

# Unani System of Medicine-A Historical Aspect

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## Abstract.

Ancient Unani System of Medicine refers to Graeco-Arabic medicine (Greek + Arab), which is based on the teachings of Greek physician Hippocrates ( Boqrat 460-377 BC) and Roman physician Claudius Galenus (Jalinoos 129 -210 AD) and developed into an elaborate medical system in principal age era by Arabian and Persian physicians, such as Rhazes (Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi), Avicenna ( Abu Ali al Husyan ibn Addillah ibn al Hasan Ibn Ali bin sina ), Al-Zahrawi (Abu al-Qasim Khalaf ibn al-Abbas al-Zahrawi ), and Ibn Nafis(Ala-al-Din abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Abi-Hazm al-Qarshi al-Dimashqi,). Buqrat, is said to be a Founder and pioneer of 'father of Unani medicine'. This is the popular form of traditional medicine widely practiced in all Asian Countries and draws on the ancient traditional systems of medicine of China, Egypt, India, Iraq, Iran (Persia) and Syria (Sham). It originated in ancient Greek almost 2700 years back and has been using drugs of approximately 90% herbal medicine obtained from natural sources, 4-5% animal (Pet and wild) and 5-6 % mineral origin. It is not only the original science of medicine but also a rich store house of rules, principles and philosophies of general medicine which can be of immense value to the medicine in particular and science in general. Diseases (communicable and non-communicable) and illnesses are considered to upset the normal temperament by pyrogen and homeostasis of the humors in the body. So severe treatment or pharmacotherapy have been used since ancient times as per the sole concept to bring back the homeostasis of the humors and to correct the abnormal temperament involved. Once these modes of treatment proved unsuccessful, surgery has been advised as a last choice.

**Keywords:** Ancient Unani medicine, theories of diseases, therapy, dieto-therapy, Unani treatment, and Unani drugs obtained from natural sources

## 1. Introduction of Unani system of Medicine.

Traditional systems of medicine including Naturopathy Unani, Ayurveda, Sidha, Homeopathy, Alopathy, Electropathy, Flower bed system, etc. are gathering increasing recognition in recent years. Traditional systems of

medicine have always played vital role in meeting the global health care needs. The World Health Organization estimates that approximate 85 percent of the world population use Natural crude herbal medicine for general treatment purposes in cough and cold.

Ancient Unani System of medicine is one of the oldest traditional system of medicine which has struggled through ages in the anticipation and treatment of various medical conditions. Unani is the Arabic word for Ionian, or Greek for which commonly Unani medicine is also known as Unani Tibb or Graeco-Arab Medicine, as Arabs have developed and refined it through methodical experiment glaringly by Ibne Sena.



**Hippocrates (460-377 BC)**



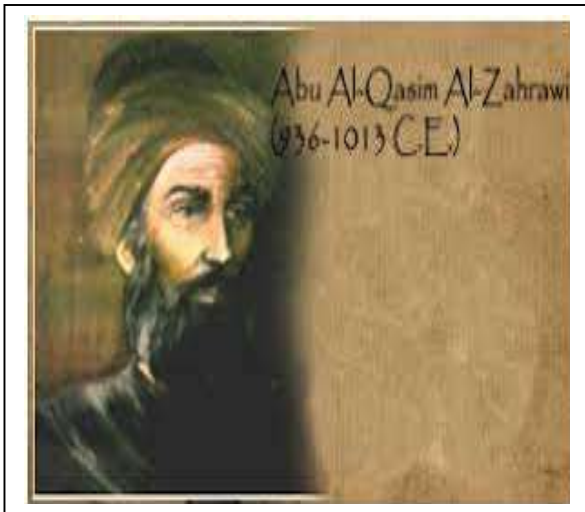
**Claudius Galenus (129 -210 AD)**



**Abu Ali al Husyan ibn Addillah ibn al Hasan Ibn Ali bin sina (980-1037)**



**Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi ( 854 -932)**



**Abu al-Qasim Khalaf ibn al-Abbas al-Zahrawi (936 – 1013)**



**Ibn Nafis (Ala-al-Din Ali ibn Abi-Hazm al-Oarshi al-Dimashqi, (1213-1228)**

Since the ancient time man has been absorbed in annoying to control disease. The development of medicine as skill and talent of healing is as old as the development of human being. In ancient times, health and illness were understood in a astrophysical and anthropological perspective. Medicine was lead by magical and religious theories and philosophies.

The history of ancient Unani Medicine begins with the Greek concept and theory of good health based on our humours. In countries of South Asian region, the ancient Unani system of Medicine has been most popular since centauries along with other traditional systems of Medicine. Today, the Indian administration supports and supports both Ayurveda and Unani medical colleges and hospitals in relation to Indians Health. But whereas Ayurveda has enjoyed a phenomenal surge in popularity, Unani Medicine still lags behind in recognition, perhaps due to its minority Islamic relations. With the revolution and wealthy development of medical science, although many communicable and non-communicable diseases are controlled and treated successfully by predictable allopathic medicine by Chemotherapy and surgery. But there are still many problem and thirst areas of illnesses and sickness and, illness where modern medical system fial due to so many reason. Generally cost increment of chemotherapy and surgery, dependency on operational and diagnostic machineries like x-ray, sono-graphy and poor clinical diagnostic trends are directly effects on common citizen India. Antibiotic resistance, increasing adverse effects and symptomatic rather than curative efficacy of allopathic system are again disappointing and made the public seek an alternative medical system. Administrations in such Asian countries are now reviving there older systems of medicine to overcome these point of basic health care needs.

## **2. General Ethics of Unani Medicine system.**

According to the Unani theory Tabiyat is reproduced the supreme organizer of our body that creates the healthy environment within the body and prepare to fight against the diseases and disorder. The tabiyat is the sum total of physical, useful and psychological character of the human being. If tabiyat is healthy, then a man does not suffer from a disease or disorder easily, if it weakens, a man becomes disposed to to disease easily. The

tabiyat contains seven principles which are called Umoore Tabaiyah. These are as follows:

- 1) Quwa (Powers): For every living being certain functions are vital to preserve the life. For these functions to take place, certain power is qualification. According to Unani medicine, there are three types of power characteristic in every human being to maintain the life and broadcast the group. Quwa Tabaiyah (Natural faculty), Quwa Nafsania (Responsive and mental faculty) and QuwaHaywaniya (Vital faculty) are the three powers present in human body Quwanafsania (mental faculty) is those faculties which perform logical sensory and motor functions in the body.
- 2) Afa'l (Functions): These include the movements and functions of the various organs of the body. To maintain proper health of the body it is necessary to ensure that various organs are not only in proper shape themselves but also are performing their respective functions properly.
- 3) Mizaj (Temperament): Unlike formations existing in the world come into being by interaction of these four elements in different quantities contrary qualities of these elements counteract with each other and a new quality develops in compound which is different from the original qualities of participating elements. This new quality developed in the component known as its Mizaj (Temperament).
- 4) Aaza (Organs): These are the various organs of the human body and the health or disease of each individual organ affects the state of health of the whole body. According to Unani medicine aaza have been classified into as
  - Aaza e Mufridah or Baseetah (Cells and tissues)
  - Aaza e Murakkebah or Aliyah (Organs or membrane)
- 5) Akhlat (Humours-Body Fluids): The human body has four primary body fluids which obtain from the food and various hormones and enzymes. These liquids are –DAM (Blood), BALGHAM (Phlegm),SAFRA (Yellow bile) and SAUDA (Black bile), constituted by initiation of different quantity of all four arkan.Dam is hot and wet in temperament, Balgham is cold and wet, Safra is hot and dry and Sauda is cold and dry. The mizaj of a man is expressed by the majority of a particular khilt (humour) present in his body.
- 6) Arwah (Spirits): Arwah, singular “Ruh” represents such constituents which the body receives from atmospheric air and without which sustenance of life cannot be imagined. These are considered to be the life force and are therefore given importance in the diagnosis and treatment of disease. These are carriers of different powers as defined by the Unani Surgeons.
- 7) Arkan or Anasir (Element): As per the concept of Unani System of Medicine, Arkan (singular -Rukn) are the primary substances of human body. All human being made up of four Arkan (elements). The human body is also formed with four elements namely-Naar (fire), Hawa (air), Ma (water), and Arz (earth). Each of these elements is capable with typical dual abilities i.e. fire is hot and dry in nature, air is hot and wet, water is cold and wet, and earth is cold and dry. In fact these four elements are four states of matter where in Hawa stands for gaseous

elements, Ma stands for liquid elements, Arz for solid elements and Nar for the matter which has been changed into heat

### 3. Theory of Health and Disease in Unani system of medicine.

According to Unani medicine, health is credited to the balance of akhlat (Humours) in the body, according to their quality and quantity, while disease occurs due to turbulences in the equilibrium quantity and quality of akhlat.. Asbab Dakhilia (Internal reasons) transactions with the diseases caused by sue mizaj (Ill temperament) or sue tarkeeb (essential deformity of body organs). Asbab Kharjiya (External causes) this is very important group of causes and encompasses almost all causes, emotional, physical, and chemical, microorganisms etc, effect on human body. They are necessary for the maintenance of health but an unnatural change in these factors become the cause of disease. These factors are called six essential factors (Asbab e sittazarooriya):

- (1) Hawa (Air) (2) Makoolat wa mashroobat (Foods and drinks) (3) Harkat wa sukoonbadni (Movement and rest ) (4) Harkat wa sukoonafsan (5) Naum wa yaqza (Sleep and wakefulness) (6) Ihtibas wa istifragh

These are called six essential factors because no human being is out of sphere of these factors and has to experience and deal with them in his daily life. The disease produced due to the above described causes manifest in three forms, which make three broad categories of disease comprising almost all disorders. These are as follows:

1. Amraz sue mizaj      2. Amraz sue tarkeeb      3. Amraz tafarruqittisal

Amraz sue mizaj deal with the disease occurring due to irregular change in the character of an organ, system, whole body. This irregularity may either be inherited or acquired as a sequel to disease or a direct cause. Amraz tafarruqittisal is the group of diseases which represent the break in the structure of an organ. This discontinuity in the structure may occur due to trauma or any other disease process. Cutoff in bone called as “Kasr” (Fracture) likewise discontinuity in membrane is known as “Fitaq” (Hernia). Except the above described general classification of the disease, they may be sub classified into various specific categories like-

- (1) Amraz Mufrada (Simple disease) (2) Amraz mutaddiya (Communicable diseases) (3) Amraz mutawarisa (Genetic disease) (4) Amraz zahira wa batina (External and internal diseases) (5) Amraz hadda wa muzmina (Acute and chronic diseases) (6) Amraz asliya wa shirkiya (Primary and secondary diseases)

### 4. General Principles of Diagnosis in Unani system of medicine.

The diagnosis is based on the presenting symptoms of a disease, Examination, palpation and drumming of different organs is the integral part of examination of a patient. However muainanabz (Feeling of pulse), mushahidaebolwabaraz (Investigation of urine and feces) and finally valuation of Mizaj are the most notable tools for the diagnosis of a disease.

## 5. Assessment of Mizaj (Temperament)

It has already been discussed that there are four kinds of temperament, Damvi, Balghami, Safravi and Saudavi, determined by the preponderance of a khilt (Humour) present in the body. Usually the normal inherent mizaj of a person changes during an illness. This is called as sue mizaj and needs to be corrected to recover health. There are ten determinants, analysis of which, founds the dominant mizaj in a patient. These determinants are named as Ajnaseashra e mizaj. These are as follows;

(1) Malmas (Palpation) (2) Laham wa shaham (Flesh and Fat) (3) Shaar (Hairs) (4) Laun –al- badan (Body appearance) (6) Sahna /Haiyat al aza (Physique) (7) Kaifiyat -e- infal (Responsiveness of organs) (8) Naum wa yaqza (Sleep and wakefulness) (9) Afal- ul- aza (Functions of organs) (10) Fuzlat -e -badan (Excreta of body) (11) Infalat- e -nafsania(Psyche)

After determination of mizaj, the diagnosis is verified by the findings of pulse. There are several hundred pulses found in a range of disease and there is a specific pulse for a specific body condition or internal setting. There are ten features to found a nabz (Pulse). These ten features are exactly felt find, if these characters are usual or irregular. These ten structures are as follows:

- ❖ Miqdar –e- imbesat (Degree of expansion)
- ❖ Kaifiyat –e- qara (Impaction on the fingers)
- ❖ Zamana –e- harkat (Duration of movement)
- ❖ Qiwam -e- ala (Texture of artery)
- ❖ Khala wa imtala (Emptiness and fullness of artery)
- ❖ Malmas (Feeling of hot or cold)
- ❖ Zamana-e- sukoon (Duration of rest)
- ❖ Istawa wa ikhtalaf (Equality or inequality)
- ❖ Nizam wa admenizam (Regularity or Irregularity)
- ❖ Wazn (Rhythm)

These features produce hundreds of pulses through changes. Few of them have been given a specific name and need special mention here

- ❖ Nabzghazali (Jerking pulse)
- ❖ Nabzmauji (Rolling pulse)
- ❖ Nabzdoodi (Vermicular pulse)
- ❖ Nabzminshari (Serrate pulse)
- ❖ Nabz-e- masali (Decussate pulse)

- ❖ Nabz-e- zanbal far (Mouse tail like pulse)
- ❖ Nabzzulfitra (Dicrotic pulse)
- ❖ Nabzwaqefilwast (Intermittent pulse)
- ❖ Nabzmitraqi (Hammer like pulse)
- ❖ Nabztashannuji (Spasmodic pulse)
- ❖ Nabzmuntaish (Tremulous pulse)
- ❖ Nabzzulqaratain(Double stroke pulse)
- ❖ Nabznamli (Ant like pulse)
- ❖ Nabzmutavahir (Tense pulse)

After finding a corresponding pulse in a disease, the diagnosis may further be confirmed by examination of bol (Urine). There are seven typical features in urine. These are examined keenly to find any abnormality in them. They are as follows:

- ❖ Laun (Colour)
- ❖ Qiwam (Consistency)
- ❖ Safai wa kadoorat (Clarity and Turbidity)
- ❖ Boo(Odour)
- ❖ Jhag/kaf (Foam)
- ❖ Rasub (Sediment)
- ❖ Miqdaar (Quantity)

## 6. General Ethics and Modes of Treatment:

After proper diagnosis of a disease, a practical usoolilaj is adapted and a cautious treatment is followed through to root out the disease. The treatment is generally divided following.

### A. ILAJ BIL TADBEER: (Regimental treatment)

Regimental therapy (Ilaj- bil- tadbeer) is one of the most popular methods of treatment, practiced by ancient Unani scholars since antiquity. It is basically application of certain special techniques or physical methods of treatment to improve the constitution of body by removing waste materials and improving the defence mechanism of the body. In other words, regimental therapies (Ilaj-bil- tadbeer) are mostly non medicinal techniques or procedures by which Unani physicians modulate the patient's habitat, life style and dietary habits of the patient. They practise some other therapeutic regimens for the treatment of various diseases.

Regimental therapy is a unique mode of treatment which is being carried out through alteration and inflection in Asbab-e-Sitta-e-Zurooria (Six essential factors). Various rules with newer advanced tools are utilized to complete this purpose such as,

- a) Ilaj bi'l Ghiza (Dietotherapy)
- b) Ilaj bi'l Taleeq (Leech therapy)
- c) Ilaj bi'l Hijama (Cupping therapy)
- d) Ilaj bil Fasd (Venesection)
- e) Dalak (Massage)
- f) Riyazat (Exercise)
- g) Nutool (Moist fomentation)
- h) Bukhoor (Steam bath)
- i) Tareeq (Diaphoresis)
- j) Qai (Emesis)
- k) Idrar (Diuresis)
- l) Hammam (Turkish bath)
- m) Kai (Cauterization)

Use of regimental treatments (Ilaj-bil-tadbeer) dates thousands year back to treat the diseases as well as to maintain health. Now a day, hijama (cupping therapy) is gaining popularity due its rapid and visible efficacy in maintenance of health and prevention and treatment of diseases. Injuries of cupping often seen in athletic personalities and film personalities recently raising its popularity and acceptance in mass.

These rules are actually meant for the Istifraagh-e- akhlaat-e- radiya (Removal of morbid Humours) or tadeel-e-mizaj (Renewal of normal temperament) of the body. These morbid Humours are actual root for the onset of disease. As soon as these morbid Humours are evacuated from the body by applying some regimens, normal health gets restored.

### **B. ILAJ BIL YAD/JARAHAT (Surgical Treatment):**

Disease which occur, few of them due to suetarkeeb and most due to tafarruqittisal are treated with surgery. Surgical treatment in Unani medicine is not as well developed as in majority medicine and state of the art machinery of modern surgery has overlapped almost all other original surgical practices, although in hey days of Unani medicine during Arab period, the determined of surgery like Abul Qasim Zohravi, had elevated the art of surgery many marks by discovering new surgical instruments and novel techniques of surgical operation. Al-Zahrawi also invented several surgical instruments. He introduced his famous collection of over **two hundred** surgical instruments such as scalpels, curettes, retractors, spoons, sounds, hooks, rods, and specula in the last volume of Al-Tasrif. He also invented the forceps for extracting a dead fetus.



### C. ILAJ BIL DAWA: (pharmacotherapy)

It is discussed that a disease usually occurs due to irregular change in the nature of asbabsittazarooriya. These changes become the influencing factor and/or exciting factor to dismantle the equilibrium of four akhlat to produce a disease. The new condition in body exhibits its own abnormal temperament with associated malfunctions. The temperament of the produced disease may be according to the preponderance of four akhlat i.e. damvi, balghami, safravi and saudavi. Physiologically the disease may be bracketed under sue mizaj (ill temperament) which, if severe or longstanding may cause suetarkeeb (structural malformation) in an organ to restore the health the sue mizaj has to be back tracked to previous normal temperament.

According to Unani medicine, the basic tenet of treatment is “Ilajbilzid” (anti temperament treatment, which explains that ‘a certain disease entity with certain degree of abnormal quality and quantity of akhlat begets drug of corresponding degree and opposite quality and quantity to counteract a disease’. If the sabab (cause) is much strong and stays for a long time, the matter usually khilt is affected producing sue mizajmaddi. Thus an abnormal khilt is produced the excess of which brings about imbalance in the equilibrium of akhlat, producing sue mizajdamvi or sue mizajbalghami or sue mizajsafravi or sue mizaj saudavi.

#### 7. Conclusion:

Unani medicine reports homeostasis of the body that depends on balance of the four Humours and temperaments which are balanced by six essential factor viz diet, wakefulness, atmospheric air, , sleep and, elimination and retention, mobility, psychological condition will become a cause of the disease in human being. Imbalance in any of factors may alter the quality of temperament and quantity of Humors which disturb homeostasis and lead to production of Humors. To eliminate the morbid Humors various regimes and drugs are utilized but modulation of real cause of disturbance in homeostasis i.e. six essential factors are the root to treat. Hence, Unani system of medicine treats deeply and especially absorbed the actual root of pathology otherwise condition may stabilize for duration but can develop again.

Today Unani physicians are not followed to the principle of treatment, mentioned in the Unani literature. Usage of munzij and mus'hil therapy (Concoctive and purgatives) in the treatment is vanishing, despite of being fundamental treatment in many diseases. Not following these principles have made difficulty in saying that which has benefitted or not benefitted a patient. Hence, for effective treatment, reproducibility in results and elimination of complication and neglect certainly require one to understand basic values, humoral and temperamental doctrines properly and sensibly adhere to the principles of treatment documented for a particular medical ailment.

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