

THE LEVELS OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS AND CREATIVE FUNCTIONING: INSIGHTS FROM THE THEORY OF *PANCHA KOSHA* (FIVE SHEATHS OF CONSCIOUSNESS)

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ABSTRACT: Various cosmological positions have shaped beliefs about the character of creativity. From the Indian tradition, have emerged multi-level cosmological models that provide structural frameworks to understand the relationship between consciousness and creativity. Among them is *pancha kosha* (from Sanskrit *-pancha* means five, *kosha* sheath) encompassing five bodies (*koshas*) of consciousness: *Annamaya* (food body/physical body), *Pranamaya* (vital sheath/prana/life force), *Manomaya* (the emotional body/mind), *Vijnanamaya* (cognition/ intellect/wisdom), and *Anandamaya* (bliss), considered the “most useful springboard for a modern scientific understanding of cosmology and evolution” (Goswami, 2000, p. 114). This article explains the theory and the attributes of various sheaths; draws implications related to human creativity’s nature and emergence; examines the role of “phenomenal awareness” (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016, p. 113), blissfulness (*ananda*), “extension of borders” and the “extension of persona” (Mahapatra, 2009, p. 72) in the manifestation of creativity; documents the role of such a state of consciousness in some exceptionally creative individuals’ lives, and discusses implications for broader understanding of experiential sources of creativity and consciousness.

KEYWORDS: Cosmology, *pancha kosha* theory, levels of consciousness, transpersonal creativity, bliss (*ananda*), illumined perception, transcendence, concentration and commitment

Every traditional human society known to anthropology has a cosmology (Abrams & Primack, 2001), and some cosmologies conceived the human being as a part of a “great chain” or a “great nest of being” of interpenetrating layers—material, mental and spiritual in nature, and as the nexus or crossing point between the world of matter and the world of Spirit, being comprised of both (Smith, 1958, 1992). Such cosmologies have, by and large, determined their theory of poetic, artistic creativity and critical conceptualizations (Deutsch, 1978; Kak, 2015; Lombardo, 2011; Ren, 1998). The “primordial progression” (Eliade cited in Yardley, 2004) in cosmological stories is apparent in the episodic unfolding of the theory of creativity as well. Attempts have been made to make explicit the different cosmological positions that are implicitly evident within the creativity field (Deutsch, 1982; Mason, 1988; Peile & Acton, 1994).

From the Indian tradition emerged the multi-level cosmological models relating to questions of philosophy and metascience: the *pancha-kosha* (derived from the Sanskrit: *pancha* (five) and *kosha* (sheath), or five-sheath model of the cosmos, and the three-bodies model, of physical, astral, and causal body, which provide a structural framework for explaining the relationship between consciousness and

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creativity. Descriptions relating to multilevel cosmological models found in Judeo-Christian, Muslim and Buddhist traditions are documented in Wilber (1993) and Roeser (2005).

In Indian thought, one version of the Great Nest of Being is found in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (Swami Gambhirananda, 1958; Swami Shivananda, 1983; Swami & Yeats, 1988/1937), which includes the *pancha kosha* theory of “cosmic hierarchy” (Goertzel, 2006, p. 30) based on five bodies (*koshas* or sheaths) of consciousness and considered “to be a most useful springboard for a modern scientific understanding of cosmology and evolution” (Goswami, 2000, p. 114). With this perspective, this paper explains the *pancha kosha* theory of consciousness and draws implications of such a theory in relation to the nature and emergence of human creativity. Additionally, it examines the role of “contemplative bliss” (Ray, 1974, p. 69), superior awareness, and the extension of persona as conceived in *kosha* theory in the manifestation of creativity in the lives of some “unambiguous exemplars of creativity” (as cited in Gardner, 1988, p. 15) in various fields.

Pancha Kosha Theory: The Levels of Human Functioning

Most wisdom traditions, throughout human history, both in the East and the West, conceptualized the human being as a multi-tiered entity ascending from the lowest material plane to the highest plane of ultimate being. Such traditions provide a structural framework for existence of non-material ‘subtle’ bodies connected with our internal experiences—feeling, meaning, and values—in addition to the material body (Goertzel, 1997; Goswami, 2006; Smith, 1992). These metaphysical planes of reality as well as hierarchical sheaths, or bodies, of the unconditional Self that map experiential domains, or states of consciousness are described, as Combs (1993) suggests, with remarkable clarity in Indian Vedantic philosophy, considered as “fairly representative of world’s spiritual “wisdom” traditions” (Goertzel, 1997, p. 354). As such, it has demonstrated broad and enduring understanding of the full range of human experience and states of consciousness leading to higher development and transcendental identity.

Conceptualization of these levels of consciousness resulting from the introspective attempts by many generations of self-aware individuals, as Goertzel (1977) feels, does provide valuable information that may serve to guide scientific theory-construction. Some (Mukhopadhyay, 2010, p. 507) are of the position that “the pentaune [an indivisible unit having five divisions] model of nature-consciousness” has many similarities with the description of the human body in terms of *pancha kosha* described in *Taittiriya Upanishad* (Radhakrishnan, 1953).

The Indian mystical philosophies do not consider *Purusha* as just body, *sarira*. They consider it *Atman* (spirit). As such, these philosophies are concerned not only with the manifest reality we see about us, but also the Unmanifest Transcendent One. In the spectrum of goals in life, the highest is the practical attainment of a state of this universal, transcendent and transpersonal existence. According to the *Upanishads*, as Hiriyanna (2005, p. 67) noted, “the *jiva* is not in reality the limited entity it generally takes itself to be” but is essentially capable of self-transcendence.

Accordingly, the basic constitution of man is thought to have an enormous range—from the physical through to the all-powerful *Atman*, which is the same as the *Brahman* or the Absolute Reality. Man is ultimately linked with the *Atman*; there exists a divine element in him. The aim of the soul (*Atman*) conceived as the complement of the human body, is to approach and unite with the *Brahman*, to enable itself to participate in the eternal bliss of *anandam*, which comes from the realization of the *Brahman* (Ray, 1974, p. 69).

Ananda, a supreme Bliss eternal, far other and higher in its character than the highest human joy or pleasure is the essential and original nature of the spirit. In *Ananda* our spirit will find its true self, in *Ananda* its essential consciousness, in *Ananda* the absolute power of its existence. The embodied soul's entry into this highest absolute, unlimited, unconditional bliss of the spirit is the infinite liberation and the infinite perfection. (Sri Aurobindo cited in Pandit, 1998, p. 146)

It is in the early *Upanishads* that we find one of the first expressions of the human being as a multi-dimensional, energetic phenomenon. The *Taittiriya Upanishad*, one of the older, “primary” *Upanishads*, “and the most popular of all other smaller *Upanishads*” (Swami Sharvananda, 1921, p. 1), is the most eclectic and synthetic of all the early *Upanishads* and proposes conception of Brahman or *Atman* as a pure activity of thought, of thinking upon nothing but on one's own self; it is thus that one enjoys eternal bliss or *anandam*. The question as to how to achieve such a state is dealt with in what is known as the doctrine of *koshas* in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (Hiriyanna, 2005). The *Taittiriya Upanishad* (Swami Gambhirananda, 1958, pp. 311-318) explains the sequence of creation from ether to the human being followed by the elucidation of a theory as to how to unfold a system view of life and the world to oneself and then to others. From the micro to the macro, from self to the universe, there are five layers of our existence that have been progressively unveiled in this *Upanishad*. These layers have been depicted in the form of spherical sheaths or *koshas*, through which the consciousness of the learner must evolve to reach the all-encompassing experience of fullness of the self and the world. Beyond and obscured by these layers, and yet forming their very essence, is the Self (*Atman* or *Purusa*). These *koshas* surround the central, formless, imperceptible, unknowable, illumined spiritual Self, or *Atman* (Deutsch, 1969; Deutsch in Metzner, 1989, p.332), leading to a progressive resolution of each into a subtler and more pervasive substratum until ultimately all are resolved into pure awareness (see Bhawuk, 2008 for a synthesis of *pancha kosha* and physical, social, and metaphysical self). It also suggests that an appropriately lived life at each level is a preparation for transcending it. It is not possible to jump from the lowest to the highest level without adequate preparation. To transcend, the Buddhists advise the aspirant to have a foundation on which to build, a clear view of the path and the goal, and finally to practice, practice and practice.

The phenomenon of transcendence is real yet immensely challenging. If it were not so, the question of relationship to the transcendental would not have intrigued humans since paleolithic times. Such questions, as Nobel laureate Prigogine (1996, p. 42) said, were “not posed in vain, they have led to what we consider the most striking manifestations of human creativity in all domains.”

It is believed that the true Self, the *Atman*, as enclosed within five sheaths or *koshas* or levels of consciousness is instrumental in providing a structural framework for delineating the relationship between consciousness, mind, life force and body. These sheaths or layers likened to an onion (Wilber, 1993) or *sariras* (body or bodies) can be considered as dimensions of awareness having mass, structure, laws, and volume (Vatsyayan, 2001) with each layer having its own particular natural time scale or rhythm. As they are penetrated, by reflecting inwardly, we go down towards the depth of consciousness. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* Ch. I.ii-3 (Swami Shivananda, 1983) also gives an in-depth description of the process of moving inward through each of the sheaths or apparent realities, until the eternal consciousness at the most subtle layer is experienced.

Each *kosha* is associated with a certain type of mental process, a certain kind of inner experience. “Each level,” as Nuernberger (1994, pp. 102-103) noted:

is seen as a layer of functioning imposed over the core of individual Consciousness (*Purusa*, or soul). It is as if the different levels of the persona are colored filters of crystal overlying the light of Consciousness. The persona (mind, life force, body) is viewed as a hierarchical, interpenetrating organization, formed of increasingly subtle forms of energy and function as we move towards the core of identity of individual Consciousness (*Purusa*). Each level, more subtle and more powerful than the preceding one, contributes various practical and powerful resources to the persona.

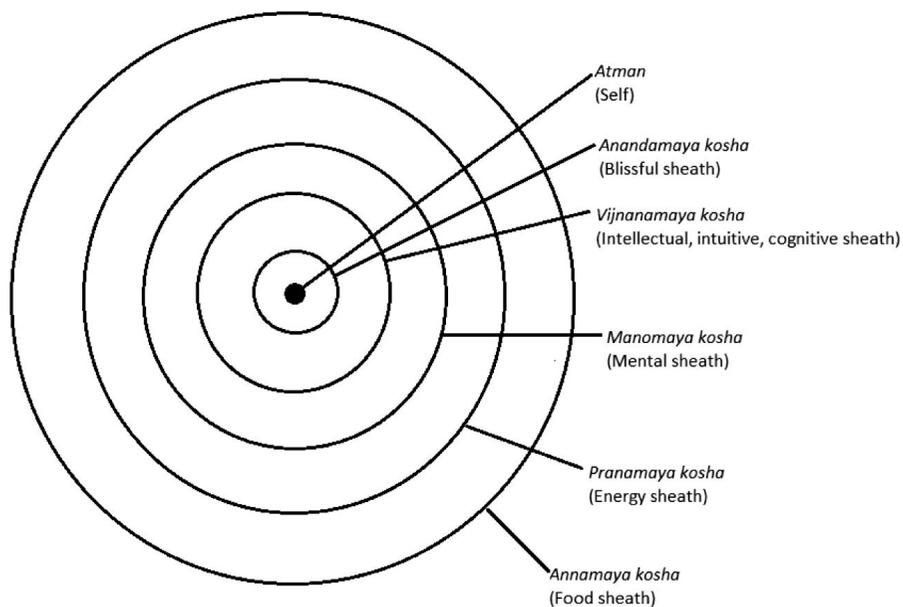
Life evolves when we progress from the outermost sheath of the physical body (*sthulasarira*) to the core, the *Anandamaya* core and the body (*sarira*) viewed from the lowest psychical centers to the highest psychical centers. Moving toward “higher levels of existence” (Dalal & Misra, 2010, p. 134) and realizing the possibilities of achieving “creative transcendence” (Funk, 2000, p. 67) come about as the human mind moves towards becoming or recognizing its being, as ultimate reality leading to that great metaphorical hymn, or poetry of the *Katha Upanishad* (cited in Vatsyayan, 2001, p. 185):

“Higher than the sense are the objects of sense,
Higher than the objects of sense is the mind (*manas*)
And higher than the mind is the intellect (*buddhi*)
Higher than the intellect is the Great Self (*ātman*).”

In Vedic literature, one finds an emphatic and unambiguous assertion that ‘infinity alone can satisfy man’ (*Bhuma vai sukham nalpe sukhamasti*), but it is important to realize that achieving infinity is possible only when each *kosha*, which represents one aspect of our existence or consciousness, is potentially open and accessible to the individual and not blocked.

Dimensions of Awareness and Levels of Existence

The theory of *koshas* recognizes the multilayered existence (*pancha koshas*) of human beings and a gradation of the various functions of the soul in the form of the existence of stages from lower to higher in the evolution of life, an evolution with which there is not only lower-higher continuity, but in which higher does not



Atman (Self) is a level of consciousness far beyond the mental plane of ego-consciousness

Figure 1. The Pancha Kosha: Levels of Consciousness

Adapted, with permission, all rights reserved, from Rama, S., Ballentine, R., & Ajaya, S. (1976). *Yoga and psychotherapy: The evolution of consciousness*. Honesdale, PA: Himalayan International Institute of Science and Philosophy of USA, p. 78.

mitigate the lower (Patyaiying, 2005). The five sheaths or *koshas* envelop one another with the *Atman*, their true Self, at the center. It suggests there is a progressive resolution of each into a subtler and more pervasive substratum until ultimately all are resolved into pure awareness. These *koshas* arranged in an unbroken, continuous series, being manifestation of the same reality, are illustrated in *Figure 1*, above (Adapted from Rama, Ballentine, & Ajaya, 1976, p. 78).

The following sections describe the attributes of these sheaths and how they manifest in the physiological as well as the psychological level of a human being.

Annamaya Kosha

The outermost layer, the *Annamaya kosha*, the food sheath or ‘food body,’ is a representation of the gross physical body, considered as primitive and the least powerful part of the persona. This sheath is regarded as the medium of enjoyment for gross objects through the physical senses. All living beings in this world are born from food and remain alive by the consumption of food. It is the external body, made of matter, like other objects seen outside by our gross senses. Here, matter is called ‘food’, thus conceiving it organically. This sheath is concerned with our physical existence: birth, growth, change, death and decay are its qualities.

Swami Sharvananda (1921) has paraphrased the verse in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* as follows:

All beings, whatever exist on earth, are born of food. And again, by food they are sustained and unto it again they go back at the end. So, verily food is the eldest of all creatures; and therefore it is called the medicament of all. Those who regard food as Brahman verily attain all food. Food is indeed the eldest of all creatures. Therefore it is called the medicament of all. From food all beings are born; having born, by food they grow. It is called food because it is fed upon, or it feeds upon, creatures. (p. 60)

The identification of consciousness with the body is so natural and complete that it seems almost impossible to challenge it. Sri Aurobindo (cited in Goertzel, 1997) associates this *kosha* with the physical mind or sense-mind. Two power functions are found in this sheath—balance/health and information. The body is used as a valuable source of information and as a vehicle for action. Since body provides us an enormous amount of data about the world and about our own inner knowledge states, we begin our journey with the physical dimension and then travel inward through increasingly more subtle levels of energy that make up the life force and mind. The body is used as a tool to enhance inner awareness and expand direct knowledge and self-control. Through *Hatha Yoga* and meditative postures, the body becomes a sensitive instrument and leads to a greater awareness of the levels and functions of the mind (Nuernberger, 1994) making one realize the significant dimension of pure consciousness, the spiritual-Self.

Pranamaya Kosha

The second covering of the Self is the *pranamaya kosha* or vital sheath consisting of the five *pranas* or vital energies and the five *karma indriyas* or organs of action. This level of being is associated with the breath, the *prana*, and the fundamental life force. It is also associated with the feelings, the emotions. This is a template of concentrated life force (*prana*). *Prana*, in its universal aspect, underlies all physical and mental processes. It stands specifically for the field of energy that penetrates and surrounds the physical body and has variously been styled ‘astral body,’ ‘etheric double,’ and ‘plasma body.’ It is the medium of exchange in the whole psychophysiological system.

Prana is the life force of the persona responsible for the various physiological functions within the body, and it plays a critical role as the mediating link between body and mind. In the conscious state one experiences *prana*, when it is manifested in the form of the breath (Feuerstein, 2001). Here, energy is also described as *prana*, which means ‘living breath.’ The *Upanishads* prescribe various meditations on *prana* to raise consciousness from the body to a higher level of the life force. Those who can identify with this powerhouse of energy attain great control over the body; they spontaneously experience a new feeling of freedom, strength, and joy. Consciousness on the level of the *Pranamaya kosha* is more subtle and powerful than that of the first covering, the *Annamaya kosha*.

Manomaya Kosha

Next is the level of living energy, the mental sheath, the *Manomaya kosha* or the 'covering of mind', the emotional body or what Vedanta calls the mind. This level of mental activity is commonly captured in the Sanskrit term *manas* (from the verbal root *man*, meaning "to think"). The *manas* is the sensory-motor mind, which thrives on the material gathered from the senses of hearing, touch, sight, taste, and smell. This sheath deals with the emotional, mental or perceptual part of the body, which comprises not just the mind, but also the organs within the body. Its functions relate to perceptual organization. It is the level that receives impulses from the external world through the senses, organizes the sensory data, processes thoughts, emotions, and meaningful patterns, influences the *Prana kosha*, and channels the ways one thinks. The *Manomaya kosha* is where thinking and doubting occurs. This is the conceiving intellect, made up of thoughts that interpret the patterns of activity that the senses perceive. Thus interpreted, these patterns are conceived as meaningful information, about an intelligible world. This *kosha* is where all thoughts originate: the doubts, the anger, the lust, the exhilaration, the depression and the delusion. This *kosha* represents inventive, critical thought: the making of novel connections, the combination of ideas. This *kosha* is also concerned with what has come to be called as "everyday creativity" (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2007; Richards, 2007), which tends to be linear, logical, often time consuming. However, all creative individuals spend much of their time here. Representing the sensory mind, its function is also related to language.

The above three sheaths are often grouped together and collectively called the mind. The mental sheath is concerned with the "lower" mental functions, which processes the input from the five senses to form perceptions out of the raw data provided by the sense organs.

Vijnanamaya Kosha

Identified with "higher" mental functions, often expressed in the term *buddhi* that consists of the intellect (thoughts), the ego (sense of individuality), and the *chitta* (informational memory), *Vijnanamaya kosha*, represents not only 'cognition' but also 'intellect' and 'wisdom.' *Vijnana* means "certain knowledge"; it includes the three mental activities of feeling, willing, and knowing. It also represents the mind, skill and all the intelligence behind human work. This sheath represents the intelligence or the consciousness that is the discriminative part of the mind underneath the processing, thinking aspect of mind. It knows, decides, judges, and discriminates. This is the organ of philosophical thought and metaphysical intuition. It is also the seat of the human will, by which one orients life toward either unreflective bodily experience or enhanced awareness and spiritual realization (Feuerstein, Kak, & Frawley, 1995). The *Manomaya* and *Vijnanamaya* sheaths together constitute what is called the mind. First there is *Manomaya* thought, which is on a level above mere physical or emotional reaction, but is still based on complex manipulations of ideas derived from the physical world. *Manomaya kosha* is the gross level of mind comprising emotions, thoughts, and different types of feelings and has no capacity to discriminate between right and

wrong deeds according to situations. The *Vijnanamaya kosha* governs the gross mind to take appropriate decisions with knowledge that has been accrued through various means. It is based on taking intuitions from the upper realms and using them to guide one's feelings and actions. In the first, the reflexes are in control; in the second, one's higher intuitions are in control.

Anandamaya Kosha

Bliss is not a static feeling but rather dynamic and unlimited, flowing uninterrupted out of Consciousness. (Phil Nuernberger, 2013, p. 81)

Anandamaya kosha, the blissful sheath, is the most interior of the *kosha*, the first of the *koshas* surrounding the *Atman*, the eternal center of consciousness. When one transcends all the previous layers, one is bliss with life. Bliss is the highest dimension of our existence. It is a state of being in which one can detach oneself from the emotions and live in perfect health of body and mind. This is the most harmonious state of mind possible, associated with states of ecstasy and rapture. Many *Yoga* devotees, many *Yoga* masters and the Buddha and other spiritual masters lived this existence in a state of bliss and acquired much knowledge through the power of meditation and dis-identification with the external self. In some respects, it is akin to the state of flow, which Csikszentmihalyi (2008) said is experienced when we are in a state of deep, concentrated enjoyment, when we are absorbed in an activity that leaves us in a state of effortless and unself-conscious buoyancy and control. This is a state characterized by positive feeling, which is not dependent on any object or events of external reality. Thus, the “experience of ananda, bliss, is a qualitatively different sense of positive state and well being from that is associated with other sheaths, *koshas*” (Salagame, 2003, p. 77).

Also called the Causal layer and considered as the deepest and most subtle in human personality, this layer forms the subtlest of sheaths (Combs, 1993). It is the co-coordinating layer of personality, with the word *ananda* or ‘happiness’ being used in the sense of ‘harmony’, ‘integration’, and complete satisfaction or fulfillment, the experience one has when completely free from any kind of stress or disharmony, conflicts or compulsions, needs, drives, or anxieties. As Sri Aurobindo (cited in Pandit, 1998, p. 146) puts it: “*Ananda*, a supreme Bliss eternal, far other and higher in its character than the highest human joy or pleasure is the essential and original nature of the spirit.” *Ananda* is the root of all human life. This *kosha* is not bound by either time or space. This is the body one enters whenever a desire is fulfilled and also in the thought-free state characteristic of *nirvikalpa samadhi* and, more familiarly, deep sleep. When used by Buddhists and the Vedic sages who preceded them, bliss (*Ananda*) is the vibrancy of creation, the underlying dynamism that enters the world as vitality, desire, ecstasy, and joy (Chopra, 2014).

Anandamaya kosha can be described as the transcendental body, and the experience of this state is sometimes taken as the highest ascent of mystical experience, an experience of total transcendence or the blissful body where Saraswati (as cited by Abraham, 2006, p. 9) noted, “only the fundamental vibration of the unconscious system remains,” which in turn consists of the casual body of the Brahma. “The

self formed of bliss (*ananda maya*) is manifested in the intellect. The different forms of bliss such as joy, enjoyment, and so on are the manifestations of the supreme, undifferentiated bliss which is Brahman” (Goswami & Goswami, 1997, p. 43). Being the center of tranquility, this sheath is the source of genuine self-confidence and the balanced mind. The balanced mind, the deepest, the most subtle dimension of the mind, provides the inner strength one needs to face life without disturbance, with unshakable self-confidence and fearlessness, a happy state with larger accommodative mental space within the individual (Menon, 1998). At this level, the revealing quality (*sattva*) dominates with only the very slightest coloration from the other qualities. The principle that is responsible for brightness, illumination, transparency is called *sattva*. The greater the transparency of the mental faculties, i.e., *sattva*, the greater is the experience of spontaneous *ananda*. *Ananda* is the natural innate state of the conscious being and can remain elusive unless one follows righteous actions with the right attitudes as dictated by conscience and discriminative faculty.

It is *Anandamaya kosha* that dissolves the veil of the mind leading to ecstasy, bliss and what Maslow calls “integrated creativity” from which “comes the great work of art, or philosophy or science” (Maslow, 1968, p. 142). These qualities correspond to the higher ranks in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, low levels of narcissism, and a high degree of personal integration. It is when in *Anandamaya* state that one connects to consciousness resulting in transcendental awareness (Menon, 2008), transcending the ordinary limits of the physical world and experiencing spiritual states of consciousness, the sacralization of everyday life, utilization of spiritual resources for problem solving, and capacity for virtue (Raina, 2013).

***Koshas* (Levels of Being) Interweave and Interpenetrate**

These levels of consciousness have their own unique functions but they form one integrated whole and are mutually interrelated. They interweave and interpenetrate suggesting that “while each dimension has unique functions, one cannot be separated from the other. Each is a necessary part of being human. We always function as a whole person, not as individual, mechanical pieces” (Nuernberger, 2003, p. 25). Though there is a gradation of the various functions of the soul, any action one takes involves all dimensions of the personality—physical, mental and spiritual.

An understanding of the theory of consciousness based on these *koshas* may provide clues to the comprehension of one’s innermost and transcendental ego and directions for achieving transforming insights, sense of well-being, competence and transcendence. It is then that one can think of “close collaboration between the imminent and transcendental spheres of our existence” (Zichichi, 1999, p. 149). Additionally, an understanding of the notion of levels of functioning or sheaths may provide a useful and important framework within which one can compare and contrast such diverse subjects as *Yoga*, biofeedback, sleep research, medicine and psychotherapy. This multi-leveled conceptualization comfortably accommodates these (Rama, Ballentine, & Ajaya, 1976).

Experience and understanding of the *koshas* helps us know the depth of the human mind and, ultimately, realize *dhyana*, or meditation, bliss and happiness (Haas, 2012). As such, this *Upanishadic* model has exercised a great influence over much psychological thought in India (Feuerstein et al., 1995). Attempts have been made to study happiness, quality of life and well-being in the context of *kosha* theory (Kiran Kumar, 2004, 2011; Salagame, 2003, 2006; Sharma & Patra, 2014). Cottingham (2015) synthesized the body of evidence that addresses the core issues of psychology with spiritual understanding based in Vedanta. The model developed from the findings, claims the author, shows potential to enable psychologists and psychotherapists to develop new approaches to many of the mental/emotional issues that affect modern human beings. In short, it has the potential to guide people towards happiness. In addition, studies have explored the role *kosha* theory plays in explaining more inclusive and non-body centered view of health. It has been noted that this theory has relevance in complementary and alternative medicine (Kaundinya & Kaundinya, 2013). Bhawuk (2011) has discussed the concept of self in the *Upanishads* and the way this model of the self is used by the practitioners of Ayurveda.

It has been demonstrated that the study of *pancha kosha* has relevance in *Yoga* therapy (Mohan & Mohan, 2004), in developing models for a holistic approach to cancer research (Amritanshuram, Nagendra, Shastry, Raghuram, & Nagarathna, 2013) and addressing psychosomatic illness (Nagendra, 2010). There is also literature available that has drawn parallels between Maslow's theory of needs and studying personality theories in the context of *pancha kosha* (Kumar & Dev, 2004). A personality tool based on this theory has been developed (Manickam, 2005).

Studies are also available relating to organizational development and management in the context of *kosha* theory. It has been noted that the *pancha kosha* model has much in common with the conventional management hierarchy (Robbins, 2001; Srivathsan, 2004). Pardasani, Sharma, and Bindlish (2014) have presented an integrated framework based on various doctrines including *pancha kosha* that can help in facilitating workplace spirituality. Mukherjee (2011) has explored some of the pertinent leadership lessons embedded in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* especially in the context of the content and methodology of imparting knowledge to people within organizations. Having developed the *kosha* model of stress management, Sharma (2005) noted that the "*kosha* model is the best approach for understanding the human energy networks and to go deeper in human psychology to achieve harmony and balance" (p. 105). Ashok and Thimmappa (2006) examined various theoretical constructs including *kosha* theory as related to adult learning in the workplace and organization development.

It is important to realize that the various frameworks developed by the early and later Indic authorities all stand in the service of practical spirituality and transcendentalism, which remain the very essence of Indian consciousness:

According to India's philosophies any kind of knowledge that is short of the total comprehension of one's innermost and transcendental ego would amount to ignorance or *avidya*. From ignorance to knowledge or wisdom (*jnana*, *prajna*),

the way is very arduous; but it is only by following this way that the bound existence can be snapped and freedom realized. (Sinari, 1970, p. 29)

Parting the Veil of Mind: Towards *Ananda* & Creativity

Life is more than survival and the environment to which it adapts, itself evolves and adapts. To grasp this co-evolution in a non-dualistic perspective require[s] the development of a paradigm capable of dealing with self-transcendence, the reaching out beyond the boundaries of one's own existence, the joy of creation. (Erich Jantsch, 1980, p. xiii)

Inner knowing experienced by the process of extension of borders, unlocking and extending different levels of consciousness leads to a state of *ananda*. Such an unlocking and extension is emphasized by Rao and Paranjpe (2016) who wrote, "When the mind connects with the external world through the gateway of external senses, we have phenomenal awareness. With its connection to consciousness, mind enables one to have transcendental realization" (p. 113). Going through such a process makes a person realize, as Sisk and Torrance (2001) suggest, the significance of inner essence, which is the essence of consciousness, and the way it forms the essence of all creativity. Inner processes or "inner selves" are so vital that the distinguished writer Anantha Murthy (cited in Prasanna, 1996, p. 28) disclosed that all creativity is the capacity to listen to one's self or having a communion with one's inner self. The *Chandogya Upanishad* speaks of the *antarhrdaya akasa* (space in the heart), which is the totality of the ideal space at the core of our being, where only the full content of life can be experienced.

In a state of *ananda* one opens the door to intimacy with one's own inner being or ideal space, permitting a communion with one's inner self. It is this inner being that builds and illuminates innate capacities of consciousness that are prevalent in creative functioning and the state of inspired being. In this context, Sudarshan (cited in Raina, 2013), "one of the leading theoretical particle physicists of United States" (Chakrabarti, 2014, p.120), asserted:

The illumined perception carries joy with it: this is not a matter to be debated but experienced. It is the great discovery of our tradition that joy, *ananda* is not brought about by events and circumstances, but is in the nature of reality. When the superimpositions are removed, the misperceptions disappear and the true nature shines forth. . . joy is the nature of our existence. (Raina, 2013, p. 375)

In such a state of awareness, our perceptions become finer, more complete, and profoundly creative, and the world reveals more features. In all manifestations of creativity, the cause is the *ananda*, the creation is *ananda*, and the resultant bliss is also *ananda* (Sharma, 2007). This is an ideal state of being that makes creativity the ever urging drive that pushes reality forward (Prigogine, 1993) and an abiding source of happiness that the legendary neurologist Ramón y Cajal (in Craigie & Gibson, 1968, p. 191) compared to the joy of scientific discovery—to that of bringing forth a new life: "Such supreme joy and satisfaction makes all other

pleasures appear as pale sensations and compensates the scientist for the hard, constant, analytical work, like childbirth labor involved in achieving a new truth.” Genuine scientific discovery fills one with joy, loss of ego-sense, happiness, and awe, fulfilled with utter humility rather than pride.

Anandamaya is the self that discovers or rather realizes itself in ecstasy, in a consciousness charged with delight. It is therefore that beauty and harmony of the world become the perennial source of happiness and freedom and draw out of the human being the deepest of cognitive and moral impulses. It is, therefore, that Nobel laureate Tagore (as cited in Das, 1996, p. 250) wrote in one of his letters, “I know that I am eternal, that I am ananda-rupam (*Joy-Form*),” which caused him to realize that life was celebratory, the “baptism of bliss” (*ananda yog*). His overall purpose in undertaking creative enterprises emerged from his concern for the celebration of spirit and infinite because the “desire we have to keep our uniqueness intact is really the desire of the universe acting in us. It is our joy of the infinite in us that gives us our joy in ourselves” (Tagore, 1988, p. 58). Further, Tagore (1988, pp. 30-31) wrote, “The joy, which is without form, must create, must translate itself into forms.” Tagore’s poetry was born out of his wonder (*vismaya*) and joy of existence.

When in *Anandamaya kosha*, one does not remain preoccupied with the secondary processes that distract us from our quantum self, thereby making it difficult to experience the quantum level of our operation. Instead, one experiences altered states that highlight parallels between ancient mystical religious beliefs and science. The physicist, Fritjof Capra (1991, p. 11), whose previous experience was limited to mathematical theories and diagrams, tells of his own awakening that took place one summer day at the ocean in a state of *ananda* and led to a re-visioning of prior beliefs:

I ‘saw’ cascades of energy coming down from outer space...I ‘saw’ the atoms of elements and those of my body participating in the cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I ‘heard’ its sound, and at that moment I *knew* that this was the Dance of Shiva, the Lord of Dancers worshipped by the Hindus.

The core element of such a vision is liberation from an ego-based identification, resulting in a spiritual epiphany that has a transformative effect. In the act of being creative, one nurtures oneself by receiving guidance from the higher consciousness that lies within and having access to the greater mind field, which means access to unlimited insight and creativity. In that creative state, the mind is freed from boundaries transcending itself, and identifies with pure, unbounded consciousness; it is absolutely free. Thus, one sees that pure consciousness, transcendental consciousness, is the state of creative freedom. The external universe is no longer external, the mental no longer internal, but everything is seen as an undivided whole (Sudarshan, 1996). Such witnessing awareness is ever-present, but people are conscious of it only at times; these are the joyous moments of creativity.

From Ego-self to the Transcendental Self: Towards Emergence of Creativity

The bliss body is described as an experience of total transcendence (Saraswati, 1998). It is a state experienced when there is a shift of personal identity from ego-self to the transcendental spiritual-Self resulting from inner awareness and growth.

It is a Self characterized by integrated awareness, suggesting a path of the reduction of entropy of the mind with the restoration of the unfragmented state and a hunger for feeling for expression. Through a “long journey of the microself to the macrosel” (Amrita Pritam cited in Kohli, 1991, p. 38) when a person “has attained liberation from the self” (Einstein, 1954, p. 12) and achieved transcendence, a person escapes the limitations that bind the ego-self and consciously enters the infinite field of creative knowledge. Great minds define themselves not in terms of the personality or “my own little self” as Tagore (1913, p. 23), described the ego in his poem “Who is this?” which according to Valery (cited in Shah, 2001, p. 23) “is only a thing mutable and accidental beside this most naked self,” but in terms of the Self that has no name and no history, suggesting the imperativeness of the journey from one’s limited, self-centered, windowless monad of a self, to a gradually ascending higher consciousness.

In the *Anandamaya* state, one does not go around and round within a circle inside enclosed space like the people in Van Gogh’s paintings, but takes a journey to a higher self, opening the doors of the consciousness to that wider realm, the cosmos and becomes established in the transcendent state that represents a definite evolutionary advance. The individual in this state is bestowed with not only cognitive excellence, but also trans-cognitive abilities, which Sisk and Torrance (2001, p. 4) referred to as “new intelligence,” integrating all intelligence, which they called “spiritual intelligence,” referring to a capacity to transcend one’s ordinary modes of being-in-the-world, making connections, with “higher,” “deeper,” or “broader” aspects of life and the universe (Krippner, 2001, p. vi). It is then that one notices that higher creativity typically has an all-at-once quality; the entire idea floods consciousness in a way that normal consciousness cannot understand.

Transcendence provides creative living chances for meaning and synthesis and allows creativity full play because one is no longer limited by the habitual patterns of thought and reaction that characterize the ego-self. The accomplished and self-actualized person is free of the self-doubts, the striving, and the fear of mistakes that so often inhibit the creative response. Further, Phil Nuernberger wrote:

Yet, true intuition, and thus creativity, have their roots, or arise from, the *Anandamaya kosha*. In part because one’s identity is now with the spiritual-self rather than the ego-self. This allows one to bypass the defense mechanisms of the personality and loosens the hold that *samskaras* (habits) have on our perceptual sets and thinking patterns. This of course, seems paramount in the ability to see (hear, think about) things in new and interesting ways. . . Nothing loosens fear and worry more than the experience of the *Anandamaya kosha* spiritual-Self, or *Jivatman*), which allows greater and greater access to the Universal Mind as we become more skilled in accessing *Anandamaya kosha*. Access to the greater mind field means access to unlimited insight and creativity. (Personal communication, June 30, 2015)

One notices such tendencies in creative scientists who, like self-actualized people, “experience fully, vividly, and selflessly, with full concentration and total absorption” (Maslow, 1971, p. 45) and embody the concept of wholeness of

integration, truth, simplicity, contemplation, effortless energy and transcendence. Reflecting on Einstein's attempts at realizing such an ambition, Prigogine (1996, p. 41) wrote:

The ambition of certain mystical practices has always been to escape from life's bonds, from the torments and disappointments of a changing and deceptive world. In a way, Einstein took this ambition to be the physicist's vocation and, in so doing, translated it into scientific terms.

In fact, Einstein (cited in Prigogine, 1996, p. 41) himself gave an expression to such a motive:

One of the most powerful motives that drive people to art and science is the urge to get away from a humdrum existence, with its pain and desperate void, to escape from bonds of ceaselessly changing personal desires. It derives sensitive people to transcend their personal existence and seek the world of contemplation and objective knowledge. This motive is comparable to the ardent desire that draws a city-dweller out of his noisy, chaotic surroundings to the peace that reigns on the mountain heights, where his eye roams far through the calm, pure air and caresses the peaceful lines that seem created for eternity. But besides this negative motive, there is another, positive one. Man tries to shape for himself, in some adequate way, a simple and clear image of the world, and to triumph over the world of experience by replacing it, to some extent, with this image.

Creativity as an Extension of Person's Self

Extension of borders—an extension of person's self—is how Mahapatra (2009), a noted poet and a social anthropologist, conceptualized creativity. The creative person, according to him, sends out his/her roots deeper and deeper and horizontally farther and farther. Such an extension occurs at three levels, the first level of extension of borders is all inside, within the person's complex self, retaining all the memories of the earlier stages and aspiring to reach to that level of wisdom that is not divorced from feeling and emotion. At the second level, it is an extension of the borders into the external world, the reality, the significant "other." It is an extension into the "others," into all history and tradition—in short, into time that finally makes the person and his/her world. And at the third level, the extension of borders means the bringing together of disparate experiences of one's own self, the myriad units of experience happening over time and making greater and greater wholes out of them. Such an extension, as Menon (2005, p. 85) noted, enhances human possibility "as one integrates diversity, and expands and deepens awareness." In fact, all creativity is always such extension so that an experience has a myriad of resonances, multiple associations, vibrant in their togetherness and resultant complexity (Mahapatra, 2009). However, these three levels of extension of borders demand a measure of concentration as well as withdrawal, a strange combination of detachment and commitment, of passionate intimacy and a measure of withdrawal. "Through creativity," writes Mahapatra (2009, p. 74), "the self is positioned in the heart of the object (the entire external reality), the image, and the

word and yet stands outside each of them. It is an extension of imagination through sensory experience, intuition and wisdom, ultimately into the realm of *Ananda*.”

Extension of Borders: On the Role of Concentration & Commitment

To free one's creative energies and express one's self strenuously in life and work it is important to move from various planes of being into a state of consciousness characterized by timelessness, total identification (*tadatmya* in Sanskrit), intense concentration, utter absorption, complete detachment and “deep immersion in the creative process” (Mainemelis, 2002, p. 234). Each creative person is aware that there is an unnameable and unfathomable level that has its source somewhere outside time, space, and causality, which made Eliot (1951) suggest that an artist should think of continual surrender, continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality to achieve the source, which is more valuable. Moreover, “talent is not just a cognitive process but the focusing of the whole consciousness on a task. . .” (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1986, p. 283). It requires abandonment of the usual split between self and object. This process leads to a state of intermittent self-concentration, of ever sharper attention and heightened interest, until absorption becomes so deep that it may truly be said that the person has forgotten himself/herself and the environment in the problem.

We are reminded of Poincare's (1952) classic description of scientific creativity as the “process in which the human mind seems to borrow least from the exterior world, in which it acts, or appears to act, not by itself, and on itself” (p. 46). That thorny concept, intuition, appears as a result of a great deal of experience. Nobel laureate Pauling relied on his tremendous store of factual information and outstanding physical and chemical intuition. He also relied on the altered state of consciousness experienced when falling asleep, a state of consciousness in which ideas blend into each other more easily than usual, and on the mysterious, long-term creative processes of the unconscious. It is during such creative times of contemplative awareness, times of quietness (*santi*) when people are lost to themselves and the time tends to lose its directionality, and when they then see no difference of the outside world from the inside world, that emergence of creativity takes place. It is such times which help fuse, as Eliot (cited in Mahapatra, 2009, p.74) says, the most ancient and the most civilized mentalities and make possible the opening up of unexpected and unedited communication links between our nature and the reality around us.

Because a flash of illumination and insight takes place in a timeless moment, a creative person like a *Yogi* must dissociate from his/her own ego, becoming one with the problem. A *yogi* completely submerses in reality, followed by studied withdrawal and sinking into utter absorption when striving to obtain a revelation beyond the ordinary reach of intellect. Just as the *Yogi* finds endless transcendental bliss by probing into the inmost essence of things that are the objects of his meditation, so the poet and artist experiences supreme bliss upon intuiting the nature of things represented in their works of art. Ray (1974) explained the process as follows:

The active process of intense concentration resolves the dichotomy of subject and object at a certain point or stretch of time when the two come together, that is, one merges into the other. The moment of coming together has been characterized in the relevant texts as one of (a) complete detachment from practical action; (b) complete disinterestedness in any practical ends of life, and also (c) a certain kind of physical distancing. Such an experience affords, it has been claimed, intense joy and delight to the perceiver-subject, and is assumed to bring about a certain psycho-physiological transformation in the perceiver. (p. 60)

It is in this state of inspiration that the legendary composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (cited in Harding, 2012, p. 8) articulated and countless other creators have echoed over the years:

It would be vain to try to put into words that immeasurable sense of bliss which comes over me directly [when] a new idea awakens in me and begins to assume a definite form. I forget everything and behave like a madman. Everything within me starts pulsing and quivering; hardly have I begun the sketch, before one thought follows another.

This phenomenon can be noted in the case of a highly accomplished musician M. S. Subbulakshmi whose music was her passion, her delight and her quest. She was an artist with a unique musical idiom, who exemplified the inward bliss of that achievement. True to her personality, she always had a sense of deep involvement in her singing, to the extent of forgetting herself as she sang. “By giving her music everything she had, she received in return a blissfulness nothing else could give her” (George, 2007, p. 270). Such blissfulness becomes possible when one “unzip[s] one’s mind and unfocus[es] one’s eyes, allowing the hard-won mastery of technique, of structure, to fade out of conscious sight—to blur into the spirit of play, of imagination,” asserted Sharon Mann-Polk (1989, p. 129) based on her own development as a concert pianist.

Creating More and More Consciousness Implications for Creativity Research and Development

If science has to be knowledge that can be harnessed for human good, then it must turn to such a study of consciousness and its non-pathologically focused, tranquil, contentless, and rejuvenating blissful states. (A. Chakrabarti, 2014, p. 121)

Nobel laureate William Golding (1982) said that creativity, the human differential, “is a signature scribbled in soul, the sign that beyond the transient horrors and beauties of our hell there is Good which is ultimate and absolute” (pp. 201-202). In the context of searching this Good, it may be justified to note that any knowledge that is short of the total comprehension of human spirit and greater and greater dimensions of creative awareness would amount to ignorance or *avidya*. In addition, such knowledge should concentrate on “consciousness of morning or morning wisdom” and not the “consciousness of night—of dark night of the soul”

(Misra as cited in Shah, 2001, p. 66), providing an understanding of the creative intuition and inspiration as grounded in the fabric of human consciousness. This is significant as creativity and consciousness are intimately linked. If we take away consciousness, creativity disappears. Consciousness creates, in each of us, an inner life where we think and feel.

Consciousness is the universal experience, and there is nothing that can exist outside of consciousness. There are diverse assumptions about the nature of consciousness (Shanta, 2015; Velmans, 2009) and creativity (Klausen, 2010); some understand them from only a very limited experience of being, and not many experience them in their fullness. Creativity, perceived through much of history as a puzzle, motivated Klausen (2010) to note, “It is not the concrete creative processes that are mysterious or elusive; it is the very notion of creativity that remains inherently paradoxical” (p. 359). Since topics of consciousness and creativity are so large, challenging, comprehensive and touch so many different disciplines, a depth of understanding will likely require theories and insights of many types, and no single perspective will suffice for explaining all the features that we wish to understand. A synthetic and pluralistic approach may be rewarding to undertake serious cognitive journeys of the untapped potential of the mind and consciousness, deep self-awareness, and latent capacities conceptualized in “earlier models of humanity” (Krippner, 2001, p. v) as reflected in the ancient religious and philosophical literature (see Sisk & Torrance, 2001) from various cultures and traditions. It will perhaps be prudent not to dismiss any tradition by labeling it as romantic and deflect it of legitimacy as a source of knowledge and in the process deprive ourselves the privilege of studying the experiential sources of creativity and consciousness that may interest cognitive scientists and philosophers of mind.

In order to evaluate such grounded and coherent insights from various traditions, one has to overcome the barriers that exist due to exclusive dependence on objective endeavor employing explicit knowledge that attempts to exclude subjective anthropomorphic biases. It is also important to realize that each point of view has its own validity – one empirical, one experiential. In order that human beings are “not robbed of the transcendence by the short-sightedness of super-intellectuals” and permitted “to create more and more consciousness” (Jung, 1989, p. 326), those studying consciousness and creativity in various traditions approach these issues with genuine faith and follow Max Planck (cited in Campbell, 2012, p. 428) who distrusted left-brain logic left to its own devices:

Anyone who has been seriously engaged in scientific work of any kind realizes that over the entrance to the gates of the temple of science are written the words: “Ye must have faith.” It is a quality which scientists cannot dispense with... The pure rationalist has no place here.

So, we conclude with William Blake (in Erdman, 1965, p. 693), the great mystical poet and painter who summarized as follows:

May God us keep
From Single vision and Newton’s sleep

Notes

¹ It is relevant to mention that Indian tradition has produced a broad range of divergent theories on consciousness (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016) and as such this exposition may not be considered representative of the full range of perspectives.

² It is therefore no wonder that when in a state of happiness even cows produce more milk (Bertenshaw & Rowlinson, 2009).

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