

Understanding Who We are...

KK AGGARWAL

The classical description of 'who we are' comes from Adi Shankaracharya's Bhaja Govindam, where he says that even the wife refuses to touch the same physical body after death, and if she touches it, a ritual bath has to be taken. This means physical body is not what we are. If we weigh physical body before and after death there will be no difference. The life force, also called consciousness or atman, has no weight, shape or dimensions.

In Bhagavad Gita, in Chapter 2, Krishna describes its characteristics as "fire cannot burn it, air cannot dry it, weapons cannot cut it and water cannot wet it. It is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient." Though modern medicine may not talk about soul but it does differentiate life and death based on certain parameters.

Vedic description describes five different movement forces in the body: Apana vayu expulses urine, stool, baby and menses; Samana vayu controls the intestinal movements; Vyana vayu controls the circulatory system; Udana vayu controls the neurological impulses and the connection between soul and spirit and Prana vayu controls the brain stem reflexes.

Soul or consciousness is linked to udana vayu and prana vayu. The best description of these five forces apart from Ayurveda text comes from Prasannopanishad.

A patient with brainstem death can be kept on ventilator for months together, as the body has normal vyana vayu, samana vayu and apana vayu. The patient will therefore, maintain blood pressure, gastrointestinal (GI) functions, urinary functions and reproductive functions. These three vayus are controlled by the atmospheric oxygen and not by the life force. Can anyone remember the weight, height, abdominal circumference or size of collar, waist or shoes of Lord Krishna? He is only known from his actions and the soul profile.

All of us have physical, mental, intellectual, ego and soul characteristics. Soul characteristics are same in all and are positive. The examples are love, compassion, care, humility, etc. These soul characteristics are influenced by the subtle mind, intellect and ego characteristics.

While introducing ourselves, most of the times we talk about our intellectual or ego profile and not the soul profile. When we describe our status, house, car or

money, we are describing our ego profile and not the soul profile. Our aim in life should be to understand our soul profile, as without the soul, nobody will come near us. The very same people will dispose of our body at the earliest opportunity they get.

Most of us correlate life span with the life span of the physical body, which has to perish sooner or later. When we ask people how long they want to live, their usual answers are 60 years, 70 years, 80 years or 90 years. Nobody thinks beyond physical death. People like Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and Mother Teresa are not dead. Though their physical body does not exist, their good karmas, work, memories and the soul profiles are still alive.

The purpose of life should be to create an atmosphere or an aura in such a way that the society remembers us after the death of our physical body. This is only possible when we shift our thinking from the ego profile to the soul profile. Soul is nothing but an energized field of information and can be equated to the live information fed in any computer or mobile phone. Both computer and mobile phones with and without information weigh the same. Similarly, weight of radio does not change whether the radio is on or off. The live data information in the TV, radio or mobile phone can be termed as their soul. A computer without this soul is useless, so are the mobile and radio sets.

The information is always static and still without any movements. This information in a computer requires a software to run. The static soul in our body also requires a software called life force. Soul, thus, can be described as a combination of the life force and the static information. In Hindu mythology, this is called Shiva and Shakti. Some people describe them as prana and chitta. In Vedic philosophy, by controlling prana, one can control chitta and vice versa. For a computer to operate, two softwares are required: operational software and application software. Operational software makes the computer do basic work and application software helps one to manipulate the data the way one wants. All of us are born with the operational software or the life force. We develop and create our own application software over a period of time by using the triad of action, memory and desires. To understand oneself, therefore, one needs to control our own application software and do not let it go beyond its desired scope of work.

Group Editor-in-Chief, IJCP Group