



HAMMAM (THERAPEUTIC BATH/TURKISH BATH) - LEAST EXPLORED REGIMENAL THERAPY OF UNANI MEDICINE FOR PREVENTIVE AND THERAPEUTIC PURPOSE

Neelam Quddusi^{*1} and Mohammad Fazil²

^{*1}Neelam Quddusi: Research officer, Hakim Ajmal Khan Institute for Literary & Historical Research in Unani Medicine, New Delhi, under Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine, Ministry of Ayush, Government of India

²Research Officer, Hakim Ajmal Khan Institute for Literary & Historical Research in Unani Medicine, (CCRUM), New Delhi, under Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine, Ministry of Ayush, Government of India

Review Paper

Received: 20.11.2023

Revised: 30.11.2023

Accepted: 10.12.2023

ABSTRACT

Unani medicine is a time-honored medical method that has been practiced for centuries. Now is the optimal moment to reverse the course of events and acknowledge the valuable wisdom and knowledge that has been amassed within this system. In addition to Pharmacotherapy, Unani medicine places significant importance on Regimenal therapies for the treatment and prevention of diseases. Hammam, often known as a therapeutic bath or Turkish bath, is a type of therapy that is not well-researched and not widely understood. It is well accepted to have various preventive and therapeutic benefits across a range of health conditions and disorders. This elevates the status of baths in the eyes of historical physicians, who now regard them as hubs for illness prevention and treatment. This medicine is highly effective in alleviating stress and its associated physiological symptoms, providing a profound sense of relaxation for both the body and mind. According to the classical literature of Unani Medicine, Hammam, also known as a therapeutic bath or Turkish bath, is utilised to decrease the thickness of bodily fluids, enhance the well-being of weakened individuals, fortify the body, raise the natural body temperature, improve metabolism, and eliminate waste products through the skin in the treatment of various diseases. The paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the preventive and therapeutic advantages of this specific treatment regimen.

No. of Pages: 5

References: 23

Keywords: Hammam, Therapeutic bath, Turkish bath, Regimenal therapies.

INTRODUCTION

“Hammam, also known as the Turkish bath or therapeutic bath, is one of the earliest Unani regimens used to heal illnesses. The benefits of the Hammam for medicine go back to 200 B.C. The Greeks utilised hot air and water baths three millennia ago. Originally, it was used as part of a religious ceremony to keep bad spirits from inhabiting the body. The use of Hammam as therapeutic aids became more common, particularly in sanatoriums and asylums. These baths

were a standard feature of all sanatoriums and many large hospitals throughout Europe. Pain reduction, muscle relaxation, and respiratory advantages are all associated with Hammam; it also effectively eliminates toxins from the body and works in synergy with massage therapy¹.

Despite lacking the medical scientific knowledge to make such an assertion fully aware of the facts, the Hammam have a long history in the Mediterranean.

*Corresponding author: neelamquddusi@yahoo.com

These people had already observed the body and mind being revitalised by the steam produced by the high temperatures. Following the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire, the Arabs carried on with this custom, crafting and inventing unique baths known as "Hammams," which translates to "to warm up" in Arabic. It could only be entered in small groups because the Arab Hammams were smaller than those of the Romans. The Arabic word "Hammam," which means "heating up," is the source of the word "Hammam," which refers to a steam bath that is made by heating cold water. A public bathing area known as Hammam was connected to both Ottoman culture and the wider Islamic world. During the Victorian era, a version on it gained popularity as a way to de-stress and unwind, and it subsequently expanded throughout the British Empire and Western Europe. The Turkic tribes of Central Asia used steam baths, which they referred to as "Manchu." The Roman bath culture and their Asian tradition were combined to create a unique hybrid known as the "Turkish bath." The Ottoman culture (1463–1878) was one of the most influential civilizations on the urban settings of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The heart of many Ottoman cities, Külliye, served as significant hubs for trade, education, culture, and religion. They served as the Ottoman Empire's emblem of might and accomplishment. Put simply, it is a collection of public buildings significant for all processes and events in public life at a single Ottoman urban community. The mosque has traditionally been the main structure. Typically, it consisted of a madrasa, kitchen, bakery, Hammam, and occasionally a hospital, along with additional structures housing various public and philanthropic activities for the community. In order to provide adequate ablution for those working on the construction, bathrooms were typically built first. During the Ottoman era, Hammams served as important gathering places and social hubs for both men and women.¹.

Tradition of Hammam:

- **Greek Baths**
- **Roman Bath Houses**
- **Egyptian Hammam**
- **Moroccan Hammam**
- **Islamic/Arabian Hammam**
- **Iranian Hammam**
- **Ottoman Bath House or Turkish Bath/Hammams**
- **Hammams in India**

Therapeutic effects of Hammams:

The Hammam is widely used to provide a variety of therapeutic and preventive benefits in a wide range of health and illness conditions. This elevates the status of baths in the eyes of historical medical professionals, leading them to regard baths as hubs for illness prevention and treatment. It has a calming impact on the body and mind and is the ideal treatment for stress and unpleasant physiological reactions.

- The ancient Greeks also used medicinal baths of minerals, salts and herbal infusions for therapeutic purposes².
- The Romans believed that good health came from bathing, eating, massages, and exercise. The baths, therefore, had all of these things in abundance³.
- With the advent of Islam, bathing became an integral part of life. Besides, baths were frequented not only for purity and hygienic reasons, but also for medical purposes. Physicians prescribed taking the bath against a great variety of ailments. In the 10th century the use of hot springs is often mentioned for all kinds of physical ailments⁴.

Concept of Hammam in Unani Medicine:

Unani medicine affirms that the balance of the four humors—phlegm, sanguine, bilious, and melancholic—determines how far a person's health can deviate from a state of healthfulness to one of disease and death. Additionally, it is dependent on changes in size, content, and original temperament. As a result, it consists of two parts: preventive and therapeutic medicine. The six necessary aspects of life—air, food and drink, physical movement and repose, psychic movement and repose, sleep and wakefulness, evacuation and retention—are corrected as part of the preventive component. Adoption of all healthy behaviours and lifestyles is facilitated by the application of Asbab-e-GhairZaruriya (non-essential components). Since Hammam is a component of the Asbab-e- GhairZaruriya, doing so will be beneficial even though it is not necessary for life to exist. When combined with a healthy diet and fitness regimen, Turkish baths can boost immunity and enhance general well-being. The practice of "hammam" involves keeping the body in a hot, humid environment for therapeutic purposes. According to the historical literature on Unani medicine, Hammam is used in the treatment of many ailments to decrease

the viscosity of the humours, strengthen the body, raise the body's natural heat, boost metabolism, and evacuate waste products through the skin.^{5,6,7,8}

Types of Hammam in Unani Medicine along with their therapeutic effects:

- **Hammam Ramli (Sand bath):** A type of Hammam, in which extremities or the whole body up to the neck is buried in the dry sand for few minutes. It is an effective treatment for several diseases, such as chronic ascites, arthralgia, stiffed joints etc⁹.
- **Hammam Dawai (Medicated bath):** A type of Hammam, in which medicated water (hot or cold) is used. It is recommended in various diseases⁹.
- **Hammam Bawraqi (Borax bath):** A type of Hammam, in which borax mixed water, is used for bathing. It is useful in skin disorders. Borax ($\text{Na}_{10}\text{B}_6\text{O}_{17} \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$) is a low toxicity mineral with insecticidal, fungicidal and herbicidal properties⁹.
- **Hammam Bahri (Sea bath):** Hammam, in which sea water is used for bath. As the sea water contains various salts, it is beneficial in certain skin diseases⁹.
- **Hammam Khardali (Mustard bath):** A mustard bath is a traditional therapeutic remedy for tired, stressed muscles, colds, fevers and seizures. Hammam in which, mustard powder is added in the hot water in a dose of 1.75-3.5gms per gallon and the patient is advised to take bath for 5-10 minutes. It is useful for skin diseases. The mustard was thought to draw out toxins and warm the muscles, blood and body⁹.
- **Hammam Harr (Hot bath):** Hammam in which hot water is used. In this type of bath, the person is kept in a high temperature, thus stay in hot and dry room as well as in hot and wet room is prolonged. It is beneficial for spasms, pain in liver and kidney, and pain in joints. This kind of Hammam, softens skin, increases blood circulation, relaxes muscles and reduces pain. Duration of this bath is 5-10 minutes⁹.
- **Hammam Shamsi (Sun bath):** In hammam Shamsi (Sunbathing) the body is exposed to

direct sunlight. It causes perspiration, resolves flatulence relieves headache and useful in vitiligo etc⁹.

- **Hammam Barqi (Thermal bath/Hot Spring bath):** Hammam in which, the person is advised to take bath in hot springs. Hot springs are defined as emanating waters from the ground with more than 5 °C than surface temperature. It is beneficial in the weakness of nerves⁹.
- **Hammam Zaiti (Oil bath or immersion in oil):** Hammam in which, the affected part of the body is immersed in lukewarm oil. It is beneficial for fatigue, nerve pain, joints pain, convulsion, tetanus and urinary retention⁹.
- **Hammam Kibriti (Sulphur bath):** Hammam in which, the water containing sulphur is used. It is beneficial for skin diseases, purifies the nerves, disperses the nodules of nerves and relieves the pain due to distension and convulsion^{9,10}.
- **Hammam Qabiz (astringent bath):** Hammam in which, water containing astringent drugs like alum or green vitriol is used. It is beneficial for haemoptysis, and excessive sweating^{9,5,6,9}.
- **Hammam Bukhari (Hot air bath):** This bath should be conducted in the same manner as the vapour bath. A temperature of 140 ° to 160 ° is not at all disagreeable to the patient. At or 180 ° the same effects are produced as in the vapour bath at the bath should be followed by cooling bath s as directed for the vapour bath. This is a very valuable remedy for the same class of diseases for which the vapour bath is recommended. It is of very great service in cases of dropsy, Bright's disease with poisoning from retained urea, and all cases in which a vigorous elimination by the skin is desired^{9,11,12}.
- **Hammam Barid (Cold bath):** Cold baths benefit persons who are strict in observing the essentials of life are of proper age, strength and stature and reside in a suitable climate. Cold water helps in correcting laxity and softness of organs produced by hot water^{9,13}.

Recommendations of Hammam in different disease conditions as discussed in Unani Literature:

1. *Amraz-i Dimagh Maadi* – Do not stay in hammam for a longer duration¹⁴.
2. *Amraz-i Dimagh Ratab Saada* – Minimal use of water in Hammam¹⁴.
3. *Amraz-i Dimagh Yabis Saada* – Hammam *Murattib* (Moistness producing bath) is highly beneficial for the treatment of dryness of brain¹⁴.
4. *Amraz-i Dimagh Reehi* – Advised to enter Hammam empty stomach¹⁴.
5. *Suda Barid Saada* – Hammam is indicated but staying in Hammam for a longer duration is contra indicated. While in Hammam pour hot water on head and before coming out of it head should be properly covered to stay away from cold air¹⁴.
6. *Suda Doodi* – Hammam is indicated with pouring of warm water in excess for opening the pores and wasted materials and purified matter get resolved¹⁴.
7. *Sarsaam* - Hammam for shorter duration with soft water to induce sleep is beneficial¹⁴.
8. *Sahar Yabis* – Hammam with Luke warm water after digestion of food¹⁴.
9. *Malankholiya*- Staying in Hammam for a longer duration cold bath is recommended¹⁴.
10. *Malankholiya Saudawi* - Hammam and Sitz Bath are essential¹⁴.
11. *Sara Dimaghi Saudawi* – Hammam¹⁴.
12. *Raasha Barid* – To stay in the hot room of Hammam for inducing sweating¹⁴.
13. *Khadr Balgami wa Ratubi*¹⁴.
14. *Zeequan nafas* - Hammam after meals¹⁴.
15. *Ghashi* – Hammam is highly beneficial for syncope due to excessive purgation but not recommended in syncope due to excessive blood loss or sweating¹⁴.
16. *Suda shirki Medi*- Hammam *Motadil* (Moderate bath)¹⁵.
17. *Buhha al-Sawt*- Hammam (Bath) if the cause is excessive shouting¹⁶.
18. *Su' al-Qinya*- Hammam (Bath) with *Ab Boraqi* (Borax water) and *Ab Shibbi* (Alum water), Hammam *Yabis* (Dry Bath)^{16,17}.
19. *Istisqa' Lahmi*-Hammam *Boraqiyya* (Borax bath), Hammam *Kibritiyya* (Sulphur bath)¹⁸.
20. *'Uqr- Hammam Murattib* (Bath producing wetness) in case of Yubusat¹⁹.
21. *Tahajjur-i Mafasil-hammam Murattib* (Moisture producing bath) frequently¹⁹.
22. *Banat al-Layl*- Hammam (Bath) for Dilatation of skin pores¹⁹.
23. *Taqashshur-i Jild*- Hammam (Bath) for a longer period of time²¹.
24. *Da' al-Sa'lab*-If this is due to the predominance of bilious humour then first local application of *Roghan Khairi* mixed with wax followed by hot water fomentation in hammam and avoid exposure to cold²⁰.
25. *Huzal Mufrat*- Hammam (Bath) followed by application of small quantity of oils producing wetness in the body²¹.
26. *Samn Mufrat*- Hammam *Yabis* (Dry Bath) on empty stomach, hammam *Muhallil* (Bath causing resolution of fluids)^{19,21}.
27. *Ri'sha*-Hammam *Har* (Hot bath) if caused by *Sue Mizaj Barid* (Cold morbid temperament) of nerves¹⁵.
28. *Khadar- Hammam* (After evacuation)¹⁷.
29. *Qabz*- Hammam (Bath) at empty stomach²².
30. *Qillat-i Mani*- Hammam *Murattib* (Wetness producing bath), when caused by dryness¹⁸.
31. *Ihtibas-i Tams*- Hammam *Murattib* (Moistness producing bath)¹⁸.
32. *Irq al-Nasa'*- Hammam *Mu'tadil* (Moderate bath)¹⁹.
33. *Hazaz*-¹⁸.
34. *Bahaq Abyaz*- Hammam (Bath) on alternate days. Hammam *Kibriti* (Sulphur bath)¹⁹.
35. *Hikka*- Hammam (Bath) with *Ab Ma'dani* (Water from springs)¹⁹.
36. *Busoor al Asdaagh* (Pustules of pinna)- Hammam *Kibriti* (Sulphur bath)²³.
37. *Zeezaan* (accumulation of sebum)-hammam at any time of the day. Irrigation with lot of hot water²³.

REFERENCES

1. **Nađa Šabanović, Ibrahim Numan.** Cultural Heritage Related to the Water Case Study: hammams in Bosnia and Herzegovina: SAR Journal. 2019; 2(2): 68-76.

2. The Greco-roman Bath. http://www.greekmedicine.net/hygiene/The_Greco-Roman_Bath.html accessed on 12.10.2020
3. **Wikipedia**. Thermae. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thermae>, accessed on 12.10.2020.
4. Encyclopedia Iranica. Bathhouses. <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/bathhouses>.
5. **Shah MH**. The General Principles of Avicenna's Canon of Medicine: Karachi, Naveed Clinic. 1966; 163-165.
6. **Tabari**. *Firdaus al Hikma* (Urdu Translation by Rasheed Ashraf Nadvi): New Delhi, Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine. 2010; 672-674.
7. **Majusi** 'Ali b. 'Abbas. Kamil al-Sana'a al-Tibbiyya, (Urdu Translation) Vol.2 (Part I): New Delhi, Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine. 2010; 37-38.
8. **Kabiruddin M**. Sharah Kuliyat i Qanoon, Vol.2: Faisalabad, Malik Sons Publishers. 1932; 754-764.
9. **Jilani G**. Makhzan al-Jawahir, Lahore, Shaikh M Bashir and Sons, n.d.; 306-310.
10. **Antaki D**. Tazkirah Ulul Albaab, Vol.1: New Delhi, Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine. 2008; 242-247.
11. **John Harvey Kellogg**. The Uses of Water in Health and Disease A Practical Treatise on the Bath, Its History and Uses. Michigan, Battle Creek. 1876; 144-145.
12. **Edward Gutmann**. A Treatise on Baths and Vapor Baths (Classic reprint). Forgotten books. 2017;1-40.
13. **Tbakhia A, Amr SS**. Ibn Rushd (Averroës): Prince of Science. Annals of Saudi Medicine. 2008; 28(2):145-7.
14. **Kabiruddin M**. Al-Iksir, Vol.1: Faisalabad, Malik Sons Publishers. 1940; 34, 40,41,50,76,124, 161, 197, 221, 222, 236, 237, 280, 349, 356, 608.
15. **Khan MA**. Iksir i Azam, Vol.1: Lucknow, Matba Nami Munshi Naval Kishore. 1906; 66-70,115-120, 317-321.
16. **Ibn Sina**. Al-Qanun fi'l Tibb, Vol. III (Part I), New Delhi, Jamia Hamdard. 1411H; 344,345, 576, 584,585.
17. **Majusi** 'Ali b. 'Abbas. Kamil al-Sana'a al-Tibbiyya, Vol. II. New Delhi, Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine. 2005; 274,275, 388-391.
18. **Nafis b**. 'Twaz. Sharah al-Asbab wa-al-'Alamat, Vol. II. Lucknow, Matba' Nami Munshi Naval Kishor. 1326 H; 83-84,101-111,115-117, 231.
19. **Khan MA**, Iksir-i A'zam, Vol. IV. Lucknow, Matba' Nami Munshi Naval Kishor. 1906; 18, 46-49, 52-62, 416-420, 422,423, 487-491, 575-579.
20. **Majusi** 'Ali b. 'Abbas. Kamil al-Sana'a al-Tibbiyya, Vol. 1. New Delhi, Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine.1995; 168.
21. **Khan MA**. *Rumuz-i A'zam*, Vol. II. New Delhi, Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine.2006; 416-418.
22. **Khan MA**. *Iksir-i A'zam*, Vol. III. Lucknow, Matba' Nami Munshi Naval Kishor. 1906; 345-347.
23. **Tabri M**. *Al Moalajat al Buqratiyya*, Vol.1 (Urdu translation). New Delhi, Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine.1995;253,256.