



Panchakosha Theory: A Yogic method of human well-being.

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Abstract:

The desire to find a really holistic model of health has made contemporary researchers turn towards Taittiriya Upanishad offering the Panchakosha (five sheaths) model of human existence. This paper discusses the hierarchy of these dimensions - between the gross physical body and the exquisite state of bliss as well as how they are applicable to the modern integrative medicine. Combining ancient knowledge of Vedas and contemporary neurobiological discoveries, we present an argument that the Panchakosha model is a more holistic view of the human condition than a common reductionist view of the body.

Keywords: Panchakosha, Taittiriya Upanishad, Holistic Health, Yoga Psychology, Well-being, Mind-Body Medicine.

Introduction:

In the modern world, the concept of health has changed its meaning, as a lack of disease has ceased to be a criteria of health and has transformed into a state of total physical, mental, and social well-being (Bharadwaj et al., 2024; Puri et al., 2023). Yet, to reach this state, a map that will take into consideration the multidimensionality of the human mind is needed. Such a map is given in the Taittiriya Upanishad in the form of the Panchakosha or five sheaths that cover the human self (Puri et al., 2023; Shukla et al., 2025). The Panchakosha theory takes the mind and the body as one spectrum of different densities as opposed to Western models of philosophy that lack structure to bifurcate them (García, 2020; Godara, 2024). In this paper, the researcher explores the role of aligning these five layers in achieving sustainable health and psychological transformation.

2. Literature:

Review Vedic science has become an emerging academic topic with researchers seeking integrative remedies to other chronic stress and metabolic illnesses (Devpriya et al., 2025; Shukla et al., 2025). There is an emerging trend in the study of the human biofield in relation to the concept of the subtle body (sūkṣmaśarīra), which is proposed to mediate in physiological homeostasis through the channels of energy (nadis) and centers (chakras) (Maxwell, 2009; Wisneski and Anderson, 2009; Yadav and Anita, 2022). In past research, researchers have put emphasis on the application of particular yogic practices in enhancing neurological well-being and emotional stability by targeting certain koshas with the help of Pranayama and Asana (Barooah, 2023; Brown and Gerbarg, 2005; Devpriya and Verma, 2025).

3. Methodology:

This paper captures the use of a qualitative, theoretical synthesis of ancient literature (Taittiriya Upanishad) and the current peer-reviewed studies in the fields of yoga psychology and neuroscience. When we compare the conventional accounts of the five sheaths with the modern knowledge about the autonomic nervous system, the role of endocrine functions, and the concept of dereification in meditation, we develop a comprehensive model of whole-body wellness (Madl, 2024; Morris, 2024).

4. Analysis of the Five Koshas:

4.1 The Annamaya Kosha: The Physical Dimension. The most superficial one is Annamaya Kosha: the gross physical body that is maintained by food (anna) and the five elements (Puri et al., 2023). It is the most material part of life and the area the focus of conventional medicine (Kayale, 2024). The level of well-being can be obtained by proper nutrition and physical practices such as Hatha Yoga which provide structural alignment and visceral regulation (Barooah, 2023; Kumar, 2024).

4.2 Pranamaya Kosha: The Vital Energy Dimension. It is the essential layer that is the "vital sheath" that moves the physical body by prana or life force (Puri et al., 2023). It controls the circulation, respiration and energy distribution using the nadis (Yadav and Anita, 2022). The symptoms of dysfunctions in this sheath may be fatigue or autonomic instability (Brown and Gerbarg, 2005; Devpriya and Verma, 2025). This layer, according to research, can be aligned with the help of rhythmic breathing methods, which result in immediate cortisol and stress measures (Bahadorani et al., 2021; Brown and Gerbarg, 2005).

4.3 Manomaya Kosha: The Mental-Emotional Dimension. The mind, emotions, and the sense faculty are included into the Manomaya Kosha (Puri et al., 2023). The psychological ego is located here, and the majority of illnesses associated with stress are triggered (Best, 2010; DiPietro, 2018). When the psyche is disintegrated by the external stimuli, it results in the establishment of what is called agitation which will ultimately be converted into the physical body as a psychosomatic illness (Barooah, 2023; Lindhard, 2017).

4.4 Vijnanamaya Kosha: The Dimension of Intellectual-Wisdom. This casing symbolizes greater wit, differentiation (viveka) and intuition (Shukla et al., 2025). It is the layer to which the ethical values and the meaning of purpose are created (Bhangaokar and Kapadia, 2009). The well-being of this level entails the realization of self-awareness and the possibility to observe mental processes without being attached to them a state scientists refer to as derereification (Garcia, 2020; Madl, 2024).

4.5 Anandamaya Kosha: The Bliss Dimension. The nearest sheath is Anandamaya Kosha which is the state of pure bliss and contact to the universal self (Puri et al., 2023; Shukla et al., 2025). It is not a feeling, but a state of calmness that is beyond the unsteadiness of the mind (Kumar, 2024; Lindhard, 2017). The attainment of this layer is regarded as the end result of yoga, which offers a resilience base that does not depend on the external factors (Lindhard, 2017; Sena, 2021).

5. Discussion:

Intervention with Modern Science. The Panchakasha theory is quite similar to the newly developed biofield science, which acknowledges the fact that humans are multifaceted electromagnetic systems (Singh, 2016; Wisneski and Anderson, 2009). As an example, the Pranamaya (vital) and Annamaya (physical) koshas are reflected in the connection between the nervous system and the endocrine glands (Basu, 2016; Maxwell, 2009).

Moreover, meditation-based interventions to address the Vijnanamaya layer have been reported to change the brain architecture of the prefrontal cortex to increase cognitive control and empathy (Chase, 2018; Madl, 2024). Clinicians can transition to the holistic integration of the body, energy, and spirit, instead of focusing on the management of the symptoms by considering the human being as a triadic foundation (García, 2020; Gonçalves et al., 2021).

6. Conclusion:

The Panchakasha theory offers a strong paradigm of the examination of the levels of human existence (Puri et al., 2023; Shukla et al., 2025). To achieve long-term prosperity, the human being should take care of each of the five sheaths, namely nourishing physical, balancing energetic, calming mental, enlightening intellectual and engaging with the spiritual (Devpriya and Verma, 2025; Lindhard, 2017). This is why the

ancient knowledge of the Upanishads is an important lesson on the way to attain complete health in the twenty-first century as modern medicine adopts the integrative models (Bhangaokar and Kapadia, 2009; Singh, 2016).

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