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## Concept of sihhat (Health): A unique concept in Unani System of Medicine

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### Abstract

The name Unani, derived from a Greek word Ionian, means the knowledge of the states of the human body in health and illness (decline of health). Unani medicine refers to a tradition of Greek, Arab, Iran and Indian medicine which is based on the teachings of Greek physician Buqrat (Hippocrates; 460-377 BC) and Roman physician Jalinoos (Galen 129-200AD) and developed into an elaborate medical system by Arab and Persian physicians such as Al Razi (Rhazes), Avicenna (Ibne sina), Al Zahrawi and Ibn Nafis.<sup>1</sup> This system of medicine is not only limited to the treatment of some symptoms of diseases but has a comprehensive approach for curing the diseases and preservation of health too. Health is a common theme in most cultures. In fact, all communities have their concept of health, as part of their culture. It is not mainly an issue of doctors, social services and hospitals but an issue of social justice. In Unani system of medicine most emphasis is laid on human health and almost all ancient physicians described each and every factor which is responsible for maintaining good health.

**Keywords:** Unani medicine, health, basic constituents, temperament, humours

### Introduction

The fundamental framework of Unani system of medicine is based on deep philosophical insights and scientific principles<sup>[1]</sup>. Means it is the Science by which the states of the human body regarding health and decline is discussed and the purpose is to preserve health and to restore it when it is lost. Hence the main concern of the system is to preservation of health<sup>[2]</sup>.

### About Umoor Tabiya

The human body is considered to be composed of seven natural principles or basic component known as *Umoor-e-tabiya* (factors related with physics). These are the factors or basic causes which are responsible for existence of human body and are considered to be responsible for the maintenance of health, the loss of any one of these component could lead to disease or even death of an individual. Therefore each and every factor is responsible for maintaining the health of an individual. The seven factors are (1) *Arkan* (Basic constituents of body), (2) *Mizaj* (Temperament), (3) *Akhlat* (Humours), (4) *Ada* (Organs), (5) *Arwah* (Pneuma), (6) *Quva* (Faculties or powers) and (7) *Afal* (Functions)<sup>[3]</sup>.

### Asbab Sitte Zarooriya

In addition to the seven factors, the following *Asbab-e-sitte-zarooriya* (Essential causes) are also considered to influences the human body with respect to preservation of health and causation of diseases. These factors affect the human body in respect of health and disease; therefore these are called as *Asbab-e-sitte-zarooriya*, means six essential causes<sup>[4]</sup>.

These six essential causes are (1) *Al-Hawa al-muhit* (Atmospheric air), (2) *Al-Makul-w-al-mashrub* (Foods and drink), (3) *Al-Harkat-w-al-sukun-badni* (physical or bodily movement and repose), (4) *Al-Harkat-w-al-sukun-e-nafsani* (mental and psychic movement and repose), (5) *Al-Naum w-al-Yaqzah* (sleep and wakefulness) and (6) *Al-Istifragh w-al-Ihtibas* (Evacuation and retention).

From the study of physiological/natural factors and six essential causes, it will be observed that the methods of study in Unani tibb are far superior then those of method adopted in the modern medicine in respect of health and disease.

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European medicine maintains that as there are causes for disease to develop, so there are causes for the preservation of health also. Therefore in Unani tibb much emphasis is laid on those causes or factors which are responsible for the preservation of health. In other words health has a central position and assumed as a natural state of the body and disease is nothing but the state of essence decline of health.

### Literature Survey

There are two states of human body described by ancient physicians- (a) *halat-i-sihhat* (state of health) and (b) *halat-i-marad* (state of disease).

Health is the natural and physiological state of human body in which constitution and morphology of a person should be as per the need. So the body performs his functions normally and the person enjoying the life without any disturbance [4].

### Definitions of Health

**Asqaliboos (Asklepiades)** (1<sup>st</sup> century BC): - He developed a new theory according to which health is the balance motion of the atoms of the organism [1].

**Arastu (Aristotle):** Health is the balance composition of four temperaments (biliary, sanguinary, phlegmatic and melancholic) and humours [1].

**Buqrat (Hippocrate):** Regular production of the four Akhlat (humour) –blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile with optimum quantity and quality constitute health [1].

**Ibn-e-Sina (Avicenna):** Health is a state the of human body in which functions of the body are normal [5].

**Majusi:** Health is the physical state of the human body in which all body organs performs their functions in a normal way [6].

**Jalinoos (Galen):** Health is a state of human body in which 'all' functions are normal [7].

**Ibn Rushd:** Health is a state in which the functions and reactions of all organs are normal [8].

**Abu Sahl Masihi:** Health is also included in *umur tabiiyya* (basic principles), that is present moderately in simple organs, humours, pneuma, means they should be at their real (desirable) state. Likewise compound organ should be normal [1].

**Zakariya Razi:** Health can be defined as a state of any organ of the body by which its functions and responses are within natural way [9].

In kitab-ul-Murshud, Zakariya Razi defined health as- when the organ of the body performs their normal and specific functions without any pain or hindrance in a normal routine [10].

**Ahmad Bin Mohammad Tabri:** Health is a condition in which the organs and the functions of the body should be normal in their compactness [11].

**S. Thomas:** "Health is a harmony of the humours" [12].

**WHO (World Health Organization):** Health is a state of

complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity [13].

**Webster:** The conditions of being sound in body, mind or spirit, especially freedom from physical disease or pain [13].

**Oxford dictionary:** Soundness of the body or mind, that condition in which its functions are duly and efficiently discharged [14].

**Perkins:** A state of relative equilibrium of body forms and function which results from its successful dynamic adjustment to forces tending to disturb it. It is not passive interplay between body substance and forces impinging upon it but an active response of the body forces working toward adjustment [13].

Unani physician defined health in a very vast and comprehensive way. They describe each and every factor which is related to the health. In most of the places they define health in respect of action and reaction of the organ. The relation of these seven factors with health can be understood with the sequence of these. Functions placed in the last, it means if an organ performs its functions accurately then all the previous factors like structure, temperament and quwa are also in normal and physiological state.

### Health related with physical factors

Actually the secrete behind the last place of functions amongst all factors given by ancient scholars is that they believes that the functions are the mirror image of anatomy and physiology of any organ and any abnormalities in the functions means there is something wrong in any stage. This is the real holism of Unani medicine and ancient scholars describe the concept of health in real holistic manner. So, now we can say that the health is related or depends on all the seven factors and we can defines health by every single factor separately as follows:

**1. Health and basic components:** Human body composed of four basic constituents- Earth, Water, Air, and Fire.<sup>15</sup> These primary materials intermixed with each other in a specific proportion in respect of quantity and quality, and a process of action and reaction takes place between them, as a result of which a dominant formed which is known as temperament. This is the new quality for that compound which also has a specific structure and shape [16].

As per the concept, state of health and its deterioration can be understand by two ways- first is the temperamental abnormalities and second one is morphological abnormalities, because these two directly related with the basic constituents. So health and its deterioration are also related with basic constituents.

**2. Temperamental Health:** Each and every organ of the body contains a specific Mizaj (temperament), which is responsible for normal structure as well as functioning of the organ. Mizaj (temperament) is a quality resulting from the interaction of opposite qualities present in the basic constituents – hotness, coldness, moistness and dryness. Thus when these basic constituents interact with each other with their properties a new quality which is present uniformly in all parts of that compound is produced known as Mizaj (temperaments) [16]. Every organ of the body has a particular Mizaj (temperament) which maintains structure, appearance

and functioning of that organ. Any organ performs their natural functions properly only when the temperament of that organ is *Motadil* (equable). Any disturbance in their equability can alter the capacity of the organ and its normal functioning. E.g. the temperament of liver and heart is hot and moist; lungs is hot and dry; while bone is cold and dry; brain is cold and moist etc. therefore temperament of every organ is different from each other but the temperament of each and every organ is normal in respect of their structure and function.<sup>7</sup> Heart can perform its functions easily when its temperament should be within normal limit. So any internal or external factors which interferes the temperament of any organ may leads to disturbance in the functions of that organ and disease may develops.

**3. Humoural Health:** In Unani system of medicine the body fluids are called Akhlat (humours). Basically the body contains four types of humours- Dam (blood); Balgham (Phlegm); Safra (yellow bile) and Sauda (black bile). A right proportion and equilibrium on the basis of their quality and quantity constitute health and irregular proportion and distribution according to their quality and quantity may lead to disease. Humours are the dietary sources for the organ to maintain their structure and functions properly.

On the basis of these characteristics and temperament they provide the nutrition and replenishment to the organ through conversion into same material. So organ with hot temperament like heart, liver and lungs etc receives their nutrition from blood and yellow bile; while organ with cold temperament like brain, spleen and bones etc receives their nutrition from phlegm and black bile. Especially black bile provides nutrition to the bones and phlegm provides nutrition to the brain etc. Another important and vital function of humours is that blood carries innate heat from heart to all organ of the body.

**4. Health and body organs:** Aza (organs) are the solid part of the body which are made up of basic constituents and acquired their nutrition and replenishment as well as rooh or Hararat-e-Gharizia (innate heat) from the humours. Therefore there are two types of organ present in the body- Simple organs and Compound organs.

**(a) Simple organs:** They are also known as *Ada mufradah* or *Ada mutashabihatul-ajza*. These organs are said to be made up of by the primary combination of basic constituents. These simple organs are - bones, cartilage, ligaments, tendons, membranes, muscles, fats and nerves<sup>[3]</sup>.

**(b) Compound organs:** Compound organs are those organs which are heterogeneous and are composed of two or more than two simple organs. These are also known as *Aza-e-Aaliyah* e.g. Hand, Foot, Stomach, Intestine, Heart, Liver, Brain, etc.<sup>[3]</sup>

Each and every organ of the body either simple or compound performs their functions in most favourable manner only when their temperament, structure and shape, all are in physiological limit and these things are depends on humors which provides nutrition and nourishment to full fill the requirement of these organs which is necessary for performing their functions normally. E.g. liver be capable of performing its physiological functions like formation of humours and production of innate heat, it is possible only when its temperament (hot and wet), structure and shape are remain within physiological limit. If there is any imbalance in

its temperament or deformity in its structure and shape takes place due to any internal or external factors, then disease ensues.

**5. Health and pneumas:** The word Arwah is stand for air or gas. Arwah is one of the seven basic principles of our body. Air is a breath of life and thus absolutely necessary to the human body in the sense that without which the sustenance of life impossible. It has been established by almost all the physicians that Ruh is a gaseous substance whose source is the atmospheric air. When the atmospheric air enters into the body through a respiratory process it enters into the lungs from where it is absorbed by the blood and mixed with humours and now it circulates into the whole boy via blood vessels then it is called as rooh.<sup>18</sup> Rooh is so important for maintenance of life because it performs very important and vital functions of the body such as-

Rooh produces hararat-e-gharizia (innate heat) in the body. Rooh produces energy in the body which keeps all the quwa (faculties) functioning.

Rooh keeps all the organs of the body alive.

When action and reaction amongs atmospheric air and humours takes palace, energy and heat is produced in the body, with the help of this energy and heat body organs become able to continue their respective function. Therefore Abu sahl masihi has called the Ghiza (food) as waqood (fuel) and external air as maddah-e-rooh (precursor of rooh). Tibb hold that the maintenance of health and proper functioning of quwa (faculties) depends upon continuous supply of Ruh. Therefore any cessation in supply of the rooh may lead to cessation in the functioning of quwa and health become lost.

**6. Health and faculties:** The quwa are those natural and specialised powers or faculties which are furnished to a living body for the performance of specific function of every organ of the body for the preservation of the individual as well as species. The concept of quwa is a unique concept in the Unani system of medicine. Because the Quwa (faculties or powers) is that property of the body with which the phenomenon of life is manifested. These quwa provides the basis for different bodily functions<sup>[18]</sup>. Each and every organ is furnished with a power through which specific physiological functions are performed by that particular organ. These quwa are specific for a particular tissue or organ on which the specific function of that organ is depends. There are major three types of quwa are there in the body:

- a. Quwa-e-tabiyah (natural faculties)
- b. Quwa-e-nafsania (psychic or mental faculties)
- c. Quwa-e-hawaniyah (vital faculties)

**(a). Quwa-e-tabiyah (natural faculties):** These are those quwa (faculties) which are responsible for various metabolic processes in the human body such as ingestion, digestion, absorption, transformation (metabolism) and excretion of waste products and preservation of race<sup>[18]</sup>. This quwa supplies food to the entire body and expelled out their waste products. Therefore this quwa replaces wear and tear of the body and produce humours and enhance growth of the body.

**(b). Quwa-e-nafsania (psychic or mental faculties):** These are those quwa which performs intellectual, sensory and motor functions in the body. Such as memory, vision, hearing, smell, taste etc<sup>[18]</sup>. This quwa is very important because other faculties more or less are depends on it.

(c). **Quwa-e-hawaniyah (vital faculties):** These are those quwa which furnish the life to every organ of the body. Therefore quwat-e-haiwania are those faculties due to which the life is maintained. Heart is the principle organ of this quwa<sup>[18]</sup>. This quwa is start from the heart, enter the arteries and reaches all over the body and furnish life to them.

**7. Body functions and health:** Afal and quwa are inseparable and it is functions that are evidence to the presence of quwa. Therefore afal are many as there are quwa in the body.<sup>7</sup> Every normal function of the body is an indicator of normal quwa of the body. If functioning of all organ of the body is normal it indicates a good health.

#### Discussion

Unani system of medicine is holistic in nature and takes into account the whole body health rather than taking a reduction approach towards disease. The main emphasis of Unani physician was on health. Recent shift in modern medicine has been observed from treatment, towards the maintenance of health. But Unani system of medicine from its advent has defined maintenance of health as one of its prime objectives. In Unani tibb Arkan (basic constituents), Mizaj (temperament) and Akhlat (body fluids) are the basic and primal steps towards the path of health and healing. This basic notion guides how to stay healthy and avoid diseases. It is equally beneficial for the physician for taking care of his patients and prescribing treatment accordingly.

#### Conclusion

Unani system of medicine is holistic in nature and focuses the whole body in respect of health and diseases. Similarly also treat the whole body rather than a particular organ or system. The main aim of this system is to preserve the health rather than treat the diseases. Preservation of health mainly related with physis or a hidden innate power of the body and known as Tabiyat. There are seven factors of tabiyat which are the main source of health and disease and innate power maintains the health by maintaining these factors on this normalcy.

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