



## THE INFLUENCE OF AVICENNA'S POETRY IN RESEARCHING THE MEDICINE OF MEDIEVAL ASIA AND EUROPE

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### ABSTRACT

*The article is devoted to the poetry of Avicenna and its influence researching the medicine of medieval Asia and Europe. Avicenna's "Urjuza-fit-tib" consists of philosophical and scientific solving problems of the health of humanity. The medicine in medieval Asia and Europe were distinguished by the researches of Avicenna written by the way of poetry.*

**Key words:** didactic poem, medicine, "Urjuza", powerful words, rhyme, science.

### INTRODUCTION

Literature is a high sphere in which there are a number of aspects. So in medicine the physicians also tried to treat sick people according to poems, oyats (saying from Koran) and advices. In this case we had to mentioned the literary works of great physician of Central Asia- Abu Ali ibn Sino

Historical research shows that many physicians experienced in medical sciences are also talented in art, literature and poetry. Avicenna was a sage who was skilled in poetry in addition to philosophy and medicine. He wrote two different types of poetry: those meant to be enjoyed for their literary qualities of novelty and imagination, and his didactic Urjuzeh.

The "Al-Urjuzah Fi Al-Tibb", the Medical Poem of Ibn Sina, known in Latin as *Avicenna*, (980-1037) is the most notable example of this genre and is the subject of this study evaluating its poetics and pedagogical significance as well as its role in the transmission of medical knowledge from Asia to Medieval Europe.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Remembering Avicenna's thoughts about three things, those treated humanity: the word, the edge and the herbs, we can firstly imagine that, the "power of words" have helped for the treatment of humanity in an essential position. Literature helps us to find out powerful words, understanding this fact Avicenna tried to treat patients using poetic phrases and advices. That's why he wrote "Urjuza fit-tib" as the main book in which there is poetical thinking of Avicenna's investigation about medicine.

The name "urjuzah" given to Arabic didactic poems indicates two characteristic features. Firstly, poems in that genre is usually composed on the Rajaz meter whose pattern of syllabic repetitions produces a jingling sound that is particularly easy to remember. Secondly; contrary to the mono-rhythmic arrangement of standard poems, the rhyme of the first verse in an urjuzah is not followed in the remaining verses of the poem. However, there is a constant similar rhyming of the two hemistiches in each verse.

Ibn Sina was himself, a talented and prolific poet. Ibn Abi-Usaybia, in his celebrated *Classes of Physicians* narrated 20 excerpts from Ibn Sina's brilliant poetry covering different genres and following various meters. He also stated that Ibn Sina at the age of 17 authored a book on prosody titled 'Mo'tassam Al-Shuara Fi Al-Arood' (The Prosody Mainstay for Poets).[7]

As documented by Qattaya, Ibn Sina composed several other medical *Urjuzahs*, one on anatomy, on health preservation during the four seasons, on tried medicaments and on clinical evidence derived from pulse and urine. However, his *Urjuza Fi Al-Tibb* the subject of this study is the longest and most famous of them.[8]

Didactic poems are different from poetry evoked by imagination and feeling. In didactic poetry, the poets want to learn science and philosophy, whether spiritual, ethical or practical to the readers. Rhyme and poetry were often used for scientific writing in Avicenna's era, and were considered a method for memorizing scientific information and raising students' interest in difficult scientific concepts. Verse was used to simplify the didactic content, ease memorization and make difficult scientific issues more attractive. In medieval Persia, students of medicine had learned the basics of philosophy before starting medical courses. Poetry could help the students memorize the poem itself in combination with its meaning, in a way that was better and easier than prose.

## DISCUSSION

All the Lucknow, Paris and Aleppo editions as well as the English translation include Ibn Sina's preface to his poem both in prose and then in verse. The statements in the prose preface reveal that it was often in Ibn Sina's time that poet physicians composed medical *urjuzas* and epitomes. Furthermore, his criticism of the medical profession in a one place for lacking in "lecture meetings and in discussions in hospitals and schools" indicates that those educational measures were commonly practiced then. Ibn Sina described his poem as "*dealing with all parts of medicine, drawn up in a very simple style, in convenient versification so that it may be easy, less difficult to understand*".[9]

According to the Avicenna's poetry he started with 12 verses praising and thanking The Creator, God All-Mighty All-Knowing for granting mankind the blessing of reasoning which enabled our minds to learn, discover and see the invisible. The details of those 12 verses clearly show the unity of science, religious belief and spiritual knowledge in the minds of Medieval Islamic scholars.

In this section, Krueger translated the verse No 12 as: "*preoccupying themselves with the body-granting to it the rightful mirth*".[10] However, as the word "body" (*al-jasad*) was not mentioned by Ibn Sina at all in this section and considering the meaning of the words "*al-dhat*" and "*al-awkad*", as well as keeping in line with the textual meaning of the preceding verses 9, 10 and 11, the following different translation is hereby presented:

*"Because they were preoccupied with their inner soul, granting to it the surest of pleasures"*

Under this title in the poem, the definition of medicine was amazingly expressed in just one verse translated by Krueger as: "*Medicine is the preservation of health and the cure of disease which arises from conscious causes which exist within the body*".[11] In difference with Krueger, considering the meaning of the words "*anhu*" and "*arad*", another translation is hereby presented: "*Medicine is to preserve health and cure diseases arising from causes affecting the body and producing symptoms*". This new translation is also

supported by one of the verses that followed in the section on the “Classification of Medicine” (verse No. 20) in which the same word “arad” is translated by Krueger as “symptom”.<sup>[12]</sup>

Avicenna has also his philosophical sayings about both medicine and behavior of humanity. His famous saying is “If there is no dust and mist in the atmosphere mankind lives thousand years” In this philosophical poem, Avicenna tried to develop the ecological upbringing of humanity paying attention to its health.

## CONCLUSION

Understanding medical sciences according to the poetry helped students of medieval Asia and Europe not to get bored and develop their literature skills. Because of literature, it is perfectly clear to create a power of word on its various sphere. Avicenna could connect medicine and literature showing the healing power of the word.

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