

HOLISTIC APPROACH IN UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE WITH RESPECT TO PHYSIS, HUMOURS AND SIX ESSENTIAL FACTORS

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Abstract:- The Unani system of medicine originated in ancient Greece at 5th and 4th century B.C. under the patronage of Hippocrates. This system was then developed in Arab and Persian lands. Its fundamental framework is based on the deep philosophical insights and scientific principles. This system of medicine is basically holistic in nature and offers preventive, curative and rehabilitative healthcare which takes whole personality approach towards disease. The real cause of disease is disturbance in the natural body humours. The imbalance in the quality and quantity of these humours leads to disease whereas restoration of this balance maintains the health of a person.

In the holistic belief system, illness and injury are often the result of disharmony in the mind-body-spirit. The disharmony can often come from a dysfunction in any one of these areas. This system offers treatment of disease related to all system is based on Hippocratic theory of four humours that is Blood (Dam), Phlegm (Balgham), Yellow bile (safra) and Black bile (sauda) and also the four qualities of state of living human body like Hot, Cold, Moist and Dry. They are represented as Earth, Water, Fire and Air. The Greek believes were put by Arabic physician as seven principles and included Elements (Arkan), Temperament (Mizaj), Humours (Akhlal), Organs (Aza), Pneuma (Arwah), Faculties (Quwa), Functions (Af'al). In this method, it is believed that these principles are responsible for the body foundations and its health as well as disease condition.

In this review paper we will try to explain about strengths of Unani system of medicine and its holistic approach with respect to Tabi'at, Humours and Six Essential Factors in different diseases.

Keywords: Holistic, fundamental, Humours, Temperament, Tabi'at

Introduction:-

Unani system of medicine is holistic in nature because it includes whole personality towards disease. This system of medicine diagnoses and treats the patient as a whole looking into their all dimensions. It is based on the concept of equilibrium and balance one or more than one of six essential factors which leads to weakening of tabi'at (physis) which further leads to alteration in humours and also alteration of temperament (su'al mizaj) resulting more weakening of tabi'at tends to causation of disease^[1]. All diseases are the result of poor management of the six essential factors, beyond the ability of physis or Tabiat to maintain and restore homeostasis. Diseases can be prevented by conscious changes to the person's diet, behaviour and environment.

Aims of Holistic Approach- The primary goal of holistic medicine is the achievement of optimal health. According to this concept everyone can achieve optimal health by gaining proper balance of life. It is a form of healing that considers the whole person including body, mind, spirit and emotions for gaining of optimal health.

Concept of Tabi'at (physis) - Hippocrate says that "Tabi'at is a managing power which works for the welfare of human body involuntarily and unconsciously and is a source of all motion and rest." Tabi'at is reflected as the supreme power of our body^[2]. Nafis said in other words "Tabi'at is a power which when found in a natural body itself becomes the first source for its motion and rest"^[3]. Tabi'at has been provided capacity to turn away the injurious matter from one organ to other and transforms them to expel out from the body^[4]. Tabi'at is solely responsible for the performance of all physiological functions and nutritional requirement of the body or replacement of what is lost after metabolism. It excretes the waste products. When the human body is exposed to causation of disease, Tabi'at takes on the causation of disease until it overcomes the disease or becomes perplexed itself^[5]. In last stage of fighting between Tabi'at and Madda-e-Marz gets intensified and domination of one on other appears. Adjustment of temperament according to the internal environmental demand is the very important function of the physis. The human body is composed of many different types of cells that together create tissues and subsequently organ systems^[6]. They ensure homeostasis and the viability of the human body which is also the function of Tabi'at. It is very clear that, the concept of tabi'at is more comprehensive and wide. It works always in active and dynamic states in the body at which physiological functions, morphological expressions and temperaments are maintained and so health is maintained^[19].

Concept of Temperament - It is assumed that all things in nature composed of four primary elements i.e. Fire, Air, Water and Earth. It does not mean that number of elements in nature is four. In fact these represent the basic division of elements in matter that is found in universe. Each of them are associated with compound quality i.e. Fire is hot and dry, Air is hot and moist, Water is cold and moist and Earth is cold and dry. Every organism and matter as a whole is furnished with a temperament upon which their properties and functions of life depend. Drugs and foods are classified according to temperament, representing unique structural composition but the temperament of human body is determined by humours which themselves are composed of different elements.

Humoral theory- Hippocrates (460 B.C.) firstly postulated the humoral theory and defined as: “the body contains four major humours, i.e. dam (blood), balgham (phlegm), safra (yellow bile) and sauda (black bile); a right proportion according to quality and quantity constitutes health and irregular distribution of these constitutes diseases.”^[1] The basis of aetiology and pathology of the disease is alteration in normal proportion of humour which leads to altered temperament (Su’al mizaj) of internal environment and then disease developed.^[4]

Six Essential factors of Life (Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyah):- Asbab-e-zaruriyah essentially influences each and every human body. Nobody could escape from these factors so long he is living. These factors are categorized in six group hence it is called Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyah which are as follows; (a) Al-Hawa’ al-muhit (b) Al-makul wa’l-mashrub, (c) Al-harkat wa’l sukoon al-badniyah (d) Al-harkat wa’l-sukoon al-nafsaniyah (e) An-naum wa’l-yaqzah (f) Al-istifragh wa’l-ihtibas^[4,7,8].

(a) Al Hawa’ al-muhit (environmental air)- In six essential factors, the most important factor is Air, because without air we cannot imagine the existence of life. The formation of pneuma (Ruh) depends on environmental air.^[3, 9] Air performs the function of *Ta’adeel-e-Rooh* (moderation of hot temperament of pneuma) at the time of *inspiration* by exchanging the air. Simultaneously it also works as *Tanqiya-e-Rooh* (purification) at the time of *expiration*^[3, 10]. Polluted air induces putrefaction to humours. Human life needs fresh and pure air to perform physiological functions and to maintain health^[3]. We can control and prevent most of the chronic lifestyle diseases such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes through strengthening of rooh, fresh and pure air.

(b) Al-makul wa’l-mashrub (food and drinks)- Food and drinks is second important factor among six essential factors. The word makool stands for foods and mashroob for drinks^[11]. Food is basically such thing which increases the essential elements of the body but does not change its quality^[13]. Health of humankind depends on normal blood which is obtained from best quality of food. Majoosi stated that “Diet is that Particular things which do not alter the body but the body alters them and turns them to his side^[4]. The foods and drinks act upon the body in three ways: by their kaifiyat (quality), by their madda (matter) and by their surat-e-nauw’iyah (morph). Avicenna described this in his famous treatise “Alqanoon fit tib” Dietetics and Nutrition is one of the important medical subjects^[1,12]. The importance can further describe by Gruner in his book Al qanoon fit tib “the stomach is the house of disease and the diet is the head of healing. This was noted by Hippocrates, Galen and Ibn Sina, the original pioneers of Tibb. In fact, most chronic disorders of our time result in part from malnutrition in one form or another. Diabetes, obesity, heart disease, inflammatory diseases, some skin disorders and cancer can trace their origin back to poor or unwise consumption of food – too much salt or fat; too little fibre; not enough fruit and vegetables; bad eating habits, etc. Hippocrates thought of it first: “*Let your food be your medicine, and medicine be your food.*”^[18]. All the liquid substance comes under the category of drinks, which also have characteristics of flow. Water is most important in all liquid substance because it is a vehicle for food materials by which the food becomes thinner and reaches the organs^[13]. Ibn sina stated that “Water is that essential element which produces flow in food substances and liquefy it.”

Greco-Arab physician treats his patients with physiotherapy and diet, if it failed, drugs were used. Rhaze’s starts his treatment with dietotherapy; he noted that “if the physician is able to treat with food substances, not medication, then he has succeeded. So by taking proper makool wa mashroob as described in the Unani literature we can prevent the disease.

(c) Al-harkat wa’l sukoon al-badniyah (physical activity and repose)-

Now a day’s people become luxurious with little or no physical activity. Physical activity plays an important role in ensuring health and well-being. Lacks of physical activity become a risk for many diseases such as cardiovascular disease, obesity etc. Physical activity benefits many parts of the body like heart, skeletal muscles, bones, blood, immune system and nervous system^[14].

Unani physicians believes that physical activity (harkat) is essential for the activation of *hararat ghariziya* (innate energy) and to excrete the waste products of the body but prolonged activity of every kind leads to dispersion of the *hararat ghariziya* (innate heat). Rest is necessary to relieve the fatigue and to decrease the body temperature and also favour the excellent process of digestion which results in formation of good quality of humour on which health depends.

Physical activity can help people to achieve a variety of goals, including increased cardio respiratory fitness, increased vigour, improved glycaemic control, decreased insulin resistance, improved lipid profile, blood pressure reduction, and maintenance of weight loss.

(d) Al-harkat wa’l-sukoon al-nafsaniyah (mental activity and repose)- Ruh (pneuma) is a vehicle for mental faculties (al-quwa-al-nafsaniyah) by which powers of the body permeated in each organs^[15]. Nafis correlated psychic functions (harkat-e-nafsaniyah) and pneuma (ruh) and says that “ in case of psychic functions, pneuma (ruh) will always mobilize because in faculties of the body, each and every movement is impossible without mobilization of ruh. Same as in case of repose^[3].

Psychological factors are dependent on dominant humour and temperament of the person. Ibn-e-Sina was the first physician who developed the relation between psychology and medicine. Mental stress associated with many lifestyle disorders like hypertension, diabetes etc. Excess of anger or joy causes dilatation of cutaneous blood vessels leads to reddish colour skin. This can also increases the heart rate which becomes the cause of various cardiovascular diseases in later life. Mental relaxation through various ways such as counselling and talk therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy protects human life.

(e) An-naum wa’l-yaqzah (sleep and wakefulness)- Sound sleep produces good quality of humours^[13]. Rhaze’s stated on Galenic view that with Normal sleep (6-8 hours in adults), production of good quality of humours takes place but if a person has excessive sleep (10-12 hours) leads to morbid humours. If a person complains sleeplessness, then more bilious humour produced^[11]. Ismail Jurjani stated that normal sleep is very beneficial to all, while sleeplessness deviates the temperament of brain. It interferes with the process of digestion and metabolism. It not only weakens the ability of thought, sense and movement but also deteriorates them gradually and renders the person to take decision^[16]. Allama Nafis gives the importance of wakefulness and stated that all the voluntary functions and movements of the body occur in wakeful condition but excessive awakening produces dissolution of *ruh* leads to dryness and weakness of brain (yaboosat wa zouf-e-dimagh) and indigestion^[3]. Excessive sleeping causes coldness in temperament which further become the cause of weakness, laziness in the body and headache etc and may develop many diseases. Insufficient sleep has also been linked to obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and other health problems and it is considered as important risk factor and getting enough high quality sleep may be as important to health and wellbeing as nutrition and exercise^[2,13].

(f) Al-istifragh wa'l-ihitbas (retention and elimination)- Elimination (evacuation) is basically done to clean the body from morbid materials (fadlat)^[17]. After completion of digestion some waste material deficit in the body. If it will not remove from body, it becomes harmful and produces serious illnesses. So it is important to eliminate these waste materials from the body. Tabi'at gets rid of waste product by the natural means that are defecation, micturition, diaphoresis, menstruation, sebum secretion and mucus secretion etc. The important work of physis (tabi'at) is to justify what should be eliminated or retained. For example *Khilte Balgham (phlegm)* predominates in the body of a person, predisposes in causation of obesity. In this condition loss of movements of *Aa'za* (organs) is due to excessive accumulated *phlegm* and cold temperament, hence the person becomes sluggish and dull which leads to lifestyle diseases. Retention and deposition of *balgham* obstructs passage of oxygen in the organs which leads to hazardous condition and finally causes death^[13]. Proper *ehitbas wa istifragh* (retention and elimination) through proper channels is very important to maintain health and wellbeing. To maintain a harmonic tabi'at, certain beneficial end-products of metabolism are retained in the body while harmful ones are expelled out.

Discussion-

Holistic approach is an integrated healthcare that treats the whole person, not simply symptoms and disease. It is not only concerned with the absence of disease but with a positive state of well being. This system recognises the importance of identifying a person's risk factors and interpreting the illness on the basis of temperamental and humoral theory. Temperament is a useful indicator for identifying the risk factors associated with individuals. The disease results in an accumulation of waste material and toxins which is beyond the ability of physis or tabi'at to deal with. These waste material or toxins accumulate initially at the humoral level resulting in illnesses associated with accumulation of excess or abnormal humours. This situation progress to functional imbalances, in which the functions of different system impaired.

Conclusion-

This system of healthcare fosters a co-operative relationship among all leading towards optimal attainment of the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of health. It emphasizes the need to look at the whole person, including analysis of physical, nutritional, environmental, emotional, social, spiritual, and life style values. It encompasses all stated, modalities of diagnosis and treatment including drugs and surgery if no safe alternative exists. This approach prevents the onset of disease, its development and also treats them. Maintaining of *asbab-e-sitta zarooriyah* is important to harmonious homeostasis of the temperament and humours of the body. We can choice our life: die young, now or at a ripe old age through proper management of *asbab-e-sitta zarooriyah*.

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