

## **Annamaya Kosa and Pranamaya Kosa**

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### **Abstract:**

Human life has always been both fascinating and intriguing. Philosophers across the globe through the centuries have tried to unravel it. Indian philosophy has explained the human being through the theory of the five kosas. The theory is an outcome of penetrating insight and rigorous practice on the human body. The present paper offers an insight into the first two kosas i.e the Annamaya and the Pranamaya , the possibilities that it carries to enhance life as well as explore the potential contained within it.

### **Introduction**

Mark Twain once famously said “East is east and west is west and the two shall never meet”. It is indeed true to the extent of the contributions made by them in exploring the dimensions of human life. The West has contributed immensely to the human beings outer dimensions like social, political, economic, scientific and so on. The East on the other hand has done much to enhance the inner dimension of man. The inner dimensions of man are generally known as the Theory of Kosas in Indian Philosophy. They are Annamaya Kosa, Pranamaya Kosa, Manomaya Kosa, Vigyanmaya Kosa and Anandmaya Kosa. The paper primarily deals with the Annamaya Kosa and the Pranamaya Kosa.

### **Annamaya kosa**

The body as we know it is referred as Annamaya Kosa. It is but a heap of food intelligently processed and arranged to carry out different activities. Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev says,” The body is a pretty complete and a self contained instrument. This is the most sophisticated piece of machinery on this planet. It embodies the highest level of mechanics, the highest level of electronics and the most sophisticated electrical circuitry.”[1] In general, three things are required for its optimum functioning and maintenance. They are exercise, food and rest. Food supplies fuel to the body. We do observe some people are highly energetic throughout the day while some are dull and inert. On a personal level we have our own high and low energy fluctuation levels. Food is chiefly responsible for our energy levels. There is a lot of research that has gone into the types and kind of food that one must have. Often, we find absolutely contrasting theories about food. This leads to a lot of confusion. Every animal on this planet follows a particular fixed diet. In general there is a clear cut demarcation between herbivorous and carnivorous animals. The herbivorous will not eat the food of the carnivorous and vice versa. Animals follow their diet based on their instincts. We have been bestowed with intelligence and choice. Nonetheless we too are animals. This means we too must be having our diet. A part of Annamaya kosa is an inquiry into food. In Yoga darshana there is a great deal of research into food. What does yoga have to say about food? Though there

are quite a few factors that determine what food one should have like geographical location, age and so on, Yoga lays down certain fundamental guidelines.

Rule 1: Food is to be decided by the occupation that one is engaged in. Every occupation requires a certain type of a body to function at an optimal level. For example a teacher's occupation is completely different from a construction worker. While one is working at an intellectual level the other needs to function effectively at the physical level. Naturally their food requirements would be completely different.

Rule 2: Listen to your body. The body knows what it wants. If we take food maintaining complete silence and in awareness, the body will tell us what we want to eat, when to eat, how to eat and also what not to eat.

Rule 3: The structure of our teeth, the way we drink water (gulping and not licking), the long digestive tract that we possess all point in the direction that we are biologically constituted to consume vegetarian food. Game Changers a documentary on Netflix is an extensive research to show how top sportspersons across the globe in different sports requiring highest levels of strength, stamina, endurance, fitness and recovery from injury ratio have been able to enhance all these above mentioned factors by shifting to a vegan diet.

Rule 4: We alternately breathe through alternate nostrils, the left and the right nostrils called as Chandra nadi and Surya nadi in Yoga. Food should always be consumed when the right nostril i.e the Surya nadi is on. This is because the digestive system is active during this period and ensures maximum digestion, assimilation and absorption.

When we talk about food what pops up in our mind is solid food. The Japanese altered their perspective about food as solid and focused on liquid as food for their body. Our planet Earth is 70 percent water and 30 percent land. Our human body too is 70 percent liquid and 30 percent solid. The Japanese using the same logic reasoned that food required to sustain, use and grow should be consumed in a similar proportion. The tea drinking ceremony was developed by Zen master Sen no Rikyu. Shunryu Suzuki says, "The only thing that exists is this spirit. This kind of imperturbable spirit was always present in Rikyu's ceremony." [2] Solid food was minimized and liquid was increased with the effect that the Japanese have the longest life expectancy in the world. It is important to note that along with the quantity of life, the Japanese also gave equal importance to the quality of life. Life at any stage had to be full of activity, meaning and purpose. A long life without these had no use for them. It was for this reason that they discovered the Hara chakra or the center of death which is situated two inches below the navel. The technique of committing death is called as Harakiri. Zen master Sen no Rikyu himself committed Harakiri at the command of his Master. The important principle is: The density of the food is inversely proportional to the life expectancy of the organism. Compared to solid, the density of water is 1gm/ml. Hence the intake of more liquid as food instead of solid increases life expectancy. The Yogis in India carried this logic one step further and did ground breaking research on air as food. Compared to water the density of air is 0.00128 gm/ml. It is here that we come at the next concept of Pranamaya kosa with Prana as the life force of the body and breath as its coarsest form.

## Pranamaya kosa

A dog takes 24 breaths a minute and has a life expectancy of 13 years. A tortoise on the other hand has 4 breaths in a minute and lives up to 150 years. A human being takes around 12 to 15 breaths a minute and lives for around 70 years. What the Yogis found that breath for all of us is continuous yet unconscious most of the time. What we need to do is to make breathing conscious. One will notice that once we are conscious of our breath our breathing becomes slow, deep and rhythmic. We also realize that unconsciously our breath was just the opposite. It was clavicular breathing. Now it is through the lungs also! One can consciously breathe and also include the abdomen. Breathing through the abdomen, lungs (to its full capacity) and clavicular will automatically slower down the breath. As breaths per minute becomes less, life expectancy is greatly enhanced. One can say that not only do we want a long life but a long life full of energy and vitality having lesser dependence on solid food. In that case one has to go one step ahead and learn to control the breath. This is popularly known as Pranayam. The word 'ayam' means controlling breath. The yogis discovered wonderful possibilities by controlling the breath and also by taking breath in numerous ways. Breathing done unconsciously has two aspects. Puraka and Rechaka i.e. inhalation and exhalation. If one were to breathe consciously it is possible to voluntarily stop breathing at two places. One can inhale and stop and hold the air within the body or one can exhale and hold the breath outside the body. Holding the breath in yoga terminology is called Kumbakh. The yogis discovered that the secret of Pranayam was in Kumbakh or Retention. The retention of breath altered the dynamics in which the entire body functioned. Systematic pranayamas were developed specifically for retention and it increased the energy and vitality of the human body exponentially.

We have five automatic systems in our body i.e. Respiratory, Nervous, Circulatory.

Digestive and Excretory. Is it possible to be fully conscious about the working of these systems? Yoga says that it is not only possible but also have access, control, maintain and cure these systems. This would mean taking control of life itself. This is very much possible by pranayama. Swami Vivekananda explains by giving an example of the respiratory system. By controlling the breath i.e. pranayama, we control the movement of the lungs as an organ. By controlling the organ, we control the diaphragm muscle which in turn controls the movement of the lungs. By controlling the muscle of the respiratory system, we gain access and control to that part of the nervous system that controls respiration. Similarly the other three systems i.e. the circulatory, the digestive and the excretory can be used to gain access and control to those parts of the nervous system as all four systems are coordinated by the nervous system including the spinal cord and the brain.

Finally, we gain access to the mind. Swami Vivekanand says, "In this body of ours the breath motion is the silken thread, by laying hold of and learning to control it we grasp the pack thread of nerve currents and from these the stout wire of thoughts and lastly the rope of Prana controlling which we reach freedom." [3] Thus, the second layer of the body i.e. the Pranayama Kosa is linked to the third layer of the body i.e. the Manomaya Kosa. There is a connecting link between all the layers of the organism. One point needs to be mentioned here. Western philosophy and psychology have always considered the human being as a mind-body organism, the mind body problem still remains a riddle even after four centuries of theorizing and research because they have missed the essential link between the two i.e. the Energy layer or the Pranamaya kosa. It is through the energy layer that one can have access to the mind. It is our common experience that when energy levels are high or low the mind functions in a different manner. Indian philosophy and psychology has managed to solve the mind body problem by the theory and practice of the

five Kosas. To accomplish this goal, it requires complete dedication of life and pranayama taught in this case is passed directly from the teacher only to a qualified student.

However, for us leading hectic and stressful lives driven by deadlines pranayama does have a solution for destressing. As Epictetus says, "Some things are within our control and some things are not. It is only when you learn to distinguish between what you can and can't control that inner tranquility and outer effectiveness becomes possible." [4] There are numerous techniques for destressing and becoming calm during difficult situations. Commonly heard or seen in movies is deep inhalation and exhalation. It helps to soothe frayed nerves and regain composure. One technique which is very effective to relieve stress is Kapalbhathi. If done before the day begins helps in keeping one calm, cool and collected throughout the day and if practiced in the evening completely destresses the person. There are two stages to it. The first stage is Half Kapalbhathi and the second stage is Full Kapalbhathi. Let us discuss the techniques in brief.

**Half Kapalbhathi:** The technique essentially consists of closing one nostril with the thumb and inhaling air through the other to fill the clavicular region and lungs. Then air is forced out through the same nostril in a rhythmic movement like the bellows of a blacksmith. Hence the name kapalbhathi. After 54 strokes when the exhalation is complete, outer kumbakh is done as per capacity. After this air is inhaled and inner kumbakh is done as per capacity. After this the air is slowly exhaled out. The same process is repeated with the other nostril and the same process is repeated with both the nostrils. This completes one round of Half kapalbhathi. Effort is made to consciously increase the number of strokes and the number of rounds.

**Full Kapalbhathi:** The technique essentially consists of closing one nostril with the thumb and inhaling air through the other to fill the clavicular region, lungs and abdomen. Then air is forced out through the same nostril in a rhythmic movement like the bellows of a blacksmith. After 54 strokes when the exhalation is complete, outer kumbakh is done as per capacity. After this air is inhaled and inner kumbakh is done as per capacity. After this the air is slowly exhaled out. The same process is repeated with the other nostril and then the same process is repeated with both the nostrils. This completes one round of Full kapalbhathi. Effort is made to consciously increase the number of strokes and the number of rounds.

The practice of Kapalbhathi slowly enhances the breathing capacity of the lungs. Abdomen which is rarely used in breathing is incorporated into the breathing process. The routine unconscious breathing also becomes slow and deep. This induces calmness in the mind. The kumbakh starts unclogging the energy channels and the flow of energy starts increasing in the body. However, for any practice of pranayama to have its effect needs a minimum of 42 to 48 days. It is called as a mandala. This is again in difference to the normal 21 days schedule that is referred in many popular books and lectures. The reason behind this is that when food enters the body it becomes a part of the body and stays active for a period of 42 to 48 days after which we have a new body. When such practices are done on a daily basis for the specified period of time they become a part of the new body.

Finally, there could be one in a million who would like to put an end to all suffering. As Rudyard Kipling says, "If you can meet with the triumph and disaster and treat those two imposters just the same." We are here talking about a spiritual goal. Here too breath has a very important role to play. The entire technique of meditation taught by the Buddha

is centered around the awareness of breath. The method is called as Anapanasatti. It consists of focusing one's entire attention on the nostrils and watching the inhalation and exhalation of the breath. The technique is essentially simple, difficult to practice but extremely rewarding. One can begin from 10 minutes and take it up as much time as possible and one can experience equanimity, poise, peace and balance for hours. Slowly but surely breath can take us to a stage where there is a permanent end to suffering and one gains enlightenment. One becomes a Buddha.

### **Conclusion**

Food is what we are made up of. What we eat and drink determines our body. We can make it into a powerful machine capable of doing wondrous tasks or waste it away. Similarly breath is a continuous and unconscious process that takes place in the body. Breath if taken consciously and modified can lead to a variety of results depending on what one wants to achieve. Life begins with the first inhalation of breath and ends with last exhalation of breath. Both are not in our hands. What we do with breath during our lifetime determines the quantity, quality and intensity of our life.

### **References**

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