

PRAYER AND HEALING IN ISLAM

Understanding Islam: The second biggest and one of the most popular religions in the world is Islam. Nearly one-fifth of the world's population belongs to the Islam religion. Along with Judaism and Christianity, it is considered to be one of the Abrahamic, monotheistic faiths. The Muslim populations are found all over the world, in every colour and race. They consider "Allah" to be their Almighty God. Allah is considered to be the Creator, the Sustainer, the forgiver, and the Compassionate. The Muslims are of the belief that since Allah is the Creator and the initiator of all things in nature, therefore, He alone deserves their devout love and reverence. Islam holds an austere belief in monotheism.

The Islamic religion has a few denominations. The denominations can be noted as follows—

- Shi'a--The Shi'a (or, Shii, Shiis), means "the party of Ali". They consider the Imam to be the final interpreter of Allah's will, holding the total authority.
- Sunni--The majority of the Muslims are believed to be called the Sunni (or, Sunnis), because they are devotees of the Sunnah example of the Prophet.
- Sufism--Islamic spiritualists are called Sufis, and their ways of living is termed to be as Sufism (also spelled Sufiism).
- Wahabbism--Wahabi Islam originated in the 18th century in Saudi Arabia. Wahabbism is identified as the official religion of Saudi Arabia. The supporters of Wahabbism primarily consider themselves to be Sunnis in nature.

Majority Muslim followers believe that praying five times a day acts as a commitment to be surrendered to the will of Allah. Therefore, Muslims are regarded to be pious in nature, on the basis of their morals and manners by which they stay devoted only to the supreme Allah.

Defining Islam: The word "Islam" comes from an Arabic root word meaning "peace" and "compliance."¹ "Islam" is a noun "masdar" in Arabic. The teaching of Islam includes that one can only find peace in one's life by submitting to the Almighty God i.e. Allah in heart, soul, psyche and deed. The Muslim faith, tradition and community believes in the prime notion that there is one supreme God. Muslims regard Prophet Muhammad as the messenger of God, and the person who submits to the will of the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God is regarded as a "Muslim." In the Qur'an, *Islam* appears eight times. It is associated with the concept of *din*, which is translated in modern times as "religion" but has a broader sense of including creed, normative standards, and the whole range of standard behavior (cited, Martin, 2004). The Arabic root word that is used as the universal Muslim greeting is "Salaam alaykum". This traditional greeting implies "Peace be with you".

Origin of the Islamic Traditions: Islam is a monotheistic religious institution that developed in the Middle East in the 7th century C.E. In 570 A.D., a man was born in a small city in the Arabian peninsula, called Mecca (Haykal 1976), whose name was Mohammed. In 610 A.D. he pronounced a new religion as Islam. In 632 A.D., he took his last breath after uniting the people of Arab who had been frayed by revenge, rivalry, and internal fights. It was a mission of

¹ Source: <http://islamworld.webs.com/aboutislam.htm>

Mohammad to stabilize the political life of the people, improve the religious life of the people and reprimand their moral life. Therefore, a complete new set of values of life was placed in front of the population. He preached the Arabs to shed off their pride and the egoistic nature of their ancestry. The advent of Islam into India started from the time the Turks started to flock in from Afghanistan and became the early conquerors, but it is Mohammad Ghorī who is considered to have laid the foundation of the Muslims in India. Prithviraj Chauhan was defeated and thus the establishment of Muslim rule started from 1193 AD. The rule of the Muslims continued until the British came over India and overtook all the ruling powers.

Islamic Religious Beliefs: The holy book of Islam includes the Qur'an. The Qur'an affirms that "With God, the '*din*' is '*al-Islam*'" i.e. "With God, true religion is Islam". The identification of someone as a "Muslim" gave emphasis to being a member of the community of those who recognize the Qur'an as the record of God's revelation and Muhammad as the messenger of God, with less emphasis on the particular practices and behavior of the individual Muslim (cited, Martin, 2004).

The religious belief of the Muslims fall under 6 heads which they term to be the "Articles of Faith"—

- Faith in the unity of God
- Faith in angels
- Faith in Prophets
- Faith in books of revelation
- Faith in afterlife
- Faith in destiny

Islamic Spiritual Practices: The Muslims believe in the existence of the *ruh* or the spirit. In Islam, spirituality is defined as making a link of the actions of the individuals to the purpose of life. It is considered that if a person does their *salah* or prayer without having any knowledge of what he is reciting then his actions are not considered spiritual in nature. Spiritual life is generally practiced by the Muslims when an individual denounces the materialistic things in life and turns to individual *ibaadat* or prayer. The Muslims follow five rites of worship which is related to the healing traditions that is imbibed within the followers of this religion. The religious rituals of Islam includes the five "Pillars of Islam"—

- Testimony of Faith (Shahaadah or Kalima)
- Prayer (Salat)
- Almsgiving (Zakat)
- Fasting (Sawm)
- Pilgrimage (Hajj)

It is believed that if an individual follows the religious rituals tangled within the religion then one can enjoy the mercy and blessings Allah by forbidding all the evils. It is taken into account that if one doesn't follow the moral codes laid down as per the Muslim laws then he can be punished by the supreme force and might suffer from ill health.

Overview on Healing: Healing is a path of action of the restoration of physical condition from a disturbed, diseased or injured organism. Healing is many a time correlated with the idea of comprehensiveness, narrative, and spirituality. Spiritual healing leads to the preservation of health, emphasizes on meditation, specific movements of the body so that the health of the person is reinstated to its normal state. The Islamic physicians believe in the belief of the patients that healing comes from God and the physicians are just the instruments of the Healer. They give the same kind of medications to both the person, affected with similar pathology, still it's found that one of them heals through the application of the medication and the other patient succumbs to the injuries in spite of the similar medications given to the other patient. As Prophet Mohammad proclaimed that—

“and when I am ill, it is He who cures me” (Qur'an 26:80).²

Health and Illness in Islam: Muslims view that God has trusted on their faith and has given them the body to use in the proper manner for the attainment of salvation. Substance abuse, smoking or any other agent that can harm the body is strictly forbidden. Ablution before prayer is compulsory and includes rinsing of the hands, arms, face and feet. Islam verifies human sexuality as a gift from God when it's enjoyed through the person's legitimate will. Sexual activities outside the marriage are considered to be derogatory in nature and are also believed to harm the body and soul. Following a healthy pattern of life is the considered as a religious commitment to mankind. Illness, on the other hand, is believed to be a trial by God. It is believed that the pricking of a finger will wash away all the sins of one's life if the individual can bear it with proper patience and piousness. Many Muslims believe that a jinn or invisible spirit may dwell in the body and cause sickness. The Muslims are of the opinion that for every illness there is a cure. It might not be present in the medical sphere, but praying for healing and seeking medical care leads one to regain their health status. The assistance of the Muslim scientists as well as clinicians in the past to the present day contemporary biomedicine across the globe has added to the rich custom of Islamic medical science. It also strived to achieve a balance in the use of “prophetic” and “spiritual” healing practices in Muslim communities. Therefore, during one's illness, Muslims are guided to seek God's help with endurance and prayer, increase the commemoration of God to acquire peace, request for forgiveness, provide more charity to the needy, and either read or listen to more verses of the Qur'an. The Muslims believe that God rewards those who put up with their suffering with tolerance and faith in God's mercy. To sum up, sickness is considered as a means to a closer association with God, the Healer.

Islamic Spiritual Healing Tradition: The practice of Spiritual Healing is called *Ruqya* in Islam. The process of Spiritual Healing revitalizes the body of the human being through different focal points of the body. In the Islamic traditions, the processes used by the spiritual healers are both the biomedical remedial measures along with the spiritual ways. The technique on the spiritual lines follows the scientific principle which makes use of the patient's latent energy and the power that is stored in the devotion and meditations of the Prophets or the messengers. The spiritual healers maintain the claims that if blood flow is correctly channeled through a balanced and stable system then the driving force of that energy will boost up the energy of the

² Source: <http://quran.com/26/80>

weak organs. The spiritual healers thus channel the blood to the affected area of the individual and heal the pain.

Traditional Healing Beliefs and practices: Spiritual Healers employs “prophetic medicine” which is also based on the recommendation of Prophet Muhammad, which is recorded in the *hadith* and the verses in the Qur’an. Proscription of pork, alcohol, and other substance abuse, the customary consumption of fruits and vegetables, yogurt, milk, and averting overeating are features of this prophetic medicine. The utilization of honey and black seed are widespread among the Muslims as defensive medicines and treatments for a range of gastrointestinal and dermatological disorders. Many Muslims follow the traditional Arabic or Unani Medicines. Traditional doctors are referred by the people as Hakims. The methods adopted by them are primarily the use of homeopathy, herbal medicine, chiropractic, and naturopathy. People many a times have an “evil eye” which forms due to jealousy and this result into adverse affects in the human body. This “evil eye” can be ward off by the phrase “Masha Allah” (Whatever God Wills) before giving any compliments to anyone.³ A few traditional healers also use charms and sacrifices to the spirits to ward off any evil influence upon the individuals.

Folk Medicine for Healing in Islam: The hadith collection of Islam consists of *Sahib-al-Bukhari*. Al-Bukhari’s huge work encloses less than one hundred entries that are of highly vital in the field of medicine. Other collections on folk medicines exist in *al-Tibb al-Nawabi*. The *al-Tibb al-Nawabi* is regarded as the prophetic medicine by the followers of Islam. Four categories are identified in Islamic folk medicine as major causes of disease: sorcery, the evil eye, jinn, and adverse routine conditions (e.g., adverse weather, food problems, accidents, etc.) [Cited, Martin, 2004]. Holy power is many a times apparent in the amalgamations of Quranic verses and magical spells in diversified forms: Quranic verses are worn on the body or recited; direct recitation of Quranic verses from a holy person; an object from a holy location and religious tombs; and so on.

Traditional and Modern View of Islamic Medicines in Healing: Europe started to make advances in the field of medicine in the 11th century as they started to note the fact that they were behind the Arabs in every field. Upgradation in the knowledge of medicine was done by the European scholars by going through the Arab scripts. The similar sources of informations were used in the other European schools, which thrived in Seville, Montpellier, Paris, Padua, Bologna, and elsewhere in Europe. Traditionally the Muslims considered that the study of medicine as a way to strengthen the faith on Allah. The Islamic scholars (*Ulama*) point out that the Islamic Law (*Shariah*) has five prime objectives which are obligatory for the society and the individual to safeguard. The major priorities of a Muslim’s life are as follows: faith, life, mind, posterity and property. During the traditional Islamic civilization the hospitals were secular in nature, patients of both the sexes had separate wards, separate nurses, bath and water supplies so that the Muslims could pray five times a day by being sacred and had practicing

³ Source: <http://www.hibamagazine.com/tag/protection-from-evil-eye/>

physicians⁴. Therefore, healthiness of mind and body helps obtain wealth and progeny, rear posterity and execute religious commitments in a true sense. A healthy mind and body facilitate to maintain the objectives of the Shariah, and the information of medicine intends at a healthy mind and body. It seeks to preserve all those goals which are penned down in the Sharia. Even in the contemporary society, with modern values and ways of life, the Muslim physicians strives all the means to look after the needy in terms of maintaining good health. It promotes the preservation of a healthy body and mind. Their prime endeavor is to make the Muslim followers conform to the norms and regulations in order to survive as healthy individuals on this planet.

Muslim Scholars on Healing: The early Muslim scholars provided different ways in the field of medicine, such as Avicenna, who was often, called the “prince of physicians”. He left behind enormous words in medical articles because attaining a healthy living is a Muslim’s sole purpose. Ibn Haytham (965–1039 C.E.) left his eminent footprints in the field of optics. Society rightly acclaims him with the nickname as the “father of optics”. Another stalwart figure who made an immense contribution to the art of medical writing is Ali ibn al-Abbas al-Majusi. Al-Majusi had gigantic understanding on medicine and its importance. His studies led to the development of numerous branches of modern medicine. He is celebrated for his notable thesis on the circulation of blood in the human body. Muslim scholars are of the view that healing engrossed physical, psychological, and spiritual processes. In order to conquer illness, scholars noted that an individual must apply both physical treatment as well as spiritual strengthening. Ibn Sina held up the view of the advantages of prayer. He opined that the obedient must look for proper medical treatment as well as to hunt for spiritual remedies (Dogan 1997, 7). Thus, making *dua*⁵ without looking for medical treatment does not authorize the *dua*. It is mandatory for the Muslims to seek out medical cure (Rahman 1987, 48). Al-Dhahabi (an influential *hakim*) a traditional Islamic scholar and historian, claims the benefits of Islamic ritual prayers to be fourfold: 1) Spiritual; 2) Psychological; 3) Physical; and 4) Moral⁶. In the modern times, Muslim intellectuals are inspired by Western scientific studies probing the usefulness of prayer and have begun to relate modern research methods to the ground of Islamic healing.

The Concept of Ibadat: The holy law of Islam (the *sharia*) differentiates between two kinds of practices: *ibadat* (it promotes the relations among human beings as well as the devotional nature of man towards God) and *muamalat* (societal principles). Muamalat is such a law that channels human behavior with each other in the society. The *ibadat* comprises of the *salat* (prayer), *zakat* (alms giving), *sawm Ramadan* (fasting during the holy month of Ramadan), and the *hajj* (the pilgrimage). The *ibadat* are the duties of the individual that each mentally capable, grown-up, and healthy Muslim (male and female) is compelled to perform. The mandatory five daily prayers must be performed during health and sickness except when a patient is cognitively unable. The desired (*ikhtiyari*) time for prayer is from the time of sunrise to sunset until the

⁴ In 931 A.D., the Caliph Al-Muqtadir from the Abbasid dynasty, ordered the Chief Court-Physician Sinan Ibn-Thabit to screen the 860 physicians-of Baghdad, and only those qualified were granted license to practice (Hamarnesh 1962).

⁵ *Dua* is a strong recommendation by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

⁶ Source: <http://quranihealing.blogspot.in/2015/07/muslim-scholars-on-healing.html>

shadow of an object is equal to its length. The five prayers are desired to take place in the following order—

- Fajr—break of the day
- Zuhr—midday
- Asr—during the afternoon
- Maghrib—evening
- Isha—night ⁷



Through wudu⁸, the ritual washing, Muslims prepare for prayer in mind, body and spirit.



God is most great.



O God, glory and praise are for You, and blessed is Your name, and exalted is Your



God is most great.



Glory to my Lord, the Highest.



God is most great.



All prayer is for God and worship and goodness. Peace be on you, O Prophet, and the mercy of God and His blessings. O Lord, make me and my children steadfast in prayer. Our Lord, accept the prayer. Our Lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers on the day of judgment.



Peace and mercy of God be on you.

When the patient regains consciousness and lucidity, compensation for the lost prayers is usually needed. A patient who is bed-bound can perform prayers lying on bed. Every prayer takes about 5–10 minutes and the patients are required to face toward the Ka'abah⁹ during the prayers if they are able to do so. (Cited, Shahri, 2005). In Islam, when a Muslim performs prayer, he or she relies on the powerful being i.e. Allah. Muslims regard that Allah is the *As-Shafi*, The Healer is believed to simplify the pain and suffering of the patient. It is believed that he offers the patient the relief from the pathological condition. This thereby reduces the patient's

⁷ Source for the picture on prayer positions: Source of the above pictures-- Breuilly, Elizabeth; O'Brien, Joanne; and Palmer, Martin. *Religions of the World*. New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1997.

⁹ The cubical building built by the Prophet Abraham inside the Holy Mosque in Makkah.

apprehension of his/her illness and its related problems which was bothering him for so long. Decline in one's nervousness soothes him psychologically and augments his coping skills. Prayers help to discharge the burden of the soul and enlarge the chest. Prayers are considered to be the best possible ways by which man becomes one with God. Ibn Majah and Al Hakim narrated that Prophet Mohammad was of the view that—

*“Be it known to you that your best deeds are prayers.”*¹⁰

The Concept of “Dua”: *Dua* is generally an unprompted, amorphous, conversation with God. Every *dua* is a form of prayer, only a prayer performed carefully becomes a *dua*. The *dua* is the very soul of worship because it venerates God, glorifies His magnificent attributes, and puts faith in Him. A *dua* is considered most promising when enclosed broadly to hunt for protection from evil, plead for the good of this world, and salvation in the afterlife. A *dua* also serves as a charm to ward off evil, or secure grace of God. To quote from the verses of the holy Qur'an—

“Truly distress has seized me, but Thou are Most Merciful of those that are merciful.

Prayer of Prophet Ayyub (Job) – Qur'an 21:83-84.¹¹

Islamic Prayer—Healing of the Body, mind and spirit: Prayers help to adjust the balance of the mind and the body of the human beings. Scientific researchers are of the view that the timing of the Muslims' prayers are in correspondence with the physiological activities of the body. ‘*Seeking cure from prayers*’, a book authored by Dr. Zaheer Rabeh points out that cortisone is the hormone of activity that initiates to boost acutely in the human body with the advancement of the dawn time, and is correlated with the augmentation in the blood pressure. Individuals feel active after dawn prayer between 6-9 a.m. Thus the time after prayer is thought to be the best time for hard labour and seeking livelihood of an individual's life. “Ozone, which has an invigorating effect on the nervous system, and muscular and mental activity, reaches the highest levels in air at such a time. Prayer is prevention from varicose. Legs varicose is a common dysfunction in the legs veins, which takes the shape of big and zigzag veins filled with blood of a changed colour all along the lower limbs. The performance of 17 units (*Rak'ah*) of obligatory prayers, and some more of extra prayers, strengthens man's bones, and forces him to do a bodily movement not less than one hour daily. This happens all along the life of the Moslem, who never abandons prayers. Prayer is a *regular simple exercise* at different times, and helps keep the viability of the body specially the cardiac system and blood circulation. Prayers are also a good treatment for insomnia among the individuals. Thus, prayer is a psychological therapy that helps calm the soul and relieve all tension for many reasons, of which the most significant is: man feels that all his problems are very small in the face of the Greatness and Capability of the Creator Who handles this large universe”.¹²

Islamic Pilgrimages: All the Muslims considers their holy pilgrimage to Hajj as one of the duties in their lives as a human being. There are many sick, ill, mentally traumatized patients

¹⁰ Source: <http://www.islamanswering.com/subpage.php?s=article&aid=1192>

¹¹ Source: <http://www.comp.leeds.ac.uk/nora/html/21-83.html>

¹² Cited from Source:--- <http://www.islamanswering.com/subpage.php?s=article&aid=1192>

who go for the Hajj in order to seek blessings from Allah. It's believed by them that the Hajj purifies their body and soul and that they become free from all the anxieties in life. There are many Muslims who cannot make upto the Holy Mosque thereby goes to a mini-pilgrimage or *Omrah*. Some Muslims strongly proposes to go the Hajj or Omrah before their death. A successful trip of the Hajj or Omrah gives the patients a great positive impact on the patient's sense of healthiness and well-being. It psychologically heals them from the sufferings they had to endure.

Healing in Qur'an: The Qur'an is the holy book of the Muslims. Though it is not a scientific or a medical text but it is considered as a text which has the capacity to restore the health of the individuals. Two verses in the Qur'an (9:14, 26:80) refer to God as *As-Shafi*, "The Healer." There are six verses in the Qur'an that refers to the process of healing of the Muslim followers—

- And (Allah) shall heal the breast of the believers (9:14).
- Mankind there has come to you as a guidance from your lord and a healing from the (diseases) in your hearts and for those who believe, a guidance and mercy (10:57).
- And we sent down in the Qur'an such things that have healing and mercy for the believers (15:82).
- There issues from within the bodies of the bee a drink of varying colors wherein is healing for mankind (16:69).
- And when I am ill, it is (Allah) who cures me (26:80).
- And declare (O Muhammad) that (the Qur'an) is guidance and healing for the believers (41:44).¹³

Conclusion: Allah has constituted such a world for its followers which are full of means or *waseela*. It is believed by the Muslim followers that they would try their utmost level in maintaining the guidelines as prescribed in the Qur'an by Prophet Mohammad. The benefit of prayer that is exhibited in the Muslim tradition is totally scientific in nature and calls for great positive reception. Prayer or making Dua for the well-being of the sick are considered to be the means for the quick healing of an individual. Praying during sickness produces physical benefits such as reduces blood pressure, lifts a man up psychologically/emotionally and decreases one's depression for death. To sum up, in this 21st century too, the physicians consider the benefits procured by the prayer system of the Muslims.

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¹³ Source: <http://eshaykh.com/quran-tafsir/ayat-ash-shifa/>

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