

Prophetic Medicine (Al-Tibb Al-Nabawī): is Historicity or Fiction?

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Abstract

At the present time, it is obvious that the attention to alternative, protective and complementary applications of medicine has increased and in this sense there is a special curiosity to the case, Prophetic Medicine "al-Tibb al-Nabawī". The content of this literature known under the headline of Prophetic Medicine "al-Tibb al-Nabawī" that we come across from the 13th century, have not examined scientifically yet and it gains popularity as a reflection of love to Prophet Muhammad and Sunnah perception. Additionally, nowadays we increasingly witness to some treatment modalities and some herbal drugs associated to the Prophetic Medicine "al-Tibb al-Nabawī" and all these practices are given a different meaning (sacred). This situation did not only create information convergence which obstacle retaining historical facts in the correct way but also, more importantly gained a new dimension that threat human health through misinformation and false application. Multidimensional researches such as history of science, history of civilization researches, laboratory studies, and collaborative work and effort of committees that contains different approaches from different countries, are needed to evaluate the information that we come across under the name of Prophetic Medicine "al-Tibb al-Nabawī". In this paper, we are going to try to argue what the concept of Prophetic Medicine "al-Tibb al-Nabawī" states, how the literature related to this area in the historical time streaming, and the content of it.

Keywords: Al-Tibb al-Nabawī, Prophetic Medicine, Islamic Medicine, Alternative Medicine, Complementary Medicine.

1. Introduction

Today's human being thinks of knowledge as it is rising in an evolutionary line because of the whirlpool formed by "Information Age". However, the reality that comes to light after the effect of this vortex has passed, a part of today's knowledge date back to tens of millennium and even sometimes used same.

Although "Ars longa, vita brevis: Art is long, and life is short", the contribution of each scientist to our information mine is very clear and significant. It is the representation of this contribution that the drug ingredients used for ophthalmia or trachoma (inflammation of the eye) 2700s BC took part in the Egypt Papyruses, are similar to today's medicine ingredient. Once again, it represents the reality that taking part of the circumcision operations practiced 1400s BC in a gadrooned in Egypt Karnak Temple, and the using of the results of Hippocrates in the 5th century BC and of Galen in the 2nd century in both east and west world throughout the centuries.

Again, here it is necessary to remember that the information and the societies getting information do not always progress in an evolutionary line. For instance, Egyptian Science was in an important level in the period of 3000s BC while there were some eras that it fell behind in the period of 2000s BC and 5th centuries AD. Although Ancient Greek and Roman Science took considerable steps in the BC centuries, they went back after the period of 4th century. This shows us that information process is with ups and downs (Guthrie, pp. 1-84; Reeves, pp. 1-61; Magner, pp. 1-50; Kelly, pp. 1-50).

2. Arabic and Islamic Medicine

When we explore on the pre-Islamic Arab culture with this perspective, taking into consideration the civilization basins and knowledge treasury before itself, it is possible to say that it is underdeveloped in comparison with other civilizations. Although site-specific vegetation and mineral resources privilege partially to Arabs, it is understood that the information they had did not pass further from folkloric medicine. In the Arabic society, soothsayers and individuals who repeat various words to treat were at the forefront. Some people perceived illnesses as a result of bad destiny. Travelling healers were coming to Mecca and its periphery in the days of Arabic fairs. In the region, there were some individuals who developed themselves by taking medicine education in the regions of Iran, Iraq and Anatolia. However, their numbers were limited with a few (Ibn Abū Usaybia, pp. 161-170; Jawād Ali, VIII, 381-386; Browne, pp. 9-11, Öztürk: 2013, pp. 63-73).

In this historical urban which we draw its frame, Prophet Muhammad, living among them as a person of the same culture, charged with the prophecy post. The question of whether all Prophet Muhammad's statements were information that Allah (the God of Muslims) tendered or the statements of him were his humanitarian experience, was a mystery for both believers and unbelievers also within that day.

3. Prophetic Medicine

In this respect, it can be said that two fundamental perceptions occurred for believers from the earliest years of Islam. According to one of these, whatever Prophet Muhammad said and did, it is the information given approval by revelation. However for others, just statements submitted by Prophet Muhammad about religion are consequence of revelation. His human attitudes and information are his own inherent characteristics and information of the era. For instance, as basic examples, Prophet Muhammad's cupping, using black hellebore, recommendations cassia (senna) rather than euphorbia pithyusa (shubrum) as aperients can be evaluated in two perspectives (Abd al-Razzāq, 5687, 5696, 5698, 5699; Ahmed Issa, pp. 42, 54, 80).

According to people with first perspective, they are the information given approval by revelation. However for the second perspective, they are representations of Arabic culture and Prophet Muhammad's individual experiments and knowledge. It is possible to say that these main approaches still continue today. However, it would be to the point to state that these are generic approaches and to admit that we are in a huge need of comprehensive studies which will provide us to understand how the events came true in the history.

As we mentioned before, the experiments which is related to medicine that history of humanity has obtained date tens of thousands of years. It is known that medical applications have taken roots for long centuries and they have crossed into other cultures and geographies. They are not subjects today which have studied deeply yet what medically information has Prophet Muhammad's era, worth of this information in comparison with other geographies in the era, the level of it in comparison with previous periods and geographies. It is possible to say that lots of treatment methods applied in Prophet Muhammad's era had ancient origins.

It stands up a very challenging point that the words of the prophet Mohammad about the healing depend on the cupping, cauterization and drinking hydromel (honey diluted in water) were a reflection of the Hippocratic medicine on the hadiths tradition. In addition, it is very interesting that the Prophet Muhammad's preferring not to use cauterization, also just like Hippocrates's choice (Abd al-Razzāq, 5680-5683; al-Bukhārī, Tib, 3, 13; Coxe, pp. 46-68).

In lots of statements existing in the hadith books, it is possible to run across with the universal fund of knowledge which includes sometimes Hippocratic and sometimes Galenic information. Today, it is a much more required issue to make special studies to determine which one of these belongs to Arabic culture and Prophet Muhammad's private experiments or prophetic revelation.

4. The Conquest of Islam and New Progresses

It will enable to see the subject as a whole to skim through swiftly to the experiences after Prophet Muhammad. The Islamic conquest process which is started with the era of Abū Bakir (A. D. 632-634), the first caliphate of Islam, transport the Islamic society to the geographies which had ancient cultures and traditions and opened a new information field to the Islamic

society. However, it had to wait for two centuries because of the fact that the pre-Islamic Arabic society did not have scientific tradition, and in addition to this the political conflicts occurred in Umayyad's and Abbasid's eras (Öztürk: 2012, pp. 620-624).

The flourishing and recovery of the ancient civilizations in the Arabic geography was shaped at the end of this process. The procured medical texts belonging to India, Iran and above all Greece, have translated intensely in the 9th century. At the beginning, some of translations were problematic. Occasionally, one translator corrected many times his own translations when he was transferring medical information to Arabic. However, everybody Muslims and non-Muslims that forms Islamic Society, succeeded to remove the information hungriness hand in hand with. The texts were transferred to the world of science. Discussions were made about it and 10th century left its mark on history as "Islamic Renaissance" with these translations and compilations (Browne, pp. 1-33; Guthrie, pp. 87-88; Öztürk: 2012, pp. 670-677).

5. First Books of Prophetic Medicine

Correspondingly to these developments, classifications in the Islamic resources started to take shape. The medicine field which has the greatest impact to life were started to be considered important although it were not of interest. It is understood today by some researchers that some works showed as the first "Prophetic Medicine" book which is written by Ali al-Rizā (d. A. D. 818) and Abd al-Malik ibn Habīb (d. A. D. 853) were fictional when the validity of both contents and names of works are taken into consideration (Ali al-Rizā, pp. 7-10, 18, 20, 149, 157-159; Ibn Habīb, pp. 55-74).

Although there was not a private title in the works of the first writers of traditions, a new classification was started to be observed after 850's AD in the hadith books. This was *Kitāb al-Tibb* (The Book of Medicine). Narratives that took part in different sections were started to be gathered under the title of medicine. However, a rise is observed in the rumors related with medicine in the process of time (Elgood, pp. 40-41; Perho, p. 54).

6. New Developments

Depending on the developments in the medical field in the ninth century, the narrators started to form new titling and classification. Hence, two very important works were committed to paper at the beginning of the 11th century in the context of information and chapters belong to Greek medicine which had started reflecting to the public. One of them was *Kitāb al-Tibb* of Ibn al-Sunnī and the other one was the book carrying the same name of Abū Nuaim (Ibn al-Sunnī, Abū Nuaim al-Isfahānī).

Chapters of the book which belongs to Ibn al-Sunnī was in a level of sufficiency to give us an idea: Knowledge and Merit of Medicine Art, Identification of the Body and Health Precaution, Kinds of Disease and Treatment Methodologies, Plants Obtained Drug and their Benefits, Protection of the Patient and Precaution of Convalescence Period, Knowledge of Food and Drink Influence, Protection of Health (Abū Nuaim, I, 171-172).

The writers such as Abū al-Qāsim Muhammad ibn Habīb al-Nīsābūrī (d. A. D. 1015) and al-Mustaghfirī (d. A. D. 1040) who were writing in the same period, wrote book named *Kitāb al-Tibb* one each and were in an endeavor to compilation of some hadiths which did not take part with the main lines in the Reliable Hadith sources related with medicine (Al-Nīsābūrī, Al-Mustaghfirī). However, these studies were mentioned with the headline "al-Tibb al-Nabawī" in the subsequent centuries (Brockelmann: 1943-1949, I, 165, 362, Brockelmann: 1937-1942, I, 274, 616-617; Ihsanoglu, pp. 34-38). Narratives we confront in these kinds of studies were never as strong as the rumors in the Reliable Hadith sources.

It will be to the point to mention these narratives which took part in the al-Mustaghfirī's work as an example: "Three bites with salt which is taken before the meal, protects human from seventy two kinds of illnesses such as insanity, leprosy, skin diseases etc..." "Ten things generate forgetfulness such as eating cheese, eating things chewed by a mouse, eating sour apple..." (Al-Mustaghfirī, pp. 22-23, 25)

The developments occurred since 13th century, tendered us a new concept. This concept was "Prophetic Medicine: al-Tibb al-Nabawī". This headline was a popular headline at that and the books carrying this headline were books written wishing to present a wealthy information by attaching all whatever related with medicine to Prophet Muhammad. The existed

statements made for the information related to Prophet Muhammad's time in these books, were compromise of information in respect of Greek Medicine.

As a small example, we can give information about utruj (Chinese greppfruit, pomelo, citron) presented by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyye (d. AD. 1350). Ibn Qayyim explains properties of the fruit and which part of it is beneficial for which illness after he mentions that Prophet Muhammad likened a believer who reads Qurān to a citron, although there is no information about medicine. Ibn Qayyim uses the recordings related with utruj of the doctors starting with Greek until his own era (Ibn Qay'em el-Jozeyah, pp. 360-362). I don't think so it is easy to link those kinds of information with prophetic medicine. Ibn Qayyim, possibly think that Prophet Muhammad mentioned to utruj with revelation information possibly because of above-cited benefits (also see Perho, pp. 107-108).

7. Conclusion

At the present time, we have to review again what is presented under the cover of "Prophetic Medicine". Additionally, "Prophetic Medicine" culture is also tried to be inserted to the scope of information which is released to the market under the name of "traditional", "alternative" and "complementary" medicine. Today, it has much more importance arguing this new meaning attribution and to question what it states.

Likewise, nowadays we front in an increasing level with some treatment methods and herbal drugs under the name of "traditional", "alternative" and "complementary" medicine. Some of these are recommended by associating with Prophetic Medicine. It is open that a different (sacred) meaning is attributed to the presented information within this scope. However, the case whether the human health is under threat or not while creating a market for offering health to people is lost sight of.

The thing which is needed to be questioned today is that: The information presented to us is whether an expression of prophetic information or it is the ancient Greek and Indian medicine. It is very ironic that the some people lose their health with a manipulated back concept of al-Tibb al-Nabawī although the Prophet Muhammad said "You have to know the value of your welfare, before you lose it."

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