Al-Islam.org
Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project
Published on *Al-Islam.org* (https://www.al-islam.org)



# 49) Piety And Health

One of the affairs in relation to which man should observe Taqwa is the observation of piety concerning his health. One has to be careful about his diet, food, health, factors causing diseases, environment, and to keep away from contagious diseases whether viral or non-viral. He should never have the impression that Taqwa only concerns the soul and it has nothing to do with the body, for Taqwa is to keep away and be careful of all what is harmful for human beings, whether it is physical or spiritual. That which is harmful has been prohibited by the Islamic laws. Imam Ali (AS) has defined this kind of Taqwa as: "The fear of Allah...is the cure for the aliments of your bodies."[1]

Fortunately, the Lord of the universe has made man familiar with his physical constitution and condition of health in a way that he can diagnose his ailment and be the physician of himself.

Imam Ali (AS) has been reported as saying to a man: "You cure is in yourself while you do not know, and your disease is from yourself while you do not understand." Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said, "You have been made the physician of yourself. Ailments have been made clear to you and the signs of health are known to you and you have been guided to the cure. Therefore, see what you can do for yourself."[2]

There are Quranic verses and traditions that refer to the same issue. Furthermore, common sense confirms the same. Even those, who do not believe in religion, observe certain rules about health and hygiene in a way that they keep away from what is harmful to health. This can be seen even in animals. The Lord of the universe says: ***"...eat and drink and be not extravagant, surely He does not love the extravagant."***[3]

The great scholar Faiz Kashani, in his commentary, says: "God has gathered medicine in a half of a verse, when He said, "Eat and drink and do not be extravagant!"

As further explanation, it is related that Haroon al-Rasheed (the Abbasid Caliph) had an expert Christian physician who, one day, said to Ali ibn al-Hossain al-Waqidi: "There is nothing about medicine in your book whereas knowledge is of two kinds; knowledge of body (medicine) and knowledge of religion (jurisprudence)."

Al-Waqidi, in response, said: “God has summarized medicine in half a verse and he recited the above-mentioned verse. He added: “Our prophet (SAW) has said: ‘The stomach is the house of every ailment, and diet is the best cure. Give to each body what you have accustomed it with.”

The Christian physician said: “Your Book and Prophet have left no medicine for Galen.”

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported as saying: “Whoever eats little, will have a sound body and a pure heart, and whoever eats too much will get sick and will become hardhearted.”[4]

Ar-Rabee’, the doorkeeper of al-Mansoor ad-Dawaniqi (the Abbasid caliph) has been reported as saying: “One day, Imam Sadiq (AS) was present in the court of Mansoor. There was an Indian, well-versed in medicine. He was reading from medical books and the Imam (AS) was listening. When the Indian man finished reading, he said: “O Abu Abdullah! Do you want me to say anything to you? The Imam (AS) said: “No, for what is with me is better than what is with you.”

The Indian man said: “What is it?” The Imam (AS) said: “I can cure cold with hot and hot with cold, humidity with dryness and dryness with humidity and will entrust the affairs to God. I will also apply what the Messenger of Allah (SAW) has said. I know that the stomach is the house of all ailments and abstinence is a cure which restores health.”

The Indian man said: “And is medicine anything other than this?[5] Now, tell me where have you obtained this knowledge from?” The Imam (AS) said: “I have obtained it from my grandfather, from the Messenger of Allah, from Gabriel, and above all from the Lord of the universe, the Creator of souls and bodies.” The Indian man said: “You said the truth. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah and His servant and that you are the most learned man of your time.”

Perhaps it is for the same reason that Sheikh Mofeed, in elaborating the beliefs of Sheikh Sadooq, said: “Medicine is a sound science, the knowledge about it is proved, and its way is the revelation.”

He further says: “Scholars have learnt medicine from the prophets, and there is no way for the fact of ailment except through hearing, and there is no way for knowing the cure, except by the grace coming from God. So it is true that through hearing it from the scholars, who are aware of secrets and who relate from the infallible imams (a.s.) that this saying of Ameerol Mo'minin (a.s.) “‘The stomach is the house of every ailment, and diet is the best cure. Give to each body what you have accustomed it with” has been interpreted.

I do not claim that in our religion, medicine has been learned from God, but I am speaking of the early stage of creation when there was no way for knowing ailment and cure other than by revelation. There must be a relation between the Lord of the universe and the medical herbs He has created. How could man realize that he could cure fever with pansy, or cold with honey which is described in the Holy Quran as a cure of people? This is not possible save through the Real Physician that is the Wise God. It is He

Who knows all relations and has put medical properties in the herbs and He knows the cure for every ailment.

Asbagh ibn Nabatah has reported Imam Ali's advice to his son, Imam Hassan (AS) as follows: "O my son! Shall I inform you of four things so that you will not be in need of any physician?" Imam Hassan (AS) said: "Yes, O Ameerul Mo'minin!" Imam Ali (AS) said: "Do not sit for eating except when you are hungry. Do not rise up from eating unless you have an appetite for food. Chew the food well and go to the water closet before you go to bed. If you follow these instructions, you will not be in need of any physician." Then, the Imam (AS) said: "A Quranic verse has summed up the whole medicine: ***"Eat and drink and do not be extravagant..."***[6]

In another narration, Imam Ali (AS) has said: "If anyone follows the above mentioned instructions, he will not get sick unless death comes to him."[7]

The messenger of Allah (SAW) and the infallible Imams (AS) have been reported as saying: "One, who has many sorrows, his body too shall get sick."[8]

They have also said: "Avoid drugs as long as your body can tolerate the pain, but when your body cannot tolerate pain any more, then look for the cure!"[9]

Imam Ali (AS) has been reported as saying: "Get along with your pain as long as it is with you (as long as it does not harm you)."[10]

The Imam (AS) has also said: "A Muslim does not seek cure unless his disease overcomes his health."[11]

In relation to the curing of an ailment with something forbidden, Imam Baqir (AS) has been reported as saying: "Taqwa is necessary in all cases, but when the child of Adam is obliged (when there is no any way at all except unlawful), God makes lawful for him what is unlawful."[12]

About the cure of fever, jaundice, blood pressure, insanity, epilepsy and other disease, there are many traditions in *Bihar al-Anwar*.

There are also many traditions about the properties of fruits, cereals, vegetables, and various kinds of meat which make us more fond of our religion. For example, about the property of melon, the messenger of Allah (SAW) has said: "Eating melon is recommended to you, for there are ten properties in it. Melon is food, water, sweetmeat and at the same time it refines the bladder, cleans the stomach, increases semen and potency, cures cold, and brightens the skin."[13]

The same has been reported by Imam Ali and Imam Sadiq (AS).[14]

It is related that Imam Reza (AS) has versified the ten properties of melon as follows:

*“The days have offered to us a watermelon,*

*From the lawful gifts of the earth and abode of peace.*

*So said the Chosen Mustafa, my grandfather Muhammad;*

*It has great features that I have gathered and described in order;*

*Water, sweet, refreshment, fruit, cure, food, seasoning,*

*Refreshes the bladder, purifies the faces, and makes pleasant the breath.*

*These are exactly ten.”*[15]

About overeating, the messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported as saying: “Avoid overeating which ruins the body, causes ailment and prevents one from worshipping.”[16]

The Holy Prophet (SAW) has also said: “Eat when you feel hungry, drink when you feel thirsty, urinate when you are under its pressure, do not have sexual intercourse except when you need it, and go to bed whenever you feel sleepy, for in this case you will have sound body.”[17]

Imam Sadiq (AS) has been reported as saying: “If people are moderate in having food, they will have healthy bodies.”[18]

About fasting, the messenger of Allah (SAW) said, “Fast, in order to be healthy!” [19]

About travel, he has said: “Travel in order to be healthy and gain (morally or materially)!”[20]

About spending the night in worshipping, he has said: “Spending the night in worshiping makes the body healthy”.[21]

About the Hajj, he has said: “Perform minor and major Hajj to have healthy bodies, have more sustenance, have good faith, and be relieved from the burdens of people and your families.”[22]

The Prophet (a.s.) said: “Beware of cold at its (seasonal) begging and receive it at its end (of season), because it affects bodies in the same way as it affects trees; its begging burns, and its end makes (trees) send out leaves.” [23]

The messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported as saying: “Make use of the cold of spring, for it affects your bodies in the same way as it affects your plants, and avoid the cold of autumn, for it affects your bodies in the same way as it affects your plants.”[24]

There are many traditions about cleanliness, brushing and flossing the teeth, removing the body hair, taking bath and clipping the nails on Thursdays and Fridays.

On brushing the teeth, the Messenger of Allah (SAW) has said: “Were it not difficult for my nation, I would order them to brush their teeth before every prayer.”[25]

In the science of fundamental dogmas, the word ‘order’ denotes necessity. Hence, it means, “I would make the brushing of teeth before every prayer obligatory.”

Imam Sadiq (AS) has been reported as saying: “There are twelve features in the brushing of teeth; it cleans the mouth, strengthens sight, makes God pleased, makes the teeth white, fills up the cavities of teeth, strengthens the gums, increases appetite, removes the phlegm, strengthens memory, increases good deeds, and makes angles happy.”[26]

The Holy Prophet (SAW) has said: “A two-rak’a prayer while you have brushed your teeth is better than seventy rak’as of prayer without having brushed your teeth.”[27]

There are many traditions on how and when to brush one’s teeth whether horizontally or vertically, and the kind of brush to be used. When there is no brush, one can do it with his finger.

There are traditions about toothpicks too. The Holy prophet (SAW) has been reported as saying, “Make your mouth clean with tooth-pick, for it (the mouth) is the place of the two recording, guardian angels.”[28]

He has also said: “Use tooth-pick after having food, for it keeps your mouth and teeth healthy and increases your sustenance.”[29]

About entertainment, the Holy prophet (SAW) said: “From the rights of guest is to provide him with a tooth-pick”.[30]

There are also traditions on the kinds of toothpicks we use. We have been warned against using straw, the wood of pomegranate tree, salt tree, and some other woods which cause leprosy as toothpicks.

The etiquette of having food, washing the hands and not wiping them, eating with the hands, licking the fingers, eating with three fingers, drinking water, and how much to drink are the rules which show the greatness of Islam.

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported as saying: “Eating after you are full will cause vitiligo.”[31]

It would not be out of place to relate some anecdotes in this relation.

The Holy Prophet (SAW) has been reported by Imam Sadiq (AS) as saying: “A believer eats in one gut, whereas a disbeliever eats in seven guts!”[32]

As for the meaning of the tradition, Sayyid Razi, Rawandi, and others have expressed their opinions, the summary of which is that since a real believer, in order to gain strength for worshipping, serving Islam and the Muslims, what he eats is well-gotten; he eats as much as to remain alive, refrains from ill-gotten

food, and he has Taqwa, whereas an unbeliever does not care for what he is eating, what he is drinking, whether it is pork or lamb, and whether it is lawful or unlawful.

Therefore, the above-mentioned quotation means that a believer fills a part of his stomach from food, whereas an unbeliever fills his stomach and bowels as much as he can.

Luqman the wise has advised his son as follows: “My son! Whenever your stomach is filled with food, your thinking power will slumber, wisdom will become dumb, and all parts of your body will cease to worship God.”33

Prophet Jesus (AS) has been reported as saying to the Israelites: “O children of Israel! Do not overeat, for whoever overeats will sleep much, and whoever sleeps much will not perform his prayer properly, and whoever does not perform his prayer properly will be among the unmindful.”34

1. Nahj al-Balaghah, p. 626.
2. Wasa’il al-Shiah, vol. 11, p. 122.
3. Qur'an, 7:31.
4. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 63, p. 338.
5. Safeenat al-Bihar, vol. 2, p. 77.
6. Khisal, p. 229.
7. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 169.
8. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 59, p. 326.
9. Ibid., p. 66.
10. Ghurar al-Hikam.
11. Khisal, vol. 1, p. 161.
12. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 59, p. 82.
13. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 59, p. 297
14. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 63, pp. 194,197.
15. Ibid., p. 194.
16. Ibid., vol. 59, p. 266.
17. Ibid., p. 261.
18. Ibid., p. 266.
19. Ibid., p. 267.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Nahj al-Balaghah.
24. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 59, p. 271.
25. Safeenat al-Bihar, vol. 1, p. 674.
26. Ibid., p. 675.
27. Ibid.
28. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 63, pp. 436,443.
29. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 63, pp. 436,443.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., p. 331.
32. Ibid., p. 325.
33. Abwab al-Jinan (the doors to paradises).

34. Ibid.

---

**Source URL:**

https://www.al-islam.org/taqwa-piety-advice-ahl-al-bayt-sayyed-hussain-sheikh-al-islami-tooyserkani/49-piety-and-health#comment-0