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A Comprehensive Review of *Kitabul Murshid* (The Guide) of *Razi*- A Physician of Medieval Period

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ABSTRACT

The trend of writing is not a new invention. The art of writing was also common in 9th CE. In this era, philosophers and physicians had written many books on various issues. *Zakariya Razi* (865-925 AD) has written more than 224 books. Among them, Razi's book *Al-Hawi* (Liber Continens), *Kitabul Judri wal Hasba* (Treatise on Smallpox and Measles), *Kitabul Mansoori* (Liber Medicinalis ad Almansorem), *Kitab al-Murshid* (The Guide), etc. have given in-depth information about medicine and philosophy and also up to 16th, 17th CE they were in the curriculum of medical science in the different part of the globe. *Kitabul murshid* is one of the best and valuable writings of *Razi*. It systematically contains numerous chapters on different topics. In this paper, the contents of the book (*Kitabul murshid*) are highlighted for better understanding and further researches.



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THE HISTORICAL ASPECT OF RAZI

Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Zakariya Al Razi was born in *Al Ray*, Iran, in 865 AD [1,2]. In early age, he was interested in music. He then studied chemistry and philosophy. [1] He is also known as ‘The Galen of Arab’ [3]. When he reached at the age of thirty, he stopped his experimental works in alchemy due to eye irritation. *Al Razi* was quite liberal and benevolent for his patients, treating them in a kind manner, giving treatment without charging them. In his later years, he suffered from cataracts in both eyes and eventually became blind. He died in *Al Ray* in 925 AD [2,4]. **Figure 1** [5]



Figure No. 1: Portrait of al-Razi (AD 865 - 925), physician and alchemist

He wrote more than 224 books on various subjects[1] El i.e. *Kitab Al-Hawi (Liber Continens)*, *Kitab Al Mansuri Fi al-Tibb (Liber Medicinalis ad Almansorem)*, *Kitab al-Murshid (The Guide)*, *Al Shakook ala Jalinoos, (The Doubt on Galen)*, *Al Syrah al-Falsafiah (The Philosophical Approach)*, *Kitab Sirr Al-Asrar (Book of Secret of Secrets)*, *Kitāb al-Jadarī wa al-Ḥaṣba (De Variolis et Morbilis)*, etc [4,6,7]. His books in medicine, philosophy, and alchemy had greatly affected human civilization, especially in Europe [1]. Some authors considered him the great Arab physician and one of the most famous known to humanity [8].

OVERVIEW OF KITABUL MURSHID (THE GUIDE)

The full name of this book is 'Kitab al-Murshid wa-al-fusul'[9] (which means The Guide Book or The Book of Aphorisms). It was written late in his career this is a relatively short general treatise based on his earlier observations and meant as an introduction of basic principles for students of medicine [10]. It appears that *Kitabul Murshid* has continued to be used in learning medicine, as mentioned by Maimonides (1135- 1204 AD) as one of the books he read for his medical education after settling in Fustat in Egypt following his exile from Cordoba in 1148 [11]. In 1961, Dr. Albert Zakī Iskandar edited and prepared the copies of *Kitāb al Murshid wa-al-Fuṣūl* in the İstanbul Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Ayāşōfyā, Nr. 3724, and in Dār alKutub al-Miṣriyya, Tibb Tal'at, Nr. 594. Thereafter, it was published in 'Mojallah Moadah tul Makhtutat Al Arabiyah, Kuwait, Volume.7, Issue.1, May 1961' [3,9].

In 1994, it was translated in the Urdu language with the title '*Kitabul Murshid*' by Mohammad Raziul Islam Nadwi [3]. **Figure 2 & 3** (Urdu translation by Mohammad Raziul Islam Nadwi).

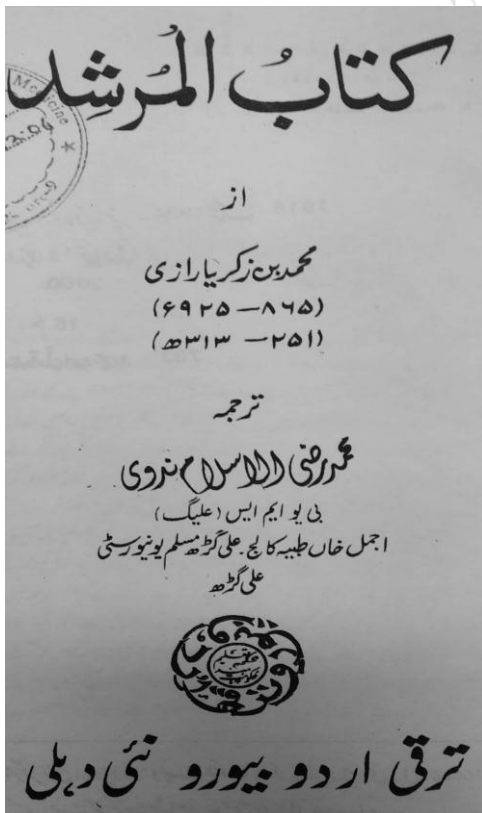


Figure No. 2:



Figure No. 3:

In the preface of The Book, Razes written shortcomings of Hippocrates’s writing ‘*Kitab al Fusul*’ [6] i.e. unclear and non-sequential discussions. Therefore, he desired to write this book in comprehensive, non-ambiguous, and in a proper sequence with suitable examples for easy understanding [3]. He wrote this book as a gateway to the medical field learners [6]. This book is comprised of 35 main headings or chapters with subheadings and about 120 pages. Table 1 [3]

Table No. 1: The Table is Showing Chapters in the *Kitaul Murshid* (The Guide) in sequence and their brief contents for ready reference

| S. No. | Chapter name | Brief description |
|--------|---|--|
| 1. | <i>Ustiqissat/Anasir</i> (Aphorisms on the four elements) | Includes tri-creatures (plants, animals, minerals) and their origin, arguments related to four elements, composition of the human body, classification of human and other animals, four basic qualities (hot, cold, dry, wet), compounding of basic components and other related discussions |
| 2. | <i>Mizaj</i> (Aphorism on Temperament) | General discussion, intermixing of four basic qualities, moderation of temperament, types of human temperament, types of abnormal temperament |
| 3. | <i>Hawa'</i> (Atmospheric air) | General description, types, and effects of air |
| 4. | <i>Ma'a</i> (Water) | Types of water and their effects |
| 5. | <i>Advia wa Aghzia</i> (Drugs and foods) | Power and characteristics of drugs and foods |
| 6. | <i>Riyazat</i> (Exercise) | Effects, timing, foredeals, and types of exercise |
| 7. | <i>Hammam</i> (Steam bath) | Timing, limitation, advantages, disadvantages, other terms, and conditions |
| 8. | <i>Nawm-o-Yaqza</i> (Sleep and wakefulness) | Causes, advantages, disadvantages |
| 9. | Essentiality of food and right use | General portrayal, organs responsible for digestion and elimination, causes of proper digestion, indigestion and weak digestion, elimination, the capability to be diseased |

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| 10. | <i>Imtila</i> (Congestion) | Types, symptoms, and recommendations |
| 11. | <i>Rada' at e Khilt</i> (Badness of humor) | Diseases, symptoms of the dominance of humors and their line of management |
| 12. | <i>Advia Mus'hila</i> (Purgatives) | Purgatives of specific humor |
| 13. | <i>Qai wa Advia Muqiyya</i> (Emesis and emetic) | Terms and conditions of emesis, emetic drugs |
| 14. | <i>Idrar</i> (Diuresis) | General discussion and diuretics |
| 15. | <i>Tareeq</i> (Diaphoresis) | Causes of diaphoresis, benefits, and harms, excretion of other secretions |
| 16. | <i>Shara'ab</i> (Liquor) | Definition, benefit and disadvantage, other description about liquor |
| 17. | <i>Jima'a</i> (Coitus or sexual contact) | Advantages and disadvantages |
| 18. | <i>Tarkeeb e Advia</i> (Composition of drugs) | Need, principle, methods of drug composition |
| 19. | <i>Marz, Sabab wa Arz</i> (Disease, cause, and complication) | Definition of disease, cause and complication, types and mentioning of other related books |
| 20. | Diseases of internal organs and indicators | Indicators of internal diseases and recommended books |
| 21. | <i>Bol</i> (Urine) | Formation of urine, diagnostic indicators of urine, urine examination and related information |
| 22. | <i>Nabz</i> (Pulse) | Cause of pulse formation, characteristics of pulse |
| 23. | <i>Tanaffus</i> (Respiration) | Need and features of respiration, anatomical description of respiratory organs, causes of different type of respiration |
| 24. | <i>Bohran</i> (Crisis) | Definition, symptoms, and routes of crisis |
| 25. | <i>Ayyam e Bohran</i> (Days of Crisis) | General discussion, causes of changes in the body on specific crisis days |
| 26. | <i>Awqat e Marz</i> (Duration of diseases) | Brief description |
| 27. | <i>Nudj</i> (Maturation/concoction) | Benefits of concoction, routes for the elimination of concocted matter, symptoms of maturation in urine and sputum |

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| 28. | <i>Hummiyat</i> (Fevers) | Types of fever i.e. <i>Humma al-Yam</i> (ephemeral fever), hectic fever, septic fever, etc., timings of food during fever, way of diagnosis of fever, related books |
| 29. | <i>Umoomi Qawanin</i> (General principles) | Related to nutrition, curing of disease and health improvement |
| 30. | <i>Istifragh wa Tabdeeli Mizaj</i> (Excretion and alteration in Temperament) | Discharge of excretions of brain, stomach, liver, lungs, heart, spleen, intestine, uterus, kidney, urinary bladder |
| 31. | <i>Fasd</i> (Venesection) | Recommended veins for Venesection |
| 32. | <i>Tabi at</i> (Nature/physis) | Overview of Physis |
| 33. | <i>Usul-i-Ilaj</i> (Doctrines of treatment) | Doctrines for evacuation, treatment of acute and chronic diseases, relieving of pain, correction of atmospheric air, classification of fatal diseases, general guidelines of treatment, basic knowledge of diseases essential for physicians |
| 34. | <i>Alamat-e-Rada'at</i> (Bad signs) | Related to urine, pulse, respiration, intellectuality, prophylactic measures |
| 35. | <i>Fan ne Tib</i> (Art of medicine) | A brief introduction, the importance of reading of medical books, present history of the disease, examination of the patient, medical diary, and other general principles of treatment |

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

After a rigorous review of 120 pages of *Kitabul Murshid* (Urdu translation, 1994), it was found that *Zakariya Razi* has systematically arranged the chapters related to different topics. He has given brief and comprehensive knowledge of each heading but wherever necessary explained the topic e.g. explanation of aphorism on four elements, temperament, the essentiality of food and right use, doctrines of treatment, the art of medicine, etc. One very important thing we found in his writing was a recommendation of related books written by other authors, which means the bibliographic system was known to him. He has written about three creatures. He gave an experimental based idea on basic constituents as a matter of

everything. *Razi* observed that anything is being burnt then it will be converted into two components i.e. fumes and ash; and fumes show the presence of fire, water, and air, and ash affirms the presence of the earthy element [3,12]. He explained different kinds of air and their characteristics [3]. With the above discussion, it is concluded that *Razi* was not a scholar of one field rather he was the stalwart of many subjects like medicine, philosophy, cosmology, geography, environmental science, etc. So, his writings must be made accessible to the world's scientific memoirs for further research.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest in the present work.

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