

AN EXPOSITION OF ISLAMIC MEDICATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE QURAN AND HADITH

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Abstract

Islam is not only a religion but also a total way of life. It covers every aspect of human endeavour. So when addressing the issue of medication, Islam has a lot to say about it, ranging from its meaning and purpose, to its utilization and efficacy. Thus, in this paper effort is made to expose the Islamic concept of medication in the light of the Qur'an and *Hadith*, based on the following headings, aside the introduction and conclusion: The concept and principle of medication in Islam, the Qur'an and medication, the *Hadith* and medication and the forms of medication in Islam.

Key Words: Islamic medication, Quran, Hadith

1.0 Introduction

Medication in Islamic parlance is known as *Ad – Dawa' or At-Tibb or As-Sharibat*.¹ Aside the Qur'an and *Hadith*, the tradition of the Prophet, there are quite a number of Islamic literatures on Islamic medication, popular among such works are *At-Tibbun – Nabawi of Jalalud – Din As-Suyuti; kitabur – Rahmah fi Tibb Wal-Hikmah* also by As – Suyuti. A section of Ibn Qayyim's *Zadul-Mi'ad* titled *At-Tibbun – Nabawi* is also a distinct works today available in Arabic and in English. The truth is that these works and few other classical ones not mentioned have become the primary sources from which modern writers find information on the subject matter.

2.0 Concept and Principle of Medication in Islam

In fact, in Islam, religion is indeed the fountain of not only medicine, but rather of the entirety of human life, both in this world and in the hereafter. And as religion is the foundain of medicine, so is *Tawhid*² or the belief in one God – Allah, the fountain of Islamic religion.

Tawhid is a revolutionary concept that constitutes the essence of the teachings of Islam. It means that there is one Supreme Lord of the Universe. He is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and the Sustainer of the world and of mankind.

Belief simply means a sincere conviction that what one believes in is really true, and one should adhere to that truth. The study of medicine/medication is also related to the Islamic faith through the injunction of the Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) concerning hygienic and better healthy living.

Medicine, like other science, draws its nourishment from the Qur'an and its philosophy of life. The human body is considered to be the formal residence of the soul and therefore closely related to both the spirit and soul, thus presenting a two-fold aspect. First, as the symbol of existence whereby both the soul and spirit are intimately related to and dependent on the physical body of man, because the former cannot exist without the latter. Secondly, man has to maintain his outward form in a good and healthy condition to exist at all, and for this reason, the existence of the inner aspects, that is, the spirit and soul become absolutely dependent upon the former.

Therefore, the Health and Care of the body becomes an important matter both for medicine and religion in order to keep man outwardly and inwardly in a healthy condition. The anatomy and physiology of human body provides incentives for the study of medicine in Islam said Makarfi.³ In other words, the Islamic point on the principle of medication and healing center on the conception that it is Allah alone who can heal and provide appropriate medication for all forms of physical, spiritual, socio-economic problem and affliction.

It is imperative to mention from the onset that in Islam the concept of medication and that of healing are interwoven. Thus, they are both used interchangeably and sometimes synonymously. That is, any prescription given by Allah in the Qur'an and the one given by the Prophet (S.A.W) for the healing of any illness is seen as medication for such illness.

3.0 The Qur'an and Medication

The Qur'an stand on medication is illuminating and the Qur'an is not in anyway ambiguous in giving its consent for medication. This is evident in Q17:82.

We reveal from the Qur'an that which is healing
and mercy for the believers.

As postulated by Risaq A-Abubakre, the Qur'an showing the significance of both spiritual or moral health as well as physical health, enunciate that part of what is in the Holy Qur'an has been revealed for the purpose of healing the believers through prayer and application of medication. It is more specific on physical healing when it says on the tongue of Prophet Ibrahim:⁴

When I am sick it is He who cures me. Q26:80.

The Qur'an is even more categorical about the importance of medication for physical health when it refers in the chapter of the 'Bee' to the chemical composition of honey as of great value to organism for the purpose of healing. This great medical uses of honey for mankind is mentioned by the Qur'an in Chapter 16:68-69.

'And your Lord inspired the Bee, saying choose your habitations in the hills and in the trees and in that which you build, then eat of all fruits and follow the ways of your Lord made smooth (for you). There comes forth from their bellies a drink of varying colours, wherein is a healing for mankind. Truly, in this is a sign for those who reflect.

Of all the books descended on the earth, the Holy Qur'an is the universal, most useful, most magnificent book, in fact, the Holy Qur'an, even though its status is beyond that, is the Divine encyclopedia as Allah Himself said:

"And We reveal of the Qur'an that which is
a healing and mercy for believers." (Q17:82).

The reason why the Holy Qur'an is a panacea is that blessings sought through the recitation of the Holy Qur'an serve as cure and remedy for illness.

As mentioned above under the use of prayers as medication, the Prophet used to recite *Ayatul-Kursiyi*, *Mu'awwudhatayn*, *Suratul al-ikhlas*, the last two verses of *Suratul al-baqarah* for protections.

There are also some popular verses of the Holy Qur'an among Muslim Alfas, the recitation of which is used as medication for curing ailments and illnesses vis-à-vis.

1. "Ya'tiha rizquha raghdan min Kulli makani" is used for seeking financial sustenance from the Almighty Allah (Ar-Razaq, the Sustainer).
2. *Qala irkabu fiha bismillahi majraha wamursaha innar-rabi laghafur – Rahim* is for seeking Allah's safety in a journey.

4.0 The Hadith and Medication

There are many *Ahadith* of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) concerning illness and their medication and the book of *hadith* has separate chapter named *At – Tibb An-Nabawi* (medicine of the Prophet). This gave Islamic medication a religious basis from the very beginning of the Islamic era – And it points to the fact that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) himself is the fountain of Islamic medications.

The above assertion is deduced from the contributions of the Prophet to the provision of Islamic medications for various illness, be it physical or spiritual illness.

It was reported by Abu Hurayrah that the Holy Prophet said:

There is no disease that Allah has sent down
except that He has also sent down its treatment.⁵

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet said:

If a fly falls in the vessel of any of you, let him dip all of it into the vessel, and then throw it away, for in one of its wings there is a disease, and in the other there is cure (antidote for it) that is, treatment for the disease.⁶

In a tradition narrated by Abdullah b. Mas'ud, the Prophet was reported to have said:

‘Hold fast with two medicines, Honey and the Qur’an’.

This tradition is interpreted thus: Hold fast to two things for your healing; the use of honey and the use of Qur’anic verses.⁷ This states that honey is a medicine. In a tradition reported by Bukhari and Muslim which has related by Qatadah and others, who said: A man came to the Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h) and said ‘O Messenger of Allah, my brother is suffering from stomach trouble’ the Prophet said, tell him to drink Honey’ then he went away and came back to say, O Prophet he had drunk the honey but the trouble increased’ the Prophet gave the same advice until the fourth occasion, the Prophet then said Allah’s (word) is the truth and the belly of your brother had lied.’ So he gave him honey to drink again and then he was cured:⁸

And a tradition transmitted by Bukhari which was narrated by Sa’id bn. Jubayr from bn. ‘Abbas that the Messenger of Allah said:

The cure with Honey is in three things, cupping (act of removing black blood from the body) curing of suffocation and curing of cauterization, but I forbid my followers (*‘ummah*) from the bodily burning.⁹

The Prophet was reported to have also said: shaving off the public hair strengthens desire for sexual intercourse, just as shaving the back of the head strengthens the neck. It is also stated in the *Ahadith* that whoever cuts his nails will not suffer from ophthalmia on the other side.¹⁰

5.0 Forms of Medication in Islam

Medication and healing, no doubt, fall under the mystic realm of religion. Thus, as a corollary from the general concept of medication, it has been found that medication in Islam includes the followings.

5.1 Prayer (*Du‘a*)

The supreme privilege of man on earth is to knock at the door of the Almighty Allah as much and as frequently as he pleased. However heinous may have been the sins of the supplicant, it is his birthright to approach God to seek his forgiveness, and implore Him to fulfill his wishes. The All-Knowing, All-Hearing Creator and Ruler of the universe is ever ready to give him a patient hearing. If his repentance is sincere, and he is resolved to abstain from sins, he is sure to be forgiven. The harder he knocks, the more he is admired and loved by the Beneficent Lord.

The one single purpose for which God has been pleased to send man on earth is the education of his spirit, so that he may be qualified to live eternal life, full of bliss, in a higher scale of existence. But there are countless millions on earth who are living in the present, regardless of the future, absorbed in their earthly duties or enjoyments, in utter indifference to their eternal interests.

Thus, the vast majority of humanity in this age of gross materialism is not conscious of the potency and value of regular supplication. Supplication is a mysterious spiritual agency. It has access to God’s throne. It brings us His mercy and grace. It is instrumental in helping man to attain his temporal and spiritual ends, satisfying his needs and desires, and in relieving him from sorrows and pains, difficulties and dangers. Prayer always operates as a shield against unforeseen calamities, though it is unperceived and unfelt. Prayer is, indeed, the voice of faith. Faith in God makes the believer optimistic, so that he can fight the battle of life, with hope and courage.

The productive capacity of prayer depends upon the strength and activity of the human soul. What has the spirit to lean on, except faith, in which the human mind finds support and solace? “Call Me, I shall answer you”. (Q40:60) “When My servant ask you concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calls on Me (Q2:186); “Call on your Lord with humility and in private” (Q7:55) says the Qur’an.

Those who are spiritually advanced, and can speak from personal experience; testify that these divine promises are not false.

In fact, prayer, supplication or invocation is considered in Islam as the most appropriate for all diseases and afflictions. Prayer in Islam involves a passionate appeal to the Divine Being as seen in the above Qur'anic quotations. The efficacy of prayer as a form of medication and healing system in Islam rests mostly on the concept of the ("Divine word) (*Kalimatullah*), that is, the Qur'an. However, there are many other prayers recommended by Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) and some *Awliya'u-llahi* (pious people and friends of Allah). For instance, the Prophet recommended the following prayers for every Muslim vis-à-vis.

1. When a Muslim wakes up in the morning he should endeavour to say:

*Alhamdu lillahi alladhi ahyana ba'da ma amatana
wa ilayhi an-nushur.*¹¹

Meaning: All praise is for Allah who gave us life after having taken it from us and unto Him is the resurrection. This is meant to seek longevity of life from Almighty Allah. (S.W.T).

2. When returning to his bed every night, the Prophet would hold his palms together and blow air or a little spittle spittle in them, recite the last three chapter of the Qur'an i.e. (*Suratul – ikhlas and Mu'awwizatayn*) and then wipe over his entire body as much as possible with his hands, beginning with his head and face and then all parts of the body.
3. The Prophet (P.B.U.H) said: when you are about to sleep recite *Aayat-ul-kurisiyu* till the end of the verse for there will remain over you a protection from Allah and no devil will draw near to you until morning.¹²
4. The Prophet (P.B.U.H) also said: Whoever recites the last two verses of *Suratul Al-baqarah* at night, those two verses shall be sufficient for him.¹³, he also recommended the following prayer to be said to seek protection from Allah:

*Allahumman inni a'udhu bika minal hammi
wal-huzni, wal-'ajzi, wal-kasali, wal-bukhli,
wal-jubni, wadal'id-dayni wagalabatir-rijali.*¹⁴

Meaning: "O Allah, I take refuge in you from anxiety and sorrow, weakness and laziness, miserliness and cowardice, the burden of debts and from being over powered by men.

To mention but few out of the innumerable prayers recommended by the Prophet (P.B.U.H) for his followers (the Muslims). While prayers like *Sayfi*, *Hayyud-dafi'u*, *Ya muhiya* and the like are prayers used by some *Awliya'llah* (Pious people and friends of Allah) for seeking protection from Allah against the enemies. The efficacy of these prayers lies in the meaning of the words contained in the prayers and in the faith, piety and level of mind of the supplicant during the prayer.

5.2 Offerings or Charity (*Sadaqah*)

Sadaqah in Islam refers to the processes by which one authenticates something or reinforces it. Technically, in Islam offerings and alms are meant to serve as supplement, reinforcement and catalyst to the efficacy of prayer as a medication with an attempt to solve one problem or the other. It is believed in Islam that a prayer intended as a medication without charity, offering or alms, is not quickly accepted by Allah like the one done with charity. This above assertion is buttressed by some Islamic scholars with the tradition of the Prophet (P.B.U.H) which says: "Nothing can prevent the destiny (from coming to past) except prayer and nothing can increase the life span (of a person) except righteousness. And ill-natured is a bad luck while good deed is an increase in (reward) and charity prevent unforeseen death".¹⁵ Their argument is that for the Prophet (S.A.W) to have mentioned *Sadaqah* (offering) along side prayer means that they both supplement and complement

each other, thus one of them is not enough. In other words, *Sadaqah* (charity) is a supplement, reinforcement and catalyst to the efficacy of prayer meant for medication.

The Holy Qur'an is indicative of the fact that Allah does accept the charity of a supplicant as this is shown in Q9:104

“God does accept repentance from His votaries and receives their gifts of charity ...”

Such alms, offerings and gifts should not be concentrated in the hands of well-to-do individuals, specialists, mystics and spiritualists. They should be extended to the poor, the needy, orphans, charity homes, orphanages and mosques to advance the cause of Allah. However, offerings should not be followed with evil acts (Q2:263-264).

5.3 *Salat* (prayer)

Salat (prayer) the canonical prayers, the supererogatory prayers or voluntary prayers are another form of medication in Islam. It has been authoritatively established by Allah that *Salat* (prayer) is a medication for the curing of the tendency of shameful and unjust deeds (in man). This is evidence in Qur'an 29:45.

Prayer is also a Divine medication prescribed by Almighty Allah Himself to be applied when seeking his assistance or help in the face of adversity or difficulty. The evidence to this assertion is also found in (Q2:45 and 2:153).

There is also an apt evidence in the tradition related by *Hudhayfah* who said it is part of the character of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) that whenever he was faced with any adversity or sorrow he sought Allah's assistance by observing *Salat* (prayer).¹⁶

5.4 *Animal Sacrifice*

This is another form of supplementary medication for prayer in Islam. Unlike the charity and ordinary material offerings, sacrifice connotes effecting ransom or redemption through the blood of an animal. Some of the Muslim Alfas are of the opinion that whenever the whole Qur'an or certain chapters or *Surahs* like *Suratu Yasin*, *Suratul-Kahf*, *Suratul – Waqi'ah* etc, are recited for prayer, ram or goat if not cow should be slaughtered for the quick efficacy or response of Allah to the recitation of the Qur'an meant for supplication.

However, it should be understood that sacrifice in Islam is not tantamount to idolatry. The focal point is Allah and He is central to the concept of sacrifice in Islam. More so, the efficacy of any sacrifice made in Islam is determined by the piety of he who makes the sacrifice. Hence Qur'an cautions that:

It is neither their meat for their blood that reaches God.

It is your piety that reaches Him: He has thus made them (animals) subject, to you, that you may glorify God for His guidance to you: And proclaim the good news to all who do right. (Q22:37).

In essence, a Muslim should, while sacrificing, remain having Allah in mind. He should avoid element of syncretism and idolatry.

5.5 *Herbs and Shrubs*

Plants constitute a major part of Allah's provisions for man on earth. Essentially, plants are for eating purpose (Q3:37, Q20:53). Besides this, many a leaf, shrub and herb of different plants and trees are also good for medicinal purposes. History is replete of the fact that herbs and shrub were used for curing diseases during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). In the book of *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih al-Muslim*, it is reported on the authority of Abdulah bn. Ja'far who said: I saw the messenger of Allah eating (R.A.) on the fresh wild cucumber eaten then by Prophet, she said: It enhances the coolness of the stomach; she said: I was given every medication to make me fat but all proved abortive until when I was given the fresh wild cucumber and I became fat".¹⁷

The herbs and shrubs were legitimately used because they are there as part of Allah's favour on man. (Q2:60, 2:168).

5.6 *Hantu* (Drink made from Qur'anic passage written on a black slate and washed with water)

Hantu is a word etymologically derived from Arabic word *Khatt* which literally means writing. However, *Hantu* to some Muslim Alfas is also a form of medication in Islam, in which certain verses of the Holy Qur'an and many other prayers of *the Awliya'ullah* (friends of Allah) are written on a black slate by Muslim Alfas and then washed with water for their patronizers to drink or bathe with as medication for ailments or illness and also as a form of medication for protection or prevention of calamities. Sometime the whole Qur'an is written and washed for a person seeking protection from enemies or seeking political position or any other high position to drink. While some specific verses of the Qur'an are also used in this form for different intentions e.g.

1. "*Sanuqri'uka fala tansa*" in Q87:6 is written and drunk as brain tonic.
2. "*Thummas – Sabila Yassarahu*" in Q80:20 is written and washed for pregnant women for safe delivery.
3. "*Wa alqaytu 'alayka muhabbatan minni*" in Q20:39 is written and washed for one who is seeking to be loved by everybody etc.

6.0 Conclusion

Medication, which means the taking of drug or medicine to prevent or treat an illness, is synonymous to combating sickness either physically or spiritually and this is the ultimate aim of Islam for its adherents. Thus, in projecting this aim, Allah, the Author of the religion of Islam has established in the noble Qur'an, as well as through the *sunnah* of His Prophet enormous ways of the application of Islamic medication.

Thus, in this paper assertion has been made to give the concept of medication in Islamic perspective, the Qur'an unequivocal stand on medication as well as that of *Hadith* of the noble Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) has also been established alongside the forms of medication among Muslim Alfas in Nigeria.

It should be emphatically stated that Islam is a total way of life that encompasses every facet of human endeavours, it has not left any problem or sickness without proffering solution or cure to it in the noble Qur'an or the *sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). In other words, Islam has solutions and cures to any problem or sickness that may tempt us to run to unbelievers for solution to any spiritual or physical problem except if the case requires orthodox medication or treatment. Thus, the Muslims should be adequately informed about the Islamic medication in the Qur'an and *sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). And those who are blessed with the knowledge should spread and disseminate it and not hoard it for themselves.

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