

# Wellbeing Natural Medicine

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***Abn Ali Al Hussein Ibn Abdallah Ibn Sina, or in Latin abbreviated to Avicenna. Arabian physician and philosopher, born at Kharmathen, in the province of Bukhara, 980; died at Hamadan, in Northern Persia, 1037.***

Ibn Sina lived during a period of great political instability, which profoundly influenced his life. The Samanid dynasty, the first Persian native dynasty to arise after the Muslim conquest, controlled Transoxania and Khorasan from about 900.

Bukhara their capital, together with another of their great cities, Samarqand, were the cultural centres of the empire. By the middle of the 10th century, however, the power of the Samanids began to weaken. By the time Ibn Sina was born, Nuh ibn Mansur, the Sultan in Bukhara, was struggling to retain control of his empire. Ibn Sina's father was the governor of a village in one of Nuh ibn Mansur's estates and was a respected and learned man, whose home was a meeting place for other men of learning in the area. Ibn Sina was therefore, as was the custom of the time educated by his father.

Ibn Sina was a very precocious youth; by the age of ten he had memorised the Qur'an and most of the Arabic poetry which he had read. When Ibn Sina reached the age of thirteen he began to study medicine and by the age of sixteen he commenced treating patients. Ibn Sina also studied logic and metaphysics, in which he received instruction from some of the best teachers of his day, but also continued to study a wide variety of subjects on his own.

Ibn Sina's skill in medicine proved to be of great value to him; his reputation caused the Samanid ruler Nuh ibn Mansur to seek him out to treat an illness that the court physicians had been unable to deal with. After Ibn Sina's treatment proved successful, he was, as a reward, allowed to use the Royal Library of the Samanids (books were very precious before the advent of printing, as they had to be hand copied). This was a unequalled opportunity for Ibn Sina and assisted him in the development of his great diversity of learning.

Unfortunately civil strife commenced in the empire and city after city of the Samanid empire fell. Bukhara was finally taken in 999, which effectively spelled the end of the reign of the Samanids. These events, and another traumatic event, the death of his father, changed Ibn Sina's life completely. Without either his father or a patron to support him, he began a life of wandering from town to town in Khorasan, acting as a physician and administrator by day and a teacher during each evening. He served as a jurist in Gurganj, was in Khwarazm, then was a teacher in Gurganj and next an administrator in Rayy. Despite these upheavals, this remarkable man continued to produce the highest standards of scholarship.

## (Avicenna) **IBN SINA**

After this period of wandering, Ibn Sina moved to Hamadan in west-central Iran, where he worked for a while as a court physician. He so impressed the ruling Buyid prince, Shams ad-Dawlah, that he appointed him twice as vizier. Although Ibn Sina commenced writing his major literary works in Hamadan, his life was far from easy. The difficult political scene of the time and rival jealousies forced Ibn Sina to go into hiding for a while and he also spent some time as a political prisoner from which he escaped to Isafan, with the aid of a Sufic Tariqa of which he was a murid.

After his flight to Isafan in 1022, Ibn Sina entered the court of the local prince Ala al-Dwla and spent the last years of his life in comparative peace. At Isfahan he completed the literary works that he had begun at Hamadan and also wrote many other works on philosophy, medicine and the Arabic language. It was customary for a court physician to accompany his patron on military campaigns and many of Ibn Sina's works were composed on these campaigns. It was on one such military campaign that he took ill and, despite his efforts to save himself, died of a mysterious illness, reportedly a colic. He may, however, have been poisoned by one of his servants.

The two most important works of Ibn Sina are The Book of Healing and The Canon of Medicine, both of which he commenced in Hamadan. The Book of Healing is a scientific encyclopaedia which covers logic, the natural sciences, psychology, geometry, astronomy, arithmetic and music. The Canon of Medicine is the most famous single book in the history of medicine, which remained the principal authority in medical schools in both Europe and Asia until the late 18th century.

In all, Ibn Sina wrote about 450 works, of which around 240 have survived. Of the surviving works, 150 are on philosophy while 40 are devoted to medicine, the two fields in which he contributed most. He also wrote on psychology, geology, mathematics, astronomy, and logic. His most important work as far as mathematics is concerned, however, is his immense encyclopaedic work, the Kitab al-Shifa' (The Book of Healing). One of the four parts of this work is devoted to mathematics and Ibn Sina includes astronomy and music as branches of mathematics within the encyclopaedia. Another of his works is "Al Nadja" (Deliverance) Ibn Sina also made a number of discoveries related to astronomy. For example, he deduced from his observation of Venus crossing the surface of the Sun that Venus must be closer to the Earth than the Sun. He also correctly postulated that light travels at a finite velocity.

Ibn Sina sought to integrate all aspects of science and religion in a grand unified philosophy. With this philosophy he attempted to reconcile the natural science of the day with religious law, the organisation of state and metaphysics and to answer the question of the ultimate destiny of man.