

Significance of Personal Hygiene from Islamic Perspective

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Abstract: Good physical and emotional health helps our bodies and minds function properly without pain, anxiety, depression or discomfort. Improper hygiene can cause diseases, which can negatively impact our physical & mental well-being. Poor hygiene causes us to smell bad (due to bacteria), develop infections, and contract diseases such as flu, common cold, *Escherichia coli*, *Salmonella sp.*, and skin diseases such as ring worm, and scabies. Other problems such as tooth decay, lice in the hair, and foot infections are also caused due to poor hygiene. Not only this but some prescription like circumcision helps to keep human beings way from many cancerous diseases. The choice of foods which may keep us away from many diseases blood free flesh much fatty foods etc. need to be adopted to save one's life from dangerous diseases. Scientists are astonished to discover that the Qur'anic revelation more than 1400 years ago on certain themes are turning out to be scientifically established truths. The degree of concordance between Qur'anic revelation and corresponding scientific discoveries is increasing progressively with rising sophistication in scientific techniques. Islam encourages scientific methodology and way of progress. In Quran the word *al-mushahida* (observation or Investigation) encourages scientific temperament and logical explanations (*al-Tafsir al Muntaqi*) of the observed phenomenon. Islam holds the cause of personal hygiene and emphasized much upon its maintenance. The paper tries to highlight some Islamic teachings and practices about importance of personal hygiene and their relevance in contemporary period.

Keywords: Hygiene, *al-Mushahida*, personal hygiene, fasting, obesity, circumcision, penile cancer, AIDS, ablution,

Quran is basically more than Magna-Carta for the humanity at all times to come. It contains information almost every aspect of life. There are scientific queries and issue of great significance. So no one can challenge the text of the Quran if read on dispassionate argument for scientific endure. If all the human beings attempt to describe the greatness of glorious Quran for all their lives they would still be unable to do so. The Quran is the Logos secret of divine art. Before pondering over the Qur'anic concept of personal hygiene and its significance, let us highlight the significance of the Holy Quran by touching one verse of this divine revelation, "Say if the ocean were ink (wherewith to write out) the words of my Allah, sooner would the ocean be exhausted then would be words of my Allah, if we added another ocean like it, for its aid" (Kaihf-109). The Quran is not books of medicine or of health science but it provides information or guides us regarding health and diseases. Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) has been sent as an example to mankind so his traditions in matters of health and personal hygiene are also a great gizmo for his followers and others and guides them on every aspect of their life.

Personal hygiene is a cosmic subject with broader objectives. However hygiene is the study of health and involves practices that promote mental, emotional and physical health as well as the social well-being of the individuals. Rules of personal hygiene such as hand washing, bathing, the avoidance of uncooked foods, cleaning the teeth, trimming of nails etc. are all related to the maintenance of personal and public health. A good number of the verses of Holy Quran and traditions of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) provide best guideline for human beings in order to enjoy the highest standard of personal hygiene than other people of the world. In Islam clean lines and purification are not only usual requirements for the performance of worship or when embracing Islam, but are part of Muslims very faith. The Allah says in Holy Quran as, "Truly Allah loves those who turn into Him in repentance and loves those who purify themselves by taking a bath and cleaning and washing thoroughly their private parts, bodies for their payers etc". (Al-Baqarah 222). The messenger of Allah Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said, "Cleanliness is half of faith. (Sahih Muslim Vol. 2, No.0432)". Some of the traditions guide us to maintain personal hygiene.

Circumcision: It is Sunnah in Islam. Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) commanded Muslims to perform circumcision of their children at very early age. According to Medical sciences circumcised people have less chances of cancerous diseases like,

- a) **Penile Cancer:**-It is a rare disease effecting about one to one lakh males in India. Circumcision if correctly performed provides almost total immunity against this disease.

- b) **Balanoposthitis**:-It is the inflammation of the glans penis and the preputial sac. Its best treatment is circumcision and safeguards from inflammation of Penis and preputial sac.
- c) **Urinary tract infection (UTI's)**:- Circumcision provides a significant decrease in urinary tract infections. One study shows 4 to 9 fold increase in urinary tract infection can be cured through circumcision.

AIDS: In some countries this epidemic disease is spreading faster than other diseases. Scientists can't explain why most West African countries (Ivory Coast) remain unharmed while population to the south is decimated. Doctor Matthias Egger from British MRC health service research collaboration said, that one reason for this puzzling phenomenon might be the practice of circumcision. There seems to be a correlation between circumcision and a low grade incidence of AIDS. This theory has some biological basis because circumcised men have a reduced risk of genital ulcers which are known to facilitate the infection like HIV. In 1999 researcher Von Heave published the results related to HIV. He put forth new conclusion that circumcised men were actually at greater risk of developing AIDS. It created chaos among Muslim Scholars and other soft corner scholars who did independent researches. But they got a kind of results similar to another research done by Meta-analysis commissioned facilitated by UN on AIDS submitted opposite conclusions that of Von Heave, that circumcision indeed had a protective effect.

There is strong dermatological evidence from many African communities to show that male circumcision has strong protective effect against HIV infections than of uncircumcised people. The ratio is of the order of 2:8fold. This protection appears to occur because the inner aspect of the foreskin (which off course is removed in circumcision) has a little covering of the Langerhans cells. This covering is prone to HIV infection that later on enters in to the body. These unprotected cells are thus likely portal of HIV entry in to the male reproductive tract. If the penis, on the other hand is well keratinized will resist entry of HIV. In this regard human body is a complex machine which needs great care, but different from the mechanism of machine so every protective step must be taken to safeguard the body from viral infections. Some religious practices are very important that help to keep body healthy and away from various diseases. Taking prayer (salat) into consideration it has different body fitness aspects.

- i. **Wudu**:- It is a great health practice and washing of all the exposed parts of the body like hand, feet, face, mouth, nostrils five times a day has great preventive measure. In Holy Quran Allah says, "O believers when you stand up for prayers wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows and wipe your heads and wash your feet up to the ankles. If you are unclean bath your whole body. (Surah Al Maidah, verse: 6).
- ii. Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) stressed much on the Miswak (toothbrush) because it keeps teeth clean and strong and save them from many diseases. According to one of the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) if I do not feel that my companions get overburden, I will prefer them to brush (Miswak) their teeth five times daily. So by brushing the teeth means to safeguard one's teeth from decay. Nowadays doctors prescribe many creams for prevention of the teeth decay, but Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) had prescribed 1400 years before by simply using a Miswak which is reachable for everyone.
- iii. In modern period hand washing is being emphasized in hospitals in order to prevent patients from germs which are the cause of diseases. So wash-up is one of the marvellous prescriptions of the Holy Quran. The entire world has learned of the bodily ablution or bath, the bounty of washing ones body, recently from this verse of the Quran. Societies considering themselves cultured and civilized have been washing their faces and bodies only over the last seventy years but the Muslims had got it as a boon fourteen centuries ago. So it is necessary to highlight some advantages of wash up and its influence on blood circulatory system.

Blood Circulatory System: this system is based on two biological principles:

- A. Transportation of blood to all parts of the body through arteries from heart.
- B. Return of blood from all parts of the body through veins.

All this is possible due to healthful functioning of the veins and arteries. There are many causes due to which blood vessels become hard and constricted. This hardening and narrowing of blood vessels do not happen immediately but over a long period of time. It happens first mostly in those parts which are away from heart like, that of feet, hands and brain. To avoid this narrowing and hardening of vessels, Islam had fourteen hundred years before prescribed an application in daily life which is a sense exercise for the proper maintenance of blood vessels by constructing and widening them on need basis. For this exercise, water acts as an agent and helps to soften the vessels distant from heart by diluting them when hot and narrowing them when cold. Water activates nutrients deposited in tissues by circulating them back to blood streams by creating temperature differences.

Allah has favoured us with a boon of circulation. Due to wash-up we can overcome the problem of circulation very easily. Other than the circulation of red blood cells in the body, circulation of lymph in the body is very important. The most important centre for stimulating the lymphatic system is the nasopharyngeal region behind the nose and the tonsils and washing these spots is especially enjoined in the wash-up (Wudu). In Holy

Quran Allah says, "O mankind; there has come to you a direction from your Allah and a healing for the disease in your heart and for those who believe a guidance and mercy (10:57).

The Qur'anic recitation has much influence on the human cardiac system, during recitation of the Quran echoes are created in the heart and are resounded to pineal gland in the brain. As per the epidemiology of most notorious nosocomial bacteria i.e. staphylococcus aureus is concerned. It is investigated in the nose of 40 to 50 percent of healthy people. During this modern era of bacterial resistance, the Methicilline the only anti biotic left for treating staphylococcus aureus infections has become ineffective and the measure cause spread of this Methicilline resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) as per research is believed to be through nasal carriage. In this concern it is found that Muslims who offer five times prayers are least responsible for spreading this communicable disease because of washing anterior nose five times daily.

One more prescription of the Quran is fasting. Fasting in Islam gives a great sense of not only to get rid of nibbling food, coffee and smoking but also of anger and excessive sexual passion. It not only stabilizes the secretion of hormones which control human behaviour but significantly rests to the stomach. According to Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), Stomach is the store house of diseases. If it is kept healthy, disease will not affect the human beings. In this regard Fasting is the best prescription now doctors also infer that fasting keeps human beings in good and healthy conditions.

Humans are considered the best creation on the surface of the earth. Allah commanded them to eat lawful things and do not transgress the limits. "We are commanded to eat lawful and good on the earth (2:168)" "He forbids us from eating dead meat, blood and flesh of swine (5:3) and intoxicants (5:91,92and 2:219)"

Islam strictly restricts Muslims to kill any animal by shock or by any other means which is not helpful to drain out all blood from animal body. The blood and meat of dead is always found full of deadly germs, like antigens the pork contains large number of antigens that are harmful for the body.

Eating Habits Prophet Muhammad not only restricts from eating dead meat or from bad eating habits but advised Muslims about eating habits as:

- a. Eating anything in the market is harmful for health, because dust and germs mix with the eatable things there (Tabarani)
- b. Any one who eat dust (clay) invites death (Tabarani)
- c. Use curry necessarily though it is only a liquid (Tabarani)
- d. Vinegar is a good curry
- e. Salt water is also considered best curry by Prophet Mohammad (pbuh).

Hadith no 3, 4 above means to use simple diet, yet doctors also proved this through investigations that simple diet keeps human beings away from diseases especially heart and obesity.

In hadith no 5 salt water is considered best during the summer period it keeps away from dehydration and sun-stroke and also normalize salt level in the body.

Muslims are directed to take foods as per necessity and do not waste them. Over eating cause obesity and is called the mother of all serious health problems. According to the National Institutes of Health, in the United States 97 million adults are overweight or obese-55 percent of the population. Nearly 23 percent of the population is obese, up from 13 percent in 1960. Between 1991 and 1999, obesity among American adults has increased by nearly 60 percent. "But waste not by excess, for Allah loves not the wasters (7:31)

Intoxicants: Other things like alcohol and other toxicants cloud mental ability and damage the digestive and circulatory system. Ethyl alcohol, or ethanol, is present in varying amounts in beers and wines, and in distilled liquors such as whiskey, gin, and rum. When a person consumes alcohol, the stomach and intestines rapidly absorb it. From there alcohol travels in the blood throughout the entire body, affecting nearly every tissue. Moderate and high doses of alcohol depress the functions of the central nervous system, including the brain. The higher the alcohol level is in the blood, the greater the impairment.

As per the chemistry of alcohol, it is a poor solvent. It is highly harmful and immediately dioxide by the liver. It indirectly affects on the liver and directly affects on myocardial tissue. It sometimes causes abrupt bankruptcy of the liver and the person dies in coma. In mouth it damages flora causes teeth decay and results in inflammation of gums while as in throat and oesophagus it damages the mucous lining and leads to cancerous diseases. Alcohol weakens the liver and leads to consumption of fatty nutrients in the blood. Alcohol burn up also disturb the pattern of blood flow which is known as blood flow rate, thus tiring the heart. it also causes fat deposits to accumulate in the heart and disturbs the cardiac function along with severe effect on the nervous system. It is a well known fact alcoholic drunkard's die due to cirrhosis' because it damages the vessels of lymphatic system which plays great role in the human body.

In the holy Quran as Allah Almighty had restricted human beings from consuming the alcohol. Kidneys are regarded as the end point of the circulatory system is highly damaged by alcohol and disturbs its filtration process .It leads to arteriosclerosis and hypertension. Alcohol penetrates deep in to the neurons protected by heavy screens of lipids and hinders the electrical communication of nervous system. It has

dangerous consequences besides well known illnesses such as polyneuritis, delirium, tremens and the Korsakoff's syndrome. Alcohol inflicts all most unrecoverable damage on various parts of the nervous system. Amnesia and hand tremors are the indications of this damage. It also retards the intelligence of a person.

Honey: Honey is an energetic diet and saves a person from many fatal diseases consistent dysentery. As per the tradition of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) is concerned he said, if a person takes honey three times in the morning for a month, honey saves/keeps him away from many diseases. As we know large number of vitamins is present in blood vessels but due to the decrease of these vitamins in vessels many diseases emerge which causes damage not only to heart but also to other parts of the body. So the best prescription prescribed by the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) for the maintenance of these vitamins is honey.

Among some of the best prescription of the holy Quran are the fruits of Common Fig (Injeer) and Olive (Zaitune) which are very adventitious for human being and Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) consider them fruits of paradise they are helpful in digestion and curable for cancer as modern doctors have discovered them. According to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) Common Fig is the best medicine for piles and joint pain. As per the views of Unani Specialist, fruits like Common Fig expands blood vessels and results in the normal blood circulation. In the same pattern Olive is a useful drug. Abu Huraira narrates a tradition of Prophet Mohammad who said, "Eat Zaitune oil (Olive oil), message with it because it keeps away from seventy diseases including leprosy. In Jamia Thirmidi, Zaid bin Arlam narrates Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) recommended olive oil for pleurisy. Physicians consider pleurisy as pillory, due to this disease water deposits between intestine and intestinal membrane causes damage to them. Moreover if excessive salts, sugar and cholesterol are given from our diet and do not drink and smoke it is very possible that his body parts do not rust from inside.

All things are created by Allah and had prescribed every thing with its advantages and disadvantages. Life is gift from Allah and we have to take care of it as Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) has told whenever you feel sick you must take medicines but many Muslims did not like medical treatment which is contradictory to the Prophetic teachings. As Usama bin Shareek reports, "I was with Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and some Arabs came to him asking, "O messenger of Allah, do we take medicine for any disease." He said, "Yes O you servants of Allah take medicine as Allah has not created a disease without creating a cure except for one." they asked which one, he replied old age."

Allah says, "And if Allah touches thee with affliction, none can remove it but He: if He touches thee with happiness He has power over all things. (6:17)

Here one should not mislead as disease is confirmed to him and accept it as the will of Allah and did not take steps to cure this disease. Keeping above mentioned tradition of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in view one has to take medicine to cure his disease.

Life without reason has no value one should apply once reason for worldly affairs and try to get the favour of Allah. We are all aware of the fact that two years before in Dec 2000 a news was published in The Times of India that prayer halls were organized in many hospitals in the western world where people pray for patients good health. After 1400 years Herbert Willon assistant Professor of Howard Medical College in America attended a medical conference where he determinedly said, curing heart pain high blood pressure. Other severe pains and cancer, Worship plays great role for curing these diseases. Now keeping in view above statement of Herbert Willon, Muslims are directed to offer prayers more than any other religious community. Muslims are commanded to offer daily five obligatory prayers, three Nafl (Supererogation) prayers Tahajjud (midnight) Dawn prayers (ishraq) and Chasht prayers. In the same manner Muslims have to work hard during the Hajj. They have to circumambulation round the Kaba So offering with full concentration during these religious prayers it also act as exercise along with worship and decrease cholesterol level in the body and helps in keeping blood pressure normal Therefore every divine worship of the Muslims have too much health advantages Professor M.A. Azim in this regard viewed as "As per my own observation is concerned regarding prayers, much abstinence during early morning, blood pressure remains normal and severe heart pain slows down too much". I very determinedly say the day will come very soon when every human being realizes the importance of the divine reality i.e. Holy Quran which guides in every aspect of the life. The teachings of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) on personal hygiene are very clear and pragmatic as well. The ways prescribed by Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) to maintain the health would be followed very soon in every health caring centres. These teachings being highly scientific has been incorporated in one way or other way in the modern day community medicine.

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