

प्रश्नोपनिषत् Prashna Upanishad

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः । भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।
 स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवाꣳसस्तनूभिः । व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ।
 स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः । स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः ।
 स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः । स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ॥
 ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

om bhadraṁ karṇebhiḥ śṛṇuyāma deva bhadraṁ paśyemākṣabhiryajatrāḥ |
 sthirairaṅgaistuṣṭuvāṃsas tanūbhir vyaśema devahitaṁ yadāyuh ||
 svasti na indro vṛddhaśravāḥ svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvavedāḥ |
 svasti nastārksyo ariṣṭanemiḥ svasti no bṛhaspatirdadhātu ||
 om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ||

Sri Aurobindo:

“OM. May we hear what is auspicious with our ears, O ye Gods; may we see what is auspicious with our eyes, O ye of the sacrifice; giving praise with steady limbs, with motionless bodies, may we enter into that life which is founded in the Gods. Ordain weal unto us Indra of high-heaped glories; ordain weal unto us Pushan, the all-knowing Sun; ordain weal unto us Tarkshya Arishtanemi; Brihaspati ordain weal unto us. OM. Peace! peace! peace!”

तृतीयः प्रश्नः tṛtīyaḥ praśnaḥ

अथ हैनं कौशल्यश्चाश्वलायनः पप्रच्छ ।

भगवन् कुत एष प्राणो जायते

कथमायात्यस्मिञ्शरीर आत्मानं वा प्रविभज्य कथं प्रतिष्ठते

केनोत्क्रमते कथं बाह्यमभिधत्ते कथमध्यात्ममिति ॥ ३.१ ॥

atha hainaṁ kauśalyaścāśvalāyanaḥ papraccha |
bhagavan kuta eṣa prāṇo jāyate
kathamāyātyasmiñśarīra ātmānaṁ vā pravibhajya katham pratiṣṭhate
kenotkramate katham bāhyamabhidhatte kathamadhyātmamiti || 3.1||

Sri Aurobindo:

Then Kaushala, the son of Ashwala, asked him: "Lord, whence is this Life born? How comes it in this body or how stands by self-division? By what departeth, or how maintaineth the outward and how the inward spiritual?"

Interpretation:

Thus, Ashvalayana Kaushalya asked him:

"O Blissful Lord, wherefrom is this Prana born?

How does it come into this body? How does it stay in this body being divided?

By what it leaves it? How does it maintain/hold onto the outer being? How to the Inner Self?"

तस्मै स होवाचातिप्रश्नान् पृच्छसि ब्रह्मिष्ठोऽसीति

तस्मात्तेऽहं ब्रवीमि ॥ ३.२ ॥

tasmai sa hovācātipraśnān pṛcchasi brahmiṣṭho'sīti
tasmātte'haṁ bravīmi || 3.2||

2. To him answered the Rishi Pippalada: "Many and difficult things thou askest; but because thou art very holy, therefore will I tell thee.

Interpretation:

To him, he spoke: " Too many questions you ask, but because you are the best among the Brahmins, therefore I will tell you!"

आत्मन एष प्राणो जायते ।
 यथैषा पुरुषे छायेतस्मिन्नेतदातं
 मनोकृतेनायात्यस्मिञ्शरीरे ॥ ३.३ ॥

ātmana eṣa prāṇo jāyate |
 yathaiṣā puruṣe chāyetaṣminnetadātaṁ
 manokṛtenāyātyasmiñśarīre || 3.3 ||

3. “Of the Spirit is this breath of Life born; even as a shadow is cast by a man, so is this Life extended in the Spirit and by the action of the Mind it entereth into this body.

Interpretation:

This Prana is born from/of the Self/Being!
 As the shadow/projection/extension is in the Purusha, so it is spread in this [Self, Being]!
 And into this body, it comes with the action of the Manas!

(Cf. The Mother’s statement of the embodiment in the future)

यथा सम्रादेवाधिकृतान् विनियुङ्क्ते । एतान् ग्रामान् एतान्
 ग्रामानधितिष्ठस्वेत्येवमेवैष प्राण इतरान् प्राणान् पृथक्
 पृथगेव सन्निधत्ते ॥ ३.४ ॥

yathā samrādevādhikṛtān viniyuṅkte | etān grāmānytān
 grāmānadhitiṣṭhasvetyevamevaiṣa prāṇa itarān prāṇān pṛthak
 pṛthageva sannidhatte || 3.4 ||

4. “As an Emperor commandeth his officers, and he sayeth to one ‘Govern for me these villages’, and to another ‘Govern for me these others’, so this breath, the Life, appointeth the other breaths each in his province.

Interpretation:

As the Emperor appoints his chief officers: “Govern these villages! Govern those villages!”
 In the same way, Prana appoints all other Pranas for different functions.

पायूपस्थेऽपानं चक्षुःश्रोत्रे मुखनासिकाभ्यां प्राणः स्वयं
 प्रातिष्ठते मध्ये तु समानः । एष ह्येतद्भुतमन्नं समं नयति
 तस्मादेताः सप्तार्चिषो भवन्ति ॥ ३.५ ॥

pāyūpasthe'pānaṁ cakṣuḥśrotre mukhanāsikābhyāṁ prāṇaḥ svayaṁ
 prātiṣṭhate madhye tu samānaḥ | eṣa hyetaddhutamannaṁ samaṁ nayati
 tasmādetāḥ saptārçiṣo bhavanti || 3.5 ||

5. “In the anus and the organ of pleasure is the lower breath, and in the eyes and the ears, the mouth and the nose, the main breath itself is seated; but the medial breath is in the middle. This is he that equally distributeth the burnt offering of food; for from this are the seven fires born.

Interpretation:

In the lower organs of reproduction and excretion, it appoints Apāna!

In the Seeing and Hearing, Mouth and Nose it is seated by itself!

In the middle of the body it appoints Samāna, which distributes and equalizes the offered food in the body! Therefore from this the seven flames are born!”

The seven tongues of Agni as kālī, karālī, manojavā, sulohita, sudhūmravarṇā, sphulinginī and viśvarucī.

Sri Aurobindo:

“Kali, the black, Karali, the terrible, Manojava, thought swift, Sulohita, blood-red, Sudhumravarna, smoke-hued, Sphulingini, scattering sparks, Vishwaruchi, the all-beautiful, these are the seven swaying tongues of the fire.” MundUp 2.4

Shankara’s Commentary:

Com.—Of its division now; the apana, an aspect of the chief Prana, stays in the two lower apertures expelling urine and faeces, etc.; so in the eye and the ear and going out from the mouth and the nose, Prana, occupying himself the place of the sovereign, stays.

In the middle, i.e., between prana and apana, i.e., in the navel, samana (so called, because he distributes food and drink saman, i.e., equally). As this distributes equally, the food and drink thrown into the fire of the body, these seven flames **go out from the fire in the stomach fed by food and drink, and reaching the region of the heart through the apertures in the head.** The drift is that the objects of seeing, hearing, etc., are enlightened through the prana.

Ayurvedic view on Dhatu Agni is the digestive fire of the seven tissues (**plasma, lymph, blood, muscle, fat, bone, bone marrow, and reproductive tissue**).

According to Ayurvedic experts, each of the tissues has its own fire responsible for converting and obtaining the necessary nutrients.

The following are the seven digestive fires in this group: Rasa Agni, Rakta Agni, Mamsa Agni, Meda Agni, Asthi Agni, Majja Agni, Shukra Agni

हृदि ह्येष आत्मा । अत्रैतदेकशतं नाडीनां तासां शतं
 शतमेकैकस्या द्वासप्ततिर्द्वासप्ततिः प्रतिशाखानाडीसहस्राणि
 भवन्त्यासु व्यानश्चरति ॥ ३.६ ॥

hr̥di h̥yeṣa ātmā | atraitadekaśataṁ nāḍīnām tāsām śataṁ
 śatamekaikasyā dvāsaptatirdvāsaptatiḥ pratiśākhānāḍīsahasrāṇi
 bhavantyāsu vyānaścarati || 3.6||

6. "The Spirit in the heart abideth, and in the heart there are one hundred and one nerves, and each nerve hath a hundred branch-nerves and each branch-nerve hath seventy two thousand sub-branch-nerves; through these the breath pervasor moveth.

Interpretation:

In the Heart is indeed this Self. There are one hundred nadis here. And multiplying each one by hundred, every nadi has 72 thousand branching nadis. In them Vyāna is moving.

अथैकयोर्ध्व उदानः पुण्येन पुण्यं लोकं नयति पापेन
 पापमुभाभ्यामेव मनुष्यलोकम् ॥ ३.७ ॥

athaikayordhva udānaḥ puṇyena puṇyaṁ lokam nayati pāpena
 pāpamubhābhyāmeva manuṣyalokam || 3.7||

7. "Of these many there is one by which the upper breath departeth that by virtue taketh to the heaven of virtue, by sin to the hell of sin, and by mingled sin and righteousness back to the world of men restoreth.

Interpretation:

So, of these many branches one branch is moving upward - Udāna. By merit it leads people to merit, by sin it leads to sin, by both to the world of men.

आदित्यो ह वै बाह्यः प्राण उदयत्येष ह्येनं चाक्षुषं
 प्राणमनुगृह्णानः । पृथिव्यां या देवता सैषा पुरुषस्य
 अपानमवष्टभ्यान्तरा यदाकाशः स समानो वायुर्व्यानः ॥ ३.८ ॥

ādityo ha vai bāhyaḥ prāṇa udayatyēṣa hyenaṁ cākṣuṣaṁ
 prāṇamanuḡṛhṇānaḥ | pṛthivyāṁ yā devatā saiṣā puruṣasya
 apānamavaṣṭabhyañtarā yadākāśaḥ sa samāno vāyurvyaṇaḥ || 3.8||

8. “The Sun is the main breath outside this body, for it cherisheth the eye in its rising. The divinity in the earth, she attracteth the lower breath of man, and the ether between is the medial breath; air is the breath pervasor.

Interpretation:

Aditya is indeed the major Prana in the outer world! It is rising and the Sight is following it! The Devata of the Earth is Purusha’s Apāna! In between there is Space, ākāśa, which is Samāna, and the Wind, Vāyu, is Vyāna.

तेजो ह वा उदानस्तस्मादुपशान्ततेजाः । पुनर्भवमिन्द्रियैर्मनसि
 सम्पद्यमानैः ॥ ३.९ ॥

tejo ha vā udānastasmādupaśāntatejāḥ | punarbhavamindriyairmanasi
 sampadyamānaiḥ || 3.9||

9. “Light, the primal energy, is the upper breath; therefore when the light and heat in a man hath dwindled, his senses retire into the mind and with these he departeth into another birth.

Interpretation:

The brightness of light is indeed Udāna. Therefore the one whose brightness of life-force is gone, he moves to another state with senses clinging to the mind.

Shankara’s Commentary:

Com.—The general fire tejas, well-known and external, is the udana in the body. The meaning is, that by its light, it favours the wind known as udana as ‘udana,’ fire in its nature, favoured by the external fire, causes the ascent from the body. Therefore, when a man’s natural fire is extinguished, then one should know that his life is spent, i.e., that he is dying; he enters another body. How? along with the senses such as speech, etc., clinging to the mind.

यच्चित्तस्तेनैष प्राणमायाति । प्राणस्तेजसा युक्तः सहात्मना
तथासङ्कल्पितं लोकं नयति ॥ ३.१० ॥

yaccittastenaīṣa prāṇamāyāti | prāṇastejasā yuktaḥ sahātmanā
tathāsaṅkalpitaṁ lokaṁ nayati || 3.10 ||

10. "Whatsoever be the mind of a man, with that mind he seeketh refuge with the breath when he dieth, and the breath and the upper breath lead him with the Spirit within him to the world of his imaginings.

Interpretation:

Whatever the state of consciousness one has, the Prana will be supporting it. Thus, being connected with Tejas of Udāna, together with his Self, Atman, it will drive him to the intended world.

Shankara's Commentary:

Com.—Of what thought he is at the time of death, by that thought, i.e., volition, he attains along with the senses, the prana, i.e., he puts forth the activity of the chief Prana. The meaning is that at the time of death, the activity of the senses having declined, he lives putting forth the activity of the chief Prana alone. Then his relations around say 'he breathes and lives'; and that prana manifesting the activity of udana (tejas); with the atman] with the owner, i.e., the enjoyer. The prana manifesting the activity of the udana alone, leads the enjoyer to worlds (bodies) thought of, according to the influence of virtuous and sinful karma.

य एवं विद्वान् प्राणं वेद न हास्य प्रजा हीयतेऽमृतो
भवति तदेषः श्लोकः ॥ ३.११ ॥

ya evaṁ vidvān prāṇaṁ veda na hāsyā prajā hīyate'amṛto
bhavati tadeṣaḥ ślokaḥ || 3.11 ||

11. "The wise man that knoweth thus of the breath, his progeny wasteth not and he becometh immortal. Whereof this is the Scripture.

Interpretation:

The one who knows thus the Prana, his offspring is never wasted, but becomes immortal! There is a verse about it in the Shruti:

उत्पत्तिमायतिं स्थानं विभुत्वं चैव पञ्चधा ।

अध्यात्मं चैव प्राणस्य विज्ञायामृतमश्नुते

विज्ञायामृतमश्नुत इति ॥ ३.१२ ॥

utpattimāyatiṁ sthānaṁ vibhutvaṁ caiva pañcadhā |
adhyātmaṁ caiva prāṇasya vijñāyāmṛtamaśnute
vijñāyāmṛtamaśnuta iti || 3.12 ||

12. “By knowing the origin of the Breath, his coming and his staying and his lordship in the five provinces, likewise his relation to the Spirit, one shall taste immortality.”

Interpretation:

Having distinguished the origin, the coming, the staying, and the power of Prana divided in five principal modalities, as well as its connection to the higher Self, one realises/enjoys Immortality.

इति प्रश्नोपनिषदि तृतीयः प्रश्नः ॥

iti praśnopaniṣadi tṛtīyaḥ praśnaḥ ||