

Prophetic Medicines: The Revival of Sunnah in Modern Times

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Abstract

Prophetic Medicine, also known as at-Tibb anNabawi, is a complete code of medicine that was gifted by Allah to the Prophet (PBUH) through revelation (Wahee). He made specific statements on 37 ailments and 61 medical plants, herbs, and shrubs while making prescriptions for sick people, out of which *Nigella Sativa* (black seed) is the most important for healing. Therefore, although the Prophet's arrival was not as a physician or pharmacist, he was inspired by Allah to make nearly 1000 statements on healing for the benefit of humankind, because man needs to remain well, free from sickness to fulfill his brief mission on earth.

The Qur'an says, "He does not speak anything of his desire. It is only a Revelation revealed". So, the tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) on healing is also true, and modern science has proven it through research after 14 centuries. Abu Hurayrah R.A. narrates a hadith that the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Allah did not send down a disease without having sent down its cure".

This Prophetic statement indicates that Allah has already created remedies for every disease. He created the remedies first, then the disease. But all remedies are yet to be discovered by scientists. After the advent of Islam, Muslim society also started contributing to the medical sciences. There are various verses in the Quran and various traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) that show the uses of many foods, vegetables, honey, birds, fishes, minerals, milk, and others as medicine and that means to cure different diseases. However, they have not mentioned the medicine directly.

As far as the revival of Sunnah concerning medicines is concerned, it has a great need and scope in today's time and would help in the cure of various rampant diseases that affect globally. For instance: the COVID-19 pandemic which has recently hit the world, and is still existing with mild symptoms. Some of the precautions that have been taken against this virus have already had their prescription in the Sunnah of our Prophet (PBUH).

Knowing the significance of infectious diseases, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), urged his followers, “When you hear about a break of plague in any area, do not enter there and when it has broken in a land where you are, then do not run away from it (and thus spread it elsewhere)” (Sahih Bukhari: Volume 7, Book 71, Number 626).

Based on this hadith, people in general and Muslims in particular still need to take extreme precautions and observance against COVID-19 as the order of Allah (swt). Also, the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) is worthy of mention as far as hygiene is concerned, such as the washing of one’s hands before having a meal. This paper is a summary of the vast content of the Prophetic Medicines and it is upon every Muslim to seek knowledge of the Sunnah in order to be able to implement it in his life.

Keywords: Prophetic Medicine, Revival, Sunnah, and Science.

INTRODUCTION

What is Tibb al Nabawi?

Tibb al-Nabawi refers to the words and actions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) concerning disease, the treatment of disease, and the care of patients. It also refers to a) the actual words of the Prophet (pbuh) on medical matters; b) medical treatment practiced by others on the Prophet (pbuh); c) medical treatment practiced by the Prophet (pbuh) on himself and others; d) medical treatment observed by the Prophet (pbuh) with no objections, and e) medical procedures that the Prophet (pbuh) heard or knew about and did not prohibit.

Tibb al-Nabawi also includes guidance on physical and mental health that is universally applicable to patients, at any time, and under all circumstances. It covers preventive medicine, curative medicine, mental well-being, spiritual cures (ruqyah), and medical treatments. It seeks to integrate body and soul in the quest for optimum health.

Muslims are duty-bound to live their lives according to the Sunnah. Prophetic Medicine or Tibb al-Nabawi is an integral part of the Sunnah. There can be no better way of achieving and maintaining good health than by adopting Tibb al-Nabawi in our lives.

1.DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICINE: IMPACT OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD ﷺ

The birth of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ heralded the culmination and perfection of the guidance from Allah ﷻ to mankind, as mentioned in the Qur’anic verse:

“This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion” (Qur’an 5:3)

This ‘perfection’ is embodied in the Qur’an (the source of all knowledge) and the Sunnah (manifestations and interpretations of the Qur’an). In addition to guiding mankind, the Qur’an and Sunnah catalyze the seeking of knowledge and scientific inquiry within the context of the Islamic ethos.

The Qur’an and Sunnah wielded a great formative influence on the development of medicine and health sciences. Muslim scholars and physicians in the early days critically examined all available medical philosophies and practices in the light of their own belief systems.

The Muslim contribution to medicine, especially in basic life sciences, was developed within the scope of medical practice as we know it today. Moreover, it emerged in the context of social, philosophical, and associated disciplines, which influenced the theory and practice of medicine. This was achieved by many physicians, including al-Razi (d. 930), al-Zahrawi (d. 1013), Ibn Sina (d. 1037), Ibn Rushd (d.1198), and Ibn Nafis (d. 1288).

Although the Prophet ﷺ was not a healer per se, his Sunnah, together with the Qur’an, provides definitive and clear guidelines in the theory and practice of medicine. This time-tested system of medicine that was developed through revelation and inspiration, and perfected with the religion of Islam, was practiced well into the 19th century, not only where Islam was practiced, but also in the Christian regions of Europe, where it was embraced during the European Renaissance.

2. THE QURANIC CONCEPT OF HEALING

The Qur’anic concept of healing is that Allah is the Healer, and the doctors and the medicines are the means of healing. This concept of healing signifies that a physician diagnoses an ailment and prescribes medicine; a pharmacist prepares the medicines and dispenses them to the patient. Ultimately, it is Allah, who heals the ailment through the medicine. Thus, pharmacy and medicine, disease and treatment, and patient and physician are all interrelated in the process of healing, which is done by Allah in whom full trust should be placed. In support of this in the tongue of Prophet Ibrahim A.S the Qur’an says: “And when I am ill, it is He who heals (cures) me “.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROPHET (PBUH) ON HEALING

The Prophet ﷺ made specific statements on 65 medicinal plants, herbs,

and shrubs, out of which the statement on black seed is the most important. About black seed Abu Hurayra R.A narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said: “Hold on (use this seed regularly)! Because it is a remedy (cure) for every disease except death”. This statement indicates that Allah has already created remedies for every disease except death. No scientist, doctor, or physician has created any disease or ailment. Physicians can only examine a patient based on symptoms and manifestation of diseases and prescribe commonly available medicines.

4. REVIVAL OF PROPHETIC SUNNAH

Medical guidance & teachings of Prophet ﷺ were & are neglected by us, we perform many Sunnah of our Prophet ﷺ except Sunnah of treatment, eating & use of food products as a treatment. Sahabah paid a lot of importance to the medical Sunnah of Prophet ﷺ, & learned, taught & performed the respected Sunnah. Allah (swt) had taught principles of treatment to our Prophet ﷺ, for the whole world, but we do not learn them nor perform them.

It is not like this, that we do not believe in them but we do not pay importance to them, nor do we know them. Sahabah were very well versed with the medical Sunnah of Prophet ﷺ & performed them & got great success in treating themselves and others.

It is important to emphasize that Prophetic Medicine is currently practiced at a very minute scale across the world today, therefore it is upon every Muslim to work towards reviving this enriched Sunnah and making it a common practice. It is well known that whoever revives a Sunnah will have the reward of everyone who acts upon it.

Imam Malik, one of the greatest Muslim scholars, compared the Sunnah of the Prophet to the ark of Prophet Noah A.S. and said: ‘ The Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is like the Ark of Noah A.S. Whoever embarks upon it reaches salvation and whoever refuses it, is drowned.’ This is the significance of the Sunnah so strive to embark upon spreading this knowledge amongst your communities as a means of Da’wah, through speech and most importantly through your actions.

5. RELEVANCE OF TIBB AL NABAWI TODAY

Healthcare is one of the greatest challenges of the new millennium. Not only are we faced with many infectious diseases such as HIV & AIDS,

tuberculosis, and meningitis, but also an unprecedented increase in diseases of lifestyle. Diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and obesity have reached alarming proportions. Tibb al-Nabawi, with its emphasis on a healthy lifestyle both physically and spiritually, underpinned with the understanding that ‘prevention is better than cure’ can play an important role in addressing issues of current healthcare.

6. SCIENCE AND SUNNAH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Islam is a way of life that focuses on aspects of physical and spiritual health. According to renowned Muslim scholar, Al-Ghazali, the heart is an important element that connects the physical and spiritual elements of a person. A person needs to pay special attention when it comes to choosing the right food as it may greatly affect the heart and even the soul. This fact is also supported by a Western scientist, Green (1979), who believes that the heart becomes the major element in shaping one’s identity. In a famous hadith, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, “In a body, there is a lump of flesh, if the flesh is good, the whole body becomes good and if the source is bad, the whole body becomes bad and indeed it is the heart”

Food is considered part of the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) those who would give thought” (The Noble Quran, 2001). Thus, honey is a source of healing for mankind. In addition, in a study, “Honey as a Dressing for Wounds, Burns and Ulcers: A Brief Review of Clinical Reports and Experimental Studies,” Molan (2006) says that honey has proven to be a useful medicine in his practice.

Black cumin (seeds) is another diet of the Prophet (pbuh). It contains over 100 valuable components. It is a significant source of essential fatty acids, proteins, carbohydrates, and other vitamins and minerals. All contents of black seeds are ideal cures for the prevention and treatment of cancer. The Prophet (pbuh) said, “Use this black seed regularly, because it is a cure for every disease, except death” (Al-Bukhari). Scientifically, these seeds which are called *Nigella Sativa* have been proven in extensive pharmacological studies to justify the Islamic traditional therapeutic value of black seeds (Mohammad Akram, 2008).

Another important drink of the Prophet (pbuh) is milk. The Prophet said, “Drink milk, for it wipes away heat from the heart as the finger wipes away sweat from the brow. Furthermore, it strengthens the back, increases the brain power, augments intelligence, renews vision, and drives away forgetfulness” (Ibn Majah). Milk is the very source of calcium (around 120mg/100g). Consumption during childhood and adolescence helps pre-

vent osteoporosis in adulthood. Some of the major Prophetic teachings on health are given below:

6.1 Sunnah of the Miswak: Dental Hygiene and Modern Science

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, if it were not that it would be difficult on my nation, then I would have ordered them to use Siwak for each Prayer (Tirmizi 22). Even thousand four hundred years ago Islam showed the importance of body hygiene with the wudhu and dental hygiene by using the Miswak to clean the teeth. In today's modern age, we now use toothbrushes and toothpaste to maintain dental hygiene.

Miswak is often dismissed as just a twig, an old-age tool. But is it really? There have been studies to compare the effectiveness of Miswak against toothbrushes. In today's society to confirm or to dismiss such norms a study found that using the Miswak lowers Gingival bleeding compared to tooth brushes. Another comparison study found that using the Miswak reduces Dental plaque, Gingivitis, and Dental caries in comparison to toothbrushes and toothpaste.

6.2 Eating and doing things with the right hand

Science helps us to find any answer to why Muslims are asked to use their right hand more than the other. What could be the wisdom behind this? Prophet ﷺ ate using his right-hand fingers and licked his fingers after meals: A New scientific research has proven that our hands (especially the right hand) have enzymes that are also present in our saliva. In simpler words, the digestive process begins with our fingers as they break down the food that we eat. These enzymes help the digestive process & if we eat with a spoon, we lose the opportunity of the enzymes present on the right fingers. Also, it is believed & proved that licking of right fingers after meals is good & beneficial for digestion & remember it is Sunnah. And it is a well-known proverb (saying) "fingers licking are good!".

6.3 Hygiene:

There is one thing people have learned over the past several weeks, it is proper hand washing techniques and thorough hygienic practices – a hallmark of Islam. Any Muslim child can quote verbatim the tradition that states, "Cleanliness is half of the faith."

Before each of the five daily prayers, a Muslim performs an ablution that comprises ritual cleaning from head to toe with clean water. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ also taught through his practice that the right and left hands should be used to handle pure and impure things respectively, fur-

ther committing to a high standard of cleanliness on a day-to-day basis.

In essence, Muslims are taught that physical cleanliness and spiritual purity have a close affinity with one another. Thus, the Holy Quran teaches, “Indeed, Allah loves those who turn to Him [repenting] and he loves those who keep themselves clean and pure.” (Surah al-Baqarah, Ch.2: V.223)

6.4 Functioning of Brain:

As we know science tells us that when we do exercise, it helps keep our body healthy. There are different types of exercises for every part of the body and if done over and over again, keep that part more functional. The same goes with brain exercises, when we do them over and over again they help in developing connections in the brain. According to an American psycho biologist “Roger W Sperry”, the human brain has two very different ways of thinking (functioning).The left lobe of the brain acts on the movement of the right side of the body & right lobe of the brain acts on the movement of the left side of the body. When we use the right hand it gives more exercises to the left side of the brain making it & its functions stronger. And remember we use both hands equally while offering Salah. This is the beauty of the Sunnah of our Prophet ﷺ. And it is the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ to start good work with the right hand by this we activate the left side brain &the left side brain is more active & powerful in analysis, logical thinking, doing work in proper order in a regular way, etc. The right-handed person uses the left side brain more and left-handed person use the right side of the brain more, so right-handed people are more logical, and linear, good at mathematics, calculation, and language learning, good at words, and do things in order in a regular way by mostly analyzing the work better, have good handwriting. The left-handed persons are more creative, think holistically (taking into consideration all aspects), are good at arts & work skills, are better at visualizing, and rhythmic, and have mostly bad handwriting& work step by step.

6.5 Eating while sitting down:

Prophet ﷺ forbade us from drinking while standing. It is reported that Abu Qatadah R.A. asked what about eating. Prophet ﷺ said that is even worse or may be more investible. Today, it is common to see people walking while drinking and eating. A recent study at the University of South Florida Found that people who eat while standing did not enjoy their meals as much. They felt the food was less tasty then compare to people who eat while sitting down. People who eat while standing also eat a lesser amount compared to those who eat while sitting. This is because the standing position creates Physical stress on the body which decreases sen-

sory sensitivity.

6.6 Fasting regularly: The Science Behind the Sunnah

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would be offered fasting on Mondays and Thursdays and recommended the fasting of Prophet Dawud A.S, whose fasting is done on alternative days. This is now known as Intermittent Fasting and is practiced by health enthusiasts, where food is not consumed for 12-24 hours followed by normal eating, and then the cycle repeats. Scientific Studies also have shown that intermittent fasting can provide health benefits such as weight loss, lowering type 2 diabetes, and reducing Neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and stroke.

6.7 Sleeping Positions: Sunnah and the Science

A study has found that sleeping on the side position has the benefit of reducing the chances of developing Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other Neurological diseases. Sleeping on the valley is harmful as Research has shown that sleeping on the stomach of babies can lead to Sudden Death syndrome (SDS). Prophet ﷺ used to sleep in the sleeping position on the Right side, He also forbade people from sleeping on their stomachs.

6.8 Sleeping Forbid

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ forbade sleeping at three different times that are after Fajr, between Asr and Maghrib, and between Maghrib and Isha. Now, Scientist has proved this statement true. In an observation, they found that every 24 hours during these three times, oxygen reached its maximum level. Sleeping at forbidden times causes hypertension, irritability, etc. because while sleeping one can't take much oxygen.

6.9 Less Food, Less Sin

One of the main principles of good health is a balanced diet. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the habit of eating less as a method of preventing sickness and disease. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Nothing is worse than a person who fills his stomach. It should be enough for the son of Adam to have a few bites to satisfy his hunger. If he wishes more, it should be One-third for his food, one-third for his liquids, and one-third for his breath." Modern Science now proved that eating less can help us fight many diseases.

6.10 Taking Salt Before Meal

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ advised his companions to take a small amount of salt before beginning a meal. This in particular seems to be contradicted

by modern medical wisdom, which stresses the harmful effects of excess salt consumption. However, a knowledge of the metabolism of the body illustrates the wisdom of this suggestion as well.

Salt is composed of two chemicals: sodium and chloride. The chlorides present in salt constitute the only readily available source of chlorides with which the body can manufacture hydrochloric acid, vital for proper digestion in the stomach. Thus, taking in a small amount of salt prior to the meal allows any deficiency of hydrochloric acid to be made up just before introducing new food.

6.11 Sunnah of Drinking Water

Drink water while taking three breathing pauses. It is prohibited to drink water in a single gulp, an act that we normally do when we are extremely thirsty. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “Do not drink water only in one breath, but drink it in two or three breaths.” Scientific studies show that there are many harmful effects of drinking water in one gulp. It can cause choking of the esophagus. It especially weakens the muscles and nerves. It is also detrimental to the liver and stomach. Science claimed that drinking water alone can cause Headache, Dizziness, and Imbalance in blood Electrolytes.

6.12 Beard: Scientific and Islamic Cause to Grow

We hear some people say that Bacteria growing in the Beard is unhygienic, the answer to that is shaving the Beard and rid of natural cells from the face. Hence leading to cancer of the face. The spiritual benefits of Beard are that it saves a person from a sin. For instance, you can change your clothes and become one of the common people. However, the beard differentiates between a believer to a non-believer, so a person will think twice before going to a place which are prohibited.

In 1973 Robert J. Pelligrini a psychologist from California State University published the result of an experiment on the perception as a function of different states of beardlessness and beardedness. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said Trim closely, the moustache and Grow the Beard. I have no connection with one who shaves. Shouts and Tears his clothing in grief or Addiction (Muslim 501).

Scientific Benefits of Having a Beard: A beard protects the face from harmful chemicals and pollution in the Air which will cause cell damage, increase wrinkling, and bad skin. Research says that the longer and thicker the beard, the wiser the person is supposed to be.

The above-mentioned are some of the few Sunnah of Prophet ﷺ that were

taught and practiced by Prophet ﷺ and Sahaba 1400 years before, in modern times Medical science proved that the teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as true and advice to follow them. During the pandemic those measures were taken by the Government to stop COVID-19, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ already mentioned that in Ahadith.

CONCLUSION

Today, modern medicine is more focused on preventative than curative medicine due to the global escalation of chronic diseases of lifestyle. Healthy lifestyle programs are linked to better health outcomes. Unani-Tibb alongside other traditional medical systems like Tibb an-Nabawi has highlighted the maintenance of health as one of its main objectives. For both these systems, knowing one's individual constitutional nature understood through the concept of temperament is the first step towards a path of health and healing.

Modern preventative medicine refers to that branch of knowledge that deals with the protection against microorganisms that may cause physical disease and psychological diseases in the individual and society. Islamic legislation supported by Prophetic narrations and Quran injunctions enumerates several methods regarding the eradication of microorganisms by establishing rules about the complete cleanliness of the body, one's clothes, and the environment. Health advice according to Prophetic Medicine provides preventative measures for the biochemical, physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual components of man. Prevention against chronic diseases of lifestyle can be attained in light of the Prophetic advice about diet, etiquettes of eating, ablution, bathing, prayer and supplication, exercise, fasting, emotions, and medical treatments.

We need to resume the legacy of our forefathers who showed the path of medical development for centuries. In this way, we can show the world, the all-embracing nature of Islam for the whole humanity.

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