



Contemporary Upanishadik Aspects About The Concept Of Prana

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Introduction:

We come across many concepts like the Brahma, the Mahabhutas, and the Prana etc. while studying the ancient Indian literature. Here we are going to discuss the contemporary Upanishadik aspects about one of these concepts, named as the Prana. There is more enthusiasm for studying the practical aspects such as the Prana; still contemporary writers have balanced the systematisation and the essence of the subtle human consciousness aspects.

In this paper we are going to discuss the lineage of Upanishads and the concept of Prana explained by literary aspects on it. The contemporary writers have explained in their writings the different aspects of the subject above and interrelation of these things with the basic structure of knowledge of Vedas, Upanishads and the Prana.

We can deduce some conclusions from the concepts of wakefulness, consciousness as the vital points of Upanishadik literature, limitations, and applications of it in today's world.

Keywords: Panch-Prana, Adya-Mithun, Shruti, Prajaapti, Puritat, Lokas, Yoga, Ayurveda.

Problem Statements:

1. Has The Concept Of Prana In Upanishads are being studied in contemporary period?
2. What are the basis of their study and conclusions?
3. What are the peculiar contemporary aspects exploring the analysis of the concept of Prana?

Objectives:

1. To know the meaning of Upanishads.
2. To know the Upanishadik aspects about the concept of the Prana.
3. To learn about the contemporary writers who have explored the concept of Prana.
4. To learn the study methods and its implications while studying the concept of Prana.
5. To deduce conclusions from the study about the concept of Prana

Introduction Of The Concepts:

A: The Upanishads:

Civilization is a product of culture and human endeavour. Vedas are our first human attempt to script these attempts. Diversified philosophies of Indian continent are usually classified as Vedic, Epic, and Sutra period. Upanishads carry heritage of at least 3000 years. They are the end part of Vedic scriptures, so recognised as Ved+anta i.e. Vedanta. It has been the quest of educationists of every era to include the essence of Upanishads for the current generation in palatable form. The earliest Upanishads were compiled by 500 B.C., but they continued to be written for thousand years after it. The Buddha closely followed the early Upanishad period¹. The

Brahma Sutra (200 A.D.), Bhashya (8th, 10th, 12th, and 14th century), and Darshana (modern period) are the efforts to systematize Upanishad teachings. The Prana is one of the essential concept evolved in vedic literature.

B: The Prana:

Upanishadik literature has discussion of the philosophical questions in its own way. For example, sensing-process (consciousness) and Prana are peculiar concepts Indian philosophy having their own method of interrelating the structure, function and ethics.

In the first Marathi tika (commentary) Moholkar explains, dissolution of sense organs in vocal expression and ultimately through mind in the Prana is essential to outreach, expound these god is the central theme of Upanishadik literature. 'This is the way to master the organs and is too the counterpart of this practice and theory'². Mr Narayan Tarkar while explaining Prashnopanishad explains, "the Prana from the sun bless the eyes of the organism which may be termed as knowledge. And the Prana of the earth i.e. Apana is the gravitational power responsible for proper holding and movements of the body vessel"³.

Prana is expressed in five ways based on their actions and is called as Panch-Prana. Antariksh is described as area or distance between the sun and the earth is termed as equalising force between the action and knowledge. It is the Samana (one of the five Prana) who balances the Prana and the Apana. We may correlate this as the interrelation between the kinetic energy and the

static energy. We may add centripetal and centrifugal forces as *Vyana* and *Udana* in his Indian action-bunch of five *Prana*, i.e. *Panch-Prana*. Through the action plane they are related to the body and structure; while through knowledge plane they lead us to different *Lokas* and States or consciousness.

Vedik texts (*Atharva-Veda*) including *Upanishads* relates food and *Prana* directly. Still only doing karma means offering rice to ancestors isn't sufficient; but we need to be able to walk on the path of both, the action (*adya-mithun*) and decisions through knowledge (*adya-sankalp*). At birth of the nature (*kalp-arambh*) there was an undefined structure (*bhakat-akar*); and it's the real meaning of the god, the sun. The space and time existed at once with this form is the experience or assumption of Indian philosophy says Moholkar. If we are able catch and follow this assertion, we can reach the even zenith called *viraja-loka* (being totally impersonal) next to *brhma-loka* (attending the first man) says Moholkar.

C: The Contemporary Aspects:

After the two World wars, the global peace and neutrality was the essential thing. Earlier for the rest of the world and later for the Indians, the earlier learners of the western systematization were eager to make available the ancient wisdom of the *Vedas*. The *Prana* is the basic instinct of existence. Among the turmoil of war and renaissance made thinkers to search over its trajectories, meaning and references available. *Upanishads* showed a ray of light in this darkness.

D: The Contemporary Writers Studying The Upanishads:

From Persian translations of *Upanishads*, through the French, German, and English editions, this spread of modern methodological study and translation continued until the era of transcultural experts like S. Radhakrishnan, Max Muller etc. in first order. Gita Press, Gorakhpur and *Yug Nirman Yojana* of Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya etc. made it available the Hindi translations for current generation. For deep studies we can follow Ray Bahadur Zalim Sinha and *Vishnu Tirth Paramhansa* etc. Chintaman Bhanu, Hari Bhagwat, M.G. Vaidya, Vishnu Bapat etc., has also wrote Marathi translations in reader friendly manner.

The concept of *Prana* was discussed as a part of tool to achieve the *Upanishadik* goals in Vedik texts and not as basic energy principle material as discussed in medicine (*Ayurveda*).

E: The Study Aspects And Conclusions:

Systematization is the core part of modern generation or culture and deification is the concurrent part of the ancient. Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Gurudev Ranade, S. Radhakrishnan were pillars of this movement in English literature with respect to India.

Some important questions discussed in *Upanishads* are about the cosmology, the consciousness, and methodologies of salvation. *Upanishadik* has a conglomerating period of weaning but sharpened phase of *Shrutis* on one hand and to address the changing or expected to be changed needs of the society.

From lacunae they found like instabilities in oral tradition, old types of manuscripts, discreteness in verses, anonymity etc.; they started to move ahead and the world class texts and traditions came into existence. Being the practical and subjective concept the *Prana* still was like the open secret as well as mysterious for scholars.

In the earlier phase, writers were just translating the verses. Thirteen *Upanishad* by Robert Hume, *Upanishad* for lay readers by C Rajagopalachari, and *Upanishads: an anthology* by D S Sarma were a few examples of them. In that explanation the meaning was looking like overwhelming promises due to inappropriate interpretation and lack of interdisciplinary systematization. *Gita Dharma Mandal*, *Anand-Ashram*, the Theosophical Society, *Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan* etc., promoted *Upanishad* study. In today's language its alike digitalization on one hand and promoting its application through IKS (Indian Knowledge System) or TKDL (Traditional Knowledge depositories) on the other hand.

Contributions:

Starting of the study of the concept of *Prana* was introduced later in earlier philosophical endeavours. Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded the *Bramhno Sabha* and translated many a *Upanishads* in English. Many a social reforms has been boon to modern India from his lineage like *Sati-bandi*, agriculture tax reforms etc. Rabindranath Tagore, the first Nobel laureate of India, continued the interest with the foundation of *Tattwabodhini Sabha* and *Shantiniketan*, a modern open school education system expressing the *Upanishads* in urban times.

Sir S. Radhakrishnan was first to interpret *Upanishads* in (physiological and psycho-scientific way) the way Indians think and tried to relate them in modern or western context. He mentioned his logical opinion on some differences or discrepancies among them. For example, There is no reference of rebirth in *rigveda*.⁴ 'Non availability of references of rivers in the *Rigved* make him to conclude that *Upanishad* were appointed to make material for establishing theory of rebirth only.

Radhakrishnan mentions, "When man questioned first time, the ancient era simultaneously started in Greece, China, and India. That time is termed as the pre-Buddhist and Vedanta time (800-700 B.C.), Karl Jaspers Axial Era (800-300)"⁵. Gurudev Ranade too state, '*Rigved* to *Upanishad* is

same like Greek Homer to Anaximander; means natural forces are personified⁶.

Devi Prasad Chattopadhyay writes in an epic book *Lokayat*. He states, isolated limited the followings of a tradition and ignoring the studying the contemporary branches of philosophy hindered the progress of Indian philosophy.⁷ He has drafted a vast canvas of pre-Vedic period and traditions to post-Vedic literature and generalization. From these writings we can have another angle to look at the Vedic and Upanishadic period in systematic manner. Along with this 'The Early Buddhist Jurisprudence' by Durga Bhagawat help us to relate social-cultural interrelations and their trajectories.

Surendranath Dasgupta a modern Vyas of the Indian academic philosophy mentions in his book *A History of Indian Philosophy*, the peculiarities of *Upanishad* rarely found in concurrent global arena. Dialogue method is the strong point of *Upanishad* unlike found in Buddha, Jain, and other Vedic literature. Aspect of the concept 'the Purusha' in *Upanishads* seems to be different from the concurrent in *Rigved*. Referring to Dussen he mention *Upanishads* as mysterious literature. Space, time and cause-effect relation are the later explanations of Dasgupta in this context of *Upanishad*.

Gurudev Ranade mentions in his book 'A constructive survey of *Upanishadic* philosophy' that, 'the *Yoga* and the *Ayurveda* was develop in the latter *Upanishad* period.'⁸

Vishnu Tirth Paramhansa has wrote a Hindi translation of *Anandgiri* commentary on *Shankar Bhashya* of *Prashnopsnihad*. It has explanations of terminologies and concepts in ancient scriptures viz., the definition of the word the god (*Dev*). It is, 'the working conceptual possibility of living principle is the god (*Dev*)'. The example of street rope-dancer (*Dombari*) and people on scaffold (*machan*) for the functioning of *Vayu* or *Pran-Apan Vayu*.

अभिवदनदीव्यवहारसिद्ध्यार्थं चेतनत्वं
संभवावयितुं देव।

'Abhivadanadivvyavaharsidhyarth chetantva sambhavayitum'⁹ - (*Prashnopsnihad* 2/2).

Pandit Motilal Shastri has wrote *Vidnyan-Bhashya* on *Atharvavediy Upanishad*. He has discussed the concepts from Vedic angle. He starts the division of the ultimate from the *Rut* means the nature law or circle and the *Satya* means the truth. He defines *Asur Acharyas* from *Balvik* etc too. Concurrently *Sadashiv Shastri Bhide* in his book *Upanishatprakash* started an expedition of translating the *Upanishad* in regional or local Marathi language. Referring to all three commentaries on it namely *Shankar-Bhashya*, *Ramanujan's Vishishtadwaiti Bhashya*, and *Madhva Bhashya*, he has explained the interrelation of

commentaries with respect to original *Shrutis*. *Shruti* is the text originally found in *Veda* and *Vaidik* literature. At the end of book he has also mentioned his personal opinions too on these three *Bhashyas* on *Prashnopsnihad*. *Bhide Shastri* explains, 'though sense or acting organs gets stagnated or standstill, one can still access the consciousness (or displacement, the *Vayu* principal) though the *Agni* principal before being *Pran-Apan*'¹⁰. The *Brahma* doesn't get generated, but it just gets expressed or perceived as we open the lid of ignorance.

Manthachali Marathi commentary written by *Vyankatesh Moholkar* explained the *Prashnopsnihad* as if it has been happening in current time. Interesting explanation of Moholkar is that he explains, '*Praja* as infinite imaginations exacerbating on the substratum of the mind, and not as just creatures or existents'¹¹. Expectation less solitude is *Prajapati*. *Narayan Tarkar* has also wrote book in Marathi on *Upanishad*. In preface, the person funding this project emphasized *Prashnopsnihad* writings are the real famous rituals called as *Satyanarayan* popular in Indian sentiment. *Bhanu* seems to be following *Dwait-vad* of *Madhva* still though sparingly, he seems to include the current terminologies like electron to explain the *Prana* in his views.

Under the leadership of *Limaye, V. P., & Wadekar, R. D.* at *Vaidik Sanshodhan Mandal* of *Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapith Poona*, the book 'Eighteen Principal *Upanishads* Vol. 1. *Upanishadic* text with parallels from extent Vedic literature, exegetical and grammatical notes' was published. *Dr. Vartak* explained the scientific way and personal meditation experiences.

Discussion:

This is the beauty of contemporary literature that the expectations of the current listeners or readers are equally addressed as like the rules of the science which he or she is going to learn. As like *Gurudev Ranade* relate *Prana-Rayi* with Aristotelian matter-form doctrine. *Bhide Shastri* promote 'the *Sansad*,' the discussing place as meaning of *Upanishad* with reference to *Late Rajaram Shastri Bhagawat*.

Contemporary literature balances between the core paradox of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. *Gurudev Ranade* states in constructive survey of *Upanishadic* philosophy that, "for knowledge though *Upanishads* stands against the *Brahmanical* philosophy, they rarely exhibit this halting attitude towards ritualism."¹²

Contemporary literature led us to different neutral opinions at one place with references and with the inclining thoughts of the writer too. *Gurudev* states all four theories of sleep, before declaring the *Prana* as the ultimate substratum or final absorbent. He states it along with opinions of *Eastern, Max Muller, Dussen, and Descartes* of 'The

sole or resting artisan while sleep goes at *Puritat* arteries, pericardium, surrounding body, pineal gland'¹³, exemplify with kite like theories.

Contemporary literature provides a universal timeline. Like Gurudev states *Yam-Niyam* were added later and the Yoga references were present in *Upanishads* prior to Bhagavad-Gita. Physiological studies dominated with the Yoga and full-fledged medicine system, the Ayurveda thereafter.

It's natural to have difference or distance in the time span of thought generation and being available the written text on it. Bhide Shastri states it may vary from 24 to 400 years naturally. This also applies to the difference or distance of time in the text and philosophical repercussions on it and its documented version too. At the beginning of preface in the book *Principle Upanishads* S. Radhakrishnan says, 'Problem of human still exists doesn't mean Upanishad is failed in its teachings'. So knowing, learning, and walking on this path is the goal, we can conclude. Russell states that, 'philosophers from Egypt and Greek and tradition interpret the role of Middle-East in the making of modern world philosophy and culture'¹⁴ Similarly while explaining the references of *Vedik* scriptures, *Motilal Shastri* depicts that the vast arena of *Aryan* concepts of *Lokas* and *Vedik* symbols/deities spread unto the middle east.

Conclusion:

It seems from time to time that nature repeats itself in circular fashion. From current tilting of the globe towards ancient knowledge doesn't seem to be the first attempt. Attempts to make *Upanishads* as Central place of intellectual psyche was the dream of these contemporary writer too. Not only due to the post war situation or the freedom fight struggle, but also due to the inherent expectations of *Upanishads* were present in making these people to think themselves as a global citizen.

If we had a look in the book 'The History of Western Philosophy' by Russell and simultaneously go through the *Vidnyan-Bhashya* of *Motilal Shastri* on *Atharvavediy Upanishad*; we found that the concepts and terminologies as mirror images across the globe. It needs to be noted that, despite being these two text from totally unrelated environments they are leading us almost to the same facts.

We can deduct from the whole history of *Upanishads* since inception that, the mere study, or reading without following by heart won't benefit the expectations from these powerful scriptures. Since the philosophy is neither interested in actual field work of a visionary Shri. Pandurang Shastri Athavale, nor in the mere discussions of words and traditions; but is interested in the afterthoughts, learning, the stream of thoughts behind accepting-refuting of the actions following the understanding these thoughts. So the critical evaluation of these

contemporary literature is the need of time to shape the better future and nurture the good practices in the field of philosophy too.

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