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SCIENCE OF EMBRYOLOGY - ANCIENT CONCEPTS (GARBHOPANISHAD)

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INTRODUCTION

We have advanced much in the field of medical science especially in each aspect of embryology. Now we have a unique mode of tools and techniques and reached to such a wonderful extent that a world is opened with high tech clinics for fertility and day by day there are increasing facilities to bless barren women with healthy precious babies. It will be quite interesting to have an insight on the contributions of our ancient sages even before the invention of diagnostic tools and aids. We can find detailed descriptions on embryology, foetus, fertilization, further development, inheritance of qualities in infants, proper development of qualities by birth through treatment and so on. Embryo is a constituent of Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether. Variations and varieties occur through the power of Sattva, Rajas and Thamas.

It is a truth that each and every creature has a soul in it, a life in it. Some pre-acquired instincts in it. An embryo developed with such pre-acquired quality when Atman enters an embryo. The present article is a probe into the relevance of Garbhopanishad brought forth by sage Pippalada, 4000 years ago when even writing materials were not available.

Garbhopanishad- A Systematic Approach.

Garbhopanishad is a treatise describing human embryology explicating the description of each and every stage of development observing even the minutest detail. Generally two Upanishads are treated as authorities on human embryology as the most ancient ones viz. Garbhopanishad and Niruktopanishad.

The process of fertilization is time-bound in human physiology. Fat produces muscles. Muscle produces bones. Bones produce marrow. Marrow produces semen. Semen is deposited by male into female. It becomes fixed in uterus which later acquired the shape of embryo like a bubble. On the seventh day it developed into a mass of flesh. Within 14 days it is transformed into a fatty mucoid mass. Within one month it thickens into a solid mass. Within two

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months the head and neck are produced. On the third month, the nail and hair are produced. On the fifth month the eyes and ears. Movements start within seven months. Within nine months a perfect baby is developed. All the parts of the body is not a spontaneous development. It is a gradual process of systematic development.

Sushruta, Charaka, Vagbhata, Haritha, Yajnavalkya and such other great sages have very well observed and documented the various stages of development of foetus. The various time bound stages from initial stage to final stage are clearly explained which a modern embriologist explains by means of a sophisticated ultramodern costly technique. Unfortunately they fail to explain why a foetus turns to be male or female. Garbhopanishad explains it. By the dominance of semen the child turns to be male, dominance of egg-female, when equal-eunuch. If the parents have soft and fine sentiments the child also will develop good qualities. Otherwise the child will be a problem physically and mentally. There are references of Agasthya the pot-born, Abhimanyu - super talented, Dhrtarashtra- born blind, Pandu-born with skin desease and so on .

Garbhopanishad of Pippalada:

The date of Garbhopanishad is supposed to be 4000 B.C. and the author sage Pippalada who had instructed Prashnopanishad and Atharvaveda shakha. He is ascribed to second millennium B.C by some pointing out the evidence of drying up of River Saraswathy. During the Rgvedic period River Saraswathy was celebrated as the sacred one which dried up before 2000 B.C. The theme of the text does not apply to spiritual outlook. It is a manual of human physiology.

The text Garbhopanishad is just in the form of verses mixed with prose. The author himself explains what he intends to say .It is doubted that some lines are missing as the manuscripts are found damaged. The text starts with salutation verses requesting the Almighty to protect the teacher and student, to nourish both, to bless them with energy, to make their activities in learning sharp and vigorous. And keep their disputes away. These verses are the shanti mantras (peace invoking chants) of Krishna yajurveda. Therefore it can be included under Yajus'saakha.

The first verse in Garbhopanishad speaks of human body as a combination of five i.e, Earth, water, fire, air and Ether. It exists in the five

(The universe is a combination of five as well as the human body). The body depends on the six supports (rasad or tastes) and is connected with six qualities. It is made up of seven dhatus (tissues), three impurities (batha, pittha and kapha), classified into two sex viz., male and female and consuming 4 types of food.

The next part is written in prose. It clarifies the verses. Why human body is called combination of five. Here gives the answer. Because it is nourished through the five elements. The solid part is called earth. The warmth in body is fire. The liquid part is water. What moves is air and space is ether. The duty of Earth is to support, water to consolidate, fire to give light and warmth, air provides movement, ether provides space. There is another group of five again i.e., Panchasyvarthamanam viz., the ear for sound, Skin for touch, Eyes for sight, Tongue for taste, nose for smell.

Next comes another group. upastha, apaana, buddhi, manas and vaak. Upastha means genitals for experiencing happiness, apaana for evacuation, buddhi for cognition or intellect, manas for envision, vaak for speech. The author again gives clarification. The body has six fold support of food with six tastes viz. Sweet sour salt pungent bitter and astringent. It is connected with the seven ragas which come out through the vocal cords i.e, shadja- for the letter sa, rishabha -for the letter ri, gamaka for the letter ga, madhyama for the letter ma, panchama for the letter pa, dhaivatha for the letter dha, and nishada for the letter ni. These are the ascending and descending tones in vocal cords. Then comes the combination of acceptance and rejection. The human body is a combination of ichai.e., desire and difference. Both are mind born. Together comes Pranidhana i.e., surrender to God. The author here depicts the beginning of creation from the macrocosm Earth to the dissolution in The Self.

The third part speaks on embryology. The seven colours include white red black grey yellow tawny and pale. The seven dhatus are blood, flesh, fat, bones, muscles, marrow and semen. Devadatta the jivatman exists in body enjoying the objects around him. When there is proper combination of all rasad there emerges blood from blood, the tissues, then flesh, fat, bones, marrow and semen. The combination of blood (in uterus) and semen from male (through contact) garbha is born (foetus). It's growth is regulated by heart where there is inner fire and growth is provided through the dhatus. The inner fire is identified as pitha. Pitha or bile accomodates air or vayu and vayu

accommodates the heart. Through the union of male with female the embryo takes its form in uterus like a semi fluid. After 7 days it becomes a bubble. After one in fortnight a solid mass, In a month it hardens, Within two months it develops into human system, first the head, after three months the feet, four months-belly, hip. Fifth month- back bone, Sixth month- nose, eyes, ears Seventh month-a conscious body. Eighth month-a perfect infant. When male seed is dominant the product will be male. Otherwise female. When both are dominant the product will be eunuch. The mental mood of parent is a regulating factor for a healthy output. The infant impregnated in an agitation mood will be abnormal in mind and body.

Why this solid flesh is called body. Because it contains all essentials of the body. The birth of an infant is like a sacrifice. It has the three fires like that of a sacrifice. Jnanagni, darshanagni, koshtagni- enabling the power to think, see and digest. In heart it is dakshinagni, stomach garhapatya, in face ahavaniya. The mind is brahmaa. Lust and greed are to be given up because they are sacrificial cows. Will power is the vow. Wisdom and senses are utensils. Activities are oblations, head is vessel for alms. Hairs are kusagrass. Mouth is inner altar. Hands are two cups. Rows of teeth-sixteen cups. There are 107 sensitive spots, 180 joints, 109 sinews, 700 channels, 500 muscles, 360 bones and 45 million hairs. The weight of heart 8 pala (1 pala 45.5 gm) tongue-12 pala, bile-1 prastha (728 g). kapha-ladhaka (2912 gm) sukra-kudava (182 gm), fat 2 prastha. Fluid weight depends on what we take in and what we give out. Such is the science leading towards liberation- Says Pippalada.

An appraisal of the work:-

we go through the work written 4000 years ago we can find minute points describing each and every aspect of embryogenic development unveiled, which in the present era experts could explain only with computerized demonstrations, equipments and ultra modern techniques. The terms used are exactly meaningful. There is no confusion in explaining the text. The word used for embryo sack is budbuda. It really means the transparent mucoid sack in which the embryo survives. One sees it crystal clear when scanning is done. The embryo starts with a single cell, divides into sixteen cells- 'shodashakalah purushah', says Chandogya Upanishad -6th chapter. Each and every stage of initial embryonic development is studied with utmost clear insight. It is wonderful to see that the knowledge and spiritual wisdom which

our sages ha , were true , accurate and precious. When sage Pippalada had composed the text some terms and concepts were not so developed. Eg: the word trimalam is used in the sense tridoshas. Chathurvedham aahaaram - bhakshya, peya, lehya and choshya. Sankhyaa treat it as saatvika rajasa and Thamas. Charaka goes to the extent of giving twelve divisions like corn, meat, vegetables, wines, water and so on.

The sage restricts on maintaining peace and happiness during pregnancy. We have examples in Mahabharata that education begins even when child is in the womb. Sage Parashara was born when his father was no more. But in his mother's womb he heard and practiced sastras. Abimanyu learnt how to enter chakravyuha before he was born. What a person practiced by birth makes him what he is. But there are instances of persons who follow evils by his actions of previous birth. The sage, before ending the text about the jivatman- who is reminded of previous birth. This definitely is a good message for our modern trends when criminals are increasing day by day. A sound mind in a sound body is a dream, a necessity and an asset to the nation.

Education begins not after a child is born but even in the womb .Moral, traditional and spiritual values begin when a child begins to survive in the womb. The style of literature in the text points to the period of yaga when sacrifice was considered as virtue. The sage considers a human birth as a sacrificial act . More than a manual of human embryology it seems like a philosophical approach giving importance to morality and spirituality in life.