

Ethics Of Healthy Discipline From Islamic Point Of View

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Abstract

Since its birth, Islam has prioritized health, placing it as second in importance to faith. In fact, embedded in the very essence of the divine law is the protection of the five essential needs of faith, life, progeny, property and mind. And, with only a little reflection, it becomes apparent that 60% of these essentials (three out of the five), namely life, progeny and mind, cannot be adequately safeguarded without the protection and preservation of health. Health is therefore an essential condition for the preservation of life which is why Islam has prized it so highly. God and the Prophet provided guidance through the divine law and countless hadiths in this direction. However, it must not be forgotten that with great health lies great responsibility: the promotion and protection of health not only concerns one's own self but also that of others and of the environment. Islam places equal emphasis on health promotion and health protection. Health promotion in Islam includes everything that protects and enhances human health, such as personal hygiene, nutrition, marriage and respect for the body, while health protection includes the avoidance of infectious diseases, protective measures against accidental injury, abstention from all harmful substances, such as alcohol, illicit drugs and tobacco, the responsibility of parents, healthy environment, protection of agriculture, role of the community and protection from infection. Islam therefore has an integrated holistic approach to health that we aspire to successfully achieve. Today, people strive and struggle to unfold and uphold many of the issues that they have identified as important elements to health as a human right, while Islam covered all these so-called, newly-founded health aspects centuries ago. Islam advocated for all the modern, man-made concepts aimed at the promotion and protection of health long before people began to acknowledge their importance. In reality, only with the turn of the 20th century did humanity begin to fathom and grasp the importance of health as a human right. Only then did people recognize that every human being's right to health must be indisputably acknowledged and be made a universal, indivisible and independent right. And, although it has taken various declarations to capture some of man's rights to health, we are still lacking in some areas as the rights of the human body have still not been captured. The value of Islam must therefore be acknowledged and recognized; we must allow ourselves to delve into its very heart to learn and be guided by all that it offers in this regard.

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Introduction

God and the Prophet have provided us with the means and the tools necessary to protect our own health, the health of others and our surrounding. Let us therefore recognize the power of religion, and use the many examples cited in the pages that follow. Religion is one of the strongest forces in our Region so I hope Muslims will use it and, use it wisely to look after their own health, that of their families, friends, fellow citizens and society and with it, advocate the universal common goal of 'Health for All'. The right to life is, from the Islamic point of view, the second most important human right. Nothing takes greater importance except the right to freedom. Evidence in support of this is found in the two Quranic verses: Persecution is even worse than killing (2:191) and Persecution is an even greater crime than killing. (2:217) These verses give a clear principle that persecution, which means a 'denial of freedom' is a far worse and greater offence than killing, which is a 'denial of the right to life'. This principle leads to a logical conclusion that freedom is more important than life. This is by no means strange, bearing in mind that the very humanity of man is the result of such freedom. We may remember in this context that God ordered His angels to prostrate themselves before man, a creature who can exercise his free will to choose whether to believe or disbelieve, be obedient to God or disobedient, do good or evil. However, according to Islam, the right to life follows very closely the right to freedom. God has decreed to the children of Israel and the rest of mankind that if anyone slays a human being, for anything other than in punishment of murder or for spreading corruption on earth, it shall be as though he had slain all mankind; and that if anyone saves a human life, it shall be as though he had saved all mankind. (5:32) It is my humble opinion that killing and saving life here are not confined to the physical sense only. Both are

viewed in the mental and moral sense as well. Clearly, what is meant by this verse is the saving or preserving of life, because it is God alone who grants life and causes death. (3:156) This is in the true and complete sense of initiating life and taking it away. Hence, when we talk of the right to life as a basic human right, we simply mean the right to preserve life, literally and morally. This right is not completely assured unless man is able to enjoy good health and live in a healthy environment. Both are integral parts of the right to life.

Basic rights

Human rights in Islam make up a fascinating mix in which privilege and obligation are inextricably intertwined. Each human right requires man to work hard to ensure, secure and preserve it all at the same time. To relinquish what is one's right is to relinquish a part of one's own humanity. Reflect, on the Quranic verse speaking about those who relinquished their right to freedom, either by choice or coercion: To those whom the angels gather in death while they are still wronging themselves, the angels will say: 'What were you doing?' They will answer: 'We were oppressed on earth'. (The angels) will say: 'Was not God's earth so spacious that you might have migrated to settle elsewhere?' Such will have their abode in Hell, a certainly evil end. Excepted are the men, women, and children who, being truly helpless, can devise nothing and can find no way. These God may well pardon, for God is indeed most lenient, much-forgiving. Anyone who migrates for God's cause will find on earth many places for refuge and great abundance. He who leaves his home, fleeing from evil unto God and His Messenger, and is then overtaken by death, his reward is reserved for him with God. God is much forgiving, merciful. (4:97-100) The same applies to those who relinquish the right to life. God says in the Quran: Do not kill yourselves, for God is merciful to you. Whoever

does this with malicious intent and by way of wilful wrongdoing, We shall make to suffer the Fire. That is very easy for God. (4:29–30).

Care of the body

In line with this we read a remarkable statement by the Prophet Muhammad, the like of which we cannot find in the statements of any human being. In a highly authentic hadith, the Prophet is quoted as saying: “Your body has a right over you”. [1] Fourteen centuries after Islam established the rights of man, people managed to issue the international declaration of human rights. Nevertheless, they have not yet arrived at the point where they recognize the rights of the human body. It is indeed true that our bodies have a rightful claim against us. This right requires each one of us to feed the body when it is hungry, rest it when tired, clean it when it gets dirty, protect it against all harm, take precautions against subjecting it to illness, provide it with the necessary treatment when it suffers from disease, and not to overburden it in any way. All this represents, from the Islamic standpoint, a right which must never be overlooked or neglected in preference to other rights, including God’s own rights over us.

Significance of health in Islam

Health is a necessary condition to the preservation of life. Indeed, it is an essential requirement for the establishment of God’s law in human life, for it is only healthy human beings that can properly implement this law in human society. According to Imam Al-Ghazali: “A proper understanding and implementation of religion, from the standpoint of both knowledge and worship, can only be arrived at through physical health and life preservation”. [2] Hence, Islam places health as second in importance to faith. The Prophet says: “Second to faith, no one has ever been given a greater blessing than health”. [3] In another hadith, the Prophet defines the relative importance of health and wealth:

“Wealth is of no harm to a God-fearing person, but to the God-fearing, health is better than wealth”. [4] Another hadith gives us the proper perspective of the essential things in life: “Whoever of you gets up in the morning feeling physically healthy, enjoying security and having his food for the day is like one who has the world at his fingertips”. [5] By contrast, health places on us a great responsibility, for which we are accountable to God. The Prophet says: “The first thing every servant of God will have to account for on the Day of Judgement is that God will ask him: ‘Have I not given you a healthy constitution?’” [6] The Prophet is also quoted as saying: “No one will be allowed to move from his position on the Day of Judgement until he has been asked how he spent his life, how he used his knowledge, how he earned and spent his money, and in what pursuits he used his health”. [7] Islam directs people’s attention to this blessing and alerts them to the fact that many people end up making a great loss as a result of their casual and negligent attitude to it. The Prophet says: “Many people give themselves a raw deal with regard to two blessings: health and spare time”. [8] Hence, he urges people to make the best use of their health and enjoy it. He is quoted as saying: “Make the best use of five things before the onset of five others: your life before your death, your health before your illness, your free time before being too busy, your youth before your old age and your wealth before you end up in poverty”. [9]

Health and Quran

The right to health, or rather, to health protection derives its importance from two factors that are inherent in human nature and the nature of the universe. The first is mentioned in the Quranic statement: He has raised the Heaven on high, and He has set the balance of everything so that you might not transgress the balance. Give just weight and fall not short in the balance. (55:7–9) These verses speak about the ‘balance’ God has implanted in the nature of the universe, with all

its structural, environmental and biological set-up, including human life. They thus draw our attention to the fine balance that applies to everything in the universe. It also makes clear that any distortion of this fine balance, whether it be excess on one side or shortage on the other, deliberate or accidental, may lead to extremely bad results that may rebound on man himself before affecting other things. God says in the Quran: Mankind, it is against your own souls that your offences rebound. (10:23) The other factor concerns the original condition in man's creation, which is that of his moulding in an upright status, as indicated in this divine address to man: O man, what has lured you away from your gracious Lord who created and moulded you and gave you an upright form. (82:6–7) Other Quranic verses give the same indication: Praise the name of your Lord, the Most High, who creates and proportions well. (87:1–2) By the soul and its moulding. (91:7) We indeed have created man in the fairest form. (95:4) To preserve this right moulding and fair form is an integral part of the purpose and objectives of Islamic law. As the famous scholar, Al-Izz ibn Abd al-Salam, puts it: "The divine law has been set in this form in order to secure what brings benefit to people and to prevent what is detrimental to them". [10] He goes on to explain his statement.

God's law is dedicated to benefit: it either prevents evil or brings about something good. When you hear God's address to the believers, contemplate what follows the initial address. You are bound to find that what follows either urges you to do something good or prohibits something evil, or combines both urge and prohibition together. He has pointed out in His book details of the harm involved in certain situations Health as a human right in Islam 16 to encourage us to avoid such harm, and pointed out the benefit involved in other situations to encourage us to seek such benefit.

Self-Discipline

From the Islamic standpoint, the right to health assigns responsibility in three different directions: to oneself, society and the state, all at the same time. It is first of all a responsibility to oneself. This, as has already been stated, is unique to Islam, summed up in the Prophet's statement: "Your body has a right over you". [1] If we follow Imam Al-Shatibi's classification, "health protection is ensured through two distinct matters. The first is to strengthen its structure and consolidate its foundation, which means to take good care of what we have of health, while the second is to protect it against any negative development, present or future, which means to take care lest it withers away". [12] This splendid distinction is outlined by Imam Al-Shatibi as applicable to all five needs, and it applies most clearly to the Islamic guidance to health protection. It outlines two types of measures. The first aims at strengthening and consolidating all aspects of health: physical, mental and environmental, or what we may call today as 'health promotion measures', while the second type are 'health protection measures' that aim to protect all physical, mental and environmental health aspects against any present or future negative developments The health promotion measures include everything that protects and enhances human health. It is remarkable that Islam considers any negligence in taking such measures a type of transgression. Sound nutrition, for example, is a health promotion measure, while neglecting to have proper and good nutrition, without reasonable justification, is contrary to health care. Islam considers this to be a transgression, as we read in the Quran: Believers, do not forbid yourselves the good things God has made lawful to you. Do not transgress; God does not love the transgressors. Eat of what God has provided for you of lawful and wholesome things. (5:87–88) These verses were revealed in connection with the case of some people who wanted to forbid themselves certain types of food, but their action was

considered to be hostile to health, as clearly understood from these Quranic verses.

Personal Care

Taking care of the whole body or of each particular organ is an important area of health promotion. Here are some of the texts that stress this aspect: Believers, do not attempt to pray when you are drunk, [but wait] until you know what you are saying; nor when you are in a state of ceremonial impurity, except if you are on your way, until you have bathed. (4:43) "It is incumbent upon any Muslim to wash his head and body once every seven days." [13] Believers, when you are about to pray, wash your faces, and your hands and arms up to the elbows, and pass your wet hands lightly over your heads, and wash your feet up to the ankles. (5:6) "Ablution [i.e. wudhu'] is part of being faithful." [14] "Only a believer maintains his ablutions." [15] "Perform your ablutions fully and properly." [16] "The Prophet used to wash his hands before eating." [17] "When he performed his ablutions, the Prophet used to rub his toes with his little finger." [18] "It is authentically reported that the Prophet wiped his ears from the inside using his forefingers and placed his thumbs on the outside, wiping both the inside and outside of his ears." [19]

Nutrition and Dietary Schedule

Another area of health promotion is balanced nutrition, in quality and quantity. Eat of the good things which we have provided for you as sustenance. (2:172) Eat of the good things which We have provided for you as sustenance, but do not transgress therein. (20:81) And He creates cattle: you derive warmth from them, and [various other] benefits; and from them you obtain food. (16:5) And He it is who has made the sea subservient [to His laws], so that you may eat fresh meat from it. (16:14) Eat of their fruit when it comes to fruition. (6:141) "Man does not overfill a container to worse effect than his stomach. Let suffice the sons of Adam a few

mouthfuls to sustain them. Should temptation be too strong for a person, let him make one-third for food, one-third for drink and onethird for his breathing." [29]

Focus for the body

Another aspect is the requirement to give every body organ its due measure of health care, to work within one's ability, to strengthen one's body by suitable fitness exercise and to do whatever is beneficial to human health. "Your eyes have a right over you." [33] "Fulfil what you can reasonably do." [34] "A strong believer is better than a weak believer." [35] "Maintain whatever is of benefit to you." [36] Protective measures which are within one's responsibility to oneself are based on God's clear order: Do not kill yourselves, for God is merciful to you. (4:29) It also relies on further statements such as: Do not with your own hands throw yourselves to ruin. (2:195)

Responsibility of society

We may now move on to the claim of the individual against society in relation to the right to health. It is again a two-tier claim of promotion and protection. The promotion part comprises all that is likely to enhance and strengthen one's inherent health balance. It takes numerous forms. 1. Parents' responsibility Parents owe it to their children to provide them with good nutrition. This is represented in the first instance by breast-feeding, in response to the divine statement: Mothers shall breast-feed their babies for two years; [that is] for those who wish to complete the suckling. (2:233) Another Quranic verse states: Weaning is within two years. (31:14)

Conclusion

It is a duty of an Islamic state to lay down guidelines and controls to ensure adherence to Islamic teachings. Blood, kidney or other organs donors actually fulfil a community duty [i.e. fardh kifayah] on behalf of the whole Muslim community. Umar ibn AlKhattab ruled that if a

man dies of hunger while he is living in a community, the whole of the community must pay blood money for his death, as if its members have taken part in killing him. It may be ruled by the same token that this same verdict applies if a person dies as a result of not being given a blood transfusion or an organ transplant, provided that this does not have an adverse effect on the donor. This is based on the hadith that states: "In their mutual love, compassion and sympathy for one another, believers are like one body: when one part of it suffers a complaint, all other parts join in, sharing in the sleeplessness and fever". [93] Another hadith in the same vein is that which quotes the Prophet as saying: "One Muslim is the brother of another: he neither does him injustice, nor does he ever give him up". Another version of this hadith adds: "Nor does he let him down". [94] To these hadiths we may add God's description of the believers, stating that they give others preference over themselves, even though poverty be their own lot. (59:9) Here we may again cite the verse stating: If anyone saves a human life, it shall be as though he had saved all mankind. (5:32)

References

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