

THE FIVE SOULS OF INDIAN MEDICINE

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Greek medicine recognised three souls, one in the head, a second in the chest, and a third in the abdomen. Indian humorology has the *tridoṣa* doctrine with three elements, *vāyu* (air), *kapha* (water), and *pitta* (heat). This doctrine can be scientifically justified as three pairs of biochemical processes—air=oxidation-reduction; water=hydration-dehydration and heat=exothermic-endothermic. Indian medicine recognises five souls in each of these three humours but virtually abides by those belonging only to air. Thus, instead of 15 souls practically there are only five. Of these five, three are the same as in the Greek medicine. Of the extra two one is assigned to the lower part of the abdomen and the other governs the bodily movement as a whole. There is no question of considering all the fifteen souls named.

In an earlier article¹ I discussed Galen recognizing three souls in Greek medicine. It was shown that Galen borrowed this idea from Plato who in turn got it from some Semitic source. The original author obviously depended upon his common sense and realizing that the main body consists of three parts, head, chest, and abdomen, believed that each part must have a soul of its own. Accordingly the three souls with their sites in the body would be as given below. I have also added provisionally what may probably be their other counterparts.

In Greek Medicine	Sites in the human body.	In Indian Medicine.	In <i>Tridoṣa</i>
1. Animal spirits	Head (Brain)	<i>Udāna</i>	Fire (<i>Pitta</i>)
2. Vital spirits	Chest (Heart and Lungs)	<i>Prāṇa</i>	Air (<i>Vāyu</i>)
3. Natural spirits	Abdomen (Liver)	<i>Apāna</i>	Water (<i>Kapha</i>)

Indian humorology recognises three humours and the doctrine is called *Tridoṣa*. The three elements here are *vāyu* (air), *kapha* (water), and *pitta* (fire). I have explained² them scientifically as :

1. Air=Oxidation, Reduction 2. Water=Hydration, Dehydration and
3. Fire=Heat=Exothermic Endothermic.

If we classify the enzymes or the important biochemical reactions in the body these would be one of only four viz., oxidation, reduction, hydration and dehydration. It then means that they are the results of only two cosmic elements, air and water. In fact van Helmont had actually recognised these two as far more important than fire and earth. According to *R̥gveda* and also the holy *Qurān*, the element water was the first to be created. Moreover, *R̥gveda* call fire *apāṃnapāt*, the grandson of water, thus reducing the importance of fire. I have shown that the *Tridoṣa* doctrine implies six biochemical reactions mentioned above as three-pairs which can be scientifically justified. It then amounts to saying that the *Tridoṣa* doctrine otherwise interpreted would imply the existence also of three souls, though not identical with those of Galen. The human system contains (1) the nervous system, (2) the respiratory system which is intimately associated with the circulatory system, and (3) the digestive system. Galen's three souls can be conceived as belonging to the above three systems. The reproductive system, though important otherwise, is not indispensable for the life of the individual. Nevertheless the above discussion does point out that Galen's three souls do not explain the make-up of a normal healthy man.

We now turn to Indian physiology to understand its attempts to explain the biochemical processes of the human system. From Jolly³ we learn that each of the humours of *Tridoṣa* has five souls. That every one of the three humours should have exactly five souls each, strikes as though its author tried to solve the problem rather mechanically. I give below the list of the souls belonging to the three humours as found in Jolly.

- Vāta*— — — (1) *Udāna* (in throat)
 (2) *Prāna* (in heart)
 (3) *Samāna* (in stomach and intestines)
 (4) *Apāna* (in lower body, anus, bladder)
 (5) *Vyāna* (in whole body)
- Pitta*— — — (1) *Pācaka* (between stomach and intestines)
 (2) *Rajaka* (in liver and spleen)
 (3) *Sādhaka* (in heart)
 (4) *Ālocaka* (in eyes)
 (5) *Bhrajaka* (in skin)
- Kapha*— — — (1) *Kledaka* (in stomach)
 (2) *Avalambaka* (in heart)

- (3) *Rasana* (in tongue)
- (4) *Sūcana* (in head)
- (5) *Ślesmana* (in joints)

Filliozat⁴ has also made a special study of Indian medicine. The *Tridoṣa* doctrine of Indian medicine comprises *Vāyu* (air), *kapha* (water) and *pitta* (heat as fire). Of these three *vāyu* is by far the most important. Filliozat writes (p.28) that "the wind, *vāyu*, introduces into the body in its own form, that of a breath, *prāṇa*". "The *prāṇa* is divided into (1) *prāṇa* proper, breath of the front, which stays in the mouth and ensures *respiration*, (2) *udāna*, breath which goes upwards and produces *speech*, (3) *samāna*, concentrated breath, provides necessary amount of air (to produce internal warmth) for the process of *digestion*, (4) *apāna*, breath which goes downwards, ensures *excretion* and delivery. Finally (5) *vyāna*, diffused breath, circulates in all the limbs and explains their *movement*." He writes emphatically that "all the movements of the body are related to the action of the wind, this is by analogy with what passes in the universe where the wind is the motor *par excellence*." Then equating movement to life, of the three humours of *Tridoṣa* air and water are both matter and energy but air is by far the most mobile. Scientifically interpreted, air would be most responsible for oxidation, and among the biochemical processes occurring in a life-form oxidation would be the leading reaction. Thus physically and biochemically air comes foremost in considering the physiology of a life-form, above all of man.

Of the five souls that belong to *vāta* or *vāyu* or *Tridoṣa* three are those which Galen had recognised and which have been indicated at the beginning. These three are *udāna*, the soul in the head, *prāṇa*, the soul in the heart and lung, and *apāna*, the soul in abdomen. We are left with *samāna* and *vyāna*. When the abdomen is divided, the upper region would contain stomach and intestine which would be under the control of *samāna*, while the lower portion with bladder and anus will be under the control of *apāna*. Now, there would be an integrating system which controls all parts of the body as parts of a whole. This power is exercised by the soul called *vyāna*. Thus the Indian medicine divides the abdomen in two parts and also recognises a power over the body as whole. From the above list we understand that heart above contains *prāṇa* belonging to *vāta*, and would be a soul of the nature of wind, then *sādhaka*, belonging to *pitta*, when it would be a soul generating warmth, and finally *avalambaka*, belonging to *kapha*, a soul regulating intake and output of water. No other organ has the representative souls of all the three humours of *Tridoṣa*. Moreover, eyes alone has *ālocaka*, the soul of the class *pitta* and *ślesmana* is only in the joints and it belongs to the class *kapha* or water. It was expected that all the important organs and tissues of the body would have a soul each.

Altogether these fifteen souls cannot be scientifically or even logically explained. The earlier thinkers must have realized as much so that of the

Tridoṣa system they selected the souls belonging only to *vāta* division. This preference, I feel I can explain. In a previous study⁵ I have shown that as a life-form man contains breath and breath is a vapour as also the volatile fraction of freshly spilt blood. The presence of soul confers life upon its recipient and life is nothing if it is not essentially movement. Additions of these two, *samāna* and *vyāna*, therefore, appear reasonable and are improvements upon the three souls of Greek medicine. However, while *Tridoṣa* system can be scientifically explained, these five souls of the *vāta* division of *Tridoṣa* cannot be. In fact if the five souls of *vāta* division can be justified then there should be more than fifteen souls in the body. The conception of fifteen souls seems arbitrary and conceived mechanically without assigning each a specified function or a specified organ.

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