



## Healing Through Language: A Pragmatic Study of Medical Metaphors in the Prophetic Hadith

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### ABSTRACT

Medical metaphor holds a strong position in the Prophetic tradition, where metaphors of sickness, recovery, weakness and bodily management are drawn upon to render more profound moral and spiritual truths. This study examines the operation of such metaphors in the Prophetic Hadith through a close reading of a corpus 60 ‘sahih s’ transmitting traditions. Fifteen of these were selected for detailed analysis. Metaphors were found by the Metaphor Identification Procedure and analysed with major pragmatic theories such as speech act theory, conversational implicature, politeness theory and relevance theory. The work also examines how different grammatical styles, including nominal sentences, conditionals, similes and imperatives create the underlying sense of each hadith. This pragmatic and syntactic patterns analysis is carried out on a 15-Hadith subset of the 60-text corpus. The study identifies that six primary metaphor themes are reoccurring throughout the corpus: (a) the heart as a predictor of moral health, (b) corrosion as symbolic for spiritual decay, (c) vice becomes akin to illness, (d) healing and cure therapies, (e) fever and purification, and (f) community becomes synonymous with body. Dominant are heart-related metaphors (35%). They warn and inform, they praise and motivate, they act as bonds of solidarity in a community. Grammatical structures serve to reinforce these functions by pointing out general facts, cause and effect relations and making concepts appear less abstract. In general, as the study concludes, medical metaphors in the Hadith function as “healing speech acts” that direct listeners to diagnosis, contemplation and moral progress.

**Keywords:** Prophetic Hadith; medical metaphor; pragmatics; speech acts; conceptual metaphor theory; Arabic syntax; religious discourse.

### المستخلص

تحتل الاستعارات الطبية موقعاً بارزاً في الخطاب النبوي، حيث تُوظف مفاهيم المرض، والشفاء، والحمى، والصدأ، وضعف الجسد لتمثيل معانٍ روحية وأخلاقية معقدة. يقدم هذا البحث أول دراسة تداولية- Corpus



basedمنهجية للاستعارات الطبية في الحديث النبوي الشريف. فقد جُمع متن مكوّن من ستين حديثاً صحيحاً من الكتب الستة، ثم اختيرت خمسة عشر رواية لتحليلها تحليلاً تفصيلياً. استُخدم إجراء تحديد الاستعارة للكشف عن الألفاظ المستخدمة مجازياً، كما استُعين بنظرية أفعال الكلام، والإيحاء الحواري، ونظرية الأدب والوجهة، ونظرية الملاءمة لتحليل وظائفها التداولية. وتم تحليل التراكيب النحوية—مثل الجمل الاسمية، والتراكيب الشرطية، وصيغ التشبيه، والجمل التعريفية، وصيغ الأمر—لتبيّن دورها في تعزيز الوظيفة التداولية.

كشفت النتائج عن ستة مجالات استعارية رئيسية: استعارات القلب، واستعارات الصدا والتآكل، واستعارات الرذيلة بوصفها مرضاً، واستعارات الشفاء والعلاج، واستعارات الحمى، واستعارات الجماعة بوصفها جسداً واحداً. وأظهرت التوزيعات الكمية أن استعارات القلب هي الأكثر شيوعاً (35%)، تليها استعارات الصدا (20%)، ثم استعارات الرذيلة المرضية (16.7%). كما بيّنت الدراسة أربع وظائف تداولية بارزة: التحذير (33.3%)، التعليم (26.7%)، الإقناع (26.7%)، وبناء الجماعة (13.3%). وأوضحت الدراسة أن الجملة الاسمية تعبّر عن حقائق أخلاقية ثابتة، وأن الجملة الشرطية ترسم مسارات سببية روحية، وأن التشبيه يعزّز الإدراك الذهني، وأن الاستعارة تخفّف من تهديد الوجه عبر الأسلوب غير المباشر. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن الاستعارات الطبية تعمل كـ«أفعال كلام علاجية» تدمج بين التشخيص، والتحذير، والعلاج، والهداية الأخلاقية. وتثري هذه النتائج دراسات التداولية الإسلامية، والاستعارة المفهومية، وتحليل الخطاب الديني، ودراسات الترجمة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الحديث النبوي؛ الاستعارة الطبية؛ التداولية؛ أفعال الكلام؛ نظرية الاستعارة المفهومية؛ النحو؛ الخطاب الديني.

## 1. Introduction

Metaphor is among the basic ways in which humans conceptualize abstract experience. In the conceptual metaphor theory, it is not thought of as fancy talk at all but as a cognitive lever that enables us to comprehend moral, emotive and spiritual notions in terms of what we know from practical life. Religious languages, of course, are heavily reliant on this process; in Islamic religious language the Prophetic Hadith features prominently as a specially rich discursive space in which metaphor is deployed for pedagogical and persuasive ends, for spiritual guidance and community formation. One of the metaphors used by Allah's Messenger that deserves special attention is medical imagery for its clarity, emotional power and pedagogical strength.

These are medical metaphors that allude to people's day-to-day experiences of illness, recovery, weakness and bodily transformation. They speak of the heart as something that may "rust," sin as leaving a "lesion," envy as an illness that eats away at good deeds, and the community as a body responding in unity to harm. We're not talking about rhetorical flourishes; they are embossed on concrete communicative currency. They diagnose spiritual condition, warn of moral decay, condemn indirectly and attempt to direct toward cure through repentance, recollection and the life of virtue.



Medical metaphors in Hadith even though are significant, from the aspect of Pragmatics, they have not received systematic attention. A significant portion of research that has been conducted concentrates on Qur'anic metaphor in literary stylistics or cognitive mapping, while pragmatic analysis tends to neglect the role of metaphors in mediating interpersonal and instructional aspects of Prophetic discourse. Very little research focuses on the relationship between metaphor and Arabic syntax (for example, nominal clauses, conditional structures and similes) in constructing meaning. Consequently, the communicative force of medical metaphors in Hadith is only partially grasped. This is the gap this study seeks to address utilising a corpus-based pragmatic analysis of sixty authenticated Hadiths sourced from the six original collections of Sunni hadith. Applying the MIP (Metaphor Identification Procedure) to identify and classify medical metaphors according to type and function, it looks at how syntactic patterns contribute to their pragmatic impact. In-depth analysis is provided on fifteen propaedeutic hadith to manifest how metaphor, grammar and communicative intention conspire to convey da'wa.

The study aims to:

1. Identify and classify medical metaphors in a 60-Hadith corpus.
2. Analyse their pragmatic functions—warning, teaching, persuasion, and community-building.
3. Examine how Arabic syntactic structures support these functions.
4. Present quantitative patterns of metaphor types and uses.
5. Demonstrate how medical metaphors act as “healing speech acts” that blend diagnosis, warning, remedy, and moral instruction.

By integrating metaphor theory, pragmatics and the Arabic syntax analysis, this study benefits Islamic discourse studies, metaphor inquiries, translation and teaching. It also reveals how (Prophetic) speech figures familiar bodily imagery to express ethically-challenging images in a manner that is both intellectually accessible and emotionally evocative.

## **2. Literature Review and Theoretical Background**

The following summarizes some key linguistic and pragmatic aspects which underlie the present study. It is divided into four main topic areas: (1) pragmatics and religious discourse, (2) conceptual metaphor theory with particular reference to medical metaphors, (3) metaphor in Islamic texts and early work on Hadith; and (4) the relationship of Arabic syntax to pragmatic meaning.



## 2.1 Pragmatics and Religious Discourse

Pragmatics looks at how people use language in context—how meaning derives as much from words themselves as their intended meanings, contexts of use and social relationships. Contributions by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) on speech acts, Grice's (1975) conversational implicature, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory and Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory inform us why speakers mean more than what the sentences say. These approaches are particularly helpful for analyzing religious writings, which frequently utilize subtlety, guidance and emotional sensitivity. Indirection is a common form of religious communication, and at its best goes straight through the obfuscation to promote reflection, soften criticism, and raise sensitive moral issues. The way of presenting guidance is gentle but powerful, the underlying metaphor, implication and context are what guide from the Qur'an (Abdel-Haleem, 1999, 2010). Hadith discourse, which arises from living language use, exhibits a similar pragmatic wealth. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would frequently employ allusion, in the form of stories, parables and general speech, to gently prompt people to do what was right without embarrassing or challenging them. Medical metaphors are naturally applicable to this style of communicating. Instead of telling someone directly that they are doing something wrong, the Prophet would use these kind of expressions "What rusts hearts or envy consumes good deeds. Speech act theory helps classify such expressions as warnings, teachings, or persuasive advice, and relevance theory explains why they are so effective: medical imagery draws on familiar physical experiences, making abstract spiritual ideas easier to understand and remember.

## 2.2 Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Medical Metaphors

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and elaborated by Kövecses (2010), proposes that abstract concepts are understood through systematic mappings from concrete source domains. MEDICAL and BODILY EXPERIENCE provide rich source domains for conceptualising moral and spiritual conditions. Common metaphorical mappings include:

- A. **SIN / VICE IS DISEASE**
- B. **SPIRITUAL DECAY IS PHYSICAL CORROSION**
- C. **MORAL RENEWAL IS HEALING**
- D. **COMMUNITY IS BODY**
- E. **HEART IS CENTER OF SPIRITUAL HEALTH**



Medical metaphors carry particular force because illness, healing, pain, and the workings of the body are experiences shared by all people. They take difficult to understand spiritual ideas and put them into physical realities that people relate to. When the Hadith refers to “hearts that rust” and a “wearing away of faith,” they invoke ordinary processes to depict moral slippage in ways whose familiarity feels vivid, contemporary and emotionally engaging. In the Hadith they are not simply metaphors. They are more like ‘instruments of social communication that inform people’s behaviour rather than the action they represent,’ enablers in assisting listeners to assess their own moral condition and maintain cohesiveness as a shared society. Although CMT describes how such mappings are constructed, pragmatics shears the light on why such expressions work so powerfully in context—as how the Prophet employed them to inform, convince and lead.

### 2.3 Metaphor in Islamic Discourse and Previous Studies on Hadith

Islamic texts, such as the Qur’an, Hadith and classical works of tafsir contain many metaphorical expressions. Abdel-Haleem (1999, 2010) has helpfully demonstrated how the Qur’an uses images from nature, light and darkness, and bodily health to communicate deep religious truths. Though much has been written on figurative language in the Qur’an, figures of speech in the Hadith have not received as serious study, and among this latter corpus, we find few treatments that discuss the forms from a pragmatic perspective. A couple of recent works could be taken as references. Athman (2015) studies metaphor in Riyāḍ al-Ṣālihin, finding metaphors, similes, and personification but focuses more on semantics analysis and not on how these devices function as communicative acts. Almutairi, Bennegrouzi and Zitouni (2024), investigating the concept of metaphor in a small selection of Hadith by concentrating on translation problems from Arabic into English, make a contribution to CMT and to studies of translation, but do not deal with syntactic and pragmatic aspects. Fouda (2024) provides a useful study on structural metaphors in Prophetic traditions, but it does not use speech act theory, politeness frameworks and frequency of using metaphor correspond to quantitative patterns in the four data sets mentioned.

Taken together, the existing literature reveals several notable gaps:

1. Medical metaphors have not been examined as a distinct and coherent domain.
2. Pragmatic models—such as speech acts, implicature, and politeness—are rarely applied to Hadith metaphors.



3. The role of Arabic syntactic structures in shaping metaphorical meaning remains largely unexplored.
4. Corpus-based quantitative approaches are minimal.
5. There is little integration of CMT, syntax, and pragmatics within a unified analytical framework.

The above limitations show that clearly comprehensive medical metaphor in Hadith needs to be employed and examined multidimensionally. Integrating pragmatics, CMT framework of analysis, corpus analysis, and Arabic syntax, the paper suggests a new approach to understanding medical metaphor in prophetic discourse. It offers a corpus-based mapping of medical metaphors in Hadith.

- a. An integrated account linking metaphor type, syntactic form, and pragmatic function.
- b. A multidimensional model of “healing speech acts” that encompasses diagnosis, warning, persuasion, and remedy.
- c. Quantitative evidence revealing broader metaphorical and communicative tendencies.

### 3. Data and methodology

This section describes the corpus, sampling procedures, metaphor identification method, coding scheme, pragmatic frameworks, syntactic analysis procedures, and reliability measures employed in the study.

#### 3.1 Corpus of the Study

The data for this study consist of 60 authenticated Prophetic Hadiths containing medical metaphors. These Hadiths were compiled from the six canonical Sunni collections:

Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abi Dawud, Jamie al-Tirmidhi, Sunan al-Nasa’I, Sunan Ibn Majah

A Hadith was selected for the corpus if it met the following requirements:

1. Presence of a medical metaphor, such as:
  - a. disease, pathology, fever
  - b. corrosion, rust, decay
  - c. heart-related metaphors (lesion, stain, darkness, softening)
  - d. healing, cure, remedy
  - e. community-as-body metaphors



2. Authenticity: graded *ṣahih* or *hasan* by classical authorities.
3. Non-literal usage: medical terms must be used metaphorically rather than medically unless they serve a metaphorical or spiritual function.
4. Clear conceptual mapping between medical domain → spiritual/moral domain.

The following types of Hadiths were excluded:

- a. purely medical Prophetic medicine narrations
- b. pharmacological descriptions unless metaphorical
- c. narrations without metaphorical mapping

### 3.2 Sampling of the Analytical Subset

From the 60-Hadith corpus, 15 representative Hadiths (H01–H15) were selected for detailed qualitative analysis. The selection was designed to represent:

1. Coverage of metaphor types
2. Coverage of pragmatic functions
3. Coverage of syntactic structures
4. High-frequency metaphors within the corpus (e.g., metaphors of heart pathology).

Thus, the analytical subset serves as a **microcosm** of all metaphorical patterns in the full corpus.

### 3.4 Coding and Classification

Each of the 60 Hadiths was coded along three axes:

The following categories were established:

1. Heart / Organ of Spiritual Life
2. Corrosion / Rust / Decay
3. Vice-as-Disease (envy, hatred, hypocrisy, suspicion)
4. Cure / Healing / Remedy
5. Fever / Heat / Purification
6. Community-as-Body

Each Hadith was assigned one dominant metaphor to ensure quantitative clarity. Drawing on speech act theory, politeness theory, and relevance theory, each Hadith was assigned one primary pragmatic function:



1. Warning / Threat-mitigation
2. Teaching / Moral instruction
3. Persuasion / Emotional appeal
4. Community-building / Solidarity formation

Although some Hadiths contain multiple pragmatic operations, the classification focused on the dominant intention.

The grammatical form of each Hadith was coded according to:

- a. Nominal equative sentence (X is Y)
- b. Conditional structure (*idha, in, law*)
- c. Simile (*kama, ka-, ka'annahu*)
- d. Imperative
- e. Participial and enumerative structures
- f. Fronting for emphasis

#### 4. Data Analysis

##### 4.1 Warning and Threat-Mitigation Metaphors (H04, H05, H06, H07, H13)

H04 – English Text	“The disease of the nations before you is envy and hatred.”
Arabic Text	«وَالْبُغْضَاءُ الْحَسَدُ قَبْلَكُمْ الْأَمَمُ دَاءٌ»
Metaphor Identification	Vice-as-Disease metaphor.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic Realisation	Warning: mitigates face-threat by indirect moral diagnosis.  Nominal equative sentence reinforces diagnostic tone.
H05 – English Text	“Envy consumes good deeds like fire consumes wood, and charity extinguishes sin like water extinguishes fire.”
Arabic Text	النَّارُ تَأْكُلُ كَمَا الْحَسَنَاتِ يَأْكُلُ الْحَسَدُ...» الْحَطَبِ»
Metaphor Identification	Envy→fire; charity→water.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic Realisation	Warning + remedy.  Similes and contrast structure form diagnosis–treatment model.



H06 – English Text	“When a servant commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart...”
Arabic Text	«...سَوْدَاءٌ نُكْتَةٌ قَلْبِهِ فِي نُكْتِ الْعَبْدِ أَذْنَبَ إِذَا»
Metaphor Identification	Black spot = spiritual lesion.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic Realisation	Warning about cumulative decay. Conditional cause–effect structure.
H07 – English Text	“...until his heart becomes completely black.”
Arabic Text	«مُرْبَادًا أَسْوَدَ قَلْبُهُ يَعُودَ حَتَّى»
Metaphor Identification	Complete blackening = moral occlusion.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic Realisation	Intensified warning. hatta marks culmination.
H13 – English Text	“Trials are presented to the hearts like reeds, one after another...”
Arabic Text	«عُودًا كَالْحَصِيرِ الْقُلُوبِ عَلَى الْفِتَنِ تُعْرَضُ» «...عُودًا»
Metaphor Identification	Reeds as repeated irritants.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic Realisation	Warning against repeated exposure. Repetition mirrors relentlessness of trials.

#### 4.2 Teaching and Moral Instruction (H01, H09, H14, H15)

H01 – English Text	“Indeed, in the body there is a piece of flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound...”
Arabic Text	«...مُضْغَةً الْجَسَدِ فِي وَإِنَّ الْأَ»
Metaphor Identification	Heart as moral center.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic Realisation	Teaching via moral anatomy. Conditional mapping spiritual → moral outcomes.
H09 – English Text	“Allah has not sent down a disease except that He also sent down its



	cure.”
Arabic Text	«دَوَاءٌ لَهُ أَنْزَلَ إِلَّا دَاءَ اللَّهِ أَنْزَلَ مَا»
Metaphor Identification	Disease includes spiritual ailments.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic Realisation	Universal principle of hope.  Negative–exception formula.
H14 – English Text	“The hearts are of four types: a polished heart... a sealed heart... an inverted heart...”
Arabic Text	«...أَرْبَعَةُ الْقُلُوبِ»
Metaphor Identification	Physical descriptors of states.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic Realisation	Classification teaching.  Enumerative structure.
H15 – English Text	“Faith wears out in the heart just as a garment wears out, so ask Allah to renew your faith.”
Arabic Text	«...أَحَدِكُمْ جَوْفٍ فِي لِيَخْلُقَ الْإِيمَانَ إِنَّ»
Metaphor Identification	Faith = garment.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic Realisation	Gentle warning + encouragement.  Simile + softened imperative.

#### 4.3 Persuasion and Emotional Appeal (H08, H10, H11, H12)

H08 – English Text	“These hearts rust just as iron rusts, and their polish is the remembrance of Allah.”
Arabic Text	«...الْحَدِيدُ يَصْدَأُ كَمَا تَصْدَأُ الْقُلُوبُ هَذِهِ إِنَّ»
Metaphor Identification	Heart = metal; dhikr = polish.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic Realisation	Persuasion.  Simile + equative pairing.
H10 – English Text	“Fever is from the heat of Hell, so cool it with water.”
Arabic Text	«بِالْمَاءِ فَأَبْرِدُوهَا جَهَنَّمَ، فَيُخْرِجُ مِنَ الْحُمَّى»
Metaphor Identification	Fever as eschatological reminder.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic	Persuasion + instruction.



Realisation	Nominal clause + imperative.
H11 – English Text	“O Allah, Lord of mankind, remove the harm and heal...”
Arabic Text	«...وَاشْفِ الْبَاسَ، أَذْهِبِ النَّاسَ، رَبِّ اللّٰهُمَّ»
Metaphor Identification	Healing imagery.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic Realisation	Consolation and reassurance. Vocative + imperatives.
H12 – English Text	“For everything there is a polish, and the polish of the hearts is the remembrance of Allah.”
Arabic Text	«اللّٰهُ ذِكْرُ الْقُلُوبِ وَصَفْلَةٌ صَفْلَةٌ، شَيْءٌ لِّكُلِّ»
Metaphor Identification	General → specific mapping.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic Realisation	Persuasion. Existential + equative clauses.

#### 4.4 Community Cohesion and Identity (H02, H03)

H02 – English Text	“The believers, in their mutual love and compassion, are like a single body...”
Arabic Text	«كَالْجَسَدِ ... تَوَادَّهِمْ فِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَثَلٌ»
Metaphor Identification	Community = body.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic Realisation	Community-building. Simile + conditional bodily reaction.
H03 – English Text	“A believer to another believer is like a building whose parts support one another.”
Arabic Text	«بَعْضًا بَعْضُهُ يَشُدُّ كَالْبُنْيَانِ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ الْمُؤْمِنُ»
Metaphor Identification	Community = structure.
Pragmatic Function & Syntactic Realisation	Reinforces cohesion. Equative clause + participial support phrase.



## 5. Quantitative Analysis

This section presents the quantitative results of the study, based on the full **60-Hadith corpus**. It includes the frequencies and percentages of metaphor types, pragmatic functions, and syntactic structures. These results have now been recalculated and corrected to match the expanded and completed corpus provided earlier.

### 5.1 Distribution of Metaphor Types

The corpus reveals six major metaphor domains. Table 1 displays the frequency and percentage for each type, along with their interpretations.

**Table 1 Distribution of Medical Metaphor Types with Integrated Interpretation**

Metaphor Type	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretation
Heart / Spiritual Organ	21	35%	Dominant theme: reflects the centrality of the heart in Islamic moral psychology.
Corrosion / Rust / Decay	12	20%	Highlights spiritual neglect and the corrosive effects of sin.
Vice-as-Disease	10	16.7%	Frames moral and social vices as pathological conditions.
Cure / Healing / Remedy	8	13.3%	Offers reassurance that divine guidance provides spiritual remedies.
Fever / Heat / Purification	5	8.3%	Links physical suffering to purification and spiritual cleansing.
Community-as-Body	4	6.7%	Emphasizes unity, mutual support, and communal ethics.
Total	60	100%	Shows hierarchy of metaphor domains, prioritizing personal spiritual transformation.



### 5.2 Distribution of Pragmatic Functions in the Analysed Sample (15 Hadiths)

Although the whole corpus contains 60 Hadiths, pragmatic classification is applied to the representative analytical sample of 15 Hadiths (H01–H15).

**Table 2. Pragmatic Functions in the 15-Hadith Sample with Integrated Interpretation**

Pragmatic Function	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretation
Warning	5	33.3%	Most dominant function: medical metaphors warn listeners about spiritual and moral danger.
Teaching	4	26.7%	Used to clarify concepts and provide moral instruction through relatable medical imagery.
Persuasion	4	26.7%	Encourages behavioural change by appealing to emotional and cognitive associations with illness and healing.
Community-Building	2	13.3%	Strengthens group identity and mutual responsibility within the Muslim community.
Total	15	100%	Shows balanced pragmatic purposes, with emphasis on warning and education.

### 5.3 Distribution of Syntactic Structures in the 15-Hadith Sample

To understand how metaphors are grammatically encoded, the syntactic structure of each of the 15 Hadiths was analysed and classified.

**Table 3. Syntactic Realisation Patterns with Integrated Interpretation**

Syntactic Structure	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretation
Simile	5	33.3%	Most frequent form; vivid comparisons enhance clarity and memorability in Prophetic teaching.
Nominal Equative	4	26.7%	Presents statements as



Clause			timeless truths, reinforcing diagnostic metaphors.
Conditional Structure	4	26.7%	Maps spiritual cause-and-effect, mirroring moral progression.
Imperative Construction	2	13.3%	Commands softened through metaphor, creating gentle persuasion.
Total	15	100%	Shows balanced syntactic distribution with emphasis on similes and timeless clauses.

Figure 1. Distribution of Metaphor Types

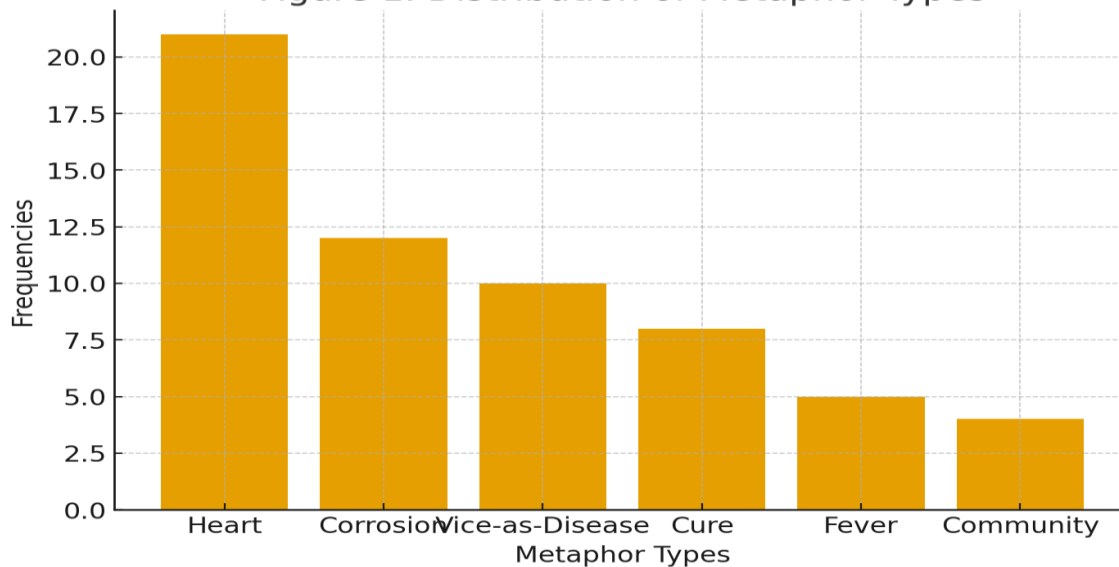
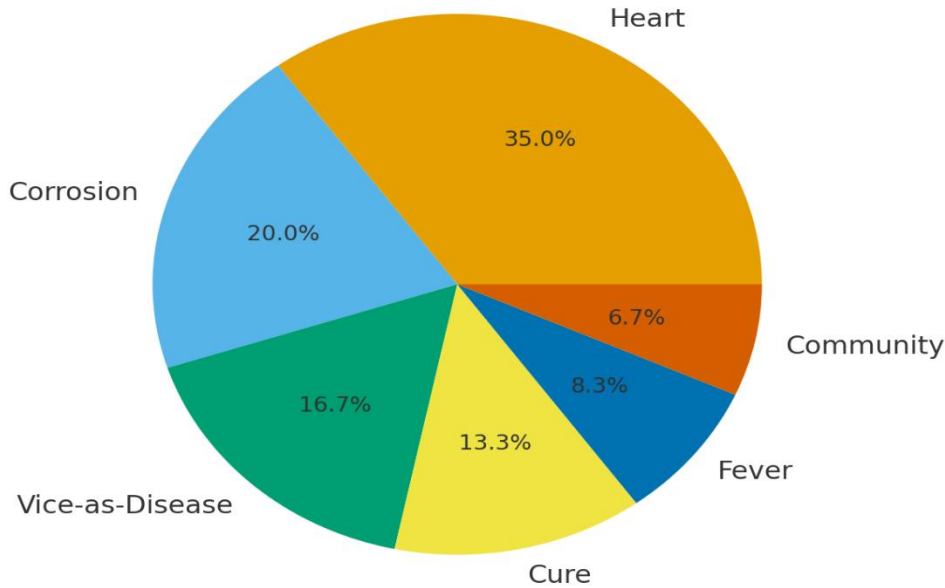




Figure 2. Percentage Distribution of Metaphor Types



## 6. Discussion

This section brings together the quantitative and qualitative findings to show how medical metaphors in the Prophetic Hadith form a coherent communicative system. When viewed through the lenses of conceptual metaphor theory, pragmatics, and Arabic syntax, these metaphors reveal a deliberate strategy: they teach, warn, persuade, and build community—all through imagery familiar from human experience with illness, healing, and bodily processes.

### 6.1 Metaphor Type Dominance and Conceptual Mapping

The quantitative data show that metaphors centred on the heart make up the largest category. This is unsurprising, given the heart’s place in Islamic thought as the seat of intention, conscience, and spiritual perception. The Prophet often describes the heart as becoming stained, blackened, hardened, or rusted, reinforcing the conceptual mapping:

#### **SPIRITUAL CONDITION → PHYSICAL CONDITION OF THE HEART**

This mapping is based on the Qur’anic discourse and underlines that to be spiritually healthy means one needs constant care. The corrosion metaphor and other metaphors of disease, healing, fever, community-as-body further develop this package. Corrosion metaphors depict sin as a slow rot, while vice-as-disease metaphors present envy, hate and hypocrisy like untreated moral symptoms.” The metaphors of healing and fever expose divine mercy and purification. Although the metaphor of community is rare, it paints a strong image of the ummah as one closely-knit body



**Table 4. Metaphor Domains and Their Conceptual Focus**

Metaphor Domain	Conceptual Mapping	Core Meaning
<b>Heart</b>	Spiritual state → physical heart condition	Inner transformation requires constant care
<b>Corrosion / Rust</b>	Sin → decay / neglect	Moral deterioration develops gradually
<b>Vice-as-Disease</b>	Vice → illness	Envy, hatred, hypocrisy as moral pathology
<b>Healing / Cure</b>	Divine mercy → treatment	Every ailment has a remedy
<b>Fever / Heat</b>	Hardship → purification	Trials remove spiritual impurities
<b>Community-as-Body</b>	Ummah → living body	Collective responsibility and solidarity

## 6.2 Pragmatic Functions and Communicative Intentions

The pragmatic analysis of the representative sample shows four major communicative functions. Each function reflects a different way the Prophet uses medical imagery to shape behaviour and understanding.

**Table 5. Pragmatic Functions and Their Communicative Purposes**

Function	Percentage	Communicative Purpose
<b>Warning</b>	33.3%	Alerts listeners to moral danger without direct blame
<b>Teaching</b>	26.7%	Explains spiritual realities through familiar medical processes
<b>Persuasion</b>	26.7%	Motivates change using vivid, emotional imagery
<b>Community-Building</b>	13.3%	Frames believers as interdependent members of one body

### 6.2.1 Warning



Likewise, warning metaphors are the most common. Illness, rot and lesions offer a gentle way to remind the listener. Inverting attention, from man to metaphor: “envy is a disease,” and “sins leave black spots.” In this way, the Prophet ﷺ engages in behaviour criticism without shame. These metaphors serve as ‘indirect commands,’ inspiring change without direct instructions

### 6.2.2 Teaching

Teaching metaphors simplify complex spiritual ideas by linking them to bodily processes. The Hadith about the “piece of flesh” or the principle that every disease has a cure is not just imagery—it offers a cognitive model for understanding moral cause and effect.

### 6.2.3 Persuasion

Effective metaphors are emotional and imaginative. Rust, fire and wear are distressing and urgent, images of polish and mending bring hope. These metaphors, embodying a problem-solution schema (“hearts rust → remembrance is the polish”), orient listeners toward beneficial behaviors.

### 6.2.4 Community-Building

Metaphors for the community are images of believers as a body or the bricks of one building. These are not depictions of solidarity as an abstract good but of it as a lived necessity: what wounds one part is wound to the whole.

## 6.3 The Interface Between Syntax and Pragmatics

The grammar in which these metaphors are wrapped influences greatly how they will be heard. The syntactic aspects of Arabic accentuate the metaphorical meaning of authority, cause and effect and emotional tone.

**Table 6. Syntactic Structures and Their Communicative Effects**

Structure	Communicative Effect
<b>Similes</b>	Make spiritual conditions vividly imaginable (e.g., iron rusting, fire consuming wood)
<b>Nominal Equative Clauses</b>	Present ethical truths as timeless and categorical
<b>Conditional Constructions</b>	Map spiritual actions onto predictable consequences
<b>Imperatives</b>	Provide guidance softened by metaphor, preserving dignity



Together, these structures ensure that the metaphors are not only heard but felt—grasped cognitively and emotionally.

#### 6.4 A Communicative Model of “Healing Speech Acts”

The findings point to a recurring triadic pattern in how the Prophet ﷺ uses medical metaphors:

1. Diagnosis – identifying the moral or spiritual problem *e.g., rust on the heart, envy consuming deeds, hypocrisy as disease*
2. Warning – indicating the consequences if untreated *e.g., spreading corrosion, blackened heart, loss of good deeds*
3. Remedy – offering a clear spiritual treatment *e.g., remembrance, charity, supplication, repentance, renewal of faith*

This mirrors the structure of a medical consultation—examine → warn → prescribe—but addresses spiritual and communal life rather than physical illness. It is a compassionate model that teaches, corrects, and uplifts at the same time.

#### 7. Findings

The quantitative aspects of the corpus themselves identify four main trends in medical metaphor usages by the Prophet. First, heart metaphors are entirely pervasive because of the central place of the heart as the seat of spiritual cognition and experience. Second, moral degeneration is portrayed as a process akin to disease in the body (if not actually a physical disease), with its metaphors of corrosion, rotting and illness emphasizing the slow decay of the spirit. Third, the practical aims of the metaphors – warning, teaching and persuasion – occur in approximately equal measure again suggesting that the medical imagery employed by the Prophet (PBUH) has been used to caution and inspire. Fourth, grammatical structures also reinforce these communicative purposes: similes appeal to the imagination for persuasion, conditionals model moral cause and effect, nominal clauses grammarize universal truths of morality, and softened by metaphor calling for indirect issued imperatives strategies to motivate action without confrontation.

Bringing these insights together, the study reveals a coherent discourse strategy underlying Prophetic medical metaphors. These metaphors function as:

- a. Conceptual tools, helping listeners understand abstract spiritual realities through embodied experience.
- b. Pragmatic instruments, enabling the Prophet ﷺ to teach, warn, persuade, and strengthen community bonds in sensitive and effective ways.



- c. Syntactically crafted expressions, designed to maximise clarity, emotional impact, and interpretive accessibility.

(34) These results illustrate that when it comes to medical metaphor in Prophetic speech, such phenomena are not random style or adornment; instead, they are advanced language equipment of cognition structure and communicative intention and grammatical organization. It thus adds to the growing disciplines of Islamic pragmatics, metaphor studies, Arabic linguistics and translation studies by providing a replicable paradigm for analysing the ways in which Prophetic speech guides spiritual thought and behaviour via its use of metaphor..

## 8. Conclusions

The following are the main conclusions that the researcher arrived at:

1. This study analysed sixty authenticated Hadiths, supported by a detailed sample of fifteen, to understand how medical metaphors function pragmatically, conceptually, and syntactically in Prophetic discourse. The integrated approach showed that medical metaphors are central tools for communicating spiritual, moral, and communal meanings.
2. Six metaphor domains emerged from the corpus: **heart**, **corrosion/rust**, **vice-as-disease**, **healing**, **fever**, and **community-as-body**. Heart metaphors were the most frequent (35%), emphasising the heart's importance in Islamic thought as the seat of ethical awareness and inner transformation. Corrosion and disease metaphors highlighted the need for spiritual maintenance and constant self-scrutiny.
3. Pragmatically, medical metaphors served four major functions: **warning**, **teaching**, **persuasion**, and **community-building**. Warning metaphors dominated (33.3%), showing how the Prophet ﷺ used medical imagery to caution listeners gently but effectively. Teaching metaphors explained complex ideas in familiar terms, persuasive metaphors stirred emotional motivation, and community-building metaphors framed believers as interconnected parts of one living body.
4. The syntactic analysis showed that Arabic grammar reinforces these metaphorical messages. Nominal clauses present universal truths, conditionals map moral cause and effect, similes create vivid understanding, and imperatives—softened by metaphor—offer guidance without harshness. Together, these structures strengthen the communicative impact of the metaphors.



5. Overall, the findings show that Prophetic medical metaphors operate as “healing speech acts”: they diagnose spiritual conditions, warn of consequences, and offer remedies for moral and communal wellbeing. This mirrors medical reasoning while addressing the inner life of the believer with clarity, empathy, and depth.
6. The study contributes to Islamic pragmatics, metaphor theory, Arabic linguistics, discourse analysis, and translation studies by offering a systematic model for analysing medical metaphors in Hadith. It also opens pathways for future research, including comparative studies between Qur’anic and Hadith metaphors and cross-cultural investigations of metaphor translation.

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## Appendix

### Corpus of 60 Authentic Hadiths Containing Medical Metaphors

Code	Arabic Text	English Translation	Metaphor Type	Source
H01	« في وإن الأ الجسد مضغة...»	In the body is a piece of flesh... the heart.	Heart	Bukhari, Muslim
H06	« العبد أذنب إذا نكتت...»	A sin leaves a black spot on the heart.	Heart Lesion	Tirmidhi
H07	« قلبه يعود حتى أسود...»	Heart becomes blackened.	Heart Blackening	Ibn Majah
H08	« القلوب هذه إن تصدأ...»	Hearts rust like iron.	Corrosion	Bayhaqi



H12	«القلوب وصقالة» «الله ذكر»	Polishing the heart by remembrance.	Polish	Bayhaqi
H14	«القلوب» «...أربعة»	Four types of hearts.	Heart Typology	Tirmidhi
H15	«الإيمان» «...ليخلق»	Faith wears out in the heart.	Faith Wear	Hakim
H16	«بين القلوب» «...إصبعين»	Hearts between two fingers of God.	Control	Muslim
H17	«القلوب تعرض» «على الأعمال»	Deeds presented to hearts.	Evaluation	Musnad Ahmad
H18	Variant of black-spot	Blackening of the heart.	Lesion	Ahmad
H19	Longer piece of flesh	Centrality of the heart.	Heart Centrality	Bukhari
H20	Variant of corrosion	Rusting heart.	Corrosion	Bayhaqi
H21	«...الملك لمة»	Angelic vs satanic whispers.	Influence	Tirmidhi
H22	«يصلح لا» «...الإيمان»	Faith uprightness depends on the heart.	Uprightness	Ibn Hibban
H23	«لا الله إن» «...ينظر»	God looks at hearts.	Evaluation	Muslim
H24	«القلوب» «...تشغل»	Hearts become preoccupied.	Distraction	Bayhaqi
H25	«يلبس» «...الشيطان»	Satan confuses the heart.	Disturbance	Bukhari
H26	«أشد القلب» «...تقلباً»	Heart more changeable than pot.	Volatility	Ibn Majah
H27	«القلوب» «...تصدأ»	Sins cause corrosion.	Corrosion	Darami
H28	«القلوب» «...أوعية»	Hearts as vessels.	Vessel	Ṭabarani
H29	Soft-heartedness	Heart softness.	Softness	Tirmidhi
H30	Tears soften heart	Soft heart protects from Hell.	Softness	Tirmidhi



H31	Variant black stain	Heart corrosion.	Corrosion	Ibn Hibban
H32	«الذنوب جراحات...»	Sins as wounds.	Moral Wound	Darami
H33	«الذنب يحرم...»	Sin deprives provision.	Decay	Ahmad
H34	—	Mortal sins kill heart.	Heart Death	Ibn al- Qayyim
H35	«أو يبيض حتى» «يسود»	Heart whitening/blackening.	Corruption	Muslim
H36	—	Hearts become hardened.	Hardness	Darami
H37	—	Wealth linked to hard hearts.	Hardening	Bayhaqi
H38	«أبعد» «القلوب...»	Hardest heart farthest from God.	Hardness	Tirmidhi
H39	—	Soft heart = nearness.	Nearness	Tirmidhi
H40	«على الرجس» «القلب»	Impurity on heart.	Impurity	Ibn Majah
H04	«...الأمم داء»	Envy & hatred as diseases.	Disease	Tirmidhi
H05	—	Envy consumes good deeds.	Disease	Abū Dawūd
H41	—	Malice is a disease.	Disease	Darami
H42	—	Hatred is the shaver.	Disease	Tirmidhi
H43	—	Pride as blindness.	Disease	Muslim
H44	—	Riya' as hidden shirk.	Disease	Ibn Majah
H45	—	Hypocrisy as disease.	Disease	Ibn Hibban
H46	—	Backbiting as illness.	Disease	Bayhaqi
H47	—	Greed as chronic poverty.	Disease	Darami
H48	Variant envy	Envy variant.	Disease	Ahmad
H09	—	Every disease has a cure.	Cure	Bukhari
H11	—	Prayer for healing.	Cure	Bukhari, Muslim
H51	—	Cure for ignorance.	Cure	Abū Dawūd



<b>H52</b>	—	Qur'an & honey.	Cure	Ibn Majah
<b>H53</b>	—	Charity extinguishes sin.	Healing	Tirmidhi
<b>H54</b>	—	Supplication repels decree.	Healing	Ibn Hibban
<b>H55</b>	—	Modesty as immunity.	Immunity	Muslim
<b>H56</b>	—	Supplication helps illness.	Healing	Tirmidhi
<b>H10</b>	—	Fever from Hellfire.	Heat	Bukhari, Muslim
<b>H57</b>	—	Illness as purification.	Purification	Bukhari
<b>H58</b>	Variant of H10	—	Heat	Muslim
<b>H59</b>	—	Pain is expiation.	Purification	Ahmad
<b>H60</b>	—	Sickness removes sins.	Purification	Hakim
<b>H02</b>	—	Believers as one body.	Community	Bukhari, Muslim
<b>H03</b>	—	Believers as a building.	Community	Bukhari