

## **Causality of Health and Cleanliness: A Qur'anic View**

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### **Abstract`**

The word of God is always associated with the work of God. Human being as a masterpiece of God's imagination is highly valued. The creator of mankind ensures physical, mental and spiritual health before assigning the role of vicegerent to human being. In this way the role of man is highlighted through focusing on promoting physical health which is naturally dependent on cleanliness. The work is based on Quranic framework for human health. Social implications of cleanliness are as promising as cleanliness for worship. The work is concluded through Quranic injunction that purity leads us to avoid diseases both from body and soul.

Health is a common theme in most cultures. The most common percept of health is the "absence of disease." During past few decades, there has been a reawakening that health is a fundamental human right and a worldwide social goal; that it is essential to the satisfaction of basic human needs and to an improved quality of life; and that is to be attained by all people.

The widely accepted definition of health is that given by the WHO (1948): "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity". (1)

Health is multidimensional. The WHO definition envisages three specific dimensions-the physical, the mental and the social.

Many more dimensions may be cited, viz spiritual, emotional, vocational and political.

Proponents of holistic health believe that the time has come to give serious consideration to the spiritual dimension and to the role it plays in health and disease.

Spiritual health in this context refers to that part of the individual which reaches out and strives for a Meta physical purpose of life. It includes integrity, principles and ethics, the purpose in life, commitment to some higher being and belief in concepts that are not subject to "state of the art. A Muslim's quest for good health is in conformity with his salvation in the life

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hereafter, as much as for the enjoyment of life in this world. Qur'an is explicit in this matter and states:

“O you who believe! Fear Allah, and let every soul look to what it sends forward for the morrow. And fear Allah; Allah is Aware of what you do. And be not as those who forgot Allah, so He caused them to forget their own souls. These! They are the transgressors” 59 Surah: Al-Hashar, Ayah, 18-19. (2) We should not forget our responsibilities towards our own bodies which have been given to us as a trust. We will be questioned if we do not keep the trust. We must know about health, health care and diseases.

Qur'an is primarily a Programme that concerns man's road to spiritual, mental and physical wellbeing...Qur'an also directs man's attention to the science of creation and urges him to explore and discover that which was made subservient to him...

The holy Qur'an says “Do you not see that Allah has made subservient to you everything in the heavens and the earth and has made his bounty flow to you in exceeding measure: seen and unseen (31, Al-Luqman, Ayah, 20) (3) The Holy Qur'an lays down basic observances for the preservation of individual and social health through teaching cleanliness, exercise and nutrition. The health of the body is one of the favors Allah bestows upon human being, and He asks them to look after it. Allah says: “Eat and drink and be not prodigal”, (Al-Ayraf, Ayah: 31). (4)

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 (p.b.u.h) has said: “The strong believer is better and more loved by Allah than the weaker one” (narrated by Bukhari) (5) “The most beloved by Allah of things He is asked to grant is (Al-aafiyah) good health . (Tirmidi) (6) Disease is just opposite to health-i.e, any deviation from normal functioning or state of complete physical or mental well being. The term Disease literally means” without ease” (uneasiness)-dis-ease, the opposite of ease-when something is wrong with bodily function. Many verses of the Qur'an and prophetic traditions contain spiritual and material methods for treating many psychological and physical diseases. Allah stated in Qur'an “And we reveal of the Qur'an that which is healing and a mercy for believers”. (Al-Isra, Surra; 17-Ayah; 82) (7) The prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be on him said:” what ever a disease that may be, Allah has created a medication for it, regardless of the fact that some may come to know what this medication is and other may not”. The prophet permitted Muslims to use all kinds of medicines except that which contains unlawful elements. In addition to hygienic problems, Islamic methods in the field of nutrition, housing, public nutrition, public health

and personal hygiene is stressed. The science of health, which embraces all factors which contributes healthful living, is called Hygiene, has got two main aspects, Personal hygiene Environmental Hygiene. According to the experts of the present time the aim of personal hygiene is to promote standards of personal cleanliness within the setting of the conditions where people live. Personal hygiene includes bathing, clothing, washing hands and toilet, care of feet, nails and teeth, spitting, coughing, sneezing, personal appearance and inculcation of clean habits in the young, Training in personal hygiene should begin at a very early age and must be carried through school age., (Preventive and social medicine: K.Park Page587-588,) (8) These are the teachings of the modern time but let us examine in Islamic point of view about hygiene. Cleanliness is part of Iman (faith) as stated in Bukhari, and Allah is pure and He loves purity (Muslim). These are two hadith of the prophet to show the importance of cleanliness to a Muslim. The noble soul can reside only in a clean body. Only by maintaining the outer cleanliness, one can obtain inner purity. It is this inner purity of Heart which Allah looks for and which is the seat of His remembrance. Hence, it is imperative for a man to keep clean within and without. The Qur'an and Ahadith amply guide us. The prophet (pbuh) said, "Neither the prayer are accepted without purification, nor charity accepted out of the ill-gotten (wealth)".

Coming to different aspects of personal hygiene, we will examine them with an Islamic perspective.

Washing hands: Islam obligated ablution before offering prayer more than 1400 years ago which shows humanity how to be protected from infectious diseases by a thorough washing of the exposed body part five times a day. Islam is the only religion that requires its believers to follow certain hygienic procedures that safeguard the human from infectious diseases. The holy Qur'an attaches great importance to personal and environmental cleanliness: "Oh you who believe! When you prepare for prayers, wash your face; wash your hands and arms unto elbow. Rub your heads with water and wash your feet to the ankles...". (Surra;Al-Maida. Ayah 5: 6) (9) This is the ablution we are supposed to perform at least five times a day. Obviously, if the hands would be cleaned so many times a day; there would be very little chance of germs to remain on or being transferred by human hands.

Performing ablution has many steps and one of them is washing hands. Having the intention to purify oneself for the sake of Allah and in accordance with Sunnah starts this religious formality. Washing mouth: After washing the hands a Muslim is supposed to wash his mouth 3 times by gargling. Mouth is an ideal location for microorganisms and it is the main entry point for infections as it is through mouth that microorganisms reach the stomach and respiratory tract.

Three different types of microorganisms cause throat infections, viral, bacterial and fungal. To protect the throat against infections, the mouth should be washed with gargling motions so that water reaches the throat. This is the area where most of the dust particles accumulate. By washing five times a day, all the dust and harmful organisms can be eliminated, thereby protecting the individual against infection. In addition, brushing of teeth before prayer is Sunnah. Prophet said “your mouth is the pathways of the Qur'an, so make them fragrant” (Bukhari) (10).

He also said, “Had it not been difficult for my followers, I would have ordered them to use tooth stick before every prayer”. This emphasizes the importance placed on oral cleanliness. (Bukhari) (11).  
Washing the face: The next stage is to wash the face from forehead to the chin, including the cleaning and massaging of eyes. Washing the face increases the circulation, cleans the eyes and all dust particles deposited on the face. Likewise, sweat on the face is also removed. If face is not washed frequently it may harm the skin by providing opportunity for bacteria to grow and to cause skin infection.

Frequently washing the face, as in ablution, eliminates the chances for wrinkling of the skin and keeps the skin smooth, even at old age.  
Washing arms: Washing both arms up to the elbows is the next stage which ensures sweat and sebaceous gland secretion with dust particles near the hair follicles is removed to prevent any possible infection. Massaging the head: The next stage is wiping the head, back of neck, grooves of pinna (auricle) of the ear and its back. The grooves and hairs are ideal site for the setting of dust particles. Cleaning the neck helps in preventing itching due to dust and remove secretion which can possibly cause skin allergy. Washing feet: Washing the feet up to the ankles is the last stage in performing ablution including webs between the toes since these are the areas where sweating and fatty secretions are predominant, which cause offensive odor. Fungus infection may develop athlete's foot, a skin disease.

Taking Bath: Bathing is not just a routine but it has a real sense of cleanliness of the body. There are clear-cut guidelines for bathing. According to the practice of the prophet (pbuh) the correct manner of performing bath (Ghusl) is:

- Wash both hands three times.
- Wash the private areas.
- Make a complete ablution.

- Rub water through one's hair three times, letting the water reach down the roots of the hair.
- Pour water over the entire body, beginning with the right side, then to left, washing the armpits, inside the ears, inside the nasal cavity, inside the toes and whatever part of the body can be easily rubbed. A woman takes bath just as a man does, except that if she has plaited hair she does not have to undo it, provided the water can reach the roots of her hair. The habit of bathing differs from place to place, depending on the climatic conditions from once a day to once a week. However while in a state of ritual impurity (Janabat) following sexual intercourse, bath (ghusl) becomes an absolute necessity in Islam. It is also necessary following menstruation and postnatal period (Haid and Nifas).

Cleanliness is so much important in Islam that in the very second revelation of Qur'an, Sura Al-Mudathir, the Holy prophet (pbuh) was emphatically asked to maintain cleanliness. (12) (Surra; Al-Mudassir, Ayah;4-5) Muslims are properly guided in the use of toilet as well. It is imperative to use water to cleanse oneself after answering the nature's call, not using toilet paper alone. Hazrat Ayesha said, "The right hand used by Allah's messenger (pbuh) for his ablution and for taking food and his left hand was used in the toilet". Alhadith;, It must be understood that Islam considers unclean even a drop of urine falling on the garment. It also must be noted that the ano-genital infection rate is very high among people who use tissue paper for cleaning instead of water. Clipping of finger and toenails is one of the sacred Sunnah of the noble prophet. The dirt that accumulates under the nail tips has to be removed as it is unhealthy, unhygienic and may become a source of infection. Periodic clipping helps in keeping the fingers and toes neat and tidy, as much as it prevents infection. The prophet used to clip his nails on Thursday or Friday. In man's clothing and adornment Islam takes into serious consideration the principle of decency, modesty, chastity, cleanliness and manliness. Anything in clothing or adornment incompatible with the attainment, maintenance and development of these equalities is forbidden by Islam.

The clothing material and the dressing manners which may stimulate arrogance or false pride and vanity are strictly prohibited. So are the adornments which may weaken the morality of man or undermine his manliness. Man should remain adhered to his manly nature, which God has chosen for him, and keep away from all the things that are likely to weaken or endanger his character. This is the reason why Islam warns man not to use certain clothing materials, e.g.; pure silk and gold for the purpose of adornment.

While Islam allow woman to use the things which are forbidden for man and which are suitable for the feminine nature alone, it does not let woman go loose or wander unrestricted. It allows her the things which suit her nature and, at the same time, cautions her against anything that might abuse or upset that nature. Islam is very sensitive to the manners of clothing. In fact, the Qur'an calls back things the beautiful gifts of God and reproaches those who look upon them as forbidden.(13) (Al-Ahraaf,7,Ayah,; 32) Raising children, according to the Qur'an and Sunnah, a great responsibility; it requires hard work, care and commitment. Parents are always concerned about preserving their children's Islamic identity .When a child reaches seven years of age, parents should show him how to perform wudu (ablution) and teach him how to pray. Parents should explain to their children that before prayer they must perform wudu; that one's body and clothing as well as the place of prayer must be free of all impurities and that one must wear proper clothing, covering his/her 'awrah (private areas). Thus Islam advocates teaching cleanliness at a very early age.

Man, who claims to have reached the zenith of civilization, has done immense harm to his environment to the extent that the world is frightened of the catastrophe that is about to fall, as a result of pollution all around. Man, the vicegerent of Allah on earth, has been entrusted with the responsibilities of protecting all other creatures. But, he, in a moment of wanton forgetfulness, in order to amass wealth, is doing incalculable harm to his environment. The agonizing cry of the environmentalists is loud and clear all over the world. But before we think of the environmental protection, we should pause for a moment to think of our own cleanliness and environment, which is the first step in our effort to protect the environment, at large.

Islam determines every aspect of the life of a Muslim. For the believer, Islam gives the criteria for judging all dimensions of his behavior and conduct, it determines his relationship with other individuals, with society as a whole, with the physical world, and it also determines his relationship to his own self. We are quite aware of the fact that in speaking and coughing, droplets of mucous and saliva is expelled from the mouth and carried for some distance away from the source of origin. Such droplets have been found to carry bacteria with them. Persons with pathogenic bacteria in there or pharyngeal cavities may become dangerous to their surroundings. When the fluids of the mouth are densely populated with bacteria, a coughing spell "yes even a few sharp words" would suffice to so contaminate the atmosphere of a medium sized room that other persons would have a good chance to become infected. The handkerchief should be held in front of the mouth when coughing, and this should be generally encouraged for use by the well as much as the sick. Qur'an is not a textbook of medicine but in it, there are guidelines in it which, if

abided correctly will give the healing that it is sent for: “O mankind, There has come unto you a direction from your Lord and healing for the diseases in your hearts, and for those who believes a Guidance and Mercy” (14) (10 Surah;Younas Ayah;:57)

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