

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Study and Review of Medical Treatise Written by Nizamuddin Ahmad Gilani

Abstract

Nizamuddin Ahmad Gilani's "Medical Treatise" is a concise Persian-language treatise on medical sciences. Nizamuddin Ahmad was a prominent physician during the Safavid era, with a substantial body of work across various scientific domains, particularly medicine. His scholarly contributions underscore Gilani's expertise in numerous scientific disciplines, with a particular emphasis on medical knowledge. The "Medical Treatise" comprises an introduction and fifteen chapters. In the introduction, the author explores the significance of medical science based on verses from the Holy Qur'an, hadiths attributed to the Holy Prophet and Imams, as well as the wisdom of sages, equating it with religious and Sharia studies. Subsequently, in the fifteen chapters, the text delves into the description of diseases, their causes and treatments, and the insights of esteemed sages like Galen, Hippocrates, and Luqman. This research focuses on the examination and review of the medical treatise available in the Library, Museum, and Documents Center of the Islamic Council.

Key words: Medical Treatise, Nizamuddin Ahmad Gilani, Manuscript, Medicine, Physicians

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Introduction

Manuscripts stand as invaluable treasures of every nation, and Iran, with its rich cultural background, boasts a wealth of Persian-language manuscripts preserved in libraries worldwide. Among these, a substantial portion pertains to the field of medical science. The manuscript of “Medical Treatise” is one such precious work within the realm of medical sciences, dating back to the Safavid era. As far as current knowledge is concerned, it has not undergone any substantial corrections or reviews. Listed in the Library, Museum, and Documents Center of the Islamic Council, this treatise is attributed to Nizamuddin Ahmad (Danesh Pazho, and Elmi Anvari, 2011, p. 165; Afshar, and Danesh Pazho, n.d., p. 232).

This version is written in Nastaliq script by Mohammad Jafar Dehdashti, featuring Shangrov-style headings and symbols, with fourteen lines per page and a single layer of book cover design. It is worth noting that, in some libraries, including the Aburihan Biruni Institute in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, there is a similar text, credited to other authors, such as Muhammad Ibn Zakaria (Mojani, 1999, pp. 150-151). For various reasons, it is crucial to rectify and publish this version. One such reason is the identification of the author, and the other is raising awareness about this valuable “Medical Treatise.” This manuscript, listed as 5/1192, is accessible in the Library, Museum, and Documents Center of the Islamic Council (Gilani, 1833). This research employs an analytical method, drawing on library and archival sources and documents.

Author and Date of Authorship

Nizamuddin Ahmed, the son of Sadruddin Ali Gilani, was a renowned Iranian physician, born in 993 AH (1585 AD) in Meridan Lahijan (Tehrani, n.d., Vol. 8, pp. 21, 413). After completing preliminary studies in his homeland, he traveled to Isfahan around 1025-1038 to pursue advanced scientific degrees, studying under prominent scientific figures like Sheikh Baha'i and Mirdamad. He later migrated to India around 1038-40 AH, following the footsteps of many scholars and poets of his time. Initially, he served as a court physician to the Gurkanians in Delhi and eventually became the personal physician to Sultan Abdullah Qutb Shahi (Amin, 1983, p. 71; Tehrani, n.d., Vol. 5, p. 22). Later, around 1050 A.H., he was promoted to chancellery and ministry by Sultan Qutb Shah. During this period, he engaged in significant scientific endeavors, contributing to various fields. In biographical records, the precise details of the scholarly life and the date of demise of this scientist are not well-documented. According to some biographers, following a brief stay in Iran where he authored a work known as the “Mozmar Danesh” under the patronage of Shah Abbas II, he returned to India in the later years of his life. He subsequently resettled in Hyderabad or another region in India, where he spent his remaining years.

Works of Nizam al-Din Ahmed

Nizamuddin Ahmed's body of work spans across diverse disciplines, including science, philosophy, narratives, theology, and medicine. Among his works, notable titles include “Al Heyvanat zawaat al-somom” (a concise treatise in Farsi on the knowledge of poisonous vermin and their treatment and medicine) (Monzavi, 1969, pp. 524-525), “Adviye bahiye” (Monzavi, 1983, p. 140), “Mofaredeh” (a Farsi work on pharmacology), “Asrar



al-Atba” (Monzavi, 1969, p. 472), “Eslahate al-Atba” (Monzavi, 1969, p. 472), “The Emergence of Medicine and Research in the Inspiration and Pleasure of Reason” (Monzavi, 1969, p. 486), “Khavase al-Fadzahr” (Encyclopedia of Imamiya Authors, 1999, p. 300), “Khavase Halila” (Monzavi, 1969, p. 483), “Darmane Bavasir” (Monzavi, 1969, pp. 673-674), “Shajra Danesh” (Monzavi, 2012, pp. 171-172), “Sharhe Khavase Al-Ahli-laj,” “Sharhe Khavase Belila,” and “Ahvale An”. These works represent a significant contribution to the fields of traditional medicine and medical treatises, many of which have yet to be critically reviewed or identified. (Figure 1)

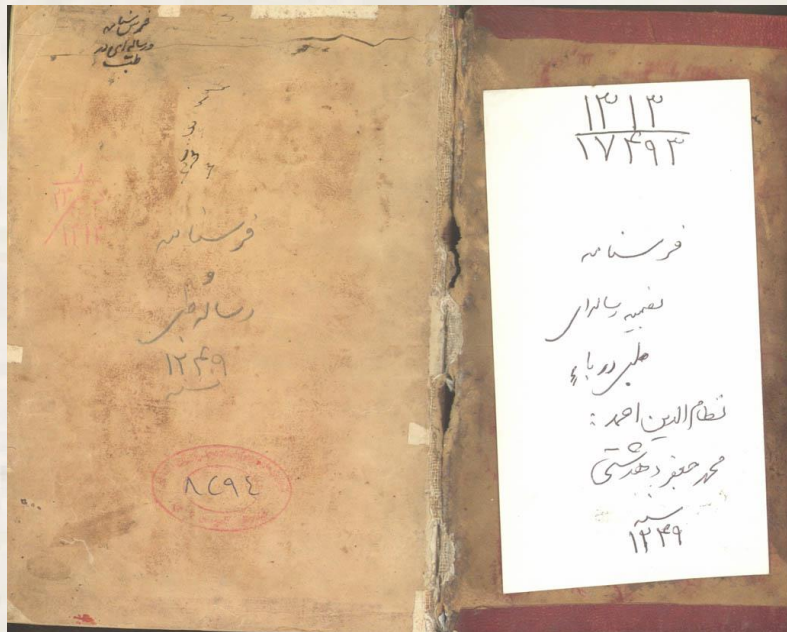


Figure 1. The Cover (Gilani, 1833)

Commencement and Closure

1- Commencement

The treatise begins with the invocation, “In the name of Allah, know that God Almighty created this world and founded it upon twelve pillars and four fundamental natures. He fashioned man in this very mold, and sages have proclaimed that man is a microcosm of the universe, a reflection of the grand cosmos...” (Figure 2)

2- Closure

The treatise concludes by advising, “To alleviate spleen-related discomfort, one should boil licorice with vinegar until it thickens, then apply this preparation to the left side, akin to a remedy with opium, as suggested by the wise sages.” (Figure 3)

Structure and Content Review of the Manuscript

1- The First Part of the Treatise

In the initial section of the treatise, the author begins by discussing the twelve pillars of the human body. Subsequently, he explains Galen’s perspectives on sweetness, bitterness, saltiness, and sourness, along with their underlying causes and associated diseases.



The text also delves into diseases resulting from imbalances of bile, soda, and phlegm, outlining their treatment methods (191-194).

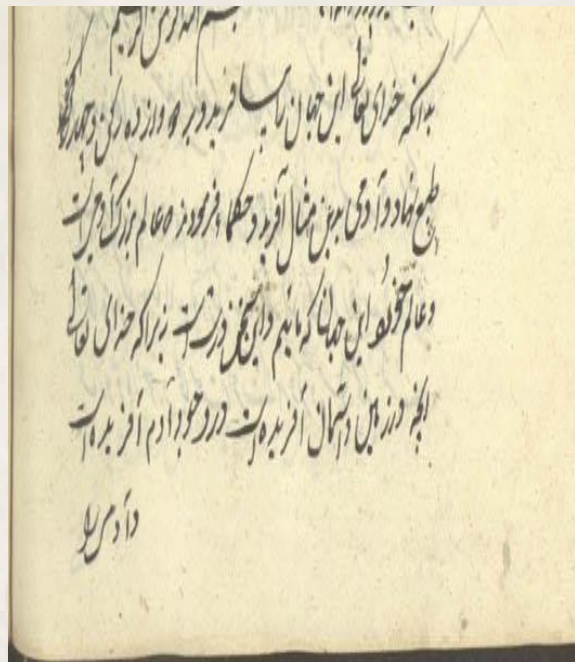


Figure 2. The beginning (Gilani, 1833, p. 189)

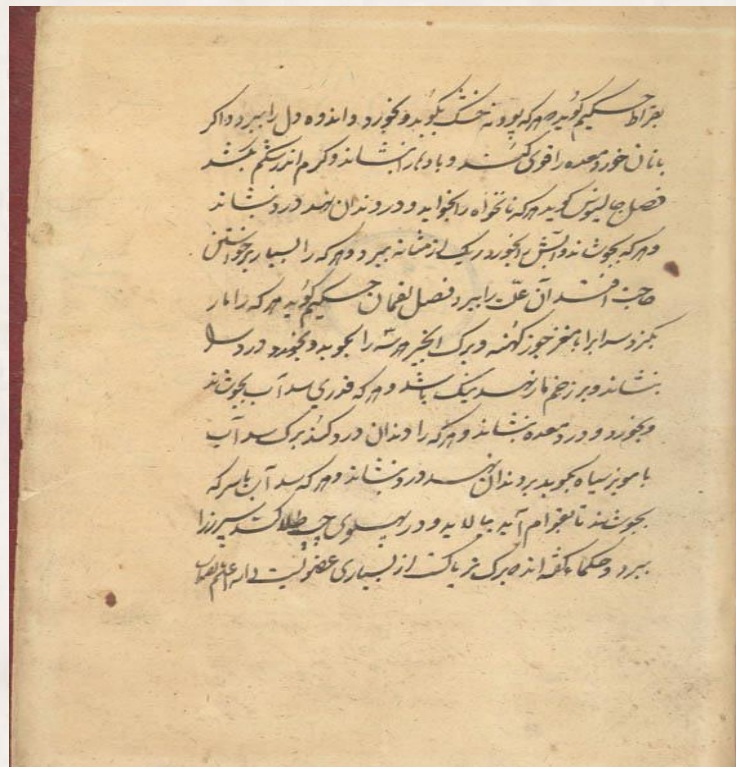


Figure 3. Closure (Gilani, 1833, p. 211)

A. The Twelve Pillars of the Body

In the introduction, the author emphasizes the significance of medical science, citing sacred and prophetic hadiths that emphasize God's provision of medicine and treatment for every affliction, including old age and mortality. He explains that God has placed twelve pillars, consisting of seven primary organs and four natural elements, within the human body. The author provides insights into the nature of these major body parts, their colors, and flavors. For instance, he mentions the twelve pillars inside a human being, including two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, a mouth, two breasts, a navel, and two private parts (genitals), paralleling them with the twelve constellations placed on the seven stars of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon. The twelve pillars are placed on the main (seven) organs of the brain, heart, liver, gall bladder, lungs, spleen, and kidney (Gilani, 1833, p. 191).

B. The Causes of Sweetness, Bitterness, Saltiness, and Sourness in the Mouth and Their Treatments

The author elaborates on Galen's viewpoint, associating sweet mouths with excessive blood, bitter mouths with an overabundance of bile, salty mouths with an excess of phlegm, and sour mouths with an overabundance of soda. He then describes the symptoms of phlegm imbalance, including saltiness, excessive salivation, and grey hair, along with their treatment methods. The text outlines various remedies, such as abstaining from food for three days while consuming pea juice with fresh fat to soften the body's temperament. Then the author advises not looking into or touching water until he is rid of the affliction when he can wash up and have fatty foods. The author offers further treatment options, including grinding seven drams of dried sweet blue violets and making a syrup with ten drams of sugar, mixing it with cold water, and eating it. Another option is to boil jujube, sebestan, black plums, lotuses, chicory seeds, hollyhocks seeds on roses, viper's-buglosses, quince seeds from Senaki, Georgia, Cassia fistula, melons, cucumbers, and Basti figs and combine them with ten drams of manna of hedysarum and consuming the mixture to soften the mood (Gilani, 1833, pp. 192-194).

2- The Second Part of the Treatise

The second part of the treatise is divided into two sections. The first part addresses various diseases, their causes, and corresponding treatment methods, while the second part presents the insights of Galen, Hippocrates, and Luqman regarding medicinal plants and their therapeutic properties. This section encompasses several chapters, including those covering the causes of heat, eye pain, types of eyes, ears, and head diseases, symptoms, indicators of health and critical illness and their patterns, hot temperament, and the period for treatment (Gilani, 1833, pp. 195-198).

The treatise proceeds to explore Hippocrates' perspectives on the causes of coldness and outlines three methods for its treatment (Gilani, 1833, pp. 199-200). Additionally, it examines the impact of emotional symptoms on human well-being, addressing headaches induced by both cold and heat, along with their respective symptoms and remedies. The text also delves into issues such as ocular, aural, and cranial wind-related ailments, along with their symptoms and recommended treatments. Furthermore, it offers insights into managing crises stemming from pain and blood-related ailments, methods of alleviating



toothache, killing intestinal worms, their effects, symptoms, and treatments, and methods of enhancing having sex and sexual desire (Gilani, 1833, pp. 200-208).

3- Eye Diseases and Their Treatments

The text discusses the significance of eye symptoms, such as eye twitching, and their potential association with underlying diseases. It also highlights the importance of addressing symptoms like redness and excessive tearing of the eyes. The text offers guidance on avoiding sunlight and provides insights into the potential causes of eye-related ailments. The treatise outlines that experiencing the heaviness and stiffness of the tongue may signify the potential onset of sudden illness. Additionally, it could lead to wandering and disrupted dreams, potentially introducing symptoms of epilepsy, as well as feelings of grief and sadness. This condition might also serve as an early indication of melancholy. Furthermore, observing illusions, such as the appearance of a fly before the eye, may suggest the presence of a cataract (Gilani, 1833, p. 195).

A. Treatment of Cold Temperament

According to Hippocrates, for the treatment of cold temperament, one should follow these steps: Grind one dram of cadaba farinose, trachyspermum seeds, kelussia odoratissima, pistacia lentiscus, Sweet William, unripe walnuts, and Anacyclus Pyrethrum. Then, prepare three times that amount of halva, combine the powdered ingredients, and form them into a pill. Consume three drams of this pill daily. This remedy is believed to have multifaceted benefits, including strengthening the stomach, alleviating phlegm, imparting a pleasant fragrance, reducing excessive salivation, expelling stomach worms, relieving pain, fortifying the kidneys, eliminating bladder stones, dispelling flatulence, pus, and stomach discomfort, enhancing libido, reinforcing the liver, and increasing the appetite (Gilani, 1833, p. 199).

Another potion entails mixing seven drams of ginger and pepper with two drams of mastic, valerian, and balsam oil, along with one dram of ambergris and amber with oil. These ingredients are finely ground, and sugar, equal to the weight of the combined drugs, is added. Then, honey, equal in weight to the total medicines, is incorporated to create a syrup. This potion is suitable for individuals with a cold temperament at a dosage of two drams and for hot-tempered individuals at one dram (Gilani, 1833, p. 199).

A third potion involves grinding one dram of Gum Arabic and pure Tibetan musk, in addition to half a dram of cloves. These are mixed with sugar and ginger to create a pill, which can be placed in the mouth as needed. This potion is reputed to enhance the physical strength and firmness of the penis. However, it should be noted that if one takes the pill out of their mouth, it may lead to weakened penile function (Gilani, 1833, p. 200).

B. Treatment of Toothache

If toothache is caused by ringworms, relief can be achieved by mixing vinegar and rose water for gargling. Alternatively, one can grind Arvaneh flowers (horehound), bedestan, pepper, and ginger to create a potion with honey. This mixture can be applied to the affected area in the mouth for relief. If the pain persists and does not respond to hot and cold water, another method is to soften some aniseed and apply it directly to the affected tooth. In cases where a worm is suspected at the root of the tooth, one can grind cara-



way seeds and beeswax and then smoke them until the smoke reaches the affected tooth, which helps eliminate the worm. If a tooth breaks and comes out in pieces, placing sumac in the affected area is recommended (Gilani, 1833, pp. 203-204).

C. Treatment of Worms in the Body

The signs and symptoms of the presence of worms in the body include a yellow complexion, physical weakness, early hunger (as worms consume food, leading to hunger, discomfort, and heartache), lack of sound sleep and disrupted sleep, and teeth grinding during sleep. Two treatment methods are suggested: First, mix eleven drams of termes (beans), kabuli helila, cloves (small flowers), and white radish with milk. Consume this mixture and engage in physical activity to encourage the expulsion of the worms. Another method involves consuming seven drams of dates and seven drams of nutmeg at night, then sleeping until the worms are destroyed. Additionally, consuming five drams of salt with abkameh (bread soaked in water) for a week after fasting is recommended and effective for expelling worms (Gilani, 1833, p. 207).

D. Treatment of Other Ailments

Bokrat Hakim suggests that consuming chicory purifies the blood, refreshes the liver, eliminates toxins, quenches thirst, and when mixed with salt, prevents excessive salivation. Furthermore, if chicory is combined with rose water and applied to the head, it provides relief from headaches.

Galen recommends that softening trachyspermum seeds and placing them in the tooth can alleviate toothache while consuming decoction of trachyspermum seeds helps remove bladder stones and triggers frequent urination.

Luqman Hakim proposes that a combination of licorice, old nutmeg, and fig bark when consumed, can repel snake bites and reduce their effects. Applying this mixture to the snakebite wound is beneficial. The decoction of licorice can relieve stomach pain, and a combination of licorice leaves and black currant, when placed in the tooth, can alleviate toothache (Gilani, 1833, pp. 208-210).

Conclusion

Throughout history, manuscripts and medical books have held significant importance. It is essential to track down the authorship and introduce valuable works, such as this medical treatise. Traditional medicine, including the insights provided in this treatise, is crucial for locating and discovering medicinal plants and traditional healing practices. The treatise not only discusses the causes and symptoms of various diseases but also presents rational treatment methods rooted in traditional medicine. The author of this treatise possessed profound knowledge and contributed significantly to Islamic culture and knowledge during the Safavid era. While many of his works have not yet been corrected, remaining unidentified, this research can serve as a valuable resource for aiding in doing an in-depth scientific analysis of Nizamuddin Ahmed's character and his contributions, particularly in the field of medicine.

Conflict of Interest

None.



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