

पञ्चमय

Pañca Maya - The five aspects of Being Human...

One way it may be helpful to reflect on the relationship between our lives and our practice is through the model of the Pañca Maya or the five aspects of being human. In this instance through reflecting on the notion that influencing the subtler aspects of the Pañca Maya can impact more powerfully on the gross aspect, whereas influencing the gross aspects of the Pañca Maya may well impact less powerfully on the subtler aspects.

"What does reflecting on our relationship with Annamaya reveal?"

For example what happens at the level of the physical body may not impact that strongly on the increasingly subtler aspects of the Pañca Maya such as our energy processes, social conditionings, latent impressions and emotional drives.

"Freedom of movement within the Annamaya does not presume freedom of movement within the Prāṇamaya."

Whereas what happens at the subtler levels of being, such as the conscious and unconscious stimuli of our external surroundings and internal processes on the latent impressions and emotional drives, can impact very strongly on how our body functions and responds.

"What does reflecting on our relationship with Prāṇamaya reveal?"

For example when looking at our practice and what we are 'doing' at the Annamaya or the gross physical aspect, though immediately satisfying to that aspect of our being, may not impact as powerfully on the increasingly subtler aspects of the Pañca Maya such as the Prāṇamaya or energy processes, Manomaya or social conditionings, Vijñānamaya or latent impressions and Ānandamaya or emotional drives.

*"What does reflecting on our relationship with Manomaya reveal?
In other words what relationship do we have
with our Saṃskāra or habitual patterns?"*

The consideration for me is the level or aspect of being we prioritise in the cultivation of a developmental depth to our practice, rather than an experiential breadth. Perhaps from this notion, it might be prudent to choose to reflect more on how we might cultivate our practice with an increasing focus on how we can prioritise the subtler aspects of the Pañca Maya more directly through our practice.

*"In observation, try to go from
Annamaya to the deeper levels."
- TKV Desikachar*

The potential here is that the outcome of such priorities will both impact on the subtler potentials of being, as well as permeating through to the increasingly grosser aspects of our being.

*"Our continued effort with the breath in Āsana
is that which helps to enliven our various levels of interaction
with our inner and outer worlds as expressed through the Pañca Maya."
– Paul Harvey on Yoga Sūtra Chapter Two verse 47*

Thus the model of the Pañca Maya offers compass points to guide us in our journey from the gross to the subtle and both warning us of and enabling us to transcend the illusions that can be re-enforced through the temptational seeds that arise within the fruits of working with the Body or Annamaya.

*"Āsana works from the outside inwards.
Prāṇāyāma works from the inside outwards."*

However, in order to realise these developmental possibilities regarding the subtler aspects of our being, we may have to forgo some of the physical effects and ambitions that we have become used to and even expect. Such is the dilemma of choosing to work from the inside out, rather than the more usual social expectation, amidst this popularised perception of Yoga being synonymous with Āsana, of the outside in.