

History of Medicine-4

Roman Period

The Romans unlike Greeks had no significant contribution to medical science. The Romans used to hate the Greeks to such an extent that they thought that the Greeks were killing human beings by medicine. A Latin writer Cato the Censor (234-149 BC) wrote about the Greek physicians: "They have conspired among themselves to murder all barbarians with their medicine; a profession which they exercise for lucre, in order that they may win our confidence and dispatch us all the more easily. They are in the common habit too, of calling us barbarians and stigmatize us beyond all other nations, by giving us appellation of *opici*. I forbid you (his son) to have anything to do with physicians."

Cato used to treat his own family members. His medicines were wine and cabbage.

Though the Romans had little contribution in curative medicine, they contributed much in the preventive and social health service. They introduced stone made aqueducts for the water supply of the cities and built a large number of bathing places (Hamman-khana). The first aqueduct for water supply was built by Emperor Appius Claudius Caecus (312 BC). By 96 A.C. the total number of aqueduct became ten (10) which used to supply daily 250 million gallons of water. Even now 4 of these are repaired and used in Rome. These are evidences of such aqueducts in different big cities of Roman Empire even today.

Another field in which the Roman left permanent mark is the sewers and public urinals. In the destroyed cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum these are still found. This was a great step to keep the cities clean by proper disposal of human excreta. This is still not satisfactory in many developing countries.

The Roman emperors began to appoint medical officers for govt. servants and later established hospitals which were unknown in Greek period.

The medical science continued in the Roman period through Greek physicians. The first Greek physician who came to Rome was a **Archagathus** (219 B.C) but soon the Romans began to dislike him because of his surgical operations, which seemed to them as cruelty.

The next physicians of Roman period are :

Asclepiades (d. 124 B.C) who came to Rome in 92 B.C. He discarded the fluid theory of Hippocrates. He introduced the Hydro-therapy in high fevers.

(2) **Antonius Musa**- He was the personal physician of Caesar Augustus. He treated Rheumatism by cold bath.

(3) **Scribonius Largus** (47 A.C.)- He was the first to write a book on medical science containing 271 prescriptions. He prepared a medicine out of the livers of the dead Roman Gladiators.

(4) **Aurificius**- He was a disciple of Asclepiades. He used to emphasize on timely use of patients died instead of other medicines.

To be Continued