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# A Review of *Al-Masa'il fi al-tibb lil-Mutallimin* in The Light Of *Mahiyatul Amradh* ( Pathology)

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## Abstract

*Al-Masa'il fi al-tibb lil-Mutallimin* (Questions on Medicine for Students) is one of the well-known medical texts in the medieval period written in Arabic in question and answer format by Hunanyn ibn Ishaq al ibadi (809-873 AD). We studied the manuscript *Al-Masa'il fi al-tibb lil-Mutallimin*, in an attempt to understand, explore and comprehend its general outlook on the concept of health and disease, classification of diseases, and description of signs and symptoms. *Hunanyn ibn Ishaq* was mainly influenced by Hippocrates, Galen, and Aristotle but in some instances he criticizes them. *Al-Masa'il fi al-tibb* is one of the best examples of the question-and-answer genre in Islamic medical history, but it is not his only work in this genre. Usaybi'a (1203-1270) ascribes the question and answer method to Hunanyn's writing style and has listed his books and treatises in question-and-answer format. These include both translations and original works and include a variety of medical topics. One example of a translated work in this style is the Arabic translation of Galen's Commentary on Hippocratic Epidemics. Another popular book written in this style is *Al-Masa'il fi-al'Ain* (Questions on the Eye) and is attributed to Hunanyn. This book is an extract of the first six treatises of Ten Treatises on the Eye which includes 207 questions and answers on the anatomy, physiology, and pathology of the eye.

**Keywords:** *Al-Masa'il fi al-tibb lil-Mutallimin*, *Hunanyn ibn ishaq al ibadi*, Ilmu Amradh (Greek Pathology), understanding of the concept of health and disease.

## Bibliographic Information

*Al-Masa'il fi al-tibb lil-Mutallimin* was written by *Hunanyn ibn Ishaq* (809-873 AD). This book remains a syllabus text in *tibb*. It has been printed and published widely in Europe<sup>(2)</sup>. *Hunanyn* wrote *AlMasa'il* for his son, but it later became popular among medical students. *Al-Masa'il fi al-tibb* exists in Arabic, Syriac, and Latin versions. *Ibn Abi-Usaybi'a* (d. 1270) stated: '*AlMasa'il fi al-tibb* is a prerequisite to familiarity with the art of medicine, for *Hunanyn* has collected the essentials of medical education. This work was undertaken by *Hunanyn*,

but was completed after his death by his nephew, *Hubaysh ibn al-Hasan. Al-Masa' il fi al-tibb lilMutallimin* is written in a unique format of question and answer. <sup>(3)</sup>

### About The Author

In the early Golden Age of Islamic Medicine, *Abu Zayd Hunanyn ibn Ishaq al-'Ibadi* (809-873 AD), an exceptional scholar and translator, emerged. <sup>(1)</sup> *Hunanyn* was known as Johannitius in medieval Europe. He was the greatest translator of his time and masterfully translated Greek medical texts into Arabic. *Hunanyn* was the author of several works on medicine <sup>(4)</sup>. He was a well-known scholar who had a great impact on European medical knowledge. It could be said that he is known as an innovator because he introduced a new method of translation. This physician was born in 809 CE in the city of Hira in Iraq. *Hunanyn* received his medical training in *Jundishapur* under the master *Yuhanna Ibn Masawayh* (777–857 CE). He then traveled to strengthen his knowledge of Greek and Arabic and eventually became fluent in Syriac (his native language), Persian, Greek, and Arabic. The number of texts and translated works attributed to *Hunanyn* differs in different bibliographies. *Ibn Abi Usaibi'a* attributed 107 translated and authored treatises to *Hunanyn*. While *Ibn al-Nadim* in his book *al fihrist* mentioned 49 treatises in addition to translations of ancient books <sup>(5)</sup>.





## Contents of the Manuscript

*Al-Masa'il fi al-tibb* has theoretical ('ilm) and practical ('amal) sections. The book contains basic medical teachings on anatomy, physiology, pathology, etiology, and semiology of diseases and practical topics such as medication and manual procedures for the treatment of disease. *Hunanyyn* wrote the book in the format of questions and answers. The first group of queries begins with the fundamental issues of medicine. These questions and answers review elements and temperaments according to Greek medicine. The next 30 questions address anatomy and the physiology of the organs. These are followed by several queries about the pathology of disease from the perspective of Greek medicine. Next, the queries focus on the environment and the effects of factors such as the seasons, soil, and the atmosphere on human health. Issues related to bodily functions such as sleeping, waking and evacuation are raised, and then queries about malfunctions of body organs and those dedicated to symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment of disease. Subsequent queries elicit an understanding of various aspects of pharmacology. Topics such as venesection and the pulse are addressed. The final queries are regarding the difference between coma and sleep, vertigo, and epilepsy. Some questions and answers in *Al-Masa'il* are noteworthy and the design of the questions and answers reflect the author's accurateness. For example, *Hunanyyn* asks many questions about the method of medical education and clinical teachers tend to use it in medical education. In the chapter on fevers, at first, he asks about the types of fever. He then offers a three-part classification method. Then, according to the etiology, he defines subtypes. In subsequent queries, he considers whether or not fever is caused by infection. *Hunanyyn* asks: 'For what reasons is a fever caused by infection? How many causes are there for such types of fever and can you name them? Then, he describes differential diagnoses of fever in exact detail. *Al-Masa'il fi al-tibb* is one of the best examples of the question-and-answer genre in Islamic medical history, but it is not his only work in this genre. *Usaybi'a* ascribes the question and answer method to *Hunanyyn's* writing style and has listed his books and treatises in question and answer format. These include both translations and original works and include a variety of medical topics. One example of a translated work in this style is the Arabic translation of Galen's Commentary on Hippocratic Epidemics. Another popular book

written in this style is *Al-Masa'il fi-al'Ain* (Questions on the Eye) and is attributed to *Hunayn*. This book is an extract of the first six treatises of Ten Treatises on the Eye which includes 207 questions and answers on the anatomy, physiology, and pathology of the eye.<sup>(6),(7)</sup>

### Topics related to *Ilmul Amradh*

*Hunayn* discussed *ilmul amradh* with the classification of diseases, mentioning 3 types of diseases along with their examples, for instance after discussing *marz e sue mizaj yabis* the author raised a question "whats the example of *marz e yabis* along with *madda*(morbid matter)? and responded the answer is "*sartaan*"(cancer).After discussing a brief discussion on the classification of diseases author moves to defining health, disease, and the intermediate condition of health and disease, and their causes. On one point *Hunayn* questions "what are the types of *asbab e aamiya mushtaraka*( mutual common causes) of disease and health and then answered 'they are *sitta* (six) in number ie. *hawa e muheet,makool va masroob ,harkatva sukoon ,noum va yaqza and istefrag vo ehtebas*.There is a satisfactory description of *halat e salisa/halat e la sehat va la marz* it seems that *Hunayn* declines towards that *halat e salisa* is a type of disease condition only not a condition of health, while some physicians' opinion it's a type of health condition.He has discussed the diseases and their types in detail. He mentioned four types of compound organ diseases ie.*marz e khilqat, marz e miqdar, marz e adad and marz e vaza*. (structure, quantity, number, and position). He mentioned five subtypes of *marz e khilqat* /structural diseases *marz e shakl ,marz e tajaveef,marz e majari marz e khushoonat and marz e malamisa* (diseases of forms, cavities, canals, roughness of surface, and smoothness of surface). While *Ibn Sina* has included the diseases related to roughness and smoothness of the surface of the organs in one category under the *marz e sutooh* /diseases of surfaces.There is a detailed description of below mentioned headings. Causes of disease, health and intermediate condition of health and disease, Narrowness of openings, Wideness of openings, The causes of an excessive number of organs, The causes of a deficiency in the number of organs, The causes of hypertrophy of organs, The causes of hypotrophy of organs, Malposition of organs, The causes of an "interruption of integrity" Signs of organs with uniform components, Signs of compound organ diseases, Types of symptoms and Signs indicating diseased organs.<sup>7</sup>

### Commentaries and Abbreviations

*Al-Masa'il fi al-tibb* contains basic material about medicine. The number of commentaries written about this book and its use as a text for medical students bears witness to its fame and popularity. Although the exact purpose of the book cannot be stated, certainly, the question-answer format was rapidly approved for entrance exams to medical school<sup>(8)</sup>.*Abul qasim Abdur Rahman Ali Ibn Sadiq Annayshapuri* a famous physician of *nayshapur*, and one of the chief disciples of *Ibn Sina*, he called as a second Hippocrates, wrote a detailed commentary on *masail*. The text is introduced by the word *Alfass* and the commentary by *Attafsir*. It is arranged into 10 fasls. A good slightly worm-eaten manuscript of *ibn sadiq* is present in Raza library Rampur. *Abu sahl Said ibn Abdil Aziz Anili* wrote a concise commentary on *masail Hunayn*, which is arranged into 3 Fasl. *ibn al-Nafis*, a renowned Arab scholar, wrote a commentary on it. Some other renowned commentators are *Muhammad ibn Khalil al-Razi Abu Bakr al-Tabib Baghdadi, Abu Saeed Al-Yamami. Abu al-Faraj Abdullah Ibn Tayyib ,Ibn Abi Al-Sadiq Nishaburi Sa'id Baghdadi* known as *Ibn Talmud Al-Safadi, Shams-ud-Din Abu 'Abd al-Muhammad ibn Labudi , Najmuddin Ahmad bin Asad bin Manafakh Alwan Maari Ibn Alam .Some famous abbreviators are Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Yusuf Muqbali, Razi-ud-Din Abu al-Hajjaj Yusuf bin Haider , Saeed bin Abdul Aziz bin Abdul bin Muhammad Ibrahim bin Abd al-Mu'min ibn Tayfur Nili Nishaburi , Fakhruddin Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Muhammad , Najmuddin Yahya ibn Shams-ud-Din Muhammad ibn Labudi. Above mentioned authors summarized, interpreted, and commented on *Al-Masa'il*.<sup>7</sup>*

### Conclusion

Through proliferous works focusing on medical knowledge, the medieval physician *Hunayn ibn ishaq* played an important role in preserving, collecting, and explaining medical knowledge. He influenced both the western and Islamic medical fraternities.

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