

The Hidden Nature of Dionysus and Asclepius Revealed

By Robert L. Peck

The power of the god *Dionysus* is symbolized by the power of wine or that power which can overpower the socially conditioned brain. The intoxicating power of wine was an excellent model for the universally described inner transformational fluid or elixir called by such names as *ambrosia*, *amrita*, *soma* or hormones (see *Directing Life*). Plato's *Phaedrus* is one of the few remaining descriptive writings about the importance of the power of *Dionysus* to bring individual liberation and evolution. The power of *Dionysus* was not at all popular with rulers and social institutions which took the symbol of liberation and distorted it into drunkenness and irresponsibility. The method of liberating the inner power of *Dionysus* was finding an inner ecstasy that released an inner intoxicating fluid whose effects are known to "exuberant" children or adults who forget themselves during an emergency. The methods of generating the inner elixir utilized the physical stimulation of the body with the breath and inner motion symbolized by a winnowing basket holding a short rod. This stimulation was declared to be sexually deviant by those who opposed individuals finding an inner mind and power of their own.

Asclepius is the allegorical god for the inner physical control of the body for obtaining health and vitality. However, this inner power was found to be able to be externally controllable to some degree, giving rise to medicine and the further control of individuals by rulers and institutions. The power of *Asclepius* was symbolized by a single snake coiled around a rod (not the two-snake *caduceus*).¹ His name (seldom translated) describes how the inner power is obtained. *Asclepius* is formed from two separate word roots. The first is *askeo*, meaning "to be disciplined", while the second root, *leptos*, has the meaning of "being purified by winnowing." Perhaps the best known example of this type of winnowing (shaking and movement of air) is with the curative power of overpowering sobbing.

There are no extant Western writings describing the meaning of the models of a snake, winnowing, and rod, but fortunately they are still available in India which was known to have shared in many of the early philosophies and practices. The *Rig Veda* of ancient India can be described as being devoted to the power behind these models and how it can be obtained. The entire Ninth Book of the *Rig Veda* is devoted to the generation of the inner intoxicating elixir (*soma*) by purifying of the body by means of winnowing (*pava*). Modern translations of the *Rig Veda* are excellent examples of how rulers and institutions suppress the inner powers of individuals since the inner produced soma is falsely attributed to an external plant controlled and purified by priests. Comparison of the original writings with the distorted translations shows how the wine of *Dionysus* was equated with fermented liquors, and the inner healing inner power of *Asclepius* was equated to drugs and physicians.

The inner rod, or *linga* in Sanskrit, is widely known in India today as the *Shiva Linga* or the symbol for vitality and creation as well as being the inner source of *soma*. It is described as existing in the perineum with a serpent or snake wrapped around the rod or *lingam* which when energized releases vital and creative energy. The *lingam* is stimulated with the breath, direct pressure and by ten maidens (fingers) grasping the breast which no modern academician is willing to consider in his or her translation of the ancient Sanskrit.

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¹ Note: the *caduceus* of *Hermes*, which originally symbolized commerce, is perhaps becoming the perfect symbol today for medicine, since Medicine is now a chief source of commerce or money exchange.