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Book Review

Pancha Kosha: An Exploration of Traditional Indian Knowledge on the Five Layers of Human Existence

Prof. Ajay Kumar Singh, Sandeep Dubey, A. K. Publications (2023)

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ABSTRACT

The book offers a wealth of information about physical and mental health via PanchKosha. Panch Kosha is a profound examination of the elements of human life, brilliantly written by the authors. The Authors shed light through the Upanishads, which are a collection of ancient Indian philosophy that form the basis of Vedantic philosophy.

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Prof. Ajay Kumar Singh & Shri Sandeep Dubey's "Pancha Kosha: An Exploration of Traditional Indian Knowledge on the Five Layers of Human Existence" is excellently written book with respect to the overall development of the human psyche. The book offers a wealth of information about physical and mental health via Panch Kosha. Panch Kosha" is a profound examination of the elements of human life, brilliantly written by the authors.

Every layer in the human body exposed meticulously stripped away, from physical being to the joyful existence of pure consciousness, giving readers a thorough grasp of their deepest selves. The author takes us on a transforming journey towards spiritual enlightenment and self-discovery through lyrical words and perceptive thoughts.

The Authors shed light through *the Upanishads*, which are a collection of ancient Indian philosophy that form the basis of Vedantic philosophy, from which PanchaKoshahas explained. Since then, the idea has developed and been elaborated upon by other schools of Bharatiya philosophy, including Yoga, Samkhya, and Vedanta. Drawing on frequently quoted Upanishads, the Pancha Kosha reveals the many dimensions of human life as represented by the Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vijnanamaya, and Anandamaya Koshas. The authors support comprehending "Kosha" and make a connection between it with mindfulness and chakra practices. Discover again the intricate network of human motivation – a timeless discovery for modern researchers.

Pancha Kosha also presents an in-depth comprehension of the condition of humans from a variety of perspectives, which can guide endeavors to make people better. Improvements in one area of a person's life may positively impact other areas due to their interdependence. The main objective of this compendium is to provide light on the ways in which each Kosha influences and enhances human life. It is also important to learn more about the human body functioning and the inner workings of the human mind.

The Sanskrit terms Pancha Pancha, which means "five," and Kosha, which means "sheath," are the roots of Panch Kosha. Pancha The concept of Kosha

in yoga philosophy refers to the five levels of consciousness that each experience passes through. These five levels are centered around Atman, often known as the genuine self. Every layer/organof the five Koshas, or sheaths, that an individual identifies with is said to offer them a unique outlook on the world. The practice of yoga helps one become more aware and conscious of these sheaths.

Subsequently the authors highlightabout Five Layers of Human Existence "Koshas":

- I. Annamaya Kosha (the physical sheath)
- II. Pranamaya Kosha (the vital sheath)
- III. Manomaya Kosha (the mental Kosha)
- IV. Vijnanamaya Kosha (the intellectual sheath)
- V. Anandam Kosha (the blissful sheath)

The Authors explained "Anna represents what our senses see as the corporeal, the Viraj (the radiant). From Prana or energy, this has expanded or changed. Sutrat-man is the combination of Prana, Manas, and Vijnana. The two major kinds of matter that constitute this sutrat-man are the vehicle of all outward acts (kriya-shakti), also known as Prana or the life-principle, and the vehicle of all intellectuality or knowledge (Vijnana-shakti), which is composed of the two types Manas and Vijnana. The substance in which all Savikalpaka (concrete) knowledge appears is called manas, or Antahkarana. Every one of the five senses of knowledge and action is governed by God. Pranamaya Koshas is the Gods. Prana is their source of power. That is what keeps their senses working. Prana is the energy of everything. Just as all fuel is the same save for brand labels, so too is life the same. All living things share the prana, the vital force. Prana and the senses are examples of subtle SattvaGuna just as the intellect and mind.

They also discussed that among the *attributes of the Annamaya Kosha are birth and death. The Taittiriya Upanishad refers to food – annam, the Sanskrit word for substance – as the finest medicine. And the five elements – earth, water, fire, air, and ether appear in similarly subtle ways among each of the five senses, and the intellect is capable of identifying ever-more-subtle causes and consequences acting via each of the five sheaths.*

For instance, the coarsest sheath, Anamaya Kosha, has its roots in the earth element, while the very sheath, Anandamaya, is based on the quanta/ ether element.

However appreciating Anandamaya Kosha, the reflection of the atman or self-inside the most subtle sheath, provides the basis for determining the roles that the elements, energy, senses, and Kosha fulfill. The gross body, also known as the sthulararira, is made up of physical objects and comprises the three Pancha Koshas. Kosha Annamaya is the maker. The subtle body is composed of Pranamaya Kosha, Manomaya up of, and Vijnanamaya Kosha. The causal or sukmsarira, body, or karmsarira, is composed of Kosha or Anandamaya Kosha. The atman lies behind the Pancha Kosha. Annamaya Kosha is the Sthulararira (food-ful, consisting of the gross The Pranamaya Kosha (energy-full, the subtlebody). The SukmaSarira consists of the instinctual (manomayakosha, the perceptual body) and the cognitive (vigyanmayakosha, the conscious body). The Karana sarira, or happy transcendental body, is the Anandamaya Kosha. The Shruti says that these five sarira sheaths have to be removed.

The Pancha Kosha hypothesis is a representation of the hierarchy of human values. The sheath of the corporeal (body) self, the most repulsive of the five Koshas, is named for the fact that it is fed by food. People who dwell in this layer of consciousness perceive themselves as a pile of skin, fat, bones, and excrement; in contrast, a discriminating person sees himself as the only reality that exists,

independent of the body. The physical body is created by the substance of food.

The Authors also defining the fundamental components that give rise to the macrocosm and microcosm frameworks, the Pancha Kosha offers a comprehensive perspective. The Kosha hypothesis clarifies the idea of causality by presenting a cause-and-effect relationship. It is described as having five interconnected layers. The veil of Maya (illusion) is lifted and any sense of differentiation between atman and Brahman (universal awareness) vanishes when the five sheaths are integrated and balanced. The Koshas facilitate mental differentiation among an individual's numerous levels. Starting with the more obvious elements of the physical body and working our way down to the more subtle facets of the mind and consciousness, it teaches us about the mechanics of the body, mind, and spirit. A nutritious meal, conventional games, breathing techniques, adequate exercise, and yoga will all be used to develop the physical proportions.

In summary, the book "Pancha Kosha: An Exploration of Traditional Indian Knowledge on the Five Layers of Human Existence" authors explained the proper expansion of the Pancha Kosha which helps to achieve an ideal, democratic community, where humanitarian values are respected and applied. These values are embedded in the Indian Constitution and correspond with the definition of basic values.

- Sumedha Trivedi