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A Critical Analysis on the Concept of *Panchakosha*

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ABSTRACT

Every human being lives here for the purpose of salvation and that too in an easier and better way. They hear and practise various techniques to attain the same. Yoga is the union of physical, mental spiritual practises which got originated in ancient India. Even from the Vedic period the ways of attaining moksha through understanding and following pathways are explained. Yogic science teaches the ways to function an individual's atman through five sheaths of the body termed panchakosha. They are related to body, breath, mind, wisdom and an absolute fullness of being. Terms like aadhi and vyadhi helps to understand the concept in a better way. A critical analysis over the topic is a hope of ray of understanding the clinically manifested diseases can be cured also under the name of panchakosha.

Key Words *Panchkosha, Yoga*

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INTRODUCTION

The prime motive of Yoga is personality development through modification of lifestyle and practising Yoga. It gives a positive impact not only to him but to the society too. It is easier and is not an impossible task to get him the highest possible state of existence. Yoga had not been a popular practise known to the world except some scattered references and countable teachers who are professionally trained and taught. Gradually Yoga had gained popularity in Yoga also outside the country too. Even the social media had helped through awareness programs at the same time blown out the concept by many wrong and unauthentic sets of discussion and instructions. None of the treatises have actually included Yoga under treatment

sector. But since few years Yoga have arose as a Health care system.

Ever since man originated in this world, he is behind the search of more pleasure. Pleasure or happiness is considered as a goal of every living being. Each and every action depends upon pleasure. But in search of these pleasures they came to understand about two important theories:

1. Every process or pleasure is momentary
2. Desire leading to pleasure is always followed by or paved the way to misery or unhappiness.

These discoveries insisted ancient sages to look inward or towards self for the ultimate happiness. They came to a conclusion that a state will be reached by everyone where doesn't need any self-stimulation to keep oneself happy. With this understanding they tried different pathways to

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reach this state. This knowledge is the basic initiation of evolution of Yogic Science.

Yoga is considered as the union of three aspects of practises viz. body mind and soul. There are different schools of Yoga where different way of understanding and practising of Yoga done. But the main aim of every school remains the same, i.e. attaining moksha. It explains a wide range of practises to be followed by one for experiencing the bliss full state.

Yogic science is one of the parts of Indian philosophy which is distinct with its practical approach. While most of our literatures provide knowledge, Yoga takes us to dominion of wisdom through practical experience. It includes systematic protocols for practising the yoga in a correct and better manner.

It gives more emphasis on the expansion of awareness. During each steps of Yoga it's a pathway to analyse, understand aware about ourselves, body and mind. The holistic approach of understanding these factors in Yoga is with the help of the theory of Panchakosha.

Theory of Panchakosha

Indian philosophy scrutinized the human being through five layers or levels of subtle formation, consisting of gross layer that is the physical layer to the subtlest layer of one's true nature of bliss. The panchakosha theory is explained widely in Brahmanandavalli chapter of Taittiriya Upanishad which is a part of Taittiriya Samhitha of Krishna Yajurveda. Upanishads. These are the layers which cover the Athman and in the chapter it explains the means of achieving this Brahman

that is nothing but the ultimate knowledge. The Sruthi proclaims that human birth is meant for understanding the Athman which invariably results in Moksha. i.e. salvation or Spiritual Liberation, the liberation from sorrows, attachment and desire. Mere understanding of shastras and practising meditations and worships don't leads to eternal bliss. Knowledge is gained after detachment from the surrounding state and from all sensory objects, from one's body that really harbours the mind which is bonded to. Athman is the substratum of consciousness of being "I".

So the theory of Panchakosha is that which explains about the five sheaths of our body which covers up or hides the inner soul. We need to identify these properly so that it will help to unveil the real self. The explanation of this principle is depicted as a Sage that is the Suthi and his disciple.

The five layers are¹

1. Annamaya Kosha
2. Pranamaya Kosha
3. Manomaya Kosha
4. Vijnanamaya Kosha
5. Anandamaya Kosha

Annamaya Kosha

This is considered as the first layer of our personality and the only component which is visible to the living organisms. Those which are perceived by our sensory body whatever it may be, comes under Annamaya Kosha. Literature explains, every living organisms are made up of the essence of Anna i.e. food, it grows with the

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food and finally it ends up and goes back in to this food itself. This sheath is made up of inert matter which later goes back to mud again¹.

Pranamaya Kosha

The prana here can be considered as the inner force or energy. Every action in our body depends upon energy expenditure like heartbeat, respiration, circulation etc. Hence we can experience the existence of energy providing power house in all our physical strain. And each activity gives an evidence of the energy back-up present in our body through pranamaya kosha. Sruthi explains this layer as the soul of Annamaya kosha. Without pranavayu we can't sustain. When prana leaves the body, life ends. Even the Ayurvedic literature describes prana vayu as the essential element for existence of life. The proper circulation of Prana Vayu helps to cure many disorders. Annamaya Kosha is an effect of Pranamaya Kosha².

Manomaya Kosha

The Upanishads states that the soul of Pranamaya Kosha is called as Manomaya Kosha. It is inner to the pranamaya kosha. It is the third layer of the panchakosha where the understanding of Chittha (mind) comes along. The body has two parts one is manas and another is budhi. Manas constitutes the Manomaya Kosha. It is basically a thought layer. It creates memories, and it is prompted by the same memories, differentiates between likes and dislikes, depended upon various emotions and pride. It can evoke both positive and negative feelings which is again depended upon our likes and dislikes. It can evoke both positive and

negative feelings which are again depended upon our likes and dislikes. This layer is very power full as the link between attachment and detachment is depended upon mind³.

Vijnanamaya Kosha

Vinjanamaya Kosha is innermost layer, i.e. the fourth layer of Panchakosha. This is said to be the soul of Manomaya Kosha. It defines our intellect and our sense organs that is jnanendriyas which helps to differentiate between hita and ahitha. This sheath is basically initiates knowledge. The decisions taken by us depend on the skill of this layer. This layer pervades the layers Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya. It is the area of analysis which deals with the present that is here and at this moment. We came through various states of happiness and we analyse and discriminate between the right and wrong and take the decision⁴.

Anandamaya Kosha

This is the innermost layer of panchakosha which pervades all the four layers. It is the state of bliss. It is considered as the soul of Vinjanamaya Kosha. It helps to identify our personality, attitude and aptitude. It is said to be the result of the seeds of residual impression of previous birth. It may consider as the level of super consciousness. But even then, Sruthi reminds us that this layer can't be considered as the ultimate bliss, as this state is just a transient state to reach the aim i.e. Moksha. The Ananda- the bliss we experience are still bonded with the surroundings. The utmost understanding of the super conscious power that is "I" is not yet attained. And it can be

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described as still as a seeker and should move towards the inner peace detaching from the complete bondages⁵.

DISCUSSION

The body can be divided as the gross body, subtle and the causal body. The first two sheaths, i.e. the Annamaya and Pranamaya Kosha comes under the gross body, the Manomaya and Vinjanamaya Koshas comes under subtle body and the innermost layer, the sheath which covers the ultimate aim that is the super conscious level or the soul anandamaya Kosha comes under the causal body. If we discriminate in terms of sthoola shareera, the gross body is the sthoola shareera, the subtle forms are coming under sukshma shareera and the causal body refers to Karana shareera. Each layer determinates different layers through which we can approach the ailments affected to the body, it can be both physiological as well as psychological.

The diseases in the yogic science can be explained under the terms of “Aadhi” and “vyadhi. The pain or physical ailments occurring to the mind is meant by “Aadhi”. And that which is affected to body is considered as “Vyadhi”. The root cause for the formation of Aadhi is nothing but lack of knowledge of ultimate realisation of oneself. This imbalance in the mind gradually affects the sensory organs which in turn leads to development of ego and continuous production of desires. Later leading to delusions resulting in kinds of mental disorders such as

eating ahithahara, residing in unhealthy surrounding. Even the Nidanas seems similar to the Ayurvedic perspective i.e eating or following unhealthy diet and following the unwholesome set of activities, injuries, evil desires, bad thought processes. This further leads to the formation of obstructed prana in the shareera, thus manifesting many diseases including both aadhi and vyadhi.

As we take the case of theory of panchakosha, the remnant of the previous birth causes the production of ignorance in the vinjanamaya kosha. Gradually affecting the Manomaya Kosha as a negative feeling, imbalancing the mindset and leads to stress. Later this impairs or affects the proper flow of Prana inside us. This derangements in Prana movement causes functional inability in later stages and thus Vyadhi manifests. So the diseases of Manomaya Kosha can be considered as Aadhi and that which affects Pranamaya and Annamaya Koshas comes under Vyadhi.

A Cohesive approach of Yoga in terms of theory of Panchakosha

Those which affects Annamaya Kosha are like diseases affecting organs, any degenerative diseases, inflammation, emaciation etc. The layer is depended on or studied much about by the school of Hatha Yoga pradeepika. This can be treated with the help of loosening exercises and sukshma vyayama, asanas, shadkriyas for the purification of the body all along with the dietary changes.

The improper pathway of Prana in shareera may lead to the development of diseases affecting the

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further sheaths vitiating each layers of the body. This can be avoided by practising pranayama and breathing exercises prior to it. This also helps to evoke the Kundalini Yoga and corrects the diseases such as hypertension, tremor, palpitation, haphazard breathing.

Today the world is revolving around himself, and he is detached from every external stimulus. Yoga teaches us the technique of expansion of awareness. And this is achieved with the help of understanding techniques of manomaya kosha. One needs to learn the techniques of expanding our awareness from point awareness towards the group and finally pervasive awareness. The expanded mind gets less emotional disturbances like irritation, fluctuations and so many more. It creates a negative vibe inside the body. The positive vibe can be attained with the help of practising the methods of Dhyana, Samadhi, Dhyana etc. this comes the stream of Raja Yoga. It also attending the devotional sessions and other group activities. The expanded mind will never concealed by any negative emotions like depression, anxiety, fear etc.

Removal of ignorance to uncover the real self helps to get rid of most of the diseases. Revealing the real self may help to avoid occurrence of the disease. This comes under the path of Jnana Yoga. Methods like spiritual courses, health awareness, psychotherapy and counselling helps to balance the Vinjanamaya Kosha.

The aim of treatment of Anandamaya Kosha is the renunciation of the accumulated fruits of action of past and present deeds. This is achieved

by practising the disciplines of Karmayoga. One should learn the meaning of working in bliss and action in relaxation.

CONCLUSION

The five koshas are anathman which hides the athman. These Koshas are to systematically be removed for the same, leading to the state of voidness. Unveiling that void reaches the athman there witnessing and experiencing non-existence of all modifications starting with Ahankara. Philosophies have given a hint of the theory upon which we need to expand the concept in a better way and consider each state of illness under this basis and can do the needful.

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