

## IMPORTANCE OF ASBAB E SITTA ZAROORIYA (SIX ESSENTIALS OF LIFE) FOR PREVENTION OF LIFESTYLE DISORDERS

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### ABSTRACT

The Unani System of Medicine is 5000 years back. It gives more importance to maintenance of health and prevention of disease rather than treatment. Now a days, modernization has changed the lifestyle of human beings, due to which, chances of developing certain lifestyle disorders such as Hypertension, Diabetes, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Diseases, Obesity, Cancer, depression, anxiety, etc. is being increased. To prevent the occurrence of such disorders, most of the persons are trying to adopt such modalities which can keep them fit and healthy. Unani System of Medicine lays rules for a balanced lifestyle, which revolves around six essential factors (*Asbab e Sitta Zarooriya*). By keeping the demand of fitness, there is a need to make

awareness about the role of *Asbab e Sitta Zarooriya* in the maintenance of human health. These six essential factors are fundamental in establishing a coordinated biological regularity. The aim of this article is to focus the effects of *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriya* on human beings, so that the individuals can choose such routine of life which can prove beneficial for their health and prevent from lifestyle disorders.

**KEYWORDS:** *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriya*; Lifestyle; Unani Medicine.

### INTRODUCTION

According to Unani medicine, "*Asbab*" are the factors which are precursors and by its own, have an influence on human body, to generate a new state or to maintain an old state.<sup>[3,4]</sup> *Asbab e Sitta Zarooriya* are basically that six essentials of life without which life of humans is unimaginable.<sup>[3,23]</sup> The human beings are continuously breaking the law of nature, even though, they want to live fit as long as possible. In comparison with rural population, the

urban suffer more because their daily routine of life is far away from the nature laws. Everything depends on a cause for its occurrence, if these causes are in favour of health, health is gained. In Unani Medicine, it is mentioned that there are six causes from which nobody can escape during life known as *Asbab e Sitta Zarooriya*. These factors are the efficient causes which are responsible for preservation or transition of existing health.<sup>[1]</sup> The six essential factors are:

- *Hawa-e-Muheet* (Atmospheric Air)
- *Makool-wa-Mashroob* (Foods and Drinks)
- *Harkat-wa-Sakoon-e-Badani* (Physical activity and Repose)
- *Harkat-wa-Sakoon-e-Nafsani* (Psychological activity and Repose)
- *Naum-wa-Yaqzah* (Sleep and Wakefulness)
- *Istifragh-wa-Ihtibas* (Elimination and Retention).<sup>[9]</sup>

#### ***Hawa e Muheet* (Fresh Air)**

Air has got first priority over all the six essential factors, as without air we cannot imagine the existence of life.<sup>[8,15,16]</sup> Unani scholars had advocated that fresh and clean air is necessary for health and many diseases occur due to change in quality of air. Ancient scholars emphasized the need of open, ventilated houses with proper ventilating system. They had also mentioned different types of seasons related to change in air and diseases associated with particular seasons and, had also suggested good ideas concerning appropriate aeration for them.<sup>[9,11,18]</sup>

Air performs the function of *Taadeel-e-Rooh* at the time of inspiration by exchanging the air. Simultaneously, it also works as *Tanqiya-e-Rooh* at the time of expiration. Most of the air borne diseases are caused by seasonal or natural changes and environmental pollution of air.<sup>[7]</sup> The normal changes are the seasonal changes because in every season the air changes into another temperament (*Mizaj*). Any change in character of atmospheric air produce changes to human body. Polluted air induces imbalance to humours (*Akhlal*).<sup>[15]</sup> Accumulation of air pollutants contribute to serious, even fatal damage to cardiovascular and respiratory system and become the cause of lifestyle disorders.<sup>[7,21,22]</sup> Human life needs fresh and pure air to perform physiological functions and to maintain health. Most of the chronic lifestyle disorders may be controlled & prevented through strengthening of rooh (*pneuma*), fresh and pure air.<sup>[4,20]</sup>

A study was done to investigate the link between premature death and different sources of air pollution in urban and rural environments. It determined, through calculations that outdoor air pollution led to 3.3 million premature deaths worldwide in 2010, mostly in Asia. Model projections suggested that premature deaths caused by outdoor air pollution could double by 2050. The study predicts that “moderate though significant increases of premature mortality will occur in Europe and the Americas, to a large degree in urban areas.”<sup>[31]</sup>

### ***Makool-wa-Mashroob (Foods and Drinks)***

The word makool stands for foods and mashroob for drinks, are placed on second number.<sup>[20]</sup> Every individual differ in bodily conditions, temperament, age, dietary patterns and habitat etc., so there is a need to choose different foods according to their requirements. In healthy condition, food is taken for the preservation of health and for aid of *tabiyat* but the aim is different in abnormal circumstances.<sup>[25]</sup> Unani physicians had advocated precise diet for specific diseases.<sup>[2,10]</sup> *Ibn Sina* described this in his famous treatise “*Al qanoon fit tib*” Dietetics and Nutrition is one of the important medical subjects.<sup>[2,10]</sup> The importance can further described by *Gruner* from his book, “*A Treatise on the Canon of Medicine of Avicenna*” quotes that “*the stomach is the house of disease and diet is the head of healing.*<sup>[6]</sup> This was quoted by *Hippocrates*, *Galen* and *Ibn Sina*, the original pioneers of Tibb. In fact, most chronic disorders of present 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 consumption of junk food – too much salt or fat; little fibre; not enough fruits and vegetables; bad eating habits, tobacco chewing and smoking, alcohol consumption etc.<sup>[27,29]</sup>

When the individual is taking a balanced diet, their health is maintained, otherwise, they may suffer from malnutrition or other types of abnormalities.<sup>[5]</sup> In relation to food intake, *Galen* says that food intake should be in accordance with the digestive ability of the stomach and taken in a limit, so that stomach can execute its function easily. Foods change the state of the body by their quality (quality of becoming hot or cold when it enters human body) and quantity. If surplus intake of food is practiced, difficulty may occur such as indigestion, obstruction and then imbalance of humours (*Akhlat*).<sup>[19,20]</sup> If taken in less quantity, it causes emaciation. Water drinking immediately after meals, should be avoided because it hinders with digestive process. It must be taken after descending of foods from upper digestive tracts or on severe thirst; this may prove beneficial to digestive process.<sup>[26]</sup> The water intake with

foods either in little or in more quantity is a very common among the people due to lack of knowledge.

Lifestyle disorders can be preventable with simple and easy changes in our diet. Now a days, traditional good quality and low calorie diets have been swiftly replaced by high-fat, energy-dense diets. Although, too much attention is being paid by people to eat '*correct food*' and they take the help of dietitian also.<sup>[2,3,9,10,12]</sup> but this facility is not available everywhere (especially in rural areas). Therefore, due to lack of dietetic knowledge, the people of the community suffer with Obesity, Diabetes, Cardio vascular diseases, etc.)<sup>[2]</sup> To prevent lifestyle disorders, one should consume fibrous foods and avoid excess of non vegetarian diet.<sup>[7]</sup>

*Galen*, a renowned Unani physician, suggested that four conditions should be kept in mind while making eating or drinking habits:

- Time of the food
- Type of the food
- Quantity of the food
- Temperament of the food.<sup>[11,30]</sup>

#### ***Harkat wa sukoon-e-badani (physical activity and repose)***

To maintain perfect health and to prevent many diseases that come from sedentary lifestyle, the body requires physical activity as well as rest. All the available facilities of present time also play an important role in physical inactivity of individual.<sup>[7]</sup> Its been observed that in free time most of the people including children watching television, using computers, playing video games, playing with mobiles, sitting and reading etc. with little or no physical activity.<sup>[32]</sup> This lack of physical activity becomes a risk factor for many diseases such as heart attack, anxiety, depression, type 2 diabetes and risk of obesity etc. Therefore, it is the need of hour to educate our community about the importance of physical activity and the bad effects of sedentary lifestyle.<sup>[5]</sup>

Eminent Unani Physicians have projected ideas regarding physical activity which is essential for the activation of innate energy and to excrete the waste products of the body. Rest is necessary to save the body's innate heat and body fluids. Excess of both causes coldness of the body because motion leads to decrease the innate fluids, as well as excess of rest increases the body fluid which decreases the innate energy.<sup>[15,16,17]</sup> Rest helps in proper

digestion. So it can be said that to sustain health and goodwill, regular exercise as well as proper rest is needed.<sup>[20]</sup> In the same manner, certain diseases can be cured by giving rest to the body, while some are cured by movement of affected organs. Unani physicians also emphasize the importance of exercise for preservation of health. Exercising for 30-45 minutes at least five days a week would be beneficial to stay healthy. *Ibn Sina* said that “*exercise is the cause of good health, if it is done at the right time and in moderate quantity*”<sup>[13,14,23,25,28]</sup>.

### ***Harkat wa Sukoon e Nafsani (Movement and Repose)***

*Ibn Sina* was the first physician who developed the relation between psychology and medicine. Unani medicine emphasizes that human mind and brain needs adequate stimulation and proper relaxation as well. Body and mind have impact on each other as psychological factors such as *happiness, sorrow, fear, anger*, etc. have significant effect to the health of a human being. Excess of anger and joy causes cutaneous blood vessels to dilate which provides reddish hue to the skin.<sup>[12]</sup> This also increases the heart rate which may cause various Cardiovascular diseases in later life. In relation to psychic movement, Unani scholars explained different faculties which govern the internal and external functions of the body. Nowadays stress and depression are increasing health problems of affluent society around the globe which further leads to many health problems and also shortens the life span of an individual. Balance of both mental activity and rest is required for preservation of good health and to lead a spiritual peaceful life. As the famous quote says, “*Sound mind in sound body*”<sup>[4,9,14,28]</sup>

### ***Naum wa Yakzah (Sleep and Wakefulness)***

Normal sleep and wakefulness are essential for health. Sleep maintains normal blood, physiology and strengthens the body. It is an ideal form of physical and mental rest while wakefulness resembles the motion.<sup>[11]</sup> The advantage of sleep is that, it provides rest to the *nafs* (spirit) and organs which makes a person more active, and it also helps in digestion which makes person healthier, while inadequate sleep interferes with the process of digestion and metabolism. Not only it weakens the ability of thought, sense and movement but also deteriorates them gradually and renders the person to take decisions.<sup>[28]</sup> In a study *Sleep Disorders and Sleep Deprivation: An Unmet Public Health Problem*, it was reported that “hundreds of billions of dollars a year are spent on direct medical costs related to sleep disorders such as doctor visits, hospital services, prescriptions, and over-the-counter

medications.”<sup>[33]</sup> Sleep problems and lack of sleep can effect everything from personal and work productivity to behavioral and relationship problems. Insufficient sleep is considered as important risk factor for Obesity, Diabetes, Cardiovascular diseases and other health problems. Getting six to eight hours of high quality sleep may be as important to health and wellbeing as nutrition and exercise.<sup>[19,28]</sup>

### ***Ehtibas wa istifragh* (Retention and elimination)**

Unani Medicine believed that balance between *ehtibas* and *istifragh* (retention and elimination) of substances is very important for maintenance of health. The elimination of unnecessary or waste materials out of the body and retention of the substances which must be eliminated, causes certain diseases.<sup>[24]</sup> Abnormal retention of waste matter leads to infection and other problems like colic pain, flatulence, piles, anal fissure, intestinal obstruction and rectal prolapse. In the same way, elimination of the substances which must be retained causes abnormal conditions like in loose motion.<sup>[8,17]</sup> The excess loss of fluid, salts, and nutrients in the stool, causes abnormalities. Elimination should be carried out through normal channels such as passage of urine, stool, sweat, and menstrual blood etc.<sup>[4]</sup> The excessive elimination of any matter always causes the coldness and dryness of temperament directly and makes the body weak and lethargic.<sup>[8,17]</sup> Therefore, if *ehtibas* and *istifragh* (retention and elimination) are balanced and take place at the time when they are needed, they are beneficial and maintain health.<sup>[26]</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

All the above mentioned factors are physical or external factors. If an individual maintains equilibrium in these factors he/she can achieve the aim of fitness for a long period. *Asbab e Sitta Zarooriya* either directly or indirectly influences the body; therefore, the public awareness plays an important role for maintaining their fitness or healthy condition.

With above discussion the inference may be drawn that all the six essentials of life as described by Eminent Unani physicians are vital and pivot for life to exist, as equilibrium and balance in *Asbab e Sitta Zarooriya* is necessary to preserve the health.

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