



Vignanamaya Kosha – From the View Point of Ancient and Modern Science

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Abstract

Every living being in this animal kingdom is born with four vital instincts, ahara (food), nidra (sleep), bhaya (fear) and maithuna (procreation). But the component that has evolved in human being is 'discrimination'. Man knows what is right and what is wrong, what is permanent and what is temporary. This is not noticed in other species of animals. Yoga is a tool to further evolve this discrimination ability of human being and transform them to super man and eventually divine man. In other words, we shall be discussing the Kosha which upholds this discrimination power as its core components.

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INTRODUCTION

As per the instruction of Varuna, Bhriгу gets absorbed in Tapas and tries to understand the subtle nature of mind¹. The discrimination power makes our mind to understand and causes the mind to differentiate the cause and effect. The Kosha represents the subtle layer of our intelligence in conscious state. The ability to discriminate between right and wrong, transient and eternal, pain and pleasure, true and false, skills of making a decision constitute this Kosha.

When we look into the deeper meaning of Vijnana, it is the combination of two syllables viz., 'vi' which is a prefix and 'jnana' refers to intuition or inner awareness. Vijnana is also referred to inner experience. Therefore, whenever we gain some experiences which are subjective in nature is a resultant outcome of

Vijnanamayakosha. Our dreams during sleep are a reflection of Vijnanamayakosha. Vijnanamayakosha is related to much unknown part of the universe and a link between the conscious mind and the universal mind. Universal knowledge comes to the conscious mind through Vijnanamayakosha or the psychic mind. Vijnanamayakosha does not depend on time, space and causation.

Vijnanamaya is not only confined to our past, present and future but anticipating something which is beyond our future. When we differentiate between Manomayakosha and Vijnanamayakosha, Manomayakosha looks at the world through one eye using four instruments such as Manas, Buddhi, Chitta and Ahankara but Vijnanamayakosha has thousand eyes, thousand hands and thousand feet² which means this Kosha can



see anything and anywhere. It is also called "the determinative knowledge (Nishchaya) and this determinative knowledge is an attribute of our subtle intellect. It is the determinative faculty which guides the mind and comes to right conclusion or determination. When the mind is in a condition of doubting, whether to do an action or not, Vijnanamayakosha helps an individual to decide "I must do'.

"Vijnana or inner knowledge performs sacrifices, because a man who has knowledge performs sacrifices with faith, etc. Therefore, knowledge is said to be the doer. Our Vijnanamayakosha determines and makes our senses to do work through our Physical body".

Vijnanamayakosha is "the sheath where subtle intelligence evolves, where the four aspects of mind originate in their pure form, born of Mahat or supreme intelligence. Deep karmas and samskaras are stored at this level and form the reservoir of encoded experiences, or memories which filter through to Manomayakosha, and manifest as our conditioned personality".

UNDERSTANDING OF VIJANAMAYA KOSHA AS PER MODERN SCIENCE

The basic fabric of Vijnanamayakosha is, "Experiential knowing which is intuitive, because we arrive at knowing in such a way that consciousness is informed of what is known without witnessing or knowing how it was arrived at. Experiential knowing is impulsive because it appears accompanied by the feeling of knowing, often with an evaluative affect or an impulse to some action. The communications between conscious and unconscious processes are strictly limited. It is proposed that when people attempt to report on their cognitive processes, that is, on the processes mediating the effects of a stimulus on a response, they do not do so on the basis of any true introspection. Instead, their reports are based on a priori, implicit causal theories, or judgments about the extent to

which a particular stimulus is a plausible cause of a given response³".

"Experiential knowing is largely perceptual in its intuitive reasoning. Lakoff and Johnson and others demonstrate the importance of perceptual metaphors in language and that they determine how we think when we use them. Gardenfors demonstrates the correspondence of intuitive logic to geometry. Experiential knowledge delivers what we take as real and objective, distinct from logical proof. Experiential knowledge is recalled or recognized, or it is obvious or self-evident, reflecting unconscious processes that give rise to it. Experiential knowledge is often expressed in the experiential form of narratives. Narrative construction may be the common and nearly universal form in which people interpret their experiences, whereas propositional knowledge may be a less common but still very important derivative of narratives. In other words, people will nearly always make sense of their experiences by constructing them in story form, and sometimes (but not always) they will proceed from these stories to infer" or deduce generalizations⁴.

"Experiential knowledge is highly dependent on memory and recognition, thus on semantic and sensory patterns and features⁵. Experiential cognition is not able to perform complex calculations. It is able to compare large amounts of data rapidly, in parallel, without engaging conscious memory, to detect correspondences and discern coherence, or to play out possible scenarios. For instance, an experienced expert can bring a large repertory of experiences which can be used to play out scenarios. Because it is not theoretical or systematic, experiential knowledge can be domain specific, and holistic. Experiential knowledge is heuristic—its reasoning methods are not complex, and they are probabilistic, relying on experiential likelihood, but not foolproof indicators. It reflects the natural world, with its mix of



cause-effect and chance events. Through its ability to integrate large numbers of data experiential thinking can be robustly reliable. It is creative and works in open-ended situations to make sense of ill-defined situations. Formal knowledge reflects systems that are clearly defined in their ontologies and procedural rules. Finally, experiential knowledge and thinking provide judgments that are effective and actionable where situations, themselves, are ambiguous. Experiential knowledge can be informed by theoretical knowledge but does not depend on it. Formal knowledge depends upon experiential knowing for both its application and its formation. Formal knowledge is applied in specific situations, requiring experiential level judgments as to what knowledge to apply and how".

"Just like a computer, the brain stores and processes information. But it is how that information is shared throughout the brain network that gives rise to our rich and vivid conscious experience. Let's consider the act of observing a sunset. There's a region in the visual cortex (known as V2) that processes the form and color of the yellow and orange sunrays against the clouds. There are auditory areas in the temporal lobe being fed information about the sound of the wind rushing past you as you stare off into the horizon. That rushing wind against your skin also generates patterns of electrical signals in the somatosensory cortex that create a sense of touch. There are many different things going on in distant places".

"The brain stores and processes information, but how and why that information takes on the characteristic of **feeling like something** is left unexplained. A theory on integrated information tells us how to measure the degree of consciousness, but does not tell us how different types of information acquire different subjective sensations, like the feel of a burning flame or an orgasm. As stated

by philosopher Ned Block, it may be that Phi is correlated with consciousness, but does not play a role in its cause".

"Consciousness is a fundamental property of the universe. Wherever there is integrated information, there is experience. The theory takes its existence as a given and therefore doesn't have to explain the mechanism behind it. It's just a fact of nature that information has an inner side in addition to its bit-composed outer side".

UNDERSTANDING OF VIJANAMAYA KOSHA AS PER YOGA

"Intuitive experience of the infinite field of awareness underlies and pervades the entire universe. When this experience is fully expanded, different traditions give it different names—Samadhi, Nirvana, Enlightenment, Turiya, Shunyata, Brahman, Absolute Truth, the union between Atman and Paramatman, God, Supreme Consciousness—but whatever they call it, spiritual masters tell us that this experience of an all-pervasive consciousness reveals the truth about ourselves and the world we inhabit: it is all One. There is no division, no multiplicity, no separation. Everything—the astonishing variety of living beings; nature's myriad shapes, textures, and forms; the sun, the stars, the clouds, and the wind in the trees—all of it is a manifestation of an indivisible field of Consciousness. The goal of human life, the sages tell us, is to meet that Consciousness within ourselves and to know ourselves as well". It is also told that the 'self' is the reflection of "pure consciousness or Brahman". Hence, the Brahmanda or the universe is within me and what is felt in the Universe is felt within me also. This feeling is surfaced in the form of experiential knowledge or realization. And probably that is the reason why there are techniques in Yoga practiced for 'Self realization' and they are popularly known as Deep meditation and Samadhi. To attain deep meditation and Samadhi, good amount of Chittasuddhi (purification of



memory patterns), Pranashuddhi (Purification of Prana) and Kaya shuddhi (Purification of body). After the purification, our Chitta attains experiential knowledge and intuition.

Vijnanamaya is the store house of wisdom and Universal knowledge. The physiological process through which an individual drags the information from the Cosmos or Universal consciousness is our Dream. But physiologically dream has become like a soap to wipe out the over loaded acquired information. Given a chance to acquire the less worldly information to the Brain, our Brain has the ability of drag out the information to Vijnanamaya which is intuitive, e.g., some time our dream come s true.

RELATION BETWEEN EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE OR INTUITION, MIND, PRANA AND MIND

In Yoga, Vijnana is also used as preconceived notion where in the discrimination and intuitive ability of an individual is lost. An individual does not differentiate between the cause and effect, right & wrong, true & false, transient & eternal and Nitya & Anitya. Due to this wrong notion aroused in Vijnanamaya causes turbulence in Manomaya as conflict starts taking place between likes and dislikes, which is otherwise called 'Speed' in mind and this speed percolates to Pranamaya and makes the flow of Prana haphazard and non uniform. This haphazardness of Prana is noticed in the form of Kujirnatvam (poor digestion), Ajirnatvam (indigestion) and Atijirnatvam⁶ (over digestion) as quoted in Yoga Vasistha. Each one of the malfunctioning in our Digestion is correlates with wide range of ailments that we suffer in our day to day life.

OPERATIONAL TOOLS FOR HANDLING VIJNANAMAYA KOSHA

There are various tools available in Yoga to operate Vijnanamaya, Satsang (good companion), Siddhantavakyashravanam (listening to the scriptural knowledge), lectures and counseling. The aim behind these tools is to correct the preconceived notion than results in causing conflict between positive and negative attributes. Advice of a 'Guru', who takes us from the path of darkness to light, plays a vital role to pull out and resolve the wrong notion aroused in Vijnanamaya.

SUMMARY

Just as butter and curd are hidden in milk and we need to extract butter from the milk, the same way Matter has energy in it in hidden form which is unseen. We need to use the various techniques to separate energy from the matter. The way energy is inherent in the matter, same way 'Vijnana' is hidden in every individual in two forms, wisdom or intuition in the form of positive outcome and wrong notion as an outcome of negativity.

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