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Ancient Phonetics in India: A Study on the Phonetic Observations of *Āraṇyaka* by the Sages in India

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Many scholars of linguistics generally know that the main languages used in early India were Vedic and Sanskrit. Moreover, they know that the study of such languages has supported particularly the investigations of historical and comparative linguistics of the world during 18th century A.D. This paper attempts to identify the phonetic roots of the *Āraṇyaka* books composed in post Vedic language by different Sages in 7th century B.C. This study attempts to find out and analyse the early tendency in phonetic study by Indians. *Āraṇyaka*, a great literature of later Vedic period or the period before Pāṇinī, provides very interesting hints on phonetics. For example, Aitareya *Āraṇyaka* (II.2.I) compares the consonant to the night, and vowels to the day. Not only that the *Āraṇyakaṣ* states that the consonants are the body and the voice its soul (III.2.5). By analysing the evidence of phonetics in *Āraṇyaka* books using qualitative approach, an important analysis of phonetics of Vedic language can be found out. Besides, the diverse understanding of phonetic elements of the language such as breath, voice and communication etc. by early Indians can be identified. Though we are aware of Pāṇinī, Patañjalī who have emphasised, discovered and developed the phonetics of Sanskrit, the study of pre Pāṇiniyan literature also supports the gradual tendency of phonetic developments in India that became very rich after 3rd century B.C.

Key words: *Āraṇyaka*, phonetics, Sanskrit, Vedic, language