

HAKEEM ALI GILANI A COMMENTATOR OF CANON OF AVICENNA

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ABSTRACT

Hakim Ali Gilani was a native of Gilan. He was a distinguished physician and medical writer. He wrote commentary on canon of Avicenna. He came to India during Akbar's time and served two Mughal rulers, Akbar and Jahangir. He was praised very much by the medical historians for his vast knowledge, curiosity and intelligence. A brief account of his achievements has been given in this article.

Gilan is a tract of Iraq from where many eminent personalities spread over the different parts of the world. Among such persons we have come across many eminent physicians who came to India during Mughal period to gain the royal patronage and settled here. Ali Gilani was one of the such physicians who came to India during Akbar's reign, settled here and lived upto the period of Jahangir. He was born in the year 1554 A.D. and died in 1609 A.D. He got medical education from Hakim Fathulla Shirazi. He belonged to Shia sect. He became a personal physician of Emperor Akbar, who liked him due to his vast knowledge. It is a sign of Akbar's faith on Ali Gilani that he selected him to treat his close friend, Faizi. Ali Gilani used to accompany Akbar when ever he was on tour. He was made the commander of 700 horsemen. Akbar had granted him the title of "Jalinoos - a - Zamani" also in 40th year of his reign. Ali Gilani was sent as an Ambassador to the court of Ali Adil Shah of Bijapur in the year 1580 A.D. Ali Gilani was very much generous. He used to spend about 6000 rupees per annum

towards charity for the treatment of poor.

Shah Nawaz Khan writes in his book "Maasirul Umera" about Ali that he had a great subtility in arts and sciences specially in medicine and was a skillful physician.

According to O.P. Jaggi The author of "medicine in medieval India", Badayuni, the author of "Muntakhbal Tawarikh" did not have a high opinion about Ali. He referred Badayuni's statement as "His excellence in acquired knowledge and especially in the science of medicine, is extreme and he is passionately devoted to the practice of the healing art, but he is but a youth, self opinionated and of limited experience. It sometimes happens that a patient, after taking one of his draughts speedly, has a taste of the draught of extinction, and not withstanding the fact that he was the pupil of Fathhulla of Shiraz, he ordered him when he was in an ardent fever, a diet of thick pottage, thereby handing him over to death."

O.P. Jaggi contradicted the Badayuni's view explaining that "Badayuni seems to have formed that

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opinion regarding Gilani when he was not yet a matured physician"

Rehbar Farooqui in his book *Islami Tibb* writes about Ali that "he was highly efficient Hakim with a unique and wonderful wisdom."

Ali's vast knowledge, curiosity and intelligence were praised by historians. They counted Ali as a scientist and medical writer. Some anecdotes found in history books are being submitted here to assess the vastness of Ali's wisdom and his knowledge.

It is historical truth that Mughal Kings used to test the talented persons. Ali was also subjected to such test. He was not yet reached to the Akbar's court. Akbar ordered that when Ali comes to me produce before him the urines of a healthy person, a patient, a cow and a donkey at the same time. Hence the order was complied with. Ali, the intelligent fellow identified all the urines correctly by his naked eyes.

There is another anecdote. Though it is not concerned with his medical ability but shows his wisdom and vast knowledge. It is in several history books that Ali had constructed a miraculous room inside a cistern which was covered with water from all sides. Even to enter the room one had to dive into the water. This miraculous room was witnessed by Emperor Akbar himself. This room had sufficient light, adorned with furniture. Books were arranged in order and another side a dinner mat was laid out with dishes of foods. It was a great wonder that the door of room was opened into the water and not even a single drop of water could enter the room through it. According to Beal the room inside the cistern was constructed in 39th year of Akbar's reign which may probably in 1594 A.D. that was constructed at Lahore. On account of this deed Akbar bestowed on Ali the rank of

high degree.

According to *Islami Tibb* with reference to *Tuzak-a-Jahangiri* a similar room inside a cistern was also constructed at Agra while Ali was posted there in compliance of Jahangir's demand. It was constructed in 1609 A.D. Jahangir appreciated it and conferred Ali "Do Hazari Mansab" as a reward of his special deed.

According to Kausar Chand Puri it is more than probable that Ali's medical equipage went along with him. However, he, in one of his articles reveals some points regarding two preparations of Ali. He describes one of the preparations was "Sharbat-i-kaifnak" or the "Ecstatic syrup", which may simply be called wine. Whatever it might be, but it was some thing so special that the Hakim himself must have attended to its preparation. Writes Jahangir in his *Tuzak*, "when the imperial army was stationed at the fort of attock with a view to chastise the Yusufzais, one day I went on hunting and was very tired. Ustad Ali Quli Khan proposed me to take a cup of wine; for if I took one, all the weariness should wear away; I asked Mohammad Abdar to fetch "Sharbat-i- Kaifnak from Hakim Ali. The Hakim sent me cup and a half of the sweet yellow wine" (*Tuzak Jahangiri* p.152). Wine is not generally sweet it must have been some sort of syrup which was so designed to replace wine as to be deliciously intoxicating. May be it after all was, a kind of sweetened wine only as Jahangir himself has written.

The another one *Itri Jahangiri* was prepared in Jahangir's reign. It is the Attar or otto of Roses. The credit of its discovery goes to Noor Jahan's mother, Azizunnisa Begum. If roses are put in water and then taken out after some time, there can be seen something oily floating on the surface. "It was col-

lected and found to smell so sweet that one drop rubbed in the palm of hand could make the whole company laden with fragrance. It looked as if many roses had opened all at once. Salima Sultana Begum gave it the name Itri Jahangiri.

O.P. Jaggi revealed Ali's another preparation which was an oil and named Deodar. He writes "Akbar, when on his way to Kabul fell from elephant, sustaining much discomfort and pain in the limbs, on using the medicated deodar oil he was much relieved within three days."

According to Rehbar Farooqui Hakim had medical formula which was used for treating Akbar. The said formula had the capability to congeal water at once.

Ali's literary works bear an eloquent testimony to the intellectual curiosity and vigour. The names of the following books compiled by Ali found in history books are:

1. Mujerribat-e-Jamali
2. Sharh-e-Qanoon
3. Sharh-e-Kulliyat Amili
4. Sharh-e-Mualejat
5. Tareekh-e-ulfi

Though all the five have their own value, yet the medical scholars have given, more importance to the commentary of Canon of Avicenna (Sharh-e-Qanoon). According to them after Allama Alauddin Qurshi, he was the second who wrote complete commentary on Canon of Avicenna. Medical writers counted this as an authoritative work next to the work of Allama Qarshi. His commentary is in Arabic and comprises of five volumes. The details of four of them mentioned by O.P. Jaggi are as follows:

The first volume has 608 pages, It deals with the body, causes and complications of the diseases, hygienic, signs

and symptoms, pulse, urine diseases of the new born and children, physical exercise, foods, drinks, health of the old people and materia medica. The second volume has 796 pages. It begins with the principles relating to simple herbs and drugs, their temperaments and their different categories. Botanical herbs, animal and mineral substances are also mentioned in the alphabetical order. Under each herb and drug, its properties and uses in different disease are described.

The third volume, a continuation of the second, is about simple drugs. The fourth volume contains a full account of fevers, skin diseases and antidotes. O.P. Jaggi did not give any details of the fifth volume.

O.P. Jaggi might have studied the commentary thoroughly. He referred a paragraph from the commentary which described the process of digestion i.e.

"It is also essential for the digestion of food that food should be encircled by the stomach and it should churn (the food constituents) in such a manner that the rotary movement (inside the stomach) may be caused. With the help of its gastric juice and generated animal heat, it should cook the food constituents and convert them into minute particles of food as to form a homogenous substance so that the digestive action may continue simultaneously within the whole of the food particles.

It is also said that Gilani seems to have pondered over the function of the heart muscle and of its valves in the inflow and outflow of the blood through them".

Thus many scholars and their works prove the eminence of Hakim Ali and increased a zeal to go through Ali's commentary and other works.

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सारांश

हकीम अली गीलानी - अविसेन्ना के केनान का एक टीकाकार

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हकीम अली गीलानी का निवास स्थान गीलान था । वह प्रतिष्ठित चिकित्सक तथा चिकित्साविज्ञान के क्षेत्र में प्रमुख लेखक भी था । उसने अविसेन्ना के ग्रन्थ केनान पर एक टीका लिखी । वह सम्राट अकबर के काल में हन्दिस्तान आया और दो मुगल सम्राटों अकबर एवं जहांगीर के काल में सेवारत रहा । उसकी उपलब्धियों के विषय में एक संक्षिप्त विवरण इस लेख में प्रस्तुत है ।