

## LESSON 26

# NURTURING THE WHOLE BEING: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

### SUMMARY

Everybody is attracted towards an impressive "personality". Being a positive and effective person is considered to be the best asset an individual can have. Hence personality and its development constitute a major concern for psychology. While "personality" is universally accepted in popular circles, the concept of personality has been approached by psychologists in different ways. Also, personality does not refer to the whole of our existence the physical, social and spiritual. This issue has received attention from the Indian sages from ancient times. Bhagvad Gita provides comprehensive models of highly developed human potential. It emphasizes Tri Guna view whereas Upanishads laid down panch kosha theory. Similar to panch kosha theory of the Upanishads Sri Aurobindo has given a comprehensive system of one's being based on his studies on consciousness.

### Holistic Personality: An Indian view

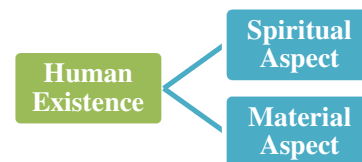
The term 'Personality' comes from the Latin word 'persona' a mask worn in Greek and Roman theaters by actors to enable each actor to play several roles.



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It also means the external appearance of a person comprising the characteristics that are accessible to other persons.

The Indian thinkers visualized human existence in terms of an integrated structure having spiritual as well as material aspects. In Upanishads the self, the atman or the consciousness is considered as the real core of personality. Consciousness is the eternal and immutable aspect of existence. Thus, personality cannot be taken as physical appearance (body) only. It extends to the different levels of existence incorporating the physical, social and spiritual levels.



### Theory of Trigunas

This theory proposes that entire existence in nature is made up of combination of three gunas namely **Sattva** (light), **Rajas** (dynamism) and **Tamas** (Lethargy, inertia). Human beings are mixtures or combinations of these three qualities. Human development is

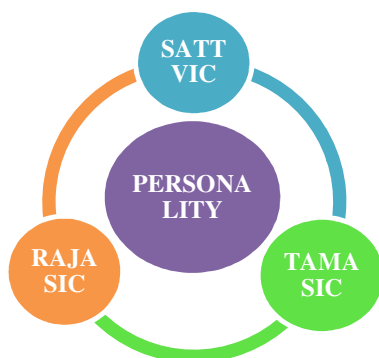
examined with reference to movement from Tamas to Rajas and then to Sattva. The highest stage is a state of being above these three gunas.



**Sattvic** - A person who follows Sattvic principle to live their life. They will meditate regularly and will do all their work as the worship of Lord. People love this person and this person also loves and helps people.

**Rajasic** - A person with rajas traits will be very active, dynamic and addicted to work. They like to eat spicy food and are fond of entertainment, sitting at one place and observing silence is difficult for him or her. Such persons are often found in the business world.

**Tamasic** - This type of person does not like to work. Due to their habit of laziness and inaction they face failures in their lives. These people are also cautious, apprehensive, and revengeful.



Each and every person is a combination of these **Tri Gunas** in different degrees. Personality development involves achieving and maintaining the right proportion of these three qualities.

### Theory of Panch Koshas (Five Sheaths of Human Existence)



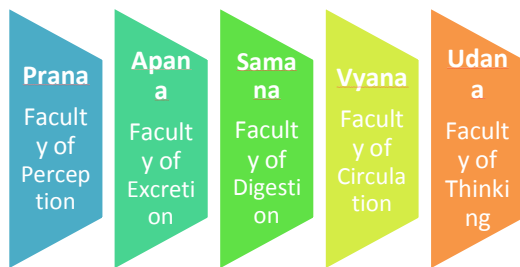
Taittiriya Upanishad gives the concept of Panch Koshas and their development. It says that starting from Annamaya Kosha and reaching the Anandamaya Kosh, our existence has 5 layers or sheaths called Koshas.

- The gross body that we see is Annamaya Kosha.
- The subtler body made of pranic energy is called as Pranamaya Kosha or vital sheath.
- The third kosha is Manomaya Kosha or mental sheath comprised of one's feelings and emotions.
- The fourth one is Vijnanamaya Kosha. It is comprised of imagination, memory, knowledge, insight and understanding.
- The fifth is Anandmaya Kosha or sheath of bliss. Its

characteristics are creativity, joy and bliss.

**Annamaya Kosha** - Physical body (Food Sheath - as it is based on the nutrition consumption). For proper development of annamaya kosha its important to have a proper diet and exercise. Signs of healthy development of annamaya kosha are - fitness, agility, stamina and endurance.

**Pranamaya Kosha** - Subtler body made of Pranic energy. Pranamaya kosha consist of Pancha Pranas. The Pancha Pranas are the five physiological systems that represent the vital sheath.



**Manomaya Kosha** - The mind regulates the Pranamaya Kosha. There is a deep relationship between mind, intellect and body. It is possible to increase the strength of mind by regular prayer, making resolutions and keeping them up.

**Vijnanamaya Kosha** - is comprised of imagination, memory, knowledge, insight and understanding. The mind is the storehouse of all memories and knowledge. The mind associates the impressions with pleasantness or unpleasantness based on memory. The intellect takes a

rational decision which is beneficial to the person.

**Anandmaya Kosha** - Blissful Sheath. It is the innermost of the five sheaths and consists of **Vasanas** or **Desires**. The Bliss Sheath controls the intellectual Sheath.

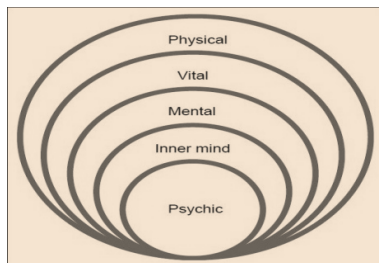
### Development of Koshas

Personality development moves from Annamaya Kosha to Anandamaya Kosha gradually removing all the five covers that mask it.

- Regular eating habits, right kind of food, all types of exercises and games, jogging, running, walking and Asanas facilitate the development of Annamaya Kosha.
- Pranayam and breathing exercises improve the quality of Pranamaya Kosha.
- For the development of Manomaya Kosha study of good literature including poems, novels, essays and articles is useful.
- All the activities that challenge one's intellect develop Vijnanamaya Kosha. These activities include debates, problem-solving, study-techniques etc.
- All the activities that make you go beyond your tiny self and give you an opportunity to identify with your fellow beings - facilitates the development of Anandamaya Kosha.

Sri Aurobindo says that two systems are simultaneously active in the organization of the being and its parts: a concentric system and a vertical system.

The concentric system is like a series of rings or sheaths. The outer most circle is comprised of awareness of physical body, awareness of vital (pranic) body or sheath and awareness of mental sheath. They are interconnected. The inner circle is composed of inner mind which is in touch with the universal mind or Supreme Energy. The innermost core is called Psychic being which is a spark of the Divine (Supreme Energy) present in all of us and in everything. It is also called Atman.



The vertical system is like a staircase consisting of various levels, planes of consciousness ranging from the lowest – the unconscious to the highest – Sat Chit Anand. In simple words, from unicellular being, humans have climbed innumerable rungs of the ladder of evolution.

### **Evaluate yourself**

1. Explain the theory of Triguna?

2. Describe the activities that can help in development of Panch Koshas.