

In the following verses, the Ācārya addresses the seekers directly. The five sheaths (pañcakośa) are taken up one by one and each one is described fully. The universal Teacher, Śaṅkara, shows how they can be transcended one by one, and how one can ultimately reach the experience of the subjective Self.





40. Negation of the Kośas

(a) Annamaya kośa (Food sheath) (154-164)

देहोऽयमन्नभवनोऽन्नमयस्तु कोशः
चान्नेन जीवति विनश्यति तद्विहीनः ।
त्वक्चर्ममांसरुधिरास्थिपुरीषराशिः
नायं स्वयं भवितुमर्हति नित्यशुद्धः ॥ १५४ ॥

*deho'yamannabhavano'nnamayastu kośaḥ
cānnena jīvati vinaśyati tadvihīnaḥ,
tvakcarmamāmsarudhirāsthipurīṣarāśiḥ
nāyaṁ svayaṁ bhavitumarhati nityaśuddhaḥ. (154)*

154. The body is a product of food, it constitutes the food sheath. It exists because of food and dies without it. It is a bundle of skin, flesh, blood, bones and filth. Never can it be the self-existing, the eternally pure Ātman.

From this verse onwards, there is a deep reflection on each of the five sheaths of the human personality. One by one they are taken up, exhaustively investigated, reflected upon and as a result of this deep and unbiased reflection each one is in turn negated. These eleven verses (verses – 154 to 164). discuss the physical body, the food sheath.

The physical body is the most powerful attraction for the majority of living beings and most of us are aware of nothing nobler and diviner than the body. For millions and millions of years, man has been living in this world mainly as a physical entity. Life after life, he has been living and striving under the self-preserving instinct and to say all of a sudden, 'I am not the physical body' is ridiculous, impossible and supremely absurd.