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HISTORY OF MEDICINE

Ibn e Sina (980-1037)

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When the Dark Ages had engulfed the West, there was just the opposite situation in the other part of the world. In the vastly expanded Muslim ruled world there was glittering Golden Age. The light of knowledge was illuminating all aspects and all spheres of human life i.e., Education, Governance, Justice, Civilization, Human rights, Science and Health etc. Interestingly and rather miraculously this Golden Age emanated from an area which was considered the most backward i.e., Arabian Peninsula. That was literally a Big Bang in all these fields. The epicenter for this remarkable and the most fascinating phenomenon was Makkah and Madinah (Now in Saudi Arabia); The rays of the light not only illuminated Islamic World but also gradually penetrated deep into Europe steadily removing the darkness and paving the path for renaissance and industrial revolution.

This Golden Glittering era produced numerous giants among men in all aforementioned fields. These men and women were the most upright and clear-headed individuals with golden heart and brightest vision. Among these was Ibn e Sina born about 1100 years ago in Uzbekistan and died at age of 57 in Hamadan. He is also known as prince of medicine and father of modern medicine. It was a common proverb in Europe at that time and afterwards that if you want to be a physician you should be Avicennian referring to his corrupted Latin name..

Ibn e Sina by 10 years of age, had memorized entire Quran by heart and had studied many books. Ibn e Sina was a devout Muslim who sought the solution for his unsolved scientific problem from Allah all mighty through regular and optional Muslim prayers. Ibn Sina was proficient in both Arabic and Persian languages. About 90% of his books were written in Arabic. Invariably they began with Allah's name, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate. Ibn-e- Sina was not a "dry" "boring scientist, he wrote poetry and was deeply engaged in philosophical discussions rejecting wrong assumptions and conclusions of great Greek philosophers. His critical evaluation of these philosophers made them more familiar in the West.

Here are some Highlights about this one of the most remarkable man.

- In his short 57 years of life span he produced more than 450 excellent books among which Book of Cure (Kitab us Shifa) and Principles of Medicine (al-Qanoon fit Tib; wrongly translated as Canon of Medicine); the later book was Standard textbook of Medicine for 600 years in Western Medical Colleges. This book was an immense five volume encyclopedia of medicine including over a million words. It comprised of medical knowledge available from ancient and Muslim sources. This book was translated into Latin in the twelfth century and was used as the standard medical text in European universities until the mid-seventeenth century.
- His other major work was "The Book of Healing", a scientific and philosophical encyclopedia. This book was intended to 'heal' the soul. It was split into four parts: logic, natural sciences, mathematics and metaphysics. In his book, he developed his own system of logic, "Avicennian" logic.
- Although his most of the work revolved around Medicine, Philosophy and Islam, he also worked on astrology, geology, mountains and on such natural phenomena as rainbow formation
- His recommendations on quarantine in infectious diseases still saving many precious lives today. His recommendations were derived from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s explicit instructions on epidemics
- As early as the 13th century when Dante Alighieri depicted him in Limbo alongside the virtuous non-Christian thinkers in his *Divine Comedy* such as Virgil, Averroes, Homer, Horace, Ovid, Lucan, Socrates, Plato, Salahuddin Ayyubi, Ibn Sina has

been recognized by both East and West, as one of the great figures in intellectual history.

- George Sarton, the author of *The History of Science*, described Ibn Sina as "one of the greatest thinkers and medical scholars in history" and called him "the most famous scientist of Islam and one of the most famous of all races, places, and times." He was one of the Islamic world's leading writers in the field of medicine.
- Along with Razi (Rhazes,) Qasim Azzahravi (Abulcasis), Ibn al-Nafis, and al-Ibadi, Ibn e Sina is considered an important compiler of early Muslim medicine. He is remembered in the Western history of medicine as a major historical figure who made important contributions to medicine and the European Renaissance. His medical texts were unusual in that where controversy existed between Galen and Aristotle's views on medical matters (such as anatomy), he preferred to side with Aristotle, where necessary updating Aristotle's position to take into account post-Aristotelian advances in anatomical knowledge. Aristotle's dominant intellectual influence among medieval European scholars meant that Ibn e Sina's linking of Galen's medical writings with Aristotle's philosophical writings in the Qanoon fit teeb (*"Canon of Medicine")* (along with its comprehensive and logical organisation of knowledge) significantly increased Ibn e Sina's importance in medieval Europe in comparison to other Islamic writers on medicine. His influence following translation of the *Canon* was such that from the early fourteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries he was ranked with Hippocrates and Galen as one of the acknowledged authorities, *princeps medicorum* ("prince of physicians").
- In astronomy, he proposed that Venus was closer to the Sun than the Earth. He invented an instrument for observing the coordinates of a star. He made several astronomical observations and stated that the stars were self-luminous. In mathematics, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) explained the arithmetical concept and application of the "casting out of nines". Ibn Sina also contributed to poetry, religion, astrology and sound. In total, Avicenna wrote over 400 works, of which around 240 have survived.

Its clear from above account that Ibn e Sina's numerous contributions in medicine, philosophy and several other fields resulted from his clear thinking and hard work which was mainly derived from Quran and the Prophet (PBUH, a walking Quran). He was unbiased very noble character man with no greed. When everyone failed, his treatment to the King of Bukhara cured him, the king offered him everything possible, but he did not accept and only asked permission to study books in his library. As Prophet (PBUH) said that there is one organ in the human body; if its healthy everything goes right and if not, then these go wrong; and that organ is heart (mind). Allah says in Quran that Quran is the healer of heart (mind). With clear mind and vision, Muslim scientists were able to achieve in a few years, what others could not achieve in thousands of years. Ibn e Sina did not suffer from inferiority complexes. He like many other Muslim rulers and scientists, challenged the great philosophers and scientists of that time. They did not accept their opinions without thoroughly verifying them. They accepted what was right and what was wrong. Muslims of today have to learn much from their spiritual ancestors.