

Prescriptions For Physicians - An Islamic Perspective

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This text has guidelines for the medical doctors and within the book he has looked at the Qur'anic verses and Ahadith to educate the importance of medical doctors, the book also gives us some of common things which we can use to improve and maintain our overall health.

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Foreword

In the Name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful.

O Allah, shower Your Mercy on Muhammad and his Household.

“O the Excellent Doctor!”

[One of the divine names mentioned in the supplication of al-Jawshan al-Kabir (the Great Armour)]

Prescription for Physicians is truly a one-of-a-kind masterpiece in providing practicing, believing physicians a deep spiritual insight into their role and responsibilities. It also provides a sense of how being a physician may assist the individual in his own spiritual journey in ascending towards the proximity of the Almighty and in perfecting his own development. In this book, Shaykh Khalfan has integrated theological, ethical, and mystical principles that clearly demonstrate the importance of the role of the physician in being a true representative (khalifah) of the Almighty to the best of his capacity.

The goal of achieving spiritual proximity to Allah, the All-Exalted, is necessary for all human beings. The means by which one can achieve this goal is challenging and for this one need to struggle and embark on a journey towards the Creator. Since the goal (the Almighty Himself) is infinite, it obviously means that the journey is also boundless and perpetual. Therefore, proximity can only be understood in the context of achieving ascending levels of existence, whereby the veils that exist between the lover and the Beloved are pierced systemically. Then, the lover starts to reflect the divine manifestations of the Beloved within himself to the best of his capacity. In fact, the purpose of every act of worship is to allow

one to pierce these veils and acquire higher manifestations and reflections of the names and attributes of the Almighty.

As the individual ascends in this journey, he comes to a stage in which he becomes totally dissolved in the Beloved (which in the expression of the insightful scholars is known as the stage of al-fana fi Allah), where he has lost his identity and only beholds and experiences the All- Encompassing One. After this stage, he embarks on loftier spiritual voyages that the insightful scholars have explained in their works in great detail. At one point, despite his physical existence in this finite world, in every existence, he visions only Allah, the All-Exalted.

The Almighty has blessed the believing physician with the means to reflect His names and attributes within himself to the best of his capacity.

As the physician heals the physical ailments of a patient, he is in actual fact reflecting the Divine Attribute “al-Shafi” (the Healer) in himself. The physician’s responsibility is to see himself only as an agent of the Almighty and understand that the effect of his treatment is not from him but from “Him”. His role is to be the medium through which Allah, the All-Exalted, provides relief to his patients. If a physician were to vision his role in this way, he would never acquire the ethical defect of pride and arrogance that is sometimes so commonly found amongst physicians. He would understand that his work as a tabib, or physician, is to make his patients feel more pleasant and content, and even in this he is just a manifestation of the Divine name al-Tabib that Almighty Allah has used for Himself.

This book has given numerous examples of how the physician has the capacity to manifest different names and attributes of Almighty Allah within himself and through that achieve purification and perfection. Indeed, the book emphasizes that the practicing, believing physician must attain these qualities to be worthy of having this great blessing of Allah, the All- Exalted. The major role of the physician is to instill a sense of pleasantness in the souls of the patients, and in so doing, develop human beings into spiritual beings with a sense of tranquility and calmness in their hearts.

A key example of this is reflected in the life of Prophet ﷺ (ﷺ) as he was known to have the miracle of curing the ill. Narrations are clear that Prophet ﷺ (ﷺ) explicitly invoked the Almighty before performing any of these miracles. This was to emphasize to the people that his miracle was through the permission of Almighty Allah and that he had reached such a high degree of purification and perfection that he was now manifesting this name of Allah, the All-Exalted, within himself. If a physician were to have this vision, then he would become more effective in his practice, and as he acquires more manifestations of the Almighty, he would become much more successful in his treatment.

Shaykh Khalfan also writes about the importance of seeing patients as manifestations of the Divine and therefore the interactions of the physician with the patient assumes a much higher dimension and importance. The physician must acquire purification and perfection in his own spiritual life and, through his acquisition of the names and attributes of Allah, the All- Exalted, he is able to strengthen his own

moral and ethical behavior to a level where he is able to inspire the same qualities in his patients. This is truly a partnership whereby he is able to influence the human being (his patient), who may have glimpses of spiritual experiences within himself, to a spiritual being who now has glimpses of a human experience. To do this, the physician must be grounded in religious and spiritual knowledge that is not just analytical or theoretical but existential and experiential.

As a physician, I pray for that time in my life where my patient interactions are not just confined to the diagnosis and management of physical illnesses, but rather, my role is seen as one who can also assist in the purification of the soul and heart. In so doing, I would be able to pierce veils of darkness and light and experience new manifestations of the Divine on a continuous basis. May the Almighty grace all believing physicians with this blessing. Imagine, if all believing physicians were to achieve this goal, what a brilliant health care system that would be!

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Introduction

In the Name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful. O Allah shower Your mercy on Muhammad and his infallible progeny, the best physicians of every time and age.

Physicians write medical prescriptions for their patients to follow specific procedures of treatment or to procure their medicine. The word prescription is from the word prescribe, which etymologically is from the Latin word *praescribere*, itself a composition of the words *prae* (pre) and *scriber* (scribe). Hence, the word prescription literally means something that has been previously written.

Sometimes, the word prescription has also been employed to signify a religious instruction for spiritual reform. Such usage is very apt, since the fundamental reality of the human being is his spirit, and the origin of many physical maladies stem from spiritual imbalances.

In this treatise our main focus is to unravel the religious prescriptions introduced by God and His Apostles for those who practice medicine, and to endeavor to manifest some of the most beautiful attributes of God. A doctor has the potential to exemplify in himself divine attributes such as al-Muhyi (the Reviver), al-Shafi (the Healer), al-Muṣafi (the Bestower of health), al-Sattar (The Concealer of defects), etc. If he appreciates his potential to manifest such beautiful attributes and begins seriously working towards their realization, he would qualify to be God's agent on earth.

The Holy Qur'an, alluding to the potential of divine successorship bestowed by Allah to every human being, says:

...وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ

It is He who has made you successors on the earth, and raised some of you in rank above others... (Sura al-An'aam, 6: 165).

Notice that the phrase *'ja'alaikum khalaifa fi al-ard'* reveals that all the human beings have the potential to be His successors on the earth. In other words, the human fabric has been woven in such a way that it has the potential to be a suitable candidate for divine successorship.

In the story of the creation of Adam mentioned in the beginning of the Qur'an, when Allah informs the angels that He is going to place a successor on the earth (Qur'an 2:30), the angels, having considered the nature of an earthly creature who possesses the faculties of appetite (shahwah) and anger (ghadab) and thus can cause mischief and evil, ask:

أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ

Will You set in it someone who will cause corruption in it and shed blood, whilst we celebrate Your praise and proclaim Your sanctity? (Surah al-Baqara, 2:30).

In response, Allah says:

إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Indeed, I know what you know not. (Surah al-Baqara, 2:30).

In other words: O angels, there are some divine names that you are unaware of. And that is what makes you unqualified to be My successors.

Then Allah introduces the reason for Adam being worthy of his position as the successor of God on earth. He says:

...وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا

And He taught Adam the names, all of them ... (Surah al-Baqara, 2:31).

Adam was taught all the divine names and hence his qualification to represent God on earth. This is

because successorship only makes sense when the successor (khalifah) possesses the attributes of the succeeded one (mustakhlaf ﷻanhu). Although the angels enjoyed exalted stations, they did not manifest all the divine attributes of perfection. It was only Adam who was able to manifest them.

Alluding to the reality of al-khilafah al-ilahiyyah (divine successorship), ﷻAllamah Tabatabaﷻi says:

ومن شأن الخلافة أن يحاكي الخليفة من استخلفه في صفاته وأعماله فعلى خليفة الله في الأرض أن يتخلق بأخلاق الله ويريد ويفعل ما يريد الله

Succession necessitates that the successor reveals the one whom he succeeds in his attributes and actions. Hence it is upon the successor of Allah on earth to embellish himself with the traits of Allah, and desire and perform what Allah desires. [1](#)

What is essential to understand here, however, is that although this story is mentioned as a particular narrative, it is actually an ongoing reality, and ‘Adam’ must not be restricted to the first Adam, but rather to the Adamic example, which refers to every human being.

To be clear of this veracity, look at the following verse:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ لَمْ يَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ

Certainly, We created you, then We formed you, then We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate before Adam.’ So they [all] prostrated, but not Iblis: he was not among those who prostrated. (Surah Al-A’araaf, 7:11).

Observe here that instead of mentioning the step-by-step creation of Adam, the father of human beings, Allah employs the second person plural pronoun kum (“you” plural), i.e. all human beings, signifying the Adamic reality, which has the potential to manifest all the divine names.

An entity of such reality, having realized its potential, becomes deserving of such an exalted rank whereby the angels are ordered by Allah to prostrate before it.

We must understand that teaching the names to Adam in verse 2:31, is not any kind of conceptual transfer of mental ideas. It is the construction of the human reality to have the potential to manifest all the attributes of Allah, whether those of majesty or beauty.

And when the human being realizes this potential, he deserves to become the true successor and vicegerent of God on earth. The infallible Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (ﷻa) having realized this potential would say that they are the most beautiful names of Allah. Amir al-Mu’minin (ﷻa), for example, in a lengthy tradition is reported to have said:

نَحْنُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى الَّتِي إِذَا سُئِلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى بِهِ أَجَابَ

We are the most beautiful names by which, if Allah the Exalted is asked, He responds.²

Various works have been written on the characteristics a doctor must have in order to qualify as an ideal doctor. Distinguished practitioners such as Apostles, Hippocrates (460–370 BC), Galen (130–210 CE), Razes (864– 390 CE), and Avicenna (980–1037 CE), among other esteemed giants of medicine, have always stressed the importance of the excellent character of the medical practitioner.

Some of the well-known treatises written specifically in this regard are al-Razi's Akhlaq al-Tabib (Ethics of the Physician) and al-Ruhawi's Adab al-Tabib (Etiquette of the Physician). Both have made allusions to the instructions of the great physicians of the past like Hippocrates and Galen.

Although this short treatise is a small step towards reminding the esteemed physicians of their important role and duty, it is meant for all those who are curious in knowing the truths of what must transpire between the doctor and the patient.

We sincerely pray to Almighty Allah to enable our esteemed doctors to implement the prescriptions conveyed by His Apostles, so that they can serve in the best manner possible and exemplify excellent morals and represent God on earth.

¹. 'Allamah Tabataba'i, al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an, v. 17, pp. 194–195.

². Al-Bahrani, Tafsir al-burhan, v.3, p. 678.

Prescription 1: “He” Is The Real Healer

The Holy Qur'an, narrating Prophet Ibrahim (ؑ)'s monotheistic expressions, says:

وَإِذَا مَرَضْتُ فَبُهِدْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِي

And when I get sick, it is “He” who cures me. (Surah ash-Shu'araa, 26:80).

In other words, He alone is the true healer.

In the well-known supplication of al-Jawshan al-Kabir we are taught to address Allah as follows:

يَا مَنْ يَنْقِذُ الْغَرَقَى يَا مَنْ يُنْجِي الْهَلْكَى يَا مَنْ يَشْفِي الْمَرْضَى

O You who emancipates the drowned, O You who saves the perished ones,

O You who cures the sick ones. [1](#)

In Arabic grammar, when the article al is prefixed to a plural noun, all the individuals of the plural can be taken into consideration. [2](#) In the above supplication, the article al precedes the word “marda”, which is the plural of the word marid (lit. disordered or sick). [3](#)

Hence, ‘all the sick ones’ are taken into consideration. As a result, the phrase ‘Ya man yashfi al-marda’ would mean “O You who cures all the sick ones.” In other words: “Other than You, there is no healer.”

Amir al-Muʾminin (ع) is reported to have said:

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ إِذَا دَخَلَ عَلَى مَرِيضٍ قَالَ: أَزْهِبِ الْبُؤْسَ رَبَّ الْبُؤْسِ، وَأَشْفِ أَنْتَ الشَّافِيَ لَا شَافِيَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

Whenever the Apostle of Allah (peace be on him and his household) would visit a sick person, he would pray [to God] as follows: ‘Remove the misery, O Lord of the misery, [4](#) and cure [the miserable person, for] You alone are the Healer, there is no healer save You.’ [5](#)

In the above supplication, everything is clear. The Holy Prophet (S) says, “You alone are the Healer, there is no healer except You.” Grammatically, when the article al is prefixed to the predicate (khabar) of a sentence, it signifies that the predicate is restricted to the subject.

In the above case when we are taught to address Allah as ‘Anta al-Shafi’ (“You alone are the Healer”) notice that the article al precedes the predicate Shafi and hence this signifies that Allah alone is the healer. Apparently then the sentence ‘la shafiya siwaka’ (“there is no healer other than You”) that follows is to reinforce this monotheistic reality.

In a beautiful intimate orison, Imam Musa ibn Jaʿfar al-Kazim (ع), whilst in the prison of the Abbasid despot Harun al-Rashid, says:

وَإِذَا مَرَضْتُ، شَفَيْتَنِي، وَإِذَا دَعَوْتُ أُجِبْتَنِي

And when I turn ill, You cure me, and when I call [You], You respond to me. [6](#)

Every doctor must realize that any kind of phenomenon that transpires in this universe is solely through divine permission (bi-idhni Allah). Although the doctor is religiously or naturally duty-bound to work to cure the patient, he must remember that cure (shifa) is entirely in God’s hands. This is because He is the principal cause of every created entity in both the stages of origination and subsistence. This reality is established by intellectual reasoning, the Holy Qur’an, the authentic traditions of the Holy Prophet (S) and his infallible progeny, and in a subtler sense, the spiritual disclosures (mukashafat) of the scholars of

insight.

Hence one must never be overcome with self-esteem or pride when a patient or a close associate tries to praise one for the result of one's struggle of treatment. Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi in his *Akhlaq al-tabib* says:

I have seen from among doctors one, who upon successfully treating a severely ill patient, is overtaken by self-conceit, and his speech is that of the dominators. If that is the case, may such a doctor not exist, nor given the succor to treat, nor get support.⁷

It is natural however that the spirit of the doctor who has been successful in his treatment would experience happiness and joy. Such a state should not be deemed to be negative. In one of his questions to the great Muslim ethical scholar Ibn Miskawayh (d. 421 AH), Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi (d. 414 AH) says:

I heard a senior physician saying: I get pleased at the cure of a patient due to my [medical] management and feel extremely happy by that. I asked him: And don't you know the reason behind this? He said: No. So, I told him [i.e. the physician] I would speak with you [i.e. Ibn Miskawayh] for a response, God willing.

Ibn Miskawayh replies: Indeed, the happiness of a doctor is only because of himself and the correctness of his action. This is because when he observes a patient, he firstly needs to be acquainted with the latter's malady until he knows it correctly and perfectly. Then when he knows it, he treats it with medicines and foods that are its opposite, which would [then] become the cause of his cure.

In this case the doctor would have really been successful in knowing the malady and treating it with medicine that is its opposite. And such acquisition and knowledge is a state that the doctor experiences with his knowledge, and for which he toils throughout the time of his diagnosis and examination.

And it is characteristic of the soul that when it makes a strong move towards that which it seeks for a long time with great eagerness, and then attains it, it becomes happy and experiences an amazing kind of delight and joy.⁸

Sometimes the doctor's joy and delight is due to appreciating the fact that Allah enabled him to diagnose the illness and employ the correct method of treatment, and finally facilitated the cure of the patient through his hands. Such joy, which undoubtedly is highly recommended, naturally reaps thankfulness (shukr), which is fundamental in the development of one's abilities and skills. The Holy Qur'an, underlining the importance of expressing gratitude, says:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

And when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you, but if you are

ungrateful, My punishment is indeed severe.’ (Surah Ibrahim, 14:7).

If the doctor were also to consider the intricacies of the whole creation, he would come to realise that every step of his efforts likewise is by and through Almighty Allah. The following well-known phrase of supplication refers to this reality:

لا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ

There is neither any state nor power save through Allah, the Exalted and the Tremendous.⁹

The following phrase of the well-known Ayat al-Kursi alludes to this reality:

...اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ

Allah, other than He there is no god; He alone is the Living One, the All- Sustainer ... (Surah Baqara, 2:255).

The divine name al-Qayyum in the above verse signifies that Allah is self-subsisting and every entity subsists by Him (al-Qayyimu bi nafsi-hi wa al-Muqawwimu li-ghayri-hi).¹⁰ Hence, whatever exists whether apparently static or mobile draws its existence at every moment from Allah. Accurately speaking, based on the Holy Qur’an, intellectual reasoning, and spiritual disclosures of the insightful scholars, every created entity is bestowed with a new existence every moment, but this is so swift that our normal vision cannot perceive it. The Holy Qur’an clearly alludes to this in the following verse:

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ صُنِعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْتَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ إِنَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَفْعَلُونَ

And you see the mountains, which you suppose to be stationary, while they drift like passing clouds, the handiwork of Allah who has made everything faultless. He is indeed well aware of what you do. (Surah an-Naml, 27:88).

The great saint and young martyr ʿAyn al-Qudat Hamadani (d. 525 AH) says:

Small children observing a lamp burning continuously would naturally think that what they see is one single flame. But the grownups know very well that it is a series of different flames appearing and disappearing moment by moment. And from the viewpoint of the mystics this must necessarily be the case with everything in the world except God.¹¹

Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 628 AH) in his Mathnawi says:

هر نفس نو می شود دنیا و ما

بی خبر از نو شدن اندر بقا

عمر همچون جوی نو نو میرسد

مستمری می نماید در جسد

آن ز تیزی مستمر شکل آمده ست

چون شرر کش تیز جنبانی بدست

شاخ آتش را بجنبانی بساز

در نظر آتش نماید بس دراز

این درازی مدت از تیزی صنع

می نماید سرعت انگیزی صنع

Every moment the world is renewed, and we are unaware of its being renewed whilst it remains the same in appearance.

Life is ever arriving anew, like the stream, though in the body it has the semblance of continuity.

From its swiftness it appears continuous, like the spark which thou whirlest rapidly with thy hand.

If thou whirl a firebrand with dexterity, it appears to the sight as a very long line of fire.

The swift motion produced by the action of God presents this length of duration as (a phenomenon arising) from the rapidity of divine action. [12](#)

Shaykh Mahmud al-Shabistari (d. after 1340 CE) in his well-known poetical masterpiece Gulshan-e Raz says:

The world is this whole, and in every twinkling of an eye, it becomes non-existent and endures not two moments.

There over again another world is produced, every moment a new heaven and a new earth.

Things remain not in two moments, the same moment they perish, they are born again. [13](#)

Ibn al-ʿArabi (d. 636 AH) in his al-Futuhat al-Makkiyyah referring to how overwhelming it is to comprehend this reality says:

فلو شاهدته لرأيتَ أمراً عظيماً يهولك منظره ويُورثك خوفاً على جوهر ذاتك ولولاً ما يُؤيد الله أهل الكشف بالعلم
لتأهوا خوفاً

If you would have visioned it [through the heart] you would have seen a great phenomenon, whose sight would scare you and make you fear over the substance of your essence; and were it not for the knowledge with which Allah supports the men of disclosure, they would have got lost out of fear. [14](#)

Essentially, therefore, every movement made by any doctor cannot transpire save through divine power, permission, and leave. Even when employing natural means to cure the patient, it is entirely in Allah's hands whether to allow the natural effects to transpire or not.

The Holy Qur'an says:

...مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ...

... Who is it that may intercede with Him except with His permission ... (Surah al-Baqara, 2:255).

...مَا مِنْ شَفِيعٍ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ إِذْنِهِ...

... There is no intercessor, except by His leave ... (Surah Yunus, 10:3).

According to authoritative exegetes of the Qur'an like ʿAllamah Tabatabaʿi (d. 1402 AH), the intercession spoken about in this verse includes both existential mediation (al-shafaʿah al-takwiniyyah) as well as legislative mediation (al-shafaʿah al-tashriʿiyyah). [15](#)

In simple words, nothing can lay influence and act as an intermediary cause save by His leave.

The principle is also the same in the case of miracles. When Prophet ʿIsa (ʿa), for example, would cure the leper and the blind and restore people to life, he would do so entirely with divine permission. The Holy Qur'an expresses this reality, employing phrases like 'bi idhni Allah' ("by the leave of Allah").

Consider the following verses wherein Prophet ʿIsa (ʿa) says:

وَأَبْرَى الْأَكْمَةَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ وَأَحْيَى الْمَوْتَى بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ

... And I heal the blind and the leper and I revive the dead by Allah's leave... (Surah aal-'Imraan, 3:49).

In chapter al-Ma'idah, Allah Himself mentions that everything Prophet ʿĪsā (ʿa) did was entirely through His permission:

...وَأِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِي فَتَنْفُخُ فِيهَا فَتَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِي...

... And you would heal the blind and the leper, with My leave, and you would raise the dead, with My leave ... (Surah al-Maaida, 5:110).

Note that the phrase 'bi-idhni (with My leave)' appears in different places in the above verse. Here, Allah Himself informs us that if Prophet ʿĪsā (ʿa) was able to cure the leper or the blind, it was only by His leave and permission.

If one comprehends this reality properly, one would understand the secrets behind how those who have been diagnosed with seemingly incurable diseases suddenly find their cure, and how those who had a simple malady meet their death. The reality is that every effect is entirely through Allah's power.

It is imperative to understand that the causativeness (sababiyyah) of the natural causes is not independent (mustaqill) but depends on Allah's will and volition. In other words, if they are created with a particular essence, it is not necessary for them to always possess the effect that they are known to normally have; rather, it entirely depends on Allah whether He allows their normal effect to transpire or not.

Mulla Sadra, in his Qur'anic exegesis, explaining the verse "*Maliki Yawm al-Din*" (1:4) at one point says:

ولم يعلم أحدهم إلا العرفاء بالله خاصة إن هذه الأسباب بمنزلة أعيان منصوبة مقرونة بما يجرى عليها من صدور هذه الآثار بلا تأثير من قبلها وإن زمام هذه الأمور كلها بيد مالك الملوك

None of them, save only those endowed with divine gnosis, have known that indeed these causes resemble entities made to accompany what normally follows them of the effects, without any [independent] effect by them, and that indeed the reign of all matters are in the hand of the Owner of kings. [16](#)

Sometimes we also observe that some causes give a different or opposite effect. Nimrod's fire is a good example. Although it naturally burns a person, it bestowed coolness to Ibrahim. The Holy Qur'an says:

قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

We said, 'O fire! Be cool and safe for Ibrahim!' (Surah al-Ambiyaa, 21:69).

The reason for this is not any kind of evasion of the natural law of causation between natural causes and their effects, but ignorance on our part about other additional causes that led to the coolness of the fire.

Similarly, although the normal effect of a specific poison is to render a person sick and bring death to him, if Allah wishes the same poison can act as a powerful medicine on the person and cure him. This is not necessarily due to changing the causative effect of specific causes but taking recourse to other hidden causes that lead to cure and well-being.

In his work *Isti'adha: Seeking Allah's Protection from Satan*, the late martyr of the prayer niche Ayatullah Sayyid 'Abd al-Husayn Dastghaib Shirazi says:

Sometimes a person observes that something is solved without any [apparent] cause, or through a thing that never had any kind of causative effect. I remember more than thirty years ago, Marhum

Sadr al-Hukama[ؒ] who was a religious and high-ranking physician, would narrate:

In my youth in the city of Jahrum I would practice medicine. One day they brought a villager to me. I found that he does not have just one or two maladies. He suffered in his kidney, liver, heart, etc. In short, it was impossible to treat him and his death [it seemed] was inevitable. I said to them: I shall not give any medicine. They became angry toward me, taunted me, and said: It shows that you do not know anything. Being upset, I also scornfully told them: Go and give him *yunjeh* (donkey fodder). I said this out of sarcasm just to respond to their vilifications.

After some time, one day I saw the same sick person together with his carers come to me. They brought together with them a sheep and other gifts and said: You having known such a medicine, why did you not tell us from the very beginning? The same *yunjeh* made him well.

Indeed, sometimes it is possible that He removes the causative effect from a cause, and sometimes makes a thing that is not a cause to be a cause. He is the One who renders every cause to cause (*Musabbib al-asbab*). In other words, He makes something to be a cause, and gives an effect to something that does not have effect. [17](#)

It must be understood however that in the same way that Allah makes natural things transpire through material causes, He can also facilitate extraordinary phenomena to take place through material causes, the only difference being that whereas the former material causes are apparent, the latter are hidden to most of the people. Hence the latter do not evade the universal law of cause and effect between material and natural things. Furthermore, if a specific material cause gives a different or opposite effect it does not go against the aforesaid principle also. Rather, we come to realise that apart from the apparent

cause, there can be some other causes hidden from us that naturally lead to the different or opposite effect. Despite this, it must be realised that any kind of natural cause, whether known or unknown, ultimately depends on the Independent Cause which confers causation to the natural causes.

There is an interesting incident¹⁸ narrated by the venerable Shaykh al-Tabrasi (d. 588 AH) in his masterpiece al-Ihtijaj from Imam Hasan al-Askari (a) who narrates from Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a) that a person from Greece who claimed to be a physician and a philosopher once came to Imam Ali (a) and saw the Imam (a) had jaundice and weak legs. He advised the Imam (a) to take a specific medicine and refrain from applying pressure on his apparently weak legs. The Imam (a) tried to prove both of his directions as futile. He asked the doctor whether he had any medicine that would worsen his condition; the doctor showed him something and claimed that if any patient suffering from jaundice would consume it, that patient would instantly die. The Imam (a) asked the doctor to give that to him, and the doctor duly obliged.

The Imam (a) swallowed the medicine and instead of instantly dying, he turned well and regained his vigour. The expression employed by the amazed Greek physician to describe the Imam's state of recovery in the lengthy tradition is: '... fa inna-ka al-ana muwarradun' ("for indeed you are now like a red rose"). Then the Imam (a) showed the doctor how his apparently thin legs could shake a strong pillar. This overwhelmed the doctor and he fell unconscious.

The gist of this anecdote is that the effect of every medicine is in Allah's hands. An effective medicine can harm a person and a dangerous and lethal drug can have the effect of a powerful medicine, not because of evading the natural effects of the drugs, but due to other additional hidden causes that naturally bring about illness or health. It is also possible for God to exceptionally confer a different effect to a specific medicine.

Although we are advised to seek the cure of sicknesses from their usual remedies, we must not be oblivious of the monotheistic principle that ultimately, He alone is the healer. Hence, although the doctor employs his ingenuity and acumen, and diagnoses and treats the patients with the best-established medicine, he must totally entrust his affairs to Allah and know that He alone is the true healer, and He alone renders the medicines to possess their effects, and He alone can grace the patient with supplementary unknown causes to attain perfect health. Underlining the importance of relying solely on Allah, Ibn Zakariyya al-Razi in his Akhlaq al-tabib says:

ويترك الطبيب في علاجه على الله تعالى، ويتوقع البرء منه، ولا يحسب قوته وعمله، ويعتمد في كل أموره عليه، فإذا فعل بضد ذلك ونظر إلى نفسه وقوته في الصناعة وحذقه، حرمة الله البرء

The doctor must, in his treatment, rely on Allah the Exalted, and anticipate cure from Him [alone] and not take into account his [own] strength and action, but [rather] rely on Him in all matters. However, if he does the opposite, and recognizes himself and his strength in terms of art and skill, Allah would deprive

him of affecting cure. [19](#)

Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi in his poetical masterpiece Mathnawi narrates a very interesting story of how a king who goes hunting sees a beautiful slave girl and falls in love with her and purchases her.

Thereafter he takes her to his palace, but after a while she turns ill. So, he tries to get the best doctors for her treatment and the doctors lured by the great wealth promised to them if she is cured, rely solely on their expertise and forget that the ultimate healer is God alone. Despite their great struggles the doctors see no positive results. This leads the king to turn to Allah and seek the cure for her sickness from Him.

Mawlana poetically portrays this as follows:

O my friends, hearken to this tale: in truth it is the very marrow of our inward state.

In olden time there was a king to whom belonged the power temporal and also the power spiritual.

It chanced that one day he rode with his courtiers to the chase.

On the king's highway the king espied a handmaiden: the soul of the king was enthralled by her.

Forasmuch as the bird, his soul, was fluttering in its cage, he gave money and bought the handmaiden.

After he had bought her and won to his desire, by Divine destiny she sickened.

A certain man had an ass but no pack-saddle: (as soon as) he got a saddle, the wolf carried away his ass.

He had a pitcher, but no water could be obtained: when he found water, the pitcher broke.

The king gathered the physicians together from left and right and said to them, "The life of us both is in your hands.

My life is of no account, (but) she is the life of my life. I am in pain and wounded: she is my remedy.

Whoever heals her that is my life will bear away with him my treasure and pearls, large and small."

They all answered him, saying, "We will hazard our lives and summon all our intelligence and put it into the common stock.

Each one of us is the Messiah of a world (of people): in our hands is a medicine for every pain."

In their arrogance they did not say, "If God will"; therefore, God showed unto them the weakness of Man.

I mean (a case in which) omission of the saving clause is (due to) a hardness of heart; not the mere saying of these words, for that is a superficial circumstance.

How many a one has not pronounced the saving clause, and yet his soul is in harmony with the soul of it!

The more cures and remedies they applied, the more did the illness increase, and the need was not fulfilled.

The sick girl became (thin) as a hair, (while) the eyes of the king flowed with tears of blood, like a river.

By Divine destiny, oxymel produced bile, and oil of almonds was increasing the dryness.

From (giving) myrobalan constipation resulted, relaxation ceased; and water fed the flames, like naphtha.

How it became manifest to the king that the physicians were unable to cure the handmaiden, and how he turned his face towards God and dreamed of a holy man.

When the king saw the powerlessness of those physicians, he ran bare-footed to the mosque.

He entered the mosque and advanced to the mihráb (to pray): the prayer-carpet was bathed in the king's tears.[20](#)

The follow-up of this tale[21](#) is very interesting but it does not concern us in our present discussion.[22](#) What Mawlana Rumi stresses upon however is that the doctor who is just an intermediary must not be deceived to conjecture that he is the fundamental healer. Instead, he must totally rely on God and struggle to treat the patient with the understanding and realization that every effect, whether positive or negative, is only through Allah.

In conclusion, reckoning God as the sole healer is one of the most fundamental prescriptions taught by Prophet Ibrahim (ع) for every God-conscious and intelligent doctor whose aim is to really cure the patient and manifest the divine name al-Shafi (the Healer):

وَإِذَا مَرَضْتُ فَبُهِتَ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ

And when I get sick, it is He who cures me. (Surah ash-Shu'araa, 26:80).

A Deeper Consideration

Sometimes, having read the above verse, or intellectually comprehended the reality that Allah is the principal cause, we vehemently say, 'He is the healer'. Sometimes however the case is different and much loftier than simple intellectual comprehension. Due to having cleansed one's heart, one visions the fact that God is the sole healer and what we observe as causes are manifestations of His actions. Hence there is nothing parallel to Him that can do anything on His behalf. He is the one who does everything. Such a vision is experienced by spiritual wayfarers to Allah in some of the stages of their journey towards perfection. Mawlana in his Mathnawi says:

این سبب ها بر نظرها پرده ها است

که نه هر دیدار صنعتش را سزاست

، دیده ای باید سبب سوراخ کن

تا حجب را برکنند از بین و بن

تا مسبب بیند اندر لامکان

هرزه بیند جهد و اسباب و دکان

از م مسبب می ب میرسد د هر خیر و شر

نیست اسباب و وسایل ای پدر

جز خیالی منعقد بر شاه راه

تا بماند دور غفلت چندگاه

*These causes are veils on the eyes, for not every eye is worthy of (contemplating) His work.
An eye that can penetrate the cause is needed to extirpate (these) veils from root and bottom,
So that it may behold the Cause in (the world of) non-spatiality and regard exertion and earnings and
shops as (mere) nonsense.*

*Everything good or evil comes from the Causer; causes and means, O father, are naught
But a Phantom that has materialized on the King's Highway in order that the period of heedlessness (the
reign of ignorance) may endure for some (little) time.[23](#)*

And in another place, he says:

در حقیقت خالق آثار اوست

لیک جز علت نبیند اهل پوست

مغز کو از پوستها آواره نیست

از طبیب و علت او را چاره نیست

چون دوم بار آدمی زاده بزاد

پای خود بر فرق علتها نهاد

In reality, He (God) is the creator of the effects, but followers of the husk (the formalists) see nothing but the (secondary) cause.

The kernel (the intellect) that is not separated from the husks has no means (of escape) from doctor and disease

But when a son of man is born twice, he plants his foot upon the head (of all) causes.²⁴

1. Shaykh Kaf'ami, al-Misbah, verse 41, p. 252
2. In grammatical terms: al-jam' al-muhalla bi al-lam yufidu al-istighraq (the plural in which lam is inserted confers the meaning of comprehension).
3. According to the well-known Qur'anic lexicographer al-Raghib al-Isfahani (d. 502 AH), the word marad is literally defined as al-khuruuj 'an al-i'tidal al-khas bi al-insan (to exit from the state of equilibrium particular to the human being) [al-Raghib al-Isfahani, Mufradatu al-faz al-Qur'an, p. 765].
4. The exact wording employed here is Rabb al-ba's which literally signifies "One who has complete control over the misery."
5. Shaykh al-Tusi, al-Amali, p. 638.
6. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.92, p. 214.
7. Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi, Akhlaq al-tabib, p. 38.
8. Abu 'Ali Miskawayh, al-Hawamil wa al-shawamil, Q. 161, p. 385.
9. In a beautiful tradition, Imam al-Baqir ('a) is reported to have said to one of his companions that uttering this litany is from among the treasures of Paradise. (Al-Barqi, al-Mahasin, v. 1, p. 9).
10. Mulla Sadra, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim, v.4, p. 20.
11. Toshihiko Izutsu, Creation and the Timeless Order of Things, p. 167
12. R. A. Nicholson, English Translation of Mathnawi, Book I, verses 1144- 1148
13. Whinfield, English Translation of Gulshan-e Raz of al-Shabistari, verses 640-650.
14. Ibn al-'Arabi, al-Futuh al-Makkiyyah, v.2, p. 677
15. 'Allamah Tabataba'i, al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an, v.2, p. 333.
16. Mulla Sadra, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim, v. 1, p. 85.
17. Ayatullah Sayyid 'Abd al-Husayn Dastghaib Shirazi, Isti'adha: Seeking Allah's Protection from Satan, session no. 21.
18. We have mentioned a part of the tradition at the end of this treatise in the Appendices.
19. Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi, Akhlaq al-tabib, pp. 38-39. Unless al-Razi has drawn this direction from the authentic hadiths that promise such a result, it would have been more accurate of al-Razi to say 'Allah can deprive him from affecting cure' instead of saying 'Allah will deprive him from affecting cure' (Author).
20. Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi, The Mathnawi, English translation by R. A. Nicholson, v. I & II, pp. 6-9 (lines 35-).
21. Those who are interested to know the entire anecdote can refer to the translation and commentary of The Mathnawi by R. A. Nicholson
22. In the end, the king and the handmaiden marry with mutual love.
23. Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi, The Mathnawi, English translation by R. A. Nicholson, v.V, p. 94.

Prescription 2: Your Fundamental Role

كُنْ كَالطَّبَّيبِ الرَّفِيقِ

Be like a friendly doctor.

– Imam Ali (a)

Names and their etymological roots can reveal the beliefs, culture and history of a nation. In the English language one who treats the ailing person is known as a physician or a doctor.

The word physician comes from an ancient Greek noun φύσις (physis) and its derived adjective physikos, meaning nature and natural. This informs us that the physician is more of one who deals with the physical being of a person rather than his soul and spirit. There is no mention or indication of the spirit at all.

As for the name doctor, it is a Latin word that literally signifies teacher. It is a contraction of the Greek διδάσκω (didaktō: teacher), from the verb διδάσκω (didaskō: to teach).¹ Considering its usage for Christian priests before medical doctors,² it might indicate that medical doctors were not only concerned with the physical dimension of the human being, but also his spiritual dimension.

In the Arabic language, however, a doctor is known as a tabib. In order to understand the great difference between calling a doctor a physician and calling him a tabib, let us look at the etymology of the word tabib.

Some lexicographers like Ibn Faris (d. 395 AH) mention that the root of the word tabib are two letters ta and ba' which signify knowledge and skill about something (علمون بشيءٍ ما مهارتاً فيهِ).³

Others, like al-Firuzabadi (d. 817 AH) in his al-Qamus al-muhit, say that the word tabba [a verb that shares the same root with the name tabib] means تاواناً لى الأمور و التاتفا (he did things slowly and gently).⁴

Commenting on this, Allamah Majlisi (d. 1110 AH) in his Bihar al-Anwar says:

إنما سمو بالطبيب لرفعهم الهم عن النفوس المرضى بالرفق ولطف التدبير، وليس شفاء الأبدان منهم

Indeed, they were called tabib because they would remove anguish from the souls of the sick ones with

friendliness and gentleness of management, and the healing of bodies is not from them.⁵

There is an interesting tradition narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (ؑa) which speaks about the origin of the word tabib:

كَانَ يُسَمَّى الطَّبِيبُ الْمُعَالِجُ فَقَالَ مُوسَى بْنُ عِمْرَانَ: يَا رَبِّ مِمَّنِ الدَّاءُ؟ قَالَ: مِنِّي، قَالَ: مِمَّنِ الدَّوَاءُ؟ قَالَ: مِنِّي قَالَ
فَمَا يَصْنَعُ النَّاسُ بِالْمُعَالِجِ؟

قَالَ: يُطَيِّبُ بِذَلِكَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ. فَسُمِّيَ الطَّبِيبُ لِذَلِكَ

A doctor (tabib) was called al-muʿalij (one who treats) at first, and thereafter Musa ibn ʿImran (ؑa) said: O Lord, from whom is the illness? Allah said: From me. Thereupon Musa (ؑa) said: From whom is the medicine? Allah said: From me. Musa (ؑa) said: What then should the people do with the muʿalij (one who treats)? Allah said: He [through his treatment] makes them feel pleasant (yutayyibu bidhalika anfusahum). And for this reason, a muʿalij was called a tabib (one who makes the patients feel pleasant).⁶

Hence the fundamental role of a doctor is tatyib al-nufus (to instil a pleasant state in the souls). This reveals that the method of his struggle in treating the patient must be such that it pleases the soul of the patient and makes him feel serene and good. Ibn Zakariyya al-Razi in his Akhlaq al-tabib, underlining the superiority of a doctor, at one point says that kings who select a specific doctor for themselves must always deal pleasantly with him and elevate him more than the rest of their subjects in their gatherings amongst their other servants. Then he says:

فإن هم إلا خدام جسم، والمتطبب خادم روح

For they [the other subjects] only serve the human body (khuddamu jism), whereas the doctor serves the human spirit (khadimu ruh).⁷

The following are some noteworthy traditions that allude to this important task of a tabib:

Amir al-Mu'minin (ؑa) is reported to have said:

كُنْ كَالطَّبِيبِ الرَّفِيقِ الَّذِي يَدْعُ الدَّوَاءَ بِحَيْثُ يَنْفَعُ

Be like a friendly doctor, who leaves the medicine where it is beneficial.⁸ Imam al-Rida (ؑa) is reported to have said:

سَمِعْتُ مُوسَى بْنَ جَعْفَرَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ، وَقَدْ اشْتَكَى فَجَاءَ الْمُتَرَفِّقُونَ بِالْأَدْوِيَةِ – يَعْنِي الْأَطْبَاءَ

I heard Musa ibn Ja'far (ع), while he was suffering [from a malady] and those who are friendly with medicine, i.e. the doctors, came to him.⁹ Note that instead of using the word *atibba* (doctors) the Imam (ع) employs the words 'al-mutaraffiqun bi al-adwiyah' ("those who are friendly with medicine"), thus revealing the fundamental task of doctors as those who are facilitators of the cure, and not the curers. Furthermore, this facilitation is also by Allah's permission and power.

However, instilling a pleasant state requires a prerequisite: There is a dictum in the Arabic language which is actually an intellectual principle that reveals a reality. The Arabs say, 'Faqid al-shay'i la yu'tihi' ("One who does not possess something cannot bestow it"). In order for the doctor to be able to make the patient feel pleasant, he himself must enjoy a serene and pleasant soul. It is such a soul that can behave pleasantly and make others feel pleasant. Hence, the doctor must himself work to be *tayyib* and pleasant, so that he can effectively play his role as a *tabib*. This is also endorsed by the following Qur'anic principle:

قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَىٰ شَاكِلَتِهِ فَرَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ هُوَ أَهْدَىٰ سَبِيلًا

Say, 'Everyone acts according to his character. Your Lord knows best who is better guided with regard to the way.' (Surah al-Israa', 17:84).

We must however be very careful in how we define the state of being pleasant. Is it just in having a physically sound body so that one's mind and heart is at peace? Or is it in exemplifying characteristics of patience, concern, love, etc.? Therefore, before embarking on anything, the doctor must realize that such a state is not something that can be acquired physically or mentally. It requires struggle and continual practice. In the same way that a doctor goes through different experiments in understanding the human body, he must go through different trials and tribulations of resistance, patience, expression of love, and expression of concern.

It is imperative for the doctor to know the methods through which he can confer a state of serenity, peace, happiness, etc., all of which are elements that can please the ailing patient.

The following are some noteworthy traditions that can enlighten every doctor on how to deal with his patient:

1. Instilling Hope Of Long Life

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

إِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ فَنَفْسُوا لَهُ فِي أَجَلِهِ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَا يَرُدُّ شَيْئًا وَيَطِيبُ نَفْسَهُ

When you are in the presence of a sick person, then give him hope of the enhancement of his lifespan, for indeed that would not change anything [that would ultimately happen] and it would make him feel pleasant.

Note that in this tradition the phrase ‘... la yaruddu shay’an ...’ does not essentially mean that there would be no increase in the sick person’s lifespan, for there are many traditions that clearly speak of means of increasing the lifespan of a human being. The phrase in this tradition apparently refers to al-ajal al-musamma, the ultimate life span known to Allah in the al-Lawh al-Mahfuz (the Guarded Tablet) that does not change. The Holy Qur’an in this regard says:

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلْمِهِمْ مَا تَرَكَ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّىٰ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ

Were Allah to take mankind to task for their wrongdoing, He would not leave any living being upon it [earth]. But He respites them until a specified time; so, when their time comes, they shall not defer it by a single hour nor shall they advance it. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:61).

The most important factor, however, is that in instilling hope of long life the doctor would make the patient feel pleasant and hopeful, and that would also have a positive effect on his physical condition.

2. Instilling Happiness In The Heart Of The Patient

Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a) is reported to have said:

قال رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله): إن أحب الأعمال إلى الله عز وجل إدخال السرور على المؤمنين

The Apostle of Allah (S) said: Indeed, the most beloved of deeds to Allah, the Invincible and Majestic, is to instill happiness in the faithful. [10](#)

Note the phrase ‘Inna ahabba al-amal ila Allahi’ (“the most beloved of deeds to Allah”), which reveals something extremely important and serious.

Imam al-Baqir (a) is reported to have said:

قال رسول الله (ص): من سر مؤمناً فقد سر مؤمناً فقد سرني، ومن سرني فقد سر الله

The Apostle of Allah (S) said: Whoever makes a believer happy, has indeed made me happy, and

whoever makes me happy, has indeed made Allah happy. [11](#)

This is among those traditions that reveal the most profound truths that the insightful scholars only reveal when and where it is essential. It alludes to monotheism in its purest form.

Imam al-Baqir (ؑa) is reported to have said:

وَمَا عُبِدَ اللَّهُ بِشَيْءٍ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنَ إِدْخَالِ السُّرُورِ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِ

And Allah has not been worshipped with anything more lovable to Allah than instilling happiness on a believer.

The tone of this tradition is extremely powerful, and one must not take it lightly. It not only reveals the greatness of the reward of instilling happiness in the heart of a believer, but also underlines the sanctity of a believer's station near Allah. No wonder Imam al-Sadiq (ؑa) is also reported to have said:

الْمُؤْمِنَ أَكْبَرُ حَرَمَةً مِنَ الْكَعْبَةِ

A believer is greater in sanctity than the Ka'bah [12](#)

There is a subtle condition however that must be observed with regard to instilling happiness: instilling happiness is due, in actual fact, to the character and real disposition of a true believer. Imam ʿAli (ؑa) is reported to have said:

سرور المؤمن بطاعة ربه وحزنه على ذنبيه

The happiness of a believer is in the obedience of his Lord, and his grief is over his sin. [13](#)

Therefore, when the physician would like to make the patient feel pleasant, it should be according to what a believer naturally desires.

Taking recourse to lying, matters of base pleasure, etc. are therefore not reckoned to be the correct means of instilling happiness in the heart of a true believer.

[3. Encountering The Sick With A Joyful Countenance](#)

Hadrat Fatimah al-Zahra (ؑa) is reported to have said:

البشر في وجه المؤمن يُوجبُ لصاحبه الجنة

Expression of joy in the face of a faithful necessitates the garden of Heaven for a person. [14](#)

Imam al-Baqir (ع) is reported to have said:

تَبَسُّمُ الرَّجُلِ فِي وَجْهِ أَخِيهِ حَسَنَةٌ وَصَرَفَ الْقَدَى عَنْهُ سَنَةٌ

The smile of a person in front of his brother is a good deed and averting a thorn from him is a good deed.

The kind of joy a faithful experience is not the same as that which a disbeliever experiences. The phrase ‘fi wajhi akhihi’ therefore bespeaks of the origin and nature of joy: it is not a joy that springs from material attractions, but rather a joy whose basis is belief and faith.

4. Removing Anguish From The Ailing One

Imam al-Kazim (ع) is reported to have said:

مَنْ فَرَّجَ عَنْ أَخِيهِ الْمُسْلِمِ كُرْبَةً فَرَّجَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، وَيَخْرُجُ مِنْ قَبْرِهِ مَثْلُوجَ الصَّدْرِ

Whosoever relieves his Muslim brother from a deep anguish, Allah would relieve him from the deep anguish of the Resurrection Day, and he would leave his grave with a tranquil heart. [15](#)

Depending on the kind of grief the patient experiences, the doctor should always try to think of how to deal with the patient so that the anguish can be gradually decreased and finally removed.

At times—and this is a problem many of the laity experience—the grief of the patient is intellectually unfounded and baseless, and this is when he is affected by the insinuations (wasawis) of Shaytan or personal unfounded speculations (zunun). Instead of hope, taints of despair accumulate the heart and turn it into a vessel of deep sorrow and anguish. How astute and intelligent would the concerned physician be to diagnose not only the physical malady but even the spiritual illness that may even worsen the situation of the patient if he continues paying heed to baseless speculations?!

5. Observing Specific Guidelines

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

إذا دخل أحدكم على مريض فليصافحه وليضع يده على جبهته، وليسأله كيف هو، ولينسي له في الأجل ويسأله أن يدعو لهم، فإن دعاء المريض كدعاء الملائكة

When one of you enters the presence of a sick person, (1) he must shake his hands, (2) place his hand on the latter's forehead, (3) ask him about his health, (4) instill hope of long life in him, and (5) ask him to pray for him, for indeed the supplication of a sick person is like the supplication of the angels¹⁶

This tradition is universal and not particular to visitors that exclude the doctors. The phrase 'Idha dakhala ahadu- kum ةala al-marid' ("When any one of you enters the presence of a sick person") which is a general statement also includes the doctors who are responsible for the treatment of the patient.

A noteworthy point in the above tradition is that although we have rendered musafahah as shaking hands, in more accurate terms it is the process of joining one hand to another. It transpires when the palm of one hand is joined to the palm of another, and there is nothing like shaking involved.

In some traditions, we are informed that if one would like to observe a complete visitation (tamam al-iyadah) of the patient, then he must touch the patient, whether by giving hands, placing his hand on the latter's arm, or placing his hand on the latter's forehead, etc.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) is reported to have said:

تَمَامُ الْعِيَادَةِ أَنْ تَضَعَ يَدَكَ عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ إِذَا دَخَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ

A complete visit is that you place your hand on the patient when you enter his presence.¹⁷

تَمَامُ الْعِيَادَةِ لِلْمَرِيضِ أَنْ تَضَعَ يَدَكَ عَلَى ذِرَاعِهِ وَتُعَجِّلَ الْقِيَامَ مِنْ عِنْدِهِ

A complete visit of the patient is that you place your hand on his arm; and that you leave quickly [and do not prolong your visit].¹⁸

مِنْ تَمَامِ الْعِيَادَةِ أَنْ يَضَعَ الْعَائِدُ إِحْدَى يَدَيْهِ عَلَى يَدِي الْمَرِيضِ أَوْ عَلَى جَبْهَتِهِ

A complete visitation is that the visitor places one of his hands in the hands of the patient or on his forehead.¹⁹

A very important etiquette when giving hands is that one must try not to be the first to release his hand, until the other releases. Shaykh al-Kulayni (d. 329 AH) in his al-Kafi mentions a tradition worthy of consideration.

Imam al-Baqir (a) is reported to have said:

إِذَا صَافَحَ الرَّجُلُ صَاحِبَهُ فَالَّذِي يَلْزِمُ التَّصَافُحَ أَعْظَمُ أَجْرًا مِنَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ، أَلَا وَإِنَّ الدُّنُوبَ لَتَنْتَحَاتُ فِيمَا بَيْنَهُمْ حَتَّى لَا يَبْقَى ذَنْبٌ

If a person joins his hand with his companion, the one who adheres to the joining receives greater reward than the one who releases his hand first. Indeed, know that sins are erased between them, until no sin remains.[20](#)

6. Observing The Correct Body Language

Amir al-Mu'minin (ؑa) is reported to have said:

لِسَانُ الْحَالِ أَصْدَقُ مِنْ لِسَانِ الْمَقَالِ

The tongue of the state is more truthful than the tongue of speech.[21](#)

This dictum of Imam  Ali (ؑa) reveals ample information for every insightful human being, not excepting the physician, whose body language can truly instill love, happiness, and patience in the ailing patients.

A smile can actively transform the heart; words of encouragement, complete attention to the patient, and so many other elements that the astute physician knows due to his vast experience, can serve to create the sparks of happiness in the ailing patient.

A Monotheistic Perspective

Although a medical doctor is known as tabib, he must know that even the bestowal of a pleasant situation for the ailing one is actually entirely through divine strength and power. Therefore, not only is Allah al-Shafi (the Curer), but also al-Tabib (the One who makes the patient feel pleasant). In the well-known supplication of al-Jawshan al-Kabir we address Almighty Allah with this sacred name in various instances. Some of them are as follows:

اللهم إني أسئلك باسمك يا حبيب يا طبيب

O Allah, surely, I ask you by Your name, O Beloved, O tabib (the Doctor who makes the patient feel pleasant)[22](#)

يا كَاشِفَ الْكُرُوبِ يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ، يَا طَبِيبَ الْقُلُوبِ يَا مَنْوِرَ الْقُلُوبِ

O Reliever of deep anguishes, O One who turns the hearts, O Tabib of the hearts (One who makes the hearts feel pleasant), O Enlightener of the hearts.[23](#)

يَا حَبِيبَ مَنْ لَا حَبِيبَ لَهُ، يَا طَبِيبَ مَنْ لَا طَبِيبَ لَهُ يَا مُجِيبَ مَنْ لَا مَجِيبَ لَهُ

O Lover of one who has no lover, O Tabib (one who makes the patient feel pleasant) of one who has no tabib, O Responder of one who has no responder.[24](#)

يا نعم الحسيب، يا نعم الطَّيِّبِ، يا نعم الرَّقِيبِ

O best Accounter, O best Tabib (One who makes the patient feel pleasant), O best Observer.[25](#)

اللهم إِنِّي أَسْتَلُّكَ بِاسْمِكَ يَا رَبَّنَا يَا إِلَهَنَا يَا سَيِّدَنَا يَا مَوْلَانَا يَا نَاصِرَنَا يَا حَافِظَنَا يَا دَلِيلَنَا يَا مُعِينَنَا يَا حَبِيبَنَا يَا طَيِّبَنَا

O Allah, surely, I ask You by Your name, O our Lord, O our God, O our Leader, O our Guardian, O our Saviour, O our Protector, O our Guide, O our Helper, O our Lover, O our Tabib (One who makes the patient feel pleasant).[26](#)

The insightful scholars believe that in the purely monotheistic sense other than Allah and His manifestations who occupy themselves in treating the patients, there is no Tabib.

1. <http://physician.askdefine.com/> [6] [8/18/2012].
2. <http://en.allexperts.com/q/Etymology-Meaning-Words-> [7] 1474/doctor.htm, [19/8/2012].
3. Ibn Faris, Mu'jam maqayis al-lughah, v.3, p. 407.
4. Al-Firuzabadi, al-Qamus al-muhit, v. 1, p.97.
5. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.59, p. 62.
6. Shaykh al-Saduq, 'Ilal al-sharayi', v.2, p. 525.
7. Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi, Akhlaq al-tabib, p.32.5
8. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.2, p. 53.
9. Al-'Amili, al-Fusul al-muhimmah fi usul al-a'immah, v.3, pp. 53-54.
10. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.2, p. 189.
11. Al-Husayn ibn Sa'id, Kitab al-Mu'min, p. 48.
12. Shaykh al-Saduq, al-Khisal, p. 27.
13. Al-Wasiti, 'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-mawa'iz, p. 286.
14. Tafsir al-Imam al-'Askari, p. 354.
15. Al-Husayn ibn Sa'id, Kitab al-mu'min, p. 50.
16. Al-Hindi, Kanz al-'Ummal, v.9, p. 103, h. 25191.
17. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.3, p. 118.
18. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.3, p. 118.
19. Al-Tabrasi, Makarim al-akhlaq, p. 360.
20. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.2, p. 181
21. Al-Wasiti, 'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-awa'iz, p.420.
22. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.91, p. 385.
23. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.91, p. 391.
24. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.91, p. 390.
25. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.91, p. 390.
26. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.91, p. 390.

Prescription 3: Every Malady Has A Treatment

إن لكل داء دواء

Indeed, for every malady there is a medicine.

– Holy Prophet (S)

One who has appreciated the reality that Allah alone is the healer, and that nothing transpires save by His leave and control, would easily comprehend that it is possible for every malady to have a medicine and treatment. For him, science would not be the criterion of judgement, for science is based on experimentation and generalizations², both of which cannot be taken as proofs to establish reality.

Furthermore, not having found the cure does not mean that there is no cure. For this very reason, research on the methods of curing different ailments continue.

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

إن لكل داء دواء

Indeed, for every malady there is a medicine.[1](#)

Hence, if medical science with its extensive research cannot come up with a medicine for a specific malady, it should not lead one to conclude that there is no medicine for that. The fault, rather, is the imperfection and incompleteness of the research. Otherwise, when the Apostle of God, who represents God on earth and communicates His message to the people, says anything, it is sufficient as truth.

In another tradition this subtle reasoning has been expressed in a beautiful way. Jabir ibn [Abdullah al-Ansari](#) is reported to have said that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

لِكُلِّ دَاءٍ دَوَاءٌ فَإِذَا أُصِيبَ دَوَاءُ الدَّاءِ بَرِيءٌ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

For every malady there is a medicine, and when the medicine of the malady is obtained, the ailing one is relieved by the permission of Allah, the Invincible and Majestic.[2](#)

The phrase ‘fa idha usiba dawau al-dau’ (“and when the medicine of the malady is obtained”) in the above tradition informs us that the problem is not the absence of medicine, but rather the incompleteness of research on the part of medical scholars to discover and obtain the cure of the apparently incurable malady.

In another tradition, the Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ دَاءً إِلَّا قَدْ أَنْزَلَ لَهُ شِفَاءً عَلِمَهُ مَنْ عَلِمَهُ وَجَهَلَهُ مَنْ جَهَلَهُ

Allah did not send down any malady save that He had already sent a cure for it; whosoever knew it knew it, and whosoever was ignorant of it was ignorant of it³

The phrase ‘... ʿalimahu man jahilahu man jahilahu’ above is worthy of reflection. It tells us that the medicine is always there, and that the victor is the one who discovers the medicine.

The expression of sending down (inzal) employed in the tradition refers to the descent of divine grace from a high plane of existence to the material world, where it is manifested. It is not a process of physical displacement such that something that existed in a higher plane of physical existence leaves its place and comes down.

Actually, everything in the material world is sent down in the former sense at each and every moment. Hence all the natural phenomena are actually sent down. This needs a comprehensive introduction which is beyond the scope of this short treatise.⁴ The Holy Qur’an, however, alludes to this significant reality in the following verse:

وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ وَمَا نُنزِلُهُ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَعْلُومٍ

There is not a thing but that its sources are with Us, and We do not send it down except in a known measure. (Surah al-Hijr, 15:21).

Notice the phrase ‘... wa ma nunazziluhu illa bi-qadarin maʿlum’ (... “and We do not send it down except in a known measure”), which clearly tells us that there is a kind of tanzil and gradual descent of everything. The phrase ‘in min shayʿ’ signifies ‘everything’.

The doctor therefore who has not found the medicine of a specific malady should continue his struggle while encouraging the patient to pray to Allah, who is always the fundamental healer.

This reminds me of a statement made by one of my associates in the holy city of Qum. I had asked him to pray for a classmate who was suffering from leukemia, and he said something worthy of contemplation: “For Allah, cancer is just like suffering from a cold.”

Yes, it is He who gave the two ailments their characteristics and natural courses, and thus one who has a cold normally recovers quickly, whereas one who has leukemia is faced with death. However, because everything is absolutely in His hands, curing one ailment is no more difficult than curing the other. It is this monotheistic reality one must inculcate in oneself and rely on the Absolute Healer.

Bearing this in mind, the ailing patient must try to achieve a complete connection to Allah (al-inqita'u ila Allah) and ask Him to cure the malady he is suffering from.

History has shown several incidents of those who suffered from diseases that science claimed to be incurable, but the Healer practically demonstrated the opposite.

1. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 59, p. 76.
2. Al-Nawawi, al-Majmu', v.5, p. 107.
3. Ibn Hanbal, Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, v. 1, p. 377.
4. A good reference book that explains this reality is Hasti wa hubut (Existence and Fall) by Shaykh Hamid Parsaniya, which has been translated by Shaykh Shuja' 'Ali Mirza and published by ICAS, London.

Prescription 4: You Are God's Secret Agent

من ستر مسلماً ستره الله عز وجل في الدنيا والآخرة

Whosoever covers a Muslim, Allah, the Invincible and Majestic, would cover him in this world and the Hereafter.

– Imam ؑAli (ؑa)

A doctor is not only responsible to struggle in curing his patient, but also to preserve his patient's respect and dignity. A trustworthy doctor, therefore, would never reveal the ugly and unpleasant things he observes in a patient. His main concern would be to learn about his patient for the sake of treatment and relief. Only when he maintains the secrets of others can he represent God on earth.

In a well-known counsel, Hippocrates (d. 370 BC) describes the character of a doctor as follows:

وينبغي أن يكون مشاركاً للعليل، مشفقاً عليه حافظاً للأسرار

The doctor should be a partner to the sick person, kind to him, protective of secrets¹

In his treatise, Ethics of a Doctor, Ibn Zakariyya al-Razi says:

اعلم يا بني أنه ينبغي للطبيب أن يكون رفيقاً بالناس حافظاً للغيب كتوماً لأسرارهم ولا سيما أسرار مخدمة فإنه ربما يكون ببعض الناس من المرضى ما يكتمه عن أخص الناس به مثل أبيه وأمه وولده وإنما يكتمونه خواصهم ويفشونه إلى الطبيب ضرورة

Know, O my dear little son, that a doctor must be friendly to people, protective of that which is hidden,

extremely secretive of their secrets, especially the secrets of one whom he serves [i.e. the patient], for indeed a person may have a sickness that he hides from one who is very near to him such as his father, mother, and children, and indeed his close associates hide it but disclose it to the doctor due to desperation and necessity. [2](#)

In hiding the defects of the patient, the doctor actually exemplifies and manifests Allah's attribute: Concealer of defects.

In the supplication of al-Jawshan al-Kabir we are taught to address Allah as follows:

يَا مَنْ أَظْهَرَ الْجَمِيلَ يَا مَنْ سَتَرَ الْقَبِيحَ

O You who manifests beauty, O You who covers ugliness [3](#)

Allah is not only introduced as al-Satir (the Concealer) or Satir al-ʿAwrat (the Concealer of deficiencies), but also as Sattar al-Uyub (One who extremely covers the defects).

In the supplication of al-Jawshan al-Kabir we address Allah as follows:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَلِكُ بِاسْمِكَ يَا غَافِرُ، يَا سَائِرُ، يَا قَادِرُ

O Allah, indeed, I ask You by Your name, O Forgiver, O Concealer, O Powerful. [4](#)

And in the same supplication we also address Allah as:

يَا سَائِرَ الْعَوْرَاتِ يَا مُحْيِيَ الْأَمْوَاتِ

O Concealer of defects, O Reviver of the dead. [5](#)

In a supplication of Prophet Yusuf (ʿa), we address Allah as follows:

يَا غَافِرَ الذُّنُوبِ، يَا عَلَامَ الْغُيُوبِ، يَا سَائِرَ الْغُيُوبِ

O Forgiver of sins, O Knower of the unseen, O Concealer of defects [6](#)

In the concluding verses of the well-known supplication of al-Sabah, Amir al-Mu'minin (ʿa) addresses Allah as follows:

يَا سَتَارَ الْغُيُوبِ، وَيَا عَلَامَ الْغُيُوبِ، وَيَا كَاشِفَ الْكُرُوبِ

O One who extremely covers all the defects, O One who extremely knows all the hidden things, O Reliever of all the deep anguishes.[7](#)

If a doctor therefore would like to preserve his status as a representative of God, he, likewise, would be extremely cautious lest he insults or diminishes the sanctity of his patient by revealing his defects to others. Amir al-Mu'minin (a) is reported to have said:

مَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

Whosoever covers a Muslim, Allah, the Invincible and Majestic, would cover him in this world and the Hereafter.[8](#)

This tradition informs us about the powerful effect of veiling the unpleasant deficiencies of a faithful person. Such a person would be protected in this world as well as the Hereafter, and Allah will not allow his faults and secrets to be disclosed.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) is reported to have said:

يَجِبُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِ أَنْ يَسْتَرَ عَلَيْهِ سَبْعِينَ كَبِيرَةً

It is compulsory for a faithful believer to cover seventy major sins of a believer.[9](#)

Imam al-Sadiq (a) is also reported to have said:

وَمَنْ سَتَرَ عَلَى مُؤْمِنٍ عَوْرَةً يَخَافُهَا سَتَرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ سَبْعِينَ عَوْرَةً مِنْ عَوْرَاتِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

Whosoever covers a faithful person from a defect [the disclosure of] which he fears, Allah will cover him from seventy defects from the defects of the world and the Hereafter.[10](#)

Note that seventy does not always allude to the exact number, such that a believer, for example, is not bound to forgive another believer's seventy-first sin, or if a believer hides one deficiency of another believer, Allah would only hide seventy deficiencies of his and not seventy-one.

Numbers like seventy, one thousand, seventy thousand, and the like are known in the Arabic language *ʿadad al-kithrah* (numbers that signify abundance). The Holy Qur'an employs seventy, for example, to confer a similar connotation. Allah tells His Apostle:

إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ

Were you to seek forgiveness seventy times (for the hypocrites), Allah would never forgive them

(9:80).

This does not mean that if the Prophet (S) sought forgiveness seventy-one times then Allah would forgive them.

One of the most appropriate examples of Allah's attribute of concealing the deficiencies of a believer is unveiled on the Day of Judgement, the day when the secrets will be unveiled. In a hadith qudsi, the Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have requested Allah not to take account of his nation in the presence of the Angels, the Apostles, and the rest of the nations, so that their defects do not appear before them, but rather to take account of them in such a way that none other than Allah and the Holy Prophet (S) comes to know about their sins. Thereupon Allah said:

يا حبيبي أنا أرفأ بعبادي منك، فإذا كرهتُ كشفَ عند غيرك، فأنا أكرهُ كشفَها عندك أيضاً. فأحاسبهم وحدي
بحيث لا يطلع على عثراتهم عيوبهم غيري

O my beloved, I am kinder than you to My servants; if you dislike disclosing their defects to other than you, I dislike disclosing them even to you as well. Thus, I will take their account Myself, such that other than Myself none will come to know of their lapses. [11](#)

This conversation transports us to the following beautiful name of Allah taught to us in the well-known supplication of al-Jawshan al-Kabir:

يا نعم الحسيب

O Best Accounting One. [12](#)

- [1.](#) Al-Lahiji, Mahbub al-qulub, v.1, p. 182.
- [2.](#) Ibn Zakariyya al-Razi, Akhlaq al-tabib, pp. 27-28.
- [3.](#) Al-Kaf'ami, al-Misbah, Du'a al-Jawshan al-Kabir, p. 250.
- [4.](#) Al-Kaf'ami, al-Misbah, Du'a al-Jawshan al-Kabir, p. 252.
- [5.](#) Al-Kaf'ami, al-Misbah, Du'a al-Jawshan al-Kabir, p. 250.
- [6.](#) 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.92, p. 171.
- [7.](#) 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.84 p 341.
- [8.](#) Ibn Hanbal, Musnad Ahmad, v.4, p. 104; al-Qawini, Sunan Ibn Majah, v.2, p. 85.
- [9.](#) Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.2, p. 207.
- [10.](#) Al-Shahrudi, Mustadrak safinah al-bihar, v.7, p. 48.
- [11.](#) Al-Shirazi, Kalimat Allah, p. 57.
- [12.](#) Al-Kaf'ami, al-Misbah Du'a al-Jawshan al-Kabir, v.51, p. 253.

Prescription 5: Understanding The Patient's Agony

اه اسم من أسماء الله تعالى

Ah' is a name from the names of Allah, the Exalted.

– Imam al-Sadiq (ؑa)

There are different kinds of patients a doctor normally encounters during his practice as a medical practitioner. Whereas some are very tolerant and forbearing, some, due to their great sensitivity, have the habit of complaining and reacting to discomfort very easily. Such encounters can at times be very disturbing and agonizing for the physician. However, he must always try to maintain a fatherly spirit of understanding, forgiveness and concern. His endeavor should be to understand the depth of the cause of the malady of the patient in order to remedy the ailment successfully.

The patient's expression of pain actually must be understood from the sublime perspective of religion. The following is an incident worthy of reflection:

عن أبي إسحاق الحزاعي، قال: دخلت مع أبي عبد الله (عليه السلام) على بعض مواليه نعوذ، فرأيت الرجل يُكثِرُ من قول أه، فقلتُ له: يا أخي أذكرُ ربك واستغيت به، فقال أبو عبد الله (عليه السلام): أه اسم من أسماء الله تعالى، فمن قال: أه، استغاث بالله عزَّ وجلَّ

Abu Ishaq al-Khuza'i is reported to have said: I and Abu ʿAbdillah (ؑa) [Imam al-Sadiq] came to one of his followers to visit him, and I saw him frequently saying 'Ah'. So I said to him: O brother, remember your Lord and seek help from Him. Thereupon Abu ʿAbdillah (ؑa) said: 'Ah' is a name from the names of Allah, the Exalted. So whosoever says 'Ah' seeks help from Allah, the Invincible and Majestic. [1](#)

This incident teaches us that our superficial comprehension of the expression of pain informs us that the patient is complaining about his malady while he is in a state of restlessness. However, those who do not behold things and events in the superficial sense, and contemplate on whatever they observe, comprehend the kernel of the patient's expression as actually the seeking of divine help which we normally term in Arabic as al-istghathah.

In actual fact, as is established by theologians, philosophers, and mystics, all the created entities in all their moments need Allah. The Holy Qur'an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ

O mankind! You are the ones who stand in need of Allah, and Allah He is the All-Sufficient, the All- Laudable. (Surah Faatir, 35: 15).

Although this perception of need is not expressed through the physical tongue, all the entities from the depths of their beings in all their moments seek help from God. However, when the human being is entangled with a problem and a predicament, the physical tongue harmonises with the tongue of existential need, and in saying ‘Ah’ which reveals the state of desperation (idtirar), one actually calls Allah, the Responder of the desperate ones, and seeks His help for removing the deficiency and need.²

Other traditions also inform us that such an expression is glorification.

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

يَا عَلِيُّ أَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِ تَسْبِيحٌ، وَصِيَا حُهُ تَهْلِيلٌ وَنَوْمُهُ عَلَى الْفِرَاشِ عِبَادَةٌ، وَتَقَلُّبُهُ مِنْ جَنْبٍ إِلَى جَنْبٍ جِهَادٌ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، فَإِنْ عُوْفِي مَشَى فِي النَّاسِ وَمَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ ذَنْبٍ

O ﷺ Ali, the moaning of a believer is glorification, his wailing is expressing the oneness of God, his sleep on the bed is worship, his tossing from one side to another is a struggle in the way of Allah, and if he gets well, he would walk among the people while having no sin on him. ³

Perhaps the reason why the moaning of a believer is reckoned as tasbih is that it reveals his need for Allah, who is free from every kind of imperfection.

Another way of looking at it is that the moaning of a believer reveals his neediness and imperfection, which in turn reveals the existence of the Needless and Perfect. This is because the existence of the needy and imperfect finally leads us to the existence of the Absolute Perfect and Needless Being who is Allah.

In other traditions we are informed that an ailing believer is rewarded when he moans. The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

يَكْتُبُ أَنْيْنَ الْمَرِيضِ حَسَنَاتٍ مَا صَبَرَ

The moaning of a sick person is written as good deeds as long as he preserves patience.⁴

Therefore, instead of reprimanding the patient, we should try to calm him down and make him optimistic of a swift recovery. Every expression of ‘Ah’ that comes from the patient must transport the doctor to Allah and His remembrance, for He alone is the Reliever of pain and discomfort.

1. Shaykh al-Saduq, al-Tawhid, p. 219.
2. For a detailed exposition, refer to: Fayd Kashani, Anwar al-Hikmah, p. 86, and Qadi Sa'id Qummi, Sharh Tawhid al-Saduq, v.3, pp. 208-209.
3. Shaykh al-Saduq, Man la yahduruhu al-faqih, v.4, p. 364.
4. Nu'man ibn Muhammad, Da'a'im al-Islam, v. 1, p. 217.

Prescription 6: The Divine Visage Of The Patient

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ

... And He is with you wherever you may be ... (Qur'an Surah al-Hadid, 57:4).

The Holy Qur'an says:

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُولُوا فَتَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَسِيعُ عَلِيمٌ

To Allah belong the east and the west: so whichever way you turn, there is the face of Allah! Allah is indeed All-Bounteous, All-Knowing. (Surah al-Baqara, 2: 115).

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

It is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then settled on the Throne. He knows whatever enters the earth and whatever emerges from it and whatever descends from the sky and whatever ascends to it, and He is with you wherever you may be, and Allah sees best what you do. (Surah Hadid, 57:4).

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, and He has knowledge of all things. (Surah Hadid, 57:3).

Amir al-Mu'minin (ع), disclosing his state of perceiving reality, is reported to have said:

ما رأيتُ شيئاً إلا ورأيت الله فيه أو قبله أو معه

I have not seen anything save that I saw Allah in it, or before it or with it. [1](#)

This is a very important, profound and subtle dictum that must not be comprehended superficially. The containment (zarfiyyah), priority (qabliyyah), and unity (ma'āniyyah) spoken about in this dictum must not be taken in the material sense.

Some traditions of the infallible progeny of the Holy Prophet (S) are such that they intoxicate the reader and transport him to a world of love and ecstasy. If the practitioners of medicine were astute enough to understand and comprehend that every entity in this universe is a locus where the attributes of God are manifested, they would be extremely cautious in every move that they make when dealing with a patient.

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

يعير الله عز وجل عبداً من عباده يوم القيامة فيقول: عَبْدِي مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذَا مَرِضْتُ أَنْ تَعُودِنِي؟ فيقول: سُبْحَانَكَ
سُبْحَانَكَ أَنْتَ رَبِّ الْعِبَادِ لَا تَأَلَّمُ وَلَا تَمْرَضُ. فيقول: مَرِضَ أَخُوكَ الْمُؤْمِنُ فَلَمْ تَعُدَّهُ، وَعِزَّتِي وَجَلَالِي لَوْ عُدَّتَهُ لَوَجَدْتَنِي
عِنْدَهُ ثُمَّ لَتَكَفَّلْتُ بِحَوَائِجِكَ فَفَضِيئُهَا لَكَ، وَذَلِكَ مِنْ كَرَامَةِ عَبْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِ، وَأَنَا الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

On the Judgement Day, Almighty Allah would reproach a servant among His servants, and say: O My servant, what hampered you from visiting Me when I turned ill? The servant thereupon would say: Free from imperfections are You! Free from imperfections are You! You are the Lord of the people, neither do You sense any pain, nor do You get sick.

Thereupon Allah would say: Your faithful brother became ill, and you did not visit him; I swear by my Invincibility and Majesty, had you visited him you would have found Me near him, and I would have taken the responsibility of attending to your needs and would have given them to you; and this is due to the nobility of My believing servant, and I am the All- Beneficent, the All- Merciful. [2](#)

This is one of the most profound traditions narrated from the Holy Prophet (S). It needs a reflective heart to understand its subtleties and intricacies. One of the most remarkable statements it reveals is the phrase ‘O My servant, what hampered you from visiting Me when I turned ill?’

Scholars of insight have a very subtle and deep interpretation of this, the elucidation of which is beyond the scope of this brief treatise. In short, the phrase ‘... Law ʿudtahu lawajadtani ʿindahu’ (... “had you visited him, you would have found Me near him”) speaks of the most beautiful reality of divine immanence and proximity propounded by mystical scholars. [3](#)

If a doctor, therefore, would realise that he is not only treating one who is in pain, but also dealing with the One who is everywhere, he would handle the patient with patience, love, attachment, care and deep concern. Alluding to this extreme proximity of Allah, the Holy Qur’an says:

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ

... **And He is with you wherever you may be ... (Surah Hadid, 57:4).**

Allah, the Exalted, also says:

أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ فِي مَرِيَّةٍ مِنْ لِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ أَلَّا إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُحِيطٌ

Look! They are indeed in doubt about the encounter with their Lord! Look! Indeed, He encompasses all things! (Surah Fussilat, 41:54).

The phrase ‘Indeed He encompasses all things’ should never be conjectured to signify a material phenomenon. The encompassment spoken about in the aforementioned verse is not akin to the encompassment of one thing over another, as this is only correct with regard to material entities.

Allah, Exalted is He, encompasses every layer of every existential entity, such that one may wonder and ask: is there any layer where He is not present?

Comprehending this subtle secret creates a different kind of environment for the doctor, and he handles every patient, regardless of his race or even religion and regardless of his habit and manners, as an entity where Allah is present and which manifests the attributes of Allah.

Understanding The Meaning Of عيادة

It is important to note that traditions narrated about visiting the sick generally mention the term al-عيادة (repetitive visitation) and not al-ziyarah (visitation). The word al-عيادة literally signifies repeated visits. It is derived from the word al-عائد which means to return. When we wish to say ‘Muhammad visited a patient’, we express: ‘Muhammad عادا maridan’, although the literal meaning of عادا is ‘he returned’. This reveals that the reality of عيادة is not a simple one-off visit.

Shaykh al-Turayhi (d. 1058 AH), the Shia lexicographer, referring to this subtlety says:

كل من أتاك مرة بعد أخرى فهو عائد، وإن اشتهر في عيادة المريض

Whosoever comes to you again and again is known as عايد, although this word has become associated with visiting the sick.⁴

However, we should note that Islam encourages such return visits that are short and do not cause the patient inconvenience and distress.

Imam al-Sadiq (ع) is reported to have said that Amir al-Mu’minin Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said:

إن من أعظم العواد أجرًا عند الله عز وجل لمن إذا عاد أخاه خفف الجلوس إلا أن يكون المريض يحب ذلك

Indeed, among those visitors [of the sick] who have the greatest reward near Allah, the Invincible and Majestic, is he who upon visiting his [ailing] brother, sits for a very little while, save if the patient loves that [he should sit more].⁵

☞Allamah al-Majlisi (d. 1110 AH) in his Bihar al-Anwar quotes the following thought-provoking poetry:

حَقَّ الْعِيَادَةُ يَوْمَ بَيْنَ يَوْمَيْنِ

وَجَلْسَةٌ لَكَ مِثْلَ مِثْلِ طَرْفِ الْعَيْنِ

لَا تَبْرُ مِنْ مَرِيضًا فِي مَسَائِلِهِ

The correct manner of visiting [the sick] is a day between every two days
And a sitting for you the like of a blink of the eye
Do not twist a patient in his matters
Sufficient for you is that you ask in two words.⁶

¹. Shaykh al-Rayshahri, Mawsu'at al-'aqa'id al-Islamiyyah, v.3, p. 75.

². 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.7, p. 304.

³. Scholars of mysticism have spoken at length about the principle of the Oneness of Being (wahdat al-wujud). If one understands this reality properly and is enabled to vision the same, everything around would appear differently. One would always be positive and optimistic and savour the different loci of divine attributes.

⁴. Shaykh al-Turayhi, Majma' al-bahrayn, v.3, p. 273.

⁵. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.3, p. 118.

⁶. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.78, p. 225.

Prescription 7: Your Comprehensive Role

تَخَلَّقُوا بِأَخْلَاقِ اللَّهِ

Condition yourselves with the traits of Allah.

– Holy Prophet (S)

The doctor must realize that the ultimate goal of the human creation, according to scholars well-grounded in the depths of religion, is to attain the sublime attributes of Allah (al-Asma⁹ al-Husna). That is why the Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ

Indeed, I was only sent to perfect the traits of greatness.[1](#)

Traits of nobility and greatness essentially belong to Allah but can be manifested in those human beings who struggle to actualize their potential of exemplifying the beautiful names of Allah.

The human being has been bestowed with a potential that can enable him to soar and attain the station of being a vicegerent of God on earth. He has been conferred with the ability to practically realise the attributes of perfection. Appreciating this profound reality should enhance the vision of every doctor and increase his efforts in bettering his methods of treating his patients.

If, therefore, a doctor also trains himself in the fundamentals of faith, not only would he attempt to treat the patient physically, but also convey and impart the pure and pristine teachings of Islam.

The excellent morals and character of a doctor when attending the patient can transform the ignorant patient and guide him to the path of salvation.

One of the most brilliant dictums of Imam al-Sadiq (ؑa) is as follows:

كُونُوا دُعَاةَ لِلنَّاسِ بِغَيْرِ السِّنِّتِكُمْ، لِيَرَوْا مِنْكُمْ الْوَرَعَ وَالْاجْتِهَادَ وَالصَّلَاةَ وَالْخَيْرَ، فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ دَاعِيَةٌ

Be callers of people [to the truth] without your tongues. They must see from you [acts such as] self-abstinence, struggle, prayer, and virtue, for these are things that call [towards the truth].[2](#)

In order to practically realize an excellent character, a doctor must always update his limited knowledge about religion and its sublime teachings by reading authoritative material and seeking directions from scholars of piety and authority. This can be done parallel to his other reading projects.

He must remember that not only is it important for him to know the intricacies of the human body, which is a secondary reality, it is also vital for him to know the subtleties of his spiritual dimension, which actually forms his primary reality. In fact, such knowledge is a path towards the knowledge of God himself.[3](#)

Imam  Ali (ؑa) is reported to have said:

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ

Whosoever comes to know himself will come to know his Lord.[4](#)

The well-known authoritative predecessors of the science of medicine like Hippocrates (d. 370 BC),

Galen (d. 200 CE), and Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi (d. 925 CE), were not only masters in the field of physical medicine but were also well-versed in spiritual medicine.

Galen, for example, is said to have written two treatises exclusively devoted to the vices of the soul: The Diagnosis and Cure of the Soul's Passions and The Diagnosis and Cure of the Soul's Errors⁵

Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi wrote a well-known treatise called al-Tibb al-ruhani (Spiritual Medicine), where he discussed ways of repelling the different maladies of the soul.

This book⁶ was translated by Professor Arthur J. Arberry (d. 1969 CE) in the year 1950 with the title The Spiritual Physick. It consists of twenty chapters. Some of the thought-provoking chapters are as follows:

Chapter (1): Of the Excellence and Praise of Reason

Chapter (2): Of Suppressing and Restraining the Passion

Chapter (4): Of How a Man may Discover his Own Vices

Chapter (5): Of Repelling Carnal Love

Chapter (8): Of Repelling Excessive and Hurtful Anger

Chapter (11): Of Repelling Excessive and Hurtful Anxiety and Worry

Chapter (12): Of Dismissing Grief

Chapter (13): Of Repelling Greed

Chapter (14): Of Repelling Habitual Drunkenness

The beauty of this work is its practical nature. Most of its chapters start with the word Repelling; Razi, therefore, is serious in revealing the method of curing spiritual maladies.

In his introduction to the book al-Dirasat al-tahliliyyah li kitab al-tibb al-ruhani (Analytical Studies on the Spiritual Physick of Razi) published by the University of Tehran, Dr. Mahdi Muhaqqiq writes:

The commonly held view among physicians was that excellence would be reached through knowledge of both medicine and philosophy. Hippocrates was mentioned as the perfect example of the physician and philosopher. Also, to Galen was attributed a work called Fa'anna al-tabib al-fadil yajibun an yakuna faylasufan (The Excellent Physician must necessarily be a philosopher).

Similarly, to achieve this end most physicians included chapters on philosophy at the beginning of their medical works; for example, Abu al-Hasan al-Tabari a fourth century A.H. physician in his al-Mu'atalajat al-buqratiyyah (Hippocratical treatments) gives some elementary notions of philosophy and declares that a physician without a certain knowledge of philosophy is not reliable. It is therefore not surprising that beside the many medical works of Razi we find about eighty books and treatises on philosophy, as listed by Biruni in the Fihrist.⁷

Perhaps the great emphasis for physicians to study philosophy is because philosophy actually forms the basis and foundation of the different fields of science. Furthermore, it also teaches the human being about the existence and attributes of the Creator and His relation with His creation and instills faith in him. It is not based on speculations or generalizations but rational convictions, which can form a strong

basis of the physician's worldview.

Hence, the aspiration of an ideal doctor should not be limited to the intricacies of the body but must include the intricacies of the soul as well.

1. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.16, p. 210

2. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.2, p. 78.

3. Obviously, this would then be the beginning of his struggle, for knowledge without action instead of elevating the status of a human being can degrade him and lower him to the station of animals, or perhaps even inferior than that.

4. Shaykh al-Rayshahri, Mizan al-Hikmah, v.3, p. 1877.

5. B. T. Qutbuddin, Healing the Soul: Perspectives of Medieval Muslim Writers (Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review 2 (1995)), 2:62– 87.

6. An online PDF copy of this work can be procured from the Online Library of Liberty

http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show [8]. php%3Ftitle=1791

[2/9/2012]

7. M. Muhaqqiq, al-Dirasat al-tahliliyyah, pp. 14–15.

Prescription 8: Avoiding The Pitfalls Of Destruction

من تطيب فليتق الله

Whosoever practices medicine, must observe taqwa.

– Imam ؑAli (ؑa)

Amir al-Mu'minin (ؑa) is reported to have said:

من تطيب فليتق الله ولينصح وليجتهد

Whosoever practices medicine must be conscious of Allah (fa liyattaqi Allah), show good will, and struggle.¹

Although being a tabib is a highly recommended occupation in Islam, it requires one not only to be academically competent, but also spiritually seasoned. This is because there are so many circumstances in which one can falter if one is not careful. In order for the tabib to guarantee his success and salvation in this world and the Hereafter, he must never forget this important prescription.

The fundamental term for being careful from falling into the pitfalls of spiritual ignominy is taqwa. When

employed in the context of the abovementioned hadith it simply means to be careful and wary of God, the natural result of which would be to adhere to whatever He commands, and refrain from whatever He prohibits. And this can only be realised when one is aware of what is lawful and what is unlawful according to Islam.

For this reason, doctors must be fully vigilant of their boundaries and acquire the essential Islamic directions from the books of Islamic Law authored by the great authorities of Islamic jurisprudence.

If a doctor is oblivious of this, instead of earning great reward, he would suffer from continual sin.

The state of taqwa is so important that Islam considers it as a determining factor for measuring the greatness of a human being. The Holy Qur'an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most God- wary among you. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All- Aware. (Surah al-Hujraat, 49: 13).

Due to the nature of his occupation, the physician is vulnerable to many quagmires of spiritual destruction, and if he is not careful, he can deviate and devastate his spiritual edifice.

Some of the numerous pitfalls worthy of consideration are as follows:

Submission To Greed

Sometimes a doctor's greater concern is the wealth he accumulates and not the treatment for which he strives. This is one of the most dangerous pitfalls into which a doctor can fall. In such a case, the process of treatment actually turns into a purely insensitive mechanical activity, and not a delicate, friendly, and divine occupation. Such types of doctors never attain success in life, unless of course success is defined by the accumulation of wealth and material prosperity. One who has understood the potential of the human being to become a reflection of divine attributes will never sacrifice this exalted aim for the transient mundane pleasures of life.

One of the tangible manifestations of greed is the acceptance of bribery from people. Bribery for the sake of prolonging an illness, causing greater complications in the patient, receiving a specific patient with more care and advantage, and so many other forms of corruption, are well-known to the doctors of the contemporary world. This is one of the most spiritually devastating pitfalls about which every intelligent doctor must be vigilant and careful. Earning extra wealth by spoiling the treatment of a patient

for the sake of relieving his enemy is a very ignorant step, the reason being that besides its worldly and other-worldly consequences, the doctor is not sure if he would even live for one more week to be able to spend that money.

The following are noteworthy traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (عليه السلام) about the evil consequences of greed:

A) Greed is Coupled with Inner Trouble

Amir al-Mu'minin (عليه السلام) is reported to have said:

الْحَرِيصُ تَعِبٌ

The greedy is always in difficulty.2

B) Greed is Coupled with Shamelessness

Amir al-Mu'minin (عليه السلام) is reported to have said:

لا حياء الحريص

A greedy person has no shame.3

C) Greed is Coupled with Inferiority

Amir al-Mu'minin (عليه السلام) is reported to have said:

الْحَرِصُ ذُلٌّ وَعِنَاءٌ

Greed is inferiority and hardship.4

D) Greed is Actual Poverty

Amir al-Mu'minin (عليه السلام) is reported to have said:

الحريص فقير ولو ملك الدنيا بحذافيرها

A greedy person is poor even if he were to own the entire world.5

E) Greed does not Increase Sustenance

Amir al-Mu'minin (ؓ) is reported to have said:

الحرص ينقصُ قدرَ الرَّجُلِ وَلَا يَزِيدُ فِي رِزْقِهِ

Greed decreases the rank of a man and does not increase his sustenance.[6](#)

All these profound traditions consist of subtleties worthy of mention, but due to the limited scope of this work we will not go into detail. However, it is imperative for the esteemed readers to reflect on them and understand the crux of this degrading characteristic.

The esteemed Egyptian Physician Abu al-Hasan ibn Ridwan (d. 453 AH/1061 CE), quotes Hippocrates to have said that one of the essential characteristics of a doctor is:

أَنْ تَكُونَ رَغْبَتُهُ فِي إِبْرَاءِ الْمَرْضَى أَكْثَرَ مِنْ رَغْبَتِهِ فِيمَا يَلْتَمِسُهُ مِنَ الْأَجْرَةِ، وَرَغْبَتُهُ فِي عِلَاجِ الْفُقَرَاءِ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ رَغْبَتِهِ فِي عِلَاجِ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ

His desire to cure the patient must be greater than his desire of the payment that he solicits; and his desire in curing the poor must be greater than his desire to treat the affluent.[7](#)

Submission To Base Desires

The doctor deals with the human body and in some circumstances handles patients who are of the opposite gender. If he is not careful and submits to his carnal desires he would fall into the quagmire of constant sin. Each of the five senses has its own role to play in the development of a human being. The insightful scholars say that the doors of Hell are seven in number, whereas the doors of Heaven are eight.[8](#)

The reason is that both the doors of Hell as well as Heaven share seven doors, while Heaven has a unique door which cannot be shared by Hell. The common doors of Hell and Heaven are as follows:

The five senses (sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing)

The faculty of khayal (which imagines physical forms)

The faculty of wahm (which imagines particular meanings)

The unique door of Heaven is the intellect. One can engage in sin through any of the aforementioned seven doors, but not through the intellect. The intellect is a door which would never allow one to sin.

Therefore, the doctor must consider how to employ the faculties he enjoys. If he succumbs to his base desires and employs them in the path of disobeying the Creator, he would actually be entering the Hell-

Fire, and would plummet to the confines of beastliness or even lower than that. The Holy Qur'an says:

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ
بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ

Certainly, We have created for Hell many of the jinn and humans: they have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, they have ears with which they do not hear. They are like cattle; rather they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless. (Surah al-A'araaf, 7: 179).

Therefore, the doctor must endeavor to be steadfast in fighting his inner temptations and direct all his faculties of perception by the intellect.

Submission To Personal Antipathy

In the same way that lust and material desire may compel the unprincipled physician to taint himself with sin, anger can also induce him to indulge in activities that would ruin his life. Those physicians who have hatred vis-à-vis a specific race or a specific person are vulnerable to indulge in activities that would never be forgiven unless the victim forgives.

Antagonism and hatred that leads to worsening the health of the patient or prolonging the same, for example, is one of the most dangerous pitfalls into which a doctor can fall. Although it is possible that no one may come to know of his deceptions, he cannot escape the All-Aware Creator who is closer to him than his own jugular vein (50: 16). In the well-known mystical terms of Amir al-Mu'minin (ع) in the supplication that he taught to his close companion Kumayl ibn Ziyad, he says:

ولا يمكن الفرار من حكومتك

And it is impossible to escape from Your sovereignty.⁹

The doctor is completely held by Allah's power each and every moment, and hence he has no way to escape. He is totally under divine sovereignty and control.

Aversion and enmity for a fellow brother or sister has been highly discouraged in Islam, unless its root is divine. In simpler words, if one shows aversion and enmity against the enemies of God, His Apostles, His close servants, His religion, etc., then it is not only quite understandable, but also very laudable and praiseworthy. This is because it is, in reality, aversion and enmity against the enemies of human perfection and its causes. The Holy Qur'an says:

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ إِذْ قَالُوا لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَاءٌ مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ
وَبَدَأَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ أَبَدًا حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَحَدُّهُ إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ لَأَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَمَا أَمْلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ
اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ رَبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ أَنَبْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

There is certainly a good exemplar for you in Ibrahim and those who were with him, when they said to their own people, ‘Indeed we repudiate you and whatever you worship besides Allah. We disavow you, and between you and us there has appeared enmity and hate forever, unless you come to have faith in Allah alone,’ except for Ibrahim’s saying to his father, ‘I will surely plead forgiveness for you, though I cannot avail you anything against Allah.’ ‘Our Lord! In You do we put our trust, and to You do we turn penitently, and toward You is the destination.’ (Surah al-Mmutahana, 60:4).

If aversion and enmity, on the contrary, is due to ignorance, personal misconceptions, petty issues, etc. then one must try to reform oneself. If a physician’s aversion vis-a-vis a patient is due to his short-sightedness and ignorance, then he would certainly fall into sin.

Consider the following traditions that highly discourage enmity and hatred against people:

A) Enmity is Ignorance at its Peak

Amir al-Mu’minin (ع) is reported to have said:

رَأْسُ الْجَهْلِ مُعَادَاةُ النَّاسِ

The peak of ignorance is enmity against the people.¹⁰

B) Enmity Destroys the Heart and Inherits Hypocrisy

Imam al-Baqir (ع) is reported to have said:

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْخَصُومَةَ فَإِنَّهَا تُفْسِدُ الْقَلْبَ وَتُورِثُ النِّفَاقَ

Beware of enmity for indeed it corrupts the heart and inherits hypocrisy.¹¹

C) Hatred is a Spiritual Malady

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

دَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ دَاءُ الْأَمَمِ فَبَلُّكُمْ بِالْبَغْضَاءِ وَالْحَسَدِ

The malady of the nations prior to you has spread to you: hatred and jealousy. [12](#)

A similar tradition is also reported from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (ؑa), with the addition of the following noteworthy phrases:

وهي الحالقة حالقة الدين لا حالقة الشعر

And they [hatred and jealousy] shave off, shave off the religion, not the hair. [13](#)

Submission To Discrimination

Attending to certain patients before those who have a greater right of being attended to, is one of the most despicable quagmires into which a doctor can fall. The fact that a certain patient is related or known to the doctor or is one who has assisted him in the past, does not legitimize the doctor's act of preferring that patient over another. Sometimes the reason is even worse, for example racial discrimination; just because the doctor prefers a specific race to another, he attends to members of that race quicker, more welcomingly, and more attentively. Such attitudes are sometimes referred to as al-ʿasabiyyah, which signifies a sense of favouring and defending one's kindred and those with whom one has some kind of affinity or relation.

The affinity may also be due to the similarity of profession or a special relationship, such as that of a teacher and pupil, or similar.

The Ahl al-Bayt (ؑa) have condemned this devastating vice. Consider the following narrations:

1. Imam al-Sadiq (ؑa) is reported to have said:

من تعصب أو تعصب له فَقَدْ خَلَعَ رِبْقَةَ الْإِيمَانِ مِنْ عُنُقِهِ

One who practices ʿasabiyyah or the one on whose behalf it is practiced, the tie of faith is taken off his neck. [14](#)

In another tradition he (ؑa) is reported to have said:

من تعصب عصبه الله بعصاة من نارٍ

Whosoever practices ʿasabiyyah (against someone), Allah shall wrap around him (ʿasabahu) a fold (ʿisabah) of fire. [15](#)

The foundation of such an attitude was laid by the accursed Shaytan, who, in the beautiful words of Amir

al-Mu'minin (ع) is called Imam al-Muta'assibin (the Leader of the prejudiced ones). He did not bow down before Adam because he was created from clay while Shaytan was created from fire. In his well-known sermon known as al-Qasi'ah, Imam Ali (ع) says:

اعْتَرَضَتْهُ الْحَمِيَّةُ فَأَفْتَحَرَ عَلَى آدَمَ بِخَلْقِهِ وَتَعَصَّبَ عَلَيْهِ لِأَصْلِهِ فَعَدُوَ لِلَّهِ إِمَامُ الْمُتَعَصِّبِينَ وَسَلَفَ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِينَ الَّذِي
وَضَعَ أَسَاسَ الْعَصَبِيَّةِ

Bigotry stood in his way. Consequently, he boasted over Adam through his creation and discriminated against him on account of his origin. Thus, this enemy of Allah, the Leader of the prejudiced ones (Imam al-Muta'assibin) and the forerunner of the proud, lay the foundation of prejudice. [16](#)

If we reflect on the above expressions of Amir al-Mu'minin (ع) painstakingly, we will come to realise how powerfully the Imam (ع) has articulated the relationship between Shaytan and 'asabiyyah. The apparent import of the above expressions reveals that this discriminatory attitude began with Shaytan.

He is the one who laid its foundation: wada'asa al-'asabiyyah. Furthermore, he is also the teacher of the same, for an Imam is a guide to either truth or falsehood, and Iblis is reckoned by Amir al-mu'minin (ع) as Imam al-Muta'assibin, which alludes to the fact that he calls others towards this despicable trait. Another veracity worthy of mention is that the very nature of Shaytan contains the trait of being prejudiced and discriminatory. This can be substantiated by the following verse of the Qur'an:

قَالَ لَمْ أَكُنْ لِأَسْجُدَ لِبَشَرٍ خَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمًا مَسْنُونٍ

Said he, 'I was not the kind to prostrate before a human whom You have created out of a dry clay [drawn] from an aging mud.' (Surah al-Hijr, 15:33).

Commenting on this verse, the late Allamah Tabataba'i says:

قوله تعالى: (قال لم أكن لأسجد لبشرٍ خلقته من صلصالٍ من حمًا مسنونٍ) في التعبير بقوله: (لم أكن لأسجد) دون أن يقول: لا أسجد أو لست أسجد دلالة على أن الإباء عن السجدة مقتضى ذاته

Regarding Allah's words: Said he, 'I was not the kind to prostrate before a human whom You have created out of a dry clay [drawn] from an aging mud.' His expression 'lam akun li asjuda' ("I was not of the kind to prostrate") and not 'la asjudu' ("I will not prostrate") or 'lastu asjud' ("I will not prostrate") shows that his denial to prostrate was a result of his essence. [In simpler terms, his essence was such that it simply was unable to prostrate]. [17](#)

In light of the aforesaid, if any physician normally deals with his patients according to 'asabiyyah and prejudice, he is actually adopting a demonic demeanour.

The yardstick of preference must be the commonly accepted phenomenon of 'first come first serve' unless the case is urgent and the condition of a specific patient is severe and serious or any other reason endorsed by Allah.

Submission To Indifference

Indifference can stem from different things: laziness, impatience, personal adversities, etc. The doctor who has happily and seriously devoted himself with this divine career must be extremely stern on himself when it comes to emotions. He must resist the waves of difficulties and must always employ his intellect as he continues with his work.

Otherwise, he would fall into situations that cannot be rectified. The doctor must understand that he is dealing with the lives of his patients and hence being indifferent to them just because of personal problems can cause complications and harm which he would not be able to salvage.

In conclusion, one of the most important Qur'anic prescriptions for every physician who is vulnerable to so many pitfalls of spiritual destruction, is to be God-wary and pious. So powerful and important is this prescription that it brings one extremely close to Almighty Allah.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

...and be wary of Allah, and know that Allah is with the God-wary. (Surah al-Baqara, 2: 194).

And in chapter 16, verse 128 He says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ

Indeed, Allah is with those who are God-wary and those who work beautifully. (Suran an-Nahl, 16: 128)

Perhaps one may ask that if it is explicitly clear in the Holy Qur'an that Allah is closer to every human being than his own jugular vein (wa nahnu aqrabu ilayhi min habl al-warid),¹⁸ what is the difference between such proximity and that which is indicated in the abovementioned verses through the preposition ma'ā (together/with) which signifies closeness?

We will say: the difference is great; whereas the universal existential proximity pertains to everything and everyone, the specific proximity mentioned in the above verses is attained through self-struggle and self-discipline. Technically, the former is called al-qurb al-wujudi (existential proximity), whereas the latter is known as al-qurb al-suluki (proximity attained through spiritual wayfaring), indicating that

whereas the former is essentially existing, the latter must be acquired through suluk ila Allah (wayfaring to Allah) as taught by the insightful scholars who draw their teachings fundamentally from the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (S) and his infallible household (a).

1. Al-Qadi al-Nu'man al-Maghribi, Da'aim al-Islam, v.2, p. 144.
2. Al-Amadi, Ghurar al-Hikam, 241.
3. Al-Amadi, Ghurar al-Hikam, 10499.
4. Al-Amadi, Ghurar al-Hikam, 691
5. Al-Amadi, Ghurar al-Hikam, 1753.
6. Al-Amadi, Ghurar al-Hikam, 1550.
7. Qutb al-Din al-Daylami al-Lahiji, Mahbub al-qulub, v.2, p. 93.
8. Mulla Sadra, al-Asfar al-arba'ah, v.5, p. 330; also see Khwajah Nasir alDin Tusi's Aghaz wa anjam, Section 14, pp. 57-58
9. Shaykh 'Abbas al-Qummi, Mafatih al-jinan, pp. 99-104.
10. Al-Amadi, Ghurar al-Hikam, 524
11. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.75, p. 186, Beirut ed.
12. Shaykh al-Saduq, 'Uyun akhbar al-Rida ('a), v. 1, p. 313.
13. Sharif al-Radi, al-Majazat al-nabawiyah, p. 174.
14. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.2, p. 307.
15. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.2, p. 308.
16. Sharif al-Radi, Nahj al-balaghah, Sermon 192.
17. 'Allamah Tabataba'i, al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an, v.12, p.155.
18. Holy Qur'an, 50:16.

Prescription 9: Your Dynamic Selflessness

طبيب دوار بطبه

He [the Prophet (S)] was a travelling physician.

– Imam a (a)

Amir al-Mu'minin (a) is reported to have introduced the Holy Prophet (S) as follows:

طبيب دوار بطبه، قد أحكم مراهمه، وأحمى مواسمه، يَضَعُ ذَلِكَ حَيْثُ الْحَاجَةُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ قُلُوبِ عُمِّي وَأَذَانِ صُمِّ
والسنة بكم، متتبع بدوائه مواضع الغفلة ومواطن الحيرة

[The Prophet (S)] was a traveling physician who has set ready his ointments and heated his instruments. He uses them wherever the need arises for curing blind hearts, deaf ears, and dumb tongues. He went with his medicines to the places of negligence and places of perplexity.¹

Although the word tabib in the above directions of Imam ʿAli (ʿa) has apparently been employed in the spiritual usage of the word, it is also extremely suitable for the medical doctor who mainly deals with the body of the human being. The fundamental message in the above passage is that a doctor must be concerned for the well-being of others, and hence go after the ailing one and not always anticipate the ailing one to come to him. This is the true spirit of a doctor.

Fortunately, we do have programmes where doctors travel to poor villages and serve to treat the indigent free of charge. However, this is not enough. The doctor should not wait for such programmes to be held at community level. He must be a nation (ummah) in himself yearning for the emancipation and serenity of others. He must therefore allocate some of his precious time to go to homes and places where he would be able to serve and practically follow the above prophetic tradition. And this is one of the most important secrets of progress and development in a doctor.

Amin al-Islam Shaykh al-Tabrasi (d. 548 AH) in his Majmaʿ al-bayan fi tafsir al-Qurʿan mentions a narration from Wahab, who said:

ربما اجتمع على عيسى من المرضى في اليوم خمسون ألفاً من أطاق منهم أن يبلغه بلغه ومن لم يطق أناه عيسى
يمشي إليه

Sometimes in one day around ʿIsa (ʿa) would gather fifty thousand sick people. Those among them who could reach him would reach him, but those who could not, ʿIsa (ʿa) would walk to them [to cure them]²

Those who would like to know the kernel of the meaning of thanking Allah which would reap increase and development must understand that this is one of the most powerful ways of expressing gratitude. Interestingly, the word shukr signifies the disclosure of a blessing. When someone discloses a divine blessing, he is known to have expressed practical gratitude.

When one employs his knowledge and skill for their fundamental purpose, Allah will make him more powerful and able. The secret therefore is to use the blessing for the purpose of its creation.

This makes me recall an incident worthy of mention: Some years ago, one of the Muslim organizations arranged a summer camp at a place in East Africa. The normal trend is that in such retreats there are always doctors brought to attend to the youth if they were to suffer from any kind of sickness or malady. That year we had one doctor who was given a room where he was to meet the ailing patients.

It so happened that some of the students turned so ill that they were not able to walk to the clinic. So the doctor was approached and informed about the situation, and he arrogantly said that it is not his duty to go to the patients, but rather it is their duty to come to him.

Fortunately, among those who had come as instructors and teachers was one who was a well-

established physician but would not occupy himself in his practice due to his great interest in studying the depths of religion. This noble instructor exemplified the true character of a tabib (a doctor who instills serenity in the heart of the patient).

Despite not being his responsibility to diagnose and treat the ailing ones, he went from room to room and talked to the suffering ones with utter patience, so that he may treat them. When I saw this scenario, my thought was transported to the word angel, and I thought to myself that indeed we do have angelic human beings on this earth.

The ancient history of doctors reveals that we had very spiritually powerful doctors who were not only well-versed in their field but had elevated their spirit and epitomized the term tabib in the true sense of the word. One such figure is Asclepius (isqilbyus). Galen is reported to have said that God Almighty revealed the following unto Asclepius:

لأن أسميك ملكاً أقرب من أن أسميك إنساناً

Naming you an angel is more suitable than naming you a human being.³ Obviously this does not imply that an angel is higher in status than a human being but alludes to the fact that Asclepius would enormously employ his intellect, which in our traditions is aptly called the inner apostle (al-rasul al-batin) and would never be overcome by the faculty of appetite (al-quwwah al-shahawiyyah).

It seems that one would feel that he does not have such a faculty in him. Otherwise, according to a tradition, if the human being overcomes his faculty of appetite, he transcends the level of the angels. Imam al-Sadiq (ع) is reported to have said:

قال أمير المؤمنين علي بن أبي طالب عليه السلام: إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ رَكَّبَ فِي الْمَلَائِكَةِ عَقْلاً بِلا شَهْوَةٍ ، وَرَكَّبَ فِي الْبِهَائِمِ شَهْوَةً بِلا عَقْلٍ ، وَرَكَّبَ فِي بَنِي آدَمَ كِلْتَيْهِمَا ، فَمَنْ غَلَبَ عَقْلُهُ شَهْوَتَهُ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَمَنْ غَلَبَ شَهْوَتَهُ عَقْلُهُ فَهُوَ شَرٌّ مِنَ الْبِهَائِمِ

Amir al-Mu'minin (ع) Ali ibn Abi Talib (ع) said: Indeed Allah, the Invincible and Majestic, mounted in the angels' intellect without appetite, and He mounted in the animal's appetite without intellect, and mounted both in the children of Adam. Therefore, whosoever's intellect overcomes his appetite is better than the angels, and whosoever's appetite overcomes his intellect is worse than animals.⁴

We pray to the Almighty to inspire the doctors to go after the patients and not limit themselves to the hospitals that they work in or the personal dispensaries they own, nor depend on their noble communities to start thinking and arranging for such divine ventures.

¹ Imam 'Ali (ع), Nahj al-balaghah, v. 1, p. 208.

² Shaykh al-Tabrasi, Majma' al-bayan fi tafsir al-Qur'an, v.2, p. 754.

3. Al-Qafti, Akhbar al-'ulama^{ra} bi akhyar al-hukama^{ra}, p. 7.

4. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.57, p. 299.

Prescription 10: Transcending Physiology

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ

Those who believe in the unseen ... (Surah al-Baqara, 2:3).

One of the distinct characteristics of a God-wary human being is conviction and faith in the unseen (al-iman bi al-ghayb). In the very beginning verses of the second chapter of the Holy Qur'an, Almighty Allah speaks of the characteristics of the God-wary (al-muttaqun). The very first characteristic He mentions about them is their belief in the ghayb (the unseen):

الم

Alif Lam Mim. ... (Surah al-Baqara, 2:1)

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who guard (against evil). ... (Surah al-Baqara, 2:2)

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

Those who believe in the unseen and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them. ... (Surah al-Baqara, 2:3)

Although the physician spends a substantial part of his life in experience and experimentation, which fundamentally rely on the five senses, he must understand that the world of matter is the lowest in the ontological hierarchy of existence.

Intellectual proof, Qur'anic evidence, authentic traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (ع^{ra}) and the spiritual disclosures (mukashafat) of the close servants of Allah, reveal that there are different layers of reality, all metaphysically united with one another. The higher levels have a causative effect on the lower ones, and

thus one cannot overlook them and take them for granted.

Understanding this primary universal reality opens the door of comprehending so many teachings of the guardians of religion. God-wary doctors, therefore, must transcend the straits of material phenomena and lend their ears to what the divine revelation and its guardians have said with regard to medicine that science cannot understand. Rebuking such remedies, just because of their metaphysical nature, is therefore indirectly rejecting the higher realms of existence and disregarding the words of the great Apostles of God.

Alexis Carrel (d. 1944 CE), the well-known French surgeon and biologist in his book *Man, the Unknown* says:

In all countries, at all times, people have believed in the existence of miracles, in the more or less rapid healing of the sick at places of pilgrimage, at certain sanctuaries. But after the great impetus of science during the nineteenth century, such belief completely disappeared ... Such is still the attitude of most physiologists and physicians.

However, in view of the facts observed during the last fifty years this attitude cannot be sustained. The most important cases of miraculous healing have been recorded by the Medical Bureau of Lourdes.¹ Our present conception of the influence of prayer upon pathological lesions is based upon the observation of patients who have been cured almost instantaneously of various affections, such as peritoneal tuberculosis, cold abscesses, osteitis, suppurating wounds, lupus, cancer, etc.²

Hereunder are examples of effective means of cure that despite being unknown to medical experts, have been communicated to mankind through the Apostles of Allah.

1. The Name Of Allah

Amir al-Mu'minin (ؓ) ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ؓ) is reported to have said:

إِسْمُ اللَّهِ شِفَاءٌ لِكُلِّ دَاءٍ وَعَوْنٌ عَلَى كُلِّ دَاءٍ

The name of Allah is a cure for every malady and a support against every malady.³

And in his well-known supplication which he taught to Kumayl, Amir al-Mu'minin (ؓ) addresses Allah as follows:

يا من اسمه دواء وذكره شفاء

O You whose name is medicine and whose remembrance is a cure.⁴

The great Shia scholar Qutb al-Din al-Rawandi (d. 573 AH), in assembly number eighty of his Lubb al-Lubab when discussing the meaning of verse 17:82 of the Holy Qur'an, says:

Know that cure (shifa) actually is from Allah. Sometimes the cause (sabab) is mentioned as the effect (musabbab).⁵ And in the Qur'an this has been done in three ways:

a) *Shifa al-Amm* (the healing of the masses): that refers to honey and the like, such as the verse: fihī shifaun li al-nasi (“in it is a cure for the people”). (16:69)

b) *Shifa al-Khass* (the healing of a specific class), for He says: Wa nunazziulu min al-Qur'ani ma huwa shifaun ... (“**We send down in the Qur'an that which is a cure**” ...). (17:82)

c) *Shifa Khass al-Khass* (the healing of a most specific class), which is the Exalted Master (Himself), as he said: Wa idha maridtu fahuwa yashfin (“**And when I turn ill, He cures me**”). (26:80)⁶

It is important to note that the above not only reveals that He alone is the one who heals, but also that He Himself is the cure. A true lover understands very well how powerful the cure of the proximity of the Beloved is.

2. The Holy Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an says:

وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا

We send down in the Qur'an that which is a cure and mercy for the faithful; and it increases the wrongdoers only in loss. (Surah al-Israa', 17:82).

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

خير الدواء القرآن

The best medicine is the Qur'an.⁷

One of the Infallibles (a) is reported to have said:

In the Qur'an there is a cure from every malady⁸

في القرآن شفاء من كل داء

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

الْحَمْدُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ، هِيَ شِفَاءٌ مِنْ كُلِّ دَاءٍ إِلَّا السُّامَ وَالسَّامَ الْمَوْتَ

The chapter of al-hamd is the mother of the book. It is a cure from every malady, except sam, and sam means death.[9](#)

So powerful is the effect of reciting the chapter of al-hamd that in a tradition Imam al-Sadiq (ع) is reported to have said:

مَنْ لَمْ تَبْرَأْهُ الْحَمْدُ لَمْ يَبْرَأْهُ شَيْءٌ

One whom [chapter] al-Hamd does not cure, nothing would cure[10](#)

This nondescript has witnessed how rapid the recovery is of one upon whom this profound chapter is recited. One of my close relatives was suffering from a condition that depicted a dangerous illness and someone recited the chapter over him in the state of desperation, and when the patient visited the doctor and tests were taken to diagnose whether the patient had any kind of serious illness, the response was negative.

3. Supplication To Allah

Imam al-Sadiq (ع) is reported to have said:

عليكم بالدعاء فإنه شفاء من كل داء

Upon you is supplication, for indeed it is a cure from every malady.[11](#)

We must understand that supplication for relief does not contradict taking medicine. Allah has directed us to seek the material causes of cure but reminded us that He alone is the true healer.

Imam al-Sadiq (ع) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ نَبِيًّا مِنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ مَرَضَ فَقَالَ: لَا أَتَدَاوَى حَتَّى يَكُونَ الَّذِي أَمْرَضَنِي هُوَ الَّذِي يَشْفِينِي. فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى إِلَيْهِ: لَا أَسْفِيكَ حَتَّى تَتَدَاوَى، فَإِنَّ الشِّفَاءَ مِنِّي

One of the Prophets [once] became ill, whereupon he said: I shall not cure myself until He Who made me sick treats me Himself. Thereupon Almighty Allah revealed unto him: I will not cure you, until you treat yourself, for surely cure comes from Me.[12](#)

Hence, while the assistance of the physician and medicine is essential, we must always seek divine help for it is He alone who allows the positive effect to take place.

Supplication has its etiquette. One must therefore try to seek and understand its etiquette and then talk to the All-Beloved.

The close servants of Allah know how to begin and go about addressing Him, and hence we must try to employ their words when presenting our needs and requests before Him.

It has been established in its own place that the best examples of Allah's close servants are the Prophets and the infallible Ahl al-Bayt of the Holy Prophet (S). Hence, we must try to find, understand, and adhere to their supplications.

Due to the tremendous efforts of our great scholars, today we have at our disposal many beautiful and comprehensive prayer manuals which contain supplications of different instances from the Holy Prophet (S) and his infallible progeny (a). One of the well-known supplication manuals is al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah, a prayer book directly dictated by Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a) to two of his effulgent sons, Imam Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Baqir (a) and Zayd al-Shahid (a). Besides being a divine pattern of etiquette of prayer, it is an ocean of knowledge which has yet to be explored and exhausted.

Professor Annemarie Schimmel (d. 2003 CE), an esteemed German scholar of mysticism and poetry, in an interview said:

I always recite the supplications from the original Arabic and do not refer to any translation. Obviously, I have translated parts of al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah into the German language. When I was occupied with rendering these supplications into the said language, my mother, due to her weakness was admitted to the hospital, and I would always go to visit her, and was perfectly aware of her situation. After she would go to sleep, I would busy myself in the corner of her room with editing the translations.

Furthermore, my mother's room had two beds, and the other bed was occupied by a woman who was strict in the Catholic faith. Out of the faith that she had, when she realized that I am busy with translating the supplications from a Shi'ite text, she got annoyed, and out of distaste and worry, said: Do we have any scarcity of supplications in Christianity and in our holy books, that you are now inclined to the supplications of the Muslims? I did not respond to her, but when my book [i.e. the translation] was printed I sent to her a copy of the same. After some time, she contacted me through the telephone, and said: "I would like to very sincerely thank you for this attractive gift, for every day instead of the supplications of the Bible, I read it!"¹³

Another very important element in our supplications must be the state of true desperation and idtirar. The Holy Qur'an tells us:

...أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ

Is He who answers the call of the distressed [person] when he invokes Him and removes his distress ... (Surah an-Naml, 27:62).

Here, three important conditions are mentioned:

The caller must be desperate (mudtarr). This can be understood by the object al-mudtarr

The caller must really call Allah, and not merely vocalise. This can be understood by the verb daʿā (calls)

The caller must call Allah and only expect from Him alone. This can be understood by the third person singular pronoun hu (Him) after the verb daʿā

4. Seeking Intercession From The Ahl Al-Bayt (a)

We have ample traditions that teach us that the Holy Prophet (S) and his infallible progeny (a) are the intermediaries of divine grace. And since Allah has placed a system of cause and effect and asked us to seek the causes although His is the ultimate power, influence, and control, asking directly from the Ahl al-Bayt (a) is not any kind of shirk (polytheism) whatsoever.

In a lengthy tradition, the Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said to Imam ʿAli (a):

يَا عَلِيُّ لَوْلَا نَحْنُ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ آدَمَ وَلَا حَوَاءَ وَلَا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا النَّارَ وَلَا السَّمَاءَ وَلَا الْأَرْضَ

O ʿAli if we did not exist, Allah would not have created Adam, nor Eve, nor Heaven, nor Hell, nor the sky nor the earth. [14](#)

In one of his letters, Amir al-Muʿminin (a) says:

فإِنَّا صَنَائِعُ رَبِّنَا وَالنَّاسُ بَعْدُ صَنَائِعُ لَنَا

Indeed, we are the artefacts of our Lord, and the people thereafter are our artefacts. [15](#)

Amir al-Muʿminin (a) is reported to have said under the Qurʾanic verse ‘wabtaghu ilayhi al-wasilah’ (“and seek the means to come to Him”)(***and seek the means to come to Him Surah al-Maida, 5:35***):

أنا وسيلته

I am His means. [16](#)

Imam al-Sadiq (a) is reported to have said:

أبى الله أن يُجْرِي الأشياءَ إِلَّا بِأَسْبَابِهَا، فَجَعَلَ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا

Allah does not permit things to take place except by their causes; thus, He made a cause for every thing. [17](#)

He (ﷺ) is also reported to have said:

نحن السبب بينكم وبين الله

We are the cause between you and Allah. [18](#)

And in another tradition, he (ﷺ) says:

بِنَا عُرِفَ اللَّهُ وَبِنَا عِبِدَ اللَّهُ

Through us Allah is known, and through us He is worshipped and obeyed. [19](#)

Imam al-Rida al-Murtada (ﷺ) is reported to have said:

بِنَا يَمْسِكُ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَنْ تَزُولَا، وَبِنَا يَنْزِلُ الْغَيْثُ، وَيَنْشُرُ الرَّحْمَةَ

Through us [i.e. the Ahl al-Bayt] Allah holds the heavens and the earth from ceasing to exist, and through us He sends down rain and spreads mercy. [20](#)

Shirk (polytheism) can only be conceived when one refers to the intermediaries of grace as independent bestowers of grace. If one asks for the cure of his malady from one of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (ﷺ) with the thought and belief that the Imam has a parallel power to that of God, then one would indeed be entangled in polytheism.

However, one who seeks their assistance because they are the intermediaries of divine grace (wasafat al-fayd al-ilahi) who have nothing of their own, has in fact adhered to the natural system that Allah has made. The reality is that in philosophical terms the entire world of contingency is nothing but a sheer link and nexus to the Creator, and thus its existence depends on Him every moment.

Muslims who have understood the station of the Ahl al-Bayt (ﷺ) and sought their mediation and assistance have had excellent experiences in their lifetimes. A number of collections of anecdotes of those who suffered from the apparently incurable diseases have been published elsewhere.

[5. Giving Charity \(Sadaqah\) To The Poor](#)

In a conversation between the Holy Prophet (S) and his close companion Abu Dharr, the Prophet (S) is reported to have mentioned some important merits of giving sadaqah, and finally said the following:

وَالصَّدَقَةُ شَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ وَالصَّدَقَةُ شَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ وَالصَّدَقَةُ شَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ

And sadaqah is amazing, sadaqah is amazing, sadaqah is amazing.[21](#)

Amir al-Mu'minin (ع) is reported to have said:

الصدقة دواء منجح

Sadaqah is an effective medicine.[22](#)

Imam al-Sadiq (ع) is reported to have said:

وداؤوا مرضاكم بالصدقة

And treat your sick ones with sadaqah.[23](#)

Note that there is no mention of sadaqah being a treatment for a specific disease. Rather, the direction to give sadaqah is of a general and absolute nature, and hence it pertains to all kinds of illnesses.

It is reported that a man complained to Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (ع) that all ten members of his family were sick. Thereupon Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (ع) said to him:

داوهم بالصدقة فليس شيء أسرع إجابة من الصدقة ، ولا أجدى منفعة للمريض من الصدقة

Treat them with sadaqah, for there is nothing swifter in response than giving sadaqah, nor is there anything of greater benefit for the sick one than giving sadaqah.

Some traditions mention that it is better for a sick person to give sadaqah by his own hand. Imam al-Sadiq (ع) is reported to have said:

يستحب للمريض أن يعطي السائل بيده وبأمر السائل أن يدعو له

It is recommended for the sick person to give to a beggar with his own hands and to tell him to pray for him.[24](#)

[6. Clay Of The Grave Of Imam Al-Husayn \(ع\)](#)

Imam al-Sadiq (ع) is reported to have said:

طين قبر الحسين عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ شِفَاءٌ مِنْ كُلِّ دَاءٍ

The clay of the grave of al-Husayn (ؑa) is a cure from every malady²⁵

Although Islam strictly prohibits the consumption of clay, the clay of the grave of al-Husayn (ؑa) has an outstanding and unique position, and it is confirmed to be a remedy for all illnesses. However, eating the clay of the grave of Imam al-Husayn for purposes other than what has been mentioned in the traditions is highly discouraged and prohibited:

Imam al-Sadiq (ؑa) is reported to have said:

مَنْ أَكَلَ مِنْ طِينِ قَبْرِ الْحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ غَيْرَ مُسْتَشْفٍ بِهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا أَكَلَ مِنْ لُحُومِنَا فَإِذَا أَحْتَاكَ أَحَدُكُمْ لِلْأَكْلِ مِنْهُ لِيَسْتَشْفِ بِهِ، فَلْيَقُلْ: بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَبِاللَّهِ، اللَّهُمَّ رَبِّ هَذِهِ التُّرْبَةِ الْمُبَارَكَةِ الطَّاهِرَةِ، وَرَبِّ النُّورِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ فِيهِ وَرَبِّ الْجَسَدِ الَّذِي سَكَنَ فِيهِ وَرَبِّ الْمَلَائِكَةِ الْمُؤَكَّلِينَ بِهِ اجْعَلْهُ لِي شِفَاءً مِنْ دَاءٍ كَذَا وَكَذَا

Whosoever eats some clay of the grave of al-Husayn (ؑa) not seeking any cure thereby, is as if he has eaten some of our flesh. Therefore, if anyone of you needs to eat some of it for the sake of seeking cure thereby, must say: In the name of Allah, and by Allah, O Allah, Lord of this blessed and pure clay, and Lord of the light that He sent down upon it, and Lord of the body that rested in it, and Lord of the angels entrusted with it, render it for me a cure from such and such malady²⁶

So powerful is the turbah (earth) of Imam al-Husayn (ؑa) that in some traditions it is also referred to as the greatest medicine (al-dawa[ؑ] al-akbar).²⁷

It is important however to know the exact location from where such clay can be gotten. According to a tradition, Imam al-Sadiq (ؑa) is reported to have said:

يُؤْخَذُ طِينُ قَبْرِ الْحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ عَلَى سَبْعِينَ ذِرَاعًا مِنْ عِنْدِ الْقَبْرِ

The clay of the grave of al-Husayn (ؑa) is taken within the ambit of the length of seventy arms-length from the grave²⁸

7. The Food That Falls From The Table Mat

Amir al-Mu'minin  Ali ibn Abi Talib (ؑa) is reported to have said:

كُلُوا مَا يَسْقُطُ مِنَ الْخُورَانِ فَإِنَّهُ شِفَاءٌ مِنْ كُلِّ دَاءٍ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَسْتَشْفِيَ بِهِ

Eat that which falls off the tablecloth for indeed it is a cure from every malady with the leave of Allah, the

Invincible and Majestic, for one who would like to seek cure by it.[29](#)

It is beyond the likes of the common man to understand the secret of how the food that drops off from the table mat can have a powerful effect such that it can cure every malady. However, those who have conviction that the guardians of faith are aware of the secrets of the universe will never doubt the effects.

8. The Water Of Zamzam

Amir al-Mu'minin (a) is reported to have said:

ماء زمزم خير ماء على وجه الأرض

The water of Zamzam is the best water on the face of the earth[30](#)

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

ماء زمزم دواء لما شرب له

The water of Zamzam is a medicine for the malady it is drunk for.[31](#)

Imam al-Sadiq (a) is reported to have said:

ماء زمزم شفاء من كل داء

The water of Zamzam is a cure for every malady[32](#)

1. Ref: <http://en.lourdes-france.org/> [9]
2. Alexis Carrel, Man, the Unknown.
3. Qutb al-Din al-Rawandi, Lubb al-Lubab, v.2, p. 84.
4. Shaykh al-Tusi, Misbah al-Mutahajjid, p. 850
5. In simple words, sometimes the cause which is the medicine is mentioned as the healing itself. Hence, for example, The Qur'an instead of being mentioned as a medicine (dawa) is known as shifa (cure).
6. Qutb al-Din al-Rawandi, Lubb al-lubab, Assembly no. 80, v.2, p. 83.
7. Al-Rayshahri, al-'Ilm wa al-Hikamah fi al-kitab wa al-sunnah, p. 183.
8. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.89, p. 176.
9. Al-'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v.4, pp. 874-.875.
10. Al-'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v.4, p. 875.
11. Qutb al-Din al-Rawandi, al-Da'awat, p. 18.
12. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.59, p. 66.
13. Ghulam Reza Guli Zawareh, The Light of Sahifah in the Heart of a German Lady, Kawthar Journal, Spring 1382 [AH solar], no. 57, Internet edition, <http://www.hawzah.net> [10] [13 Sept 2012].
14. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 18, p. 345.

15. Shaykh al-Tabrasi, al-Ihtijaj, v.1, p. 260.
16. Al-Bahrani, al-Burhan fi tafsir al-Qurʿan, v.2, p. 292.
17. Mawla Fayd Kashani, al-Mahajjat al-bayda', v.8, p. 292
18. Shaykh al-Tusi, al-Amali, p. 157; 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.23, p. 100.
19. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.26, p. 260.
20. Shaykh al-Saduq, Kamal al-din wa tamam al-ni'mah, p. 202.
21. Al-Samarqandi, Tanbih al-ghafilin, n. 389.
22. 'Allamah Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.62, p. 269.
23. Al-Barqi, al-Mahasin, v.1, p. 294.
24. Qutb al-Din al-Rawandi, al-Da'awat, p. 228.
25. Shaykh al-Tusi, Misbah al-mutahajjid, p. 733.
26. Shaykh al-Tusi, Misbah al-mutahajjid, p. 733.
27. Ibn Qulawayh, Kamil al-ziyarat, p. 462.
28. Shaykh al-Tusi, Misbah al-mutahajjid, p. 732
29. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.6, p. 300
30. Al-Barqi, al-Mahasin, v.2, p. 573.
31. Al-Barqi, al-Mahasin, v.2, p. 573.
32. Al-Barqi, al-Mahasin, v.2, p. 573.

Appendix 1: A Part Of The Tradition Of A Meeting Between A Greek Doctor And Amir Al-Muʿminin ʿAli (ʿa)

The Original Arabic with English Translation

The Original Arabic

عَنْ أَبِي مُحَمَّدٍ الْعَسْكَرِيِّ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحُسَيْنِ زَيْنِ الْعَابِدِينَ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) أَنَّهُ قَالَ: كَانَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) قَاعِدًا ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ فَأَقْبَلَ إِلَيْهِ رَجُلٌ مِنَ الْيُونَانِيِّينَ الْمُدْعِينَ لِلْفَلْسَفَةِ وَالطَّبِّ فَقَالَ لَهُ يَا أَبَا الْحَسَنِ بَلَّغْنِي خَبْرُ صَاحِبِكَ وَأَنْ بِهِ جُنُونًا وَجِئْتُ لِأَعَالِجَهُ فَلَحِقْتُهُ قَدْ مَضَى لِسَبِيلِهِ وَفَاتَنِي مَا أَرَدْتُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَقَدْ قِيلَ لِي إِنَّكَ ابْنُ عَمِّهِ وَصِبْرُهُ وَأَرَى بِكَ صُفَارًا قَدْ عَلَاكَ وَسَاقِينَ دَقِيقِينَ وَمَا أَرَاهُمَا تُقْلَاتِكَ

فَأَمَّا الصُّفَارُ فَعِنْدِي دَوَاؤُهُ، وَأَمَّا السَّاقَانِ الدَّقِيقَانِ فَلَا حِيلَةَ لِي لِتَعْلِيظِهِمَا، وَالْوَجْهُ أَنْ تَرْفُقَ بِنَفْسِكَ فِي السَّفِيِّ تُقْلَلَهُ وَلَا تُكْثِرُهُ ۚ وَفِيمَا تَحْمَلُهُ عَلَى ظَهْرِكَ وَتَحْتَضِنُهُ بِصَدْرِكَ أَنْ تُقْلَلَهُمَا وَلَا تُكْثِرَهُمَا فَإِنَّ سَاقِيكَ دَقِيقَانِ لَا يُؤْمَنُ عِنْدَ حَمْلِ تَقِيلٍ أَنْقِصَا فُهِمَا

وَأَمَّا الصُّفَارُ فَدَوَّاهُ عِنْدِي وَهُوَ هَذَا - وَأَخْرَجَ دَوَاءً - وَقَالَ هَذَا لَا يُؤْدِيكَ وَلَا يُخَبِّسُكَ وَلَكِنَّهُ يَلْزِمُكَ حِمِيَّةَ مِنَ اللَّحْمِ
أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحاً ثُمَّ يُزِيلُ صُفَارَكَ

فَقَالَ لَهُ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) قَدْ ذَكَرْتَ نَفْعَ هَذَا الدَّوَاءِ لِصُفَارِي فَهَلْ تَعْرِفُ شَيْئاً يَزِيدُ فِيهِ وَبَضْرُهُ؟ فَقَالَ
الرَّجُلُ بَلَى حَبَّةٌ مِنْ هَذَا - وَأَشَارَ إِلَى دَوَاءٍ مَعَهُ - وَقَالَ: إِنْ تَنَاوَلَهُ إِنْسَانٌ وَبِهِ صُفَارٌ أَمَاتَهُ مِنْ سَاعَتِهِ وَإِنْ كَانَ لَا
صُفَارَ صَارَ بِهِ صُفَارٌ حَتَّى بَسُوتَ فِي يَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ عَلِيُّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): فَأَرِنِي هَذَا الضَّرَّارَ فَأَعْطَاهُ إِيَّاهُ

فَقَالَ لَهُ كَمْ قَدَرُ هَذَا قَالَ قَدْرُهُ مِثْقَالَيْنِ سَمٌ نَاقِعٌ قَدْرُ كُلِّ حَبَّةٍ مِنْهُ يَفْتُلُ رَجُلًا فَتَنَاوَلَهُ عَلِيُّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) فَسَحَّه
وَعَرَّقَ عَرَقاً خَفِيفاً وَجَعَلَ الرَّجُلَ يَرْتَعِدُ وَيَقُولُ فِي نَفْسِهِ

الآن أُوحِذُ بِإِنِّ أَبِي طَالِبٍ يُقَالُ قَتَلْتَهُ وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنِّي قَوْلِي إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْجَانِي عَلَى نَفْسِهِ فَتَبَسَّمَ عَلَى عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ وَقَالَ: يَا
عَبْدَ اللَّهِ أَصَحُّ مَا كُنْتُ بَدْنَا الْآنَ لَمْ يَضُرَّنِي مَا زَعَمْتَ أَنَّهُ سَمٌ ثُمَّ قَالَ فَعَمَّضُ عَيْنَيْكَ فَعَمَّضَ ثُمَّ قَالَ افْتَحْ عَيْنَيْكَ فَفَتَحَ
وَنَظَرَ إِلَى وَجْهِ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فَإِذَا هُوَ أَبْيَضٌ أَحْمَرٌ مُشْرَبٌ حُمْرَةً فَارْتَعَدَ الرَّجُلُ لِمَا رَأَى

وَتَبَسَّمَ عَلِيُّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) وَقَالَ: أَيُّ الصُّفَارِ الَّذِي زَعَمْتَ أَنَّهُ بِي؟ فَقَالَ وَاللَّهِ لَكَأَنَّكَ لَسْتَ مَنْ رَأَيْتُ قَبْلُ كُنْتَ
مُصْفَاراً فَأَنْتَ الْآنَ مُورِدٌ

فَقَالَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) فَزَالَ عَنِي الصُّفَارُ بِسَمِّكَ الَّذِي زَعَمْتَ أَنَّهُ قَاتِلِي وَأَمَّا سَاقَايَ هَاتَانِ وَمَدَّ
رِجْلَيْهِ وَكَشَفَ عَن سَاقَيْهِ فَإِنَّكَ زَعَمْتَ أَنِّي أَحْتَاجُ إِلَى أَنْ أَرْفُقَ بِبَدَنِي فِي حَمَلٍ مَا أَحْمَلُ عَلَيْهِ لئَلَّا يَنْقُصَ السَّاقَانِ
وَأَنَا أُرِيكَ أَنَّ طِبَّ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خِلَافُ طِبِّكَ وَضَرْبَ يَدِي إِلَى أُسْطُوَانَةٍ خَشَبٍ عَظِيمَةٍ عَلَى رَأْسِهَا سَطْحٌ تَجْلِسُ بِهِ
الَّذِي هُوَ فِيهِ وَفَوْقَهُ حُجْرَتَانِ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَوْقَ الْأُخْرَى وَحَرَكَهَا فَاحْتَمَلَهَا فَارْتَفَعَ السَّطْحُ وَالْحَبِطَانُ وَفَوْقَهُمَا الْعُرْفَتَانِ
فَعُشِّي عَلَى الْيُونَانِي

فَقَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): صُبُّوا عَلَيْهِ مَاءً فَصَبُّوا عَلَيْهِ مَاءً فَأَفَاقَ وَهُوَ يَقُولُ وَاللَّهِ مَا رَأَيْتُ كَالْيَوْمِ عَجَباً

فَقَالَ لَهُ عَلِيُّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) هَذِهِ قُوَّةُ السَّاقَيْنِ الدَّقِيقَيْنِ وَاحْتِمَالُهُمَا أَنِّي طِبُّكَ هَذَا يَا يُونَانِي

فَقَالَ الْيُونَانِيُّ أَمْنُكَ كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ؟ فَقَالَ عَلِيُّ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) وَهَلْ عِلْمِي إِلَّا مِنْ عِلْمِهِ وَعَقْلِي إِلَّا مِنْ عَقْلِهِ وَقُوَّتِي إِلَّا مِنْ
قُوَّتِهِ؟

English Translation

[Imam] Abu Muhammad [al-Hasan] al-ʿAskari (ʿa), narrated from ʿAli ibn al-Husayn Zayn al-ʿAbidin (ʿa), that he said: Amir al-Muʿminin (ʿa) was sitting one day, when a man from Greece, claiming to be a philosopher and a doctor, came to him (ʿa) and said: ‘O Aba al-Hasan (ʿa), I was told about your associate, and that he (S) was insane, and I had come to treat him, but found that he had passed away and so I missed the opportunity to do that. I was also told that you are his cousin and son-in-law, and I can see that you have jaundice and have such thin legs that I do not think they will be able to bear the weight of your body.

‘As for jaundice, I have its remedy. However, there is no alternative to thicken your legs. Be gentle to yourself, walk less and do not walk excessively; also, minimize lifting things on your back, or in your arms, for indeed your legs are thin, which when lifting a weighty load are not safe from being fractured. As for jaundice, I have its medicine with me and here it is.’

He said: ‘This will not affect you adversely nor pain you, but you have to abstain from partaking meat in your diet for forty days, after which the jaundice will be removed.’

ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ʿa) said to him: ‘Indeed you have mentioned the advantage of this medicine for my jaundice; but do you know something that can increase this illness and worsen it?’ The man said: ‘Yes, a grain of this,’ and he pointed to another medicine that was with him. He continued: ‘If a person with jaundice were to take a grain of this it would kill him at that very moment; and if he does not have jaundice then he would get jaundice until he dies the same day.’ ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ʿa) said: ‘Then show me this harmful medicine!’ So the man gave it to him.

Then the Imam (ʿa) asked the doctor: ‘How much is this?’ He said: ‘Two mithqals, which are poisonous and penetrating, each grain of which can kill a man.’ ʿAli (ʿa) consumed all of it, and thereafter started sweating slightly. The man began trembling in fear, saying to himself:

‘Now I will be captured by the son of Abu Talib (ʿa). It will be said that I killed him and my word will not be accepted that he himself perpetrated this on himself.’

ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ʿa) smiled and said: ‘O servant of Allah! I am now physically healthier than I was, and what you conjectured as poison did not harm me.’ Then he (ʿa) said to him: ‘Close your eyes.’ He closed them. Then he said: ‘Open your eyes!’ So he opened them and looked at the face of ʿAli (ʿa) finding it white and rosy, whereupon the man began trembling due to what he saw.

ʿAli (ʿa) smiled at him and said: ‘So where is the jaundice that you thought I had?’ The man said: ‘By Allah! It is as if you are not the same person whom I saw before; you were yellow, but now you are like a red rose.’

ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ʿa) said: ‘My jaundice has been eradicated by the very poison which you thought

would kill me. As for these two legs of mine (and Imam ʿAli (ʿa) extended his two legs and exposed both of his shins) you conjecture that I need to be gentle to my body in lifting what I lift, so that my two legs do not fracture? I will now show you that the medical treatment of Allah, the Invincible and Majestic, is opposed to your medical treatment.’

He (ʿa) then held a huge wooden pillar on top of which rested the roof of the building that he was sitting in, and on top of the roof were two rooms, one above the other; he shook the pillar and lifted it as a result of which the walls, the roof, and the two rooms above were raised; on [seeing this] the Greek man fainted.

The Commander of the Faithful (ʿa) said: ‘Sprinkle some water on him.’ So they sprinkled some water on him and he regained consciousness and said: ‘By Allah! I have never seen anything as amazing as I have today.’ ʿAli (ʿa) said to him: ‘This is the strength and ability of the two thin legs. Where is your medical treatment now, O Greek fellow?’ The Greek man said: ‘Was Muhammad like you?’

ʿAli (ʿa) said: ‘And is my knowledge save from his knowledge, my intellect from his intellect and my strength from his strength?’

Appendix 2: Other Medicine Known To Be A Cure For All Maladies

1. Honey

The Holy Qur’an says:

وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنْ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ

And your Lord inspired the bee [saying]: ‘Make your home in the mountains, and on the trees and the trellises that they erect. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:68).

وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنْ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ

Then eat from every [kind of] fruit and follow meekly the ways of your Lord.’ There issues from its belly a juice of diverse hues in which there is a cure for the people. There is indeed a sign in that for a people who reflect. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:69).

Imam al-Sadiq (ع) is reported to have said:

قال

أمير

المؤمنين

(

عليه

السلام

):

لَعَقَ

العسل

شَفَاء

مِنْ

كُلِّ

دَاءٍ،

قَالَ

اللَّهُ

عَزَّ

وَجَلَّ

:

يَخْرُجُ

مِنْ

بُطُونِهَا

شَرَابٌ*

مختلف

ألوانه

فيه

شفاء

للناس

Amir al-Mu'minin (ع) said: Licking honey is a cure from every malady. Allah, the Exalted, said: 'There issues from its belly a juice of diverse hues in which there is a cure for the people ...'¹

Imam Musa ibn Ja'far al-Kazim (ع) is reported to have said:

أَلْعَسَلُ شِفَاءٌ مِنْ كُلِّ دَاءٍ إِذَا أُخِذَتْهُ مِنْ شَهْدِهِ

Honey is a cure from every malady if you take it from its honeycomb.²

2. Eating Red Raisins

Imam al-Sadiq (ع) is reported to have narrated a tradition from Amir al-Mu'minin (ع) that says:

مَنْ أَكَلَ إِحْدَى وَعِشْرِينَ زَبِيْبَةً حَمْرَاءَ مِنْ أَوَّلِ النَّهَارِ، دَفَعَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُلَّ مَرَضٍ وَسَقَمٍ

Whosoever eats twenty-one seeds of red raisins from the beginning of the day, Allah would dispel from him every malady and sickness³

Amir al-Mu'minin (ع) is reported to have said:

إِحْدَى وَعِشْرُونَ زَبِيْبَةً حَمْرَاءَ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ عَلَى الرِّيقِ يَدْفَعُ جَمِيعَ الْأَمْرَاضِ إِلَّا مَرَضَ الْمَوْتِ

Twenty-one red raisins every day on an empty stomach repels all maladies except the malady of

death.[4](#)

3. Black Cumin Seed (Al-Habbah Al-Sawda) ^(a)

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ^(a) is reported to have said:

عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْحَبَّةِ السَّوْدَاءِ فَإِنَّهَا شِفَاءٌ مِنْ كُلِّ دَاءٍ إِلَّا السَّامَ ، يَعْنِي الْمَوْتَ

Upon you is the black cumin seed (al-habbah al-sawda'), for indeed it is a cure from every malady except sam, which means death.[5](#)

4. Cupping And Blood Letting

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

من احتجم يوم الثلاثاء لسبع عشرة أو تسع عشرة أو لإحدى وعشرين من الشهر كانت له شفاء من كل داء من أدواء السنة كلها

Whosoever does cupping on a Tuesday of the seventeenth, nineteenth or twenty-first of the [lunar] month, it would be a cure for him from every malady of the maladies of the year.[6](#)

Imam al-Sadiq ^(a) is reported to have said:

الْحِجَامَةُ فِي الرَّأْسِ هِيَ الْمَغِيْبَةُ تُنْتَفَعُ مِنْ كُلِّ دَاءٍ إِلَّا السَّامَ

Cupping on the head is a helper which is of benefit for every malady save death.[7](#)

5. Sipping Milk

Amir al-Mu'minin ^(a) is reported to have said:

حَسُو اللَّبْنَ شِفَاءً مِنْ كُلِّ دَاءٍ إِلَّا الْمَوْتَ

Sipping milk is a cure from every malady save death.[8](#)

6. Eating Barley Bread

Explaining the importance of barley, Imam al-Rida (ع) is reported to have said:

وَمَا دَخَلَ جَوْفًا إِلَّا وَأَخْرَجَ كُلَّ دَاءٍ فِيهِ وَهُوَ قَوْتُ الْإِنْسَاءِ

And barley did not enter any stomach save that it removed from it every malady; and it is the sustenance of the Prophets.⁹

1. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.6, p. 332
2. Al-Barqi, al-Mahasin, v.2, p. 499.
3. Mirza Nuri, Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.16, p. 312.
4. Al-Barqi, al-Mahasin, v.2, p. 548.
5. Al-Maghribi, Da'a'im al-Islam, v.2, p. 149.
6. Shaykh al-Saduq, al-Khisal, pp. 385-386.
7. Al-'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v.17, p. 112.
8. Shaykh al-Saduq, al-Khisal, p. 636.
9. Al-'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v.17, p. 4

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