



PROGRAM E-20

**OM SRI SURYA VA NAMAH  
OM SRI CHANDRA VA NAMAH  
OM SRI BUDDHA VA NAMAH  
OM SRI SHUKRA VA NAMAH**

THE AWAKENING

## **The Koshas – Part 2**

It is said in the *Yoga Vasishtha*: "For the ignorant person, this body is the source of endless suffering, but to the wise person, this body is the source of infinite delight".

*But, what do they mean by 'this body'?*

*The kosha system refers to the different layers of subjective experiences, which range from the densest physical body experiences, to the most subtle levels of astral mind experiences.*

Yoga and mysticism hold to the concept that life, and the universe, are made up of varying degrees of manifested energy, which is known as *maha-prana*. It is this universal energy that manifests the various realms of existence.

Maha-prana is one in form, yet its various layers of manifestation are clearly discernible. Even though they appear to be independent, they all manifest from the singular source of maha-prana. In yoga psychology, it is understood that all of these layers are linked and unified within one structure.

According to the perennial philosophy of mysticism, the physical universe is made up of five astral elements: ether, air, fire, water, and earth. These relate to the five koshas.

Since the human body is a microcosm of the macrocosmic body, the human body is composed of these same astral elements, but in subtler amounts -- much like the contents of your blood and the contents of sea water: they are the same elements in the same proportion, but one is much more diluted.

In the human body, these five astral elements are regulated and controlled by *maha-prana*, which controls the vital airs (*vayus*), responsible for the biological activities of the physical body.

These individual elements are also linked to the different major *chakras* located along the spinal column, through which the psycho-spiritual *kriya-kundalini* energy is awakened and flows, and is modified by the chakras.

Each major chakra controls one of the five astral elements. Furthermore, these chakras are basically controlled by the five koshas, and are connected to the glandular endocrine system, which is connected to the brain, and thus the mind.

The basic premise of this subtle science is that while aspiring toward comic enlightenment, you should not ignore your physical existence in the here and now.

In the cosmic scheme of things, we begin to realize that from consciousness, matter evolves; even the five astral elements were created from the cosmic mind.

Thus, the potentiality of mind is latent in all forms of matter, yet under certain circumstances, the potentiality of the mind will manifest itself...

Mysticism 'sees' mind as a latent part of all matter, whatever form it takes. Where there is form, there is mind. Thus, all systems are cognitive systems.

Thus, mind is expressed as the most primitive sensations, and as it evolves to the human level, its capabilities significantly expand through repeated experiences.

The human mind, as a culmination of evolution, expresses itself through instinct, and is capable of expressing everything from speech to creative imagery.

The human mind, then, is a microcosmic reflection of the cosmic mind, or the mind of life.

On our brief journey through the micro- and macro-cosmos, we have finally arrived at a crucial stage in the awakening program: that of beginning to control the maha-prana, the life energy of our mind-body-astral complex.

This concept concerns the universal feature of the human mind that can be divided into koshas, various levels, or spheres consisting of five layers of mind-stuff.

Through kriya body-mind practice, the mind purifies itself of its emotions, and expands into its soul, its memory banks, with crystal-clear perception, uniting with the cosmic, divine mind.

Humans are, in essence, an all-pervading memory track.

The body is a product of the five elements, and is entirely distinct from the real self -- the atma. Nonetheless, because of delusion, most people identify with one of the five koshas or sheaths.

If one identifies with the anna-maya kosha or the physical body, and it is cut, one thinks that they have been cut.

If one identifies with the prana-maya kosha, one thinks "I am tired", or "I have energy".

If one identifies with the mano-maya kosha, one regards oneself as the thinker, often thinking "I am angry", or "I am unhappy".

If one identifies with the vijnana-maya kosha, one thinks "I am these thoughts".

If one identifies with the ananda-maya kosha, one feels "I am happy".

All the koshas, including the vijnana-maya kosha and the ananda-maya kosha, are **not** the atma.

The highest goal in life is to reach the final emancipation, called moksha, which resides outside of the koshas.

Just as a rope is perceived as a serpent in semi-darkness, so by semi-darkness of the mind does the mind perceive the atma of a person as one of the koshas.

The anna-maya kosha constitutes the gross physical body.

The prana-maya, mano-maya, and vijnana- maya koshas constitute the subtle body, or astral body (*linga sharira.*)

The ananda-maya kosha constitutes the causal body (*karana sarira*).

The physical body is formed of the essence of food.

The subtle body is formed of uncompounded elements.

The ananda-maya kosha is the cause for the subtle and gross bodies or the remaining four sheaths.

Birth and death are the attributes of the anna-maya kosha.

Hunger and thirst are the attributes of the prana-maya kosha.

Delusion and sorrow are the attributes of the mano-maya kosha.

The atma is ever pure and unattached, absolutely free from the six waves of the ocean of samsara: birth, death, hunger, thirst, delusion and grief.

The physical body operates during the waking state.

The subtle body functions during the dreaming state.

The causal body operates during the deep-sleep state.

During deep-sleep it is the thin veil of the ananda-maya kosha that separates the individual jiva-atma from the Supreme Atma, or Brahman.

Esoteric kriya yoga instructions take the mind from the gross to the subtle, and from the subtle to super-subtle states of consciousness.

Seekers develop the faculty of true discrimination between the real and the unreal, between the permanent and the impermanent.

When the seeker acquires this faculty of discrimination, he abandons the first kosha and recedes to a subtler kosha.

Step by step the seeker abandons one kosha after another and dissolves them, and eventually attains knowledge of unity with Brahman, becoming liberated from the rounds of birth and death -- with the same memory track again and again.

One becomes liberated with the knowledge that the individual jiva-atma, moving through time, is identical with Sri Brahman, who is within, and beyond the five sheaths.

Just as the molten metal poured into a mold takes the form of that mold, it might be easier for some seekers to imagine that these koshas are fashioned after the mold of the physical body.

This will help the discrimination of the koshas, and one's meditation on the koshas.

With this added data we will be able to move forward with the study of the sacred kriya pranayama techniques, and how they function.

OM

Shanti & Prem,

Goswami