

## Introduction of Unani Pathy

Nature has blessed India with a vast variety of herbal and medicinal plants and shrubs that grow in its different climatic regions from the frozen Himalayas in the north to the tropical forests in the south. From times this immemorial rich beauty has been used in preparing herbal medicine to cure various diseases and to promote a great repository of this knowledge, organized in the form of Unani and Ayurvedic herbal systems of medicine. The systems have a mass following and world wide acceptability.

Practice of medicine is as old as human existence. The extensive studies on earliest civilization and the prevailing religions, it is quite evident, that the philosophy of medicine originated by not as a science but as some dogma, magic, superstition and spirits. However, it was **Greek philosopher physician Hippocrates (460-377 B.C)** who had freed medicine from the imagination of magic, spirits and superstition.

The foundation of fundamentals was laid down by the father of Unani medicine "**HIPPOCRATES**" and a number of other Greek Philosophers, physicians and scholars have not only enriched the system but also gave it –a status of science.

"**Unani**" was derived from the word "**IONIAN**" which indicates its origin to Greece. "**TIBB**" means medicine. Hence, the Unani Tibb-a system of medicine is an age old time tested system. In fact Unani system of medicine is a synthesis of Greek & Arab systems. The land of Greece had been the epicenter of learning & intellectuals ever since the ancient time. In India it has a long history though it was originated from Greece, 5000 years back. Unani physicians were the first to classify the disease on the basis of different anatomical and physiological symptoms of the body, Hippocrates explained that the disease was a normal process and its symptoms were the reaction of the body to the disease.

After him many scholars enriched the system of whom **Jalinoos (Galen) 131-210 A.D.** **AL-Razi (Razes) 850-925 A.D** and **Abu Ali Ibn (Avicenna) 980-1037 A.D** are noteworthy. Unani pathy got enriched by imbibing what was best in the contemporary system of traditional medicine in Egypt, Syria, Iran, Persia, India, China and other middle east and far east countries. That is why, this system is known in different parts of the world, with different names such as Greeco-Arab medicine, Ionian medicine, Arab medicine, Islamic medicine, Traditional medicine, oriental medicine etc.

Arab physicians introduced Unani pathy in India which took firm roots in the soil soon. Unani pathy had its days in India during 13th & 17th centuries. Soon it spread all over the country and remained popular among the masses, even after the downfall of Mughal Empire. It got a set back during British rule but still remained in practice as it enjoyed the faith of masses.

The Unani pathy survived during the British rule due to the efforts of the Sharifi family in Delhi, The Azizi family of Lucknow and the Nizam's of Hyderabad.

Hakim Ajmal Khan (1868-1927) from Sharifi family was an outstanding physician and scholar of Unani medicine kept the tempo high.

Ajmal Khan was the scion of the family of physicians who had long served the Mughal court and after their decline those of regional princes. Like his father and grand father, Ajmal Khan was an influential figure in the city of Delhi, respected for his aristocratic standing and behavior & renowned for miraculous cures.

Besides this Maseeh-ul- Mulk ,as he came to be known, was a versatile genius of his time ,he was an acclaimed physician, a statesman of national stature, a poet of great sentiments, a reformer and an orator , all at the same time. Ajmal Khan's was an aristocratic style . He was a patron and a host, invariably in the company of poets and literary landlords and government servants. His sporting activities shifted from traditional 'Akhara' (wrestling pit) to billiards and shikar. It has been mentioned that he went along on the hunt but never actually shot anything, arguing that a Hakim ought not to take but give life.

Ajmal Khan's most original contribution was almost single handedly making available some of the great benefits of traditional medicine. The respectability which the Hakims and Vaidis enjoy today is largely due to his tireless efforts. His efforts were devoted to reversing the tide of cultural decline in medicine his political activities were an inevitable out growth of them.

In an introduction to a catalogue of Arabic and Persian manuscripts he wrote: "Although the sun of Eastern arts and sciences kept rising in its own time and many nations drew benefits from its light, now that sun has declined and the age, as is its habit, has given birth to a new sun that fulfil's the needs of the people of the age .....The results of this reversal, which previous nations have already endured, will happen to us: We will see our former greatness and glory in the hand of oblivion if we do not take thought to preserve it."

Hakim Ajmal Khan vigorously advocated the causes of Unani & Ayurvedic systems of medicine. He stressed that two Indian systems which had served the people well should continue and make progress without any hindrance. While speaking at the first Tibbi conference he tried to emphasize the value of Eastern medicine by giving historical evidence .He said:

"It is not I who aim at praising the Unani System of medicine but the whole world recognizes that the Greek medicine traveled from Greece to Egypt, then to Spain from where it reached Baghdad. From Baghdad it came to Iran where it made tremendous progress and produced great physicians and scholars who in spite of flux of time still shine and I am confident, they will continue to guide us till knowledge remains in the world. From there it came to India & flourished here".

He believed that both systems' the Ayurvedic and the Unani had entered a period of decline. Indeed that of the former was far greater and he ventured that it had seen no development for four to five hundred years. For reforms of content, he turned to western medicine to learn some techniques, primarily to areas like surgery. It was to western medicine that Ajmal Khan wanted a Tibb to answer.

Of the groups whom Ajmal Khan found to support his schemes, the princes more than any other group value medicine intrinsically as well as for its symbolic value. The Nawab of Rampur cherished Ajmal Khan personally and supported the institutions he exposed.

The ruler of Bhopal had a state- wide organization of medical care staffed by Unani trained doctors. The rulers of the princely states almost single – handedly provided capital for the college that Ajmal Khan founded for indigenous medicine.

From the very beginning of his career, Ajmal Khan also attempted to gain respect of the British for his endeavors. “It in this, his concerns were like those of the Aligarh modernists and other apologists who required validation of their efforts by the British”.

Ajmal Khan’s relation to the British was based on a quest for respect, for ‘Izzat’ and ‘wiqar’. He sought this respect for himself, for his family, and for his art. He accepted the family title of ‘Haziqui-Mulk’ from the British in 1908. Hailey the chief commissioner wrote to the viceroy in 1913.

“He is man whose opinion.... is of great value as he comes across all classes of men and has a very sound judgment in all such matters.’

Hakim Ajmal Khan is remembered as nationalist and a modernist Ajmal Khan’s complete commitment to Hindu- Muslim cooperation was shaped by his long and deep experience of the value of cooperation in the field of medicine. Through out his life he worked for Hindu—Muslim unity Gandhiji in a letter which he wrote to Ajmal Khan from the sabarmati jail in 1922, writes:

“I write to you in your capacity as chairman of the working committee and therefore leader of both Hindus and Muslims, or better still of all India. I write to you also as one of the foremost leaders of Musalman but above all I write this to you as an esteemed friend.... A staunch Musalman you have shown in your own life what Hindu- Muslim Unity means”.

Ajmal Khan was perhaps the Muslim closest to Gandhi ji.

It is difficult to appreciate the achievement of Hakim Ajmal Khan in satisfying the standards of two radically different cultures, the aristocratic and the democratic. As personal physician to a Nawab he was in a word of affluence, of indulgence or scorn for the undistinguished multitude and subservience to the great. He could never let it appear that anything else in the world was important, when the Nawab did not think it to be so. But he did believe many things to be important. He had his old style Matab, where he examined the rich and the poor patients regardless of caste, creed and religion. While in Delhi, he never took fees from his patients, gave very cheap prescriptions, and gave the costly medicines free of cost. But outside Delhi, he charged up to Rs. 1000/-per day.

In spite of the fact that he was a famous physician, he sacrificed his comforts for the sake of the poor and underprivileged. On one occasion when he was about to leave for an outing, a ‘Mehtr’ (sweeper) came and informed him that his wife was seriously ill. Hakim Sahib told his servant to bring his medicine chest, and proceeded to the Mehtr’s house.

He, however, left behind him two institutions of considerable promise. The Tibbia college and Jamia Millia Islamia –according to Mohammad Ali-one the child of his youth, the other of his old age.