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ETHIC0-LEGAL ISSUES**Mental health in Islamic medical tradition****Nurdeen Deuraseh, Mansor Abu Talib**

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Mental medicine is a crucial branch of Islamic medicine known, in Islamic medical literature, as *al-Tibb al-Ruhani* or *Tibb al-Qalb*. Although *Al-Tibb al-Ruhani* concerns mainly with spiritual and psychological health, however, spiritual medicine cannot be separated completely with physical medicine (*al-tibb al-jismani*) since man's construction is from both soul and body. In other words, there is a symbiotic relationship between the two kinds of medical knowledge, as one would find it impossible to achieve one form of medical science without the other. For this reason, Muslims should be fully aware of spiritual and physical medicine because, in Islam, the spirit and the body, the soul and matter, the faith and the world have been accorded equal importance. One is able to obtain the happiness in this world and in the hereafter as long as he is physically and spiritually healthy, and it can be achieved by the art of medicine, which preserves and restores the health.¹

In addressing issues of mental health, the Qur'an mentions three components that are directly related with mental health. They are *nafs* (psyche); *qalb* (heart) and *`aql* (mind).² However, it should be noted that the *nafs* (psyche) does not mean *ruh* (spirit), for spirit does not constitute the personality component, but refer to the power of various passions or lusts and instincts inherent in the individual which always urge him to satisfy the soul.³ It is true that the word *nafs* is used in some Qur'anic verses to mean spirit i.e., *ruh* but this usage usually depends on the context. Similarly, the *qalb* (the heart), in psychological context, is not referring to the organ on the left side of the human chest, but to the sophisticated cognitive and perceptive part which has many interrelated functions and unique characteristics, as clearly described by the Prophet (SAW): "Truly, in the body there is a morsel of flesh, and when it is corrupt the body is corrupt, and when it is sound the body is sound. Truly, it is the *qalb* (heart)."⁴ Furthermore, Allah (SWT) says: "*fi qulubihim marad* (in their hearts is a disease)."⁵

Realizing the importance of the physical and mental health, Abu Zayd Al-Balkhi (d. 322/934), a brilliant Muslim whose contributions on the field of psychiatry needed more than ten centuries to be appreciated, has devoted his life to write an important psychological book entitled *Masalih al-Abdan wa al-Anfus* (Sustenance for Body and Soul). For the first time, he successfully discussed simultaneously and comprehensively on both the body and the soul, together with the diseases to which they are subject, in one volume.⁶ Al-Balkhi (d. 322/934) argued that since man's construction is from both his soul and his body, therefore, human existence cannot be healthy without the *ishtibak* (interweaving or entangling) of soul and body.⁷ For this reason, al-Balkhi criticized medical doctors who concentrated only on physical illnesses and neglected psychological aspects or mental illnesses of the patients. This is due to the fact that, according to al-Balkhi, if the body gets sick, the *nafs* loses much of its cognitive and comprehensive ability and fails to enjoy the desirous aspects of life. In other words, if the *nafs* gets sick, the body may also find no joy in life and may eventually develop a physical illness. Hence, the psychological condition is considered as one of the main factors contributing to physical health. Subsequently, when a man's psyche becomes strong, the bodily nature is also strengthened because the two cooperate in preventing and overcoming diseases.⁸

In discussing psychosomatic aspects, al-Balkhi recognized that the body and the soul would have the possibility to be healthy or sick, balanced or imbalanced. Imbalance of the body is like fever, headache and other physical illnesses, while that of the soul is like anger, anxiety, sadness and similar symptoms.⁹ While al-Balkhi accurately observed that the physical diseases should be treated through medical methods involving the use of drugs or surgery, he nevertheless, encouraged

psychological treatments. This is because in seeking treatment for diseases of the body, the patients bear the bitterness of medications, the suffering of cauterization, surgery, as well as, spending large sums of money for medical treatment and care. On the other hand, the care and refinement of the soul which is far more important, is more pleasant and rewarding and less costly to treat and restore. This idea, in fact, is in harmony with what the Prophet (SAW) said: "Verily Allah does not consider your appearances or your wealth in (appraising you) but He considers your hearts and your deeds." Again the Prophet (SAW) said: *taqwa* is right here, *taqwa* is right here, and he pointed to his chest."¹⁰

One of the mental diseases, which psychologists should pay a great attention to as one of the most disturbing problems is *al-huzn* (sadness). Al-Balkhi like other Muslim psychologists, observed that *al-huzn*, sadness or depression, is one of the spiritual diseases caused by loss of loved ones, personal belongings or failure to obtain what one is looking for or wish to possess. Before al-Balkhi (d. 322/934) turned to the question of how to cure this spiritual disease, he felt that it was necessary to point out two types of *al-huzn*, sadness or depression. The first is referred to as *al-huzn*, which is clearly known by reason, i.e., the loss of a loved relative, bankruptcy or loss of something the depressed person values greatly. It follows that if the cause of sadness was understood, then cures could be found. Since, everyone might face this kind of problem, al-Balkhi (d. 322/934) suggested that if one cannot achieve what he or she wishes, then, he or she is advised to avoid from negative behaviour in order to be free from sadness, worries and fears. Furthermore, one has to beautify one's self with good behaviour as well as with contentment that lead to life which is free from sadness and worries. In addition, one has to train one's self in the right way so that the pursuit of contentment and the enjoyment of spiritual happiness become an ingrained habit and an acquired feature. Al-Balkhi says: The *huzn* with known reason is caused by thoughts about the loss of a loved thing or the difficulty of attaining a greatly desired thing. This is the type of sadness, whose treatment we wish to speak about. The therapy of this *huzn* is external and internal. The external consists of persuasive talking, preaching and advising. The treatment resembles the medicines given to physically sick people. The internal is through the development of inner thoughts and cognitions, which help the person get rid of his depressive condition. He must realize, through this therapy, the physical psychosomatic harm which his depressive mood can cause to his health; and since his own self is the one he really loves any other thing that he had lost, it will indeed be greatly irrational to harm the most beloved for losing things that can be substituted. He will be like the merchant who has lost a little profit and stupidity pays his capital to regain it.¹¹

The second type of *al-huzn* (sadness), which according to al-Balkhi related to physical medicine, is caused by no known reasons. It is a sudden affliction of sorrow and distress (*ghummah*), which persists all the time, preventing the afflicted person from any physical activity or from showing any happiness or enjoying any of the pleasures (*shahwah*). According to al-Balkhi, this type of *huzn*, with no known reasons, is caused by bodily symptoms such as impurity of the blood and other changes in it. Thus, the treatment is a physical medical method, which aims at purifying the blood. In relation to this, `Ali b. al-`Abbas al-Majusi (d.383/994), a well-known medical physician, in his *Kamil al-Sina`ah al-Tibiyah*, pointed out the relationship between certain psychological events to the physiological changes in the body which in turn affect both physical and mental health. He advised that a person with this kind of *huzn*, has to cure it as soon as it occurs because such bad condition can negatively affect the body's temperaments and may later cause related health problem. Furthermore, he argued that the health of people is based on the way they express and direct their emotions. Those who resist anger and control themselves against sadness, worry and similar injurious habits through a balanced mental power are able to preserve their good mental and physical health. This shows that joy and contentment can bring a better living status to many who would otherwise be sick and miserable due to unnecessary sadness, fear, worry and anxiety.¹²

As we pointed out before, in order to preserve human's spiritual and physical health, the doctor is advised to use psychological methods of treatment notably by strengthening spiritual and psychic powers of man, i.e., by listening good music and creating an environment that makes one happy and pleasant. In talking about music, Al-Balkhi was of the opinion that music beautifies and refreshes the soul and the body.¹³ It is in this sense that there are a number of *ahadith* exhorting the faithful to visit the sick and offer them hope and comfort. According to one tradition, whenever the Prophet (SAW) visited a sick person, he would say: "No fear, it (illness) is a catharsis, God willing." It is

from this teaching that people visiting the sick are asked to say such things to them that would make them happy. The Prophet (s.a.w) also encouraged visitors to request the sick person to pray for them because the state of the sick and the helpless are so pure that God hear their prayers. So, not only should the healthy pray for the recovery of the sick, but the sick may be profitably requested to do so for the healthy.¹⁴ Seemingly, this has a great psychological effect on the sick person. The sick Muslim is not a person receiving punishment, but on the contrary, he receives blessings and reward for his sufferings if he faces the problem with patience and confidence in what Allah (s.w.t) has determined for him.¹⁵

Although *Al-Tibb al-Ruhani* concerns mainly with spiritual and psychological health, however, spiritual medicine cannot be separated completely from physical medicine (*al-tibb al-jismani*) since man's construction is from both the soul and the body. As a medical doctor, he should concentrate on both physical illnesses as well as spiritual illnesses of the patient. This is because, good health does not only results through the balance of air, earth, fire and water, embodying the four qualities of hot, cold, dry and wet, and disease is a deviation from the normal state of those elements of the body, but a good health also results from the balance of spirituality, emotion and mentality.

REFERENCES

- ¹ In the introduction of his commentary of *Sahih al-Bukhari* of *Kitab al-Tibb*, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (773–852/1372–1449) divided the science of medicine into two types namely *Tibb Jasad* (physical medicine) and *Tibb Qalb* (spiritual medicine). Ibn Hajar praised the value and usefulness of medicine, and stresses the primary importance of *Tibb al-Jasad* and *Tibb al-Qalb* because they are associated. In trying to reconstruct an aspect of the Greek medicine, we found another division of medicine given by Ibn Ahmad al-Ayni, in his introduction to *Umdah al-Qari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*. He divided the science of medicine into two main parts namely the theoretical (*al-ilm*) and the practical science (*al-amal*). The former, according to him, is the true knowledge of the intended subject in the mind of mankind by which it can administer and put into practice (*ma`rifah haqiqah al-maqsud wahuwa maudu` fi al-fikr al-ladhi yakunu bihi al-tadbir*) and the latter is the external part of the subject in human's mind by which man is able to put into practice directly either through the sense or hand (surgery) (*khuruj dhalik al-maudu fi al-fikr ila al-mubashirah bi al-hiss wa al-amal bi al-yadd*). To give further explanation, Ibn al-Ayni asserted that the theoretical medicine comprised of three major branches. Firstly, *al-ilm bi al-umur al-tabi`ah* (the science of natural affairs), that concerned with the functioning of structures, organs, and parts of the human body viewed as a living organism. It also included the science of anatomy. Secondly, *al-ilm bi al-umur al-lati laysat bi tabi`ah* (the science of non natural affairs). This idea, which was originally introduced by Greek medical doctors, most notably Hippocrates and Galen, was known in Greco Islamic system as *al-darurah al-sitta* and later known as *sex res non naturals* in Latin. Non-natural affairs referred to the necessary elements for survival and yet they were not natural or to the extent that they can be in some sense manipulated by humans in order to prevent and treat diseases. These six necessary factors for the preservation of health were air, movement and rest, food and drink, sleeping and waking, retention and excretion, which include bathing, defecation, urination and coitus. The third type of theoretical medicine is known as *al-ilm bi al-umur al-kharajah an al-amr al-tabi`ah* (things outside nature). It is rather unfortunate that we know so little about this because Ibn al-Ayni did not explain what he means by *al-ilm bi al-umur al-kharajah an al-amr al-tabi`ah*. However, it would be easy to interpret it correctly, if we refer to the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) who said: "Truly, in the body there is a morsel of flesh, and when it is corrupt the body is corrupt, and when it is sound the body is sound. Truly, it is the *qalb* (heart). The hadith implies that when there is equilibrium in the nature of the body with the nature of heart, the body stays healthy. When equilibrium is lost, things become contra-natural and disease is produced. The previous discussion as has been mentioned is theoretical aspect of medicine. Having known theory alone would not permit physician to interpret medical science correctly. Thus, we see that Ibn al-Ayni emphasized that a physician should master the second kind of medicine that is known as *al-amal* (practical science). This is related to practical medicine that comprised of two branches namely preventive medicine (*hifz al-Sihhah*) and therapeutic (*ilm al-ilaj*) medicine. The former, *hifz al-sihhah*, is preventing and preserving the state of the body in its nature, the state in which human beings function normally and in sound and perfect condition: in healthy body, mind and spirit. It is generally acknowledged that *hifz al-sihhah* is the most important branch of Islamic medicine since it is primarily concerned with the prevention and preservation of health rather than with cure.
- ² Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-`Arab*, 6vols. (Cairo: Dar al-Ma`arif, n.d), s.v. "q-l-b," 5: 3713-5 and "n-f-s," 6: 4500-4; Hanna E. Kassim, *A Concordance of the Qur'an* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), s.v. "n-f-s" and "q-l-b," 825-30, 903-6 respectively.
- ³ Therefore, when we talk about mental treatment, it refers to psychological treatment rather than physical medical methods. Even though the psyche entity cannot be defined for certain, but its powers can felt. For it is the center of needs, instincts, lusts and desire. In Qur'anic context, there are three stages of the development of the human soul (*nafs*): (1) *nafs ammarah* (the passionate soul) as Allah (s.w.t) says: "Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame): the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil (*ammarah bi al-su'*) unless my Lord do bestow His mercy: but surely My Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Yusuf (12): 53). This soul, according to Muslim psychologists, inclines toward sensual pleasure, passion and self gratification, anger, envy, greed and conceit. In other words, it is the soul that concerns of pleasure of body, gratification of physical appetite and ego. The Prophet (s.a.w) said: "your most ardent enemy is your evil soul which resides within your body." (2) *nafs lawwamah* (soul which blames, the soul aware of its

own imperfections) as Allah (s.w.t) says: “And I do swear by self-reproaching soul (*nafs lawwamah*).” (surah al-qiyamah (75):2. This soul is conscious or aware of evil, resists it, asks for God’s grace and pardon, repents and tries to amend and hopes to achieve salvation. The Holy prophet said: “These are two impulses within us. One spirit, which, calls towards good and confirms the truth. He who feels this impulse should know that it comes from Allah. Another impulse comes from our enemy, which leads to doubt and holds untruth and encourages evil. He who feels this should seek refuge in Allah from the accursed devil.” Lastly, *nafs al-mutma’innah* (the soul at peace, the soul reintegrated in the spirit and at rest in certainty). It is the highest state of spiritual development, where rest and satisfaction are achieved. Satisfied soul is the state of bliss, content and peace.

⁴ Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, Kitab al-Iman, Bab Fadl man Istabra’ li dinihi.

⁵ Al-Baqarah (2): 10.

⁶ Al-Balkhi has divided his *Masalih al-Abdan wa al-Anfus* into eight chapters. Chapter one is an introductory remark concerning the importance of sustaining the health of the *nafs* (soul); chapter two is on mental hygiene; chapter three is titled “How to regain one’s mental health if one loses it.” Chapter four titled “A statement about psychological symptoms and their classification.” Chapter five is entitled “How to manage anger and get rid of its symptoms.” Chapter six entitled “How to tranquilize fear and panic (*taskin al-khawf wa al-faz*).” Chapter seven entitled “Getting rid of sadness and severe depression. And lastly chapter eight on “Ways of fighting obsessions and the harmful inner speech of the *nafs*.” For a brief analysis of this book, see Malik Badri, “Abu Zayd al-Balkhi: A Genius Whose Psychiatric Contributions Needed More than Ten Centuries to be Appreciated,” in *Malaysian Journal of Psychiatry* 6, no. 2 (1998): 48-53.

⁷ Al-Balkhi, *Masalih al-Abdan wa al-Anfus* (Hand-written manuscript no. 3741, Istanbul: Ayasofya Library), 273. The Arabic word *ishtibak*, that al-Balkhi used in his book, *Masalih al-Abdan wa al-Anfus*, literally, means interweaving or entangling. It is psychosomatic interaction between the soul and the body and therefore, it indicates that al-Balkhi really understands the phenomena.

⁸ Al-Balkhi, *Masalih al-Abdan wa al-Anfus*, 270-3; Ibn al-Qayyim, *Tibb al-Qulub* (Kuwait: Dar al-Da`wah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’, 1990), 68-9.

⁹ Al-Balkhi, *Masalih al-Abdan wa al-Anfus*, 270.

¹⁰ Ahmad b. Hambal, *al-Musnad*, hadith no. 8707.

¹¹ Al-Balkhi, *Masalih al-Abdan wa al-Anfus*, 316-319. The English translation is based on Malik Badri, “Abu Zayd al-Balkhi: A Genius Whose Psychiatric Contributions Needed More than Ten Centuries to be Appreciated,” in *Malaysian Journal of Psychiatry* 6, no. 2 (1998): 52-3. Cf. al-Kindi, “Risalah fi al-Hilah li Daf` al-Ahzan”, in *Rasa’il Falsafiyah*, ed. `Abd al-Rahman Badawi, 6-12.

¹² Al-Majusi, *Kamil al-Sina`ah al-Tibbiyyah*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Bulaq, 1293 A.H), 1: 216-7, 263-66, 274.

¹³ Muhammad Nazim al-Nasimi, *al-Tibb al-Nabawi wa al-`Ilm al-Hadith*, 3 vols. (Beirut: Mu`assasah al-Risalah, 1991), 1: 36-45.

¹⁴ This shows that the sick Muslim is considered close to Allah (s.w.t), as it is clear from the hadith: “Visit the sick and ask them to pray for you, for the prayer of the sick is answered and his sins are forgiven.”

¹⁵ Al-Balkhi, *Masalih al-Abdan wa al-Anfus*, 322.

• The Islamic tradition places strong emphasis on mental health, and its perspective transcends mind-body dualism to integrate behavioral and physical health.²⁷ • Many Muslims see prayer and reading of the Quran as having health benefits and may utilize these as a source of healing complementary to medical interventions.² • A lack of understanding or knowledge about the religious beliefs, customs, or rituals of Muslim patients by non-Muslim providers may be an impediment in establishing a therapeutic relationship.²⁸ Although Islamic faith tradition places an emphasis upon mental wellness and offers explanations around the concepts, there remains a cultural stigma surrounding mental health within this group which may fuel underutilization of services for this population (Abu-Raiya, 2011; Aloud, and Rathur 2009; Ciftci, Jones, and Corrigan, 2013; Randhawa and Stein 2007). Interestingly Muslim scholars of the Islamic faith tradition in the 8th, 9th and 10th century such as Ibn Sina, known in the West as Avicenna, founder of modern medicine, were the first to reject concepts that considered mental disorders.

Somali-Swedes and Medical Health Care Services. About 30,000 Somalis reside in Sweden today.⁷ Many suffer from health problems. • Milder forms of mental health problems may also be handled through conversations with a counselor within the family group.¹⁷ The *mala-dies* stand in contrast to *âœwaali*, a psychotic condition and a sign of pure *âœmadness*, which is considered difficult to cure and generally requires recurrent Qurâ€™an readings, psychiatric care, hospitalization, and medication. • Both physical and mental health problems are treated with Qurâ€™an reading while family and friends give their support. The Qurâ€™an, which may be read or placed on the body, provides common ground and guidance when responding to depression, worry, and ill-health in general.²⁵

Question #1: What is Mental Health? From an Islamic theological perspective, psycho-spiritual health is directly related to a human being's ability to actualize their primordial spiritual purpose. All human beings are created to tread a path that will ultimately ensure their salvation in the afterlife and their ability to acquire God's pleasure. Health is thus, from an Islamic theological perspective, indicated by an individual's successful ability to remain on this path of worship. Hence any obstacles that obstruct their ability to tread this path is seen as detrimental to human functioning a... • Many individuals with even medical illnesses seek out alternative forms of treatment that include prayer, exercise, rituals, and traditional healers^[2].