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**MALAY MEDICINAL PRACTICES AND PROPHETIC FOODS FOR TREATING THE FOUR TYPES OF ILLNESSES MOST COMMONLY FOUND IN THE BOTTOM BILLION POPULATION: A PRELIMINARY REVIEW IN THE USAGE OF NIGELLA SATIVA (BLACK SEED) IN MALAY MANUSCRIPTS FOUND IN MALAYSIA**

*Perubatan Melayu dan Penggunaan Pemakanan Sunnah dalam Merawat Empat Penyakit Utama dalam Kalangan Golongan Termiskin Dunia: Tinjauan Awal dalam Penggunaan Nigella Sativa (Jintan Hitam) Berdasarkan Manuskrip Perubatan Melayu di Malaysia*

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**Abstract**

This paper serves to outline Malay medicinal prescriptions in treating the four common illnesses of the bottom billion namely gastroenteritis, worm infection, Anaemia, and fatigue. Its main scope will project preliminary findings from 20 unpublished Malay medicinal manuscripts focusing on the black seed as the primary ingredient in health preservation. The black seed in the Islamic tradition made a significant turning point in the field of medicine as the Prophet Muhammad recommended the usage of black seed as being compatible for all cure except for death. A search strategy was developed to scan established catalogues of Malay manuscripts. The physical manuscripts were then systematically hand searched for relevant treatments for the above illnesses. The relevant prescriptions were captured, transliterated and translated for analysis. The black seed were one of the dominant ingredients used in Malay medicine as mentioned in the written manuscripts (MSs).

Keywords: *habbatussauda*, *Nigella sativa*, Sunnah, Malay, Medical, Manuscript, black seed, *jintan hitam*.

**Abstrak**

Kertas ini bertujuan untuk mengenengahkan cara perubatan Melayu dalam merawat empat penyakit umum dalam golongan termiskin dunia (*bottom billion*) iaitu gastroenteritis, jangkitan cacing, anemia, dan letih lesu. Skop utamanya akan merungkai penemuan awal daripada 20 manuskrip perubatan Melayu yang tidak diterbitkan. Kajian ini memfokuskan kepada jintan hitam sebagai bahan utama dalam pemeliharaan kesihatan. Jintan hitam dalam tradisi Islam membuat titik perubahan yang signifikan dalam bidang perubatan kerana Nabi Muhammad telah mengesyorkan penggunaan jintan hitam sebagai ubat untuk semua penyakit kecuali mati. Strategi carian manuskrip Melayu lama telah dibangunkan untuk mengimbas katalog-katalog

manuskrip Melayu yang relevan. Manuskrip fizikal kemudiannya dianalisa berdasarkan rawatan yang berkaitan untuk penyakit-penyakit di atas. Perskripsi perubatan yang berkaitan telah ekstrak, ditransliterasikan dan diterjemahkan untuk analisis. Justeru, jintan hitam adalah salah satu bahan dominan yang digunakan dalam perubatan Melayu seperti yang disebutkan dalam manuskrip tertulis.

Kata kunci: *habbatussauda*, *Nigella Sativa*, Sunnah, Melayu, medikal, manuskrip Melayu, *black seed*, jintan hitam.

## INTRODUCTION

The black seed or so-called "grain of blessing", which is the same "black coriander" and "black cumin", and in Iran is called "Choniaz." The black bean has different names, a plant belonging to the family of fennel and anise, black, growing alone in the Mediterranean region, while growing in Africa and the Arabian Peninsula in Asia. Human beings have used this pill for centuries and have known its nutritional value and its medical and therapeutic benefits. They were used by the pharaohs, as evidenced by the fact that researchers found them in the tomb of Tutankhamun and were used extensively in folk medicine (Padhye, 2008).

Several research and recent studies have given this seed full attention and emphasized the benefits and its importance for health benefits. The black cumin herb has several names depending on the region and history. For example, in old Latin the black seed is termed 'Panacea' meaning 'cure all' while in Arabic it is termed as 'Habba Sawda' or 'Habbat el Baraka' which means 'Seeds of blessing'. In China it is referred as Hak Jung Chou and in India it is called as Kalonji (Aggarwal et al, 2008). The plant belongs to the Ranunculaceae family of flowering plants with the genus of approximately 14 species including *Nigella arvensis*, *Nigella ciliaris*, *Nigella damascene*, *Nigella hispanica*, *Nigella integrifolia*, *Nigella nigellastrum*, *Nigella orientalis* and *Nigella sativa*, respectively. Specifically, *Nigella sativa* is the most thoroughly investigated category of the *nigella* species for healing purposes although other species have also been implicated for therapeutic uses (Aggarwal et al, 2008).

Throughout history, folk medicinal practices recommended its consummation with food or mixed with honey and are largely used as antihelmintic, carminative, lactagogues, and agents. Other usages are for health benefits stimulating as muscle relaxants, diuretics, anti-hypertensive, and as immunity enhancers for the weakly-immune. Significantly, the seeds have been described as safe to be used orally in moderate amount in food (DerMarderosian. et al, 2005).

## NIGELLA SATIVA IN THE HADITH AND PROPHETIC TRADITION

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did not neglect to mention its importance. As stated in Saheeh al-Bukhaari, it was reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) recommended the consummation of the black seed to an ailing companion:

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا عُبَيْدُ اللَّهِ، حَدَّثَنَا إِسْرَائِيلُ، عَنْ مَنْصُورٍ، عَنْ خَالِدِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ، قَالَ خَرَجْنَا وَمَعَنَا غَالِبُ بْنُ أَبِجَرَ فَمَرَضَ فِي الطَّرِيقِ، فَقَدِمْنَا الْمَدِينَةَ وَهُوَ مَرِيضٌ، فَعَادَهُ ابْنُ أَبِي عَتِيقٍ فَقَالَ لَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِهَذِهِ الْحَبِيبَةِ السَّوْدَاءِ، فَخَدُّوا مِنْهَا خَمْسًا أَوْ سَبْعًا فَاسْحَقُوهَا، ثُمَّ أَفْطَرُوهَا فِي أَنْفِهِ بِقَطْرَاتِ زَيْتٍ فِي هَذَا الْجَانِبِ وَفِي هَذَا الْجَانِبِ، فَإِنَّ عَائِشَةَ حَدَّثَتْنِي أَنَّهَا سَمِعَتِ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ " إِنْ هَذِهِ الْحَبَّةُ السَّوْدَاءُ شِفَاءٌ مِنْ كُلِّ دَاءٍ إِلَّا مِنَ السَّامِ ". فَلْتِ وَمَا السَّامُ قَالَ الْمَوْتُ

We went out and Ghalib bin Abjar was accompanying us. He fell ill on the way and when we arrived at Medina he was still sick. Ibn Abi 'Atiq came to visit him and said to us, "Treat him with black cumin. Take five or seven seeds and crush them (mix the powder with oil) and drop the resulting mixture into both nostrils, for `Aisha has narrated to me that she heard the Prophet (PBUH) saying, 'This black cumin is healing for all diseases except As-Sam.' Aisha said, 'What is As-Sam?' He said, 'Death.'"

This significant hadith tells us the importance of healing using the black seed, not only the prophet mentioned in specific terms of the 'what' in healing however the general view of the prophet's recommendation of habbatussauda consummation is the solution to (most) ailments.

### **THE USAGE OF THE BLACK SEED IN MALAY MEDICINAL MANUSCRIPTS**

The writings on remedies for preservation of health and method of medication are mainly available in Malay texts of the 19th century or even much earlier. We are fortunate that these 'manuals' are available at specialized libraries located in the region and the world. Such writings do not wholly rely on wisdom that had been transferred from the Islamic civilization but furthermore they are an amalgamation of the best wisdom and advice from the Indian and Chinese civilizations (Zakariah & Ali Mohd, 1998). All interwoven in the rich tapestry of Malay the lingua franca of the region. As the aim of the main project is to find an alternative for the prescription contained within the Prophetic diet as seen in the Tibb al-Nabawi genre, it is apt that a proper study of Malay writings on the subject is undertaken. This mining of information from unpublished Manuscripts is a relatively novel approach and probably forms the first serious attempt in English, towards understanding local culture of health preservation and medication since the early works of Gimlette (1923).

Recently the various works of local scholars (Taib Osman 2000; Mat Piah 2006; Ab.Karim 2006) in studying the local health practitioners are notable and valuable however they have never attempted to connect Prophetic diet with the local diet. Neither have they looked at the whole genre of writings with the intention of finding the local remedy for preservation of health. Their studies have been mainly concentrated upon the philological and Malay philosophical angle without any insights from modern medicine. As a result their works are useful for us in the sense of charting a general outline of some writings in Malay on shared issues.

### **METHOD**

The study of the various catalogues of libraries that contain Malay Manuscripts in order to recognize and locate the Malay manuscripts that discusses medicine, remedies. The names of these important Malay manuscripts include but not limited to Kitab Tib, Petua-petua. Manuscripts are viewed at the location and relevant parts will be identified and copied or scanned; whichever is possible.

External tools such as dictionaries and references books about the various plants, mixtures of medicinal nature etc were used as method of reading the manuscripts. Malay equivalence to worm infestation, gastroenteritis, fatigue and anemia were identified in order to capture the various prescription so as to explore the local wisdom that is practiced in the nusantara.

The various findings i.e. prescriptions will then be scanned and the manuscript identified for the purpose of the project. To analyse and mine the various writings and summarise the relevant points of local wisdoms attained in order to conduct a systematic review on health preservation

from the angle of Malay manuscript and writings. To transliterate the Jawi into the Rumi writing as well as to translate it into English to enhance relevancy and findings of the project.

## RESULTS

Based on the remedies extracted from the 20 unpublished manuscripts, nigella sativa were one of the top most ingredients used in Malay healing, and is in line with the prophetic food category. The black seed has various formula blended with other ingredients such as vinegar, ginger, garlic, pepper, and etc. The mixture is then dissolved into liquid which should be drank, some are cooked and eaten, while in certain cases it is recommended for the patient to be given a massage before the intake. Other black seed mixture are in powder form which is blown on the stomach, other method also include patching it onto the stomach.

According to these manuscripts nigella sativa is effective in treating; gastroenteritis, indigestion, worm infection, and headache. 28 prescriptions shows remedies on treating gastroenteritis using black seed, being the most relevant manuscript is MSS 3126 Kitab Tib with 8 mentions of prescription formula using the black seed (with other ingredients).

### Ingredient Statistics of Black Seed Frequency in treating gastroenteritis.

INGREDIENT	MSS 3135 [KITAB TIB]	MSS 2997 [KITAB TIB]	MSS 3126 [KITAB TIB]	MSS 2802 [A.	MSS 1653 [ KITAB TIB	MSS 3084 [ AZIMAT.	MSS 3147 [ KITAB	MSS 2219 [KITAB TIB]	MSS 3074 (B) PETUA.	MSS 3749 : [PETUA	MSS 3140: [AZIMAT.	MSS 2810 [ KITAB TIB	MSS 2836 [ KITAB	MSS 3326 [ KITAB TIB	MSS 2468 (D) [ KITAB	MSS 2999 [KITAB TIB]	MSS 2290 : KITAB	MSS 2905: KITAB	MSS 3473: KITAB	MSS 3290, KITAB	TOTAL
Black seed frequency	/		/	/	/		/	/				/			/	/	/	/	/	/	28

### Ingredient Statistics of Black Seed Frequency in treating worm infection.

INGREDIENTS	MSS 2997 [KITAB TIB AZIMAT]	MSS 2290 : KITAB TIBB AZIMAT DAN PETUA LEMBU	TOTAL
Black seed frequency	/	//	3

## CONCLUSION

These are preliminary studies, however, it is important to note that two key findings have been explored which is firstly the Malays believed in the importance of prophetic food (specifically) nigella sativa leading to its account in health preservation. Secondly the Malays created their own uniqueness in optimising the prophetic food with mixing together other ingredients to reach the full potential of the process of healing.

It is recommended after this preliminary study, newer perspective such as a scientific approach is needed to further explore this type of healing and if possible proven to be safe and healthier than modern medicine.

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