AN ASPECT OF THE FIVE SOULS OF INDIAN PHYSIOLOGY

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ABSTRACT: In this paper the author discusses five souls viz, prana, Apana, Udana, Samana and vyana of Indian physiology. Also aims to show that the last named two souls were unknown to Galen.

There are three systems of thought which are interrelated since they produce impacts upon one another and must be briefly considered together while dealing with any of them in particular. The three systems which concern us here are the Tridosha doctrine, Indian cosmology and the five souls of Indian physiology. When the early man gave up hunting and took to farming, as farming, as farmer he had to reckon three conditions to grow a good crop. When millet was used it is a hardy plant. Its seeds can be thrown over the ground and a harvest of millet can be obtained. Barely, on the contrary, needed the soil to be ploughed and harrowed which meant the ground used as farm had itself to be selected as suitable. Thus arose the importance of Earth to the farmer would pray for timely rain. It was easily observed that during winter plants do not seem to grow. Then plants also need light. A farm adjacent to a forest exploited as a farm by burning trees was not the ideal site as farm. Briefly sunlight which mainly meant warmth was the third condition for growth a good crop. Then came the practical physician who tried to find the essential conditions which maintain health if not even life. Like plants man also needs water and warmth. To the farmer air was not of much concern for it was everywhere and the same. To man air had to be of good quality for in a cave, where man originally lived, air was of poor quality compared with what was outside on the open ground. Thus arose the Tridosha system with the factors called, Vata, kapha and Pitta, representing Air, Water and Warmth. To the physician Earth or Soil was of no concern, for even as a hunter or as one leading pastoral life, Earth did not matter much. Thus to man there were three important items, Air, Water and Warmth.

Now man was also curious to know what makes up the universe. Gombrich (1975; 123) gives five cosmology as Ether (really Akasha) Air, Fire, Water and Earth. We see here a short of fusion between what a farmer considered essential for plant—life
and what a physician believed was important for the human system. Only Ether or Akasha was an additional item special to cosmology. Divanji (1948) has explained that when we consider the make-up of the universe, then there has to be Creative Energy which is understood best by the word Brahma. We find now that our inquiries on life-forms, on plant-life and human-life, have finally taken us to the origin of existence itself, and this has given us cosmology.

Our discussion above can also be undertaken considering first how man came to conceive soul, as the moving force that characterizes a life-form, as that a man, and next life itself. The question implicitly put to himself were, what is life, its obvious expression. Man who was living hurdled up in a cave or in a small cottage, could not avoid being close to one another, including those about to expire. It was easy to observe that the dead is one who dose not breath, when he concluded. Breath = Life – force or soul. But nothing is destroyed. Soul escapes upwards and becomes a bird. Then a pictogram of a flying bird was depicted as a cross which was crudely drawn by the early man but became the symbol of soul. To the early man every thing was concrete and a symbol was the plenipotentiarly of the original. Then cross = soul, and it can substitute the soul. To depict a cross on a grave meant infusing soul to expedite the resurrection of the dead. I have explained this with suitable illustrations in 1986.

Even more important was the idea of life for soul was the invisible force while life was its obvious phenomenon. As hunter he had observed a deer and other game. Its legs allowed being depicted as a zigzag line and the zigzag line became the symbol of life. An article on. Movement as symbol of life, is due to appear in Pakistan Archaeology. So far man had concerned himself with only one soul and life-form itself as whole.

But later observations carried out on man himself showed that he is composed of trunk and four limbs. Any of the latter can be amputed without loss of life. On the contrary serious injury to any part of the trunk meant immediate or delayed death. Thus the soul as life-essence resided in the trunk. Now the trunk can be easily subdivided into, head, chest and abdomen. Either these three parts together contain as single soul or there were three souls, one for each part of the trunk. We can realize how easy it is to divide the trunk into three divisions and then equally easy to credit each of them with a soul of its own. Galen recognizes three souls as explained in the article published (in 1986, b). I have shown that Galen simply borrowed the idea from plato, who in turn, seems to have taken it from the Hebrews. Obviously even simple people must have thought in such terms and plato collected and expounded their idea. The three souls of Galen with their main seats in the body are

1) Animal Spirits in the head
2) Vital Spirits in the heart (chest)
3) And Natural Spirits in the liver (abdomen).
This offers an occasion to interpret life as the expression of soul. It is particularly mentioned by the Indian physiologists that prana, the Indian equivalent of Animal spirits, is not merely in the head but best of all in the eyes. Now of all parts of the body that are subject to voluntary movement eyes show it the most. In fact we can confirm a man as alive or about to die when the eyelids are forcibly opened and the eyes show movement or entire loss of it. If eyes show no movement there is no soul in the head. With such an observation we can further confirm that Movement = life. Heart is eternally active and what can be called Heart = soul as “Natural Spirits” was incapable of realizing the existence of peristaltic movement which is of a subtle nature, but consistent with a soul in the chest, there was to be a soul in the abdomen as well. Since the liver is the largest organ in the abdomen he conceived the liver to be the seat of a soul specific to the third part of the trunk. But since we know now that there is peristaltic movement Galen’s Natural Spirits refers to this movement rather to liver. This would be an improved interpretation of Galen’s Natural Spirits.

We now turn to Indian physiology. The subject deserves being dealt in a monograph. But here we may first select three souls of Indian physiology and identify them with those of Galen,

| Soul: Seat with other particulars: Galen’s term |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| 1. Prana: Eye-Cardiac: Vital soul             |
| 2. Apana: Speech-Anal: Natural soul          |
| 3. Udana: Throat-Air: Animal soul            |
| 4. Samana: Mind-Umbilicus: Not in Galen      |
| 5. Vyana: The whole body: Not in Galen       |

The “peristaltic soul”, if it be so called, is termed Samana by Indian physiologists and its seat has been rightly assigned as the umbilicus. In contrast Samana, whose domain is the upper part of the abdomen intimately associated with the intestines, Apana also is in the abdomen and occupies its lower region, where there is bladder, anus and the reproductive organs. Then excretion of faeces, urination and ejection of semen, are all concerned with Apana. There are two souls in the abdomen according to Indian physiology, while there is only one according to Galen. The fifth soul according to Indian physiology would be Vyana. People have debated if a whole system disintegrated into its component parts is the same as when the latter are reassembled into the whole again. The best thinkers believe that the two cannot be identical so that the body-as-whole carries a soul which remains by the Indian physiologists. There is a special virtue assigned to it. When the dead is resurrected it is the Vyanna, as soul, is everlasting. It is the resurrecting soul and as such it can only be the resurrecting soul and as such it can only be the soul of the whole body.
SUMMARY

When we speak of soul we implicitly speak of life. Soul is the invisible power and life its obvious phenomenon. Movement was observed early enough as the four legs of a running deer or some game when man was a hunter. A pictogram of the four leg sin movement gave a zigzag line which became the symbol of life. It means, movement = life, and zigzag line = symbol of life. The one sign of life is breathing which again is movement and breath = soul. The soul supposed to be a concrete object rose upwards and became a bird and the pictogram of a flying bird roughly drawn as a cross became the symbol of soul, whence cross = symbol of soul. The ideas of soul as also of life imply movement. In this light the most powerful soul is prana. It is breath-soul mainly residing in the heart, which is intimately associated with lungs; but its favourite seat is the eyes. This association of prana with eyes, as its seat, deserves attention. Of all parts of the body subject to voluntary movements it is the eyes which shows it most. Being most mobile they became the seat of prana. The trunk of the body is divisible into three parts, the head, chest and abdomen. Some primitive man ascribed a soul to each of these parts. This idea was accepted by the Herbrews from whom plato got his idea of three souls and Galen got the same. From plato. Besides prana, called Vital Spirits by Galen he recognized it as residing in the throat and dealing with Air. Animal spirits corresponds to Udana of Indian physiology. In the abdomen the largest organ was the liver and Galen’s Natural Spirits was its resident. It compares with Apana of Indian physiology but only in part. Galen’s three souls as compared with those of Indian physiology would be

1) Prana = vital Spirits of Galen
2) Udana = Animal Spirits
3) Apana = Natural Spirits

The abdomen contains intestines which show involuntary movement. The soul residing thus in umbilicum is called Samana in Indian physiology. The lower abdomen has organs of excretion, of urination and of seminal discharge. These became the province of Apana in Indian physiology. The whole body is an entity as such. Even after death it is expected that there will be resurrection. Hence the body as a whole carries a soul called Vyana. The two souls Samana and Vyana are unknown to Galen.

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