

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF AVATARANA OF AATMA AND GARBHA

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ABSTRACT

Concepts of *Aatma* and *Garbha* are intricate and exciting, which fascinated the Indian philosophers, who gave elaborate descriptions with varied opinions. *Ayurveda* uniquely defines *Aatma* and *Garbha* wherein, *Aatma* is an entity which are *Anadi* and *Ananta* solely responsible for all the lively activities of the *Shareera*, and *Garbha*, a conglomeration of *Panchabhoutika* entities (*Shukra* and *Shonita* with *Chetana*). The *Avatarana* or *Avakranti* of *Aatma* happens during *Shukra* and *Shonita Samyoga* to endure the *Karmaphala* and get liberated from the life-death cycle. This happens along with *Saatvika*, *Rajasika* and *Tamasika* bhavas under the influence of *Vayu Mahabhuta*. The event of *Avatarana* is fully under the control of *Daiva* and beyond appreciation with our perception. This study attempts to understand the concepts of *Aatma* and *Garbha* and their *Avatarana* as mentioned in the texts of *Ayurveda*.

Keywords: *Aatma*, *Garbha*, *Karmaphala*, *Daiva*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the science of life, where remedial intervention is possible only in the living. *Ayu* is nothing but *Chetananuvrutti* (continuity of life). Until the time

the body has *Chetana* (*Atma*/soul), it is said to be living and subject to treatment. That which pervades everywhere, be it the body or the world, is known as

*Aatma (Atati Sakalam Vyapnoti Iti Aatma)*¹. Acharya Madhwa in *Geeta Bhasya* quotes the four features of *Aatma*, i.e

*Yadapnoti yadadatte yachhatti vishayaaniha /
Yacchaasya santatobhavah tasmad aatmeti bhanyante*
||²

Vishayaan Aapnoti - Spreads all over
Vishayaan Aadatte – moulds all things into its form,
Vishayaan Atti – it enjoys the previous deeds,
Santato Bhava - it is eternal.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Study Design – Literary study

The distinctive contributions of numerous *Acharyas* on the notion of *Aatma* to the field of *Ayurveda* will be collated and examined after a thorough literary examination of all accessible *Ayurvediya* and *Philosophical* texts. This can be used as a starting point for additional investigation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

❖ Definition of *Aatma*:

The term *Aatma* comes from the Sanskrit word "*At*" *dhatu*, (*At' Saatatyagamane*)³ which means "to move continuously or constantly evolving. (*Atti santata bhaavena jaagradaadisarvaavasthasu anuvartate iti*)⁴ "that which is in constant association during *Jaagruta*, *Swapna*, *Sushupti Avasthaa*". In contrast to *Achetana* or *Jada*, *Aatma* is described as *Chetana* and *Karta*, in which *Chaitanyabhava* (a sign of life) is felt.

❖ Synonyms of *Aatma*:

- *Avyakta* – The one which cannot be perceived through our five senses.
- *Kshetranja*- which is fully aware of *Kshetra* or *Panchabhoutika* ensemble

- *Shaaswata* - Which exists always
- *Vibhu* - Which pervades everywhere
- *Nitya* - Which is eternal
- *Shareeri* - Which lodges are in the shareera (Body), etc.

❖ understanding of the word 'Avatarana' –

The etymological derivation of the word *Avatarana* is *Ava + Tru – Bhave lyut* ⁵

Ava – Gati avagama pravesha.... vrudhishu |⁶

Tru – Taranaplavanayoh |⁷

Here, *Tarana* can be understood as

-*Teeryati anena Iti.*

-*Taranapoorvaka deshaantara gamanam.*

-*Paaragamanam.*

- *Swargah.*

i.e. to save, to liberate, to swim across

And *Plavana* here refers to

- *Plava gatyam.*

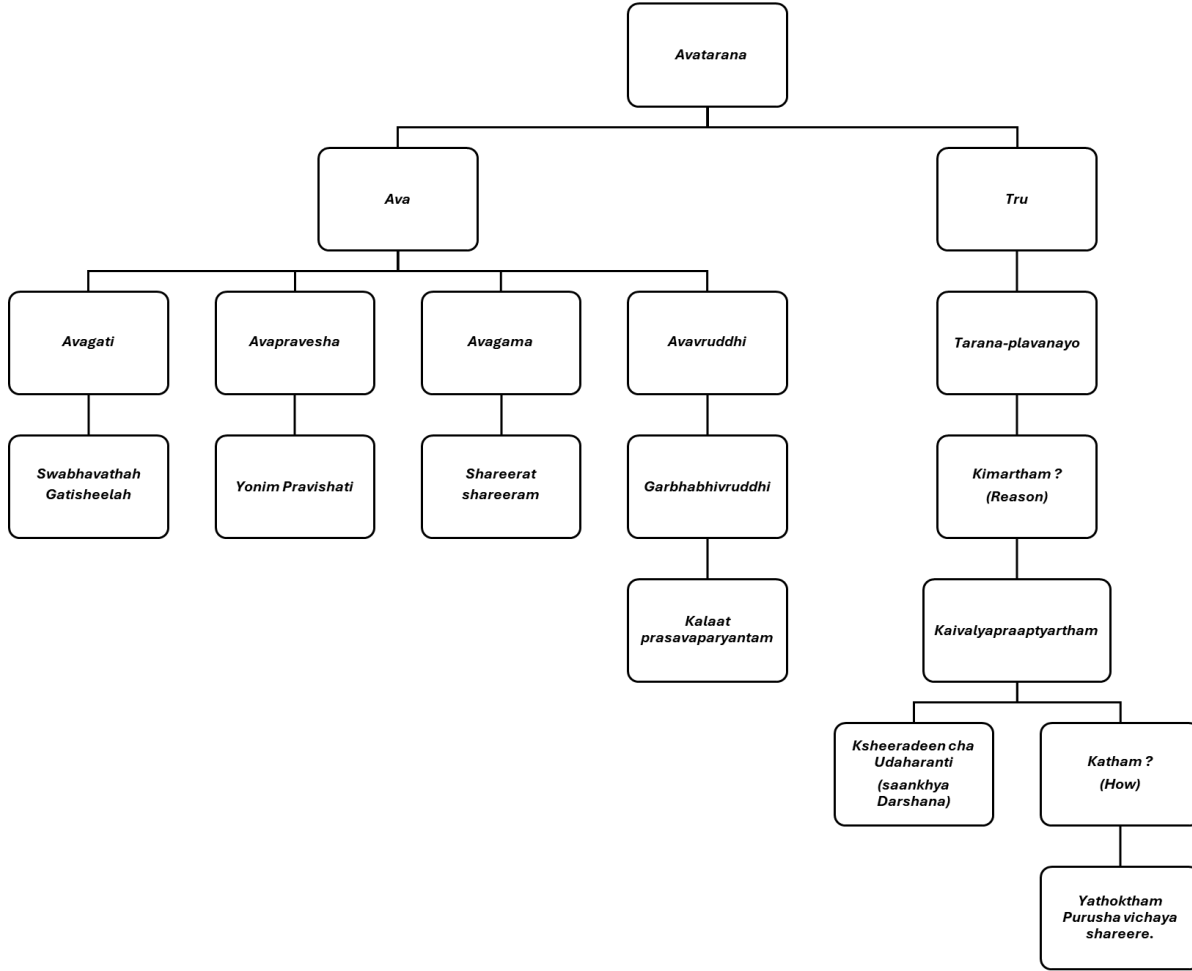
- *Plavate iti.*

i.e. swimming, floating or leaping.

Hence, *Avatarana* can be understood in various ways, such as

- ✓ To descend
- ✓ To move continuously
- ✓ To enter
- ✓ To grow or develop
- ✓ To swim/to float.

To be concise, the concept of *Avatarana* can be understood as:



Avatarana of Aatma -

In the concept of Avatarana of Aatma, the word Avatarana can be interpreted as

- **Ava** – gati, avagama, pravesha.
- **Avagati** – Swabhavatah gatisheelah /

The Aatma is not a stationary entity; it is constantly fleeing.

- **Avagama** – Shareerat shareeram /

This Gati of Aatma happens from one body to the other after death or from one Yoni to another, depending upon the Karmaphala⁸.

- **Avapravesha** = yonim pravishati |

The status of the Aatma after departing from one Shareera prior to entering the other is known as Aatvaahika Purusha⁹ as it is associated with four Tanmaatras (Prithvi, Aapa, Teja, Vaayu) along with Manas.

The Pravesha of the Aatvaahika Purusha into the Shareera happens exactly at the time of Sukra Shonita Sanyoga¹⁰, and the selection of a specific Yoni, Deha, Maata, Pitaa, Satva, Bala etc. is solely guided by deeds of the past.

- **Avavruddhi** – Garbhabhivruddhih. i.e Sam-poorna shareerabhivruddhi Prasava Paryantam.

This means the avatarana of the Garbha refers to the development process of Garbha in the mother's womb

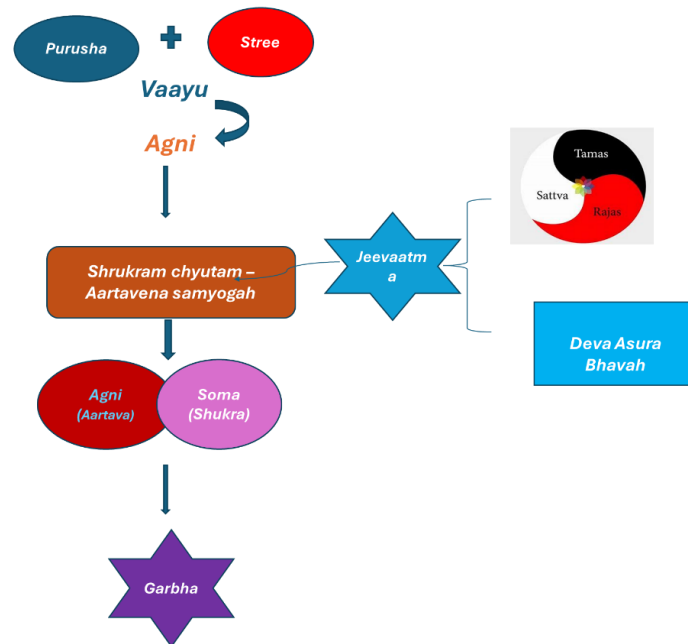
from the most primitive form to a fully developed foetus. We find an elaborate explanation of the month-wise development of *Garbha* (*Maasanumaasikan garbhavruddhi*) at ^{11,12} in many *Ayurveda Samhitas*. From the stage of *Kalala* (*Prathama Maasevruddhi*)¹³ to a fully developed foetus. To ensure the proper development of the *Garbha* in the womb, *samskaras* like *Garbhadaana*, *Pumsavana*, and *Seemantonayana* are indicated.

The fetus in the womb undergoes physical and psychological stress. *Garbhopanishath*¹⁴ quotes, the *Aatma*

now as a *Garbha* thinks, “I have seen thousands of variegated living forms and have relished the variety of foods and drinks, have slurped breast milk from many species, and have repeatedly gone through a cyclic process of birth, death, miseries and sorrows, yet I am unable to escape from this ocean of anguish or find any remedy. Whatever deeds I did for my folks, good or bad, I suffered alone, whereas those who enjoyed the fruits escaped”.

Acharya Sushruta has described the complete process of the formation of *Garbha*¹⁵.

Garbhaavatarana –



The *Aatma* undergoes the whole process of *Avatarana* just to get liberated from all the previous *Karmaphala* and attain the state of *Kevala Bhava*. The world can understand this.

- *Tru – Taranaplavanayoh.*

Reason for avatarana –

The sole purpose of *Avatarana* is *Purusha Kaivalyartham*¹⁶, i.e. to reach the status of ‘one-and-one’ alone and disassociate from the clutches of the *Tanmaatra* and *Manas*. The *Chaturvimshati Tatva* are *Achetana* or *Jada*¹⁷. These *Chaturvimshati Tatva* combine with the twenty-fifth *Tatva*, i.e. *Purusha*, which is *Chetana*. The *Samyoga* of *Purusha Tatva* to *Achetana Chaturvimshati Tatva* makes it *Chaitanyayukta*. The moment the *Purusha* realizes its original self, “one and

only one”, it automatically gets dissociated from the *Chaturvimshati Tatvas*.

Sankhya Darshana puts forth the view, i.e. the activation of the *Jada Prakruti* (also called *Pradhaana*) to ensure that the *Purusha* can realise its ‘One’ness (*Kevala Bhava*). The status of *Jada Prakruti* lasts until the goal is achieved, i.e. until the *Kevala Bhava* is realised. Common examples are given to convey this message. *Upamaa Pramana – Ksheeradeen*¹⁸ (*Saankhya Darshana*)

1. *Ksheera* –

Vatsavivruddhanimittam ksheerasya yathaa pravrut-tirajnsya

Purushavimokshanimittam tathaa pravrut-tihi Pradhaanasya ||¹⁹ (Saa.Kaa 57)

Once the calf is grown up to graze independently, milk production in the mother cow automatically stops. Similarly, *Pradhana's* activity comes to a halt the moment the *Purusha* realises its *Kevala Bhava*.

2. Kaala-

Karmavat Drushtervaa kaalaadeh ||²⁰ (Saa. Soo.3/60)

The influence of *Greeshma* terminates once it is taken over by *Varshaa*. Similarly, the activity of *Varshaa* terminates once it gets taken over by *Sharat*. In the same way, the influence (activity) of *Prakruti (Pradhana)* terminates once the *Purusha* realizes its *Kevala Bhava* (one and only one), which may require repeated cycles of birth and death.

3. Loka vyavahara –

Aoutsukya nivrutyardham yathaa kriyaasu pravartate lokah |

Purushasya vimookshartham pravartate tadvadavyaktam ||²¹ (Saa. Kaa.58)

A person indulges in various activities to fulfil his set goals. Having attained the goal, the activity ceases. So is the purpose of *Pradhana*, i.e., to provide the necessary (suitable) environment and multiple opportunities for the realisation of the self as being Unique—*Kevala Bhava*.

4. Nartaki –

Rangasya darshayitwaa nivartate nartakee yathaa nrutyaat |

Purushasya tathaatmaanam prakaashya nivartate prakrutihi ||²² (Saa.kaa.59)

A dancer retreats from the Dias after achieving the purpose of entertaining the audience with various dance footwork and facial expressions. The *Pradhana*, too, returns to its *Jada Avastha* once the *Kevala Bhava* of the *Purusha* is realised.

5. Bhrutya –

Swabhaavaat cheshtitam anabhisandhanaat bhrutya-vat ||²³ (Saa.Soo.3/61)

The sole purpose of unfolding the *Pradhana (Prakruti)* is to realize *Purusha's Kevala Bhava*, just like an obedient and humble servant who cares for his master day and night.

6. Sooda –

Viviktobodhaat srushtiniruttihi pradhaanasya soodavat paake ||²⁴ (Saa.Soo.3/63)

A chef cooks food and leaves the kitchen once all the food is prepared. In the same way, when the *Purusha* attains *Kevala Bhava*, *Prakruti* becomes devoid of *Mahat* and *ahankara tattvas* and returns to its original state of *Achetana* or *Jada*.

- How to attain the state of *Kevala Bhava*?

Having said that, our *Acharyas* also show us the way (path) towards the Realisation of *Kevala Bhava*. Indeed, *Purushavichayam Shaareeryam²⁵ Adhyaya* of *Charaka Samhita* elaborates the measures to be followed during the journey towards *Uparama*:

- Practising instructions as per *Dharmashastra Granthas*,
- knowledge that *Purusha* and *Loka* are identical,
- Involvement in activities that maintain *Manas* free from all bondages.
- Involve oneself in *Yoga*.
- To be in the company of righteousness and avoid disloyalty.
- Identify oneness in all living beings.
- Purity in thoughts, words and deeds.
- Having hold over sensual enjoyments.
- Being calm, composed and unruffled in all situations.
- To renunciate material comforts in the interest of achieving ultimate enlightenment.

All these factors clear our *Manas* and ease the path of *Moksha Prapti*, just like brushing with a cloth, which removes dust from the mirror and makes it glitter²⁶.

CONCLUSION

- In *Ayurveda*, the branch of *Shareera* not only deals with structural anatomy but also with metaphysical entities like *Avykta*, *Mahan*, *Ahmikara*, *Panchmahabhuta*, *Aatma*, etc. *Aatma* is considered one of nine *Karana Dravya*. The descent of *Aatma* into the *Garbha* is a very complex phenomenon. Sense organs cannot perceive it, and the concept of *Avatarana* of *Garbha* doesn't restrict itself to embryogenesis. *Acharya Sushruta* has briefly described the *Avatarana* of *Aatma* and *Garbha* in *Shareera Sthana*. *Ayurveda* has

accepted the *Srushti Utpatti* of *Sankya Darshana*. The comprehensive understanding of *Avatarana* of *Aatma* and *Garbha* helps understand not only foetal development but also the purpose and value of human life.

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