



Health and Hygiene in the light of *Qu'ran* and *Sunnah*

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Annotation:

“He who has health, has hope; and he who has hope, has everything”

After faith, health in (Islam) is considered as one of the greatest sanctifications given to humankind by Allah (S.W.T) there are number of reference in Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) regarding the significance and implication of this blessing. The Holy Quran expresses the most general instructions about nutrition and health of humankind, in chapter 80 verse 24 (Surah Abase, Ayat 24) Allah (S.W.T) states: “Of course man must be careful of food and nutrition”. And in chapter 2 verse 172 (Surah Baqarah, Ayat 172) “People of faith, if you are worshipper, eat from healthy food that we have given to you and give thanks to God, if you are worshiper.” The Prophet (S.A.W) said, ‘there are two blessings which many people do not appreciate: health and leisure’. He (S.A.W) also said, “No blessing other than faith is better than well-being.” It is religious obligation; therefore, to safeguard this blessing and not mishandle it through ill practice, for that there is being severe punishment, according to Allah’s immutable laws. The preservation of this blessing can only be achieved through different ways, means and mechanism, hygiene is one of them. This is the fact that there is positive co-relation between health and hygiene; rather we can say good health depends on good hygiene. Hygiene is one the measures to preserve and enhance good health. From Islamic perspective, good health is vital for properly performing the different Islamic duties including salah (offering five times daily’s prayer), taking Ramadan’s fasts and Hajj. The present study is an attempt to deliberate on the dependency of health on hygiene in light of basic sources of Islam (Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w)

Keywords: Islam, Quran, Sunnah, Health and Hygiene.

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Introduction

Before to start the discussion on the title, it is fairly imperative to have some definitional scenario of words like Health and Hygiene:

Health

The World Health Organization (WHO), in 1948 has given the definition proposed by Dr. Andrija Stampar,¹ defined health with a phrase that modern authorities still apply, “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or

¹ Prominent researcher from Croatia in the field of social medicine and public health and one of the founders of the WHO

infirmity”.² For first time, it was endorsed that, in addition to physical and mental health, social welfare is an integral component of the overall health, because health is closely linked to the social environment, living and working conditions. In the backdrop of this globally defined concept, many researchers and theorists subsequently advocated for adoption of working, practical, and operational definitions of health. In 1977, with the adoption of the WHO Global Strategy “Health for All by the Year 2000”, a pragmatic concept of health – the ability to conduct a socially and economically productive life – was accepted indirectly, which was an essential goal of this Strategy.³

Health is also defined as “The quality of life that enables the individual to live most and to serve best”. Thus health is defined as, “a state of complete well-being, physical, psychological, social and spiritual and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” it is here to mention that defining well-being as the absence of disease, which is like defining life as the absence of death. About the significance of health, our holy Prophet (S.A.W) is reported to have said, “No doubt, health and happiness are amongst the blessings of Almighty Allah”. This saying of the holy Prophet (S.A.W) signifies vitality of health in the life of mankind. To have wide-ranging definitional outlook of the health lets have the view of our classical polymaths of the Arab-Islamic civilization:

The Andalusian philosopher, physician Ibn Rushd (1126–1198 C.E) is one of the well-known physicians and Islamic scholar said “Health is a state in which an organ performs its normal function or undergoes its normal reaction”

Ibn al-Abbas⁴ said: “Health is a state of the body in which functions are run in the normal course. Health means that the body is in a state of equilibrium” for Ibn Sina the state of equilibrium which a human enjoys has a certain range with an upper and lower limit

In *Al-moojz fi-tibb*, Ibn Al-Nafis⁵ said, 700 years ago said “A state of the body in which functions are run in the normal *per se*, while disease is the offosite state”⁶

The word health refers to a state of complete emotional and physical well-being.⁷

The Oxford student’s dictionary of English defines Health as the state of being well and free from illness.

In ancient Greece the backbone of the perception of health was balance between a person and the environment, the unification of soul and body, and the natural origin of disease. Similar concepts existed in ancient Indian and Chinese medicine.⁸ In the 5th century BC, Pindar defined health as

² World Health Organization. About World Health Organization. Constitution. Available at: <http://www.who.int/governance/eb/constitution/en/>. Accessed: September 09, 2022.

³ World Health Organization. World Health Report Executive Summary - achieving health for all. Available at: http://www.who.int/whr/1998/media_centre/executive_summary6/en/.

⁴ Abd Allāh ibn al-‘Abbās, also called Ibn Abbās, byname Al-ḥibṛ (“the Doctor”), or Al-baḥr (“the Sea”), (born c. 619—died 687/688, at-Ṭā’if, Arabia), a Companion of the prophet Muḥammad, one of the greatest scholars of early Islām, and the first exegete of the Qur’ān.

⁵ Ibn Al-Nafis was an Arab polymath whose areas of work included medicine, surgery, physiology, anatomy, biology, Islamic studies, jurisprudence, and philosophy. He is known for being the first to describe the pulmonary circulation of the blood. Ibn Al-Nafis, a 13th century Arab physician, described the pulmonary circulation more than 300 years before William Harvey.

⁶ Soubani AO, Khan FA. The discovery of the pulmonary circulation revisited. www.kfshrc.edu.sa/annals/152/mh9422ar.html

⁷ <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/150999>

⁸ Donev D. Human health – definition, concept and content. How the disease occurs and the natural course of disease. Modern concept and definition of healthcare [In Macedonian]. In: Nikodijevic B, editor. Contemporary diagnostics and therapy in medicine. Skopje: Faculty of Medicine; 2000. p. 5-19

“harmonious functioning of the organs”, emphasizing the physical dimension of health, the physical body and the overall functionality, accompanied by the feeling of comfort and absence of pain. Even today, his definition bears importance as a prerequisite for the overall health and wellness. Plato (429-347 BC) in his “Dialogues” pointed out that a perfect human society could be achieved by harmonizing the interests of the individual and the community, and that the ideal of ancient Greek philosophy “a healthy mind in a healthy body” could be achieved if people established internal harmony and harmony with the physical and the social environment. According to Aristotle’s teaching, man is a social being by his very nature; he tends to live in communities with the duty to respect the moral standards and ethical rules. Aristotle emphasized the necessity for regulating the relations in the society to achieve harmonious functioning and preservation of health of its members. Democritus connected health with behavior, wondering why people prayed to God for health, which was essentially under their own control. Hippocrates explained health in connection with the environmental factors and lifestyle. Hippocrates was the creator of the concept of “positive health”, which depended on the primary human constitution (we consider it today as genetics), diet, and exercise. He thought that proper diet and exercise were essential for health, and that seasons’ changes had a profound effect on the mind and body, resulting in different types of predominant diseases during the winter (respiratory tract diseases) and summer (digestive tract diseases)⁹

To define health in operational and working terms was vital for creating policies and programs for maintaining and improving health, and it considerably managed to exceed the widely rooted notion that health simply means the absence of disease. The Ottawa Charter from the 1st International Conference on Health Promotion, held in Ottawa, Canada, in 1986, says that health is created in the context of everyday life and environment, where people live, love, work, and play. Thus, active and interactive understanding of health was introduced.¹⁰ In simple terms, health refers to a person's physical, emotional and psychological well-being.

The modern concepts of health recognize health as more than the absence of disease, implying a maximum capacity of the individual for self-realization and self-fulfillment. The holistic concept of health is contained in the expression of wholeness. Health is a relative state in which one is able to function well physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually to express the full range of one’s unique potentialities within the environment in which one lives.¹¹

Hygiene

Hygiene refers to good practices that prevent disease and lead to good health, especially cleanliness, proper disposal of wastewater and drinking water supply. It refers to all the activities that are done to improve and preserve, maintain good health.

According to the Collins Dictionary, “Hygiene is the practice of keeping yourself and your surroundings clean, especially in order to prevent illness or the spread of diseases.”¹²

Hygiene is the science of health, and the practice of cleanliness that promotes good health and well-being.¹³

⁹ <http://theheathytoast.blogspot.com/2018/09/test-post-1.html>

¹⁰ Pavleković G, Donev D, Zaletel Kragelj L. Concept and principles in health promotion. In: Donev D, Pavleković G, Zaletel Kragelj L, editors. Health promotion and disease prevention. Stability Pact Forum for Public Health Cooperation in SEE. Luge: Hans Jacobs Publishing Co; 2007. p. 3-14.

¹¹ <http://theheathytoast.blogspot.com/2018/09/test-post-1.html>

¹² <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/hygiene>

¹³ <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms/def/hygiene>

According to the Oxford Learners Dictionary hygiene the practice of keeping you and your living and working areas clean in order to prevent illness and disease.¹⁴

Discussion and Summery

Islam-the religion of nature (*Din-i-fitrah*), exclusively guides humanity in all aspects of beliefs and worship, society and affairs and morals and manners in all-inclusively, with its pure teachings. The Quran though is not a book of medicine or of health sciences, but in it there are moderate instructions, guidelines and frameworks in the matter of health and hygiene , by following one can not only lead a healthy life, but can also be protected from many deadly diseases.. Allah (S.A.T). Said in Al-Quran: “And We have sent down to you the Great Book which is a clear explanation of everything.”¹⁵ *Al-‘Afiyah* in Islamic terminology is a term whose meaning connotes good health, state of well-being, safety and protection from afflictions¹⁶

According to Islamic teachings, one should avoid harmful health issues, including eating too much or sleeping too much, or eating too little or sleeping too little, or being too idle, suffering from grief and mental anxiety, or being too busy in any action. Doing things that do not involve movement of the body, which causes obesity, waking up at night, sleeping during the day, all these matters are harmful to health and cause death. Sleep when you sleep, eat when you eat, work when you work, light exercise, walking, avoiding waking up at night, getting sunshine, all these are actually permissible issues from the *Shariah* point of view. A physically able believer is better than a weak believer.”

Islam emphasizes hygiene and preventive medical measures more than cure. All the teachings of Islam begin with purity and the first step and the first principle of hygiene is also purity. There is a decree of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about purity: “Cleanliness is an essential part of faith”¹⁷

Islam endeavors for having good health by following hygienic environment, avoidance of unhealthy practices and taking a balanced diet. Highlighting the significance of character, behavior and deed, Almighty Allah says in the holy Quran

Health nutrition must have a concoction of the different types of food which Allah has graciously provided for His creations, so that it satisfies all the body needs in terms of proteins, fat, carbohydrate, salts and vitamins. Most of these are mentioned in the Quran “He created cattle which give you warmth, benefits and food to eat”.¹⁸ It is He who subdued that sea, from which you eat fresh fish.¹⁹ Referring to vegetarian food, Allah says: It is He who sends down water from the sky... with which He brings up corn, olives, dates and grapes and other fruit.²⁰ Milk and honey are also mentioned: In cattle too you have a worthy lesson. We give you to drink of that which is in their bellies, between the chyle and the blood: pure milk, a pleasant beverage for those who drink it.²¹ From within their (i.e. the bees) bellies comes forth a fluid of many hues, that provides with a cure (of illnesses)²² eat of the these fruits when they ripen²³ and from it (the earth) we produced grains for their sustenance²⁴

¹⁴ <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/hygiene>

¹⁵ Al-Quran: 16:89

¹⁶ Kekere-Ekun, Ridwan (2005/1426H), Solace for the Afflicted. Lagos: Deen Communications.

¹⁷ *Sahih al-Muslim* 1:118

¹⁸ Al-Quran, 16:5

¹⁹ Al-Quran, 16:14

²⁰ Al-Quran, 16:11

²¹ Al-Quran, 16:66

²² Al-Quran, 16:141

Allah (s.w.t) states: People of faith, eat from clean and Halal nutriment that we have given to you. And: God made Haram the carrion, blood, pork meat and all animals slaughtered without mentioning the name of God. The consumption of pork meat, alcoholic beverages and carrion are the examples of forbidden consumption in the Quran.²⁵

Islamic teachings focus on cleanness. The Prophet of Islam (S.A.W) “used to wash his hands before eating. We are also recommended to clip our nails, for the Prophet said, five practices are part of natural cleanness: circumcision, shaving the public hair, picking out armpit hair, cutting the nails and trimming the mustache”

The Prophet (S.A.W.) warned: “Be careful of the three cursed things, urinating, defecating, (and fluctuating), and spitting (with phlegm) in any sources (rivers, seas, oceans, wells etc) and in the middle of the road (where people walk) and from under the shade”.²⁶

Imam Nawawi said: “It is not allowed to defecate or urinate or throw dirt in the places where people benefit from”. Public pathways and shaded areas are two areas where people would be offended from excrement and filth because they use them so often. The same curse would apply to those who leave filth behind for the next person. The curse, in this context, has two meanings: people are cursed by the one who has to deal with the dirt they left behind and they are cursed by Allah for their careless and disgusting habits. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) forbade anyone to urinate into stagnant water,²⁷ and because this makes the water impure and harms those who use it.

Islam prefers wholemeal food; an example is the Prophet’s preference for wholemeal bread, as reported by Ibn Majah, which mentions that *Umm Ayman* once refined some flour to bake bread for the Prophet. He (S.A.W.) asked her what she was doing and she replied: “This is a type of food which we used to make back home and I thought of baking it for you” He (S.A.W.) said: “Put it (the bran) back in then make the dough.”

An important means of health protection and promotion is to give to each part of our bodies its due. The Prophet (S.A.W.) said “Your eyes have a claim against you”. One must not overburden oneself: “Bear only what you can cope with “This should be accompanied by increasing physical fitness through exercise and sports. The Prophet (S.A.W.) said: “A physically able believer is better than a weak believer. He also said: “Your body has a (human)”right of you, and “Be keen to do what is of benefit to you”

Eat and drink and be not prodigal.”²⁸ This is a directive to people to take food and drink sufficient for the body’s needs but not to take more, for that would not be conducive to good health. The messenger of Allah (S.A.T.) has said: “The strong believer is better and more loved by Allah than the weaker one” narrated by Muslim and Ahmad.

“The most beloved by Allah of things He is asked to grant is (Al-aafiyah) good health (Tirmidi)

Allah Almighty loves His creations so much that He even deals with what we eat and what we put on our bodies. Our muscles, bones, lungs, liver, brain, and secretions are made from the raw materials we eat. If we supply the plant with unnecessary raw materials, the plant will not produce strong bones, a strong muscle, good pumps (heart) and clean pipes (vessels). “O you mankind: Eat

²³ Al-Quran, 6:141

²⁴ Al-Quran, 36:33

²⁵ Al-Quran, 2:172 - 173

²⁶ Abu Dawood

²⁷ Sahi Muslim, 423

²⁸ Al-Quran, 7:31

of what is lawful and good on earth.²⁹ "Eat of the things which god has provided for you lawful and good, but fear God in whom you believe". Forbidden to us are dead meat, blood and flesh of swine³⁰ and intoxicants.³¹

With reference to food, Allah says in the holy Quran, "Eat of the good things which we have provided for you." As directed by the Creator, use of the wholesome and pure food is considered to be worthwhile with reference to maintaining health and prolonging life. In the same context the holy Quran further says, "Eat of what is lawful and wholesome on the earth." Islam has clearly marked the lawful and unlawful things for the followers and has declared the things "Halal" (legal from the religion perspective) and "Haram" (illegal from the religion perspective) for the Muslims.

Health and healthy habits are indispensable to each other. Health does not come as a matter of chance; it does require abidance to following good manners and healthy habits. In this regard, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) is reported to have said that, "I have been sent for the teachings and completion of manners". The holy Prophet (PBUH) is also reported to have said, "Fear of God and good manners lead the Muslims to the heaven". Sayyiduna Zayd ibn Arqam (RA) narrates that the holy Prophet (PBUH) used to say (in prayer): "I seek your protection from powerlessness (*ajz*), laziness (*kasl*), cowardice (*jubn*), miserliness (*bukhl*), and weakness (harem)." In the same context with reference to the protection and promotion of health the Prophet (PBUH) has further said: "Our bodies have rights upon us, our eyes have rights upon us, so give everyone his due right". At another occasion He (PBUH) has stated that, "Taking proper care of one's health is the right of the body." About the health and fitness of the holy Prophet (PBUH) Tabrani and Tirmidhi report "His (PBUH) stomach and chest were in line." It reflects fit health and ideal posture of Him (PBUH).

Health is the product of healthy habits particularly with reference to pure and healthy diet, its amount of intake, cleanliness, proper routine of rest, sleep and exercise. In this regard Islamic stance about some of the health friendly elements related to everyday life.

Freshness and intake of the proper food is the initial requirement of healthy life. Food should be fresh and tasty to satisfy the taste and nutritional requirements of the person who eats it. In this regard we see that Allah the Almighty hosted Maryam (the mother of the Prophet Isa) with fresh dates." The amount of food we take is the next element with reference to its utility in the promotion of health. About the amount of food the holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have said: "Only a few morsels of food is sufficient that may keep the backbone of a person straight or in other words, one third of the stomach is for solid foods, one third is for the liquids and one third is for air." In light of the Islamic way of healthful living, minimum amount of the food should be taken avoiding overstuffing the stomach. Muslims of the post-Hijrat period practically manifested this Islamic approach by showing their good health standard. During those days, a health practitioner came to Madina for practice. After more than half a year of his stay in Madina he did not see any patient. Resultantly he came to the holy Prophet (PBUH) and explained his story. The holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said to him, "We are the people who do not eat until we get proper appetite and when we eat we avoid overeating." This was His reply to the complainant which reflects golden Islamic approach towards the relationship between the dietary habits and maintenance of good health.

Cleanliness of the body, clothes and environment is another significant factor that plays vital role in the maintenance and upkeep of the normal health. With respect to importance of cleanliness Islam has very clear directions for the Muslims. The holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) once said, "Allah

²⁹ Quran 2: 168

³⁰ Al-Quran, 5:4

³¹ Al-Quran, 5:93 and 2:219

is beautiful and He loves beauty.” At another occasion the holy Prophet (S.A.W) has stated that, “Cleanliness is part of the Muslim’s faith.” These sayings reflect the value and worth of cleanliness and piousness in the everyday life of the Muslims. Personal Hygiene encompasses overall cleanliness of the body. In personal hygiene, emphasis is placed upon care of hands, mouth, teeth, eyes, nose, scalp, feet, and proper clothing, regular bathing, balanced way of eating, exercise and sleep. In the same context, the Islamic practice of five time daily ablution is the best example of rendering the aforementioned organs of the body tidy, clean & healthy. About the importance of cleanliness the holy Prophet (S.A.W) is reported to have said, “Islam is clean, so you all be clean because no one will enter the heaven except the one who possesses clean mind and clean body”

Allah’s Messenger (S.A.W.) once said, “O Abbas, ask Allah for health in this world and in the next.” (Tirmidhi)

Allah’s Messenger (S.A.W.) has said, “No supplication is more pleasing to Allah than a request for good health.”³² There is another saying in reported in Nasai of Allah’s Messenger (S.A.W.) has said, “Ask for forgiveness and health. After certainty of faith, nothing better is given to a man than good health.”

Conclusion

From Islamic perspective Health is both a trust and a blessing from Allah. It is the duty of every man to safeguard and preserve his health properly by following many measures.

Allah loves his creations so much that he is concerned even with what we eat and put in our body. Our muscles, bones, lungs, liver, brain and secretions are made from the raw product we feed it. If we provide the factory with junk raw products, the factory will not produce tough bones, strong muscles, good pump (heart) and clean pipes (vessels). Allah’s Messenger (S.A.W) said, whoever awakes in the morning with a healthy body and a self that is sound, and whose provision is assured, he is like the one who possesses the whole world.

If a person wants to keep himself healthy and energetic, then he has to adopt the methods mentioned by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): waking up early in the morning, brushing his teeth, eating when he feels hungry, stopping eating before he is full (i.e. eating when he is hungry), Eating simple food, walking, resting after lunch, walking after dinner, washing hands before eating, drinking water in three breaths, sitting down Drinking, eating and eating by laying the table, cleaning the plate etc. well, licking the fingers of the hands after eating, avoiding intoxicating and harmful things, etc. There are numerous rules for staying healthy, but today modern science has proved that the principles and methods of staying healthy which the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has told are the guiding light for the person who comes to the Day of Judgment. In addition to Islamic procedures, medical as well as scientific principles with reference to the maintenance and promotion of health and participation in different activities and good hygiene have also been taken into consideration. Thus as the saying goes, ‘Health is wealth’, it is our duty to maintain good health so as to realize the potential of our life in order to live joyously and successfully. “He who has health, has hope; and he who has hope, has everything” (Arabian Proverb)

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