

Fundamentals of Unani Medicine

Unani System of Medicine is based on the specific principles put forward by Hippocrates. He was the first person to establish that disease is a natural process, its symptoms are the reactions of the body to the disease, and that the main function of the physician is to aid the natural forces of the body. He was the first physician to introduce the humoral theory.

The most important principle of Unani Medicine is temperament (*Mizāj*) which classifies human beings, diet, drugs, etc. into four qualitative types: Hot & Dry, Hot & Wet, Cold & Wet and Cold & Dry. Different characters are found in persons having different temperament, for instance a Hot & Dry Temperament is associated with a lean built, excessive anger, etc. The temperament of diet, drug, etc. is known by some physical characters and effects on human beings, for example, a non-succulent, pungent or salty vegetable is likely to be Hot & Dry. This allows the identification of the diet which is proper for maintaining the healthy Temperament of a human being. Pathological shift in the temperament causes disease, and reversing the abnormal temperament to the normal, by using drugs/diets of opposite temperament cures the disease.

Unani System of Medicine possesses fundamental principles for all medical fields i.e. Physiology, Anatomy, Preventive Medicine, Pathology, Diagnostics, Pharmacology and Therapeutics. Seven Natural Factors, viz. Elements (*Arkān*), Temperament (*Mizāj*), Humours (*Akhlāt*), Organs (*A'dā'*), Pneuma (*Arwāh*), Faculties (*Quwā*) and Functions (*Af'āl*) make the totality of a human being. The disease is caused by the imbalance in the temperament and humours, disorganization and discontinuity of the structure leads to the development of disease.

Assessment of Temperament (*Mizāj*)

Parameter	Temperament (<i>Mizāj</i>)			
	Sanguine (<i>Damawī</i>)	Phlegmatic (<i>Balghamī</i>)	Bilious (<i>Ṣafrāwī</i>)	Melancholic (<i>Sawdāwī</i>)
Complexion	Ruddy (Reddish / Wheatish Brown)	Chalky (Whitish)	Pale (Yellowish)	Purple (Blackish)
Built	Muscular & Broad	Fatty & Broad	Muscular & Thin	Skeleton
Touch	Hot & Soft	Cold & Soft	Hot & Dry	Cold & Dry
Hair	Black & Lustrous Thick, Rapid Growth	Black & Thin Slow Growth	Brown & Thin Rapid Growth	Brown & Thin Slow Growth
Movement	Active	Dull	Hyperactive	Less Active
Diet (most liked)	Cold & Dry	Hot & Dry	Cold & Moist	Hot & Moist
Weather (most suitable)	Spring	Summer	Winter	Autumn
Sleep	Normal (6-8 hours)	In excess	Inadequate	Insomnia
Pulse	Normal in Rate (70-80/min) Large in Volume	Slow in Rate (60-70/min) Normal in Volume	Rapid in Rate (80-100/min) Normal in Volume	Slow in Rate (60-70/min) Less in Volume
Emotions	Normal	Calm & Quiet	Angry	Nervous

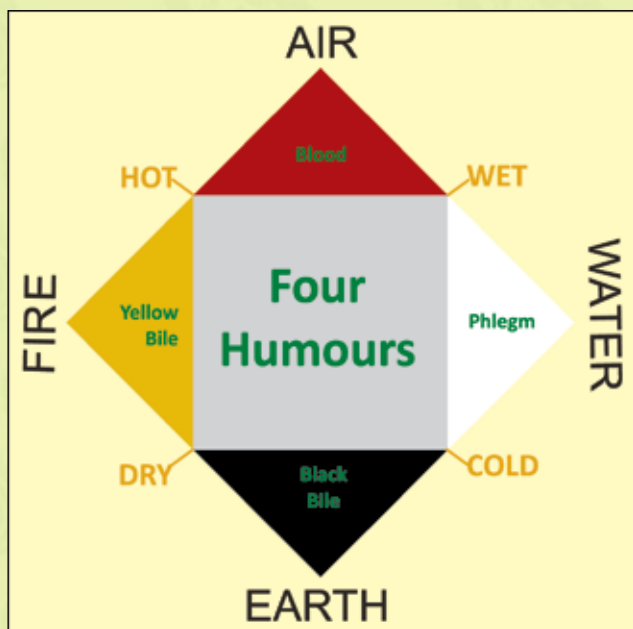
(Maximum number of ticks in a particular column denotes the dominant temperament.)

The fundamental framework of this system is based on Hippocratic theory of four Humours (*Akhlāt*) – Blood (*Dam*), Phlegm (*Balgham*), Yellow Bile (*Ṣafrā*) and Black Bile (*Sawdā*). Admixture of different elements and their qualities in specific ratio in a particular entity, whether living or non-living, denominates its temperament (*Mizāj*). Human temperament is commonly denoted by the dominant humour i.e. Sanguine (*Damawī*), Phlegmatic (*Balghamī*), Choleric (*Ṣafrāwī*) and Melancholic (*Sawdāwī*), which can be correlated with the temperament of diet, drugs, environmental factors, etc. as the entities of non-human universe

being made up directly of elements are described in terms of qualitative temperament. Any disturbance in the equilibrium of humours causes disease, and therefore the treatment aims at restoring the equilibrium by giving factors (including drugs) of opposite temperament. In addition, Unani System of Medicine believes that medicatrix naturae (*Ṭabī'at Mudabbira Badan*) is the supreme power, which controls all the physiological functions of the body and provides resistance against the diseases.

Thus, the humoral imbalance can be corrected by proper diet and medication. The physician prescribes drugs according to the temperament of patient, causative humour, faculty of organ involved and severity of the disease. These drugs are classified as per the specific temperament (*Mizāj*) and are graded in the first, second, third and fourth degree according to their potency.

Unani Medicine gives more importance to maintenance of health and prevention of disease rather than treatment. In a completely healthy person it prescribes lifestyle, diet and environment appropriate for his or her temperament, while in healthy but weak persons or healthy persons who have become vulnerable to disease, special diets, non-drug manipulations or regimens and even drugs are prescribed to maintain health and prevent disease.



Schematic diagram of Humours (Akhlāt)

Every person is supposed to have a unique humoral constitution, which represents his healthy state. To maintain correct humoral balance, there is a power of self-preservation or adjustment called medicatrix naturae (*Ṭabī'at Mudabbira Badan*) in the body. If this power weakens, imbalance in the humoral composition is bound to occur and this causes disease. In Unani Medicine, great reliance is placed on this power. The medicines used in this system, in fact, help the body regain this power to an optimum level and thereby restore humoral balance, thus retaining health. Also, correct diet and digestion are considered to maintain humoral balance.