

ISLAMIC PRAYERS: A SPORT FOR BODY AS WELL AS SOUL**Salam N Asfar**

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It is a well known fact that prayers provide delight and peace to the soul, they also give a psychological relief to the prayer as was said by prophet Muhammad "Relief us Bilal with prayers"¹.

Every one who professes Islam is in ordinary life to pray five times in each day as was commanded by The Holy Koran and by apostle Muhammad. The five daily prayers are; at dawn or just before sunrise, just after noon, before sunset, just after sunset, and just after the day has closed. Prayer consists in standing, glorifying God, bowing, kneeling to the ground on a rug, sitting, saluting angles and invocation^{2,3} (Fig.1).

Prayer is preceded by Ablution { Lat. ablutio, "to wash off" (Wudu) } which is washing with running water, in its religious use, destined to secure that ceremonial or ritualistic purity which must not be confused with physical or hygienic cleanliness. Ablution consists in (Fig.2) washing of face, hands (to elbows) and feet in prescribed manner. Also rinsing of mouth, gargling, ear and nose cleaning^{4,5}.

Both praying and ablution, consuming movements of nearly all body joints, muscles and ligaments with stimulation of all cranial nerves for five times daily, so they are surely be a good sport for

the body. Prayer movements should be considered as an active exercise which is necessary for prevention and treatment of many disease conditions.

Anatomical and physiological views

The cranial nerves^{6,7}: All senses are in action during ablution and prayers.

The olfactory nerve is stimulated in ablution, to smell the washing water which should be clean with no odor, also nose cleaning with water will stimulate this nerve. The optic nerve is essential for light perception, accommodation and light reflexes which occur during ablution and prayers. The oculomotor, trochlear and abducent are involved in eye muscles movements during angles saluting (left and right), down ward looking in nodding to God, and up ward looking in invocation. The trigeminal nerve is stimulated during face wash, and water taste during rinsing of mouth and gargling during ablution. The facial nerve has sensory stimulation by water taste and from the external ear in ear cleaning, it also has motor action in gargling and vocal praying. The vestibulo-cochlear nerve is stimulated in hearing and equilibrium during movement of head and body. The glosso-pharyngeal nerve is in action during water taste, gargling and

snuffing from the nose. The vagus nerve is involved in cardiovascular regulation during standing, sitting, bowing, kneeling, and rising, it is also involved in mouth and ear wash, gargling and snuffing, the laryngeal supply is involved in vocal praying. The accessory nerve has also laryngeal supply, and it is in action during angels saluting, hand raising and kneeling. The hypoglossal nerve which supply muscles of the tongue is involved in laryngeal movements and is in action during vocal praying, mouth wash and gargling.

The body movements^{7,8}

Body movements consumes the movement of joints, muscles (actors and counter-actors) and ligaments.

Head movements:

Flexion in nodding to God, extension during invocation, lateral rotation and abduction in saluting angels. The mandible and floor of the mouth are moved in vocal praying and mouth wash.

Vertebral column movements: Flexion & extension in nodding, bowing and kneeling to the ground. Abduction and rotation in saluting angels and washing of legs in ablution.

The anterior abdominal wall, the back muscles and the thoracic wall are moved during ablution, bowing, kneeling and ventilation.

The lower limb

The hip joint movements: Flexion & extension are seen in bowing, kneeling, sitting and standing. Adduction, abduction, medial and lateral rotation are noticed in leg wash and kneeling.

The knee joint movements: Flexion & extension in ablution, bowing and kneeling. Rotation of flexed knee in foot wash.

The ankle joint: Planter flexion in foot

wash and rising from kneeling. Dorsi-flexion is seen during kneeling.

The tarsal bones joints: Inversion & eversion in foot wash, and during swing in rising to stand from kneeling position.

Metatarsal and toes joints moves during kneeling and rising from kneeling position.

The upper limb

The pectoral girdle: Is always in mobility to enhance the movement of the shoulder joint.

The shoulder joint movements: Flexion & extension during invocation, bowing with hands on the thigh, and in rising from the ground. Adduction & abduction are seen in glorifying God and in standing with hands close to the body, rotation is noticed during ablution, bowing and kneeling.

The elbow joint: Flexion & extension occurs frequently during ablution, invocation, glorifying god, bowing and kneeling.

Radio-ulnar articulation: Pronation is seen in bowing with the hands on the lower thighs, supination is seen on using the palm to carry water to wash the face, mouth, and nose.

The wrist joint movements: Flexion & extension: seen in rising from the ground. Radial and ulnar adduction, and circumduction are noticed during washing of face and cleaning of ear and nose.

The hand joints moves frequently during ablution and praying.

Ablution and prayers movements are practiced three times each prayer, and to do this for five times daily means that each cleaning and prayer movement is exercised for at least fifteen times daily and this will be truly a good body sport, specially in our modern life where there is no place for sports.

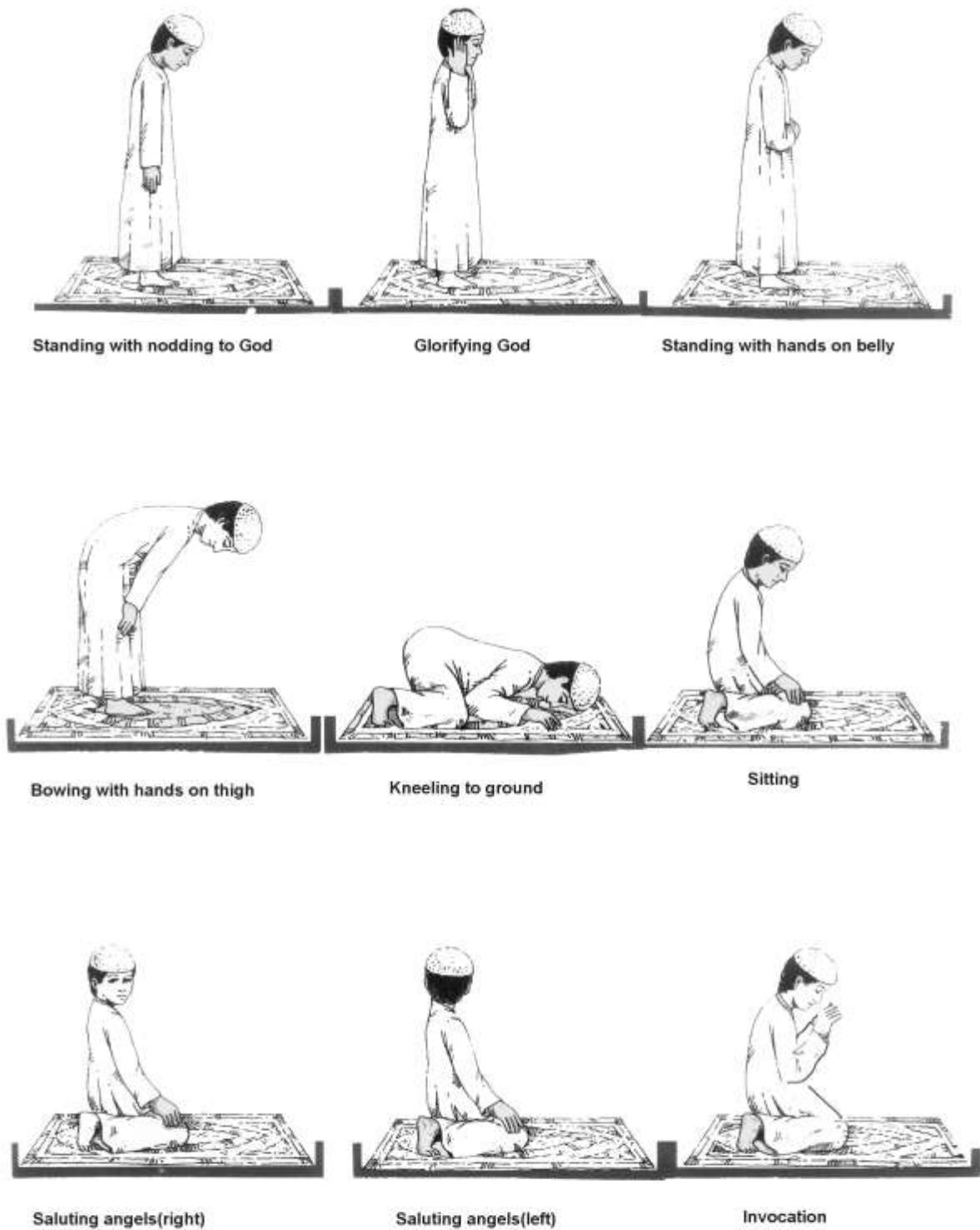


Fig.1: Different movements during Islamic Prayer



Gargling



Rinsing nose with water



Washing all face parts



Washing hands and elbow



Rubbing head with water



Washing feet and ankles



Rubbing ears with water (inside and outside)

Fig.2: Different steps of ablution.

Clinical view

Physiotherapy is now taking a major part in prevention and treatment of many medical disorders. If ablution and prayer movements are considered as an active exercise and the patients are asked to pray for five times daily, this will considerably reduce the demand for physiotherapy and rehabilitation department.

Prevention of diseases: Active exercises may reduce the incidence of; contracture in post burn period, deep vein thrombosis, bed sores, stagnation urinary stones, and post-operative joint stiffness and pulmonary infection.

Treatment of many disorders: Active exercises can increase wound healing by increase the blood supply to the area, and help in relief gaseous bowel distension following abdominal surgery. It can be a method of treatment in many orthopaedic conditions including lumbago, sciatica, thoracic outlet syndrome, chronic rheumatoid arthritis, and osteoarthritis to give stability by muscle exercises.

The examples of the benefits of active exercises in medicine are many, and it is wise to direct physicians to educate their patients about the advantages of prayers as a type of physiotherapy for treating their disease conditions.

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