need.

You're already familiar with your physical body. It's called annamaya kosha in yoga, (maya means “made of” and anna means “food” or “physical matter.”) But yoga also makes you aware of a second body, the organizing field that holds your material body together. This is the life energy that governs your biological processes, from breathing to digestion to the circulation of your blood.

Pranamaya Kosha

The energy body is called the prana-maya kosha in yoga. When it ceases to function, your physical body can no longer operate. Your heart and lungs stop working and your cells begin to disintegrate. Exercises like diaphragmatic breathing, the complete yogic breath, and alternate nostril breathing are specifically designed to enhance the proper functioning of your second sheath.

In addition, getting plenty of fresh air and sunlight is essential for maintaining the health of the vital force. Yoga texts explain that the sun is the ultimate source of prana, and it is said that some advanced yogis go for years without eating; instead they simply absorb the prana radiated by the sun. For most of us, however, fresh whole foods are a major source of prana.

Manomaya Kosha

The third sheath or mental body is the apparatus responsible for our sensory and motor activities and our day-to-day awareness when we're functioning "on automatic." It processes input from our five senses and responds reflexively. When we move through life passively, reacting to our environment rather than actively shaping it, our awareness is focused here. Many people, and most animals, routinely operate at this level.

This body is called manomaya kosha (which means "body made of thought processes"). In the West we associate our routine mental state with the brain, but according to yoga the entire nervous system (including the brain) merely mediates the activity of the manomaya kosha, expressing the commands of this higher energy state through the physical body.

You get a clear sense of what the mental body is when you observe a patient in a coma. Their second sheath is still operating so their heart continues to pump and their lungs expand and contract. But the person has no awareness of the external world and no ability to take action because the activity of the mental body has shut down. The pranamaya kosha operates from the moment of our first breath to our last, but the manomaya kosha shuts down temporarily on a daily basis, regenerating itself during the state of deep sleep.

The health of the manomaya kosha is tremendously enhanced through the practice of mantra meditation. This soothes and balances this inner body, and helps release "knots" of energy tied up in mental complexes and obsessive thoughts. Yogis who spend a great deal of time in meditation often have very little need for sleep, in part because their mental vehicles are functioning optimally, like a car that's just had a tune-up.

The mental body "feeds" on the sense impressions we offer it. If we supply our third sheath with a continual stream of violent TV shows and video games, for example, it begins to crave increasingly aggressive forms of stimulation, and may become more agitated and less sensitive to the suffering of others. If we "stuff" it with too much work or too much play we may experience a form of mental "indigestion," leaving us feeling harried or exhausted.

It is therefore important that we do our best to eliminate FAEGI (Fear, Anger, Ego, Greed, Impatience) to ensure health of the manomaya kosha is kept at its peak performance. A harmonious environment, interesting professional challenges, and fun and supportive relationships offer an ideal diet for the mind. A daily session of pratyahara, or sensory withdrawal, leading into meditation provides an excellent inner tune-up.

Vijnanamaya Kosha

Subtler still is the vijnanamaya kosha (vijnana means "the power of judgment or discernment"). It's often translated as "intellect," but the real meaning is broader, encompassing all the functions of the higher mind, including conscience and will. It may be easier to understand the distinction between the third sheath or mental body and the fourth sheath or intellectual body by taking a look at those in whom the vijnanamaya kosha is underdeveloped.

One such type is someone who doesn't seem to be in control of her life, who is constantly reacting to circumstances rather than making a decision and responding proactively. This kind of woman has a hard time making up her mind, thinking for herself, or being creative. She has very little willpower and is continually the victim of her own poor judgment.

Another example of a deficient fourth sheath is someone without strong personal ethics. He may attend religious services and speak piously about moral values, but when the opportunity arises to benefit himself at the expense of others, he doesn't hesitate to act. His ability to discern between right and wrong is weak; conscience is a platitude rather than a living experience for him.

An activated fourth sheath is what distinguishes human beings from animals. Only humans have the ability to direct their own lives, free from the promptings of instinct, and to make moral choices. The sages considered the development of a healthy vijnanamaya kosha so important that they placed the exercises for it at the very beginning of the yoga system. These are the yamas and niyamas, commitments every yoga student is asked to make: not to harm, lie, steal, overindulge, or desire more

than you actually need; instead you are asked to be content, pure, self-disciplined, studious, and devoted.

Jnana yoga also works with this kosha. This is the path of the intellect in which you are advised to study spiritual truths, contemplate them deeply, and finally incorporate them into the very core of your personality. On this path your spiritual understanding becomes the “food” with which you nourish your intellect.

As your meditation practice deepens over the months and years, your ability to connect with inner guidance is enhanced. You begin to experience the events in your life, even the painful ones, in a calm and objective manner. Your yogic lifestyle, contemplation, and meditation lead to clarity of judgment, greater intuitive insight, and increased willpower as your vijnanamaya kosha grows stronger and more balanced.

Hanuman statue which will be energised in upcoming Maha Kumbaabishegam serves the purpose. His meditative posture and positive energy will help to reverberate each devotees energy towards oneness

Anandamaya Kosha

In the vast majority of humans, the fifth sheath is totally underdeveloped. This is the anandamaya kosha, the subtlest body which is experienced as ananda (spiritual bliss). Generally only saints, sages, and genuine mystics have done the inner work necessary to make ananda a living part of their daily experience, and most people are hardly even aware that this level of consciousness exists within themselves.

The anandamaya kosha is extremely important in yoga because it's the final and thinnest veil standing between our ordinary awareness and our higher Self. Many individuals who've had near-death experiences have reported experiencing a brilliant white light radiating all-embracing wisdom and unconditional love. This is the experience of the anandamaya kosha. Saints and mystics purify their minds so that they can have this experience throughout life, not just for a fleeting moment at death.

In the tantric tradition, spirit is often symbolized as Shiva, the transcendent Lord who is ever immersed in divine consciousness. Matter/energy is called Shakti, the Supreme Goddess whose divine body is this entire universe. It's said that they love each other with unspeakable intensity. Their supreme love is experienced in the anandamaya kosha, where spirit and matter passionately embrace.

We can awaken our bliss sheath through three practices. The first is seva, selfless service. This opens our heart to our innate unity with other beings. The second is bhakti yoga, devotion to God. This opens our heart to our unity with the all-pervading Divine Being. The third is samadhi, intensely focused meditation, which opens our heart to our own divine being.

You are a multidimensional creature. Your awareness manifests on many different planes. By getting to know your five bodies and the inner Self (whose awareness illumines them all), you can experience the health and fulfillment of an enlightened life.

Experiencing your 5 sheaths @ Hanuman Vigram after Maha Kumbaabishegam

The five sheaths are not theoretical constructs. They are real parts of your being that you can actually experience. The following eight-step exercise will help you get a fuller sense of these inner dimensions of your personality.

1. Sit comfortably with your head, neck, and trunk in a straight line. Sit upright without straining. You'll feel both alert and relaxed.
2. Close your eyes, withdrawing your awareness from the sights and sounds around you. Bring your full attention to your physical body. Be aware of your head and shoulders, chest and waist, back and abdomen, arms and legs. This is your annamaya kosha.
3. Bring your full attention to the point between your nostrils and feel yourself breathe. Gradually your breath will flow more slowly, smoothly, and quietly. Be aware of the energy pulsing

through your body. It's making your heart beat, your lungs expand and contract, the blood course through your veins, your stomach gurgle. The force orchestrating this movement—not your physical body itself—is your prana-maya kosha.

4. Shift your awareness into your brain. Pay attention to the part of your awareness that's regulating your sensory input and motor output. This is the part of you that notices your nose is itching and orders your hand to scratch it. It notes that you're uncomfortable sitting in one position for so long and wants you to move your legs. It generates the reflexive mental chatter that continually fires through your mind. This is your manomaya kosha.
5. Lift your awareness higher inside your skull. Sense the part of your awareness that consciously made the decision to participate in this exercise and right now is commanding you to sit still and complete it. It recognizes the value of expanding your self-awareness and compels you to get up early in the morning to do your hatha postures and meditation, even though lazing in bed might be more pleasant. This is your vijnanamaya kosha.
6. Center your awareness in your heart. Relax deeply; keep breathing smoothly and evenly. Now, taking as much time as you need, allow yourself to settle into a state of complete tranquility. Buried deep in that inner peace is a sense of purest happiness. This is not an emotional euphoria, though as you leave this state it may pour out of you as a sense of great joy and gratitude. It is a space of perfect contentment, perfect attunement, and abiding stillness. There is no sense of lack, or fear, or desire. This is your anandamaya kosha.
7. Now simply be aware of your own awareness. The pure consciousness that is having this experience lies beyond this experience. It is your true inner Self, your immortal being. Rest in your own being for as long as you can hold your attention there.
8. Return your attention to your breath. Breathe slowly, smoothly, and evenly. Open your eyes. Take a moment to relax and absorb this experience before you get up.

Shiva Shambo
Om Nama Siva Ya Om
Help Ever Hurt Never
Service to Society is Service to Almighty
Master Ir. Sivabalan - Temple Trustee
1st Jan 2020