
What are the Islamic concepts of human life, health, diseases, medicine and cure? And what is the real nature of Islamic Culture in this regard? Very few attempts have been made to answer these questions to the extent possible with the help of all available knowledge and resources of research.

It is a fact that the Holy Qur'ān being a perfect source of knowledge and guidance gives a concept of life which covers both body and soul. Its teachings fulfil all the bodily and spiritual demands of human existence and as such they help us in achieving the highest standards of physical and intellectual development. In proof of this claim we have a great treasure of the Holy Prophet's (S.A.W.) Traditions (Aḥādīṣ) which bring before us the practical model of the Qur'ānic teachings. This forms a history of the culture giving proper importance to health and is based on the principles of Islam which in their final analysis are perfectly scientific.

Prof. Fazlur Rahman's book "Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition" is before us and comprises this study and research. The book consisting of only 137 pages bears a unique style of analysing the Islamic tradition and teachings in connection with health and diseases, medicine and cure and may be of great help to us in reaching the conclusion that Islamic culture in its nature is a culture of perfect health of human beings.

The book is divided into following six chapters:

The concept of health and disease in the world of Islam—In this chapter the author, while highlighting the health concepts of all other religions and nations, has made an in-depth comparative analysis with reference to the Qur'ānic Āāyāt and the Prophet's (S.A.W.) Traditions. Thus the Islamic concept of health and medicine has been put in its true and scholarly perspective. The style of analysis of the effects of faith on health is masterly and is commendable.

The second chapter consists of thought provoking arguments regarding religious values and their important references relating to health and medicine.

The third chapter contains discussion on Prophetic Medicine which, beyond all doubts, inspires our vision.

The fourth chapter explains the Islamic principles of hygiene. Various significant issues have been discussed in it. The chapter contains in detail such historical references which confirm the fact that health consciousness has always been a prominent part of the teachings of Islam, both at the individual and social levels.
The fifth chapter is related to the medical ethics and is documented with citation’s from renowned scholars and thinkers. It expresses the ethics of ṭabīb in such a manner that its study clearly manifests the spirit of the ethical structure of Islam.

The sixth chapter brings to light the details of various stages of human development and also explains the Islamic concept of creation.

As an epilogue the author has summarised all the issues in a thought-provoking manner. He has explained the Islamic concepts of birth, birth control, contraception, abortion and the concepts related to these and to the contemplation about sex. The reality of death in the light of Islamic teachings with reference to the Islamic literature has also been discussed. Analysing the sound Islamic framework of human health, Prof. Fazlur Rahman has, under a sub-heading, brought to light the methods of treatment by spiritual medicine for example, according to the respected contemporaries (Ṣaḥābah) of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) the cure of snake bite is to recite 'Ṣūrah Fāṭiḥah'. In addition to this, treatments suggested by the great saints and spiritual leaders have also been mentioned. In this connection the events related to Ḥadrat Nizāmal-Dīn Awlīā and Ḥadrat Jamal Hanswī intensively illuminate the vision. The arrangements made for the public health and the establishment of hospitals by the Muslim rulers and Nobles alongwith the tendency of founding trusts have been indicated chronologically, providing authentic historical evidence. The author mentioning the treatment of allergy with proper diet suggested by Nūr Jīhān for Jīhāngīr during the tour of Kashmir establishes that (in olden days) the importance of health consciousness in Islam was so great that apart from common women even the significant ladies of the palaces were aware of the art of medicine and necessary treatment.

The author has separately surveyed the systems of all the social, cultural and spiritual institutions. In connection with the medicine and cure the Traditions of basic importance have been identified. Apart from the details of schools and hospitals, the system of monasteries (Khāņqāhs) has also been discussed and for the first time their health services have been put in true perspective.

In order to establish these facts the author has referred to the Holy Qur’ān, authentic interpretations, the Traditions of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) and their explanations, and in addition to these many such books which are referred as comprehensive in Islamic knowledge.

This is a book of broad utility, interesting not only to general readers but is also a flambeau for those who write on this subject and provides new angle for thought and studies.

The West is constantly searching for such a culture which with its traditions of peace and pleasure may liberate them from the prevailing pain and anxiety. The study of this book can help achieve this goal. The preface writer of this book and the president of the executive staff committee of the books related to the series, "Health Traditions, Medicine and the Faith", Mr. Martin E. Marty, while expressing his views regarding the concept of health and medicine in different cultures, has pointed out that if the interest in Islam continues at the same pace then it is quite possible that
in a few years (especially in North America) Islam would become the second largest religion after Christianity. On the basis of his conjecture he has ascribed this book for fulfilling the intellectual demands of the Americans in study of Islamic medical ethics (and the Islamic medical attitude).