**Sathya Sai Baba Center of Atlanta Study Circle**

**Baba's Teachings on Five Sheaths of the Self (Pancha Koshas)**

**The Five Sheaths that Envelop Man**

Man is enveloped by five sheaths: *Annamaya* (Food), *Praanamaya* (the Life Force), *Manomaya*

(the Mental), *Vijnaanamaya* (the Integral Consciousness) and the *Aanandhamaya* (the Blissful).

The physical body is sustained by food. Hence it is called *sthuula shareera* (the gross body).

Next comes the *Suukshma shareera* (subtle body) which is covered by three sheaths of Life force,

Mind and Integral Consciousness. This subtle body is the basis for the pleasures and pains

experienced by man. All experiences of man are based on this subtle body. Next comes *Aanandhamaya Kosha* (the sheath of Bliss). It is the base for the entire Cosmos. The Cosmic Consciousness that is present in the bodily sheath is called "body consciousness." This means that even in the gross body, *Chaithanyam* (consciousness) is present. The consciousness that is present in the *Praanamaya Kosha* (The sheath of the Life Principle) not only indicates the life-principle, but also proclaims the basis of the vital force. The third is the *Aathmik* Principle, which illumines the *mind---Manomaya Kosha.* The fourth is the consciousness in the *Vijnaanamaya Kosha.* This is the basis for the entire Cosmos. It is called *Chith,* the all-pervading Cosmic Consciousness.

Transcending all these is the Pure Divine Self--the Supreme *Purusha.* This is the source of all

power. It is the embodiment of the Infinite Will. This is the power that protects the Cosmos. The

ancient sages strove to explore the nature of the *Aanandhamaya Kosha* (the sheath of Bliss).

They sought to discover how they can experience Bliss.

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**Sheaths Of The Self**

*Embodiments of Love!*

ONE who has recognized the truth that the same *atma* exists in all, experiences unity with God and enjoys divine bliss, whether he is a renunciant or a householder, or whether he follows the path of action or not. The principle of *atma* cannot be understood by merely studying the Vedas and sacred texts or listening to discourses. Just as a gigantic tree originates from a tiny seed, so also the entire universe has its origin in the principle of *atma*.

*Embodiments of Love!*

You are verily the embodiments of bliss and happiness. Is it not sheer ignorance to search for bliss and happiness in the external world when they are very much present in you? True spiritual transformation lies in understanding one’s own real nature.

Both the present and the former Vice Chancellors of our Institute have prayed to Me (in their speeches earlier) that I should explain in detail the concept of *Pancha Koshas* (5 sheaths of the Self).

The pure *Atma* is enveloped by five sheaths; and due to its association with these sheaths, it acquires their traits. The physical body is referred to as the *Annamaya* *Kosha* (food sheath). The *atma* associated with gross body in its waking state is called ‘*Viswa’* as it is endowed with *jnanendriyas* and *karmendriyas* (organs of perception and action). As this body is involved in various external activities, it is also known as *Vyavaharika.* Thus, the Vedas have given various names to this sheath which comprises the sthula sareera (gross body). The *Pranamaya Kosha* (life sheath*), Manomaya* *Kosha* (mind sheath) and *Vijnanamaya Kosha* (wisdom sheath) form the *sukshma sareera* (subtle body) as they are not visible to the naked eye. Mind in its subtle form is all-pervasive. That is why it is said*, Manomoolam* *Idam Jagat* (mind is the basis for the entire world).

*Anandamaya Kosha* (bliss sheath) refers to the *karana sareera* (causal body). One should go beyond all thefive sheaths in order to experience bliss. This state isknown as *turiya,* which is beyond *sushupti* (deep sleep state). This refers to the *Mahakarana Swarupa* (supreme casual aspect). This is *Paramarthika* (theultimate spiritual principle). The bliss experienced in this state is true bliss. This bliss cannot be obtained through the senses, mind or intellect.

There are five types of *kleshas* (obstacles), which come in the way of experiencing this bliss. They are: *Avidya Klesha, Abhinava Klesha, Asthitha Klesha*, *Raga Klesha* and *Dwesha Klesha.* Man is unable to have the vision of the *Atma* and experience *atmic* bliss due to these five *klesha*s. One who has excessive attachment to the body suffers from *avidya klesha,* which leads to various desires and diseases and makes one’s life miserable. The *abhinava klesha* arises when one does not exercise control over one’s mind. Man gives undue importance to the body and gets carried away by the vagaries of the mind and as a result is put to suffering. The *asthitha klesha* arises out of interest

in worldly pleasures. The *raga klesha* results from attachment towards wealth and material objects. The *dwesha klesha* arises when one’s expectations are frustrated and desires are not fulfilled.

**Give Up Body Attachment**

Some devotees worship God expecting something in return. They are happy if their desires are fulfilled or else they will start hating even God. They do not enjoy the fortune on hand. On the contrary, they desire for something more which they do not deserve. As a result, they are subjected to distress. Today even the relationship between mother and child, husband and wife and between one brother and another are marred by *dwesha.* The sheaths other than *Anandamaya Kosha* put man in bondage and subject him to *kleshas*. In order to understand the principle of *Paramarthika,* one should get rid of the mind or at least have control over it and gradually give up body attachment.

*The body is made up of five elements and is bound to perish some time or the other. But the Indweller has neither birth nor death. He does not have attachment or bondage. Truly speaking, the indweller is God Himself.* (Telugu Poem)

One cannot realize the indwelling divinity until and unless one gives up body attachment. Body attachment is an obstacle on the path of spirituality. Just as a gigantic tree is contained in a tiny seed, likewise the five *klesha*s are ingrained in body attachment in the subtlest manner. Attachment to the body is the main cause for man’s unhappiness, anxiety, misery and lack of peace. One should consider the body as an instrument and lead a life of truth keeping in view the indwelling divinity.

First of all man should travel from the food sheath to the life sheath. Life sheath is referred to as vibration as it is responsible for the movement of the body. What is mind sheath? Mind is all-pervasive. Mind can travel any distance in a trice. Man has death but not the mind. Mind will follow man life after life. What is wisdom sheath? It is not connected with material world. The material world is associated with reaction, resound and reflection. For example, you hit the table with your hand. Then the table also hits you in turn. As is the action, so is the reaction. This is the principle of *Pratibhasika* [appearing as the similitude of something, hence illusory]*.* That which is related to *Pratibhasika* is only worldly and secular knowledge. It cannot be termed as wisdom. True wisdom lies in understanding the constant integrated awareness. It leads to the changeless eternal bliss. This can be experienced only after transcending the five sheaths, namely, *Annamaya* (gross form), *Pranamaya, Manomaya,* *Vijnanamaya* (subtle form) and *Anandamaya* (causal form). Then you reach the state of *turiya* (supreme causal state). That which is beyond the causal state is supreme causal state. In order to attain this state one should understand very clearly the nature of five sheaths.

**Primordial Basis of the Universe**

The entire world has a primordial basis. Here is a silver plate and a silver tumbler. Silver is the basis for these. The name and form of the object can be changed, but silver remains the same. Likewise, all names and forms are bound to change, but the primordial basis remains changeless.

*The principle of Atma is ancient and eternal. It has neither birth nor death, neither beginning nor end.*

It is the primordial basis for the body, the mind and the life principle. Divinity is the foundation of everything. The water of the ocean becomes vapor due to sun’s rays. The vapor in turn become clouds. The clouds come down in the form of rain, flowing down as rivers and streams, which ultimately merge into the ocean. Just as the rivers, which originate from the ocean, ultimately become one with it, so also all the living beings and objects, which originate from Divinity, will ultimately merge into it. This in Vedantic parlance is called *mukti* (liberation).

[…]The individual soul in the waking state is known as *Viswa*, as it is associated with *karmendriyas* and *jnanendriyas*. In the dream state, it is called *Taijasa* (the effulgent one), as it is associated with the effulgent principle of *antahkarana* (inner instrument). In deep sleep state, it is known as *Prajna*. It is associated with the bliss sheath.

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