

Psycho-Quranic Interventions in AIDS Patients

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Abstract—The psycho-Quranic interventions refer to the strategies based on Quranic principles incorporating contemporary psychological methods to bring behavioral and cognitive changes in AIDS patients. The importance of Islamic principles such as confession, remembrance of God, spiritual exercise, reading scriptures has been brought out for management of AIDS patients. They may psychologically help themselves by confessing their own weaknesses and guilt feelings and surrender before God for divine guidance in order to lead healthy life and make them to achieve the goal of existence. The value of concentrate and religious meditative techniques has also been focused to improve quality of life of AIDS patients.

Keywords—Psycho-Quranic interventions, AIDS patients, confession, remembrance of GOD, spiritual exercise, reading scriptures.

I. INTRODUCTION

In India the HIV/AIDS epidemic is now 26 years old. Within this period it has emerged as one of the most serious public health problems in the country. This disease, which is caused by the human immune deficiency virus (HIV), has already killed tens of thousands of men, women, and children. But we are only beginning to see the full scope of the epidemic. This is because the disease progress slowly from HIV infection to full-blown AIDS in an average of 8 to 10 years in adults.

An estimated 3.86 million people in India are infected with HIV. In the 6 states - Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, Nagaland and Tamil Nadu - HIV prevalence in the population is more than 1 percent of the reported AIDS cases, an estimated 75 percent of the infections are in the male population, 83 percent of which are through the sexual route. The overall prevalence in the country for a population of 1000 million is still, however, very low, a rate much lower than many other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Data clearly indicate that HIV is prevalent in other parts of the country. In the recent years it has spreaded from urban to rural areas and from individuals practicing risk behavior to the general population (The Hindu, 2001).

Some of the factors influencing the spread of HIV in the country are the high prevalence of STDs, commercial sex work and large scale migration from rural to urban areas. About 75 percent of the infection occur from the sexual route

(both heterosexual and homosexual), and about 8 percent through blood transfusion, another 8 percent through injecting drug use. About 89 percent of the reported cases are occurring in sexually active and economically productive age group of 18-40 years. One in every 4 cases reported is women. With about 14 million TB cases existing in India, HIV/AIDS also possess a twin challenge of HIV/TB co infection. Nearly 60 percent of the AIDS cases are reported to be opportunistic TB infection cases.

II. PSYCHO-QURANIC INTERVENTIONS OF AIDS PATIENTS

Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a pandemic disease. It can be understood also as a behavioral disease because it is acquired through behavioral dysregulation either through injections of addicted substance and sharing of needles or through visiting commercial sex worker and involving unprotected sex. Medical treatments have been developed that slow the progress of the HIV infection, but they cannot cure AIDS. The psychological help of AIDS patients through spiritual exercise and Psycho-Quranic interventions like reading scriptures, prayer, confessions, behavioral regulation and meditation is an extremely worthwhile goal, both because every day of human life is precious and because it may prolong life until a medical cure is found.

A great deal of research is currently in progress to find ways in which psychological intervention might be useful in slowing the progression of HIV infection. Therefore, it may be possible to utilize Islamic principles such as confession and remembrance of God and spiritual exercise (i.e. meditation) to help strengthen the immune system and changing health related quality of life of AIDS patients. Some promising progress has to be made in this area. Psychotherapy with AIDS patients has been developed and primarily focuses on working on issues like depression, anxiety and anger and religious based psychological interventions to work with these patients are hardly attempted. Psycho-Quranic interventions to work with AIDS patients are being discussed below.

1. **Prayer:** Prayer has beneficial consequences for the individual (Duke & Johnson, 1984). This parallels similar observations for the practice of ritual,

particularly religious ritual. It relates negatively to health concerns, aids adjustment to disease, reduces depressive feelings and help individuals effectively cope with the stress of cardiac surgery (Parker & Brown, 1986). There have been studies to link praying with changes in neurocognitive aspects of brain. Schjoedt et al (2009) found that formalized praying and secular controls, improvised praying activated a strong response in the temporopolar region, the medial prefrontal cortex, the temporoparietal junction and precuneus. This finding supports the hypothesis that religious subjects, who consider their God to be 'real' and capable of reciprocating requests, recruit areas of social cognition when they pray. Praying to God is an intersubjective experience comparable to 'normal' interpersonal interaction.

2. **Reading religious scriptures:** Reading religious texts helps to cope with the disease. When the content of the religious text is processed by the client mindfully, it may bring changes in her/his cognitive structures/beliefs and in this way a sort of cognitive restructuring will take place. The chances of this happening are more when the client ponders and reflect on the content of the message. Suppose a client read the following verses from Quran in which Allah says "So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief" (94:5). "Bear with patience whatever befall you" (31:17), "Be not sad, surely Allah is with us" (9:40). Having read and reflect on these verses may motivate the client to see the current stressful situation in a different way and this may help him to reframe the situation. The client will become proactive and would attempt more to improve the situation. It will also help him to become persistence and will learn to regulate the emotions effectively. This will also act as a sort of bibliotherapy or self-help book intervention.
3. **Confession:** Tawbah is not the negation of the past; it is a contract for the future. Tawbah is the result of human's understanding of the wrongness of an act and his determination not to repeat the act. God sees not only the outward action but the inner motive too. All acts, good or bad, are shaped by intentions and motive (Quran). The concept of Tawbah derived from Quran and Haadith, provided the stamp of divinity and hence authenticity to the act of confession as a therapeutic measure. The eminent Muslim thinkers opined that on the spiritual level the values of confession lie in the fact that they maintain a predominantly healthy attitude towards sin, as well as providing a disciplinary remedy against it. It may, of course, be successful in helping the AIDS patients by narrating

the moral conflicts to another person and prevent the conflicts from becoming the source of morbid obsessions. The concept of Tawbah offered the suffering man a hope of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the prerequisite without which the process of reconciliation of the patient to the world and to God could not take place. Forgiveness is the hope that the sinner can again enter into relationship with God and his neighbor, instead of continuing as a hopeless victim of retaliation and alienation. Traditionally, penance of Tawbah is said to consist of three parts: (1) Contrition or repentance; (2) Confession and (3) Satisfaction. The concept of Tawbah implies all these parts of penance. Confession and repentance are humanly acts. They are man's efforts for his restoration to emotional health but satisfaction is a divine gift, given as the result of confession and repentance. Confession or Tawbah implies a change in the old pattern of life, so it has effects on all body, mind and soul. The whole of human personality is involved in it. Private confession may be helpful for AIDS patients. Serenity and peace of mind usually follow upon a good confession. There are five steps involved in a good confession. AIDS patient may be asked to: 1. Examine his conscience. 2. Realize the wrong. 3. Resolve to amend his life. 4. Confess his sin. 5. After confession make a promise not to do the sin again. Tawbah is the eradication of all cruelties. The man surrenders himself totally to the will of God. Repentance is very necessary; whenever we do the wrong act we should sincerely turn to God in repentance. "He pardons him unto who turns to him with a pertinent heart." Repentance purifies one of wickednesses and ultimately becomes the beloved of God. So, it is very necessary for the AIDS patients to remain close to God, have full knowledge of Him, remember Him and obey His commands wholeheartedly.

4. **Remembering God (Al-dhikar).** It means regulating one's behavior considering God's presence everywhere and behavioral intent to regulate behavior is just to please God. It may involve involving in some desirable behaviors or controlling behaviors being asked by God to have control over them. Prevention of infection with the AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) virus requires people to exercise influence over their own motivation and behaviors. To achieve self-directed change, people need to be given not only reasons to alter risky habits but also the means and resources to do so. Effective self-regulation of behavior is not achieved by an act of will. It requires

certain skills in self-motivation and self-guidance (Bandura,1986). Moreover, there is a difference between possessing coping skills and being able to use them effectively and consistently under difficult circumstances. Success, therefore, requires not only skills, but also strong self-belief. The Arabic word dhikr is generally translated as remembrance. The whole of prayer is the Holy Quran dhikr-Allah, or the remembrance of Allah. The Holy Quran also frequently refers to a dhikr. Hence, whether words giving expression to Divine glory and greatness are uttered, somewhere besides the Qiyam as taught by the Prophet, all goes by the name of dhikr but all this is not compulsory part of the prayer. Doctrinally speaking, the dhikr is the becoming aware by the creature of the connection that unites him for all eternity to the creator. Seeing in this way, the dhikr constitutes by the very essence of religion, as much in its exoteric dimension (where man remembers God as his Master and transcendent and omnipotent Judge as in the esoteric order where the Divine Presence reveals itself as the inner dimension of human being. From a practice point of view each of the means that the Revelation has placed at the disposal of believers in order to help them to attain this awareness is dhikr. There are on the one hand, ritual practices that are obligatory for all of the faithful those who are connected to the five pillars of Islam and whose powers of recollection (quwwat al-dhikr) have often been commented upon by the mystics. The superogatory deeds, on the other hand are able to carry out ad libitum to get nearer to their lord, such as the reading of the Quran, preferably during the night, the voluntary fasting and alms giving and the numerous prayers and rogations recommended by the Sunnah.

Numerous verses of the sacred book may be recommended to the AIDS patients for the performances of dhikr, involving God in morning and night, in fear and humility, until the soul is appeased. The following are some of these behavioral injunctions:

- *Call upon God, or call upon the Merciful; whichever you call upon, to Him belong the Names Most Beautiful (XVII, 110) Remember Me, and I will remember you (or Mention Me, and I will mention you). (II, 152).*
- *Believers, remember God often, and give Him glory at the dawn and in the evening. It is He who blesses you, and His angels, to bring you from the shadows into the light... (XXXIII, 42-43).*
- *In mosques God has allowed to be raised up, and His Name to be commemorated therein; therein*

glorifying Him, in the mornings and the evenings, are man whom neither commerce nor trafficking diverts from the remembrance of God and to perform the prayer, and to pay the alms (XXIV, 36-37). God guides to Him... those who believe and whose hearts are at rest in God's remembrance because surely, in God's remembrance are hearts at rest (XIII, 27-28).

The AIDS patients may psychologically help themselves by confessing their own weakness and guilt feelings and surrender before God for divine guidance in order to lead their right way of life and make them to achieve the goal of existence. The invocation means the invocation of God's alone. The invocation provides a guarantee and security against excesses and undesirable behavior of the AIDS patients to which they are exposed to.

III. SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

In spiritual exercise, the first lesson for the AIDS patient may be to Divert your attention away from all things and concentrate it on the idea of God and this concentration should be such that, firstly, your mind should be empty of all other thoughts and secondly, all your organs should suspend their activity except in so far as it is in conformity with your positive attitude at the time.

To focus attention on God is known as concentrative meditation. In this state the created thing considers himself the slave of the creator and devotes himself solely to Him, at least during certain special moments.

AIDS patients may be asked to concentrate on all ideas and thoughts with singleness of purpose and attention of God or can keep their mind free of external or internal influences and cleanse their imaginative faculty then the

Through special exercise mentioned above spiritual faculty of AIDS patients will develop. The increase in spiritual faculty or power will lead towards spiritual perfection which will manifest itself in high and sublime morals and will enable them to fight with those negative thoughts which arise in their heart hindering spiritual progress.

Meditation in Islam

Husain (2002) has suggested the following religious meditative techniques which may be helpful for the well-being of AIDS patients. The goal of the meditation in Islam is to purify one's heart, attain spiritual power, and to protect oneself from heart Problems, attack/disease. In the light of their experience the sufis', have given instructions on many methods of meditation. Below are given some meditative exercises based on the repetition and contemplative penetration of certain verses, especially those that contain the Names of the Divinity.

In the first kind of meditation the practitioner keeps

looking/gazing at the word of Allah written on a picture of the heart, with deep concentration for a time. Then close your eyes, open your eyes, then again close your eyes, and imagine that Allah is written on your heart in golden colour. With your eyes closed keep imagining this deeply, with full concentration, again and again.

Practice imagining with full attention that your index finger is writing Allah on your heart in golden colour. Then, bowing your head, meditate imagining that Allah is written of your heart. Both the methods should be practiced for ten minutes everyday.

In the second type, of meditation, the practitioner recites (Allahu) by thrusting (Allah) on the right shoulder and (Allahu) on the heart with force (moving the head in the same directions at the same time). The thrusts (especially on their heart) should be so forceful that the heart shakes.

Performing this for few minutes will create feelings of heat and intensity, so stop for a minute and turn your attention towards your heart. Then, the heart will perform Allahu Allahu..... on its own. Then resume the thrusting which the noble Sufis called 'Habs-E-Dam' (Holding breath) should be practiced in the empty stomach.

In the third type of meditation the practitioner meditates in a solitary place. The meditator breathes in and stops his breath at his level (belly bottom). Attaches his tongue to the palate (roof of the mouth), and turns his attention towards his heart, and forces his heart to perform the Zikr of Allahu Allahu ... In the beginning, the practitioner will not be able to feel whether the heart is performing the Zikr or not, but with extreme attention and endeavour, the heart will, gradually, form the habit of performing this Zikr on its own.

Initially, stop the breath and recite Allah with the heart fifty times, stop, when you start sweating. Repeat this again, and increase the number. Gradually, you will be able to do it hundred times. And by practice, this number may increase more and more, using your courage and strength. In the later stages you will find your heart performing the zikr while you would be engaged in worldly affairs.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

HIV/AIDS is one of the most challenging health problems ever faced by the country. It is emphasized that no programme can achieve the desired goal unless it involves the coordinated efforts of the individuals, society and government. Psychological help of AIDS patients is necessary to change their perceptions. Not only the above mentioned Islamic principles and lifestyle will help the AIDS people, but will drastically reduce the incidence of psychological disorders and intake of abusive drugs. In the process, the Islamic principles will help in attaining the satisfaction, the real happiness and well-being in AIDS

patients.

It has been suggested here that Islamic principles such as confession and remembrance of God, and spiritual exercise (e.g., meditation) may be the better means to help the AIDS patients. Certainly the importance of the health is shared equally by religious people and medical health specialists, and we are sure that all other faith groups have the same attitude to the health of the body. We believe that religious education and practices in respect of helping the AIDS patients may be keys to improving their quality of life and enhancing well-being.

For the well-being of HIV/AIDS patients, religious training of manners and morals should be given priority. Patients may be given the following advices.

- Keep your sexual desire under control.
- Do not put your heart too much in the world.
- Read Quran and exact in translating your thoughts and execute in behavior.
- Ask for Forgiveness of his sins in day and night Forgiveness carry virtue.
- Be prepared for death and consider it a great blessing.

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