

Ancient and Modern Understanding of the Functions of Kōśas

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Kōśas are a concept that since upaniṣadic times are described as constituting the human functional structure. Their applicable meaning, however required further elucidation. The study investigates the functional meaning of *kōśas* based on scriptural references and experiential assessment, taking into consideration also the concept of *tattvas*, *prāṇa*, and *ahaṅkāra*. Special attention is given to *ānandamaya kōśa*, the function of which is one of the most complex ones. The paper reviews ancient as well as recent scriptural description of *kōśas* and explains them through a general perceptual model. As a result, the paper presents a revised functional model of the *kōśas* that are under the governing force of *ahaṅkāra*, together with indicating a way to *manonāśa* and *jñāna* that changes the role of *ahaṅkāra* in one's life.

Received August 17, 2024

Revised September 21, 2024

Accepted September 22, 2024

Key words

Kōśa, prāṇa, tattva,
ahaṅkāra, ātma-vichāra



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1 Introduction

The effort to understand any teaching, where the source person of the teaching is no longer alive is a challenge and a source of possible mistakes. This is so as the *ṛṣi* (Sa. “seer”) has to give linguistical form to his realizations in a language, which may or may not his mother tongue, using contexts that are usual at his time. The one that writes the teaching down for the posteriority writes what he understands or hears in language that is identical or not with the language of the teaching. When a later study occurs, the context and the meaning of the words may have changed, so even knowers of that given language may have difficulty to understand it as correctly as it was meant to be. When a translation is made to another language, it brings further possibilities of inaccuracies as the translator’s way of thinking, knowledge in the given area and linguistic abilities may significantly influence the translation. Finally, when the end-user is trying to apply the teachings given in the text, he faces the same challenge. The paper given below stems from the effort of the authors to better understand and contextualize the concept of *tattvas*, *kōśas*, and *ahamkāra* in relation to “spiritual practice” (Sa. *sādhana*).

2 Definitions of Kōśas and Tattvas

In the yogic description of functional units of human beings, *kōśas* (Sa. “sheath”) represent the tools through which humans can exist and be active during their life cycle. Apart from the first *kōśa*, i.e., the physical body, the other four *kōśas*, i.e., *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *viññānamaya*, and *ānandamaya kōśa* are more linked to the activities of the brain and thus represent mental functions. Their properties will be indicated below.

Thus, the concept of *tattvas* (Sa. *tattvaṃ*, “truth”) in Indian philosophy was used to model the building elements of the manifested reality (Avalon 1978, 283). The manifested universe is said to have undergone three stages of development (Figure 1). The first level of manifestation was formed by *śuddha tattva* (Sa. “clean”), then the *śuddha-aśuddha tattva* appeared due to the “pollution” of the system that hosted living forms by the change in their quality of perception as well as actions. Here, additional information can be deduced from the work of Vay (1869, 40–47). On this level of manifestation, the *kañcukās* (Sa. “limitations”) came to existence, barring the living entities from having an inherent access to reality and binding them to *avidya* (Sa. “ignorance”). The *kañcukās* are: “limited all might” (Sa. *kalā*), “lim-

itation of knowledge” (Sa. *vidyā*), “limited omniscience” or “limited *jñāna*” (Sa. *avidya vidyā*), “limitation of attachment” (Sa. *rāga*), limited *iccha śakti* – “ability to create at will”, that leads to cravings, attachment, and permanent discontent, “limitation of time” (Sa. *kāla*), “limitation by cause-effect” – limits the free will and thus creates karma, which forces humans to a chain of births (Sa. *niyati*), and “illusion” (Sa. *māyā*). With further degradation of the system, the *aśuddha tattvas* (Sa. *aśuddha*, “unclean”) came to existence and the *tattvas* needed for manifesting living entities on this level (from *buddhi* a.k.a. *viññānamaya kōśa* till *prthivī* (Sa. “earth”) (Satyasangananda 1995, 31–37; Avalon 1978, 283–287; Figure 2). The link to the universal frame of existence is given both in Sāṃkhya and Vedānta (Avalon 1978, 283–286) by adding the changeless Absolute consciousness and *Śakti* to the list of *tattvas*. In case of *aśuddha tattvas*, the model of quintuplication explains the “pollution” (Shankaracharya 1979, 1–8). According to this model, every *tattva* contains a fraction of the other *tattvas* (Figure 3). For purification of *tattvas*, practices called *Tattva Śuddhi* are used (Satyasangananda 1992, 91–100; Avalon 1913, 97–108; Woodroffe 1990, 109–115).

According to this model, for a human being to be able to live, *tattvic* entities are needed, that are given in Figure 4 and are mostly related to sensory and mental activity. *Tattvas* are sorted out according to their character as related to creation. Thus, *Puruṣa* (Sa. “soul”) is non-created and does not create. *Prakṛti* (Sa. “source”) is non-created but creates. *Mahat* (Sa. “great principle”), *ahamkāra* (Sa. “I-making”) and the five *tanmātras* (Sa. “mere essence”) – sound till smell – are created and they themselves create. Finally, *manas* (Sa. “mind”), the five *jñānendriyas* (Sa. “sense organs”), five *karmendriyas* (Sa. “organs of actions”), five *mahābhūtas* (Sa. “great elements”), i.e., *ākāśa* (Sa. “space”), down to *prthivī* are created, but they do not create. The last group is needed as tools for perceiving the manifested world in which we live (Avalon 1974, 54–75).

Figure 1.
System of Tattvas according to Avalon (1978, 285)
and Satyasangananda (1992, 37)

Parasamvit (Niṣkala Śiva)					
		Aham and Idam are not differentiated yet			
Śiva tattva	Śiva tattva (unmani śakti)			Śakti tattva (samāni śakti)	
Vidyā tattva	Mantramahēśvara	Aham	Idam	Sadākhyā tattva (nāda śakti)	Śuddha tattva
	Mantreśvara	Aham	Idam	Īśvara tattva (bindu śakti)	
	Mantras and the 8 vidyeśvaras	Aham	Idam	Sadvidyā tattva	
	Vijñānakāla under the Sadvidyā and over the maya	Here starts the effect of maya, kañcukās and form			Śuddha aśuddha tattva
Ātma tattva	Pralayākāla in maya	Puruṣa tattva	Prakṛti tattva		Aśuddha tattva
		Aham		Idam	
	Sakāla: all beings from Brahma downwards if they are not muktas				
		The tattvas from Buddhi to pṛthivī			

Figure 2.
Effect of Kañcukās on Tattvic Qualities

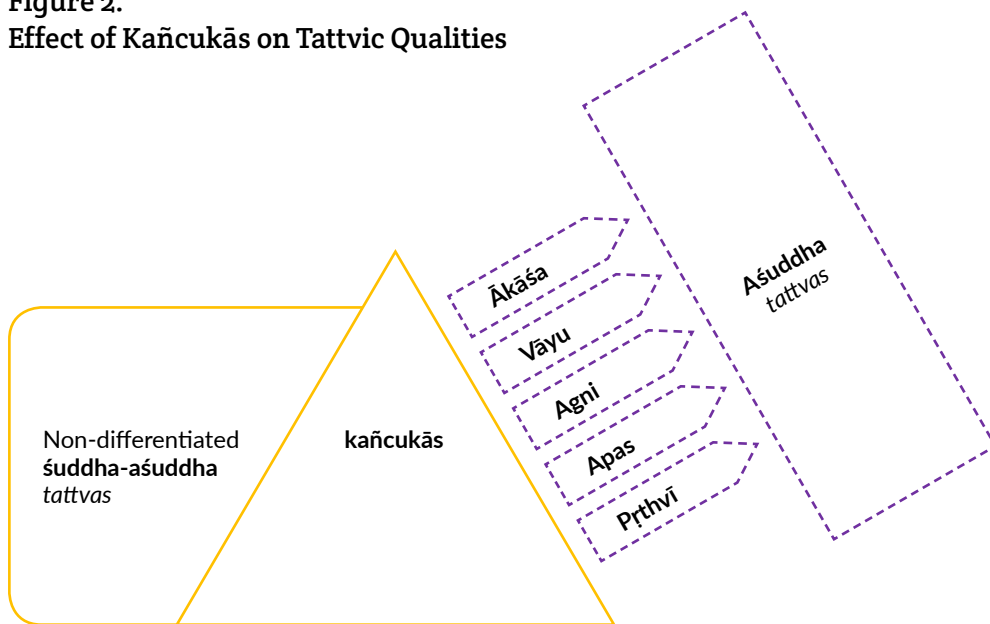
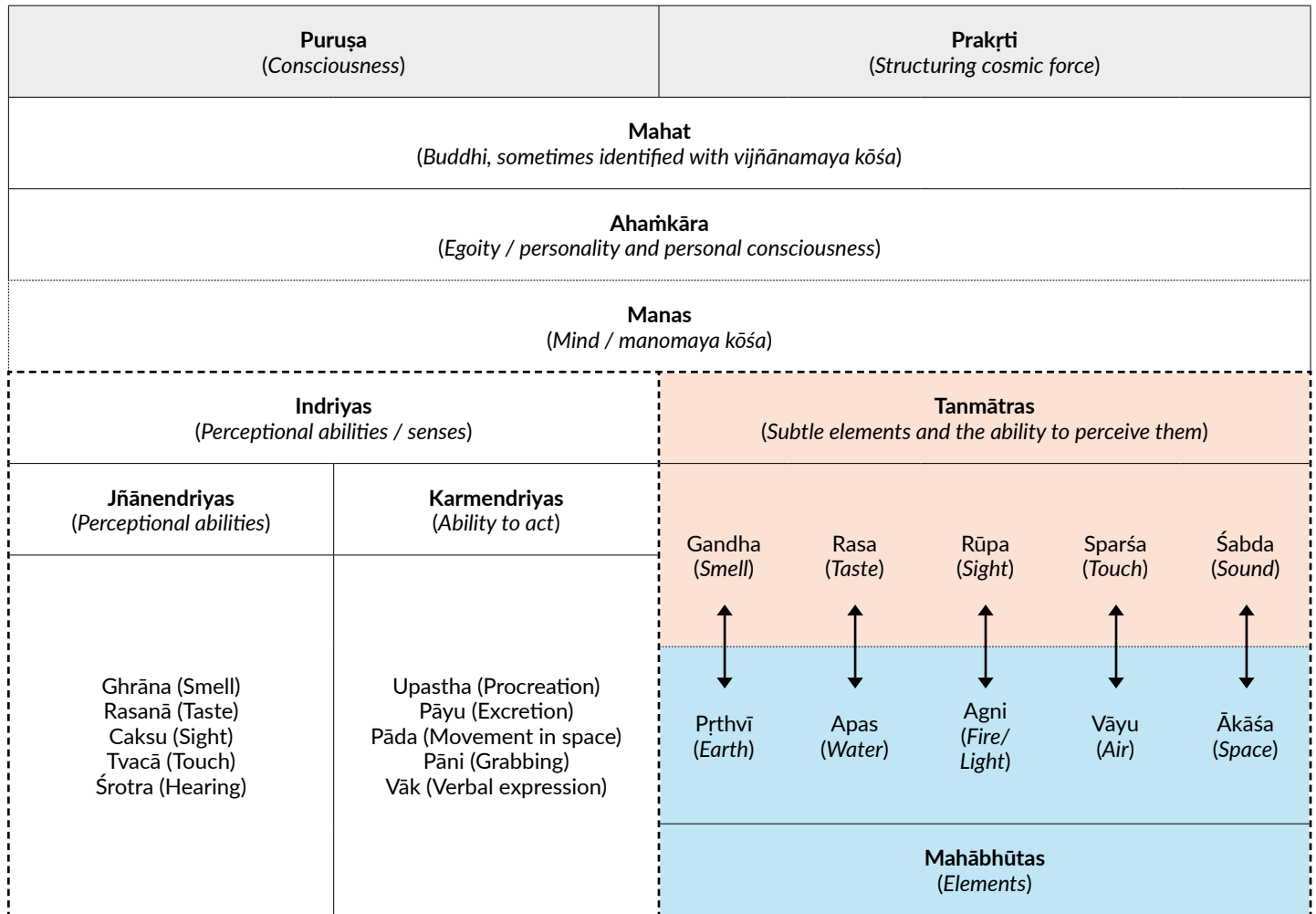


Figure 3.
Model of Quintuplication according to Shankaracharya (1979, 1–8)

No.	Ākāśa (Space)	Vāyu (Air)	Agni (Fire/Light)	Apas (Water)	Pṛthvī (Earth)	Notes
1						Tanmātras/Bhūtas/Tattvas in their original state
2						Tanmātras are divided into two equal parts
3						One half is intact, the other half is divided into four equal parts
4						Each quarter is combined with the other four

Figure 4.
Structural Elements Needed for a Human Being
to Live according to Avalon (1974, 54–75)



3 Kōśas in the Upanisads

The *kōśas* are defined in a number of *Upaniṣads* [1]. They are a part of the vedāntic understanding of human being (Sastri 1903, v). They are used either as tools for understanding human structure or to enable a discrimination between the Absolute and the instruments of human perception. In this way, *kōśas* could be considered as a system of “irreducible complexity” (Behe 1996, 36). The *kōśas* are often pictured as “sheaths”, i.e., as if they are “layers” of the human system. However, they must be “functional software” units that represent the sensory and information processing units that humans need for being aware of the many entities and processes in the world of the *aśuddha tattvas* (Sastri 1903, 395). As can be seen in case of a practice called *Tatva Śuddhi* (Woodroffe 1990, 108–109), it is the *ahaṁkāra*, which absorbs and later projects the *bhūtas* (called also as *mahābhūtas tattvas*) that give form to the human system. Thus, the *ahaṁkāra* is also responsible for projecting out the *kōśas* that enable the interaction with the outer environment. In this way, the *annamaya kōśa* – enables the *ahaṁkāra* to perceive and work through the body. The *prāṇamaya kōśa* (joint functioning of ten main *prāṇas*) supports life as it distributes energy and information through *nāḍīs* to every *kōśa*. This is perceivable when impulses – mental, emotional or activity oriented – are recognized in us. The *manomaya kōśa* (processes perceptions connected to *indriyas*) is perceivable when, for example, thoughts appear in our mind. The *viññānamaya kōśa* is perceived when discrimination takes place and decisions are taken – it arranges the inputs provided by *manomaya kōśa* and the other *kōśas* into “doable form” and presents it to *ahaṁkāra* for decision-making. The *ānandamaya kōśa* evaluates the *ānandic* (joy related) contents of the information provided by the *indriyas* and *manomaya kōśa*. Then, it gives an evaluation on a scale from pain till joy. The activity of the *ānandamaya kōśa* can be perceived when satisfaction or joy (or lack of it) is felt. It channels true *ānanda* during dreamless “deep sleep” (Sa. *suśupti*) or in *samādhi*. The classic commentaries of *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (Sastri 1903, 471–481) declare that this *kōśa* is not identical with Brahman, thus is a product (evolved principle) and that it reflects partly the joy of Brahman and partly the joy coming through other *kōśas*. Avalon (1913, 22–23) cites that the role of *citta* is “contemplation” (Sa. *cinta*) and is the “working space of mind” (Sa. *cittākāśa*), which makes all the above processed perceived to happen in this “virtual” space. As regards the *buddhi* (*viññānamaya kōśa*) it is said that it comes to existence only when needed by a life event that is to be resolved (Sa. *niścaya kariṇī*) and subsequently becomes inactive (as if in a standby position).

The *indriyas*, *manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahaṁkāra* powered by *prāṇa* are the ones that contain the possible cause of re-birth. Thus, they withdraw from the *annamaya kōśa* at the time of death.

4 The Function of Kōśas and Their Relation to Ahaṁkāra and a Human Perceptual Model

The ancient views on *kōśas* are discussed mainly in the context of the descriptions given in the *Upaniṣads*. In case of modern understanding, we will discuss the views of Ramana Mahariṣi and Michael James (2023, 7), specifically on *viññānamaya* and *ānandamaya kōśas*; it is of interest to see the description of the *kōśas* in various *Upaniṣads*. The reason, why the *Upaniṣads*, e.g., the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* are dealing also with the issue of *kōśas* is because the text has as one of its goals to guide to *Brahmavidyā* (Sa. “knowledge of Brahman”) by an exposition of the nature of five *kōśas*. An insight into the nature of the *kōśas*, which are the sheaths of the Self, shows that *Brahman* is beyond the *kōśas* and that *Brahman* is identical with man’s real Self within (Sastri 1903, 380).

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* gives the following explanation related to all the *kōśas*. The description of *annamaya kōśa* is given as: “*He verily, is this man, formed of food essence*” (Sastri 1903, 387). The essence of food is given in *Garbha Upaniṣad* (Kak 2006, 2) as skin, blood, flesh, fat, bone, marrow, and semen (Sastri 1903, 390).

The *prāṇamaya kōśa* is said to be built by *prāṇa*. It is permeated by the three “higher” *kōśas*. The *manomaya kōśa* is described as: “*Than that, verily – than this one formed of food-essence – there is another self within, formed of prāṇa; by him this one is filled.*” Now it is to be noted that the *prāṇa* as such is not dependent on air “*It breathed airless*” (Sastri 1903, 411), still when manifested, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* declares that “*what we call Prana is the air itself*” (quoted in Sastri 1903, 412) and also “*this [note: air] is [note: the means to] liberation*” (Nikhilananda 1963, 205). The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* expresses it as “*it [note: prāṇa] is equal to a white ant, equal to a mosquito, equal to an elephant, equal to these three worlds, equal to this universe, therefore this is also Sāman*” (Sa. *Sāman* is a type of prayer or hymn; Madhavananda 1934, 78). Thus, *prāṇa* is a driving force of all life related processes [2]. But ultimately, “*for the same reason, breath [note: prāṇa] is [note: Brahman]*” (Sastri 1903, 26). The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (quoted in Sastri 1903, 37) and

similarly the *Vedānta Sūtras* (Rau 1904, 157–160) declare that the “Chief of breath” (Sa. *Mukhya prāṇa*) is born of Brahman. The *Chief of breath* is not an organ, and there is no objection to its being superior to all the rest. *Prāṇa* is termed as “air”, a tool of the senses and mind that power activities. It has no tattva assigned. There is a difference between *adhyatmika prāṇa* (Sa. “vital principle”) in the individual and the *ādhidaivika vāyu* (Sa. “cosmic principle of air”). *Prāṇa* pervades all bodies (Rau 1904, 160–162).

The *manomaya kōśa* is described as a further “self”, which permeates the *prāṇamaya kōśa* and is full of *saṅkalpa* (Sa. “impulses”) and *vikalpa* (Sa. “doubt”) (Sastri 1903, 429).

The *vijñānamaya kōśa* is defined as filled with *manas* and formed of determinative cognitions, which are regarded as *pramāṇas* (Sa. “right cognitions”), also called *Vijñāna*, including the determinative knowledge gained in ordinary experience (Sastri 1903, 445–446).

The *ānandamaya kōśa* is given as “*than that, verily – than this one formed of Vijnana – there is another self within formed of bliss: by him this one is filled*” (Sastri 1903, 469). It is important to note again, that the *kōśas* fall into the category of “products”, i.e., they are the tools for expression of the Absolute on a given level of existence (Sastri 1903, 473). Thus, their origin is in the state of *ajñāna* – lacking conscious unity with the Absolute, where direct abidance in the Absolute is not automatically possible. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (quoted in Vasu 1905, 111–112) explains the work of *kōśas* in the following manner:

Know thou the Ātma [note: Self] as seated in the chariot [note: as the Lord of the chariot], the body even as the car; Buddhi [note: intellect] is the driver and Manas [note: mind] as the reins. They say the senses are the horses and the [note: sense] objects their roads; the wise say that the experienter is the Ātma joined with senses and mind.

Sarva Upaniṣad describes the *kōśas* in a terse way (quoted in Madhavananda 1980, 38–39):

The aggregate of the six sheaths [note: nerves, bones, marrow, skin, flesh, and blood], which are the products of food, is called the Annamaya kōśa, alimentary sheath. When the fourteen kinds of Vāyus beginning with the Prāṇa, are in the alimentary sheath, then it is spoken of as the Prāṇamaya kōśa, vesture of the vital airs. When the Ātman united with these two sheaths performs, by means of the four organs beginning with the mind, the functions of desire, etc., which have for their objects

sound and the rest, then it (this state) is called the Manomaya kōśa, mental sheath. When the soul shines being united with these three sheaths and cognizant of the differences and non-differences thereof then it is called the Vijnānamaya kōśa, sheath of intelligence. When these four sheaths remain in their own cause, which is Knowledge (Brahman), in the same way as the latent banyan tree remains in the banyan seed, then it is spoken of as the Ānandamaya kōśa, causal frame of the Soul. When it dwells in the body, as the seat of the idea of pleasure and pain, where it becomes the Kartā, agent.

In the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (quoted in Sastri 1903, 474–475) it is declared that “*just as the other kōśas, such as the Annamaya which are the products evolved from Brahman, are permeated by Brahman, the Supreme Bliss, so also the Ānandamaya is permeated by the Supreme Bliss and hence spoken of as Ānandamaya evolved from Ānanda.*”

The commentaries of Shankaracharya and Suresvaracharya (quoted in Sastri 1903, 475–477) on this issue state:

the bliss – Ānanda here spoken of is the happiness, which results from thought and action. Formed of this bliss-stuff is the Ānandamaya [3]. And this lies within the Vijnanamaya, because the sruti declares that it lies within the Vijnanamaya, the source of all sacrificial rites and the like... it is proper to say that this Ānandamaya, made up of the vasanas of love and other forms of happiness presents itself to consciousness in dream [note: Svapna] in association with Vijnanamaya.

This Ānandamaya self is interior to and quite distinct from the Vijnanamaya looked upon as the agent in all actions... Just as motion, which is a function of Prana, is experienced throughout the body permeated by the Prānamaya, just as sentiency or sensation [note: jñāna-śakti], which is a function of manas, is experienced throughout the body, which is endued with Prana, and permeated by the Manomaya, and just as the consciousness of agency ‘I am the doer’ is experienced throughout the body, which is endued with both Prana and Manas and permeated by the Vijnanamaya, so also special forms of pleasure are experienced throughout the whole body, in the hands, feet, etc., which are endued with Manas and Prana, and permeated by the Ānandamaya. This is the idea conveyed by saying that the Vijnanamaya is permeated by the Ānandamaya.

Here *ānandamaya kōśa* is presented as a subset of *vijñānamaya kōśa*, but both are non-identical and the *ānandamaya*

is providing the *vijñānamaya* with information necessary for decision-making and suggestion for actions presented to *ahamkāra*. The *vāsanās* could be taken as criteria on the basis of which the *ānandamaya* evaluates its anandic quality. Interestingly the *Upanishad* assigns the perception of physical pain to *manomaya kōśa*, but it does not touch upon non-physical pain, which should belong under the jurisdiction of *ānandamaya* (Sastri 1903, 477).

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (quoted in Sastri 1903, 487) further gives the following hints: “He, verily, this one, is quite of man’s shape. After his human shape, this one is of man’s shape. Of him, love itself is the head, joy is the right wing, delight is the left wing, bliss is the self, Brahman is the tail, the support [note: of the *ānandamaya*].” “Thereof, – of the former, – this one, verily, is the Self embodied. Thereof, – of the former, – i.e., of the *Vijñanamaya*, this one, surely, namely, – the *Anandamaya*, – is the embodied Self, i.e., the Self dwelling in the *Vijñanamaya* body... This very *Anandamaya* is the master of the *Vijñanamaya*, – the latter being the body of the former.” (Quoted in Sastri 1903, 496).

As shown in *Tripura Rahasya* “the intellectual sheath is the veil drawn over Pure Intelligence; it is inert by itself. One-pointedness is abiding as the Self. Birth is the false identification of the Self with the body”; the *vijñānamaya kōśa*, just like other *kōśa*, are “inert” (Sa. *jaḍa*) (Ramananda 1994, 223). This is found also in the *Guru Vachaka Kovai* (Muruganar 2004), which can be considered as one of the modern-day *Upaniṣads*, it is stated there that “*Ānandamaya* is said to be a sheath [note: *kōśa*] because of the great desire towards the waking state [note: *jāgrat*] of the one identifying with the *vijñānamaya kōśa*. But when the strong ego identifying with *vijñānamaya* is destroyed, the *ānandamaya* that survives will lose the nature of a sheath [note: *kōśa*] and remain as the supreme Bliss” (Muruganar 2004, 461). The *Ulladu Nārpadu* (Maharshi 1998, verse 12, quoted in James 2022) shows that “the body is a form of five sheaths. Therefore, all five are included in the term ‘body’. Without a body, is there a world? Leaving the body, is there anyone who has seen a world? Say.” Verse 24 (quoted in James 2022) declares that “[t]he *jaḍa* body [consisting of five sheaths] does not say ‘I’; *Sat-Cit* does not rise; in between one thing, ‘I’, rises as the extent of the body. This [the spurious adjunct-conflated awareness that rises as ‘I am this body’] is *cit-jaḍa-granthi*, bondage, *jīva*, subtle body, ego, this *saṃsāra* and mind. Know.” Further, it declares that “[i]f *ahamkāra* comes into existence, everything comes into existence; if *ahamkāra* does not exist, everything does not exist. *Ahamkāra* itself is everything. Therefore, know that investigating what this is alone is giving up everything” (Maharshi 1998, verse 12, quoted in James 2022). Thus, it can be de-

duced that the *kōśas* are only service units to the *ahamkāra* without empowerments for independent decision-making. The *vāsanās* (Sa. “past impressions”) cause identification with the body and thus also with the *prāṇamaya kōśa* and it is permeating the *annamaya* (or *annarasamaya*) sheath. It is perceivable through the information “I breathe”. *Samāna vāyu* is the center of the *prāṇamaya kōśa* (Sastri 1903, 416).

Michael James (2023, 7) states, that body, life, mind, intellect and will (the five *kōśas*) are separate from the “I am”. He explains the first five words of verse 22 of *Upadesa Sarah* (James 2022) as:

உடல் (Ta. *uḍal*) and *விக்ரஹ* (Sa. *vigraha*) mean the physical body, the ‘sheath composed of food’ (*annamaya kōśa*); உயிர் (Ta. *uyir*) and *ப்ராண* (Sa. *prāṇa*) mean life, the ‘sheath composed of *prāṇa*’ (Sa. *prāṇamaya kōśa*), namely the breath and other physiological processes that animate the body; *பொறி* (Ta. *pori*) and *இन्द्रிய* (Sa. *indriya*) in this context mean mind in the sense of its grosser functions, the ‘sheath composed of mind’ (Sa. *manōmaya kōśa*); உள்ளம் (Ta. *uḷlam*) and *धी* (Sa. *dhī*) mean the intellect (*buddhi*), the ‘sheath composed of discernment’ [note: understanding or intelligence] (*vijñānamaya kōśa*); இருள் (Ta. *iruḷ*) and *तमः* (Sa. *tamaḥ*) mean darkness, which in this context refers to the will (Sa. *cittam*) and simultaneously to the ‘sheath composed of happiness’ (Sa. *ānandamaya kōśa*), which is called ‘darkness’ because it consists of the dense, dark fog of inclinations or desires to seek happiness in things other than oneself (Sa. *viṣaya-vāsanās*) [4].

The full verse runs as: “Body, mind, life, intellect, and darkness are not I, the one existence or reality (Sa. *ēka sat*) because that [note: the body consisting of these five sheaths] is non-aware (Sa. *jaḍa*) and non-existent (Sa. *asat*).” (James 2022).

Ānandamaya kōśa – as we can see – in this tradition is conceived as “darkness of ignorance or darkness of desire” (James 2022). It can be so if we consider that usually *ānandamaya kōśa* assesses and enables the experience of the absence of presence of joy generated by sense objects and because attachments to feelings that come from sense objects originates in *avidyā*. Nevertheless, living beings cannot well exist without at least a perception of *samtoṣa* (Sa. “satisfaction”) – basic mental comfort. When in this context the *ānandamaya kōśa* is described as “darkness” (Ta. *iruḷ*; Sa. *tamaḥ*), we have to consider what is asserted by Michael James, that it is necessary to distinguish this darkness from the primal darkness of *avidyā*, which is the darkness of false perception of the self, which is the dark-

ness is *ahamkāra* itself, not just one of the five sheaths. That is, the very nature of *ahamkāra* is *avidyā* or false perception of the self, because when in unity with *ahamkāra* one is always aware of oneself as “I am this body” and consequently one is aware of the seeming existence of other things. The reason why the *ānandamaya kōśa* is in this context said to “remain in sleep” is that since those, who have not yet become “self-realized” (Sa. *jñāni*), are unable to understand the full implications of the realization that *ahamkāra* does not in fact exist even when it seems to exist, they want to know why *ahamkāra* rises again from sleep and other states of *manolaya* (Sa. “temporary dissolution of mind”), so saying that the *ānandamaya kōśa* remains in sleep and other such states, and therefore causes ego to rise again in “waking” (Sa. *jāgrat*), or “dream” (Sa. *svapna*), is intended to satisfy the interest of such individuals [5].

In the *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu* (Maharshi 2010, 84–86), it is expressed as: “If the First Person exists, the Second and Third person will also be in existence. But upon one’s investigation into the reality of its nature, the First Person is destroyed, the Second and Third Persons will also cease to be, and Self – nature, shining alone, will verily be revealed as one’s own nature.” Thus, if one “investigates” (Sa. *vichāra*) to its ultimate depth, it will be clear that no such thing has ever actually existed or risen at all, as Mahariṣi implies in verse 17 of *Upadesa Sarah* (quoted in James 2022): “When one investigates what the mind actually is, [note: it will be clear that] there is no mind at all.” That is, however, a realization that comes in the state of *jñāna*. It has to be cleared however, why the concept of will is assigned here to *ānandamaya kōśa*, as according to the upaniṣadic sources, it should pertain more to *vijñānamaya kōśa* and *ahamkāra*.

Ramana Maharishi stated the view, that the *kōśas* are insentient and the *jīva* has to undergo *manonāśa* (Sa. “destruction of mind”) in order to become free of their ruling role and to come to the state of *mukti* (freedom from *avidya*). The state of *manonāśa* is difficult to link with life as *ahamkāra* will be devoid of tools for life (i.e., of the majority of *kōśas*) except for the case that the “Will of the Absolute” (described by Sanskrit terms of *Ānanda*, *parāśakti*, *parāvāk*, *Svātantrya*, *Spanda*, *hṛdaya*; Kṣemarāja 2014, 6–7) emulates the function of *manas* and all the *malas* cease to take effect. This is to happen when *ahamkāra* melts into Being (Timčák 2018, 18, 23).

Michael James (2022) expands on *ānandamaya kōśa* as follows:

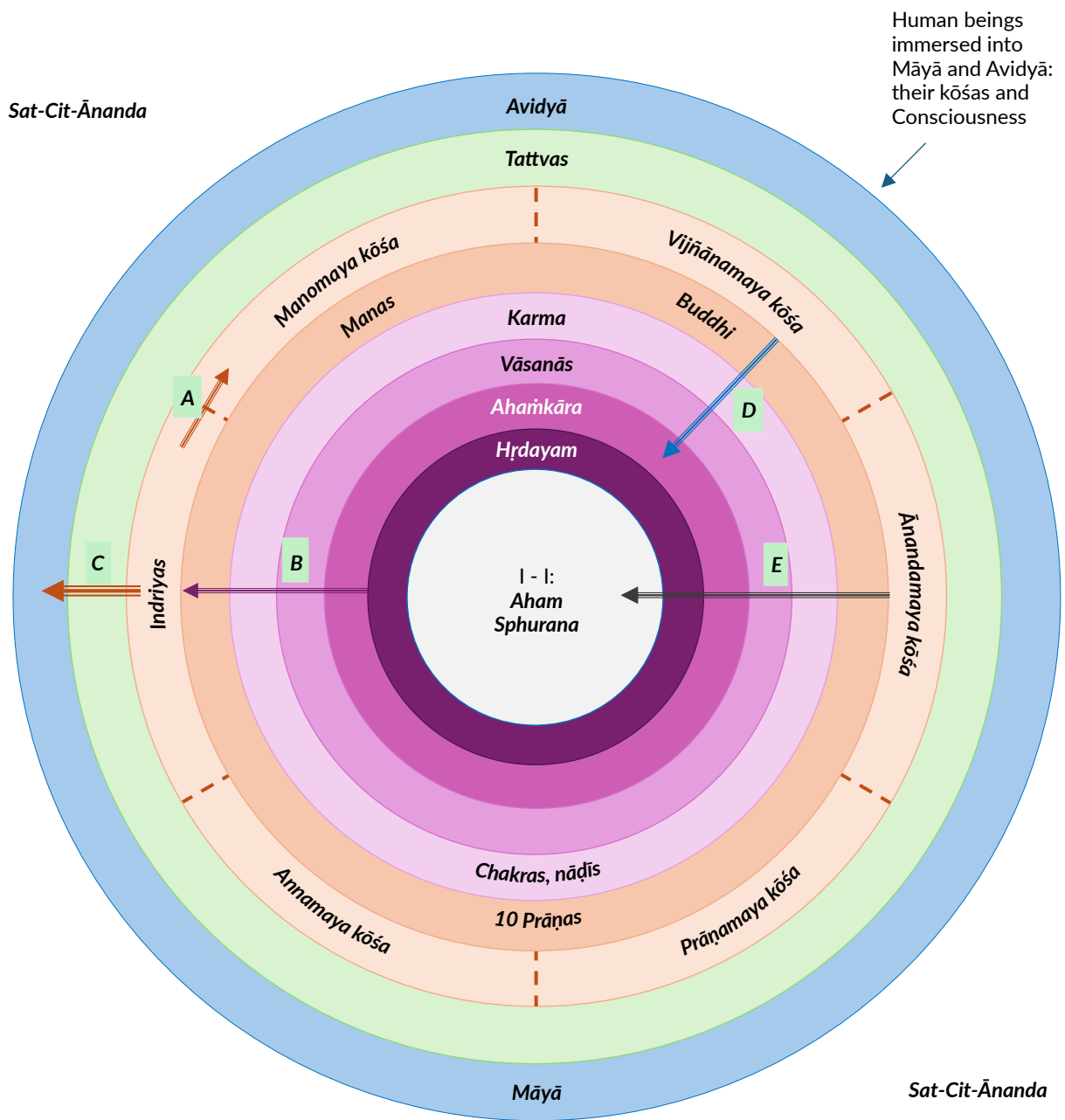
Moreover, the reason why our will is called *ānandamaya kōśa*, the ‘sheath composed of happiness’, is that *vāsanās* alone are what constitute it, and all *vāsanās* are inclinations or desires driven by our fundamental inclination to seek happiness. Therefore, the name *ānandamaya kōśa* implies that it is the sheath composed of *vāsanās*, which are various forms of our fundamental love to be happy. That is, happiness and our love to be happy are inseparable, because they are both our own real nature (*svabhāva*), as Bhagavan Ramana implies in the first sentence of the first paragraph of *Nāṅ Ār?*

So, in this context *ānanda* implies not only happiness but also love for happiness. Though love for happiness is infinite and therefore formless, when we rise as *ahamkāra* it manifests in us in the form of numerous *vāsanās*, each of which is essentially just an inclination or liking to experience happiness.

However, here it can be noted that it seems more related to our everyday experience that the information coming from *ānandamaya kōśa* to *vijñānamaya kōśa* forms the basis on which the *ahamkāra* (influenced by *vāsanās* relevant in a given case) takes a decision/identifies with a proposal for decision as illustrated in Figure 5. Thus, the question to resolve is whether *ānandamaya kōśa* is the storehouse of *vāsanās* or it only processes data coming to it through outer and inner senses from the point of joy-content. The ability of *ānandamaya kōśa* to connect to unconditioned *Ānanda* during dreamless sleep could indicate that the *vāsanās* are stored through *ahamkāra*. After all – as we could see above – the *ahamkāra* contains all the information needed for forming the *kōśas*.

According to the cited upaniṣadic sources, *prāṇa* has its origin in *Brahman*, but as declared also by Ramana Maharishi, *prāṇamaya kōśa* on itself is devoid of life. So, to term it as “life” as used in the translations of Michael James is perhaps not ideal for *prāṇamaya kōśa*. Further to add to *ānandamaya kōśa* the attribute of “will” can also be misleading as on itself it is devoid of life and thus cannot exhibit “will”, which the *ahamkāra* is to exhibit on the basis of data coming from *vijñānamaya kōśa* [6]. Further, the *ānandamaya kōśa* is embedded in the *vijñānamaya kōśa*, but they are non-identical and the *ānandamaya kōśa* provides only information, the quality of which depends also on *vāsanās*. The upaniṣadic sources declare that *ānandamaya kōśa* (as everything) has its identity with *Brahman*, which is a sole source of *Ānanda*, but reflects also joy coming from everyday activities. It also conveys the basic level of “inner comfort” (Sa. *saṃtoṣa*) that is needed for everyday life. It means that even for avoiding depres-

Figure 5.
 Functional Model of the Kōśas in
 Relation to Ahamkāra



Notes

- [1] The word *upaniṣad* can mean “sitting near a teacher”, or according to Shankaracharya, “knowledge of the Self” (Sa. *Ātmavidyā*). Apart from the historical *Upaniṣads* there are also new, de facto *upaniṣads* – treatises on *ātmavidyā* recorded by disciples of *Ātmajñānis* – “Knowers of the Self”, like Muruganar’s works on the teachings of Ramana Maharīṣi. In the text, that translation of the *upaniṣads* was used, which seemed to express most clearly the function of *kōśas*.
- [2] In Vasugupta (2014, 200) *spanda* is defined as the “throb in the motionless Śiva, which brings about the manifestation, maintenance, and withdrawal of the universe”. Thus, it seems to be the very support of breath and *prāṇa* also and gives an explanation why *prāṇa* in unmanifested form is Brahman or “It breathed airless” but working as a driving force of life when manifested.
- [3] This “bliss-stuff” in context with *annamaya kōśa* can perhaps be related to neuropeptides (Burbach 2011, 1–2) formed as a reaction of the brain to a situation proposed by *vijñānamaya kōśa* after *ahaṁkāra* identifies itself with that proposed reaction. Or it can be identified as some of the substances like opioids created in the brain (Lutz and Kieffer 2013, 195–196).
- [4] *Cittam* has many meanings: memory, memory field, mind, intelligence, desire. Here it is given the meaning “will”.
- [5] The term “ego” is replaced in the text by the original term *ahaṁkāra*, which is its original form and is thus a better term for the concept of individual consciousness. The *Kāma-kalā-vilāsa* (Puṇyānanda et al. 1953, 13) defines *ahaṁkāra* as follows: “*Ahaṁkāra*, which excels all and is the massing together of Śiva and Śakti and the fully manifested union of the letters A [note: first letter of the ABC] and Ha [note: the last letter of the Sanskrit ABC], and which holds within itself the whole universe is Cit.” The term *ego* has a different general connotation than the *ahaṁkāra*.
- [6] To give a well-established concept a new name without a radical need may create misunderstanding that may hinder the comprehension of a given term.
- [7] Talks with Sri Ramana Maharīṣi (2006, 392): “Sri Bhagavan also added: Were the *vāsanās* in the brain instead of in the Heart they must be extinguished if the head is cut off so that reincarnations will be at an end. But it is not so. The self [note: *ahaṁkāra*] obviously safeguards the *vāsanās* in its closest proximity, i.e., within itself in the Heart [note: *Hridayam*], just as a miser keeps his most valued possessions (treasure) with himself and never out of contact. Hence the place where the *vāsanās* are, is the self, i.e., the Heart, and not the brain (which is only the theatre for the play of the *vāsanās* from the greenhouse of the Heart.”
- [8] For questions relating the perception and working models of *ahaṁkāra*, Wilber (1984) gives a very interesting overview, together with modes of perceptual risks in stages of inner development.

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