



A Review Of The Unani Medical Literature Produced From 9th To 12th Century

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Abstract

The present work is based on the description of over 200 books written by authors spanning four hundred years from 9th to 12th century AD. It covers descriptions of the books authored by 13 physicians of 9th century, 24 physicians of 10th century, 18 physicians of 11th century and 18 physicians of 12th century AD, along with their brief biographical account. Further, the monograph narrates the details of the works of eminent authors of Unani literature viz., Firdous al-Hikmat (Paradise of Wisdom) by Tabari (d. 870 AD), al-Havi (Continens Liber) by Rhazes (d. 925) and Canon of Medicine by Avicenna (d. 1037 AD), and also describes the works of some lesser known authors like Tadbīr al-Ḥabālā (Obstetrics) by Al-Baladi (d. 991 AD), Amraz al-Uyun (Ophthalmology) by Ibn A'yan Al-Miṣrī (d. 995 AD) and Aqrābādīn (pharmacy) by Ibn Tilmīdh (d. 1165 AD). The book is published by CCRAS-National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage, ministry of AYUSH, Gov. of India, Hyderabad, India

Key words: History of Medicine, Unani medicine

INTRODUCTION:

I have observed that there is no comprehensive work dealing with detailed descriptions of literature composed in Unani Medicine. I am inspired by the sentence of George Sarton that if we do not understand the history of scientific knowledge we will not be able to add to it. As Professor Rabie El Said Abdel-Halim, eminent and well known historian of Islamic medicine once said, "One of the most inspiring lessons we learn from the history of medicine and the history of science is that these disciplines broaden our world viewpoint and outlook to life. A thoughtful study of the history of science is bound to strengthen a unique feeling of brotherhood, unity and universality of mankind." ¹

H. S. Zillur Rahman, a great historian writes on the history of Unani Medicine and I quote "The Arabic period in the whole history of Unani Medicine is very bright and vivid. The immortal impressions created by Arab physicians on this medicine derived from Greece through their legendary exploits will be studied forever with importance. Although the tradition of treatment and therapy was established in the Arabian Peninsula at local level but their technical knowledge was very little, collection of drugs was short, therapeutic actions were very limited and art of therapy was devoid of scientific notions. Medicine that began eight thousand years ago from ancient Iraq, Babylon, Nineveh and Egypt and the candle of knowledge that was lit there, its direct effects were received by Greece. After the downfall of Egypt, Greece has given brightness to this gloomy light. The beginning of Unani Medicine was from ancient Egypt and ancient Iraq not from the land of Greece, and the chain of its history and its tip is connected to

these countries. History of Egyptian medical schools, school of Heliopolis, school of Sias, school of Menphio, school of Thebes, school of Abydos is linked to the earliest impression of human civilization. After the Kingship period (1580-1190 BC), Egyptian medicine continued to decline significantly and the direction of this fountain of knowledge and wisdom turned to Greece in a very serious way and Greece got the opportunity to emerge as a major center of science and knowledge. Greek art, science, philosophy and medicine did not suddenly set the levels of development like a gift from God, they took advantage from medicine of Iraq and ancient Egypt which was reached at the peak of development when the Greek were uncivilized and badavi roaming around the country four centuries before siege of Troy and five centuries before Homer. Hippocrates, Diuqlys, Herophilus, Surans, Marnys had obtained their medical information from Egyptians. Alexandria was the center of medicine and civilization and haven of knowledge and excellence in the era of Ptolemy and the Roman in Egypt. Not denying the privilege of Greece that they adopted the great academic values with perfection and with their efforts human developments improved mentally but it is also a fact that the earliest impressions left on the medicine by Babylon, Assyrian, Canaan and Egypt are big assets for the Greeks. The human mind was illuminated by Arabs after the decline of Greek and Roman, and wisdom and aptitude has reached new boundaries of grandeur. Arabs investigation in science, philosophy, medicine and other branches of knowledge lit the beam in the darkness of ignorance and set the smooth atmosphere for growth of knowledge and science. Immediately after the emergence of Islam, Academic interests had begun among Muslims. There are examples of curiosity to learn other languages at the time of the Prophet itself. The sayings of The Prophet encouraged education and raised the status of knowledge. He gave special attention to medicine. He himself prescribed medication and has suggested treatment advice. Cupping was his favorite method of cure. He himself and his companion on his advice adopted it." ^{10, 11, 12, 13, 14}

DISCUSSION:

The Muslim world was too vast. Besides Arab countries its borders were spread up to North Africa, Egypt, Sudan, Algeria and Central Asian empires like Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan. Although these countries were using local and traditional methods of treatment, there was no formal system of treatment. Disciplined system of Unani Medicine, its principled and theoretical status, valuable scientific legacy, therapeutic rules, and healing effects were accepted by all and it became the most popular method of treatment for a major world of that time.

In addition to the eastern parts of the Islamic empire whose center was Baghdad, this medicine has achieved growth levels with the same excellence and perfection in western part of the Andalusian cities of Cordoba, Granada, Toledo, Seville, and Zaragoza also. Zahravi, Ibn Zuhr, Ibn Rushd, Ghafqy, Ibn Juljul, Ibn Wafid, Ibn Tufail, Ibn Bajah, Ibn Maimun, Ibn Baitar and other medical researchers had enriched Unani Medicine and by their academic works, books and European students Europe was acquainted with medicine and spread darkness of ignorance was removed there. Western researchers have admitted that the whole European academic, scientific and medical progress is indebted to Arabs.

From Spain and North Africa through the central lands of Egypt, Syria and Iraq, to Iran and India in the East, and over a period of roughly twelve centuries (from the middle of the 8th to the present century), Unani Medicine has shown great variation and diversity. As cosmopolitan Islamic culture developed, shared traditions spanned vast areas and crossed many centuries. Yet rolled round the common threads were innumerable other factors and local conditions that produced considerable diversity. The general health of the community in that period was influenced by many factors: the dietary and fasting laws and the general rules for hygiene and burial of the different religious communities of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and others; the climatic conditions of the desert, marsh, mountain and littoral communities; the different living conditions of nomadic, rural, and urban populations; local economic factors and agricultural successes or failures; population migration as well as travel undertaken for commerce, attendance at courts, or as a pilgrimage.

The period between 7th to 12th centuries AD is generally designated in history as Medieval Islamic age because from its dramatic rise in the seventh century A. D. to the present, Islamic civilization has covered a large part of the globe, incorporating many subcultures and languages into its orbit, and vigorously

engaging the peoples around it. In this period the seminal and wide-ranging contributions of Islamic civilization to science, medicine, technology, philosophy, architecture and arts have been amply and widely acknowledged by historians. A significant aspect of the intellectual history of Islamic civilization is the role of Muslim scholars as intermediaries and interlocutors between different cultures and traditions and as synthesizers, catalysts and disseminators of scientific knowledge and technology.

The earlier Greek medical teachings were welcomed and valued by an emerging Islamic empire which needed to find ways of dealing with medical problems common to all peoples: disease, pain, injuries, and successful childbearing. This heritage of medical theory and practice, mingled with some Persian, Indian, and Arab elements, was assimilated and elaborated by a community of both Muslim and non-Muslim physicians speaking many languages, Arabic, Persian, Syriac, Hebrew, and Turkish, though Arabic became the lingua franca and Islam the dominant faith.

When Muslims came in contact with the legacy of the ancients, including Greek science and philosophy, Indian mathematics and medicine, Egyptian and Roman technology and Persian literary awareness and political wisdom, they critically strained it, imbibed its spirit, supplemented it with their own reflections, researches and innovations, and raised the level of knowledge in wide-ranging fields to unprecedented heights. Furthermore, they did not keep the fruits of their researches and innovations to themselves but made them available to large parts of the world.

Islamic medicine was built on tradition, chiefly the theoretical and practical knowledge developed in Greece and Rome. For Islamic scholars, Hippocrates (5th century BC) and Galen (d. 210 AD) were pre-eminent authorities, followed by Hellenic scholars in Alexandria. Islamic scholars translated their voluminous writings from Greek into Arabic and then produced new medical knowledge based on those texts. In order to make the Greek tradition more accessible, understandable, and teachable, Islamic scholars ordered and made more systematic the vast and sometimes inconsistent Greco-Roman medical knowledge by writing encyclopedias and summaries. Islamic medicine drew upon Hellenic medical tradition to form its own. Likewise, medieval and early modern scholars in Europe drew upon Islamic traditions and translations as the foundation for their medical enterprise. It was through Arabic translations that the West learned of Hellenic medicine, including the works of Galen and Hippocrates.

It has widely been recognized that one of the most important contributions of Muslims to Western civilization was the transmission of the scientific and philosophical legacy of the ancient world to medieval Europe. A movement for the globalization of science, medicine and philosophy was set in motion in Baghdad during the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Mansur (754-775) and his great grandson al-Mamun (813-833). This movement was marked by extensive translations of scientific, medical and philosophical works from ancient Rome, India, Persia and Egypt, a creative synthesis of the researches of Muslim scholars and scientists and those of the ancients, the establishment of scientific institutions, the employment of Arabic as the lingua franca of scientific communication, and the creation of a multiethnic, multi-religious community of scientists and scholars. It is very remarkable that many Non-Muslim authors living in Baghdad also written medical treatises in Arabic such as Ali ibn Abbas Majusi (Hally Abbas), Ali ibn Isa (Jesu Haly), Ibn al-Taiyib, Abu Sa'id Ubaid Allah, and Ibn Butlan etc. This testifies for the faithfulness of the Christian and other Non-Muslim community of Baghdad and the toleration of the Muslim rulers.

From 622 to 1492 AD, Arabic replaced Greek as the international language of science and medicine. Roger Bacon (d. 1293) acknowledged that almost all of Aristotle's works were available only in Arabic translations and that without Arabic, Greek knowledge would have never reached Europe. The Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen has remarked that "as leaders of innovative thought in that period in history, Muslim intellectuals were among the most committed globalisers of science and mathematics."

Medicine was a central part of medieval Islamic culture. Disease and health were of importance to rich and poor alike, as indeed they are in every civilization. Responding to circumstances of time and place, physicians and scholars of Islamic period developed a large and complex medical literature exploring and synthesizing the theory and practice of medicine. This extensive literature was not specialized in the sense that modern medical literature is. Rather, it was integrated with learned traditions in philosophy, natural science, mathematics, astrology, alchemy, and religion.

During the Golden Age of Muslim Civilization, medical care was free to all. Hospitals were built in many cities across the Muslim World, and cutting-edge treatments such as cataract operations, regular vaccinations, internal stitching, bone setting, and medical education in teaching hospitals were part of standard practice, as was the awareness of the importance of nutrition and exercise in maintaining life and preserving health.

"Medicine is a science, from which one learns the states of the human body ... in order to preserve good health when it exists, and restore it when it is lacking..." (Canon of Ibn Sina)

For more than five centuries, from 750 to 1258 AD - which is often described as the Golden Age of Islamic science, the teaching and practice of medicine in Europe was heavily influenced by the works of Al-Razi (d. 925), al-Zahrawi (d. 1013) and Ibn Sina (d. 1037 AD). Ibn Sina's (Avicenna) Canon of Medicine, were translated into Latin and then disseminated in manuscript and printed form throughout Europe. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries alone, the Canon of Medicine was published more than thirty-five times.

During the period between 9th to 12th centuries, the Muslim world became an intellectual center for science, philosophy, medicine and education as the Abbasids championed the cause of knowledge and established the 'House of Wisdom' in Baghdad; where both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars sought to translate and gather all the world's knowledge into Arabic. Many classic works of antiquity that would otherwise have been lost were translated into Arabic and Persian. The original works were also produced in this period by eminent Unani physicians; the works of these scholars actually laid the foundation for the development of Medicine.

The period is really very important in the context of development of Unani Medicine. This period was a golden era in the history of medicine as Arabic medical literature of this period through Latin translations provided late medieval Europe with ideas and practices from which early modern medicine eventually arose. In this period two types of literature were written by Unani scholars:

1. Translation of vast number of Greek literatures throughout a thousand years of medical history
2. Composition of a large number of original literatures by Unani scholars

CONTENTS: This monograph contains the account of the medical history of four hundred years from 9th to 12th century in chronological order as following

I: Literature composed in 9th century

1. Firdous al-Hikmah by al-Tabari (d. 870 AD)
2. Daghāl Al-Ayn by Ibn Masawaih (d. 857 AD)
3. Aqrabadhin by Sābūr ibn Sahl (d. 869 AD)
4. Kitāb al-Bah by Jabril ibn Bukhtishu (d. 870 AD),
5. Taqwīm al-Advia by Yuhanna ibn Bukhtishu (d. 903 AD)
6. Risala fi Qadr Manfiat by al-Kindī (d. 873 AD)
7. Kitāb al-Ashr Maqalat by Hunayn ibn Ishaq (d. 873 AD)
8. Kitāb fī Manāfi al-Aaza by Hubaysh (d. 890 AD)
9. Al-Risālah al-Shāfiyah by Ishāq ibn Hunayn (d. 910 AD)
10. Kitāb al-Nihaya wal-Kifaya by Al-Ṭūlūnī (d. 914 AD)
11. Kitāb al-Basar by Thābit ibn Qurra (d. 901 AD)
12. Risalah fī Auja al-Niqris by Qusta ibn Luqa (d. 912 AD)
13. Al-Kunnash al-Kabir by Ibn Ṣarabyūn (d. 935 AD)
14. Some other prominent authors of ninth century

II: Literature composed in 10th century:

15. Kitāb al-Ḥawī by al-Rāzī (d. 925 AD)
16. Adab al-Tabib by Ishāq ibn Alī Al-Ruhāwī (d. 931 AD)
17. Kitāb al-Adwiyah al-Mufradah by al-Isra'ili (d. 932 AD)
18. Masalih al-Anfus by ibn Sahl Balkhi (d. 934 AD)
19. Al-Mu'alajat al-Buqratiya by Ahmad Tabari (d. 985 AD)
20. Kitāb al-Ghina wa-al-Muna by al-Qumri (d. 999 AD)
21. Kamil al-Sina'at al-Tibbiyya by al-Majusi (d. 994 AD)
22. Kitāb al-Miā by Abu Sahl Masihi (d. 1010 AD)
23. Kitāb al-Abnyia by al-Harawi (fl. 976 AD)
24. Kitāb al-Murshid by Al-Tamimi (fl. 980 AD)
25. Kitāb Tadbīr al-Ḥabālā by Al-Baladi (d. 991 AD)
26. Kitāb Khalq al-Janīn by Arib ibn Sa'd (d. 976 AD)
27. Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā by Ibn Juljul (944–994 AD)
28. Zad al-Musafir by Ibn al-Jazzar (895-979 AD)
29. Kitāb al-Advia by Ibn Abi al-Ash'ath (d. 975 AD)
30. Aqrabadin by Ibrahim ibn Baks (d. 1003 AD)
31. Kitāb al-Fihrist by Ibn Nadim, (d. 990 AD)
32. Kitāb al-Tasrif by Al-Zahrawi (d. 1013 AD)
33. Risala fi tarkeeb al-Ain by Ibn Manduah (d. 1019 AD)
34. Kitāb fi Khalq al-Insan by Ibn Behnam (d.1048 AD)
35. Kitāb al-Aqrābādhīn by Ibn Samajūn (fl. 1002 AD)
36. Maqala fi Mahiat al-Ramad by Al-Maqdesī (d. 980 AD)
37. Amraz al-Uyun by Ibn A'yan Al-Miṣrī (d. 995 AD)
38. Al-Muntakhab fi Ilm al-Ayn by Ammar (d. 1010 AD)

III: Literature composed in 11th century:

39. Kitāb Al-Saidana by Al-Bīrūnī (d.1048 AD)
40. Kitāb al-Manazir by Ibn al-Haytham (d.1040 AD)
41. Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb by Ibn Sīnā (d.1037 AD)
42. Kitāb al-Fuṣūl al-Īlāqīyah by al-Īlāqī (d. 1067 AD)
43. Ikhtiyarat al-Ilaj by Abū al-Faraj al-Tayyib (d. 1043 AD)
44. Maqalah fi Dafa al-Madharr by Ibn Ridwan (d.1061 AD)
45. Tadqīq al-Nazar by Ibn Al-Wafid Lakhmi (d. 1074 AD)
46. Al-Raudat al-Tibbiyya by Ubaidullah (940-1058 AD)
47. Taqwīm al-Siḥḥat by Ibn Buṭlān (d. 1038 or 1066 AD)
48. Mualajah al-Amrad by Ibn al-Kattani (951-1029 AD)
49. Taqwim al-Abdan by Ibn Jazlah (1054-1100 AD)
50. Kitāb al-Mā by Ibn Mohammed Al-Azdi (d. 1064 AD)
51. Tazkirah al-Kahhalin by Alī ibn Isā (fl. 1010 CE)
52. Sharah Fusul Buqrat by Ibn Abi Sadiq (d. 1077 AD)
53. Nurul Uyun by Al-Yamani, Zarrin-Dast (d. 1087 AD)
54. Maqala Fi Khalq by Sa'id Ibn Hibatullah (d. 1102)
55. Tashreeh al-Ain by Al-Kafartābī (d. 1067 AD)
56. Maqalah fi Radd by Abu al-Alā Zuhr (d. 1131 AD)

IV: Literature composed in 12th century:

57. Chahar Maqaleh by Nizāmi Arūdi (d. 1155 AD)
58. Zakhireh Khwarazm shahi by Isma'il Jurjani (d. 1136 AD)
59. Kitab al-Mukhtarat fi al-Tibb by Ibn Hubal (d. 1213 AD)
60. Al-Taysir by Ibn Zuhr (d.1162 AD)
61. Treatise of the Errors by Ya'qub ibn Ishaq (d. 1208 AD)
62. Kitāb al Kulliyāt by Ibn Rushd (d. 1198 AD)
63. Al-Murshid fī Ṭibb al-Ayn by Al-Ghafiqi (d. 1165 AD)
64. Kitāb al-Mu'tabar by Hibatullah (d.1165 AD)
65. Kitab al-Nafs by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d.1209 AD)
66. Kitab al-Fusul by Mūsā ibn Maimūn (d. 1204 AD)
67. Kitab al-Kāfī by al-Aynzarbī (d. 1153 AD)
68. Al-Aqrābādīn al-Kabir by Ibn Tilmīdh (d. 1165 AD)
69. Bustān al-Aṭibbā by Ibn al-Muṭrān (d. 1191 AD)
70. Al-Īzāh fi Asra al-Nikah by al-Shayzarī (fl. 1164 AD)
71. Al-Asbab wal-Alamat by al-Samarqandī (d. 1222 AD)
72. Al-Irshād li-Maṣāliḥ by Ibn Jumay (d. 1198 AD)
73. Al-Mukhtarat fi al-Tibb by Abd al-Latif (d. 1213 AD)
74. Kitab al-Iqtidab by al-Arkeeziyaqun (d.1193 AD)

In order to evaluate the contributions of authors in these periods to the progress of medicine authentic primary sources were utilized to review their biography and their compositions. Original Arabic and Persian editions of resource books were studied.

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