

A [n Appreciation] Study on Islamic-Physiologist Approach to Sexual Prohibitions: Case of Nūri's Effort¹

Majid Daneshgar

Faisal Bin Ahmad Shah

APIUM, University of Malaya
Malaysia

Abstract

In this paper, we made an attempt to consider and review the Islamic-Physiologist interdisciplinary opinion of Nūri (2005) on the issue of marital health and homosexuality. We would like to offer our special thanks to Nūri. Prominent Muslim scholars believed that Islam offers a codified set of hygienic rules covering terrestrial and spiritual aspects of human beings, life and ensuring their prosperity. Nūri (2005) also assumed that Islam regulates and gives the human being's timetable for his whole life starting his birth and ending to his resurrection in various individual and social aspects in the form of certain obligatory duties of maintaining good hygiene and health in different spheres. One of these spheres in health category is in conjugal sexual relation.

Keywords: The Qur'ān, ḥadīth, Human being Health, Conjugal Life, Sexuality, Homosexuality

Introduction

The personal health can be a suitable prerequisite for marriage and sexual health discussion. It has a vital role in the human life and thinkers like Nūri (2005) devoted most part of their life to considering this issue. He assumed in Islam, we can observe the best strategies and guidance of prevention for sexuality diseases. From his viewpoints, following points are the important items which help human to have a healthy life.

- a) Keeping away from sexual intercourse with women in their menstrual period
- b) Qur'ān prohibition from pederasty and fornication

Generally, Muslim scholars those who wish to follow the Islamic regulations mostly refer to Islamic texts such as the Qur'ān and traditions in order to prove their scientific claims. Because they believed that the compatibility of their scientific claims with inimitability of the Qur'ān is the best way to recognize whether their statements are valid. On this subject, one of the main issues is that scholars endeavor to create a bond between Islam and Medicine. Ibrahim B. Syed (2003[1]) wrote an essay about the spiritual medicine in Islam which he referred to Islamic statements and Muslim scholars' findings for clarifying the issue of medicine in Islam[1]. In addition to consider the *Khawās al-Qur'ān* (Miraculous Properties of the Qur'ān), he stated that spiritual medicine in Islam is able to be defined in a Qur'ānic context in which a physical illness may be cured by recitation of the Qur'ānic verses as well as prayers (*Du'a*) [1]. Even non-Muslim scholars tried to have a look on Islamic resources for writing their scientific works. Zumla and Lulat (1989) emphasized on the Qur'ānic statements with the purpose of elaborating the topic of "honey- a remedy rediscovered" [2]. For instance, they stated "the holy Qur'ān vividly illustrates the potential therapeutic value of honey" [2]. Many statements about the medical guidelines in the Qur'ān have been produced by scholars who believed that "the Qur'ān achieves its healing and health promoting effect by utilizing three different approaches: the legal approach, the guidance approach, and the direct healing approach" [3]. Elkadi's (1985) definition from above classification is as follows:

¹. Originally, this article is merely an appreciation essay which it is a developed form of an article that was presented in the non-English section of the conference book in the Middle East.

“The legal approach is through the provision of legislation prohibiting matters which are hazardous to health and enjoining matters which promote health. This legislation has a direct impact on the health of the individual. The guidance approach is through the provision of the general rules and regulations which guide the individual in the conduct of his or her daily affairs. This guidance has an indirect positive effect on the health and well-being of individual. The third approach is through the direct healing effect of the Qur’ān on the various organs of the human body” [3]

So these three approaches are able to highlight the boundaries of Interdisciplinary works on domain of Islam and Medicine, which mostly rotates around the orbit of the Qur’ān and traditions. Nūri (2005) who has written his lengthy book on the health in the Qur’ān considered several issues from Qur’ānic-Medical perspectives.

Nūri professionally analyzed the issue of conjugal health by referring to the term ‘pure’ that has been come to the Qur’ān for 31 times with its derivations. He believed that this Qur’ānic emphasis proves the significance of cleanness and purification (*taharah*) for human being.

In the Qur’ān, it is stated: “which none shall touch but those who are clean” (Q 56:79).

Likewise, God called the Prophet Muhammad to follow the cleanness principle and to prevent himself from the impurity in order to be an acceptable pattern for people. “And thy garments keep free from stain and all abomination Shun!” (Q 74:5-6).

Hereby, Nūri believed that the holy Qur’ān emphasized on ablution, ritual bathing, ritual purification which it indicates the cleanliness and personal health in human life. He continues that God explains his reason at the end of verse 6 of *Sūra al- Ma’ideh* (Q 5:6): “Allah doth not wish to place you in a difficulty, but to make you clean, and to complete his favor to you, that ye may be grateful”. And it is also worthy of notes that Islam recommended tooth brushing and inhaling of water through the nostril at the time of the ablutions; doing of this routine action 3 to 5 times in a day has positive psycho-physical effects on body [4]. Also, Islam stressed on ritual bathing and washing the whole of body for man and woman and it recommended them as worship and religious practices. Nowadays, scientists discovers that these ritual practices have several healthy advantages on the body such as auto-self nerve provocation, skin health, circulation improvement, activation of skin pores, skin respiration, etc [4].

a) Health in Conjugal Life

In this section, Nūri significantly brought this issue that God speaks about everything from the universe to human creation, as stated in this verse: “Have not the unbelievers then beheld that the heavens and the earth were amass all sewn up, and then we unstitched them and of water fashioned everything?” (Q 21:30), it certainly expressed most important subjects about human life and even about the health of sexual relation in a conjugal life. Meanwhile, the Qur’ān initially mentioned on keeping away from sexual intercourse with women in their menstruation period. This Nūri’s (2005) claim is as same as the Elkadi’s (1985) claim who stated one of the prohibited matters in the Qur’ān which “sexual intercourse during the menstrual period, which could lead to certain infection and inflammatory conditions”[3]. Therefore, Nūri has stated that Islam remarks Muslims about behaviors relevant to those women who are in their period. Because it has been said in the holy Qur’ān: “They will question thee concerning the monthly course (menstruation) Say: it is hurt; so keep away from women (from sexual intercourse with women) in their course and do not approach them (sexual intercourse with women) until they are clean; but when they have cleansed themselves, then come unto them as God has commanded you Truly, God loves those who repent, and He loves those who cleans themselves” (Q 2:222).

Then, Nūri (2005) started his physiological glance over to the menstruation and harmonically-neurotically provocation of women sexual systems.

It should be pointed out that hormones are materials which secretes from endocrine into the blood till it makes different reflections around secrete place. Also neurons and nerves complex inject some materials into the capillary. Hereby, these two systems have a relationship with uterus and regulate the menstruation cycle.

In physiology, menstruation comes out from three endocrines [Note]:

1- Hypothalamus

That part of the fore-brain situated beneath and linked with the Thalamus on each side and forming the floor of the third. Also has a close connection with pituitary gland beneath it, the hypothalamus contains collections of nerve cells believed to form the controlling centers of the sympathetic and the parasympathetic nervous systems. The hypothalamus is the nervous centre for primitive physical and emotional behavior [5]. It contains nerve centers for the regulation of certain vital processes: the metabolism of fat, carbohydrate and water; sleep; body temperature and sexual functions. We should know that this gland is the beginner of women's period.

Hypothalamus is a motive and origin for pituitary hormones production, by secreting GnRH; secretes the LH and FSH, and hereby regulates the pituitary role in ovaries and women sexual systems [4].

2- Pituitary

Also known as the pituitary body and the hypophysis, this is an ovoid structure, weighing around 0.5 gram in the adult. It is attached to the base of the brain, and lies in the depression in the base of the skull known as the sella turcica. The anterior part is called the adenohypophysis and the posterior part the neurohypophysis [5]. The gland is connected to the hypothalamus of the brain by a stalk known as the hypophyseal or pituitary stalk. The pituitary gland is the most important ductless, or endocrine, gland in the body. However this gland is not bigger than a pea, but is the main part of endocrine and produce hormones which controls other endocrines, hereby sometimes called it as prime gland. This gland has divided into three parts; (a) anterior (b) median (c) posterior and contains two motive hormones for ovaries secretes which one of them is FSH and the other one is for hormones of corpus luteum that LH[4].

3- Ovaries

The main female reproductive organs which produce the ova and steroid hormones in a regular cycle in response to hormones from the anterior pituitary gland. Situated one on each side of the uterus in the lower abdomen, each ovary contains numerous follicles within which the ova develop [5]. Only a small proportion of these reach maturity, when the ovum is described as a Graafian follicle. Ovulation occurs and, if the ovum is fertilized, a pregnancy may develop. (Also see: ENDOCRINE GLANDS; OESTRADIOL; OESTROGENS; PROGESTERONE.)

They contain many primary follicular cells complex. These cells are primary sexual cells which at the birth of a girl are about one or two millions in ovaries and will be decrease to three hundred thousand by maturity and finally, remain four hundred or five hundred. It starts his growth in the 6th day of menstruation cycle. Stretched lucky follicular will torn and ovum release to the abdominal sinus and this is ovulation. After 3 to 5 days this ovum transfers to the uterus by fallopian tubes which productivity dose not happened, the ovum will be wilt and voided from vagina [4].

After describing the physiological statements, Nūri (2005) talked about female sexual system during their period:

“1. In normal conditions and non-period, vagina is invulnerable by soft mucous secretes and because of acid lactic and estrogen, this area is acidity and there is no virus there. 2. During the menstrual period through estrogen and progesterone reduction and uterus tissue inflowing and its sensitiveness, the vagina has the potential for virus growth and putrefaction transmission. 3. During the period, inflammation of mucous of the vagina membrane and sexual hormones reduction are the main causes for contraction of this area muscle and therefore this muscles are not lax and intercourse for women is painful and uncomfortable. 4. The sexual hormones reduction is the main cause for vagina plashes, thus inner PH is not acidity and transmission probability and viruses growth will be increased. 5. Whereas estrogen is the main motive for women sex appetite and during the menstrual period its scale in blood is low, hereby the women have seldom psycho-physical tendency for intercourse and sometimes near to disgusting. 6. Having intercourse during the women's period might be increase the menorrhagia and metrorrhagia. 7. During the period, the intercourse is uncomfortable for couple, because the vagina is gamy and dirty. 8. Ethical reasons such as self-improvement and patience for the couple are other reasons of this prohibition [4]”.

Nūri also expressed that Islam stressed on that women are prohibited from say praying and fasting during the period. Thus, it is obvious how Qur'ān talks about this issue.

“And they ask you about menstruation. Say, "It is harm, so keep away from wives during menstruation. And do not approach them until they are pure. And when they have purified themselves, then come to them from where Allah has ordained for you. Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves” (Q 2:222).

B) The Qur'ān and Prohibition: Homosexuality

Nūri (2005), in this section, has tried to answer to this question why homosexuality is a prohibited note in Islam. Hereby, he has used the Qur'ānic verses, *ḥadīth* (tradition) and scientific statistics:

The first verse which prohibits the fornication is the 22nd verse of *Sūra al- Isra* which the Qur'ān states: “And approach not fornication surely it is and indecency and evil as a way”. In the second one, He mentioned the word ‘indecency’ which implies the exposure of this sin and third is the phrase ‘evil as a way’ which express that this work can have impositions and open other sin’s way for the man [4], [6].

Another Qur'ānic verse which states these prohibitions is:

“Who call not upon another god with God, nor slay the soul God has forbidden except by right, neither fornicate for whosever does that shall meet the price of sin” (Q 25:68)

There is also a narration from Ja‘far Ibn Muhammad that stated “At the Day of Judgment the most martinet persons with most penalties are adulterous” [7].

Nūri and other Muslim scholars believed that disregarding to Qur'ānic statements and its prohibitions from illegal sexual relations (*‘alaqāt al-Jinsiyyah ghyr al-Shar‘iyyah*) hurts ethical dignity of individuals and will break the family reverence and sanctity. However, it is able to bring about finding a suitable place for sexual diseases such as gonorrhoea or syphilis, and now HIV as one of the most dangerous diseases with an age lesser than forty and high spreading ability. Nūri therefore believed that although modern science could not able to make strategies for controlling of HIV; the Qur'ānic legal guidance regularly announced the prevention declarations as follows:

1- Necessity of Veil for Women (*Hijāb*)

Nūri pointed out that having the *hijāb* for ladies is necessary in society and its public environment and it is a valuable tool for preventing from sexual psycho-physical disorders. The Qur'ān said:

“ O Prophet, say to thy wives and daughters and the believing women, that they draw their veils close to them...” or “ ...and let them cast their veils(Head Covering) over their bosom and not reveal their adornment save to their husbands, or their fathers,...”(Q 24:31) or “... and display not your finery, as did the pagans of old...” (Q 33:33) or in other verse comes “... be not abject in your speech...” (Q 33:32) also in verse 31 of *Sūra al- Nūr* (the Light) states: “And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty...”

2- Forbidding the women and men from gazing at non-intimate individuals (*mahārim*) which indicates in “There is no blame upon you for entering houses not inhabited in which there is convenience for you” (Q 24: 29) or “Tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what they do” (Q 24: 30)

3- Declaration of Marriage affair which indicates in Qur'ānic verses “And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought” (Q 30:21, etc). Prophet Muhammad states: “In Islam, the most loveable fundamental in the presence of God is Marriage” [8]. Because the family is the base of affection. Islam recommended those Muslims who are not able to marriage that held chastity and virtuousness until the bounty of God contains them. And also recommend those who may not find the means to marry be abstinent until God enriches them of His bounty: “But let them who find not [the means for] marriage abstains [from sexual relations] until Allah enriches them from His bounty. And those who seek a contract [for eventual emancipation] from among whom your right hands possess - then make a contract with them if you know there is within them goodness and give them from the wealth of Allah which He has given you” (Q 24:33).

Nūri also draws attention to the more crucial disadvantages of homosexuality. He stated that other disagreeable kinds of indecencies are homosexuality which has a popular output named “HIV”. He also strongly stated that fourteen centuries ago Islam warned the loath people about this disaster and condemned homosexuality problems [4]. He proves his claim by applying some Qur’ānic verses as follows:

“And Lut, when he said to his people, what, do you commit indecency with your eyes open? What do you approach men lustfully instead of women? No, you are a people that are ignorant” (Q 27:54) or “And Lūt, when he said to his people, what, do you commit such indecency as never any being in the entire world committed before you? See, you approach men lustfully instead of women no, you are a people that do exceed” (Q 7:80-81) Also in other verse Nūri brought that the Lūt expressed one of the harmful social effects of male homosexuality on dissection of generation (pogrom) “And We sent Lut to his people and he said: you commit the filthiest act which no one before you has done it in the world* is it not true that you have sexual relationship with men and have cut off the natural way of producing generation and also commit such dirty acts in your gatherings..?” (Q 29:28-29)

Lesbianism and Its Status from Islamic Perspective

Mohammad b. Ali said female homosexuality is same as the male homosexuality and in other place he stated a narration that once upon a time a woman asked from Ja’afar b. Muhammad about the punishment of female homosexuality, and he said “its penalty is same as the punishment for fornication”.

So it seems Nūri assumed that the main reason which brings about the Qur’ān occasionally asked people to prevent from some unhealthy and illegal affairs like homosexuality is due to the current statistics as follows:

- a) Homosexuals account for 3-4% of all gonorrhea cases, 60% of all syphilis cases, and 17% of all hospital admissions in the United States [9].
- b) 73% of psychiatrists say homosexuals are less happy than the average person, and of those psychiatrists, 70% say that the unhappiness is NOT due to social stigmatization [10]
- c) Homosexuals live unhealthy lifestyles, and have historically accounted for the bulk of syphilis, gonorrhea, Hepatitis B, the "gay bowel syndrome" (which attacks the intestinal tract), tuberculosis and cytomegalovirus [11].
- d) 73% of psychiatrists say homosexuals are less happy than the average person [10].
- e) 26% of gays and lesbian youth are forced to leave home because of conflicts with their families over their sexual identities [12].

Hereby, Nūri and such people believed that the inimitability of the Qur’ān is due to its pre-modern announcements in which Islam in 1400 years ago warns human being to do or not to do.

Conclusion

Among many scientific research on domain of Islam and Health or Qur’ān and Science, still there is a lot of utterances which are incomplete. But Nūri’s book of “Health in the Qur’ān” tried to significantly follow the scientific regulations. He after bringing a fully developed introduction divides his effort into two parts of

- (a) Physiological statements; (b) Islamic proofs. His method of expressing the compatibility or incompatibility of the relation of science and the Qur’ān would be a proper method which scholars are able to use it in their research. Nūri in this way, allows readers to read true physiological notes and then put them next to the Islamic proofs. So it means using a comparative method that scholars and readers are able to find their answers.

However, this essay tried to examine of the interesting books in domain of interdisciplinary issues of Religion and modern science which was a good effort among Muslim countries.

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Note

All comments are extracted from Dr. Nūri’s statements

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