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Review Article

VACHO AGNI: AN ANALYTICAL ORIENTATION OF ASSOCIATION OF VAK (SPEECH) & AGNI Amrutha B Ballal^{1*}, Shreevathsa BM²

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ABSTRACT

Vak or speech is the main feature in human, that makes him unique from other species. This is the *Karma* of *Vakindriya* in the body. Speech is exhibited in three different levels in the body, as it is mentioned in *Sushruta Samhita*, i.e., *Adhyathmika* level of expression of Speech is *Swara*, *Adhiboutika* level of expression is *Vak/Vachana* and *Adidaivika* level of expression of speech is *Agni*. In this context, *Vacho-Agni* is been said, that specifies *Agni* as the Deity of Speech. Similar expression of referring *Agni* to *Vak* is also available in the texts of *Upanishads* and Purana. In the current paper, the association of *Agni* with the speech was analytically assessed in all three different planes and its importance was framed. This comprehensive information of the body in three levels, is required to get the true knowledge and to attain final salvation.

INTRODUCTION

Speech is one of the unique abilities of the Man, that distinguishes him from other species. It is a potent instrument for expressing one's thoughts, feelings, and emotions. The melody, tone, and pitch of the voice play an important role in the success of the speech. Swara is the fundamental element of this speech, which is regarded as Vakindriya Karma (the motor organ of speech). All Indian literary works view's the body as their foundation for expression, describe the body's anatomy at the outset, and view Moksha (Salvation) as their ultimate objective. This idea links man to the natural world and celestial world. Ayurvedic science, in addition to explaining physical and pathological factors, it also addresses philosophical issues. Adhyatmika, Adiboutika, and Adidaivika levels are the three stages of understanding one's body that Sushrut Acharya has described in his text.[1] In the present paper, the relationship between Vak and Agni will be framed, as it analyses Vak, or speech component of the body, under these three domains.

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OBIECTIVES

- To conceptually analyse the concept of 'Vacho Agni' w.s.r to Adhyatmika, Adiboutika, Adidaivika view of Vak (speech).
- To analyse the practical utility of the concept 'Vacho Agni'.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials

The source of materials for the present paper is taken from the classical texts of Ayurveda, Sangita Rathna kara, Upanishads, Sanskrit Dictionaries and relevant sources from articles.

Methodology

Firstly, the concept of 'Vacho agni' was analysed thoroughly under the view of Sushruta Samhita. Similar related contexts in the text were also reviewed. The understanding of Swara- Vak, their types, Utpatti (origin) etc were considered from the texts of Sangita Rathna kara. Later the views of Upanishads or Purana were also considered that would support our view on 'Vacho agni'. Lastly the relation between Vak- Agni, under the view of Adhyatmika, Adhiboutika, Adidaivika levels were framed.

OBSERVATIONS- RESULTS

Vacho agni, is the main term mentioned in the commentary by Dalhana Acharya in the 1st chapter of Shareera stana. This chapter explains about the formation of universe and the man with the 24 Tatwas

in common in them.^[2] Here, amongst 24 *Tatwas* (components), the external exhibition of 13 *Tatwas* are being explained in the form of *Adhyathmika*, *Adiboutika* and *Adidaivika* view. *Vakindriya*, one of the *Karmendriya* is also explained under these three views

as *Adhyathmikatwa* of *Vakindriya* is the *Swara*, *Adiboutikatwa* of *Vakindriya* is the *Vak* (Speech) and *Adidaivikatwa* of *Vakindriya* is *Agni*.[1] Same will be discussed further.

Table 1: Three Components with their relation to Vakindriya

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S.No	3 Components	Meaning as per Dalhana	w.s.r to Vakindriya	
1	Adhyathmika	Yatra stita (main presentation within the body)	Swara or the voice	
2	Adiboutika Yatrastham prakashyam (external expression) Vak or the		Vak or the Speech	
3	Adidaivika Yath anugrahena ca prakashayanti (protected or Agnexhibited with the help of celestial component)		Agni or the fire	

Adhyathmika level of understanding Vak is by - Swara or the Voice.

Swara or the voice is the primordial form of speech. This is the sound that is produced within the body and forms the base for *Vak*. This is also considered as the *Nada* in the body which is said as the base for *Sharira* and for the universe.^[3]

Swara can be defined as the modified version of Shruti (tone of voice).[4] These are also known as Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Da, Ni; Sapta Swara.[5] Nada is said to be the basic component of Swara, which is made up of the

Prana (vital force) and the *Agni* (fire) as its preliminary component to get exhibited as the *Swara*.^[6]

There are multiple views for the *Swara Utpatti* in Indian classical texts like Sangita rathnakara, Tarka Sangraha, Paniniya Sutra, Ayurveda etc. *Swara Utpatti* as per Sangita Rathnakara is, when *Athma* wants to express itself, it triggers the *Mana*, which in turn triggers the *Agni* and the *Vayu* in the body and enters the *Brahma granti* and moves upwards into *Nabhi*, *Hridaya*, *Kanta*, *Murdha*, *Asya* and exhibits different forms of sound.^[7] Table 2 depicts the different sites and the different forms of exhibition of *Swara*.^[8]

Table 2: Depiction of the different Stana (Site) and Forms of Swara

S.no	Stana of Swara	Form of Swara
1	Nabhi (umbilical)	<i>Su<mark>k</mark>shma</i> (subtle sound)
2	Hridaya (heart)	Atisukshma (very subtle sound)
3	Kanta (throat)	Prushta (manifested sound)
4	Murdha (head)	Aprushta (unmanifested sound)
5	Asya (mouth)	Kritrima (artificial sound)

According to Ayurveda, *Swara Utpatti* can be framed using both collective and dispersed information. *Akasha Mahabhuta* is said to be the main component for *Swara Utpatti*,^[9] *Vayu* is main character, that is responsible for all the activities of the body and same is required for the propagation of *Swara*.^[10] Multiple components involved in the *Swara Utpatti* are the *Udana Vayu*,^[11] *Prana Vayu*,^[12] *Swara Vahi Dhamani*,^[13] *Talwadi* parts (palate, nose, tongue etc)^[14] that helps us to understand *Swara Utpatti*.

Understanding of the voice production as per contemporary view; respiration, phonation, resonance

and articulation are considered as the major process in voice production. The inspired air, is exhaled by creating the vibration in the vocal folds, which results in voice. This voice then passes via different areas, such as the nasal cavity and the oral cavity, to achieve varied forms, pitches, and tones and exhibits voice. [15]

There are different forms of *Swara*, based on their site of origin,^[8] their mode of exhibition,^[16] based on their condition of expression,^[17] as per Sangita Rathnakara and Ayurveda which is given in the Table No. 3 and Table. No. 4.

Table 3: Depiction of Different types of Swara

S.no	Swara based on the site of	Swara based on the mode of	Ayurveda (Condition
	production	exhibition (Pitch of the voice)	of expression)
1	Sukshma (subtle sound)	Mandra (low pitched)	Prakrita swara
2	Atisukshma (very subtle sound)	Madhya (mid pitched)	Vikrita Swara
3	Prushta (manifested sound)	Tara (high pitched)	
4	Aprushta (unmanifested sound)		
5	Krutrima (artificial sound)		

Table 4: References on *Prakrita* and *Vikrita Swara* in Ayurveda^[17]

S.no	Prakrita Swara	Vikrita Swara
1	<i>Gruta guna - Swara varna prasada</i> (Cha.su 13/14)	Context of <i>Sadvritta</i> - One should avoid Speaking in <i>Uccha Swara, Nicha Swara, Viswara.</i> - (Cha. su 8/24)
2	Swara varna balaprada - Barhi mamsa guna - (Cha.su 27/65)	Swara bheda - is Swedya vyadhi- (Cha.su 14/20)
3	Charanayudha mamsa - Swara bodhana (Cha.su 27/66)	Shonitaja vikara - Swara kshaya (Cha.su 24/15)
4	Madhya varga - Swara varna Vishodhana (Cha. su 27/185)	Ati Madhura rasa sevana - leads to Swara pranasha (Cha.su 26/43)
5	Dhatu samya laxana- Swara varna yoga (Cha. vi 8/89)	Raktapitta purva rupa - Swara bheda (Cha.ni 2/6)
6	In the context of Sara- Meda Sara - Sneha yukta Swara Majja Sara - Snigdha Swara Shukra Sara - Prasanna, Snigdha Swara (Cha. vi 8/103)	Raktapitta Upadrava - Swara bheda (Cha.ni 2/7)
7	Garbha Athmaja bhava-Swara varna Vishesha (Cha. sha. 3/10)	Shosha samprapti - Swara avasada (Cha.ni 6/5)
8	Garbha Sathmyaja bhava- Swara Sampath (Cha. sha. 3/11)	Sharama janya Shosha laxana - Swara bheda (Cha.ni 6/7)
9	Kumara Ayu Pariksha- Assess for Snigdha, Gambira, Dheera Swara- Signs of Paramayu Bala. (Cha. sha. 8/51)	Shosha kshaya janya Shosha laxana - Swara bheda (Cha.ni 6/9)
10	Rasayana labha- Prabha Varna Swara Auodarya (Cha. chi 1/1/8)	Vishamashana janya Shosha laxana - Swara bheda (Cha. ni 6/10)
11	Indrokta Rasayana Phalashruti- Swara varna Sampath. (Cha. chi 1/4/6)	Ekadasha rupa yakshma - Swarabheda (Cha.ni 6/14)
12	Vajikarana Yoga Labha – Bala Varna Swarakara. (Cha. chi 2/1/41)	Vikruta Swara- Indriya Stana - (Cha. Ind. 1/25)
13	Madya guna - Swara varna prasada (Cha. chi 24/62)	Apaswara- Vikruta Swara- (Cha. Ind. 9/14)
14	Prakrita Swara- (Cha. ind. 1/14)	Yakshama- Kshataksheena laxana – Swarabheda (Cha.chi 8/16)
15		Pishachi Unmatta laxana - Binna ruksha Swara (Cha. chi 9/20)
16		<i>Upadrava</i> of <i>Udara roga- Swara bheda-</i> (Cha. chi 13/49)
17		Sahaja arsha laxana- Kshama, Binna, Sakta, Jarjara Swara- (Cha.chi 14/8)
18		Kaphaja pandu laxana - Vak Swara graha- (Cha.chi 16/24)
19		Rajayakshma Laxana - Types of Swarabheda - (Cha.chi 8/53-55)
20		Pakshagata Laxana- Swara bheda – (Cha. chi 28/41)

Adhiboutika level of understanding Vak is by - Vachana. Vachana/Vak or the Speech is the Adhiboutika level of Vak. Speech is the modified or the expanded form of Voice used to convey the words.

Speech is the systematic arrangement of words that expresses a specific meaning along with emotions.

Vak is characterized as the one that is employed to convey the ideas. [18] Sangita Rathnakara defines Vak as a group of Nada that produces the Pada (words), and a group of Pada that forms the Varna

(sentence). This *Varna*, or external expression, is known as *Vachana*.^[19]

Utpatti of Vak as per Ayurveda and Other classical texts are similar to that of Swara, with its extended presentations, in the form of Speech. The process of Vak initiates from the Swara, where in the Shiras, Vavu, Mana, Jihva-Danta-Oshta etc are involved. Two main Organs are required here for Speech production that differentiates Swara from Vak is, one is the *Mana* which is the *Ubhavendriva*^[20] useful for framing the Speech (Sense of Speech) and also for Production of Speech (Motor aspect of Speech). One more is the Jihva, which contains three Indriya's in it According to Acharya Gangadhara.[21] i.e., the Vakindriya (Motor functioning Speech), Sparshanendriya (Sensory perception of Speech), Rasanendriya (Emotional perception of Speech). All these in combination functions for the Speech production.

Vak Utpatti as per Contemporary science-Speech is one of the Higher mental functions. It is the verbal expression of the idea, which gives it a clear meaning. The three major steps of Speech productions are, Perception, Processing in higher mental, Production. It can be further elaborated as, Stage 1: Perception of specific words with visual, tactile, auditory and other sensation.

Stage 2: Higher order mental processing integrates the activity of neural circuits in the motor (Broca's) and sensory (Wernick's) areas, and appropriate sentences are constructed. Ultimately.

Stage 3: By the articulation of the muscles around the oral cavity the Speech is produced.^[22]

Types of *Vak* as per Ayurveda is *Prakrita* and *Vikrita Vachana*, reference of the same is being provided in the below Table. No.5.

Table 5: References of Prakrita Vachana and Vikrita Vachana in Ayurveda

S.no	Prakrita Vachana	Vikrita Vachana
1.	Rishi Vachana - Uttama Vachana (Cha.su 1/21)	Context of <i>Sadvritta</i> - One has to avoid, <i>Atimatra</i> , <i>Atidruta</i> , <i>Vilambita Vak</i> . (Ch. Su. 8/19)
2.	Dharaniya karma- ManoVak Kaya karma - (Cha. Su 7/26)	Ashasta Vachana- Parusha, Suchaka, Akala vak etc - (Cha. Su 7/28)
3.	Apta Vakya - Asamshaya, Nischita, Satya, Yathartha Vak. (Cha. Su 11/19)	Snehapana Vyapath- Vakyanigraha- (Cha. Su 13/76)
4.	Arsha tantra - Vakya of the tantra. (Cha. Su 30/19)	Mukata and Vak Sanga are explained in Vataja Nanatmaja Vyadhi. (Cha. Su 20/11)
5.	Vachana in Vada- Bahu Artha, Bahu vidha Vak- Shabda sandi yuktam (Cha. Su 8/155)	Abaddha Vak – Unmada laxana (Cha. Chi.9/6)
6.	Vaksiddi Pranati kanti- Rasayan labha. (Cha. Chi 1/1/8)	Manda Vak Chesta – Kapha Unmada laxana (Cha. Chi.9/14)
7.	Sadvachana, Sadvakya – reduces the Krodhaja Jwara. (Cha. Chi 3/322)	Atibhashana - Graha Unmada laxana (Cha. Chi 9/21)
8.		Alpa vak - Grahani Laxana (Cha. chi 15/16)

Adidaivika level of understanding Vak is by Agni.

The last method of comprehending the *Vak tatwa* is *Adidaivatwa*.

In order to safeguard the body and the spiritual cultur, ancient Indian philosophies connected the cos mos to human life by relating the body to celestial figur es. This is referred to as Somatic Spirituality or Cosmic Anatomy or Divine Anatomy.^[23]

In this manner, a single deity is assigned to oversee each body component, facilitating the passage of energy throughout the body to safeguard that specific organ. Here, *Agni* is considered as the *Adidaiva* of *Vak*.

There are multiple references in Indian Philosophical texts that states the interrelation between *Vak* and *Agni*, which is explained in the Table no.6.

Table 6: References related to Vacho-Agni as per Indian Classical texts

S.no	Reference	Quotes	Meaning
1	Taittiriya Upanishad, (1.5.1)	Agnervacaḥ prajayate	Speech is born out of Agni (fire)
2	Brahmasutras of Bhadarayana (1.2.24)	Vaco'gnernirmittatvat	Speech is created from <i>Agni</i> (fire)
3	Chandogya Upanishad (4.10.3)	Vaco vai agnerlokaḥ	Speech is indeed the world of <i>Agni</i> (fire)

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4	Shiva Purana, Rudra Samhita (4.9.13)	Vaco vai agnermukhe sthita	Speech is situated in the mouth of <i>Agni</i> (fire)
5	Bhagavad Gita, (10.37)	Dahyante papmanaḥ pavakena yathai-va shukraṃ Tatha vaco malaṃ dahyaṃ vag-vajreṇa ca duṣkṛtam	How fire purifies the gold, similarly, the fire of Speech (<i>Vak</i>) purifies the impurities of the soul. Although this verse doesn't directly state "Speech is derived from fire", it uses the metaphor of fire to describe the purifying power of Speech, implying a connection between the two.

Another comparable reference on the relations hip between *Vak* and *Agni* can be found in Ayurveda, n amely in the *Raksha Karma Shloka* of *Vrana*, where *Agni* is said to be safeguarding a person's *Jihva* (Tongue). [24]

According to the *Taittiriya Upanishad, Agni* is one of its *Adhibhuta* component and *Vak* is one of its *Adhyathma* component.

True wisdom would result from understanding this truth. [25] *Kena Upanishad* narrates *Vak* in different forms i.e., *Anabhyudita Vak* - Speech in Unuttered form. *Abhyudita Vak* - Speech in Uttered form which resides in the organ of Speech that is presided over by the deity i.e., *Agni*, this mere Knowledge alone is enough to achieve *Brahman*. [26]

According to Ramana Maharshi: The relationship between *Agni* and *Vak*. In order to manifest *Jivathma* and *Paramathma* for their union, he cites the necessity of comprehending *Agni* at the *Adhyathmik* and *Adhidaivik* levels. Here he cites, three different forms of *Agni* in *Adhyathmik* level. They are *Vak*, *Prana* and *Buddhi Agni* that is required for *Mantra yoga*, *Prana yoga* (*Pranayama*), *Dhyana yoga* respectively. One can achieve control over *Jivathma* (Self) with the u se of these three *Adhyathmik agni*.^[27]

DISCUSSION

Adhyathmika, Adiboutika and Adidaivika are the three different ways of expression of an individual. These three together represents the completeness in an individual, i.e., Adhyathmika level speaks about the Unmanifested form in the Human body. Adiboutika level speaks about the Manifested form in the Human body. Adidaivika level speaks about the inter connectedness of body with the spiritual component. In the present paper, though Vacho-Agni i.e., relation of Speech with Agni is said in Adidaivika level, the same can also be elicited in other two levels, that will be discussed further.

Role of *Agni* in *Swara* (*Adhyathmika* level of *Vak*)

Swara is the inner innate component of the Speech. Nada is the Key ingredient of Swara, that is made up of Prana and Agni. Without Agni, there is no

Nada. First site of exhibition of Nada is from Nabhi, which is again considered as the Mula stana (Main site) of Agni in the body as per Ayurveda. In the context of Prakrita Swara, intake of some of the Ahara varga's like Gruta, Mamsa, Madhya, Rasayana etc. are said to be imparting good Swara in an individual. These food components, firstly come in contact with the Agni in the Jatara (Abdomen), gets digested and then bestows the Swara in an individual. In the context of Vikruta Swara, diseases like Raktapitta, Shosha, Yakshma, Udara, Arsha, Pandu etc. are found to be producing Swarabheda (Alteration in the normal voice). In all these diseases, the improper functioning of Agni can be elicited. Thus, Agni plays an important role in the production and maintenance of Swara in the body.

Role of Angi in Vachana (Adiboutika level of Vak)

Speech is the complex phenomenon happening in the body, which involves Mind, Respiration and Muscles of oral cavity for its complete expression. Role of *Prana Agni* (Breath) and *Buddhi Agni* (Mind) is clearly evident here i.e., *Prana Agni* helps in attaining the Modulation of breathing that is required for the Vak. The Pitch, Tone of the Speech, depends on the *Prana Agni*. *Buddhi Agni* indicates the intricate process of neural activity i.e., the processing of speech in Broca's and Wernick's area. The combined effect needs *Agni* to act there for the manifestation of Speech.

Role of Mana in the form of Buddhi Agni is highly noticeable in both Prakrita and Vikrita Vachana. Rishi Vachana, Apta Vachana, Tantra Vakya etc. are said to be the words of those seers, who had good control over their mind or they were having good Strength in their *Buddhi Agni*. Hence their Speech was considered as Superior. While the Improper form of Speech like Ashasta Vachana (Offensive speech), Suchaka Vachana (Back biting), Parusha Vachana (Harmful speech), Anruta Vachana (Lying) etc. and some of the disease conditions like Unmada and Graha Roga where in Abaddha Vachana (Inappropriate speech) etc. are seen, here one can observe the unfavourable consequence of *Buddhi Agni* or the Poor control over the Mind that has led to Improper speech. Satya (Truth) and Anruta (False) are considered as Vakindriya Karma,^[28] wherein Satya is related to Jyothi i.e., the Agni or light and Anruta is considered as Tama or Darkness (absence of Agni). This Highlights the need of Agni in a proper Speech. Thus, we can confirm that Agni in the form of Prana Agni and Buddhi Agni is very much important for the Formation and for the Quality of the Speech.

Understanding Adidaivika level of Vak i.e., Vacho Agni

In *Adidaivika* levels, *Vak* is related to *Agni. Adidaivika* levels speaks about the Celestial power which is responsible for that particular bodily component. This also creates the channel that carries energy through it. These *Vak* and *Agni* are the Symbolic representations or the one that shares similar features in them i.e., both *Vak* and *Agni* require *Vayu* for its Initiation and its Propagation. Both these in their normalcy stage do protect the body, but when hampered, would produce harmful effect to the body. Thus, by providing the due respect to the *Adidaivika* component, it imparts sacredness to the body and one can merely take care of the body. It helps for Self-realization and Spiritual growth.

Understanding Vacho-Agni under the view of Ayurveda

Acharya Sushruta has introduced this concept of understanding Sharira in Three different ways. This gives wide view over one's body. Similar explanation on considering the equality in body and deity is available in Upanishad's too. This says the close proximity of the concepts in all Ancient Indian Science's, which commonly aimed in protecting the body, understanding the truth of the life and finally attaining the salvation.

Connecting of the body to the universal entity, this concept is similar to Loka Purusha Saamya Siddhanta explained in Ayurveda. [29] By finding Loka in the Purusha or Understanding the Purusha as the Integral part of the *Loka* provides *Satva buddhi* (true knowledge of the body) that is very much required for attaining Moksha.[30] This Satya buddhi, is also necessary for attaining Naishtika Chikitsa or the *Vinopadha Chikitsa*^[31] i.e., the *Chikitsa* that removes the Upadha or Miseries. In Ayurveda, Dukha (Misery) are of three forms i.e., Adhyathmika, Adhiboutika, Adidaivika dukha. By understanding the Body in three different levels, one can win over these Trividha Dukha and attain good health that is required for final Salvation. Thus, by understanding the broader view of the concept of Vacho-Agni in three different levels and applying the same concept to all other 13 Tatwa's of the body would help in attaining the health through all means.

CONCLUSION

Here the status of Vak as Karmendriya was interpreted on three levels. First, as the Swara, which is the Unmanifested form of Speech in the body in the Adhvatmika level. Then comes the Vak. in the Adhiboutika stage, which is in the completely exhibited form in the body as the Speech. Finally, the *Adidaivika* level of Vak, that connects body with this Loka and Para Loka is by Agni. The Deity Agni is regarded as the protector of the Speech, because they share similarities not only in Adidaivika level, but its relation can also be framed in Adhvatmika, Adhiboutika levels too, Hence, we can conclude that Agni is very crucial for the Speech production. Maintaining Agni can aid in Maintaining the health in Physical (Adhyatmika), Physiological (*Adhiboutika*), Philosophical (*Adidaivika*) levels and helps in attaining final salvation.

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