

## **Annamaya Kosha – From the View Point of Ancient and Modern Science**

**Bhavit Bansal\* and Sanjib Patra\***

\*Faculty, Division of Yoga and Life sciences

S-VYASA Yoga University, Eknath Bhavan, Gavipuram Circle, K.G. Nagar, Bangalore

Email id: sankp79@gmail.com

### **ABSTRACT**

Our physical body is known as Annamaya kosha and also called Sthula sareera. It is the body that experiences pain & pleasure, disease & sickness and scientifically all its functions get operated during the waking (Jagrata) state. The physical body is formed by the essence of food or 'Anna' and birth and death are two attributes of Annamaya kosha. This Kosha is encircled by the four Koshas viz., Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vijnanamaya and Anandamaya kosha.

### **Introduction**

Every individual is concealed with five layers of existence viz., Annamaya (physical), Pranamaya (vital), Manomaya (Psychic), Vijnanamaya (Intellectual) and Anandamaya (Happiness) and this concept is well described in Taitriya Upanishad. In this article, we shall discuss about the concept of Annamaya kosha from the perspective of ancient and modern science. As the name suggests, 'Anna' means Food, 'Maya' means 'Encircled with or Sheath' and the meaning of 'Kosha' is a 'Sac or Compartment'. Hence, we can say that it is the compartment of our 'Physical body'. In other words, it is the food sheath of human existence. This sheath corresponds to 'Sthula sareera' or Physical body and this sheath cannot exist without contact of other sheaths.

As per Taitriya Upanishad, the word 'Annamaya' was pronounced by Bhrigu. Varuna, the father of Bhrigu, instructs him to start with Tapas<sup>1</sup>. He begins his Tapas and finds himself quantum-plating with the idea of 'Anna' or food which nourishes all living and non living beings. He realises that the 'Anna or food' is the physical principles that pervades all matter and nourishes it 'Annam Brahma iti vyajanat'. This dialogue between Bhrigu (son) and

Varuna (father & Guru) is described well in Taitriya Upanishad.

In modern science it is said that all the time, atomic energy bounces in and out from the physical body like a simple pendulum. Although it is difficult to see it, but scientifically it can be considered like a pendulum swings from left to right and right to left and in the same manner every individual emits atomic particles viz., Bio-photons etc. The Sattwic body has a longer bouncing of atomic & sub atomic particles, a Tamasic body perhaps no bouncing at all, while a Rajasic body has random bouncing with no limitation.

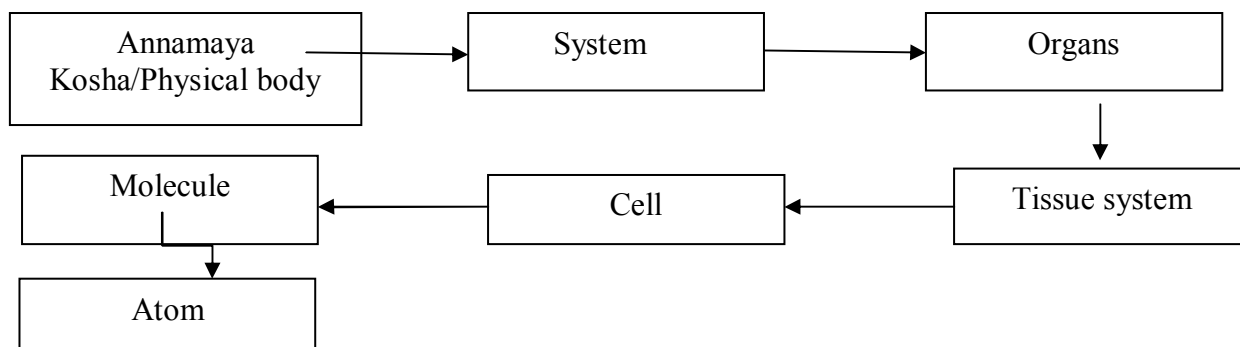
When these atomic particles bounce off your body and come back, there is a period of rest. That period of rest is always noticed in the pendulum also. When it goes to the left and then turns to the right, there is a span of rest. Probably this is the reason why every life process has the attributes of activation and relaxation.

### **Scientific view points of annamaya kosha**

About ninety six percent of the mass of the human body is made up of four elements viz., oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>), carbon (C), hydrogen (H) and nitrogen (N<sub>2</sub>), with a lot of that in

the form of water. The remaining four percent is the mixture of other elements. Some of the more prominent representatives are called macro nutrients, whereas those appearing only at the level of parts per million or less are referred to

as micronutrients. These nutrients perform various functions, including the building of bones and cell structures, regulating the body's pH, carrying charge, and driving chemical reactions.



### Annamaya Kosha from the view point of Ayurveda

According to Ayurveda, the term 'Dhatu' is derived from the Sanskrit root word 'Dh' Dhatru', which means 'Dharana' to support and 'Poshana' to nourish<sup>2</sup>, that promotes the growth of Sareera (body). Dhatus (tissue) are seven in number, Rasa (Plasma/Lymph), Rakta (blood), Mamsa (muscles), Meda (fats/adipose tissue), Asthi (bone), Majja (marrow) and Sukra (reproductive tissue). All dhatus get their nourishment from Ahararasa (chyle)<sup>3</sup> which is the end product of intestinal digestion. In addition to the above mentioned Dhatus, there is biological derivatives viz., Vata (movement), Pitta (bile) and Kapha (phlegm), which are capable of revitalizing and rejuvenating the body tissues.

### Naturopathy

The concept of 'Panchamahabhoota' is discussed in three branches of alternative medicine viz., Ayurveda, Naturopathy and Yoga. But to have better understanding, we discuss under the heading of Naturopathy. Five great elements are Ether (Akasha), Air (Vayu), Fire (Tej), Water (Jala) and Earth (Prithvi)<sup>4</sup>. Correlating each one of the element, we can say that body cavities can be correlated with ether, skin with air, digestion of food &

transformation of thoughts with fire, blood, lymph, fatty tissue and body fluid with water and bones, flesh, ligament, tendons, vessels and fibres with earth. Here Prithvi is directly correlated with Annamaya kosha and held responsible for bringing solidity to body.

### Yoga

Under the heading of Yoga, we shall discuss and correlate Sense organs (Jnanendriya) and Organs of action (Karmendriyas) with the five elements. The sense organ 'ear' is correlated with ether and mouth as Karmendriya, air with skin & hand, fire with eyes and feet, water with tongue and genitals<sup>5</sup>, earth with nose and rectum.

### Role of Digestive System in building and impairment of annamaya kosha

Digestive system plays an important role in the manifestation of disease and health. Billion of food molecule travel through this system but seldom do we know which of the molecule become the origins of our diseases in various organs. Naturopathy and Ayurveda believe that food is our medicine and we are how we eat. In line with these sentences, one of the plexus in our stomach is called Manipura chakra<sup>6</sup> and this Chakra is like a motherly chakra as per as nurturing to any vital part

of the body is concerned. Impairment of this Chakra gives rise to wide range of complications in other systems in the body. Therefore, the aim of Yoga was to restore the efficiency of the organs so that all Dhatus get nourished and Panchamahabhutas and Doshas are in the state of equilibrium.

### **Operational Toole**

In Yoga the operational tools for handing Annamaya Kosha are Asanas and Kriyas. The aim of Asanas is to make the body light and harmonize the circulation of blood in various parts of the body. It also enhances the transportation of the micronutrients for nurturing and stimulating and relaxing various local organs for better and optimum functioning by promoting the blood supply. Kriya has its main focus on digestive system and this

in turn facilitates rejuvenation and revitalising of various parts the body.

### **Summary**

All living and non-living beings that exist on earth are born of food. Then they live by food: then, again, to food (earth) they go in the end. So, verily food is superior to all beings in the world. It is also told that those who worship food as Brahman obtain all food. From food all beings are born; having been born, they grow by food. Food is eaten by beings and also it eats them. Therefore, it is called Anna (food).

### **Acknowledgement**

I hereby acknowledge our student Ms. Indukala for her contribution for preparing this theoretical manuscript.

### **References**

1. Gambhirananda S. (2001). Taittiriya Upanishad with the commentary of Shankaracharya, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Advaita ashram, Kolkata
2. Sharma R. K. and Bhagavandas (2009). Agnivesa, Charak Samhita Text with English translation vol II, Vimana Sthana 5/3, Published by Chowkambha Sanskrit series, Varanasi.
3. Vani G. and Prasad J S R A. (2016). Concept of Dhatvagnipaka in Ayurvedic perspective in comparison with tissue metabolism, Int J Res Ayurveda Pharm, 7 (2).
4. Bhakru H. K. (1991). The complete handbooks of Nature cure; 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Jaico publication, Mumbai
5. Sharma C. (2013). A Critical survey of Indian Philosophy, 13<sup>th</sup> Edition, Moti Lal Banarasi Dass, New Delhi
6. Saraswati S S (2004). A systematic course in ancient tantric techniques of Yoga and Kriya: A systematic course in the ancient tantric techniques; 7<sup>th</sup> edition, Bihar Yoga publication trust, Munger.

\*\*\*\*\*