

Original Article

Interpretation of the Five Viscera's Ascending Kidney-Water and Descending Heart-Yang

Jung-Kyun Bang

Dept. of Oriental Medical Classics and History, College of Oriental Medicine, Sangji University, Wonju, Korea

According to the principle of ascending water and descending fire, water has the property of wetting downward, which is the opposite of fire, which has the property of blazing upward. Thus, they work differently according to their innate properties. Nature and the human body maintain harmony through the interaction of ascending water and descending fire. When applied to the human body, the heart and kidney are the center of this principle. In other words, the heart above is the fire and the kidney downward is water. When the heart-fire harmonizes downward, the kidney becomes warm, enabling genuine vital functions to be active. When the kidney yin moves upward, the heart receives the nourishing yin to harmonize nutrients and blood. Thereby, physiological functions become normal throughout the blood meridians. However, in the ascending kidney-water and descending heart-yang of the heart and the kidney, the liver and lung are the major functional organs. In other words, the liver through the dispersing and raising yang functions moves water, which is the vital essence of the kidney, upward. And the lung, through the astriction?clearing of the lung and descending Qi?dispersing functions, moves the heart-fire downward. These functions are deeply related with changing seasons; thus, these functions can be explained with the ascending kidney-water and descending heart-yang of the five viscera.

Key Words: ascending Kidney-water and descending Heart-Yang, Liver, Lung

Introduction

Not long ago, the US again launched the spaceship Discovery. Different countries in the world are competing with each other trying to send a spaceship into space. These attempts are the process of studying the vast and mysterious universe that we do not

understand fully. The quest by mankind to understand the universe has continued in part for survival and in part to fulfil curiosity. As shown through the quest to understand the universe, science in the Western world has evolved by focusing on confirming the structure, as in the case of Western medicine based on anatomy. On the contrary, science in Asia has been focused on phenomena rather than structures and has developed by revealing the common aspects of different phenomena. As a result, the thought of obedience to nature has developed. And based on this thought, the theory of "correspondence between man and the universe" has been established as the major theory. One of the principles in this theory is the principle of ascending

Received 19 October 2005; received in revised form 4 November 2005; accepted 22 November 2005

Correspondence to : Jung-Kyun Bang, College of Oriental Medicine, Sangji University, Woo-san dong 660, Won-ju, Gangwon-do, Korea. Tel : 033-730-0666, Fax : 033-730-0653, E-mail : bjkdcw@sangji.ac.kr

water and descending fire. This principle of ascending water and descending fire in Oriental medicine occurs in nature and is applied to the human body to explain normal physiological functions and pathologic mechanisms. However, there has not been a specific delving into what mechanism is used to apply the principle of ascending Kidney-water and descending heart-yang. Thus, I examined this principle of ascending kidney-water and descending heart-yang of the five viscera through their functions and anatomical locations.

Body

1. Meaning of ascending water and descending fire

Described as the sign of yin and yang in 『NeiJing』¹⁾, water and fire are the elements used to actually observe yin and yang explaining the true nature. They are included in the five phases with their properties being contrary. Water has the property of wetting downward, whereas fire has the property of blazing upward²⁾. In other words, water has the yin properties in which it wets everything and flows downward. Fire on the other hand has the yang property of blazing upward. Thus, the action of water is downward and the action of fire is upward, with their functions being opposite. Although their actual directions are opposite, fire should come down and water should go up in order to achieve harmony in nature, ie., ascending water and descending fire. Water and fire should interact, but the nature can change and yin-yang do not lean to one side, maintaining harmony.

Then, what force is working for water and fire to show different functions other than their innate properties? The answer to this question is shown in 『the Book of Changes』 through the Gua form. Centering around Eight-Gua, Eight-Gua in Fuxi's Eight-Gua is

where Qian-Gua(☰) is situated in the south and Kun-Gua(☷) in the north³⁾, explaining the inborn constitution where the nature is in right places through which all the creatures in the universe are born. On the other hand, in Wenwang's Eight-Gua, Li-Gua(☲) is in the south and Kan-Gua(☵), in the north⁴⁾. Wenwang's Eight-Gua explains the changes in the after birth after the nature takes right places, ie., the principle of the generation and transformation. Therefore, in Wenwang's Eight-Gua, yin and yang would interact and changes in Qi occurs distinctively⁵⁾. The interaction between yin and yang could be described as ascending water and descending fire. The mechanism of ascending water and descending fire occurring is as follows. Kan-Gua(☵) represents water, which is in the north and stays down. Water can go up due to Yang-Yao(—) in the middle of Kan-Gua. On the other hand, Li-Gua(☲) represents fire, which is in the south and stays up. Fire comes down due to Yin-Yao(--) in the middle of Li-Gua⁶⁾. Thus, water and fire have opposite actions but through their interaction, harmony in nature is maintained. In other words, water and fire (Yin-Yang or the Nature) interact. The 『NeiJing』 says, “the power of earth goes up to the sky to become clouds and the power of the heaven comes down to become rain.”⁷⁾ Thus, the Qi interaction of heaven and earth is explained with clouds and rain. In other words, when the vital essence of water goes up to become the activity of qi, it becomes clouds; and when the powder cloud Qi comes down, it changes to rain to come down⁸⁾. In 『NeiJing』, there are other places that talk about the natural interaction with Qi. This Qi is the fact that when something rising reaches the top, it must come down, ie., Heaven; and when something goes down to the most bottom, it must go up, ie., Earth⁹⁾. In other words, something rising is has the function of the yang but Earth's Qi (water) goes up. Something coming down in the function of the yin but Heaven's Qi(fire) comes

down.

Thus, the nature's yin and yang's Qi should interact. For natural yin and yang's Qi's interaction, Wangbing proposed "the independence of Yin and Yang", claiming that in order to maintain the properties of yin and yang, Qi of the opposite should be reared, which is the root of each other. Furthermore, Wangbing explained that the theory of independence of Yin and Yang by expanding to living according to seasons and taking in food¹⁰. On the other hand, in 『NeiJing』, the smooth interaction of the nature's yin and yang's Qi is expressed as "Yin flourishing smoothly and Yang vivified steadily"¹¹, suggesting that the Yang-Qi of the body has the property of easily escaping outside so that it should be hidden by the power of the Yin-Qi and tangle inside the Yin-Qi, stopping the flow so that it should be even due to the power of the Yang-Qi. In other words, the fire, ie, the Yang-Qi, has the property of going out in which water-qi goes up to hide Qi and tangle due to the innate property of water, ie, the Yin-Qi, due to its silent property. When fire-qi comes down to make water flow, harmony in the body is maintained. In 『the Book of Changes』, it is expressed as the Jiji-Gua. The Jiji-Gua is that water is above fire, in which water-fire interact with each other, making interaction easy¹². Thus, water in the bottom goes up and fire above goes down, making the state of ascending water and descending fire. On the contrary, ascending water and descending fire is not achieved to make fire goes above water, which is the Weiji-Gua. In this case, water-fire do not interact, not being beneficial¹³. In other words, fire goes up to burn more and water goes down so that fire above becomes severe and water below becomes severe upper Heat and lower cold.

2. Ascending Kidney-water and descending Heart-Yang of the five viscera

When ascending kidney-water and descending heart-

yang is connected with the five viscera, it can be explained as centering around the heart and the kidney. The heart is included in fire and situated above in the body. The kidney is included in water and situated below the body. The heart-fire and the kidney-water affect each other, making water-fire interaction smooth in the body, maintaining normal physiological functions. This is the major content of ascending kidney-water and descending heart-yang of the five viscera. In other words, the heart is fire above and the kidney is water below. However, when the heart-fire goes down, the kidney becomes warm so that the genuine vital function could work on the activity of qi. When the kidney-yin goes up, the heart receives nourishing yin, so that the nutrient and blood become harmonized and normal physiological state is maintained through all blood meridians¹⁴. Some claimed that the spleen in the middle of this action controls the role of ascending and descending¹⁵. On the other hand, for water-fire interaction of the heart and the kidney, some scholars explain with blood and vital essence stored in the heart and kidney. In other words, the Kidney stores vital essence. In vital essence, Zheng-Yang's Qi is present so that fire blazes up. The heart stores blood. In blood, body fluid of the primordial principle goes down below so that water-fire interact¹⁶. However, this explanation could not explain what mechanism is involved for the heart-fire comes down and the kidney-water goes up. I want to explain ascending kidney-water and descending heart-yang of the five viscera suggested in 『SuWen · Liujiezan-gxianglun』.

In 『SuWen · Liujiezan-gxianglun』, yin-yang of the five viscera is explained as "the Heart-Taiyang aspect of Yang, the Lung-Taiyin aspect of Yang, the Kidney-Shaoyin aspect of Yin, the Liver-Shaoyang aspect of Yang"¹⁷. Guoaichun corrects that this sentence in which Shaoyin aspect of Yang of the lung, Taiyin aspect of

Yin of the kidney, and Shaoyang aspect of Yin of the liver¹⁸⁾. Many scholars follow this content, which is reasonable, so this content is explained as the claim of Guoachun. For this content of this clause, based on the five viscera, the yang is defined as those situated above the diaphragm, and the yin is those situated below the diaphragm. The characteristics of the five phases of the five viscera are distinguished as Taiyang · Shaoyin · Shaoyang · Taiyin. The important aspect is the fact that the heart and lung are paired above the diaphragm, and the liver and kidney are paired below the diaphragm. In other words, the heart and kidney having the properties of water and fire is situated above and below as Taiyang and Taiyin. The liver and lung having the properties of wood and metal are Shaoyang and Shaoyin situated near the heart and kidney. The location of five viscera of the anatomically, explains the fact that the five viscera have the natural ascending kidney-water and descending heart-yang as follows.

In 『NeiJing』, the left and right are the roads of yin and yang¹⁹⁾. In the left, Qi goes up. In the right, Qi goes down. Thus, the left and right are considered as the roads where Qi of yin and yang goes up and down. This is the method of selecting the Xiang where during the day, the sun goes up from the left so that Qi goes up from the left. At dusk, the sun sets from the west, which is the right side so that Qi goes down from the right. In 『NeiJing』, based on this content, the liver produced Qi from the left, and the lung stores Qi from the right²⁰⁾. Thus, the liver and lung are the internal organs overseeing Qi's ascending and descending.

Based on the above content, let's examine the basic properties of Qi functioning ascending and descending by the liver and lung. The liver, as stated above, has raising yang and dispersing functions. Raising yang explains dispersing Qi above and dispersing represents Qi moving without blockage. However, the dispersing function is closely related with vital essence. In other

words, the kidney stores vital essence during winter and stores energy sources for the activities of the following spring. In spring, it retrieves stored vital essence in the winter. When spring comes, the body relieves vital essence stored in winter. The dispersing function of the liver is involved in this process. In other words, it does not clash with the kidney trying to store vital essence. Rather than the strong Yang-Qi' force, Shaoyang is appropriate. This is the dispersing function. In 『NeiJing』, the liver is explained as “Bajizhiben”²¹⁾. Many scholars stated that this term is involved in fatigue²²⁾²³⁾²⁴⁾. However, some understand that it destroys vital essence stored in winter²⁵⁾. The liver is the organ taking out vital essence from the kidney to distribute throughout the body. In short, the liver delivers Qi above through raising yang by taking out vital essence of the kidney so that it transports vital essence of the kidney, ie., water, above.

On the other hand, the lung has the functions of astringing • clearing the lung and descending Qi • dispersing. Among 4 seasons, the fall take Qi emitted in the spring and summer. The lung also does astringing of Qi emitted in the spring and summer, facilitating the storage of vital essence in the kidney. Thus, the lung functions related with the heart are as follows. As stated above, the lung is Shaoyin. Along with the heart, which is Taiyang, is situated above the diaphragm. This combination is to prevent the heart, ie., Taiyang, to go above fire-qi. The lung, ie., Shaoyin, inhibits the overaction of the heart-fire, taking down. In 『NeiJing』, the lung is “the office of assisting heart”²⁶⁾. The lung cools fire-heat of the heart and plays the role of clearing the Lung and descending Qi of the Yang-Qi²⁷⁾. Thus, the astringing of the lung and clearing the lung and descending Qi function have much significance; however, it can be examined as the heart fire goes down.

As for water-fire of the heart and kidney, water-qi

goes up and fire-qi comes down due to the functions of liver and lung being near to the heart and kidney anatomically. Thus, ascending kidney-water and descending heart-yang occur in the body. During this process, the liver and lung play the major role.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were made in this study.

1. Water-fire are the symbol of yin-yang, and are the elements observed actually in the nature. This water-fire have opposite properties of wetting downward and blazing upward. But unlike their innate properties, ascending water and descending fire function. In 「the Book of Changes」, this is explained with Gua-xiang of Kan-Gua(☵) and Li-Gua(☲). The Jiji-Gua is explained when ascending water and descending fire are achieved. On the other hand, in 『NeiJing』, the independence of Yin and Yang is used to explain ascending water and descending fire. The state of ascending water and descending fire achieved is explained with Yin flourishing smoothly and Yang vivified steadily. Thus, the power of water of the body or nature goes up to control and inhibit fire, and the power of fire comes down to control and inhibit water, maintaining normal harmony.

2. The middle of ascending kidney-water and descending heart-yang in the body is the heart and the kidney. In other words, the heart belonging to fire is above, and the kidney belonging to water is below, but the heart-fire goes down to harmonize and the kidney becomes warm, the genuine vital function works as the activity of qi, and the kidney yin goes up to make the heart to harmonize the nutrients and blood to maintain normal physiologic state through all blood meridians.

3. For ascending Kidney-water and descending heart-yang of the five viscera, I examined the anatomical

locations of five viscera and general functions of the five viscera suggested in 「LiuJieZangXiangLun」. In 『NeiJing』, the left and right are recognized as the roads. The left is where Qi goes up and the right is where Qi comes down. This is where the liver and the lung oversee. Thus, the liver through dispensing and raising yang functions transports water, the vital essence, above. The lung through the astriction · clearing the lung and descending Qi · dispersing function, transports the heart-fire below. These functions are related with seasons, which can be explained with the ascending Kidney-water and descending heart-yang of the five viscera. In other words, anatomically the heart and lung are situated above the diaphragm, and the liver and kidney are situated below the diaphragm. Water-fire of the heart and kidney function as ascending and descending due to the functions of liver and lung. Thus, the body maintains water-fire harmony due to ascending kidney-water and descending heart-yang.

References

1. Hongwonshik. 『JingJiaoHuangDiNeiJing-SuWen』. The press of oriental medicine institution. 1981:24
2. 『Shujing』. Xueminwenhuashe. 1990: Earth p336
3. 『The Book of Changes』. Xueminwenhuashe. 1990:71
4. 『The Book of Changes』. Xueminwenhuashe. 1990:120
5. Liujie, Yuanjun. 『Zongguobaguayixue』. The press of Qingdao. 1995:40~42
6. Heshaochu. 『Gudaimingyijiezhouyi』. The press of Zongguoyiyaokeji. 1994:135~137
7. Hongwonshik. 『JingJiaoHuangDiNeiJing-SuWen』. The press of oriental medicine institution. 1981:23
8. Zhangjiebin. 『LeiJing』. The press of Renmin-

- weisheng. 1980:16
9. Hongwonshik. 『JingJiaoHuangDiNei-Jing-SuWen』. The press of oriental medicine institution. 1981:244
 10. Wanghongtu. 『Huangdineijingyanjiudacheng』. The press of Beijing. 1999:487
 11. Hongwonshik. 『JingJiaoHuangDiNeiJingSuWen』. The press of oriental medicine institution. 1981:17
 12. 『The Book of Changes』. Xueminwenhuashe. 1990:149~157
 13. 『The Book of Changes』. Xueminwenhuashe. 1990:174~176
 14. Lijunchuan, Changkyenshun beyond 2men translation. 『Yiyixuesixiang』. Farenwenhuashe. 2000:211
 15. Yangli, Kimchungliel · Hongwonshik beyond translation. 『the Book of Changes and Oriental Medicine』. Farenwenhuashe. 2000:326~327
 16. Zhangjiebin. 『LeiJing』. The press of Renminweisheng. 1980:4
 17. Hongwonshik. 『JingJiaoHuangDiNeiJingSuWen』. The press of oriental medicine institution. 1981:34
 18. Guoaichun. 『HuangDiNeiJingSuWenJiaoZhu』. The press of Renminweisheng. 1995:151
 19. Hongwonshik. 『JingJiaoHuangDiNeiJing-SuWen』. The press of oriental medicine institution. 1981:24
 20. Hongwonshik. 『JingJiaoHuangDiNeiJing-SuWen』. The press of oriental medicine institution. 1981:190
 21. Hongwonshik. 『JingJiaoHuangDiNeiJing-SuWen』. The press of oriental medicine institution. 1981:36
 22. Mashi. 『HuangDiNeiJingSuWenzhuzhengfawei』. The press of Renminweisheng. 1998:88~89
 23. Wukun. 『HuangDiNeiJingSuWenzhuzhu』. The press of Xueyuan. 2001:50
 24. Lijinyong. 『XinbianHuangDiNeiJinggangmu』. The press of Shanghai kexuejishu. 1988:60
 25. Parkchanguk. 『HuangDiNeiJingSuWenZhuShi』. Kyung Hee University Press. 1998:175~176
 26. Hongwonshik. 『JingJiaoHuangDiNeiJing - SuWen』. The press of oriental medicine institution. 1981:34
 27. Parkchanguk. 『HuangDiNeiJingSuWenZhuShi』. Kyung Hee University Press. 1998:152