

KNOW THYSELF, HEAL THYSELF

By: Nasira Bhikha - Vallee
Published: The Criterion
Mar/ Apr 2007



A Science of Medicine
The Art of Care

Hippocrates, the father of medicine said, It is more important to know what sort of person has a disease than to know what sort of disease a person has. Today though, illnesses are seen as separate from an individual and we tend to overlook their causes in our quest to find magic bullet cures. However, as the side-effects and abuse of modern drugs become more prevalent, there has been a re-awakening of holistic medicine worldwide.

Tibb, which was in fact conceptualized by Hippocrates and other great philosophers such as Galen and Ibn Sina, is the root from which modern medicine has evolved and is one of the oldest and most comprehensive systems of healing. The Tibb system of healing takes into account every aspect of a person and focuses on cures suited to each individual's unique needs. Whilst recognizing the benefits of modern medicine, Tibb works to identify the cause of an illness as opposed to only the symptoms.

The focus of Tibb is to empower individuals to take responsibility for their own health. Tibb's philosophy is that everybody has the right to be healthy. By being aware of our who we are, our lifestyle and eating habits, we can be responsible for our own health. In Tibb, true healing comes from within. Tibb is not merely a medical system - it is a way of life. Who we are is a concept known as Temperament in Tibb. Temperament relates to a person's individual make-up. Generally our particular characteristics of physical appearance, personality, as well as the mental, emotional and spiritual attributes - body, mind

What is Temperament?

Tibb philosophy is based on the theory that everything in the universe comprises of four elements symbolically represented by fire, air, water and earth. These elements have corresponding qualities of heat, moistness, coldness and dryness. Every entity in the universe, be it mineral, plant, animal or man, contains these elements and qualities in specific ratios. Depending on the ratios of these elements every object, compound or living entity has a state of equilibrium that reflects these qualities of heat, moistness, coldness and dryness. This equilibrium of qualities is called temperament.

Individual Temperament

The overall temperament of the human being is hot and moist, which stands to reason, when we know that the body has an ideal temperature of 37°C, and contains between 60-70% water.

However, slight variations exist within this hot and moist category, which explains why some of us feel colder or hotter than others. This leads to individual temperament which can be identified by observing the particular characteristics of physical appearance as well as the mental, emotional and spiritual attributes - body, mind and soul of a person. Believe it or not, the differences in skin and hair texture, body type, emotional reactions etc, offer important information about our personal temperaments. on oranges and kiwi fruit which are high in vitamin C.

What are the Four Temperaments

Though we are all unique, Tibb has identified four Temperaments in which all people can be identified.

They are:-

- Sanguinous
- Phlegmatic – also termed serous
- Melancholic – also termed atrabilious
- Bilious – also termed choleric

How to Identify your Temperament

Read through the following descriptions to decide which of the four Temperaments you are most likely to be.

Sanguinous temperament (Hot and Moist qualities)

- Physically- persons with this temperament are generally well built, more muscular tissue than fat, with a medium to large frame. Complexion-wise, they have a reddish/shiny tinge.
- Behaviour tendencies- include a good appetite, and enjoy cold drinks. They are moderately active physically. Weather-wise, they prefer cold and dry weather
- Personality traits- include a persuasive, sociable, and outgoing nature, and a talkative disposition.

Phlegmatic temperament (Cold and Moist qualities)

- Physically- persons with this temperament possess a medium to large frame, with more fat than muscle. The bones are well covered, and the veins barely visible. Complexion-wise, they are relatively pale.
- Behaviour tendencies- include preferences for hot foods and drink. Hot weather is preferred, as they are uncomfortable in winter. They are not particularly active physically, and tend to put on weight easily. They are inclined to succumb to phlegm-related disorders.
- Personality traits- include a calm, relaxed, accommodating nature, and make a good listener.

Melancholic temperament (Cold and Dry qualities)

- Physically- persons with this temperament are generally slender, with a bony frame (short or tall). Complexion-wise, they have a dry rough skin.
- Behaviour tendencies- include a preference for hot and moist foods and drink. They prefer warm weather, being uncomfortable in late autumn and winter. They tend to be over-active physically, and are usually light sleepers. Medically, they are prone to gas related colon problems.
- Personality traits- include a generally thoughtful, logical, and analytical disposition, and inclined to be perfectionist.

Bilious temperament (Hot and Dry qualities)

- Physically- persons with this temperament are generally medium or lean in build. Sharp eyes and prominent veins may be evident. Complexion-wise, they have a flushed aspect. They are generally quite active. Weather-wise, hot weather makes them uncomfortable.
- Behaviour tendencies- include a strong digestion, preferring cold and moist foods.
- Personality traits- include a resourceful, outspoken and dominant nature. They are inclined to be short-tempered.

How can knowledge of your Temperament improve your health?

Once you have identified your Temperament, you can take corrective measures to try to improve your health in times of illness or maintain your health when you are feeling well. The rule to remember is that too much of what you are will affect you negatively. For example, the qualities associated with the Sanguinous temperament are hot and moist, so everything with an excess of hot and moist qualities will affect you negatively. A Sanguinous person should therefore stay away from too much hot and moist foods, have lots of water in very hot weather etc.

Lifestyle and your Temperament.

We are all aware that lifestyle plays an important role in the state of our well being. Tibb has a checklist consisting of six factors to consider when examining the relationship between one's temperament and your environment. Making sure that each of the following factors are given appropriate attention will help you to monitor the quality of your life. The Six Factors are:

Environmental Air and Breathing, Sleep and Wakefulness, Food and Drink, Movement and Rest, Elimination, Emotions.

Each of these six factors affect our temperament and either raise or lower heat, moisture, dryness and coldness. For example, weather is either hot or cold or moist or dry. Similarly, sleep increases moisture in the body and exercise produces heat.

Once you are aware of your temperament, you can use the lifestyle factors to optimize your health. Over thousands of years, Tibb has associated qualities with everything in the universe from the air that we breathe to the seasons and even the food and drinks we consume. We can use this knowledge to gain optimum well-being suited to our specific needs.

For in-depth understanding of your temperament and the six lifestyle factors, Tibb offers comprehensive workshops to the consumer. Aptly entitled, "Know Thyself, Heal Thyself," these workshops will give you an understanding of the Tibb philosophy and how best to enhance your health and that of your family through self-empowerment and insight into your temperament. For bookings please call the Ibn Sina Institute of Tibb on the number listed below.

For further information on Tibb, the following books are available, "4 Temperaments, 6 Lifestyle Factors" and "Cooking for Your Body Type - Everyday Meals to suit your Temperament". These books are available from leading pharmacies, the Ibn Sina Institute of Tibb and selected health stores nationwide.

Call the Ibn Sina Institute of Tibb on 011 495 0300 or e-mail .