

Gateway 2023 at Imagine Yoga Studio. Interactive Handouts

Five aspects of being human: Pañcamaya, a holistic ancient model.

The Pañcamaya model of the human system is presented in the Taittiriya Upaniṣad (Vedic, dated approximately 6th century BCE).

“The term pañcamaya thus indicates that the human system is composed of five fundamental dimensions (physical body, breath/prāna, intellect, personality, and emotions) that are completely interconnected and interrelated. Indeed, as the text says, they pervade each other”

-Chase Bossart, article “Yoga Bodies, Yoga Minds”

Go to this workshop’s [resources](#), to read full article)

Reminder of some Sanskrit words:

pañca: five

[maya](#): something pervading; consisting of

anna: food

[annamaya](#): physical; the physical body; consisting of food

[prāna](#): life force, energy, constant motion

[prānamaya](#): breath/prāna; the vital body; consisting of vital force

[manas](#): part of the mind that learns from experience (*man* is “to think”)

[manomaya](#): dimension of intellect; the intellectual mind; the capacity to learn; consisting of mind

[vijñāna](#): natural intelligence, deeper knowledge

[vijñānamaya](#): the personality, how one perceives & communicates; consisting of special knowing

[ānanda](#): happiness, joy

[ānandamaya](#): dimension of emotions; consisting of bliss

Birds!

In the [Taittiriya Upaniṣad](#), the [Pañcamaya model](#) (five aspects of being human) is represented by birds, one bird for each of the 5 dimensions.

According to my teacher, Chase Bossart, the symbolism is **Freedom**.

Each bird (each dimension) has 5 parts:

Head: gives direction. Where we are going to.

Wings: they propel us to go where we are going to, and need to be balanced in order to do that.

Body/Trunk: it's the essence of each dimension, and what brings all together.

Tail: Provides stability. Where we are coming from.

Birds with corresponding elements

[Annamaya](#)

Head: head

Right wing: right side of body

Left wing: left side of body

Body/Trunk: trunk/heart

Tail: pelvis & legs

[Prānamaya](#)

Head: prāna (vital force, energy)

Right wing: apāna (energy that moves in the direction of elimination)

Left wing: vyāna (energy that moves in the direction of circulation)

Trunk: akāṣa (space)

Tail: prithivī (earth, soil)

[Manomaya](#)

Head: [Yajurveda](#) (one of the 4 Vedas)

Right wing: [Rigveda](#) (one of the Vedas/spirituality)

Left wing: [Sāmaveda](#) (one of the Vedas/creativity. Veda of melodies and chants)

Trunk: [ādeṣa](#) (oral instruction of teacher/guru)

Tail: [Atharvaveda](#) (one of the 4 Vedas)

Vijñanamaya

Head: śraddhā (deep trust, faith)

Right wing: Rtam (cosmic order, the highest truth, divine order)

Left wing: satya (truth, truthfulness)

Body: yoga (to link)

Tail: mahāt (causal plane, samskaras -patterns- & vāsanās -behavioral tendencies-)

Ānandamaya

Head: Prīya (love, passion)

Right wing: moda (joy or pleasure from experience)

Left wing; pramoda (the desire to continue having a pleasurable experience)

Trunk: ānanda (happiness, joy)

Tail: Brahma (source; god of creation in Hinduism)

References

Notes from Yoga Teacher & Yoga Therapist training with Gary Kraftsow (viniyoga.com)

Notes from studies with Chase Bossart (yogawell.com)

Yogastudies.org (Paul Harvey's website, and incredible resource!)

Wikipedia.org