



# Six Essential Principles of Iranian Traditional Medicine for Maintaining Health From the Quran's Point of View

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The Iranian physicians have proposed six principles in traditional medicine for being healthy and preventing from diseases and they called them "The six essential principles". As the Quran is a comprehensive book for human beings, the essential efforts are certainly specified in it. That's why the above mentioned principles in Quran approve their validity and persuade human beings to consider them to be healthy.

**Objectives:** The aim of this study was to find out the viewpoint of Quran about the six essential principles of Iranian Traditional medicine for being healthy.

**Materials and Methods:** First, the required issues were adapted from the samples subjected to the aim and selected from the Iranian Traditional medicine book and were studied deeply by qualitative study of phenology. Then the data were analyzed by content analysis. Also, the verses related to the issues were adapted from Quran software and were translated and interpreted.

**Results:** Six major classifications such as "life environment", "food", spiritual status", "physical activity", "sleeping and awaking", "excretion and retention", and four minor classifications such as "climates", "seasons", "sexual intercourse" and "menstruation" were adopted from data analysis. These classifications in Quran were stated by three manners like "direct", "indirect" and "integrative".

**Conclusions:** The essential principles of health in Iranian medicine were not only stated in Quran, but also were emphasized.

**Keywords:** Iranian Traditional Medicine; Quran; Health; The Six Essential Principles

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## 1. Background

Health means the state in which, the human do the right and safe acts and according to the physicians' definition, maintaining health means knowledge of managing the healthy body (1). In Iranian medicine, the health maintaining issues are considered and are classified in two groups of essential and non-essential efforts. The non-

essential efforts are those which help health maintaining either do them or not (1,2), while the essential efforts are those which without them, neither health nor life is possible (1); and the number of these efforts are six, thus they are called "the six essential principles". Jalinus said: "If the six essential principles are considered moderately, they cause health" (3). The six essential principles are:

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►Implication for health policy/practice/research/medical education:

This study trains the people to live healthy based on the Iranian traditional medicine and Quran teachings.

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the climates and what belongs to it, the food and drinking and their sub classifications like the kinds of food and the manner of eating and etc. carnal movements and what is debated over such as anger, happiness, fear, grief and etc. the physical movement and the relevant issues, sleeping and awaking and last but not least, retention and excretion and the issues debated over them like sexual intercourse and menstruation (1, 2, 4). In Quran, a lot of verses are related to the instructions for health that specify the assignments clearly such as this verse "Eat of the good with which we have provided you" (5) which orders to eat the good foods (6) or "He has forbidden you the dead, blood, and the flesh of swine" (7) which prohibits eating the flesh of swine, blood and the dead and some verses debated over this subject indirectly and just some instances of this debate is mentioned, like verse 134, Surah Al-e-Imran "Those who curb their anger", invites human keep their heads (6, 8). Need to say that in Quran, the six essential principles are those efforts which are emphasized immensely. Hence, these six principles are inductive (1). So they can be increased or decreased during a period. We can see that in Quran, other important issues which effect on the human health are mentioned, while the physicians did not classified them under the six essential principles; like the recommendations for social relationships as mentioned in verses 9 to 13 of Hojrat (9). Regarding that WHO attempts to define broader and more comprehensive dimensions for health definition (10), we can find more complete essential efforts by inducing the verses of God and considering the essential needs, which their aim is health keeping and the cause of aim is serving God. With respect to the physicians' positions, Aghili Khorasani declares that "The reward is for those who cures the people who are unable to move, stand and pray" (1).

## 2. Objectives

The aim of this study was to find out the viewpoint of Quran about the six essential principles of Iranian Traditional medicine for being healthy.

## 3. Materials and Methods

This study is a qualitative phonological research. In this method, the sampling based on the aim was used (11), in the present study, the samples and criteria of selecting them were included as follows: 1. the reference books of Iranian medicine which their authors should be the contemporary physicians, the books can be related to every period of time like "The law, Kharazmshahi savings" 2. The books which are not original, but their contents are helpful and sometimes are the special conception of original books, like "health maintaining during Naseri period, Heart Enlivening and so on". Need to say that during a qualitative study, the number of samples is not determined and sampling continues during the study (11). The

resultant number of samples is determined based on the data saturation (12). The main method for data collection, was first extracting the context related to the six essential principles from the samples and then classifying them. For data analysis, analysis of context was used. The qualitative analysis is an inferring method in which the steps of data analysis is first coding, second interpreting the content, and finally interpreting the meanings from the text (13). Analysis of content is valuable in the researches and is a proper tool for qualitative research (14). After completing the medical debates, by searching the meaning of the words and topics in Quran software, the verses related to the findings were found, some of them were referred and their translations and interpretations were used. This article does not intend to mention and explain the whole verses related to debates. References are cited at the end of the article and the personal comments and conceptions about the issues in the article are considered as ethics considerations.

## 4. Results

After investigating the data, six essential contents and five non-essential contents were received. The essential contents include life environment sub classified into seasons and climate, food, spiritual states, physical activity, sleeping and awaking, retention and excretion classified into sexual intercourse and menstruation.

### 4.1. Life Setting

Weather is the first part of the six essential principles and inhaling from the lung is a way to receive it (1). The proper weather is the mild one away from the smokes. If the weather is changeable, it causes the body damage (1, 4). The reasons of weather change are either related to the earth (like ruggedness of lands, the distances of mountains and seas, the wind blow and solid) or celestial (like the star Radius and the distance from the sun), in verses of 96 and 97, surah Anam, the God, Almighty, "ordained the sun, and the moon for reckoning" and considers the stars as a guidance in darkness (6, 15) or combination of both (like the city crosses) (16). The state of weather is changeable because of the season variety, climates, winds, adjacency of seas and mountains and the solid variety (1, 17). About the importance of issues related to weather, Arzani stated in Heart Enlivening: "Needing weather is essential. Thus the weather is the most important part of the six essential principles".

#### 4.1.1. Seasons

Every season has its own nature and we should consider some points with regard to the seasons (1, 2). Spring is mild and cool, summer is hot and dry, autumn is cold and dry and winter is cold and wet (4). In verse 2, surah Ghoraysh, God, the Almighty has mentioned both winter and summer (18), which according to the traditional

medicine, they have contrasting natures.

#### 4.1.2. *Climates*

In order to know the climates, it is essential to know the earth and celestial orbits. Living in the specific geographical region, duration of day and night, adjacency of mountains and seas, temperature, the direction of wind blow, solid, underground water and housing, are the issues debated in this section (1). Aghili, stated in the Medicine Summary: "We should know that the celestial and earth changes and recognition of celestial orbits, climates, territories, and regions are subjected to knowing the celestial orbits, stars, equator and division of Settled quarter". A lot of verses in Quran include the points related to the climates, such as, the verses of 1-3 of Altagh, verses 58 and 54 of Surah Al-Araf, verses of 30-33 of Anbia, verses of 45-49 Forghan, verses of 37-40 Yasin, verses of 5 and 7 of Al-Rahman, verses of 5 and 6 of Yunes and also some verses are about living in pleasant gardens and near the rivers are referred (6) in (136 Al-Emran, "gardens underneath which rivers flow, where they shall live forever") (8), and the mansions (19), the firm houses (20). For instance, verse 33 from Anbia says: "It is he who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon; each floating in an orbit" (6, 21).

#### 4.2. *Food*

Eating and drinking are the second parts of the six principles. The body has metabolisms and if these metabolisms are not made up by eating food, the human will die (1, 2, 4). Water can be helpful (17). In traditional medicine, the foods are classified into categories which have specific functions in body (2). The foods like apple and pomegranate create mucus in body (1, 2). Of course the properties of each fruit are mentioned in 'Medicines Storage'. There are various instructions for eating food, such as considering the order of eating food, choosing a proper dish for cooking food, not eating food while the stomach is full, chewing food completely, avoiding from overeating and so on (1, 2, 4, 16). Ebne Sina declared in 'The Law': "Surfeit is fatal whether in eating or drinking" (2). The importance of nutrition is emphasized in Quran and some verses (such as Verse 1 of Tin, verse 35 of Noor, verse 99 of Anam, and so on) (15, 22, 23); mentions the foods like honey, olive, grape, fig, pomegranate, palm and fresh fish. These foods are so worthwhile in traditional medicine. (24). A lot of verses consider the importance of feeding directly, like verse 3 of Maedah in which determines the task: "You are forbidden (to consume) the dead, blood and the flesh of swine; also flesh dedicated to any other than Allah, the flesh of strangled (animals) and of those beaten, that which is killed by falling, gored to death, mangled by beasts of prey, unless you find it (still alive) and slaughter it; also of animals sacrificed on stones (to

idols) (you are forbidden) to seek division by the arrows, that is debauchery" (7). Other verses (verse 19 of Kahf, 157 of Araf, 145 of Anam, and 173 of Baghara) involve nutrition instructions (5, 15, 25-27). The healing effect of honey in verses 68 and 69 of Nahl is stated (28). In Iranian traditional medicine, the best water for drinking is the one which contains stones on its floor and flows from south to north and from east to west and originates from the high lands and has low weight. Gilani said: "drinking water is good for moisturizing body, reviving the instinct, color freshness and softening body" (4). With respect to the importance of water, it is stated in Quran: "we made every living thing of water" (21).

#### 4.3. *Sleeping and Awaking*

Sleeping and awaking are the third parts of the six essential principles. Hakim Gilani states: "sleeping means inclination of the instinct heat towards the nature because of the need to relax and ready to digest food" (4). The reason of needing to sleep is to revive the power which was reduced during the physical activities; specially the night sleep which is too important (1, 2, 4). In Quran, sleeping, especially the night sleeping is mentioned, the given verses are: 96 Anam, 61 Ghafer, 86 Manl, 47 Forghan, 23 Rome, 9 and 10 Naba (15, 29-32) in verse 67 of Yunes, calmness at night is mentioned: "He it is who has made the night for your rest and the day to see" (6, 33).

#### 4.4. *Physical Activity*

Body movement and inertia is the fourth part of the six essential principles. In criticism of the 'Body Advantages' book, Dr. Mesri stated: "The movement is done for pension request or the body abstinence. "Continuing the movement causes power reduction, and continuing the inactivity causes fatigue and diseases" (34). For implying the movement and standing of the body, physicians proposed doing exercise and Ebne Sina found it superior to other affairs (2). Jorjani said: "the distinct heat which reaches to the entire body will be diminished time after time and should be replaced and the only heat which results from the body can replace the distinct heat which is called abstinence" (16). During the food digestion, those excreta remains from the food that the nature cannot excrete it by ordinary ways like urination, faeces. If these materials cumulate in body, some damages will be brought about (1, 2, 16). Abstinence can help these excreta excrete. Other advantages of abstinence include: better digestion, body roughness, and power increase. Actually, abstinence makes the instinct heat to be agitated (1, 2, 4, 16). In Quran, the story of Taloot illustrated the importance of power indirectly (5): "their prophet said to them: 'allah has raised saul to be your king.' but they replied: 'should he be given the kingship over us, when we are more deserving of it than he and he has not been

given abundant wealth? 'he said: Allah has chosen him over you and increased him with amplitude in knowledge and body. Allah gives his kingship to whom he will. Allah is the embracer, the knower". Relaxing is necessary for reviving of what has been lost during a day. Sleeping is inactivity (1) which was debated. In Iranian medicine, for the body members, there are specific exercises and the exercises related to breathing and chest are mentioned (1, 2, 4, 17). Verse 3 of Mozmel, by considering the meaning of Tartil from the viewpoint of Allameh Tabatabaee who said that "Tartil is recitation of Quran so that the letters are pronounced clearly and separately" (35), stated the abstinence of respiratory tools.

#### 4.5. Mood

Carnal movement and inactivity is the fifth part of the six essential principles and according to Hakim Arzani "That is the same as carnal side effects which occurs on ego and follows the reactions" (17). Actually, the carnal movement is for attracting the advantages and excreting the harm (1). The carnal expressions (the emotional status) are classified into two categories, and have specific effects on the body; some of them cause the spirit move outward, and body warming like anger, pleasure, joy, and wish and some cause the soul move inward, and keep the body cool such as fear and sorrow (16). Discussing about the spiritual medicine and enhancing the spiritual capacity and carnal expressions (the emotional status) for treatment of diseases are involved in this section (16). In Quran, various states of soul in different situations are considered like verse 40, Tuba: "Do not sorrow, Allah is with us." which suggests the sorrow following the fear (35). Some verses recommend the patience and has positive load for soul like what has been mentioned in "Therefore, have patience. the promise of Allah is true" (31). And the verses like 159 and 134 of Al-Emran, 149 Nesa, 199 Araf, 92 Yusef and 22 Noor, suggest anger and pardon, Verses 4 of Ghoraysh, 155 Baghara, 19 Ahzab, 47 Nahl and 112 suggest fear and verse 49 Araf and 62 Yunus suggest grief.

#### 4.6. Excretion and Retention

The sixth part is excretion and retention. Hakim Gilani stated: "you should know that excretion of some materials from the body is essential and also keeping some of other materials is essential for body health"(4). If the material obliged to be excreted cannot be excreted causes harm and if the useful material excretes from the body causes harm, too (1, 2, 4, 16). Thus the former is called excretion and the latter is called retention (13, 17). In this collection, two subcategories have been received: menstruation and sexual intercourse.

#### 4.7. Menstruation

Menstruation is a kind of excretion (36) and not-excretion of menstruation is considered as a disease (37). On

the other hand, this blood is a kind of natural retention which must be maintained during the pregnancy in order to grow the embryo (1). Hakim Arzani said: "The menstruation blood is the food for embryo during pregnancy" (37), in Quran, two verses suggest the menstruation like verse 222 Bagharah, verse 4 Talagh (5, 38).

#### 4.8. Sexual Intercourse

Another natural excretion is sexual intercourse in which the semen is excreted (1, 2, 4). As Hakim Gilani said "The semen excretion is a kind of excretion which is helpful in maintaining health". If the semen is not excreted, some diseases will appear (4). The issues related to sexual discourse are mentioned in booklet. The Iranian medicine has instructions for sexual relationships such as, avoiding from having sex with the prostitutes, and the menstruating women and avoiding from having sex excessively (1, 4), the correct way of having sex and avoiding from sodomy and etc. (1). With regard to the legal sex between men and women, verse 223 of Bagharah and with regard to the corrupted lusty such as illegal sex and sodomy, there are different verses such as verses 15 and 24 of Nisa, 80 and 81 of Araf, 32 of Asra, 2 of Noor (20, 23, 27, 39) and the illegal marriages are mentioned in verse 23 of Nisa.

### 5. Discussion

The findings have shown that in Iranian medicine, for health maintaining, there is a need to consider some affairs and these affairs are emphasized in Quran. In the Holy book, the above mentioned issues are declared by three ways: the verses related to eating/drinking or sleeping/awaking are proposed directly or the verses which give instances from the given issues such as the verses related to anger and fear or combination of direct and indirect viewpoints; like the verses in which the weather is mentioned. The weather is important due to enlivening the heart (1, 2, 4) and also the weather is the combination of medical soul because from the viewpoint of the physicians, the medical soul separated from the abstract soul, is a soft steam-like material and the weather is compounded (1). Thus the bad weather disorders the medical soul. The weather, seasons and climates are discussed as follows. As the seasons have their own natures, it is essential to adapt measures in accordance to that season. Each season, brings about the diseases related to its nature and its contradiction, destroys the nature; for instance, in hot season, in case of using the spicy foods, the body drives through heat (1). The discussions about climates are classified into two sections: one is astronomical discussion and the other is geographical discussion; and we can get involve in them (1). Aghili, in Summary of Hekmat said: "Although the weather is the most important one in the six essential principles, human cannot involve in it unless he moves from one place to another" (1). But

this issue does not decrease the importance of weather in health. In Quran, there are a lot of verses related to weather such as astronomy. The verse "Allah created the seven heavens one above the other \* setting in them the moon as a light and the sun as a lantern?" suggest it (40). And the stories in which a nation was destroyed by the catastrophe such as storm, flood, quake and etc. (27) like the Shoeib nation which were destroyed in earthquake and the Nooh nation which their life finished by sinking in water (6, 41). Food and drinking are considered as important issues in both Iranian medicine and Quran. In these two sources, some points about nutrition are mentioned. The principles of eating food can be written based on Quran.

1. The essentiality of care in eating food and choosing the good food in verses 24 of Abaschnad 19 Kahf (25, 26).

2. Preventing from eating the dirty and impure food in these verses: 157 of Araf, 145 and 12 of Anam, verse 3 of Maedeh, and 173 of Bagharah (5, 7, 15, 27).

3. Using the good food suggested in verses 4, 87 and 88 of Maedeh, 81 of Taha, 16,132 and 157 of Araf, and 168 and 173 of Bagharah (5, 7, 27, 42).

4. Eating food moderately and avoiding from overeating and not eating in verse 31 of Araf (27).

5. Using the Halal food in the verses of 1 Maedeh, 118, 143, and 144 of Anam, 30 of Hajj, 6 of Zomr and 168 of Bagharah (5, 7, 15, 43, 44).

6. Breast feeding for two years in verses of 133 Bagharah, 14 of Lighman, 15 of Ahghaf and 6 of Talagh (5, 38, 45, 46).

7. Access to all of the food in verse 6 Hood, 15 Melek, and 34 Ebrahim (10, 41, 47, 48).

Sleeping enough at night, gives some advantages. If the sleep does not exist, continuing the fatigue and movement causes the soul reduction. By this way the ego is unable to measure body and leads to destroying (4). In Quran, sleeping means relaxing (6) which is mentioned in this verse: "and we made your sleep a rest" (49). Sleeping causes the relaxation and revival of the power and removes the fatigue due to awaking (35). The meaning of Sabat, suggests the inactivity of some parts of body during sleeping and this temporary inactivity leads to relaxing and reconstructing the worn members, enhancing the body and soul and revitalizing and getting ready to restart activity. Thus this verse considers the sleeping as blessings of God (50). The physical activities are the essential affairs in health and there is not any verse which mentions this issue. But the stories of Taloot emphasize having the vigorous body. One of the best ways of strengthening the body is abstinence (doing exercise) (4, 51). In an interpretation of verse 247 of Bagharah, it is stated that: Prophecy and kingdom are two issues which Bani Israel were proud of them and Taloot didn't have any of them, but from the God's viewpoint, the kingdom doesn't need the wealth but also it needs intellectual and physical power that Taloot has (35). God chooses the commander based on the qualification, and the intel-

lectual and physical power is the two essential terms for corps commanding (52). Knowledge and physical power are the two inner and actual terms and the commander determines the direction of prosperity based on his knowledge and enforces it by his power. On the other hand, "amplitude" suggests the extent of human nature in knowledge and power. It means that the human's nature can be widened and expanded by knowledge and physical vigor (50), the carnal expressions (the emotional status), are important in health maintaining because it effects on body rapidly. For example, if one fears, his body becomes cold (16). The verses which mention the carnal expressions (the emotional status), persuade to acquire or be distant from an emotional state indirectly. For example, in verse 134 of Al-e-Imran, curbing the anger is a feature of the pious: "who spend in prosperity and in adversity, for those who curb their anger and those who forgive people. And Allah loves the charitable" (8) or according to the verse 45 of Bagharah, patience is a feature of the humble (6). In Iranian medicine, grief and fear which make the body cold (1, 2, 16), were mentioned in Quran and the human is indirectly convicted to be away from them, the verses such as 62 of Yunes refer to it: "indeed, there shall be neither fear nor sorrow upon the guided by Allah" (33). Also the verse 49 of Araf mentions this issue (27). By this way, the carnal expressions are illustrated by instances. The excretion of menstruation blood suggests that these excreted materials are useless for body in normal state, since it is useful during pregnancy for embryo (17). If there is not any embryo, the accumulation of these materials is harmful for body (37). During the creation of embryo, if these materials are not excreted, the embryo will not have a proper place to grow. Thus their retention is essential (37). Sexual intercourse is important in Iranian medicine, as it is a carnal movement (1, 2) and also due to the excretion of semen, it is considered as excretion (4). So, this issue includes three parts of six essential principles and considering its correct principles is important in health maintaining. Verses 222 and 223 of Bagharah emphasize the instruction of right sexual intercourse. In various verses, Levat (sodomy) is known as "indecency act" (5, 6), those verses are 54-56 of Naml, 78 and 79 of Hood, and 80 and 81 of Araf. Also in verse 32 of Asra, avoiding from the illegal sex as an indecency act is accentuated by referring to the story of Loot nation: "do not draw near to fornication, for it is an indecency, and its way is evil (6, 39). Thus the rules of sexual discourse which were mentioned in Iranian medicine are referred in Quran, too. According to the Iranian medicine, it is prohibited to do two or more excretions (1). Thus the menstruated women must not have sexual relationship. On the other hand, the natures hate the impurity (1). So the men must not have sex with women in this period. The human, need the essential principles to maintain the health and their number is six based on the viewpoints of physicians (1, 2). By searching in the verses of Quran, we can find that these

issues are illustrated directly or indirectly. What has been referred in this article was a short referring to the scientific dimension of Quran related to the medical science issues, which are based on the viewpoint of Iranian medicine, and on the other hand, the findings of this study are the clear reasons for the vividness of Iranian medicine and despite the technological improvements, it is yet satisfying, for approving an issue, the firmest reason is from God's sayings. "our messenger (mohammad) has come to clarify to you much of what you have hidden of the book, and to forgive you much. a light has come to you from Allah and a clear book, with which Allah guides those who seek his pleasure to the paths of peace. by his permission he takes them out from darkness to the light, and guides them to a straight path" (7). With this regard, the author of "Heart Enlivening" stated that: the sayings of physicians are reliable if it is consistent with Sharia otherwise they are null and void" (17). So, it is recommended for the Enthusiasts to study more about the essential affairs by inducing God's sayings and studying the Iranian medicine books and searching about the human needs.

## 6. Appendices

As in article adjustment, the ancient and outdated Iranian books were used, it is obvious that the publication date was based on the correction in the present time and the books were written during the life time of the author and the years later:

Ebne-Sina, 4<sup>th</sup> century; Ali-ebne-Abbas Majoosi: 4<sup>th</sup> century; JorJani: 6<sup>th</sup> Century; Aghili Khorasani: 12<sup>th</sup> cent; Hakim Gilani: 13<sup>th</sup> Cent; Blkhi: 3<sup>rd</sup> cent

Explaining some expressions:

Instinctive heat: It refers to improving and protecting the body and the activities which must be done for body without which cannot be completed (1).

Powers: It is the plural of power. This is in the nature of animals by which the hard and back breaking tasks are done (1).

Nature: This manages the body, and what is proper for managing and protecting bodies is issued by this spontaneously (1).

Soul: It refers to the physicians' definition for soul not the abstract soul. According to the physicians' definition, soul is a soft steam-like material which appears from the blood mucus (1).

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