

# THE CONCEPTS OF KĀLA, PRĀNA AND VĀK IN VEDIC LITERATURE

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## Introduction

MIU and MERU, in their zeal to integrate subjective knowledge method of the Vedas and the objective ones of the modern science, are developing various models to explain and express the former so as to utilize it eventually, for the betterment of coming new age. The model of mind-energy or quanta seems to be one of such attempts, which is really fundamental. And therefore needs no expressions.

To facilitate such an endeavour, a few equally fundamental issues of Vedic ones, have to be propounded. They are Kala, Prana And Yak etc. All these three have been elaborately described in the vedic literature. Though in Samkhya scheme Kala and Yak do not find their place and Prana as such is to be included in Vayu Mahabhuta, while Yak be included in Sabda tanmatra. However, they find place in Kashmir a Saivism and have been enumerated in the list of thirty – six tattvas in all. This article therefore takes into account Saiva school of thought alongwith Vedas, Aranyakas, Brahmanas and Upanishads, besides other relevant texts. Accordingly they have the number, 10th (Kala), 21st (Prana) and 22nd (Vak), yet in a certain sense and on a certain level they are identical. Among these three, nay in all the principles, Prana particularly is the most important one.

## Modern Science: Indian Culture

Modern science, though has not yet accepted the five Mahabhut as scheme of creation, cannot yet, really speaking reject them, essentially the Vayu. Even if it has its own different concept of Vayu, than that of the Indian, it is yet the common platform whereon we can reconcile both and eventually also the others. The modern concept of Vayu is obviously objectively scientific, the Indian concept of Vayu, also so; the difference is in standpoint, the angle and methods.

## Semantic aspect of Sanskrit

At the very outset, one should bear in mind a peculiarity of Sanskrit language, from semantic point of view. In Sanskrit, generally speaking every word has its derivative or what is called primary sense, and the other, the secondary sense. Word in its secondary sense does not abandon the primary one, the same in its primary sense, naturally has the capacity to accommodate the secondary sense. And it is in this way that the Sanskrit word semantically meets the demands of what are called the technical or any other possible senses. The other senses are the extensions or the modifications of the primary sense. The methods of comprehending such meanings are known as prakarana and upapatti i.e. context and propriety. In other words there are semantic levels and gradations based on the principle of Unity and Diversity (samanyam-ekatva-karam, visesastu-prthaktva-krt). Thus the same word would denote different yet unifying senses, in grades or in degrees; similarly many words may denote also the same meaning accordingly.

## Kāla and Prāna

The word Kāla, is from Kal-to deviate (towards or from the norm). The derivatives Kalanam, Kalā,

Kāli, Kali and Kala are from the same root in some modified senses of the original sense. Kala indicates deviation of the creation from the highest Reality and going back towards it. Thus from Siva to prthvi is the range of the Kala i.e. its spatiotemporal deviations. The agent to measure this course is the Sun. RV. says 'Suryo atma jagatah tast husasca'. Kala is beyond measure and succession, has been, however, measured. The first such unit of measurement is termed as Vipala, but the smallest unit is said to be equal to six breaths (pranas). It is in the Upanishads, that we come across the expression about the Kala having macrocosmic (the bahya i.e. the one without) and the microcosmic (the abhyantara i.e. the one within) aspects. It is further said that microcosmic 'Kala is prana, while the macrocosmic one is the Sun'. However, the Atharvaveda, is the original source, wherein this equation as regards prana and surya, has been figuratively brought out. The Rigveda on the otherhand refers to this phenomenon still more figuratively, but no less directly by using astronomical terms like Saddhriciandvi suci. The movement of Creation which in fact is, movement of Prana, is of two types, successive and extensive, the first is Kaldhva, the second is desadhva i.e. the Time- space coordinates. The relation or rather an identity of Prana and Surya can well be understood when we look into the list of units of measurements of Time (Kala), viz. yuga, samvatsara, ayana, masa, paksa, divasa, ghatika, pala, vipala and prana. Besides, these, the Hindu calendar consists of the other heavenly bodies and the events; like the moon, grahas, including Rāhu, Ketu and asterisms (constellations) and the phenomenon like that of eclipses, solstices, tithis, ksaya, vrddhi, etc., in other words what is called the parva. This is known as Kālādhvā.

1. see: prānah prajānām udayaty esa suryah and it is very curious that the whole of Kālādhvā has been correspondingly translated in terms of the pranic movement in the body with its pentagonal nature (viz. prāna, apāna, samāna, udana and vyāna). In this respect the atharvanic expression serves as the source for macrocosmic nature and microcosmic nature of this secret science termed later on as svarodaya. It says: 'aho rātre nāsike, ditiscaditisa sirsakapāle, samvatsarah sirah'.

### Sun, Moon and Agni

The prāna and apāna, are the basic two forces in the Body (within and without), which are in naturally opposite direction, and accordingly have been directed in the body in the East and the West, as also is the case with the Sun and the Moon in the heaven. A middle term has been duly recognized in the form of Agni, the Fire, also in its metaphysical sense. These three principles represent in the body, the pingalā, the Idā, and the Susumnā, the nādis which represent all the Nādimandala (the complex system) in the body. They further stand respectively for pitta, kapha and Vāta, also referring correspondingly the gunas, rajas, tamas, and sattva or the prāna, apāna and samāna, Biologically again, the prana is said to be purusa, Male, the apāna prakrti, Female, the samāna as, Neutral, and that the right half of the body is purusa, the left half is prakrti and the middle portion is neutral. We have touched upon the Kālādhvā. The next is the desādhvā, along with the former they make Time – Space-coordinates. The first is the succession, while the second is the extension of the Highest Reality in the course of Creation. Both of them are correspondingly translated on pranic level in terms of svara system. The successive and extensive movement of prana in body in vertical and horizontal directions, is said to be thirty six angulas (i.e. fingers including twelve out from the nose), of all the beings in their own terms and units right from an insect, to the Lord Brahmā, the Creator (ā kita Brahmādeh). It thus covers the lowest and the highest range of Creation. It is further generally calculated that the total number of breaths in a day and night comes to 21600, which are also distributed to the cakras (mobile centres of powers), their governing deities, as well as to the alphabets (varnas) in the body. Detailed information, especially, is to be found

in Tantrāloka, and Tantrasāra of Abhinavagupta (A.D. 9th-10th century in Kashmira). It is suffice to stress here that Indian seers measured time by way of svara, i.e. the breathing or respiration system. The Atharvanic expression then bears a deeper sense: prāne ha bhutam bhavyam ca prāne sarvam pratisthitam (i.e. in prāna is established the past, the future and indeed all). And precisely, therefore, by conquering prāna one goes beyond both desādhvā and Kālādhavā. Any kind of spiritual discipline may it be, this fact stands.

#### Prāna in Ayurveda (The Indian Medicine)

As has been stated earlier that, Prana in terms of Vayu is one of the five Mahabhut as of Samkhya school and has been generally accepted by all the scientific disciplines and other branches of learning in India, notwithstanding the religio-philosophical differences of various faiths and schools of thought. Ayurveda, the ancient Indian medicine, happens to be one of the branches of Indian Culture which accepts Sāmkhya as a philosophical foundation, and of which, Charaka, Susruta and Vagbhatta are a few authentic remnants in which the concepts of pentagonic scheme of Mahābhutas, Tanmātras, sense-organs etc., form the very basement of the whole scientific structure. It would therefore be appropriate to quote Charaka, who assigns prāna supreme position, and highest fiat, amongst all the fundamental principles of Creation, and which would give us better insight into its macrocosmic and microcosmic workings and relation.

‘Vāyu is the controller of the Machine in the form of the body. It promotes the movements of all types. It is the leader as well as the controller of Mind. It is the conveyor of objects of all the faculties, the distributor of all the elements of the organism, which brings about the coherence of the body. It is the promoter of Speech. It is the mother of contact and Sound, the basis of the power of Hearing and Touch, the source of joy and of liveliness, the kindler of fire, the driver of all the elements of troubles. The expulser of impurities, the border of thick and fine canals, the maker of embryo.

#### Pathological Functioning:

‘But when, in truth, it is excited in the body, it inflicts on the body all sorts of derangements. It puts in tumults the Mind, attacks all the faculties, etc.

#### Normal Cosmic Function:

‘Of the one which is in its natural state, the functions i.e. the support of the earth, the flaming up of the fire, the regulation of the continuous course of the Sun, of Moon and of the totality of the stars, and the planets, the formation of the clouds, the emission of waters, the divisions of the seasons, of the elements, the determination of the quality and the aspects of the elements. The elaboration of grains, the growth of cereals, the drayness and transformation of that which is not transformed.

#### Perturbing Cosmic Functions:

‘Of the one that is excited, the functions when it circulates in the world, are in truth, the following, i.e. the leveling up of the summits of the mountains, uprooting of trees, the overflowing of the oceans, the rising of the lakes, pushing back of the course of waters the production of the moist, of thunder, of dust, of sand, of birth of frogs, of serpents, caustics of blood, of stones and, of lightening, the distribution of six seasons, etc. production of clouds, of the suns, of fire and the wind, which bring to an end of the four yugas of the world’.

Of course, some of the Vedic Rcs, already, have paved the way for latter elucidation. One should, in

this connection, note that the three dosas (kapha, pitta and vāta) which form the body in their normal condition, also form the seed of the disease in their abnormal or pathological conditions. In themselves, they are said to be, bodily products of pṛthvi and jala (together as Kapha), tejas (as pittam) and, vayu and akasa (as Vata), i.e. the five Mahabhutas. Prana, in its gross aspect, as yayu, is characterised as 'rupa-rahitah sparsavan', i.e. having touch but bereft of Form. The Tejas is defined as 'usna sparsavat' - i.e. having hot touch; and jala as 'sitasparsavat' -, having cold touch. The definitions of Tejas and Jala having hot and cold touch respectively are based on touch, which, essentially, is the characteristic of Vayu. It is also clear that hot and cold are relative terms of the same phenomenon of which the medium of cognition is touch. It is then prana or vayu, which is the common factor for them.

In Ayurvedic physiology and pathology also Vayu in the form of Vata has a peculiar position. It is stated that Kapha and pitta are lame; they are carried away by vayu, indicating thereby the supremacy of it. It is also said that pain exists only when and where vayu is vitiated (na hi vatad rte sulam). Thus according to Ayurveda, it is clear that, Kapha and pitta, usna and sita cannot work without vayu. In other words they require the agency of Vayu for their support and manifestation. In the higher analysis, Kapha-pitta-vata, all the three are lower terms of bodily constituents; We may call them as lower faculties in living organisms. There are higher faculties besides, in it. Just as Kapha, pitta, require vata for their manifestation, as also these higher faculties i.e. manas, buddhi, ahamkara and citta require vayu for their manifestation. Moreover prana, is also the link between these higher faculties and the lower faculties in the living organism, a liaison-officer so to say.

Psycho-theraph : Mind: Vāyu

In this respect yoga and Ayurveda have given a very valuable and one of the most original and essential point which modern medicine in general and psychotherapy in particular has yet to realise. And that is, prana is the leader and controller of mind (niyanta praneta ca manasah). Yoga, similarly says:

pavano badhyate yena manas tenaiva badhyate |  
manastu badhyate yena pavanas tenaiva badhyate ||  
(Hatha-yoga-pradipika)

Since, it is very difficult, nay rather impos'sible mind by mind or on mental level, the only way left is the prana. Therefore, Indian Seers have very judiciously evolved; out the magnificent science of Yoga, with prana as the leverage. While on the otherhand all the other multiple advances in modern psychotherapy have been unable to fathom the depth of this problem; and which practically turns to be a sterile endeavour. The day is not far, when the psychotherapy will have to admit all these facts and theories of yoga- and Ayurveda.

Vāyu in therapeutics

There are mainly two lines of treatment in Ayurveda - Samana (palliation of vitiated dosas) and Sodhana (purification of bodily impurities (i.e. malas). Here, too,

Ayurveda says that strictly speaking it is mainly a vata - cikitsa). Vayu as vata, when vitiated leaves its normal movements (anulomatva) and becomes abnormal (pratilomatva) and is the basis for all other bodily disorders. The Samana and Sodhana, which is the secrecy of all Ayurvedic treatment and



medication is primarily aimed at this goal; Yoga achieves the same by yogic processes. And then we can very well understand and appreciate the expression of Hatha-yogapradipika.

prānāyāmena hi sarve visusyanti -malā iti, |  
acāryānām tu kesām cit anyat karma na sammatam ||

By prānāyama alone, all the impurities are removed, it being case, some of the masters, do not grant any other Activity (than that of spoken above).

Pathogenesis : Ayurveda : Yoga

According to Ayurveda, disease is a loss of equilibrium in body i.e. in harmonious functioning of the so called dosas. Which come in contact with other bodily constituents (dhatus) and when find a weakened spot, manifest in form of disease. However, all this is traced back to Gastric Fire, roughly corresponding to Metabolism in modern science. While yoga goes still further and maintains that this is not the ultimate cause. This too is due to a disturbance and alteration in the rhythmic respiration, pattern in an individual, sequentially causing physiological and functional changes and finally disturbs also the whole set up of penta gonic scheme of Vayu running through and working in the overall net-work of Nadi. The result is disease. From yogic point of view the same would be the case for any other pathy. Even the concept of time of administering medication is based on this pentagonal scheme of Vayu with its spacio functional nature in body. Precisely, then, yoga as a therapy ascribes and translates or relates all concepts of diagnosis, etiology, disease, pathogenesis, not speak of physiology and treatment and also, dose, in pranic terms and lift them to pranic level. Here is then one of the greatest example of the principle of practicability brevity and economy.

This brings us to the unfathomed esoteric, yet the most scientific one too, school and tradition in India, found expressed here and there throughout a vast range of its literature, yet epitomized in a small treatise under the name 'Siva-svarodaya' or 'svarodaya' or 'pavanavijaya'.

Svarodaya : Scientific objectively

It states that, in its natural sense, the pranic movement is cyclic and that it is parallel to the solar movement and cycle in the universe. In man, however, if he understands the secret and supranatural working of each of them and their mutual relation, action and interaction, he can be a master of it and govern it more effectively to transform his life within and without, eventually. This is the aim of this science. By acquiring additional knowledge of other branches of Indian sciences, he can achieve eventually perfection even in other fields. It is, in principle, a science of sciences, out. of place nowhere and at home everywhere. In its gradational range, all the sciences are covered one after another.

The pranic movement, accordingly, is not only from one nasal cavity to the other one, in horizontal direction, but also from one point to the other in its vertical direction. The most important point of this vertical and horizontal movement of prana is that all the thirty six tattvas appear and disappear cyclically in order, with prana as the agent. Svarodaya, practically comprises all these tattvas in to its penta gonic scheme, point or a sticks, to only, the pancha mahabhutas as a reference point or a scale.

The pancha-mahabhutas, because of their macrocosmic and microcosmic, individual distinction, have in body, different locations, forms, bija-varnas (letters) colours, volumes, force, levels, lengths, directions, solstice duration, sequence, and therefore also different biophysical as well as bio-chemical, in a word psycho-somatic effects. It would be difficult at present to find out the limit and scope of this science.

But if a team work of scientists from different disciplines begins, the svarodaya is there to enlighten the man, or rather a living being.

The ultimate aim of Svarodaya is to arrive at and establish in the Highest Reality characterised by Satcitndananda, It is the self-realisation and the liberation.

However, achieving this or any other ulterior goal, could be made possible only when, the prana. instead of moving through Pida or Pingla moves through Susumna, and at the end arrives at the highest point of perfection of the unmani state, (wherein the mind has been completely quelled and is crossed beyond), above the head, which is called the 16th (sometimes 17th Kala of the Moon), the Amrtakala, Digit - the Immortal.

At each and every stage or a phase of the pranic movement, there take place the bio-physical, bio-chemical as well as psychological changes in the body. This would even be an objective proof for the scientific investigation.

Svarodaya : Subjective and objective comparison

India has developed subjectively objective methods of assessment. We would confine here only the svarodaya (Respiration). Modern science looks at Respiration as a mechanism, a functional system, a complex of physical, psychological, neural, hormonal factors together, and has evolved out and developed many sophisticated objective tests for its assessment. It has yet, however, not paid any heed to ancient Indian yogic parameters of ascertaining psychosomatic results. It is also not aware, nor does it find necessity to accept and investigate Indian concepts of Nadi system (like Ida, Pingala and Susumna), pancha - pranas, panchamahabhutas, tanmatras, nor even Ayuvedic concepts of Dosa, Dhatu, srotas, etc. As for Respiration is concerned, it has not yet recognised and nor does it attach importance and significance to length, volume, force, direction etc., the Indian parameters. Moreover, Yoga is a union of interdisciplinary systems. The investigation in yoga, then, must take into account, all these points, and must eventually evolve out, methods of interpreting modern data and investigation in terms of Indian concepts and parameters. Indian concepts are such as to provide a different and good ground, for modern science with its all sophisticated equipment to accelerate the speed of its progress, and would be much profited by it.

A little pondering on the foregoing points would, surely convince a scientific mind and provide, objective clues, from yogico-tantric texts and Ayuvedic systems, and other related systems, to build up a parallel model of Prana, to Mind, by using modern parameters.

Vāk

At the very outset it must be noted that the metaphysical nature of Sanskrit language and its grammar, are not yet known even to the great scholars of repute, not to speak of others. And even if a few admits its existence, most of them are sure to ignore it if not even sure to condemn it. To be precise the very basal concept of macrocosm and microcosm is embedded in the Sanskrit Grammar. The sixteen Svaras. (vowels), represent prakrti (Creative Principle), the yoni (female organ) while thirty six vyanjanas (consonants), the purusa (the Male Principle) or the Bija (the Seed), both by conjugation give birth to Word-Creation. There too hrasva svaras represent Male Gender as well as Male Principle, while the dirgha one represent Female Gender and Female Principle. They also indicate, respectively the Sun, the right nadi- pingala etc., and Moon, the left nadi - Ida etc. The vowels r, r, l, l on the other hand represent neutral Gender, the Agni or the nadi-susumna, even therein, the short ones or masculine-neutral and the long ones are feminine neutral. Moreover the groups of consonants are classified also

as per pancha-mahabhutas scheme. Thus the five groups ka, ca, ta, pa with five letters each, in the order of pṛthvi, apa, teja, vayu and akasa. These broad groups in sequence correspond to the evolved out from a, i, u, e, o. In this connection one may note the Pāṇini's sutras : akuha visarjaniyānām kanthah etc. which clearly shed light on this esoteric aspects. Out of these five basic vowels, e and o again are but combinations of a + i and a + u, respectively. There are thus three original vowels. viz. a, u, i, termed are anuttara. iccha and unmesa. (The ultimate, the Wish and the Awakening), and are supposed to be the three basic Saktis (Powers), which make the creation possible. Here too it is a, the Anuttara, from which iccha. (i) and unmesa (u) evolve out. Thus a is the source of Creation both of Speech and world. Gita also says : 'aksaranam akaro'smi : (of letter, I am 'a'). Even Aitareya Brahmana says that a is the only vyahrti, the Utterance, which all the rks yajus, sāman, chandas, enter and merge. The detailed and elaborate discription is found in Tantraloka (of Abhinavagupta), Vijnana-bhairava etc.

Above all it must be noted that grammar is of what is called the Vaikari Speech, the grossest and lowest kind of Speech of Sanskrit out of its four in all. Only this kind of Speech is the one that man speaks, and is the subject of grammer. The other three are the subject matter of Tantra, Yoga and other related texts. Even then the so-called grammatical technical terms like prakṛti. purusa. pratyaya. alpaprāna. māhaprāna and above all anusvāra and visarga, nay the very siva sutrani etc. are said to be having also secret meanings and significances. This becomes more obvious when one looks into the Nandikesvara-Kārikā of Nandikesvara. (with upamanyu's commentary), who was contemporary to Panini and both of whom belonged to Kashmira Saiva school.

Svarodaya and Vāk.

In the very beginning, tantrasara states that Speech is nothing but an articulated breath. It is, in fact, breath modified, and therefore science of breath i.e. svarodaya is also the base of Speech. It is also mentioned that Speech is also cyclic and also that it is connected with Spacio-temporal cycles besides that of svara. At time of and along with the begining of svara. the cyclic order of Speech also begins. Sanskrit gram mer consists of 50 letters (alphabets). The arrangement is based on pancha-mahabhutas scheme. The unit of svarodaya is 60, while that of Speech is 50. Thus 60 and 50 are the parallel cycles of svara and Speech respectively, with 10 digits margin between the two. This cyclic unit of Speech is said to be analogous to arahatta-ghata-cakra.

1. A device of water-pots attached to the wheel on the well which works with the natural course of wind. This is called a natural course (sahaja).

Vijnāna Bhairava, one of the authoritative work of Kashmira Saivism, bringing out the salient features of Speech, from advaitic point of view says 'from Absolute has evolved out Bindu, from Bindu, Nada and from Nada kala. Bindu is said to be anusvara, while Nāda is said to be visarga on Vaikhari level in Grammar. Anusvāra is that wherein, articulation has not yet taken place, while visarga is that which has already left (the range of) Vaikhari, Thus Vaikhari has only an interim manifestation, and the whole of such Speech-phenomenon, or the Speech-creation is but a play of Absolute through bindu and visarga i.e. advaita (Bindu), and dvaita (visarga). Before and after these, is the same Brahman. This is represented by ham (am) and sah (ah). In fact am and ah are represented by ham and & sah (hamsah, Brahman in the form of Divine Swan), or otherwise soham. Am stands for surya or prāna, the latter for Moon or apana etc., moving through pingala and ida respectively and also cyclically, so as, ultimately, to unite into susumna at the Brahmarandhra at the top of the head. This aspect has, with more details, been dealt with by Vijnana Bhairava. It indicates that svaras have vertical as well as horizontal expansion. The vertical movement is termed as anudātta (short), svarita (retroflex), and a udatta (acute) accents,

## SIGNIFICANCE OF ART IN INDIA

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origination from heart. throat and head respectively; horizontally they are termed – as hrasva (short), dirgha (long) and pluta (prolonged). By use of either one of this scheme, one can meet the Absolute. This is the main reason why Vedas are recited by employing these devices of the svara.

There are in brief the main ideas behind the concepts of Kāla, Prāna and Vāk. By developing the model of prana, one can dive deep into the esoteric, occult and sacred aspect of Indian Culture.

1. Susumna represents Agni and udāna. As a whole it is termed as a jāpa gāytri, or hamsa-gayatri. This is the essence of Mantra lore.

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