

A Review of the Concept of Sick Person in Islam

Seyed Javad Khatami¹, Gholamreza Raeisian², Seyedeh Somayeh Khatami^{3*}

1. Assistant Professor and Faculty Member, Dept. of Islamic Jurisprudence and Law, Hakim Sabzevari University, Iran
2. Assistant Professor Department of Koranic Studies Faculty of Theology, Ferdowsi University Of Mashhad (FUM)Iran
3. PhD student of Theology, Ferdowsi University Of Mashhad (FUM), Lecturer and Faculty Member, Dept. of Theology, Hakim Sabzevari University, Iran

Corresponding author: Seyedeh Somayeh Khatami

ABSTRACT: In the Islamic culture, we face a human whose life is only limited to spending phases of germinal, infancy, childhood, youth and old age. With this approach, the words and concepts find deep and new form. This article attempts to deal with one of the most common concepts in human's life, i.e. disease in view of Islam while responding to questions put forward in this regard. For this purpose, the root of the word disease in Arabic (i.e. Maraza) and its derivatives were studied in all the Quranic verses (Muslim Holy Scripture). There are two kinds of Quranic verses (totally amounting to 23 verses) which refer to the disease with "Mariz" or "Marza". Examining verses which refer to the "disease" derived from the word root "maraza" and studying their characteristics lead us to the interesting results and considerable findings. In the first category, the diseases of the body, Allah looks at sick persons with these kinds of diseases with blessing and kindness while the second category, i.e. the diseases of the heart and soul, are chastisements together with wrath which require urgent treatment. It is hoped that we will be able to elucidate the status and importance of these diseases among people through this paper. Finally, having recourse to the most pure words of Allah it will be clarified how people shall approach toward such diseases.

Key words: Maraza, Mariz (sick person), Quran

INTRODUCTION

In modern life, many people have been obsessed with pains and diseases found around us and each of us encounters them in a way or another and we feel them in us or in our close relations. For someone who tries to adapt his or her behavior to Quran and word of God and likes to know about the diseases which occur around him and/or inflicts people? Are there any verses about sick persons and diseases in Quran? And if so, what diseases are they and what are their various types of diseases? Have those inflicted been blessed by Allah or are they punished? Which one has been looked upon with contempt and which has been looked upon with mercy? And finally, in terms of treatment, which one is of greater importance in view of Allah and requires double effort and attention. This article makes an attempt to reply to such questions.

METHODOLOGY

For giving an appropriate answer for the abovementioned questions, we primarily need to study the word: "disease" according to both Quran and traditions (hadith). For this reason, we search verses which are derived from the root word: maraza. Twenty three verses from the Holy Quran have been selected and studied. They are divided into two categories. The comparison of the characteristics of these two categories leads us to interesting and remarkable results. The responses to the questions put forward above can be found through considering them and matching them with relevant traditions.

Main Framework

Expressing and statement of verses referring to the words "mariz" or "marza". These two words have been mentioned nine times in the nine verses of the Holy Quran which consists of verses 184, 185, 196 of Surah " The Cow" and verses 43 and 102 of Nessa (The women), 6 Maedeh (The table), 20 Al-Muzzammil (the Enshrouded One), 61 Noor (The Light), 17 Fath (Victory), 80 Sho'ara. Among the verses mentioned above, the verse 185 Bagharah (The Cow) is expressed in the following:

"The month of Ramadan is the month in which the Koran was sent down, guidance for people, and clear verses of guidance and the criterion. Therefore, whoever, of you witnesses the month, let him fast but he who is ill or on a journey shall (fast) a similar number (of days) later on. Allah wants ease for you and does not want hardship for you. And that you fulfill the number of days and exalt Allah who has guided you in order that you be thankful" (185).

There are a few things common in these verses.

In all the verses, Allah refers to the diseases which incur harm and cause problems for the individual and that is why s/he fails to perform duties such as Jihad, fasting, Salat (praying), etc. (to avoid repetition, some verses were not mentioned here).

Table1.

Surah	Verse	Comment
The Cow	185	The decree of a sick person who can not fast in Ramadan.
The Cow	196	Concerned with a sick person who due to disease after ihram fails to perform hajj formalities.
The Women	43	Concerned with a sick person who can not use water for ablution and Qusl.
The Light	61	Concerned with a sick person who people avoided eating with him/her due to disease.
The Women	102	Concerned with a sick person who while saying prayers in war is not permitted to carry weapon.
Fath (Victory)	17	Referring to a sick person who cannot participate in war.
Muzammil (The Enshrouded One)	20	Concerned with a sick person who is not able to recite Quran and/or perform devotions during midnight.

- a) In these verses, Allah intends to put forward the word "sick person" in order to issue an order for him.
b)

Table2.

Surah	Verse	Comment
The Cow	185	Concerned with a sick person who cannot fast in Ramadan month and those sick persons who are not able to fast in Ramadan and allows the sick person to compensate for it and fast in future.
The Cow	196	Referring to a sick person who after being dressed in ihram garment fails to perform hajj formalities due to illness.
The Women	43	The sick person who cannot use water for ablution is allowed to use fine sand (Tiammom).
The Light	61	People are recommended to join the sick persons when eating meals (before Islam join sick persons was considered disgrace and hateful). (Aroosi Hoovizi, 1991).
The Women	102	Sick persons who are not able to carry weapons in war are allowed to set it a side.
Fath (Victory)	17	The sick person who is not able to participate in war is allowed to stay at home.
Muzammil (The Enshrouded One)	20	The sick person who is not able to recite Quran and/or perform devotions during midnight is allowed to perform as much as is possible for him/her (of course mentioning illness as an example is for the justified reasons but it is not exclusive to them. (Makarem Shirazi, 2008).

As it was said earlier, Allah, in these verses, alleviates the duties of the sick persons in comparison with healthy persons such as in verse 185 of Surah Cow in which the healthy person is bound to fast but the sick person is exempted to do so and/or in verse 196 of the same Surah in which the healthy person is bound to perform ihram formalities and then sacrifice animals but the sick person is not, etc.

In all these verses, with regard to the communications, reasons and proofs mentioned in a, b and c, those diseases are referred to which have something to do with body and physical aspect and for the same reason the order related to them is alleviated and has also been elaborated on in Quranic interpretations (Feiz Kashani, 1415 AH, - Tabarsi, 1981- Hosseini Shah Abdolazimi, 1984-Makarem Shirazi, 2008- Gharaati, 2004 - Points in the verse 185 of Surah: The Cow).

Comments on those verses which refer to "disease" with the word "maraza"

This word has been mentioned for thirteen times in Quran. They are: (The Cow/10), (The Table/52), (Infal/49), (Repentance/125), (Hajj/53), The (Light/50), (Ahzab/12.23.60), (Muhammad/20,29), (Moddasser/31). For instance, one of these communications is mentioned as follows:

"There is sickness in their hearts which Allah has increased for them. There is a painful punishment because they lie". (10)

There are also a few points common in these verses:

- a) The reasons for these diseases have been mentioned in all these communications:

Table3.

Surah	Verse	Comment
The Cow	10	Their illness roots in telling lies.
Maedeh	52	Their illness is due to doubt in religious teachings and weakness of faith. (Gharaati, 2004.)
Infall	49	Their disease is due to the lack of faith in Allah and the fact that ignorance of Muslim to trust in God in war was because of their pride in their faith.
Muhammad	20	Their illness is because of fear and horror from hearing the command of Jihad shivering their whole body.
Moddasser	31	Their illness is due to enmity and malice toward the Quranic communications and doubt in the truth of Quran. (Makarem Shirazi, 2008)
Muhammad	29	Their illness is due to the violent grudge against the Prophet and sincere believers and waiting for an opportunity to stab.
Infal	25	Their illness is because of doubt and feeble faith which results in blasphemy and infidelity. (Tabatabaei, 2006)
Hajj	53	Their illness is due to their implacability.
The Light	50	Their illness is because of their infidelity.
Ahzab	32 and 60	Their illness is because of coveting and desiring women when talking to them (this disease originates in the overflow of the sexual instinct and suffering from aberrant qualities and behaviors.
Ahzab	12	Their illness is due to being suspicious of Allah's Promise.

B) In these verses, the outcomes and consequences of these diseases in individuals afflicted with them have been specified.

The Cow/10: ... and there is a painful punishment for them.

Maedeh/52: ...then, they shall regret what they had hidden in themselves.

Repentance/125: ...they will be increased in filth added to their filth, so that they die as unbelievers (125).

Hajj/53: ...and the harm doers are in a wide schism, but those they are harm doers (50).

The Light/50: ...but those they are the harm doers (50)

Ahzab/60: ...and those who make a commotion in the city do not desist, we will surely urge you against them. Then, they will be your neighbors for only a little (60).

Muhammad/20: ...you see those in whose hearts is sickness looking towards you as one who swoons at death (20).

C) In all these verses (considering what was said above), the word "maraz" has been applied for the diseases which are related to the heart and soul. The interpreters have also certified this fact (Tabarsi, 1984-Hosseini Shah Abdolazimi, 1984- Feiz Kashani, 1415.concerning the verse 10 of The Cow).

Comparison between the two categories of diseases

The All-knowing Allah's approach toward these two types of diseases is peculiar from the very beginning and even His address to them is quite different. The first type is referred to with the word "mariz" and word "maraz" is applied for the second type. In the first part, the cause of disease has not been mentioned but in the second category the cause has been mentioned.

The first category, Allah's mercy is granted to the sick people and in the second category, not only there is no alleviation but also they have been promised to be punished. In order to understand the merciful look of Allah upon these sick people, the orders which are about confrontation with these diseases are stated briefly as follows:

The Holy Prophet (AS) says, " Humans have a deserving status at the presence of Allah and they do not reach this status through their own actions unless they are tested physically through an infliction with diseases and then they can reach their status (Ravandi, 1407).

Therefore, the philosophy lying behind being inflicted with a disease, is the perfection of humans and elevation of good doers' and god fearers' ranks. Furthermore, the Holy Prophet (AS) said, "sickness is a gift from Allah to the servant and the most favorable servants for Allah is he who has received the most gifts".

In addition, addressing to Salman, he said, "O', Salman! If you get sick, there are three benefits in your sickness: you will remember The Almighty God, your prayers shall be accepted, and the diseases remove every sin from your soul, May Allah recover you after the disease!". (Sadough, 1404)

Therefore, with Allah, the sick person is so favorite that even the Holy Prophet says, "No Muslim shall be inflicted with physical illness unless Allah orders his angels to provide him with the best awards for the best actions made in his healthy state (Majlesi, 1403).

Each and every cases mentioned above indicate the Allah's merciful approach and blessing to this group of sick people. While they are faced with a state quite contrary to the first one and the relevant verses disseminate the Allah's wrathful approach toward them.

After studying and comparing between these two categories of diseases, we encounter questions:

What similarities are there between these two categories of diseases which the Almighty God has regarded both as sick persons.

With regard to the differences of these two categories, in terms of importance and paying attention to the treatment, which one is of higher priority?

Response

In both categories, the humans are inflicted with an element. Sometimes this element affects the human's body and sometimes is so powerful that passes the physical barrier and targets the heart and soul of the human. One of the Quran interpreters has a particular comment in this respect, he says basically the Almighty God considers suffering from the heart disease as the physical illnesses and if they are not treated, they will gradually be intensified, they will become chronic and finally the sick person shall die and this severe state of the disease is due to lack of abstention. This lack of abstention in the heart diseases suggests the commitment of sins (Tabatabaei, 2006). But the point is that based on the verses, the status of which one in terms of Allah's attention to treatment is of greater importance or simply who is the real sick person?

Considering the abovementioned issues we can conclude that

Among the 23 verses which refer to the disease, 13 verses are relevant to the diseases of heart and soul and 10 verses relate to the body.

The verses concerning the diseases of heart and soul have been considered as diseases by Allah. For this reason, the disease is introduced, but the verses relevant to the physical illness the word "sick person" for expressing the order have been mentioned. In other words, the word "sick person" is an introduction to expressing their order. And the disease has been considered in particular.

Mentioning the cause and reason in heart-related diseases suggest the particular attention to the treatment of these diseases. Because the mentioning of the reason means to get rid of the disease.

With regard to the reasons mentioned we can realize that diseases relevant to the heart and soul are of particular importance and demand a particular attention. As it was seen these diseases have also symptoms like any other physical illnesses and there are factors which cause these diseases. However, what is important here is that every person is bound to recognize these elements and symptoms through examining and judging his own self (ego) and as the first symptoms manifested, take action to treat them. Because if they are ignored, the mental and spiritual diseases shall progress rapidly and cause the hardness and corruption of the heart and subsequently, it will result in death and metamorphosis of the human being. The weakness of intellect and intellectual powers will be among the most important symptoms of these diseases until pride and ignorance, self admiration, ostentation and conflict in speech will grow and intensify gradually in the individual.

Therefore, it is quite appropriate to pay attention to this matter because the common people are very anxious about physical illnesses and try to treat them. Of course, it is worth mentioning that if the reason for the diseases has not been mentioned in Quran, it doesn't mean that they are unimportant. But because the humans feel the harm and pain, seek to treat (cure) them quickly. Hence, the internal diseases either are not felt or are not of so much importance to them. Nonetheless, as mentioned in the Quran and traditions (Hadith), the importance of internal diseases is sometimes much more than the physical illness. Therefore, what humans do not realize clearly or do not pay attention to, is the jealousy which has been created in their heart, the dominance of lust, according to the Holy Prophet, prevents him from reaching the Heaven. (Mohammadi Rey Shahri, 2002)

One of our great interpreters contends that if one is jealous with someone's progress and achievement, this is an illness which shall be treated immediately. Backbiting, telling lies and obsession with suspicion various kinds of dangerous diseases which shall be cured immediately. There are things compatible with our eternity. If one could realize that death is the beginning of the way, i.e. first immigration and metamorphosis and then flying. Everybody who progresses thanks God, since it is God who bestows us. (Javadi Amoli, 2011)

Thus, with regard to some traditions concerned with physical diseases as well as numerous other traditions the physical illnesses are of importance per se. Now, we can realize the medical interventions but what is important is that Allah in Quran seeks human salvation and happiness through cleanliness from the heart and soul diseases and prevention from being perished.

CONCLUSION

Verses which referred to disease in Quran are categorized into two categories: the verses which refer to disease with the word "maraz" and the verses which refer to the diseases with the word "mariz". Studying these two categories suggests the clear-cut differences among them. The first category refers to the physical diseases and the second category deals with the diseases of heart and soul. In the first category, the word "sick" is used for the statement of the order. The second category, however, is concerned with the disease itself. The first category does not refer to the cause but the second category mentions the reason and cause of the disease, particularly, the treatment of which. And finally, Allah looks at the sick people in the first category with mercy and blessing but looks at the second category with wrath and admonition. This means to take the

case seriously and seek for treatment rapidly because the diseases relevant of the heart and soul cause doubt and hesitation for humans and do not allow the heart to get to know with divine and religious wisdom and theology and eventually practice them. Subsequently, human's fate changes from happiness to misery and results in human suffering from pain and chastisement both in this world and the

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