

# Deep Into the Subtle Body

## Exploring our inner sheaths – the *Koshas*

### I. Introduction:

We recently discussed *Prana*. *Prana* is the air we breathe. It is also our life force, the flow of energy within us.<sup>1</sup> Our discussion included the *Nadis*, channels for the movement of *Prana*.

Tonight we follow the *Prana* even deeper within us as we explore the *Koshas*, five layers or sheaths, of the human body.

The *Koshas* are another map for connecting to our deepest sense of self, *Purusha*. By following this map we learn how we make choices that can bring us more positive emotions, more engagement, greater meaning, accomplishments that matter, and rich, lasting personal relationships – the indicators of a life of well-being.

### II. The *Koshas* – an overview.

In his book *The Yoga Tradition*, Georg Feuerstein wrote that the human body-mind is a system that parallels the universe outside the body.<sup>2</sup> He wrote that the universe around us exists in various vibratory frequencies, and every layer of us, including our mind, is part of that vibration.

This vibration within us occurs in what we call the subtle body. We've already talked about *Prana* and *Nadis* as part of that subtle body.

The subtle body also consists of *Chakras*, which we will begin to discuss next time, as well as five layers or sheaths known as the *Koshas*. *Prana* moves through these five *Koshas*.

A. The *Koshas* are sub-divided into three types, or “frames,” called *Sariras* (“body”).<sup>3</sup> The *Koshas* are contained within these three *Sariras* as follows:

1. *Sthula Sarira*, the anatomical frame of the body, containing *Annamaya Kosha*, the outside body known as the “food” or “gross” body; the sheath of nourishment.

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<sup>1</sup> Bryant, Dr. Edwin (2009). *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, at 571.

<sup>2</sup> Feuerstein, Dr. Georg (2001 ed.). *The Yoga Tradition*. Prescott, AZ: Hohm Press, at 350.

<sup>3</sup> See, generally, Iyengar, B.K.S. (2011 ed.). *Light on Pranayama*. Uttar Pradesh, India: HarperCollins Publishers, India, at 8–9. (See this resource for explanation of this section II.A).

2. *Suksma Sarira*, the subtle frame, containing:
    - a. *Pranamaya Kosha*, the physiological sheath made up of the respiratory, circulatory, nervous, endocrine, excretory, and digestive systems. This is known as the breath or *Pranic* body;
    - b. *Manomaya Kosha*, the psychological sheath, the outer mind where our sensory impressions exist influencing awareness, feelings, and motivation; and
    - c. *Vijnanmaya Kosha*, the intellectual sheath, the intelligence or wisdom mind where reflection and insight occurs affecting reasoning and judgment. This is where our thoughts can transmute into a Sattvic, lucid state, coaxing us toward connection.
  3. *Karana Sarira*, the spiritual sheath, the sheath of joy, containing *Anandamaya Kosha*, the Bliss body. This is the Spiritual part of our mind where we connect to Supreme Consciousness and revel in the choices we've made serving that connection. It is the sheath of joy.
- B. The *Koshas* were discussed at least as far back as the *Taittiriya Upanishads*, thought to date back to around 500 or 600 BCE. This *Upanishad* teaches that we are divided into five layers or five “selves” with the inner most self, *Atma*, another name for our soul, being the place where Consciousness resides within us.<sup>4</sup> This *Upanishad* discusses a metaphysical theory of how we can find God within us by means of the *Koshas*. It discusses how Supreme Consciousness exists both outside the human body and inside it, and how it moves through us from outside the body into our deepest, most subtle layer. This layer is referred to as our spiritual heart.
- C. The *Nadis* connect to the *Koshas* through the energetic centers known as the *Chakras*.<sup>5</sup>
- D. Yoga teacher Shiva Rae writes that the *Koshas* can be viewed as a topographical map or chart of the “landscape of the self,” describing how we can use our understanding of the *Koshas* to navigate the inner journey toward the “core of the self.”<sup>6</sup> As we seek to build a life of well-being, the *Koshas* can be another tool of construction of that life. It shows us the energetic process of

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<sup>4</sup> Mahony, Dr. William (1998). *The Artful Universe*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, at 179.

<sup>5</sup> *Light on Pranayama*, at 37.

<sup>6</sup> Rae, Shiva. *You Are Here*. *Yoga Journal*. Retrieved from [www.yogajournal.com/wisdom/460](http://www.yogajournal.com/wisdom/460)

processing experience, giving us a better sense of how we can refine our thoughts and emotions, choosing a path of greater connection and meaning.

Let's now look at each of the five *Koshas*.

### III. *Annamaya Kosha*.

The first of the five sheaths or layers is our outer body, *Annamaya Kosha*. This *Kosha* consists of the skin, muscles, connective tissues, bones, fat and organs. It includes our outside body, the part we can touch and feel; the form we use to navigate within the world.<sup>7</sup> It is also the form we present to the world through our facial expressions and body language. It is what utters the products of our thoughts.

- A. “*Anna*” can be translated as “the essence of earth” and this *Kosha* corresponds with the Earth Element.<sup>8</sup> We are made of “earth” and are nourished by food, which is derived one way or another from earth. When we die our physical outer body returns to the earth.
- B. Earth is the densest of all vibration and therefore is associated with a sturdy foundation. As we experience the world and seek relationships we find success along the path by being like earth: determined, resolute, disciplined, stable, and self-honoring in our behavior.
  - 1. Qualities such as discipline are vital if we are going to make meaningful contributions in the world. We need discipline to keep focused on our goals and make the best use of our time in order to make those goals a reality.
  - 2. Stability and determination are necessary so that we are able to stand firm in the face of challenges, not losing sight of our strength and worth.
  - 3. These qualities are important in maintaining nurturing relationships because they are the very qualities others seek in their friends.
  - 4. Swami Gurumayi Chidvilasananda writes that discipline is the “mainstay of purification.” We must learn to control our thoughts and emotions so that we are not overpowered with negativity, moving us away from connection.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Feuerstein, Dr. Georg (1998). *Tantra the Path of Ecstasy*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, Inc., at 141.

<sup>8</sup> Iyengar, B.K.S. (2012). *Core of the Yoga Sutras*. Hammersmith, London: HarperThorsons, at 34.

<sup>9</sup> Chidvilasananda, Swami (1996). *The Yoga of Discipline*. South Fallsburg, SYDA Foundation, at 18.

- C. With determination we stick to practices that help us find and refine the core patterns of behavior that foster these qualities. Practices can include meditation, yoga, running, hiking, walking the dog, visiting art museums, sailing, knitting, peaceful drives, or anything that we pursue mindfully and with integrity.
- D. We can practice yoga poses to become mindfully connected to this layer. We learn alignment and learn how to feel that alignment through our bones, joints, and spine. We engage our muscles, feel our skin and even start to sense how this proper alignment feels inside us, in our organs and circulation. Shiva Rae writes that if we want to affect our mind and spirit, we have to “honor and pass through the gateway of the physical body.”<sup>10</sup> Feeling the sense of firmness and conviction doing a pose this way infuses us with those qualities and creates memories to which we can return.
- E. Denver yoga teacher Angie Arnold pointed out in a class one day that we should pay attention to our mind’s reaction to alignment instructions, particularly if we feel that we are being corrected. This is one way that paying attention to the physical body helps draw us inward.
1. Do we tend to get angry?
  2. Are we irritated with the teacher when asked to pay attention to a part of our body, say the foot or knee, when all we want to do is move?
  3. Do we become irritated with ourselves because we’re making a “mistake”?
  4. These are but a few examples of how paying attention to our body, to *Annamaya Kosha*, can help us learn to pay attention to ourselves. This is a start to awakening to positive emotions and the potential of relationships. Even directing our attention to things like stomach ailments or headaches causes us to engage in some self-examination: how are we abusing this body? Aches and pains, illness, or tightness in a yoga pose can help us figure out what patterns of thought are causing us stress or making us feel tense. We begin to see patterns of thought and behavior that bring tension and, once we identify them, can then begin to change those patterns.<sup>11</sup>
  5. Conversely, we also begin to notice what actions in our body bring us pleasure. We learn to pause and appreciate the feel of a touch, the softness of

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<sup>10</sup> *You Are Here*.

<sup>11</sup> Freeman, Richard (2010). *The Mirror of Yoga*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, Inc., at 31.

a fabric or a dog's fur. This type of mindfulness is an example of how to use the Tattvas to create deeper, richer connection.<sup>12</sup>

6. Each time we turn our attention toward ourselves, whether in a yoga pose or responding to a physical ailment or ache, we are being “mindful,” paying attention to ourselves. This is necessary if we are to do the work necessary to create a life of well-being, a life in which we find our signature strengths and then, with determination, engage them meaningfully each day.

#### IV. *Pranamaya Kosha.*

The second of the five sheaths or layers is our breath or *Pranic* body, *Pranamaya Kosha*. This layer includes the circulatory system for our physical body as well as our subtle body. The breath connects our outer body, *Annamaya Kosha*, with the inner *Koshas*. As we've seen this connection occurs via the *Chakras* and *Nadis* in our subtle body.

- A. As Supreme Consciousness condenses into matter, it does so as *Prana*, which takes the form of energy slightly grosser than Consciousness. As such, *Prana* is the link between Supreme Consciousness and matter.<sup>13</sup>
- B. There are five subcategories of *Prana*, *Prana-Vayus*, which perform the primary functions of the body:
  1. *Prana*, which moves in the thoracic region and controls breathing;
  2. *Apana*, which moves in the lower abdomen and controls the elimination of urine, feces, and semen;
  3. *Udana*, which works through the throat and controls vocal chords and the intake of air and food;
  4. *Samana*, which fuels the gastric fires, aiding in digestion and maintaining the functioning of the abdominal organs; and
  5. *Vyana*, which moves throughout the entire body, distributing energy from food and breath through the arteries, veins, and nerves.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See posted outline in this course: “*Tattvas* in the Material World.” Dorigan, William (2016). [www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html](http://www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html)

<sup>13</sup> Kempton, Sally (2011). *Meditation for the Love of It*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True, Inc., at 199–200.

<sup>14</sup> *Light on Pranayama*, at 12–13.

- C. *Prana* forms an energetic bridge between body, mind, and spirit. It connects all our bodily systems. It powers the nervous system, the organs, and our muscular system. It is the energy that causes our neurotransmitters to fire to send impulses through the brain and the rest of the body.<sup>15</sup>
- D. We usually don't even pay attention to our breath even as it engages in these vital functions of keeping us alive and operational. When we tense we often constrict the breath and, when we do that, we also constrict or limit the efficiency of the body.
- E. We can get a sense of this *Kosha* by contemplating how our next inhalation and exhalation moves through the body as oxygen in the bloodstream. When we learn how to align our outer body properly in yoga poses we can more easily explore the movement of breath throughout the entire body system.<sup>16</sup>
- F. We can practice experiencing movement of the breath and its vital force, including the blood in our circulatory system, when we breathe into a tight area, or send the breath to various parts of the body.
1. Even though the lungs themselves exist in only a part of the body, our circulatory system extends to everywhere within us. Thus, we can learn to feel movement of our vital life force wherever we choose to direct it.
  2. In her *Yoga Journal* article Shiva Rae uses as an example the practice of Sun Salutations as a way we can practice coordinating our breath with our body movement, as well as our mental body, awakening and charging the energy within us.<sup>17</sup>
- G. We can use this *Kosha* as Shiva Rae describes by learning how to feel and perceive, being receptive to the feedback we receive in our body. Notice how you feel when you are strong in a pose and allow the breath to guide you in your bodily actions necessary to enter, hold, and deepen the pose. Contrast that with how you feel when you rush or push a pose, allowing the body to tense as you ignore the action of the breath. There is a big difference when we allow the body to adapt to a natural alignment, fueled by the breath rather than forced effort.
- H. In part, because of this adaptability, this *Kosha* corresponds to the Water Element<sup>18</sup> with its characteristics of adaptability, flow, and receptivity. These

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<sup>15</sup> *Meditation for the Love of It*, at 200.

<sup>16</sup> *You Are Here*.

<sup>17</sup> *You Are Here*.

<sup>18</sup> *Core of the Yoga Sutras*, at 34.

are important traits to cultivate in order to increase connection to our own inner selves and to the world because we make more connection through such traits than we do through rigidity and resistance.

- I. In *Light on Pranayama* Mr. Iyengar calls the practice of *Pranayama* an art that can make the body's respiratory system more efficient. He defines *Pranayama* as “*prana*” (breath, life force, energy, respiration, and vitality), and “*ayama*” (concepts such as stretch, extension, regulation, prolongation, and restraint). He discusses practices such as *Puraka*, the long, sustained subtle flow of inhalation, *Rechaka*, exhalation, and *Kumbhaka*, breath retention.<sup>19</sup>
  1. *Pranayama* not only improves the functions of the body, it also helps our minds concentrate and appropriately deal with our thoughts, desires, and actions.<sup>20</sup>
  2. *Pranayama* and mindful breathing in general also operate to increase our awareness, a necessity for those seeking to increase positive emotions, engagement, meaning, accomplishments, and nurturing relationships in their lives. This increased awareness helps develop emotional resilience by teaching us how to discriminate among our feelings, isolating the root cause of a thought or emotion, and then refining it into something helpful.
  3. When we engage in this practice of discriminative refinement, *Pranayama* enhances the effectiveness of our *Pranic* “bridge,” the energetic connection existing among all forms in the material world, as well as between the material world and us, all the way through to our inner self.<sup>21</sup>
- J. In Chapter 58 of my book *Finding the Midline* I describe how the breath helped me win an important national karate match. I was surprised to be in my division's championship round and old patterns of thought immediately began babbling in my brain, telling me I wasn't good enough to be in the finals. Even before the match started I was so convinced I didn't belong that I started congratulating myself for being the runner-up. In other words, I had lost the match before it even started. With that attitude I fell behind right away and my coach called a time out, asking me to start taking slow breaths. As I did so, he reminded me that I was capable of winning and that I was in a Midline (he didn't use that word), a place where I had a chance to do something pretty amazing if I risked putting myself completely out there. He said I would regret it forever if I didn't give it my best. I listened and kept

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<sup>19</sup> *Light on Pranayama*, at 13–14.

<sup>20</sup> *Light on Pranayama*, at 14.

<sup>21</sup> *Meditation for the Love of It*, at 200.

taking slow breaths. As I did so, my mind stopped chattering and I was able to get in touch with other, more reinforcing messages from my memory. I knew how to win. I was fast and strong. I had technique. So, I went out, let my training take over, and won the match. Score one for the breath!<sup>22</sup>

- K. This process of paying attention to the breath as a way of gaining stability of the mind is the subject of Patanjali's Yoga Sutra 1.34 in which he states that one method for calming the mind is to fix it on the breath.<sup>23</sup>
- L. The breath can work for us the same way, helping us to slow down, even amidst the chaos, and connect to our inner strengths and memories of competency. We also can, depending on the occasion, feel the desire to laugh, the surprise that leads to joy, the awe of what we are looking at, the gratitude for the kind deed just done on our behalf. We can enjoy the feeling of being engaged in something meaningful. We can see the chance in the moment to serve somebody with purpose. We can catch the facial expression or body language of somebody as they talk with us and create a new or deeper relationship as a result of our more mindful attention and response.

## V. *Manomaya Kosha.*

This *Kosha* refers to *Manas*, the mind. It contains the rational, linear mind and our senses of perception. This is where our instincts and emotions exist and where we process our sensory input.<sup>24</sup> *Ahamkara*, Ego, operates at this layer as it seeks to assert itself over our thoughts and memories. Our nervous system operates through this *Kosha*. This *Kosha* is associated with the Fire element.<sup>25</sup> The light from fire illuminates the facts so we can make better choices.

- A. This *Kosha* is the layer within us where we can become conflicted as to what choices to make based on our particular sets of memories, experiences, and education, as well as our patterns of thought that may or may not serve us well. Doubts and desires can interfere with our ability to process what we perceive in the moment and what choices to make in response. For example, we can either interpret what we perceive as threatening, leading us to separation, or as welcoming, leading us to connection.
- B. This is the layer of difference because here we experience the notion of "I" or "mine" in contrast to "other." It is here where we confront the chatter of the

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<sup>22</sup> Dorigan, William (2013). *Finding the Midline*. Winter Park, CO: LuHen Publications, LLC., at 186–189.

<sup>23</sup> *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, at 130–131.

<sup>24</sup> *Tantra the Path of Ecstasy*, at 141.

<sup>25</sup> *Core of the Yoga Sutras*, at 34.



mind, the *Vrittis*, as the mind processes the distinction between “us” and “them.”

- C. These *Vrittis* create our world, appearing as language out of which our thoughts and words are formed. (We can also think in symbols but words describe the meaning of the symbols to us). Given the importance of words, it is helpful that we fill ourselves with as much positive language as possible so that in times of stress our mind by default is more likely to connect to positive messaging. Conversely, if we fill ourselves with negative messaging, that is the language we will experience when under duress. One way to do this is to engage in *Mantra* practices, where we repeat words infused with sacred or uplifting messages.<sup>26</sup> Positive language nurtures our spirit.
- D. Swami Muktananda writes that when we practice *Mantra*, we focus on our inner spirit like a beam of light.<sup>27</sup> Swami Gurumayi Chidvilasananda elaborates, stating that *Mantra* operates to calm the mind when we begin to feel angry, afraid, or otherwise overwhelmed, and then the *Mantra* points us like a ray of light further inward toward Supreme Consciousness.<sup>28</sup>
- E. When we practice *Asana* we can learn to pay attention to our thoughts and what they tell us about ourselves. For example, if we become frustrated while trying a pose, we can notice that thought and, later, use that experience as an invitation to explore ourselves further, asking what else is happening inside our mind that was triggered in that moment of frustration? Conversely, when doing a pose we may feel a sense of accomplishment and achievement because of the effort we undertook to learn to do the pose.<sup>29</sup>
- F. In fact, setting a goal of learning to do a pose we see another doing can give us an experience of accomplishment, one of the five attributes of a life of well-being. The practice leading to learning the pose is engaging, another of the attributes. Successfully “busting out” a challenging pose in class leads to a feeling of pride, one of the positive emotions Dr. Fredrickson identifies as yet another attribute of a life of well-being.<sup>30</sup>
- G. Yoga poses such as inversions, including handstand and headstands, can put us in touch with our fears or frustrations. This allows us to examine the basis

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<sup>26</sup> Muller-Ortega, Dr. Paul (2009). *Siva Sutra Pravesana*. The Woodlands, TX: Anusara Press, at 39–40.

<sup>27</sup> Muktananda, Swami (1989 ed.). *Where Are You Going?* South Fallsburg, NY: SYDA Foundation, at 90.

<sup>28</sup> *The Yoga of Discipline*, at 105.

<sup>29</sup> *You Are Here*.

<sup>30</sup> See posted outline in this course: “What is Success?” Dorigan, William (2016). [www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html](http://www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html)

for those fears and frustrations and process them. These poses can also bring us feelings of pleasure, self-honoring, and other favorable emotions.<sup>31</sup>

- H. Meditation is a key practice for helping us quiet the mind’s chattering, identify and then process fears, insecurities, doubts, and desires so we can make choices that increase the potential of a life of well-being.<sup>32</sup>

## VI. *Vijnanamaya Kosha*.

This *Kosha* is derived from the word “*Vijnana*” or “intellect,” and is the sheath of the intuitive mind, wisdom, insight and higher intelligence.<sup>33</sup>

- A. This *Kosha* corresponds with the Air Element<sup>34</sup> with its characteristics of wisdom, curiosity, and wonderment. It is at this level of the mind that we become more open to the potency of each moment, freeing us from rote responses based on patterns of thought and behavior, habits of reaction based on past experience.
- B. This is where we can dissolve *Vikalpas*, conceptualizations. A *Vikalpa* is the way we conceptualize or assume things without factual support. They are how we categorize and make a judgment, without any basis in reality.<sup>35</sup> For example: “If that new guy didn’t return to my class the following week, he must not have liked my class.” That happened to me. I found out a few months later that the man, Chris, loved my class and started going to other Anusara classes (the type of yoga I taught) because he liked it so much. He hadn’t come back to my class because he normally worked when the class was held. The one time he had come to my class was a special night off.
- C. We make choices that distinguish one thing from another. We perceive things in our life and attach labels based on our perceptions. To further understand *Vikalpas*, think of ice cream. If the only ice cream you ever ate was spoiled, you would probably spit it out. You might then make a judgment that all ice cream is awful, something to be avoided at all costs. We do this with people, with types of activities, with locations, with virtually everything. Too much of

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<sup>31</sup> Iyengar, B.K.S. (2002 ed.). *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Hammersmith, London: Thorsons, at 12; See, generally, Baptiste, Baron (2002). *Journey into Power*. New York, NY: Fireside.

<sup>32</sup> *Finding the Midline*, at 196–198.

<sup>33</sup> *Light on Pranayama*, at 9, 39.

<sup>34</sup> *Core of the Yoga Sutras*, at 34.

<sup>35</sup> *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, at 56–57; See also, Shantananda, Swami (2003). *The Splendor of Recognition*. South Fallsburg, NY: SYDA Foundation, at 117–121.

this and we end up walking through life with dusty eyeglasses, never accurately seeing anything.

- D. Such a mistaken method of viewing the world diminishes our potential to create a life of well-being. We become too tied up combating these negative feelings and there is no room to feel positive emotion or the thrill of engaging activity. We fail to see meaning in our actions. Our relationships become, at best, routine and casual.
- E. *Vikalpas* are one of five states of mind identified by Patanjali in Yoga Sutra 1.6. The other four are: 1) *Pramana* – proof based on what we actually experience through direct perception (*Pratyaksa*), inference (*Anumana*); or scriptural testimony (*Agama*); 2) *Viparyaya* – a mistaken view; seeing one thing but believing it to be another; she uses the example of seeing a rope in the road and believing it to be a snake; 3) *Nidra* – sleep; and 4) *Smirti* – memory.<sup>36</sup>
- F. This *Kosha* is where we can choose to be lucid, to see clearly. Here we can make a *Sattvic* choice based on the actual facts of the situation, without bias, prejudice, or other tendencies to view things incorrectly, *Vikalpa*.
- G. We shed feelings of separation. We remember our common connection through Supreme Consciousness and our goal of connecting to each other and to our community. We overcome the *Malas*, overcoming feelings of unworthiness, envy, jealousy, and other divisive emotions.
- H. The power of the *Vikalpas* to mistakenly label or conceptualize gets in the way of connection and with the opportunity for a richer experience. However, in *Vijnanamaya Kosha* we can dissolve our groupings of false perceptions, viewing the moment through a clear lens. Through this clear lens, we remember our Divine essence. We remember our goal of creating a life of well-being.
- I. In yoga poses Shiva Rae suggests that we can feel this *Kosha* within us when we begin to feel the joy of the pose. She says that we are like an observer who is separate from the joy but can “feel” it arising.<sup>37</sup>
- J. Meditation allows our mind the space it needs to take off the “tinted glasses” that cloud our perceptions and see the potential in the moment for creating the life we envision for ourselves. It allows us access to the positive memories

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<sup>36</sup> *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, at 32. See also, Iyengar, Geta (1990). *Yoga A Gem for Women*. Spokane, WA: Timeless Books, at 12.

<sup>37</sup> *You Are Here*.

stored within us that give us the strength and courage to seek out positive relationships and engage in meaningful behavior.<sup>38</sup>

## VII. *Anandamaya Kosha*.

“*Ananda*” means “bliss” and this is the inner most layer or sheath of our subtle body, the place of pure joy. This is a carefree, peaceful, place where we touch the love that lies within each of us as we connect to our Divine essence.<sup>39</sup> This is where the heart and soul become open and free, revealing a place of *Paramananda*, the highest state of love that is innately present within each of us.<sup>40</sup>

Here we feel complete, whole, *Purnatva*. We are no longer subject to the feelings of separation that arise within us naturally as part of our human embodiment. We easily feel positive emotions, and revel in the joy of meaningful engagement and nurturing friends. Our choices aren’t influenced by the negative thoughts that can haunt us and drive us to decisions that move us away from the very type of life we wish for ourselves.

- A. In this place we feel in flow with life. There is a sense of freedom, *Svatantrya*, as we act out of our heart, manifesting ourselves fully in the world, unfettered by concern over approval or result.
- B. We can use our *Asana* practice to get in touch with this sheath. Instead of recognizing as an “observer” that doing the pose feels fun, there can be a point when we truly feel the joy, the satisfaction, and the fullness of heart while in the pose. We no longer recognize these feelings through the mind, but feel these feelings in our entire being.<sup>41</sup>
- C. Meditation is a powerful and effective technique that teaches us how to interpenetrate all five sheaths to blend them into one. This amalgamation corresponds to the seventh limb of the eight-limb path of yoga – *Dhyana*.<sup>42</sup>
- D. *Anandamaya Kosha* is not something unattainable. Children at play frequently access this state of joy, as do others, such as musicians and dancers. We can also think of actors, athletes, and dancers as further examples.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Finding the Midline*, at 199–201.

<sup>39</sup> Chidvilasananda, Swami Gurumayi (1997). *Enthusiasm*. South Fallsburg, NY: SYDA Foundation, at 29.

<sup>40</sup> Mahony, Dr. William (2010). *Exquisite Love*. The Woodlands, TX: Anusara Press, at 217–221.

<sup>41</sup> *You Are Here*.

<sup>42</sup> *Light on Pranayama*, at 226–229.

<sup>43</sup> *You Are Here*.

- E. Yet, all these examples tend to suggest that in fact *Anandamaya Kosha* is only for others, such as the gifted linebacker intercepting a pass in the Super Bowl, or the singer performing in front of thousands in a stadium. In reality, behavioral psychologists tell us that this feeling of joy is available to any of us at any time when we learn to recognize our own strengths, and then find a meaningful way to offer them in service to others through engaging activities.<sup>44</sup> This, of course, correlates with the Divine attribute of *Satchitananda* that we have discussed in previous sessions.<sup>45</sup>
- F. This *Kosha* corresponds to the Sky Element.<sup>46</sup> This is the case because at this level we live out of a place of clarity and the knowledge of connection to something larger than us. We see things through clean lenses, finding connection and opportunities to manifest ourselves in ways that are the highest meaningful expression of our talents, skills, and gifts. This is the life of well-being, of *Satchitananda*, available to each of us.

### VIII. Conclusion.

We spend time discussing the subtle body because, after all, this is where our memories are stored and processed, and our choices are made. If we wish to create a life of well-being, we will do so from these choices. Therefore, it is imperative that we have a sense of the environment within us where our choices are made so we can direct our study and practices in a way that clears the path for decisions that serve us.

Next week we bring all the various components of the subtle body together as we begin our study of the *Chakras*, vortexes of energy within us serving as core centers that form a coordinating network for the system of our mind and body.

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<sup>44</sup> See, e.g., Csikszentmihaly, Dr. Mihaly (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, (Kindle Version; retrieved from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)); Frankl, Dr. Viktor (2006 ed). *Man's Search For Meaning*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press; Fredrickson, Dr. Barbara (2014). *Positivity*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press (Kindle Version: retrieved from [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)); May, Dr. Rollo (1975). *The Courage to Create*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., at 39–40; 134; 140; and Seligman, Dr. Martin (2011). *Flourish*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

<sup>45</sup> See posted outline in this course: “Our True Nature.” Dorigan, William (2016). [www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html](http://www.findingthemidline.com/midlinetalks/html)

<sup>46</sup> *Core of the Yoga Sutras*, at 34.