

The humoral theory and human psychology in traditional medical systems of ancient Greek medicine and Ayurveda medicine

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The humoral theory is one basic principle which identified a number of bodily liquids as the main constituents of living beings. Thereby health is the maintenance of balance between these Humors while diseases are their imbalance. Its earliest roots in the West can be detected in Greek medicine in the medical cult practices of Asclepius in Asclepeions (700 BCE) and later in Hippocrates who was an Asclepiad (460 – 377 BCE). In the East, the humoral theory can be witnessed in Ayurveda (1000 BCE) as the concept of Tridosha. Moreover, both systems highlighted that the levels of Humors not only affect the humans physically causing disease but also psychologically diseasing the mind as well. For instance, Greek medicine identifies as the Humors of blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile and the four temperaments of Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholic and Phlegmatic which ultimately decided the attributes of a person. Ayurveda recognizes three bodily liquids named Tridosas of vatha 'Air', pitha 'Bile' and kapha 'Phlegm' as the key to the maintenance of physical health while Trigunas or three virtues of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas maintained wellbeing of the human psychology. Moreover, both systems believed in maintaining a relative proportion of Humors in the human body to be regulating the human temperament along with behavioral manifestations. Thereby the objective of this paper is to analyze the Theories of Humors in Ancient Greek medicine and Ayurveda medicine and its effect on human psychology, the effect of human psychology on the balancing and unbalancing of Humors and identify the parallels in their identification, approach and treatments. Moreover, it will also analyze the holistic approach apparent in both Greek medicine and Ayurveda medicine where the human was considered as a psychosomatic entity. This paper will use Historic method under Qualitative research methodology as this study will have to read, analyze and interpret historical material in English and Sinhala translations as its main device for gathering and analyzing information. Thus, this will mainly involve the finding, reading, evaluating, organizing and synthesizing of both primary sources and secondary sources relevant to the topic in order to finally arrive at the purpose of the study. In conclusion, it can be observed that though there is a similarity in the identification of Humors and its effect on temperaments and mind conditions as apparent in Greek medicine and Ayurveda medicine, the approach in their classification, identification and number are different. However, it can be concluded that in traditional medical systems identified as in Greek medicine and in Ayurveda medicine, the knowledge on functioning of Humors and its relation on temperaments and Trigunas can be identified as a depiction of scientific perception of mental health in traditional medical systems. Moreover, the significance of mental wellbeing to the overall physical wellbeing and physical wellbeing to the mental wellbeing are also apparent.

Key words: Greek medicine, Ayurveda medicine, Humors, Tridosha, Temperaments, Triguna