

## A Review of Second Chapter of First Book- Avicenna's Canon of Medicine

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### ABSTRACT

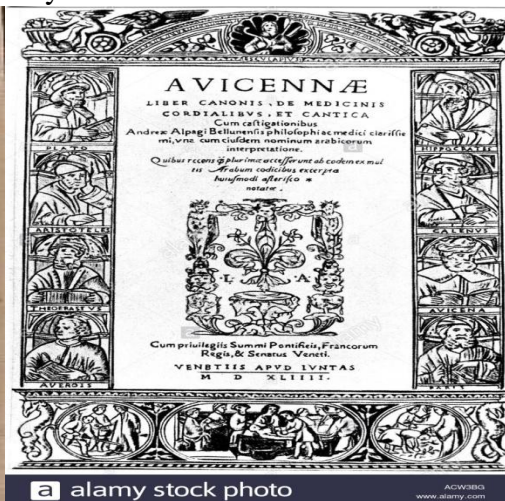
Greeko Arab philosophers and physicians have written numerous books on different topics. RabbanTabri's Paradise of wisdom, Rhazi's book Liber Continens and Avicenna's Canon of Medicine (*Al QanoonFilTib*) are the famous books. Among them Avicenna's book is being reviewed i.e. Canon of medicine. It contains mainly five books and each book is composed of different chapters. In second chapter of first book, Avicenna has described how everything is made in universe and what are the basic components; which are essential to form the tri natural kingdoms (plants, animals, and minerals). In this paper, it is trying to explain his writings in this chapter to make it more comprehensive in contemporary era for better understanding and further research.

**Keywords:** Al Qanoon, Canon of medicine, Avicenna, four basic constituents.

### BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF AL QANOON FIL TIB

Renowned philosopher "Abu Ali al-Husain Ibn Abdullah Ibn al-HasanIbn Ali IbnSina" (980-1037AD) was a renowned muslim philosopher and physician was born in Bukhara. [1] He is also known asAvicenna in west,IbnSina has written many books i.e. *Kitabulshifa*, *AdviaQalbiya*, *Al QanoonFilTib* etc. Among them, *Al QanoonFilTib* is famous book. Originally *Al Qanoon* was written in Arabic language in 11<sup>th</sup> CE. This book has been translated in various languages e.g. in English known as Canon of Medicine and in urdu as *Al QanoonfilTib* by GhulamHasnainKantori. Commentaries of *Al Qanoon* have been written in Urdu and Persian.

The Canon of Medicine has been taught many years in Europe medical colleges from 12<sup>th</sup> CE to 17<sup>th</sup> CE. This book was translated to Latin in the 12th century by Gerard of Cremona. [2]



(The Canon of Medicine:Wikipedia) (Canon of Medicine (Latin), [www.alamy.com](http://www.alamy.com))

*Al Qanoon* is composed of five books:

1. Book one contains many theses which that include the general medical knowledge, the cosmic elements i.e. four basic constituents (*Arkan Arba*), the mutual interaction of elements (*Mizaj/temperaments*), fluids of the body (*Akhlat/humours*), human anatomy (*TashreehulBadan*), and physiological principles. [3]
2. Second book is made up of listing and alphabetical arrangement of medical substances (*AdviyaMufrada/single drugs*) and general descriptions of single drugs.
3. In third book, diagnosis (*Tashkhees*) and treatment of specific diseases related to one part of the body (*AmrazeJuziyah*).
4. Fourth book is composed of diagnosis and treatment of diseases related to the entire body (*AmrazeKulliya*).
5. Fifth book contains information about formulation of compound medicines/*AdviyaMurakkaba*. [3]

## BOOK ONE, CHAPTER TWO (FOUR BASIC CONSTITUENTS OF UNIVERSE)

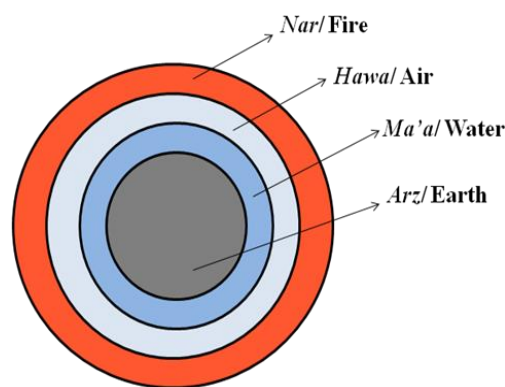
In this thesis, *IbnSina* (Avicenna) has tried to answer the question regarding the formation of universe and its materialistic causes. Avicenna described the four basic substances (fire, air, water and earth) which take part in the formation of everything. He wrote here that a physician must believe the four substances are existing in universe; that are explained by natural philosophers. [4] The "heavy" (*Saqeel*) are earth (*Arz*) and water (*Ma*) while the "light" (*Khafeef*) elements are fire (*Naar*) and air (*Hawa*):Figure.1

### THE EARTH (ARZ)

Under this heading, Avicenna has written that the nature of earth is cold and dry, if left to it without outside influences. It is heavier than all constituents taking part in the formation of universe. [3] The purpose of earthy element is to make the objects firm and stable, and to maintain the forms and figures also.

### THE WATER (MA)

Avicenna described that water is outer to the Earth because water is lighter than earth and inner to the sphere of the Air due to heaviness than air. It is cold and moist. [3] Presence of moisture in water means that it gets easily disseminated and gathered again and acquires any type of shape but it is incapable of retaining it. Contemporary science has proved that the water is bipolar substance; therefore water is having a property of good solvent. So, Avicenna told the water is one of the four basic components for the formation of everything.



(Figure.1)

### THE AIR (HAWA)

About air, he has written the position of Air is above Water and below the Fire. It is "due to its relative lightness". It is "hot and moist" in nature. [3] Air provides *Latafat*(lightness), *Takhalkhul*(porosity), *Tause'e*(expansion) to everything. Now a day it is proved that almost birds are having spongy skeleton having more air spaces in their body to fly easily. Perception of Avicenna was very vast behind the selection of air as a primary component for try matters.

### THE FIRE (NAAR)

*Nar* (Fire) is basic substance; position of fire is higher than air, water and earth. It is "*HarYabis*" (hot dry) in nature. [3] Due to its weightlessness and penetrative power; everything gets ability to grow, attenuate, rectify, and easily blends with other things. Hotness and dryness of fire

enable it to maintain the harmony of absolute coldness of water and earth.

In present day, the concept of Avicenna regarding fire and its energy has been affirmed i.e. lattice energy. The lattice energy is always positive; in presence of high lattice energy, ions interact strongly with each other to make a tight bond in solid matter. [5] It can be accounted that the quality (*Harārat/energy*) of fire which provides firmness and hardness to the object.

In The Physics of the Healing (Avicenna's book) he has further explained about the intermingling of basic substances and its need during the formation of the body.

He said that the movement of fire (*Nār*) will be upward and earth (*Arz*) downward; thus both elements should meet with each other in the limit to form the body. So, once there is the mixture, the simple body does have the power to perform the functions that occurs after intermingling, but if taken alone any of them, it does not possess the power. [6-8]

Here are some weaknesses in second thesis of first book of Al Qanoon regarding explanations. Avicenna has written the topic superficially and various lines are having lag and also not clearly elucidated. The structure of this thesis looks little unpolished. He could explain further his thesis in some other aspects like habitat, dietary habit etc. of the living things.

It must be explained that habitat determines the dominancy of one or two basic substances among them in the formation of animate; e.g. in terrestrial and aquatic areas, earthy and watery element are responsible for existence and continuation of life. [9]

Avicenna proposed that "everything in universe is made up of four basic substances". It does not mean that everything must have flame of fire, fluidity like water etc but if every object may show the quality of these four basic constituents e.g. growth in plants is due to quality of fire i.e. energy, likewise what is immobile is due

to *Arz*(earth) and acceptance of any shape easily is the quality of water.

## METHODOLOGY

Many books have been reviewed specially the books of IbnSina and related commentaries. All literature has been studied methodically. Other than this, web surfing was also done.

## CONCLUSION

After review of second thesis of first book of Al QanoonfilTib (Avicenna's book), it is concluded that the knowledge of Avicenna regarding concept of four basic substances must be explained properly. Here, some explanations have given in outlook of contemporary sciences to make it more understandable.

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**Conflict of Interest:** Nil

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