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## *Ruh* and *Ruh-e-Nafsaniyah*: A literary research

**Ghufran Ahmad, Ansari Sumaira, Mohd Zulkifle and Tasfiya**

### Abstract

Two different types of created objects are found in the universe, the first is that which possesses life, they are animates. The second is that which has no life, they are inanimate. This difference is due to the *Ruh* (spirit/pneuma). Like other animates humans are also animate, so, *Ruh* (pneuma) is present in human body as it is an essential component of the life, without which the maintenance of life is impossible. *Ruh* is produced in the heart by atmospheric air and light part of *akhlat* (humours). Concept of *Ruh* (spirit/pneuma) is mentioned in all medicine, including in religions. Unani System of Medicine (USM) has also described *Ruh*, its types and their genesis in different ways. Its existence as a part of external air is not denied by anyone. Unani Scholars categories *Ruh* into three; *Ruh-e-haiwani*, *Ruh tabī'ī* and *Ruh-e-nafsāni* (vital pneuma, natural/ vegetative pneuma and psychic pneuma). In present paper general description about *Ruh* is giving first with especial attention on genesis of *Ruh-e-nafsāniyya*, as stated in Unani literature in a comprehensive way.

**Methodology:** The present work is of explanatory nature. For this all statement of Unani scholars and stanza were collected from classical text. The collected material was put in systemic way and then was evaluated critically. Appropriate and befitting, commensurating with present day science, notes were given at places where need was realized to make the information more comprehensive.

**Keywords:** *Ruh*, *Quwa*, *Ruh-e-Nafsaniya*, *Umur Tabi'iyya*, *Arwah*, Unani, Pneuma

### Introduction

**Arwah** (pneumas / spirits) are one of the *Umūr Tabi'iyya* (factors of the existence) of body. *Ruh* (pleural- *arwāh*) represents such constituents which the body receives from atmospheric air and without which sustenance of life cannot be imagined. *Ruh* has always been a figure of controversy among the scientists. This controversy has been partly due to the fact that present teacher of this subject, mostly being dogmatic and impervious to modern scientific knowledge, could not present this vital part of concept in its right perspective and partly due to the fact the word *Ruh* carries diverse meanings which created various misunderstanding even among the modern scientists, which eventually lead to wrong interpretations of the term *Ruh* actually meant in *Tibb*. Thus in religious books the *Ruh* is meant for soul. However, almost all the physician clarified that in *Tibb* it never meant for what it stands in the religion, besides its other meanings are of psych or power<sup>[1, 2, 3]</sup>. Sometimes the term *Ruh* is used for *quwwat* (faculty, power) as *Ṭabri* says in his book *Moālājāt-i-Buqrāṭiyya*, sometimes *quwwat-i-haiwāniyya* (vital faculty) of the *qalb* (heart) is called *Ruh-i-haiwāniyya* (vital pneuma) and *quwwat-i-nafsāniyya* (psychic faculty) of the *dimāgh* (brain) is called *Ruh-i-nafsāniyya* (psychic pneuma) and *quwwat-i-ṭabī'iyya* (vegetative/ natural faculty) of the liver is called *Ruh-i-ṭabī'iyya*<sup>[2, 4, 5]</sup>. In Ayurveda, *Prana* and *vayu* are described as equivalents of pneuma or the Breath of Life and Vital Force. *Prana* and *vayu* form the basis of all kinetic function in the organism. *Qi*, is described in Chinese Medicine same as Unani concept of *ruh* (pneuma) and Chinese medicine assumes *Qi*, as energies and essences that give life to the organism. *Qi* also has the same associations with the breath. The *Jing*, or essence, is Chinese Medicine's equivalent of the Radical Moisture. And functionally, *Shen*, or the spiritual essence stored in the heart, is quite similar to what Unani Medicine calls the *Ruh-e-Nafsaniya* (Vital Spirits).<sup>[6]</sup>

### Definition and source of *Ruh*

*Unani* physicians have described *Ruh* in different ways; they also differ to a great extent in explaining its source. Some have considered it corporal while some others immaterial. According to some physician the source of *Ruh* is external air while some others have denied it. Considering the view that *Ruh* is not the atmospheric as such; instead it is produced in the heart by atmospheric air and light part of *akhlat*<sup>[4, 5]</sup>. The views given by some physicians on this matter are as under:

Galen held the view that *Ruh* is a part of atmospheric air which enters the lungs from air through the respiration and thence into the heart<sup>[3, 7]</sup>. From there it goes into the nervous system via the brain, where it operates as a sort of instrument for the soul in the form of a transmitter between mind and body of perceived information from the environment and the rational orders of the mind<sup>[8]</sup>. *Abu Sahl Masīhī* was of the same opinion. He says, *Ruh* is inhaled inside through the respiration and there it undergoes some changes and gets converted into *Ruh-e-Nafsaniya* (animal pneuma)<sup>[3, 9]</sup>. *Ibn sina* explains *Ruh* as it is produced by delicate and vaporous part of humours in the same way as organs are formed from dense and viscous part of humours<sup>[1, 2, 3, 10]</sup>. When the blood reaches into the left ventricle of the heart and gets matured and rarified then some part of this blood turns into light gaseous part, which produces the *Ruh*<sup>[11, 12]</sup>.

*Majūsī* says *Ruh* as a vehicle of *nafs* (psych), *Ruh* is not a body. It is something else permeated in the ventricles of brain. *Ruh* is an instrument of *nafs* (psych) through which all sensory and voluntary movements of the body are carried out<sup>[13, 14]</sup>. The same phenomenon is also described by physiologist in the head of nerve impulse, which causes the muscle contraction, glandular secretion and produce a sensation in the brain<sup>[15]</sup>.

**Functions of *Ruh*:** (1) *Ruh* produces *ḥarārat-i-gharīziyya* (innate heat) in the body. (2) *Ruh* produces energy in the body which keeps all the *quwā* (faculties) functioning and (3) *Ruh* keeps all the organs of the body alive<sup>[2, 7]</sup>. *Ibn Rushd* stated that for animals, *Ruh* is the approximate tool of *quwā-i-mudabbira*. Death is inevitable in case of loss of *Ruh*<sup>[11]</sup>.

**Types of *Ruh*:** Unani physicians have described *Ruh* into three categories; *Ruh-i-ḥaiwāni*, *Ruh ṭabīʿī* and *Ruh-i-nafsāni*. Explaining these three kinds of *Ruh*, *Ibn Abbas Majūsī* writes, *Ruh ṭabīʿī* (natural pneuma) is found in the *Kabid* (liver) and is distributed throughout the body by veins. The existence, growth and functions of *quwwat-i-ṭabīʿī* are depend upon *Ruh-i-ṭabīʿī*. It is produced in the liver by pure blood devoid of other humours. *Ruh-e-Nafsaniya* (animal pneuma) is generated in the heart and reaches every part of the body through its arteries. *Quwwat-i-ḥaiwāni* is maintained, nourished and protected by this *Ruh*. It is produced in the heart by pure and clean blood and air which enters the body by inhalation<sup>[13]</sup>.

**Relation between *Ruh* and *quwā* (pneuma and faculties):** *Arwah* are the *hāmīl* (carrier/transporter) of all *quwā*<sup>[4]</sup>. And *ḥarārat-i-gharīziyya* (innate heat) is tool of all *quwā* i.e. *quwwat-i-ṭabīʿīyya*, *quwwat-i-ḥaiwāniyya* and *quwwat-i-nafsāniyya*<sup>[9]</sup>. The maintenance and proper functioning of *quwā* (faculties) depend upon the continuous supply of *Ruh*. Any cessation of the supply of *Ruh* means cessation in the functioning of *quwā*. *Atibbā'* say the source and sustainer of life is *Ruh* which is the cause of vitality in the organs. It is our day to day observation that any obstruction in the respiratory tract which stops entry of air into the lungs causes sudden death of the individual. Similarly, obstruction of blood supply to any organ causes death of the organ, resulting in gangrene, hence blood is known as *hamil-i-Ruh* (carrier of pneuma). This is all due to the cessation of supply of *Ruh*. *Ibn sina* says, in the opinion of Aristotle, first of all *mabda al awwal* or *nafs ula* or *ṭabīʿat* (human

nature/physis) pays its attention towards *Ruh*, thereby all the *quwā* of the body are produced<sup>[3, 4]</sup>.

### ***Ruh-i-Nafsāniyya* and its genesis**

*Ruh-i-nafsāniyya* (psychic pneuma) generates into the ventricles of brain, circulates in the body diffusing into nerves. It is produced by *Ruh ḥaiwāni* which resides in the heart. When this *Ruh* reaches the brain, it is termed as *Ruh nafsāni*. This *Ruh* is essential for *afʿāl-i-nafsāniyya* (nervous functions)<sup>[13, 14]</sup>. Genesis of *Ruh-i-nafsāniyya* has been described by various scholars. Some of the description regarding genesis of psychic pneuma are as under.

*Rabban Tabri* says *dimāgh* (brain) is the centre of *ḥiss wa ḥarkat* (sense and movement) and it is the palace of *nafs nāṭiqā*. It's *mizāj* is *bārid raṭb* (cold and moist). He says the *ḥarārat-i-gharīziyya* (innate heat) ascends from heart to the brain through two vessels (which is divided into many branches) and the brain become warm and works as a tool of *nafs nāṭiqā*. *Nafs nāṭiqā* uses the *a'dā' wa ḥawās* (organs and senses) of the body during wakefulness and guards these senses during sleep. *Dimāgh* does not remain always active rather it sometime sleep and sometimes remain awaken but, *qalb* always remains active because it's *ḥarkāt* (movements) are *nari* (combustive) and stops only at the end of life that is death<sup>[16]</sup>.

According to Galen *qalb* is the reservoir of *Ruh* and blood. The *Ruh ḥaiwāniyya* (spirit of the heart) has extreme heat. As it has an open passage between itself and the brain, the chill of the brain reaches it to make it moderate and render it fit to receive the *quwwat-i-ḥiss, idrāk and ḥarkat* (faculty of sense, perception and movement). But when this passage suffers derangement the effect of the chill of the brain stops, and it does not remain capable of receiving the power of sensation and motion. This faculty therefore becomes non-existent on the side that is connected with the heart, but the side nearing the brain remains unaffected, since there are many arteries in the brain all of which supply the power of heat to the brain from the heart which leads to sensation and motion<sup>[17]</sup>.

*Masīhī* holds that *ḥarārat-i-gharīziyya* (innate heat) is the common tool of all faculties, from which *quwwat-i-nafsāniyya* is capable of movements, and *qalb* is the reservoir of the *ḥarārat-i-gharīziyya*<sup>[9, 18]</sup>. *Abūl Ḥasan Moḥammad Ṭabri* says *qalb* is the seat of three things *Ruh, khūn* and *ḥarārat-i-gharīziyya* (pneuma, blood and innate heat) and *Ruh ḥaiwāniyya* (vital pneuma) is the mixture of these three<sup>[5, 19]</sup>. *Masīhī* says when *Ruh ḥaiwāniyya* reaches the brain by two *rag* (two vessels, now it called carotid arteries) these vessels are further divided into many branches and makes a big *jaal* (network), and in this *jāl*, *Ruh-i-ḥaiwāniyya* circulates and stay for long then it gets transformed and matured as *Ruh-i-nafsāniyya* (psychic pneuma)<sup>[9]</sup>. After transformation, *Ruh-i-nafsāniyya* enters in all ventricles of the brain, and according to need of the body it enters into *a'sāb* (nerves), *nukhā'* (spinal cord) and reaches *ḥissī wa ḥirki a'dā'* (sensory and motor organs) of the body<sup>[9, 18]</sup>.

*Majūsī* also described the genesis of *Ruh nafsāniyya* same as *Masīhī*. He says *Ruh-i-nafsāniyya* is the *Ruh* which originates in ventricles of the brain. It reaches all over the body through nerves. It gets strength from *quwwat-i-nafsāniyya* and in turn maintains and sustains the same *quwā*. This *Ruh nafsāniyya* is produced by *Ruh-i-ḥaiwāniyya*, which is generated in the heart. *Ruh-i-ḥaiwāni*

ascends from heart to the brain through two vessels namely *rag-i-subati* (carotid arteries). At the base of the brain these vessels are further divided into many branches, which form arterial network (*jāl* and *naseeja*), called *shabka*. In this convoluted arterial networking *Ruh-e-Nafsaniya* stays longer and gets absolute *nuḍj* (concoction), and becomes pellucid, this is called *Ruh-i-nafsāni*. This *Ruh-i-nafsāni* reaches *batani-i-muqaddam* (forebrain) and becomes more purified and *fudlāt* of *Ruh-i-nafsāniyya* excreted through nostrils. From the forebrain *Ruh-i-nafsāniyya* goes to midbrain and hindbrain. In hind brain it accomplishes *ḥarkat* and *dhikr* means *yaddasht* (movements & memory), whereas in forebrain it accomplishes *ḥiss* and *takḥaiyyul* (sensation & imagination) and in midbrain accomplishes *fikr* (thought/worriment) <sup>[13]</sup>. Also, modern physiology substantiates this novel concept of mechanism. Likewise two internal carotid arteries and two vertebral arteries anastomose and form *circulus arteriosus / circle of Willis* (then *shabka*) on the base of the brain. On account of rich vascularity, brain has high metabolic activity by which the constant neural activity is accomplished. Almost 15% of the cardiac output and 25% of total consumption of oxygen are utilized by brain for the accomplishment of its above described functions <sup>[20]</sup>.

### Methodology of research

The present study is literary. This study is based absolutely on explanatory, exploratory and conciliation of thought and doctrines. The method of collection of literary material was from three sources. The primary source of collection of material was from classical published books and from manuscripts' and their translations i.e. *Kamilus Sana'ah*, *Al Qanoon Fit Tib*, *Zakhira Khawarazam Shahi*, *Kitab-ul-Kulliyat*, *Kulliyat-i-Qanoon*, *Kulliyat-i Nafisi*, *Kitab Fil Anasir*, *Kitab Fil Mizaj*, *Chahar Maqala*, *Kitabul Miat*, *Firdausul Hikmat*, *Kitabul Mukhtarar Fit Tib* and *De Anima* (Aristotle) etc. The secondary sources were from different types of available, published and unpublished forms i.e. journals, proceeding, periodicals, thesis, reports; souvenir, dissertation gazettes etc. The tertiary sources were from digitals material. These sources were /are available in different libraries and from where relevant material was collected. The collected material was then analyzed and systematized in comprehensive way. Finally the relevant aspects were elaborated in light of present and past knowledge. At some places explanatory notes were added as per need. The collected material was sorted out under various themes related to various aspects of *Ruh-e-Nafsaniyya* and their role in health promotion. The themes selected were (a) Conceptual understanding of *Ruh* and *Ruh-e-Nafsaniyya* (b) Applied aspects of *Ruh-e-Nafsaniyya* (c) Promotion and understanding of health through *Ruh-e-Nafsaniyya*. These themes were explained in perspective of health.

### Conclusion and discussion

From the above description, it can be inferred that the *Ruh* is a gaseous substance; obtained from the inspired air and *akhlat-i-latifa* (light part of humours), it helps in all the metabolic activities of the body. *Ruh* produces *ḥarārat-i-gharīziyya* and energy in the body which keeps all the *quwā* functioning and it keeps all the organs of the body alive. *Ruh* is an instrument of *nafs* (psych) through which all sensory and voluntary movements of the body are carried

out. Unani physicians have described concept of *Ruh*, its types, genesis of *Ruh* and specially genesis of *Ruh-i-nafsāniyya* (psychic pneuma) very scientifically and in acceptable manner. No one can pick the finger on this novel concept. Chinese medicine, Ayurveda and modern medicine also described the same phenomenon or concept of *Ruh* with different name/ terminology like the Unani system of medicine. In Ayurveda, *prana* and *vayu* are the responsible for all kinetic function in the organism. *Qi*, of Chinese medicine assumes that *Qi*, energies and essences that give life to the organism. *Qi* also has the same associations with the breath and functionally, *Shen*, or the spiritual essence stored in the heart, is quite similar to what Unani Medicine calls the *Ruh-e-Nafsaniya* (Vital Spirits).

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