

The Legitimacy of Siwak between Islam and Dentistry

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Introduction

We are thankful to God the Most Merciful, and the greatest peace on His Prophet Mohammad, the messenger of mercy and peace, and to all of his companions. Islam in the first place is a religion of purity and cleanness, and it called Muslims to take special consideration to these two acts, made it one of the Islamic rituals, one of its basic elements, a worship. Furthermore, it made purity and cleanness as one of the stipulations for one of the greatest worships and duties in Islam, which is praying. Islam has focused on the apparent features of man and his essence, as it urged to clean parts of the human body. It made Wodou'- cleaning before praying-, which is to clean specific parts of the body a prerequisite for the accepted pray. It specified for each event in Islam a type of washing such as washing in Al Feter and Al Adha Festivals, washing in Friday and other occasions. Is also made cleaning teeth one of the Sunnan that Muslims approach God when performing them.

The main focus of this study is to examine the legitimacy of using Siwak between religion and medicine especially that the researcher is one of the experts in dentistry. This wooden piece, which Islam has urged to use it in cleaning teeth, must hold a Devine secret in using it. Al Sharia did not call for performing a specific act randomly, and I wondered about the saying of the scholar Rudat- the director of microbiology institute in Rustock University, who, in one of his published articles in East German Journal (1961); declaring in this respect : "I read about Siwak, which Arabs use as a toothbrush in one voyager's book visiting their lands, and he described this act in a sarcastic manner, took it as a proof of their cultural decline, who- as the voyager claims clean their teeth by a wooden piece in the 20th century. I thought, why couldn't be a secret or a scientific fact behind their use of this wooden piece. The chance came when one of my colleagues working in microbiology field in Sudan brought me a number of these wooden sticks. Immediately, I embarked my research on them, grinning and wetting them, put the powder in germs farms and the same effect when adding Penicillin to germs farms appeared".

The importance of this study stems from its attempt to examine the Shari and medical aspect for using Siwak. The study adopted the inferential design, and it was divided into a preface, two sections and a conclusion, and as follows:

Preface: This section identified the motivating factor for writing this research paper, the design and type of research.

Section One: Definition and legitimacy of Siwak.

Part One: Legitimacy of Siwak.

Section Two: Siwak from a medical and health perspectives.

Part One: Siwak as one of the innate features and a Shari and medical support.

Part Two: Times for using Siwak.

Part Three: The chemical structure of Siwak.

Part Four: Benefits for using Siwak.

Part Five: How to use Siwak.

Conclusion

Section One

Definition and legitimacy of Siwak

Part One: Definition of Siwak in language and theoretically

First: Definition of Siwak in language

Siwak, with a stress on Seen (the sound of S in English) is the reference of the act using Siwak, and the tool used for such act.

In other saying, the word Meswak- with a stress on M (the sound of M in English) is also used to refer to the tool. In Arabic, it is said: " Saak Famahou Yasoukeh Saoukan- He used the Miswak in cleaning his mouth. If one says: ' Istak, the "M" is not mentioned in the context of sentence, the mouth is not mentioned in the language context, but intertextuality infers that he used Miswak. The word Miswak is masculine, but Al Azhari transferred other saying in this respect from ancient Arabs, claiming that the author of Al Muhakam said that it can be feminine and masculine at the same time. Al Laith Bin Al Mudafar stressed the fact that it is feminine. The plural of Meswak is Souk such as Kitab and Kutub ⁽¹⁾.

Second: Al Siwak from a Fiqhi perspective

- **Al Hanafeyya defined al Siwak as the name of a specific wooden piece ⁽²⁾.**
- **Al Malekeyya defined it as the use of a stick or otherwise tool in teeth or to get rid of yellow teeth or odor of teeth ⁽³⁾.**
- **Al Shafeyya and Al Hanabelah defined Al Siwak as the use of a stick or otherwise in teeth to get rid of changes in teeth and for other purposes ⁽⁴⁾.**

Part 2

The legitimacy of Siwak

First: The Shari judgment of using Siwak

The majority of Shari scholars have agreed that the sue of Siwak is a certain Sunna, and the proof is Aisha quote of the prophet when saying: " The prophet- peace on Him- used Siwak and gave it me to wash it, then I use and wash it, then I wash it thoroughly and give it to him" ⁽⁵⁾. Another quote of Aisha from the prophet is her saying: " The prophet said that using Siwak purifies the mouth and is a bless from God" ⁽⁶⁾.

Second: The Shari text clarifying the legitimacy of Siwak and its advantages:

- 1- Abu Horairah's quote of the prophet saying that he prophet said: " Wasn't it hard for my nation, or on people, I would have asked them to use Siwak at each pray". And in another narration- At each Wodou" (7).
- 2- Aisha quote of the prophet when saying that: " When entering home, the prophet always started by Siwak" ⁽⁸⁾.
- 3- Houthaifa quote of the prophet when saying: " When praying at night, the prophet washes his mouth with Siwak" ⁽⁹⁾.
- 4- Aisha's quote of the prophet when saying: " The prophet said that using Siwak purifies the mouth and is a bless from God" ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Section Two

Siwak from a medical and health perspective

Part One

Siwak as one of the innate features and a Shari and medical support

Islam came and ordered its followers of specific issues that transcend what the modern medicine has reached to prevent teeth decay, and to maintain dental health and mouth cleanness. The black causing tooth decay and gum inflations will not be found among Muslim using Siwak when washing for pray, when praying, when waking and after eating, and this gives a a clear picture of the importance of Siwak.

Modern science has revealed that the most significant times to use Siwak are after awakening because some holes in teeth appear while sleeping. Some residues can form from saliva, causing inflations on teeth as the saliva does not move in the mouth during sleep. Thus, we find that the prophet used Siwak when awakening from sleep to pray in night ⁽¹¹⁾.

Some of the prophet sayings (Hadith) have documented the times when the prophet used Siwak, and these times are found both in day and night. This is consistent with the accumulation of black layer in the mouth, thus, teeth need continuous clean. Islam teachings and the directions of the Prophet in using Siwak are all conform to what the modern dentistry profession aims, which is to remove the microbiological layer while being in the early stages of development, before being mature and has an effect of solid and loose tissues.

Modern science has proven the effectiveness of Arak Siwak in eliminating germs and bacteria that causes tooth decay and gum diseases. As Dr. Kent Koyodeel said before the 52nd scientific conference for Dental Research held in Atlanta- Georgia in USA: " It was noticed that those using Siwak have more healthy teeth, and that some of the British and Indian manufacturing companies are now making tooth paste containing materials taken from Siwak" ⁽¹²⁾.

By comparing Siwak and toothbrush and tooth paste, it was clear that Siwak has numerous benefits for both mouth and teeth that exceed the ones reported when using modern tools and medications invented for dental health. The prophet, peace on him, used Siwak in cleaning his tongue and this is consistent with what the modern science calls for, and that is the need for cleaning the tongue several times.

This is all proofs of what the prophet has called for and demonstrated in his sayings, actions and directions are all Divine legislations given by the All Mighty to the prophet. These legislations are beneficial and are all wise. In the holy Quran, God says: "Take what the prophet gives you and do not do what he forbids you. Be blessed as the punishment of God is hard" (Al Hasher, verse 7).

Several Shari texts have documented that Siwak is one of the innate attributes in man, and these included the following:

- 1- The prophet has said that : " There are ten things of innate nature of man and these are cutting the mustache, letting the beard grow, Siwak, water inhaling, cutting nails, washing the skulls, cleaning the armpit from hair, shaving the pubic, and using water wisely". Zakareia said: " Musaab argued that the tenth was forgotten, and this was swaddling" ⁽¹³⁾.
- 2- Ibn Abbas said that the prophet explained God's saying: " god gave Ibrahim valuable words" by saying that he was given the words of purity: five in the head, and five in the body. In the head, cutting mustache, swaddling, inhaling, using Siwak and combing the hair. The five in the body are cutting nails, shaving the pubic, circumcision, shaving the armpit and cleaning with water after feces and urine ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Al Hafiz Ibn Hajar- peace be on his soul- when talking about innate nature in these prophet's sayings: " The things mentioned here are of intuition and when one performs them, he is on the natural intuition that God has made all people on, urge them to do, and favored that these may be of the routine acts to be on the most beautiful body and soul ⁽¹⁵⁾. Ibn Al Qaiem- peace on his soul- said: " there are two intuitions: the first is related to heart, and that is to know god, love Him and to make him the first priority in one's life, and a practical intuition based on these attributes. The first intuition transcends the soul and purifies the heart, while the second purifies the body. Each of them is strongly related to the other and strengthens it ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Part Two

Times for Using Siwak

Shari scholars agreed that Siwak is used in the following times:

- 1- At Wodou (Washing before praying): As Abo Horairah said: The prophet said: " Wasn't it hard for my nation, or on people, I would have asked them to use Siwak at each pray ⁽¹⁷⁾.
- 2- When preparing to pray: As Abo Horairah said: The prophet said: " Wasn't it hard for my nation, or on people, I would have asked them to use Siwak at each pray ⁽¹⁸⁾.
- 3- When getting up from sleep (awakening): As Houthaifa quote of the prophet when saying: " When praying at night, the prophet washes his mouth with Siwak" ⁽¹⁹⁾.
- 4- When entering home: Aisha quotes of the prophet when saying that: ' When entering home, the prophet always started by Siwak" ⁽²⁰⁾.
- 5- When the mouth changes and the teeth become yellow: As Aisha's quote of the prophet when saying: " The prophet said that using Siwak purifies the mouth and is blessed from God" ⁽²¹⁾.
- 6- When reading the Holy Quran: that the prophet has ordered to use Siwak by saying: " If the Muslim uses Siwak, then embarks his pray, the angles pray behind him, hear his reading of Quran, approach him- or the use of another word- very closely. All what come of Quran from his mouth goes to the deep soul of the angel; so purify your mouths with Quran ⁽²²⁾.

Part Three

The Chemical structure of Siwak

The chemical structure of Arak sticks ⁽²³⁾:

After studying the chemical structure of Arak stick, scientists have found that it contains the following elements:

- 1- Tannins: Which is anti- moldiness, a purifying element, terminates gum bleeding and strengths it.
- 2- Sinnigirin: With acute odor and taste helps in killing germs.
- 3- Chloride with silica: Which are materials that whiten teeth, with a glue material covering mina, and protect teeth against decay ⁽²⁴⁾.

- 4- Methil Amin: Heals gum cuts, and enhances its healthy growth. It is then a purifying material that can modify the hydrogenic elements in the mouth, which has indirect effects on microbes' growth. The scientists have also found that other quantities of anti-tumor materials such as Fluorine; which makes the teeth harder and tougher, having an acid effect against teeth decay. The most influential effect for Fluorine can be seen in the early stages of teeth growth, when this element penetrates strongly to the teeth to replace the lesser interactive atoms such as Potassium and Sodium in the infrastructure of teeth mina. The atomic bonds formed by the new material stronger compared to the one formed by the lesser interactive materials. In addition, the exposure of mina to Fluorine at this stage of growth transforms it from being HydroxyPanate to Floropanate.
- 5- There is a= enough quantity of Chlorine that removes dyes in addition to silica, which maintains teeth white.
- 6- Pills: Which is found by &# 37.4 of the total structure of Arak stick, and is characterized of being an effective element in removing black layer.
- 7- Sodium bicarbonate, which is recommended by the American Dentistry Association for teeth treatment while adding it to teeth treatment process (²⁵).
- 8- Silva Yuria: Known to fight teeth decay and caries; preventing the formation of fusiform foci mentioned above.
- 9- Aniseic acid: Which helps in removing sputum from chest, in addition to the existence of ascoribic acid and setsetrol, and both of these materials can strengthen capillaries feeding gum.

Imam Ibn Al Qaiem has listed several benefits for the use of Siwak; emphasizing the miraculous aspects of using it, which is one of the things the prophet has called for using several times (²⁶).

Part Four

Benefits for using Siwak

Historically, the use of Siwak was known as a tool for cleaning teeth and mouth, and its use if simply one of the actions (Sunnan) that the prophet used. In one of his Hadith, the prophet said:" Using Siwak purifies the mouth and pleases God". In addition to being one form of worships, using Siwak has several benefits for teeth and mouth. Simply speaking, Siwak is a stick or a branch taken from Arak tree , and is characterized by its soft fibers, and contains many chemical materials with the ability to fight germs and microbes.

Several research studies have documented the significance of taking care of teeth and mouth, as these studies have shown a statistically significant correlation between dental health and many diseases, including heart diseases and strokes. Furthermore, the medical studies have documented the many benefits of using Siwak, and may play a vital role in preventive dental health field. Some doctors have stated that the soft natural fibers found in Siwak are more beneficial for the gum and teeth compared to synthetically manufactured toothbrushes known among people. Also, the purifying materials contained in Siwak may have more benefits to the ones found in tooth pastes.

The most important benefits of Siwak may include the following:

- 1- Cleaning and whitening teeth.
- 2- Fighting germs and bacteria.
- 3- Strengthening gum and fighting inflations.
- 4- Preventing the formation of black layer on teeth.
- 5- Preventing bad mouth odor.

Some of the manufactured materials found in the market such as mouth wash may be beneficial for preventing bad breath as they contain Themol (from thyme) and Eucalyptus in addition to aromatic oils that have proven to be effective against bacteria. There are other aromatic oils that are elicited from tea, garlic, mint, Cummins and sperm and other materials. These can be used as combinations and elements for preparing mouth wash or tooth paste. But, due to the hazards of allergies, or the side effects resulting from swallowing these oils, it is recommended to consult a specialist before starting the treatment using these oils, which are sold in the market without prescription for treating bad breath. Modern research studies have indicated that Siwak contains other benefits such as fighting bacteria and germs safely, without causing any allergy. In addition, the benefits of Siwak may exceed this, and has positive effect on general health.

This may be due to the fact that Siwak contains tender and soft natural fibers on the gum, minerals, and effective important materials such as the cleaning material (sinigrin), other materials that may help in cleaning the and whitening teeth such as Sodium chloride, Sodium bicarbonate, Potassium chloride, and Calcium oxalate, in addition to the existence of other materials enhancing dental health and gum fibers such as Gallic acid. There are also several volatile oils giving the mouth a good odor. Siwak contains vitamin C, which is very important to gum health. Some research studies have reported that Siwak contains materials promoting blood clotting, thus, stopping gum bleeding and enhancing cuts healing. Siwak also contains Tannin, a material that helps in making the gum stronger.

Part Five

How to use Siwak

Sharia scholars have described the best methods for using Siwak, and this that the person uses it horizontally on teeth. Siwak may be used on teeth edges and grinders; passing it gently to the throat ceiling (²⁷). Dentists claim that the most appropriate method to clean teeth using Siwak or toothbrush is to put them on an angle of 45⁰ degree as the teeth connect to gum, while pressing, moving the tool gently back and forth while making round tender movements while using Siwak. The total surface of teeth from the tongue and cheek side is cleaned, while considering cleaning all the front and back teeth. The chewing teeth surfaces are cleaned deeply with short strokes back and forth.

As for cleaning the tongue using the brush, it is from back to front. Cleaning the tongue helps getting rid of residuals, which may be the cause of bad breath and bacteria growth.

Conclusion

The study concluded with several results, including:

- 1- Al Siwak is the use of a stick or something likewise in cleaning teeth to get rid of the changes happening to them. the legitimacy of using Siwak is documented on the Holy Quran and Sunna, and its use is of the innate nature of human beings.
- 2- The medical research studies have documented the effectiveness of Siwak as it contains several ingredients and elements that protect teeth and maintain their health.
- 3- Sharia scholars and dentists have agreed that on the need to maintain using Siwak as called by the Holy Sunna and for its health importance.
- 4- The times for using Siwak are listed in holy Sunna, which has also indicated the most appropriate methods to use it.

Margins

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