

An Analytical Review of ‘Unşur-e-Mā’: (Substance Bears the Cold and Moistness Properties)

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Abstract:

Purpose: The aim of this paper is to clear the concept of unsure ‘Unşur-e-Mā’, so, that the students of Unani medicine can easily understand it on present knowledge.

Background: There are number of theories come, in which theory of arkān-e-arba’a is most accepted. ‘Unşur-e-Mā’ is one of the four arkān and it is present in different proportion in everything. The form of classical literature of unani medicine is same as it was 1000 years ago. Only change happened in the linguistic aspect i.e., from Arabic to Persian, then Urdu, and now a days it is being translated in English.

Methodology: Tibb (medicine) is a branch of science, and science is a synonym of change, in the form of progress with respect to time. Instead of translation, the text must be understood and interpreted with the current knowledge. Therefore, ‘Unşur-e-Mā’ is being interpreted in the light of classical and modern knowledge. If we look for the genesis of human body, ‘Unşur-e-Mā’ is present in maximum proportion which comes from the Rutubat Gharīziyya (Radical moisture), which is absolutely essential to life, it is basically genetic code, which is transfer at molecular level from parent to offspring. It determines the overall quality, character and longevity of our life.

Conclusion: Arkan are the substances which are the mirror of kaifiyat. Significance of unsure ma’a is basically by its kaifiyat (Barid Ratab). Each and every form of life depends on it. Unsure ma’a is present in different proportion in everything. All the fluidic component of human body comes under the unsure ma’a. Character transformation from parents to offspring occurs through Radical moisture in the form of Rutubat-e-Ghariziyya.

Future prospects: The things must be interrelated in their progressive history by keeping the basic principles of unani medicine as its soul.

Index terms: Unani, ‘Unşur-e-Mā’, Radical Moisture, Arkān-E-Arba’a.

Introduction: When the human life begins, the humans prefer to live around water rather than desert or hilly areas. This is because the vegetations, crops, foods, plants found only around the water, so to fulfill their food requirement, they prefer to live around water. As the time passes the different theories for existence of life were proposed, in which theory of Arkān-e-arba’a is universally accepted. According to this theory, for existence of life four kayfiyāt i.e. Hārr, Bārid, Raṭb, Yābis are necessary. Everything consist from these four kayfiyāt but what make us to perceive these kayfiyāt is matter in which one dominant kayfiyāt Fā’ila (Hārr or Bārid.) along with kayfiyāt Munfa’ila (Raṭb or Yābis) is found. ‘Unşur-e-Mā’ is Bārid (kayfiyāt Fā’ila) and Raṭb (kayfiyāt Munfa’ila). ‘Unşur-e-Mā’ is present in different proportion in everything. It is most passive, receptive, and the greatest receiver and absorber of energy. It is Flowing and fluidic. It Cools, moistens, lubricates, dissolves, cleanses, purifies, and sinks downwards. It Fertilizes and germinates as the Source of all Life.

What is Arkān: The essential constituents and the working principle of the body according to Unani medicine can be classified into seven main groups which are called as Umūr-e-Tabī’yya namely: **Arkān** (four basic constituents), **Mizāj** (Temperament), **Akhlāṭ** (Humors), **A’ḍā** (Organs), **Arwāḥ** (Life spirit, pneuma), **Quwā** (Faculty) and **Af’āl** (Action). As we know that Arkān are the Ajzā’ Awwaliyya (primary components) for the human body which are the basis of its materialistic form. Mizāj is a resultant of combination of these kayfiyāt present in ‘Anāşir, after that Akhlāt are formed which are responsible for the genesis of A’ḍā and Arwāḥ. Now the rest two Umūr i.e., Quwā and Af’āl are necessary for all physiological functions throughout the life. The loss of any one of these component may leads to disease, or even death of an individual, each component has a close relation to and direct bearing on the state of health of an individual. ^[1] In unani medicine Arkan has given a maximum importance that is why study of Umūr-e-Tabī’yya always started at atomic and molecular level. ^[2]

The first keystone of Umūr-e-Tabī’yya is Arkān (simple bodies which are primary substances of human and non human bodies. They cannot be subdivided into bodies which have different forms. There intermixture results in different forms in nature.) comprising earth, water, air, and fire as different states of matter and the building blocks of everything in the universe. ^[3] In modern medicine cell is the structural and functional unit of life but according to unani medicine the basic unit of life is Arkān and cell is also form by their intermixture, so that first study of Arkān is necessary. ^[4] Arkān are the primary substances of human body. They cannot be sub divided into bodies which have different forms. Their intermixture result in different forms (*surat nau’iya*) in nature. The various substances (compounds) in nature depend on their Imtizāj (chemical combinations) for their existence. ^[3] Synonyms are- Uştuquşşāt, Ummahaat, Arkān, ‘Anāşir, Element. ^[4]

Discussion: ‘Unşur-e-Mā’ will be discussed in its progressive history.

‘Unşur-e-Mā’: As A Primary Element. ^[4]

Concept of one element: A group of ancient philosopher's held the view that all things in this world were made of only one element; that very element, after passing through changes and metabolism, converted itself into different forms. But those philosophers differed in determining this element specifically. Some called it water and others named it earth, fire, air and vapour, according to their philosophies. *Thales* projected that only Mā’ is responsible for origin of everything. He argued that only one thing which had the ability to be converted easily into

different shapes could assume the state of an element; only those things had the ability to acquire different forms, which had mobility, wetness, liquidity and coldness; water possessed all these qualities.

Concept of Two element: Some philosophers believed that primary element were fire and earth. According to *Xenophenes* Earth and water were primary elements. He argued that moistness and dryness both were necessary to create forms in compounds. Since moistness easily accepted various forms and in the same way gave them up, dryness was necessary to protect the form. The air was a vapour created from water and it becomes fire due to the production of heat by intense movement in the air.

Concept of three elements: This theory was given by *Perphyrius (333 B.C.)*. According to him an element would be always found in one of the three forms i.e. solid, liquid, gas. Some philosophers who believed this theory are named as Ahl-e-iksir, They called the solid elements in their terminology as Milh (salt), The liquid elements as zibaq (mercury) and gaseous elements as kibrit (sulphur).

Concept of Arkane Arba: First given by *Empedocles*. He assumes that all matter was composed of a mixture of four primary substances- fire, air, water and earth. Now days the only accepted concept is **Arkān-e-Arba'a**. This concept was widely accepted by Hippocrates, Aristotle, Galen, and Avicenna. According to *Hippocrates*, there are four qualities i.e. Hotness, Coldness, Moistness and Dryness. Coldness is necessary for our body especially when we are affected from heat or temperature. The pain from the dryness makes sure that there is presence of contra property of dryness in our body. *Galen* said regarding composition and formation of body by 'Anāšir-e-Arba'a- Solid (Earth), Liquid (Water), Air and Fire participate at particular ratio in composition and formation of Human body. According to *Ibn-e-Sina (980-1037)*, Arkan are the primary substances of human body. They cannot be subdivided into bodies which have different forms. Their intermixture result in different forms (*surat nau'iyā*) in nature. The various substances (compounds) in nature depend on their imtizāj (chemical combinations) for their existence. Contended this theory of four Arkān, *Aristotle (384-322 B.C.)* illustrated the binary qualities to each of the rukn to express their Mizāj and properties, these are- Al-hawa (Air) is primarily hot and secondarily wet. Al-Nar (fire) is primarily hot and secondarily dry. Al-Ardh (Earth) is primarily cold and secondarily dry. Al-Mā' (Water) is primarily cold and secondarily wet.

Concept of five elements: Indian philosophers believed that elements were five in number; earth, water, air, fire, akash (sky). This theory is called panj mahabhut in Ayurvedic terminology.

Concept of indefinite arkan (Arkan-e-Kaseera): Some philosophers known as Ashab-e-Khaleet (Scholars of admixture), who were of the opinion that there are a large number of elements or unlimited number of arkan and said that all the substances in the universe are composed of different combination of arkan. Anaxagorus, one of the eminent scholar, suggested that number of rukn can be changed into different kind of arkan, due to particular characteristic; therefore, a lot of arkan are needed for the formation of Universe.

Aflatoon- Theory of Forms: According to him only forms are true object of study. The objects which are seen are not real, they just only mimic the real forms i.e. anything which comes into perception are shadows of the real things. All things are most pure in forms. He realizes that true knowledge does not refer to things but only to forms i.e. for anything there is a corresponding form.^[5] These elements are four states of matter where; Hawa (air) stands for gaseous state, Mā' (water) stands for liquid state, Ardh (earth) stands for solid state, Nar (fire) stands for the matter which has been transformed into heat energy.^[1]

Apeiron as an origin: Apeiron is a Greek word, meaning "which has no boundaries" or "the boundless" or "the unlimited". This theory created by *Anaximander*, he believed that apeiron generated the four qualities (hot-cold, wet-dry) which acted on the creation of the world.^[6] Everything is generated from apeiron and then it is destroyed by going back to apeiron, according to necessity. He believed that infinite world are generated from apeiron and they are destroyed there again.

Natural position of 'Unšur-e-Mā': Unšur-e-Mā is simple body which is in its natural position, surrounds the earth while itself is surrounded by the air. This is because the water is heavier than air and lighter than earth.^[7] Kayfiyat-e-Mā' is Cold and Wet. It is naturally cold therefore it acquires its natural property when external heat application is stopped, and becomes cold on itself. Being moist, shapes can be readily fashioned (with it) and as easily lost.^[8]

The above referenced classical theories and concept about the 'Anāšir Mā'iyya reflects the philosophies of famed scientists and everyone has 'Unšur-e-Mā' in their theory of forms. It is also responsible for the genesis and existence of human body like every matter in the universe. So, to look for its existence in human body we may go through the present knowledge related to human body in different sciences.

Human body also has three forms of matter which is responsible for its existence i.e., solid, liquid and gas. According to unani medicine two things are transferred to offspring from their parents one is Hararat-e-Ghariziya and second is Rutubat-e-Ghariziya which has genetic and building material for foetus formation. Akhlat keeps these hararat and rutubate ghariziya throughout the life.

Body fluid composition: Body is formed by solid and fluid and gaseous matter. The fluid part is more than 2/3rd of whole body. Total body fluid is 45%-75% of body wt. In males it is 60-65% and in females it is 50%-55%. It is divided between Intracellular fluid (ICF) and Extracellular fluid (ECF). ICF is 55% of total body water and ECF is 45% of total body water. ECF have 5 subunits- interstitial fluid and lymph, plasma, fluid in bones, fluid in dense connective tissue like cartilage and trans cellular fluid. Water is of major importance to all living things in some organism up to 90 % of their body weight comes from water. According to H.H. Mitchell, journal of biological chemistry 158, the brain and heart are composed of 73 % water, and lungs are about 83% water. The skin has 64% water, muscles and kidneys are 79% water and even the bones has 31% water. Body fluids play significant role in homeostasis, in transport mechanism, in metabolic reactions, in texture of tissues, in temperature regulation.^[9] To measure the volume of a fluid compartment in the body place an indicator substance in the compartment and allow it to scatter evenly throughout the compartments fluid and then analyse the extent to which the substance becomes diluted. Such marker substances are Deutrium oxide, Tritium oxide, antipyrine.^[10]

Radical Moisture: Radical moisture also called the nutritive, hormonal essence of the organism. It is thick, moist, pale, oily, creamy color and has mild pleasant aroma. Radical moisture is basically genetic code, which is transfer at molecular level from parent to offspring. It determines the overall quality, character and longevity of our life. Genetic makeup of every person is different, so that character of every person is also different.^[11] The plant cannot shoot out leaves, flower and fruit without it and it is absolutely essential to life. So Man cannot thrive without this radical moisture.^[12]

Conclusion: In modern medicine cell is the structural and functional unit of life but according to unani medicine the basic unit of life is Arkan and cell is also form by their intermixture. It seems that the approach of Unani Medicine is more realistic and conductive to better results in the study of human body and its various functions. Arkan are the substances which are the mirror of kaifiyat. Significance of unsure ma'a is basically

by its kaifiyat (Barid Ratab). It has a special power for life. It is considered as channel of Life. Each and every form of life depends on it. Unsure ma'a is present in different proportion in everything. All the fluidic component of human body comes under the unsure ma'a. Character transformation from parents to offspring occurs through Radical moisture in the form of Rutubat-e-Ghariziya. unsure ma'a comes as rutubate ghariziya which is maintained by akhlat throughout the life.

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