

The 5 Sheaths or *Pancha Kosha* of the Human Being: The Veils Covering *Atman*

This valuable Vedic notion of a living being functioning through multiple layers of corporality is expressed in the Taittiriya Upanishad.

Annamaya kosha: The outermost layer is dense and made of the gross elements and is composed of food. It makes up the physical body that moves about in and acts on the material world.

Pranamaya kosha: This next layer inward is made of the vital energy that sustains life. This life energy flows through *vayus* or larger current and smaller more subtle ones called *nadis*. These flows create vortices in special areas of the body, known as *chakras* (wheels).

Manomaya kosha: Moving inward is the mental sheath comprised of the three functions of the lower mind: *chitta* (the subconscious storehouse), *manas* (the conscious mind of ongoing mental activity), and *ahamkara* (the ego or sense of individuality.)

Vijnanamaya kosha: The fourth innermost sheath is the intellect. It is the higher mind, or *buddhi*, and is the power of discrimination and loci of inner discernment.

Anandamaya kosha: The most inward sheath is called the Bliss sheath because it is illuminated by consciousness. This sheath is the place of Kundalini Shakti experientially, which is also that of dualistic Samadhi.

