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Preventive Measures for a Healthy Life: Towards an Islamic Perspective with Reference to COVID-19

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Abstract: Traditions and practices in food, resting, and hygiene or cleanliness are among the key factors deeply associated with human immunity against fatal diseases and viruses. *Al-Ṭibb Al-Nabawī* (Prophetic medicine in Islam), similar to popular herbal and Ayurveda medicine, promotes a symbolic narration “prevention is better than cure.” Drawing on this broader notion of *Tibbin Nabawī*, this paper addresses a critical question of how the “healthy lifestyle” prescribed in Islamic tradition provides a preventive measure against potentially fatal diseases and deadly viruses such as COVID-19. For this, the essay examines Islamic perspective on, among other things, *ṭahārah* (cleanliness), food habit and dieting, sleep and rest cycle, and pandemics. It argues that Islamic traditions on healthy lifestyle, which is largely consistent with the prescriptions of modern science, offer a unique physical and spiritual paradigm to fight toxic diseases of the human body and pandemics such as COVID-19.

Keywords: Islam; Divine Remedy; *Al-Ṭibb Al-Nabawī*; Healthy Lifestyle; Food-habit; Rest-circle

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Abstrak: Tradisi dan amalan dalam makanan, rehat, dan kebersihan adalah antara faktor utama yang sangat berkaitan dengan imuniti manusia terhadap penyakit dan virus yang boleh membawa maut. Al-Ṭibb Al-Nabawī (perubatan Nabi dalam Islam), mirip dengan ubat herba dan Ayurveda yang terkenal, mempromosikan periwayatan simbolik “pencegahan lebih baik daripada menyembuhkan.” Dengan menggunakan gagasan Al-Ṭibb Al-Nabawī yang lebih luas ini, makalah ini membahas persoalan kritis bagaimana “gaya hidup sihat” yang dianjurkan dalam tradisi Islam memberikan langkah pencegahan terhadap kemungkinan penyakit dan virus maut mematikan seperti COVID-19. Untuk ini, kajian ini meneliti perspektif Islam terhadap, ṭahārah (kebersihan), tabiat pemakanan diet, kitaran rehat, dan pandemik. Ia membahas bahawa tradisi Islam mengenai gaya hidup sihat, yang selaras dengan preskripsi sains moden, menawarkan fizikal unik dan paradigma spiritual untuk melawan penyakit bertoksik tubuh manusia dan pandemik seperti COVID-19.

Kata Kunci: Islam, Ubat Ilahi, *Tibbin Nabawi*, Gaya hidup sihat, Tabiat makanan, Lingkaran rehat

Introduction

The horrific pandemic of COVID-19 has once again reminded the humanity that there is nothing more important than preventive measures for a healthy life. Science as well as different cultural and religious traditions prescribe different preventive measures for the humanity. Popular herbal and Ayurveda medicine promote a symbolic narration “prevention is better than cure”. Likewise, *Al-Ṭibb Al-Nabawī* or Prophetic Medicine, divinely instructed and found in the tradition of Islam, encompasses both prevention and cure for the human body and soul. Many ideas and treatment in modern medical science, specially the food science, are very much relevant to the natural and divine practice of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). The Quran, the book of God (Allah in Arabic) declares: “We sent you (O Muhammad) not, but as a Mercy for all creatures” (Qur’an, Sūrat al-Anbiyā’, 21:107), which means that Qur’an singles out Mercy as the most important purpose of the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH). This can also be seen in the Qur’an’s characterization of itself as “a healing to the (spiritual) ailments of the hearts” and “a Guidance and Mercy” for the believers and humankind (Qur’an, Sūrat al-Yūnus, 10:57). Islamic injunctions

are therefore consistent with human nature, emphasizing on the healthy body, healthy mind, healthy society and healthy environment.

Islamic worldview provides a clear structure on how to deal the issue of spiritual and physical wellbeing of humanity which plays a vital part towards the realization of the worship (*'ibādah*) of Allah (Rahman et al., 2018). Islam as a holistic belief system puts optimum emphasis on the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of individuals and societies. Along with the care of the individual, safeguarding communities, including its weakest members, is of paramount importance in Islam. More than 1400 years ago, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught his followers various forms of hygiene practices that are still applicable in the 21st century (Vanguard, 2020). According to the Centre for Disease Control in the United States, the virus that causes Coronavirus and SARS is largely transmitted most readily by respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes (CDC, 2020). Islam provides clear injunctions on coughing and sneezing openly. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) instructed the believers to cover their faces when sneezing (Vanguard, 2020). The most obvious effect of sneezing and coughing without covering the mouth is the spread of airborne bacteria and viruses, in addition, droplets invisible to the naked eye, may fall onto surfaces or other people (WHO, 2020).

Modern science in general does not have any tension with Islam. In fact, recent scientific discoveries, in many cases, have helped us comprehend the essence and importance of some of the general injunctions and practices of Islam. In 2016, for example, Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine was awarded to Japanese Dr. Yoshinori Ohsumi for his discoveries of the underlying mechanisms of a physiological process called “autophagy”. Autophagy is a natural process by which the body degrades and recycles damaged cells, proteins and toxins. This is the body’s way of cleaning the house. It happens during starvation, calorie restriction, and fasting. If the body fails to engage in autophagy, damaged cells and structures can accumulate dangerously. Autophagy is one method that the body uses to naturally neutralize cancer cells and degrade cells infected by harmful bacteria and viruses (*New York Times*, Oct 03, 2016; *The Nobel Prize*, 2016). Amazingly, the very recent discovery of “autophagy” is inclusively alike to the divine decree of “fasting” (صيام) in Islam that was revealed in the Qur’an more than 1400 years before in Madīnah. In fact, all Abrahamic faiths—the major

revealed religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam—profoundly recommended the practice of fasting as a religious obligation to achieve the purification of heart and self-consciousness of God (in Arabic *tazkiyatun nafs* and *taqwā*). Even the non-Abrahamic faiths such as Hinduism, Buddhism or Taoism practice fasting as a deity ritual to control human's egocentric attitude and desire (IRO, 2019).

Islam maintains a profound balance between body and soul, where the interest of physical health and sound mind is more important than the interest of wealth of people (al-Qaradawi, 1993). The popular proverb “health is wealth” or “health first” is therefore an inherent philosophy of *Al-Ṭibb Al-Nabawī*. Drawing on this broader notion of *Al-Ṭibb Al-Nabawī* that envisions a healthy society characterized by environmentally sound, socially responsible and culturally friendly, this essay aims to examine how a “healthy lifestyle” in Islamic tradition provides a preventive measure against potential fatal diseases and deadly viruses. For this objective, we will first elucidate the notion of *tahārah* (cleanliness) focusing on ablution and other daily essential practices (section 3), followed by food habit and dieting (section 4), as well as sleep and rest cycle in Islamic tradition (section 5). To examine how Islamic traditions on healthy lifestyle originated over 1400 years before are still applicable today, we brought the example of COVID-19 in section 6. Section 7 concludes with some broader implications of this essay.

Preventive Measures for Healthy Life

Fatal diseases are largely incurable and very expensive in treatment, and can, once become epidemic, spread across people of all ages and classes. It is therefore crucial to know the causing factors and potential measures to prevent or control them easily. These diseases, like cancer, are not born in a single day or overnight, but take about six months to two years to develop in human body. People therefore need to know basic body chemistry in order to prevent these diseases, or to treat them, if already appeared, right away as fast as possible. Once people suffer from these diseases, treatment and healing often takes a very long time. The best approach therefore is preventing people from getting these diseases at the very first place. Almost 97% of cancer and other incurable diseases diagnosed and consulted with in 2016 reveals that the solution is interestingly in our own hands, practically for free.

Constipation, acidity, sleeplessness at night (no sleep), emotional stress (failure to manage stress), sedentary lifestyle and less water intake are among the basic body chemistry or the key factors observed in cancer patients and other fatal illness. Both worldview and way of life are therefore critically important for a healthy life (Rasheed, 2017; Basen-Engquist et al., 2020). Moreover, developing a good society and social order requires both individual healthy life and prosperous family (Islam et al., 2018).

A common statement found in both traditional and modern health science, “prevention is better than cure”, corresponds to what *Al-Ṭibb Al-Nabawī* stands for. In other words, the inherent philosophy behind the practice of *Al-Ṭibb Al-Nabawī* is “prevention of disease rather than therapeutic medicine” (Deuraseh and Lateh, 2014: 102). The former is nearly free while the latter is intensively expensive, time consuming, and associated with physical and mental trauma for individual and society (Rasheed, 2017). The Prophet (PBUH), in many occasions, kept advising his followers to ask Allah to grant certitude and wellbeing. He (PBUH) admitted that, “after certitude, no one has ever received a blessing greater than health and wellbeing,” which shows that “Islam honors good health, strength, and wellbeing and considered it as the most prized, precious, and generously gifts from Allah” (Deuraseh and Lateh, 2014: 102).

The common tendency of human being is to waste their time when they are healthy and to ignore the prevention of diseases but to give full attention to diagnosis and treatment of them. The Prophet (PBUH) was fully aware of this and hence he said, “There are two gifts of which many human beings are cheated: health and leisure” (Bukhārī Vol. 8, Book 76, No. 421). There are many reasons why the preventive measures for a healthy life are both crucial and critical in Islam. First, without good health and wellbeing, one cannot perform her/his ‘*Ibādah* (worship) properly. Abu Dardā’ al-Anṣārī (RA), one of the companions of the Prophet (PBUH), had once said, “To be healthy and grateful is better than to be ill and endure patiently.” The Prophet (PBUH), upon hearing this, said: “Allah loves healthy people, as you do.” With this in mind, an Arab came and asked the Prophet (PBUH): “What should I ask Allah after I complete each of my five daily prayers?” The messenger of God (PBUH) replied: “Pray for good health.” The man further asked: “Then what”? God’s Messenger (PBUH) reiterated: “Pray for good

health.” The man asked again: Then what? God’s Messenger (PBUH) replied again: “Pray for good health and wellbeing in this world and in the hereafter” (Al-Jauziyah, 2010).

Secondly, as indicated earlier, since being healthy is the most prized, precious, and generously gifts from Allah, preventive measures for a healthy life should be given the same degree of attention, and even more, as diagnosis and treatment of disease. It is because maintaining good health is something for which Muslims are accountable to Allah. Consequently, it is incumbent upon the followers of Islam to safeguard this blessing and not allow any change to overcome it through ill-usage (Deuraseh and Lateh, 2014).

Third, as a steward or vicegerent (*khalīfah*) in this planet, Islam teaches us to maintain balance not only within human body but also with nature (Islam, 2012). If the balance of nature is disbanded, the nature of the environment can be catastrophic. Similarly, if a human loses the balance in lifestyle concerning, for example, food habits, rest and hygiene, his/her body will undeniably have an imbalance making adverse reactions. Like nature, human body is a complex system, and everything has to be at a sustainable level (Khan, 2019). While there are a plethora of issues covered in the *Al-Ṭibb Al-Nabawī* for a healthy life, this paper examines four fundamental issues: cleanliness, food, sleep, and COVID-19.

Cleanliness (ṭahārah) in Islamic Tradition

***Ablution (wuḍū’)* and its benefits**

The physical cleanliness and wearing clean garments are not only important factors for sound health and sound mind; they are also indispensable ingredients of *‘ibādah* for seeking the pleasure of Allah (Omar et al., 2018). Performing ablution (*wuḍū’*) in Islam is considered one of the most cleansing methods to clean and purify some important parts of human body. Washing face that includes cleaning mouth up to the throat and nose; two hands up to the elbow; wiping the head, ear and neck; and washing the feet until the ankle are mandatory to perform a complete ablution. Muslims perform ablution at least five times daily before five daily prayers. Ablution has many physical and spiritual benefits. It reduces stress, restraining oneself from anger, and control high blood pressure. In a scientific study on the health effects of

ablution, Magomed Magomedov, Ph.D. in Medical Sciences, Daghestan State Medical Academy, found the followings:

- Chinese medicine singles out more than 700 biologically active spots on the human body. For their quick effect, the “reflex therapy” named sixty-six drastic spots, aggression spots, antique spots or prime-elements spots. Sixty-one of the drastic spots are located in the zones required for ablution before performing prayer. Other five are located between ankle and knee. Since it is desirable (*Sunnah*) to wash the leg up to the knee, ablution becomes a kind of treatment complex, which includes the hydro-massage of the BAS (biologically active spots), their thermal and physical stimulation.
- Face ablution, apart from the purely refreshing effect on the thermal skin receptors, “recharges” such organs as intestines, stomach and bladder, and has a positive effect on the nervous and reproduction systems as well.
- The BAS responsible for the osseous system, intestine, nervous system, lumbar area, stomach, pancreas, gall bladder, thyroid gland, solar plexus and others are situated on the right leg. Thus, ablution activates those systems and organs and improves their functioning.
- The BAS responsible for the work of hypophysis, the brain organ that regulates the functioning of the endocrine gland and controls growing, are located on the left leg.
- More than a hundred BAS are located in the cochlea area. They can be compared to the body’s “control board”. Ear ablution is desirable (*Sunnah*) while doing ablution.
- The massage of the ear BAS harmonizes the work of almost all organs, decreases high blood pressure (due to the anti-hypertension and anti-allergic zones), and relieves tooth and throat pain.
- It is also important to intensively massage or rub the BAS. Proper methods of performing ablution in Islam suggests applying certain physical strength, which suits the physical state

of a person. This has also scientifically grounded explanation (Magomedov, 2009).

Along with the medical benefits stated above, there are at least two other benefits of *wuḍū'* from both religious and physical point of view. The benefits from the religious point of view are: achievement of the purity which brings peace of mind and tranquility, and getting rid of Satan's temptation, which removes the turmoil from the mind and brings back the spirits. Two benefits, along with the ones outlined above, from a physical point of view are: strengthening the heart and solidifying the footsteps (Yasin 2012). Since the heart is attached to the brain, the brain is strengthened, which means that the body and mind are strengthened too. It is well known today that anger causes many health problems especially when it is not controlled. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "Verily, anger comes from Satan and Satan was created from fire. Fire is extinguished with water, so if you become angry then perform ablution with water" (Abu Dawud, Book 43, No. 4784). Aside from prayers, Muslims are instructed to perform *wuḍū'* before going to bed: "Whenever you go to bed, perform ablution like that for the prayer, and lie on your right side" (Muslim, Book 48, No. 2710).

Dusting and cleaning the bed before sleeping

The Prophet (PBUH) said: "When any one of you goes to bed, they should take hold of the hem of her/his lower garment and then should clean (her/his bed) with the help of that and then should recite the name of Allah" (Muslim, Book 48, No. 2714). While taking a nap or sleeping, the Prophet (PBUH) encouraged two actions in preparation for it: to tidy up and/or clean the bed by shaking out and reciting a special *du'ā'* (prayer) before sleeping (Tumiran et al. 2018). Abu Hurairah (RA) narrated, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

When anyone of you goes to bed, s/he should shake out her/his bed with the inside of her/his waist sheet, for s/he does not know what has come on to it after her/him, and then s/he should say: "In Your Name (O Allah!) I have laid down on my side. If You take my soul, then have mercy on it. If You release it, then preserve it in the manner in which You preserve the men of right action" (Bukhārī, Book 50, No. 1210).

Using Siwāk/Miswāk (Chewing Stick)

There are a number of Prophetic traditions stating the virtues of *miswāk*, the practice of using chewing stick to cleanse the teeth. Cleansing the teeth properly is associated with good health and the pleasure of Allah. In an authentic narration, the Prophet (PBUH) said: “Were I not afraid that it would be hard on my followers, I would order them to use the *siwāk* (as obligatory, for cleaning the teeth) (Bukhārī Vol. 9, Book 90, No. 346). “The *miswāk* is purifying for the mouth and it is pleasing to the Lord (i.e., Allah is pleased with the Muslim who uses the *miswāk*)” (Musnad Ahmad Vol. 1, Book 1, No. 62). Islam teaches that four things including *miswāk* were among the fundamental practices for a healthy life. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Four things are amongst the practices of the *Al-ʿAnbiyā* (Messengers sent by God) - application of perfume, circumcision, *miswāk* and marriage” (Tirmidhī, Book 11, No.1080).

To elaborate further, there are ten practices and qualities that lead a person to be pure, clean, and cultured as narrated by Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah (RA), the Prophet (PBUH) said:

There are ten actions which are of *fiṭrah* (inherent qualities): (1) To trim the moustache, (2) To lengthen the beard, (3) To perform *Miswāk*, (4) To put water into the nostrils (cleansing the nostrils), (5) To clip the nails, (6) To wash between the toes, (7) To remove the hair from under the arms, (8) To remove the pubic hair, (9) To perform *Istinjā*’ (to clean oneself after answering the call of nature), and (10) To rinse the mouth. (Muslim, Book 2, No. 261).

The Prophet (PBUH) used to do *miswāk* before prayers, after coming back home and while waking up at night to perform prayers. He (PBUH) said: “When anyone of you stand at night to offer *salat* (prayers), you should clean your teeth with a *miswāk* because when you recite the Qur’an, an angel places his mouth on yours and anything coming out of your mouth enters the mouth of that angel” (Bukhārī, Vol. 2, No. 2117). “Whenever the Prophet (PBUH) would wake up from his sleep, he would use the *miswāk*” (Abu Dawud, Book 1, No. 56).

Hygiene in passing urine and stool

In Islam, cleanliness is so important that “it is half the faith (ʿīmān)” (Muslim, Book 2, No. 223). The Prophet (PBUH) practiced cleanliness

and ordered his companions to follow it. Among the practices, he used to keep his body and clothes clean, take bath on a regular basis, use perfume, and do *miswāk*; and he (PBUH) used to dislike the use of smelly things and used to appreciate neat and attractive appearance (Islamic Information Portal, 2013). While most people of the world consider urine and stool as unclean, Islam goes one step further in declaring them to be “ritually” unclean. It means, in the matters of worship (*‘ibādah*), a Muslim must perform *wuḍū’* in addition to cleaning her/his private parts properly after passing urinate or stools. The Quran says, “And Allah loves those who make themselves clean and pure (i.e. who clean their private parts with dust [which has the cleansing properties of soap] and water from urine and stools, after answering the call of nature]” (Qur’an, 9: 108).

Food-habit and dieting in the Prophetic tradition

In a narration of Abu Huraira (RA): A man used to eat much, but when he embraced Islam, he started eating less. That was mentioned to the Prophet (PBUH) who then said, “A believer eats in one intestine (is satisfied with a little food) and a *Kāfir* (disbeliever) eats in seven intestines (eats much)” (Bukhārī, Vol. 7, Book 65, No. 308). In this prophetic tradition, the phrase “eating in one and seven intestines” is just a metaphor respectively signifying eating sparsely and excessively. Moreover, eating in one or seven intestines is a figure of speech suggesting little or excessive eating. Interestingly, the mention of the number seven is only to signify excess as it is common in Arabic. Lastly, overeating is disliked in Islam, and a believer eating excessively shows his weakness (Cheema, 2016).

Etiquettes of drinking water

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “Do not drink directly from a water pitcher or any water container” (Tirmidhī, Book 26, No. 1885), and “when commencing to drink, first recite “*Bismillah*” (in the name of Allah) (Tabarani, Mu‘jamul Kabir, Vol.10, No. 10475). It is recommended to drink water with the right hand and sitting position, and taking three breathing pauses. The Prophet (PBUH) said: “Never eat and drink with the left hand because *Shayṭān* (Satan) eats with the left hand” (Muslim, Book 36, No. 2019). He added, “Sit down and drink...” (Bukhārī, Vol. 8, Book 76, No. 459). The modern science has also proved that drinking water whilst standing or walking can cause Gastrointestinal Tract (GIT)

damage, and may contribute to kidney damage, arthritis, nerve tension, and other disorders (Petre, 2017). Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) advised not to drink water only in one breath, but to drink it in two or three breaths. He (PBUH) breathed three times (outside the vessel) in the course of a drink and said: It is more thirst- quenching, healthier and more wholesome (Bukhārī , Book 74, No. 5631). Anas said: So I also breathe three times in the course of a drink (Muslim, Bbook 36, No. 2028). Narrated by Abdullah Bin Abbas (RA), the Prophet (PBUH) said: “Do not blow from your mouth into food and water” (Tirmidhī, Book 26, No. Book 26). To end with, Muslims are instructed to recite *Alhamdulillah* [All praise is due to Allah] after drinking water. By this act, the followers of Islam actually praise the Almighty Allah who gave them water to drink without which nobody can survive on earth (Quran Reading, 2020).

Ibn al-Qayyim explained the negative effect of drinking whilst standing and the importance of drinking whilst sitting:

Drinking whilst standing has numerous negative effects, one of which is that it does not fully quench the thirst and does not settle in the stomach so that the liver can distribute the nutrients to other parts of the body. Rather it comes to the stomach with speed and force, and there is the fear that it will cause a chill or disturbance, and may pass quickly to the lower parts of the body without moving gradually. All of that is harmful to the drinker, but if he does it occasionally or in the case of need, it will not harm her/him. (Zaad al-Ma‘aad, Vol. 4, p. 229).

Keeping two-third (2/3) empty stomach for water and air

Miqdam bin Ma’dikarib (RA) said: “I heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) saying: “A human being fills no worse a vessel than his stomach. It is sufficient for a human being to eat a few mouthfuls to keep his spine straight. But if he must [fill it] then one third for food, one third for drink and one third for air” (Ibn Mājah, Book 29, No.3349).

Umar Bin Khattab, the Commander of the Faithful (Second *Khalīfah*), was worried in the year of famine and he said, people do not seek the fairness of their stomach and the Prophet (PBUH) said: “The food of one person is enough for two, the food of two is enough for four, and the food of four is enough for eight” (Muslim, Book 36, No.

2059). Al-Nawawi said, “This is an encouragement to be sympathetic with food, that even a little food is enough to suffice, and there is a blessing in sharing with those present” (Sharh al-Nawawi ‘ala’ Sahih Muslim, Vol.14, p. 23).

On other associated etiquettes of eating, Umar bin Abu Salamah (RA) reported: Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said to me, “Mention Allah’s Name (i.e., say *Bismillah* before starting eating), eat with your right hand, and eat from what is near you” (Bukhārī, Book 70, No. 5376; Muslim, Book 36, No. 2022). Islam recommends its followers to maintain balance in eating and have sympathy to share food with others. Islam does not deprive a Muslim of the good of life, but rather promotes a healthy and balanced lifestyle in food consumption and spending wealth. Allah (SWT) says:

O you who have attained to faith! Do not deprive yourselves of *Ṭayyibaat* (the good things) of life which God has made lawful to you, but do not transgress the bounds of what is right. Verily, God does not love those who transgress the bounds of what is right” (Quran, Al-Mai’dah, 5:87).

The Arabic phrase *Ṭayyibaat* means “good things,” or adorable and the delicious that souls desire, and hearts tend to. The Almighty Allah says: “Give to close relatives their due, as well as the poor and needy travelers. And do not spend wastefully. Surely the wasteful are like brothers of the devils. And the Devil is ever ungrateful to his Lord” (Qur’an, Al-Isrā’, 17:26-27). Therefore, the moderation and balance in lifestyle in both food habit and spending money are among the moral mandates in Islam.

Fasting for dieting

One of the healthy practices found in the prophetic traditions is fasting. Fasting is also a healthy dieting for the human body and soul. In Islamic tradition, fasting in the month of Ramaḍān is mandatory. It is a special medicine for both physical and mental desires to enhance physical fitness and spiritual strength. According to medical scientists, the best of all medicines is rest and fasting. Fasting strengthens our metabolism, prevents diseases, saves medical bills, and enhances longevity (Estima 2018). Fasting is the only ‘*ibādah* (worship) with no outer manifestation; a special package for enhancing *taqwā* (love, fear, and consciousness of Allah); a special method with far-reaching social implications (helping

the poor, feeding the hunger, etc.); and a comprehensive training kit to control and reshape the *nafs* (souls, desires) (Mawdudi, 2013).

Apart from the obligatory fasting in the month of Ramaḍān, the Prophet (PBUH) used to fast other time in every one day on-off or at least twice a week on Monday and Thursday. It was narrated by Ḥaḥṣah (RA): “When the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) would lie down, he would place his right hand under his right cheek, and he used to fast on Mondays and Thursdays” (An-Nasa’i, Vol. 3, Book 22, No. 2369). This is a magnificent preventive remedy for standard dieting. It is very hard to find any other intervention that has such compelling benefits on health and longevity than fasting by eating around just 40 percent less food in daily dieting practiced by the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) 1400 years before. Fasting, as stated earlier, is one of the best dieting methods for both physical and mental desires and works as autophagy that prevents numerous incurable diseases.

‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-’As (RA) said: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH), said to me: “It is sufficient for you to fast three days every month, because for every good deed you will have (the reward of) ten like it, so that will be like fasting for a lifetime” (Muslim, Book 13, No. 1159). The Prophet of Islam used to fast on the “white days” (*Al-Āyyām Al-Bayḍ*) which refer to the 13th, 14th, and 15th of the lunar calendar. It may not be the same days each month of the solar Gregorian calendar. The days are named as such due to the moon being full and the light it reflects is at maximum (Hashmi, 2017). The word lunacy originates from the Latin “*lunaticus*,” meaning “of the moon”, and has long been associated with mental health. Aristotle is said to have held that the brain was the “moistest” organ in the body and thereby most susceptible to the influences of the moon, which triggers the tides. Although scientific evidence is inconclusive, the gravitational hypothesis holds that the moon’s gravitational pull has the power to affect animal feelings and behavior, as animal physiology (particularly bodily fluids) are subject to seasonal, lunar, and circadian rhythms. Moonlight itself may have effects on the human physiology (McCrae, 2011).

Some studies have shown that the lunar cycle has a particular impact on human reproduction, specifically fertility, menstruation, and birth rate. During the full moon, it is said that the lunar effect decreases sleep quality and diminishes melatonin levels. Animal studies reveal

that the lunar cycle may affect hormonal changes (SeekersGuidance, 2020). Fasting during the “white days” therefore has special positive impacts on health and mind.

Eat of whatever it is lawful (ḥalāl), and good (ṭayyib)

Ṭayyib, a very comprehensive word with a great place in the Qur’an and *Sunnah*, literally means to be good, pleasant, agreeable, and lawful. It also means to be clean, wholesome, gentle, excellent, fair and legitimate. From these meanings, the general meaning for *ṭayyib* we can generate is anything that is good, pure and harmless. Islamic approach to a healthy lifestyle includes treating our bodies with respect and nourishing them with, not only faith, but also with lawful, nutritious food. A major part of living life according to the Creator’s instructions is implementing a pure diet and lifestyle. Choosing real or right food and avoiding the impure or harmful ones is essential for good health. Our bodies and the health of our families are our *amānah* (trust) entrusted upon us by the Creator and we have to be accountable to Him (Saeed, 2020). The Islamic prescription on a pure diet contains at least four issues:

- (a) Lawful and good. The Qur’an (Al-Baqarah, 2: 168) says: “Eat of whatever is in the earth, provided it is lawful (*ḥalāl*), and good (*ṭayyib*).” Lawful in Islam are those food items, which Allah has declared lawful, and are earned in a manner that is consistent with the law of God, and the law of the land.
- (b) Not to be wasteful. The second important prescription in this matter is: “Eat and drink and be not wasteful” (Qur’an, Al-A’raf, 7:31).
- (c) Not to make good things unlawful. “O you who believe, forbid not the good things which Allah has made lawful for you” (Qur’an, Al-Ma’idah, 5:87).
- (d) Forbidden food. They are basically four in numbers, as stated in the Qur’an: “He has forbidden you only the *maitah* (dead animals), blood, the flesh of swine, and that which is slaughtered as a sacrifice for others than Allah (or has been slaughtered for idols, on which Allah’s Name has not been mentioned while slaughtering). But if one is forced by necessity without willful disobedience nor transgressing due limits, then there is no sin

on her/him. Truly, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (Al-Baqarah, 2:173).

Sleep and Rest-circle

Modern sleep scientists believe that sleep deprivation has deleterious effects on mental concentration, memory, mood, and quality of life. In addition, recent data indicates that sleep deprivation impairs endocrine and metabolic functions (BaHammam, 2011). Islamic perspective on sleep and rest-cycle are examines below.

Sleep is a sign of Allah’s creation

Almighty Allah says in the Qur’an: “And We made your sleep for rest and the night a covering and the day for seeking livelihood” (An-Naba, 78: 9-11). Allah has placed a desire for sleep in human’s nature in order to make her/him fit for work. The sleep is a sign of the creations of Allah. This has been echoed in Surah ‘Ar-Rūm in the Qur’an where Allah says: “And of His Signs is your sleep by night and by day and your seeking of His bounty. Surely in this, there are many Signs for those who pay to heed” (30: 23). The night has been made dark and protected from light so that human can enjoy a peaceful sleep more easily; while the day has been made bright for her/his livelihood with greater ease and facility. The darkness is needed for the peace and rest of human body, while the light during the daytime is important for earning livelihood (Mawdudi, 2006). Almighty Allah says: “It is He Who ordained the night for you to repose in it, and gave to the day its light. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who listen (to the message) (Qur’an, Yūnus, 10: 67).

Prophetic traditions in sleep and nap

(a) Early to bed and early to rise: Since the best time for rest and sleep is night, a number of Prophetic traditions confirm that the Prophet (PBUH) disliked being involved in any activity after the *Isha* (night) prayer. The Prophet (PBUH) said, “One should not sleep before the night prayer, nor have discussions after it” (Bukhārī, Book 9, No. 568). Besides, it is mandatory for Muslims to wake up for *Fajr* (dawn) prayer, which is about one hour before sunrise. The Prophet (PBUH) also disliked sleeping after *Fajr* prayer. It has been reported, he (PBUH) said that the early morning work is blessed by Allah, and he told his companions to gain this blessing by not sleeping after dawn prayer (BaHammam, 2011).

(b) Nap/*Qailulah*: The Concept of *Qailulah* (in Arabic) or midday napping is a well-established practice, which is widely advised in both Islam and Neuroscience (Tumiran et al. 2018). Clinical research shows, a nap of 20 minutes increases alertness, improves memory and learning capabilities, enhances creativity, improves physical health, reduces stress, and increases good mood (Weiler, 2017). Along with “sleep” (*sinah* and *nawm* in Arabic) that appears in several places in the Qur’an reflecting on specific function in human life, taking a midday nap is also encouraged and rewarded in Islam. Midday napping or *Qailulah* practice is encouraged in the Prophetic traditions so much that a number of hadiths roughly with the similar utterance have been narrated by Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dā’ūd, Ibn Mājah, and Al-Tirmidhī (Tumiran et al. 2018). One of the hadiths narrated by Anas (RA): “We used to offer the Friday prayer early and then have the afternoon nap” (Bukhārī, Book 11, No. 905). It is flexible, however, to have midday napping on the other days either before or after lunch; but on Friday, it is only after the Friday prayer. As described in various prophetic traditions, midday napping should take place at specific times, before noon or early in the afternoon (Kan’an, 2000; Tumiran et al., 2018).

(c) Adab/Manner of sleep and nap: In the narration of Ḥafṣah (RA), “When the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) would lie down, he would place his right hand under his right cheeks” (An-Nasa’i, Book 22, No. 2367). As mentioned earlier, while taking a nap or sleeping, the Prophet (PBUH) encouraged to clean up the bed and recite a special *du‘ā’* (prayer) (Tumiran et al., 2018).

Islamic prescription on healthy life and COVID-19

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus in Wuhan, China, has become a pandemic across the world. The entire world got virtually shattered, posing unprecedented consequences on health systems, economy and society for ever (Vieira et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020). As of August 17, 2020, there are over 21 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 across 185 regions/countries costing 775,489 lives (Johns Hopkins 2020). According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), people infected with the COVID-19 virus usually experience “mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment.” People with strong immune system can survive the infection, while older

people specially “with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.”

There is no treatment currently available for COVID-19 and it will take months or even year to develop a vaccine for this virus. Two strategies are currently recommended to hinder the spread of this virus. Since “the virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes” (WHO, 2020), the first strategy is cleanliness and respiratory etiquette, also known as “nonpharmacological practices” that includes covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, frequent handwashing and maintaining spatial separation between persons. The second strategy is “social distancing” that includes closure of workplace and educational institutions, avoidance of mass gatherings, quarantine of persons in contact with confirmed cases, isolation of suspected or confirmed cases, stay-at-home recommendations, and even mandatory quarantine or lock-down in some residential areas and cities (Vieira et al., 2020; CDC, 2020).

Although during the lifetime of the Prophet (PBUH), there was no plague in Arabia, he left a comprehensive ruling on a healthy lifestyle that systematically addresses the critical issue of plague as well. The generation after the Prophet (PBUH) faced a number of plagues and they applied these comprehensive Islamic guidelines. In fact, plague disease was a major concern during the medieval ages in Islamic world. Most of the Hadith books, which collected and classified most of the prophetic traditions, contain a special chapter or more related to plague. For example, al-Bukhārī dedicated two chapters in the book of Medicine for plague. Moreover, Muslim writers composed, in Arabic, more than 35 specified treatises and books about plague. Most of them approached the subject through religious point of view (Kadan and Angrini, 2014).

Some of the Prophetic advices regarding pandemic can be applicable to today’s COVID-19, and go in line with the critical suggestions given by the healthcare professionals and institutions such as the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) as well as the Centre for Disease Control in the United States (CDC, 2020):

- (a) QUARANTINE is a Prophetic advice: “Run away from the leper (the one with contagious ailment) as you would run away from a lion” (Bukhārī Vol. 7, Book 71, No. 608).
- (b) SOCIAL DISTANCING is a Prophetic command in which he instructed that those with contagious diseases should be kept away from those who are healthy” (Muslim, Book 39, No. 144).
- (c) TRAVEL BAN is a Prophetic teaching: “Do not enter a land where the plague (contagious ailment) has broken out; don’t leave from where it has broken out” (Bukhārī Vol. 7, Book 71, No. 624).
- (d) DON’T HARM OTHERS, if you have symptoms: The Prophet (PBUH) said: “Do not cause harm or return harm” (Ibn Mājah Vol. 3, Book 13, No. 2340).
- (e) HOUSE IS A MASJID, if necessary: The Prophet (PBUH) said: “We have been made to excel (other) people in three (things): Our rows have been made like the rows of the angels and the whole earth has been made a mosque for us, and its dust has been made a purifier for us in case water is not available” (Muslim, Book 4, No. 1060).
- (f) THERE’S A CURE; patience is the virtue: The Prophet (PBUH) said “There is no disease that Allah sent without sending for it a cure“ (Bukhārī , Vol. 7, Book 71, No. 582).
- (g) LET’S TREAT; ALLAH WILL CURE: The Prophet (PBUH) said: “There is a remedy for every malady, and when the remedy is applied to the disease it is cured with the permission of Allah, the Exalted and Glorious” (Muslim, Book 26, No. 5466).
- (h) FACE MASKING is a Prophetic teaching: Prophet (PBUH) while sneezing, would cover his face with his hand or with his garment” (Tirmidhī, Book 43, No. 2969).
- (i) WASH HANDS every time you enter home: The Prophet (PBUH) said: “Cleanliness is half of faith” (Muslim, Book 2, No.432)
- (j) HOME QUARANTINE is a Prophetic advice: “The plague (contagion) patient who remains in his home with patience

and expectation of reward, knowing that nothing will befall him other than Allah's decree will attain the reward or a martyr“(Muslim, Book 33, No. 239).

Conclusion

The life of the Prophet (PBUH) is the embodiment of the Qur'an. The Prophetic tradition or *sunnah* is the way of life for the entire mankind in order to live a better life. As mentioned, he was sent as a “Mercy for all creatures” as declared in the Qur'an. His sayings, actions and recommendations are therefore full of wisdom and consistent with the changing contours of human societies across ages. He was also sent to teach and purify the humankind as described in the Qur'an: “It is He (God) who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom - although they were before in clear error” (Jumu'ah, 62:2).

The essay shows, the tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) and his customs in dieting, sleeping, and cleanliness correspond to a “healthy life” that incorporates both body and soul, individual and society, humans and other species. This healthy lifestyle serves a protective measure against fatal diseases and viruses so that the followers of Islam can worship their lord Allah and engage themselves for the service of the humanity. *Al-Ṭibb Al-Nabawī* thus has the potential not only to promote a balanced and healthy lifestyle as championed by the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) but also to improve a moderate, healthy and peaceful life. Although the broader implications of the Islamic traditions of healthy life on body, soul and society are yet to be fully scientifically known, some of the recent scientific discoveries have revealed amazing impacts. We have, in this essay, brought the issue of autophagy, for example, showing the surprising healing impacts of fasting in human body. As we have discussed, along with one full month of obligatory fasting during the month of Ramaḍān, there are also recommendation of three days of fasting in each month.

The Islamic prescription of a healthy life is to be enjoyed both individually and collectively. Islam therefore puts much emphasis on family institution and regards it as a core foundation of a society. Healthy life is the fundamental instrument to generate a happy and wealthy family. Without physical well-being and sound spiritual disposition, a

society cannot sustain to be a healthy nation. Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1993), an eminent scholar of Islam, therefore advised to take care of the family where the mother and her newborn baby are the primary pillar to build up a good and healthy society. Islam encourages everyone to enjoy the blessings of Allah in a balanced and healthy way. ‘Amr bin Shu’aib (RA) reported: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, “Eat, drink, and give in charity. Wear nice clothing, but without pride and extravagance. Verily, Allah loves for His blessings to be seen upon His servants” (Musnad Ahmad, Vol. 4, Book 32, No. 3605).

The holistic approach contained in *Al-Ṭibb Al-Nabawī* includes treating our bodies with respect and nourishing them with not only faith but also lawful (*ḥalāl*) and nutritious food. A major part of living life according to the divine instructions is implementing a pure diet and lifestyle. Choosing the right food and avoiding the impure elements and practices are essential for good health. Since our bodies and our families are a trust (*amānah*) from Allah, paying attention to a healthy lifestyle is of paramount importance for the followers of Islam.

Islamic traditions in dieting, napping and hygiene and all other the criteria discussed in this essay are especially important during difficult times such as pandemics. We have seen that some Prophetic traditions regarding hygiene and various prescriptions during pandemics are very much relevant to the “nonpharmacological practices” and “social distancing” strategies suggested by modern medical science and practitioners in the wake of COVID-19. Islamic traditions on the preventive measures for a healthy life are more than 1400 years old; nevertheless, they are, as applicable in the 21st century problems, appreciated by the scientific community today.

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