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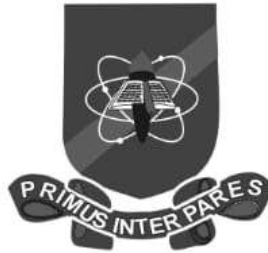
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EDITORIAL

It is with great pleasure and gratitude to Allah (SAW) that on behalf of the Editorial Board, I am presenting the 7th volume, December 2021 edition of Voyages Journal of Religious Studies, a publication of the Department of Religious Studies, Gombe State University. This edition of the publication has in it a number of articles from reputable scholars within the world of academia across disciplines.

Some of the issues covered in this volume center on Qur'an, ethics and morals, Islamic education, Da'wah activities, cultural values, pandemic in the teachings of Islam, Ulumul Hadith, peaceful coexistence and an examination of some biblical verses on stewardship as it applies to the Nigerian context.

My sincere gratitude goes to the authors who contributed their wealth of knowledge. I wish to acknowledge the efforts of the editorial consultants and the editorial board who work tirelessly to see the success of this edition. Thank you.

Lastly, we give a tribute to our former Editor-in-Chief, Prof. Umaru Dahiru, may Allah have mercy on him and grant him Jannah. Amin.

Dr. Fatima Abubakar,

Head, Department of Religious Studies,
Gombe State University, Gombe, Nigeria.

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End Time Narrative: Islamic Teachings in a Period of Pandemic

Fatima Abubakar,¹ Auwal Abdullahi² and Ali Sama'ila³

Abstract

Islam is a religion that considers all human needs for a balance between physical, emotional, spiritual, health and general well-being. Cleanliness is a significant part of the high standards and values that are inherent in Islam. If we analyze the preventive measures which are being issued by health authorities to reduce the spread of ongoing pandemic of the novel virus tagged Covid-19; are like those cleanliness and personal hygiene guidelines which Islam has provided years ago. Islam has been handling pandemics for more than 1,400 years and an honest study of the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) demonstrates that, infection control is inherent in Islamic principles and practices. Therefore, it is imperative to carry out this research in order to encourage Muslims while emphasizing the need to contain Covid-19 pandemic as well as highlighting the guiding principles to be followed during a pandemic as practiced by earlier Muslims. The relevant data for the research would be sourced from both primary and secondary sources. Analytical and descriptive methods will be employed in addressing all vital issues raised. The research will find out the historical origin of pandemics in Islam and how to contain them. This paper will also focus on the challenges faced by the entire Muslim Ummah during the corona virus lockdown and the negative impacts it has on Muslims and the world at large.

Keywords: End Time, Narrative, Pandemic Period, Covid-19.

Introduction

With the appearance of corona virus, the world today is witnessing serious set-in terms of socio-economic activities that threaten human existence on earth. This leads to several assertions by different groups of people including those with religious mindset who related the appearance of the virus to signs of end time. However, from the Islamic viewpoint one cannot categorically say that the virus is directly a sign of Last Hour even though it can be considered as one of the calamities that indicate to deterioration of things which precede the end time or as one of the minor signs of the Lat Hour as stated in a number of Islamic texts as can be seen in the successive pages of this paper/ it is then crystal clear that even if corona virus is linked to end time, it is not one of

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the ten major signs of Last hour mentioned by the Prophet (PBUH) in one narration as narrated by Hudhaifa b. Usaid al-Ghifari (RA) who said:

Allah's Apostle (PBUH) came to us all of a sudden as we were (busy in a discussion) He said: What do you discuss about? They (the Companions) said. We are discussing about the Last Hour. Thereupon he said: It will not come until you see ten signs before and (in this connection) he made a mention of the smoke, Dajjal, the beast, the rising of the sun from the west, the descent of Jesus son of Mary (Allah be pleased with him), the Gog and Magog, and land-slides in three places, one in the east, one in the west and one in Arabia at the end of which fire would burn forth from the Yemen, and would drive people to the place of their assembly (Muslim 297).

Based on the teachings of the above hadith, Corona does not fit any of the ten major signs of the last Hour. Or so it seems! The appearance of The Mahdi and the return of Prophet Isa (PBUH) and the coming of Dajjal all of which will follow one another, which are yet to come. None of these has yet happened, but they would manifest as stated by the Prophet (PBUH) However, it is only Allah SWT who knows the time. But then there are the minor signs or "Alamat-as-Sughra meaning additional signs other than the ten major signs. No doubt there are some traces of end time minor signs. Corona virus is still wreaking havoc in the world, and no one knows when it would end and what would be the death toll as a sign of Last Hour that is clear is that Corona virus still far less mortality rate than some of the most devastating pandemic in human history ('Abdurrahman Khan'). In view of the above, this paper seeks to find out whether Corona virus that negatively affects human existence on earth can be considered as one of the signs of Last Hour as viewed by many people including Islamic Scholars. The paper also highlights Islamic views on pandemic, its guideline on pandemic and challenges faced by Muslim societies during the Corona virus pandemic.

Islamic Viewpoint on Pandemic

Islam is a religion that considers human need for a balance between physical, emotional, spiritual and health. Personal hygiene and cleanliness keep the body free from disease. Cleanliness is a significant part of the high standards and values that are inherent in Islam. When one analyzes the preventive measures issued by health authorities to reduce the spread of ongoing pandemic of Covid 19 one will realize that they are like those cleanliness guidelines which Islam has provided over thousand years ago during the time of the Prophet (PBUH) in the 10th Century to prevent human-to-human contamination. Islamic scholar of Medicine, Ibn Sina used a method of isolating people for 40 days as a means of limiting the spread of contagious diseases. This is undoubtedly like modern technique of quarantine. This practice has now been adopted by different countries during the corona virus outbreak. Islam follows the science and the contributions of Muslim physicians, scientists and biological scientist which became great between the 8th and the 13th

centuries, this period was referred as the "Islamic Golden Age. Islam greatly emphasizes personal hygiene, food hygiene, and faith can play a significant part in global efforts to promote hand hygiene, which in the current situation, is fundamental in reducing the impact of the corona virus outbreak.

Islamic Rules and Guidelines During a Pandemic

Islam, and vast teachings for over 1,400 years has demonstrated how pandemics are to be handled been handling pandemics for more than 1,400 years and an honest study of the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) demonstrates that infection control is inherent in Islamic practices. Here are five of Prophet Muhammad's teachings regarding pandemics:

1. Travel ban and Quarantine

The Prophet (SAW) recognized and preached the importance of travel ban and quarantine in places contaminated with disease in order to mitigate the spread of illness. He said: *"If you hear of an outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; and if the plague breaks out in a place while you are in it, do not leave that place"* (Bukhari 426). The wisdom in these teachings asserts that when confronting any outbreak, it is imperative to assume the worst until it is known otherwise (and act accordingly). Thus, strict travel bans imposed much earlier in Covid-19's timeline could very well have curtailed the spread of the virus (Aizaz Khan).

2. Social Distancing and Isolation

The Prophet (SAW) practiced social distancing as well. It is reported that a leper once wished to pledge his allegiance to him, an act that would require him to touch or hold the Prophet (SAW) hand. Keeping his distance, the Prophet (SAW) kindly sent word to him that his pledge had already been accepted and that he should return home. It was narrated from a man from the family of Sharid whose name was Amr that his father said: *"There was a leper among the delegation of Thaqif. The Prophet (SAW) sent word to him: Go back, for we have accepted your oath of allegiance"* (Ibn Majah 457).

Regarding isolation, the Prophet (SAW) taught that those who are sick should not in any way compromise the community at large. He said: *"Do not place a sick patient with a healthy person."* This teaching was extended to animals as well; *"The cattle suffering from a disease should not be mixed with healthy cattle"* (Bukhari 368). In the current circumstances, social distancing and self-isolation have been frustratingly difficult for governments to impose. Ultimately, they have been compelled to pay heavy fines – in some cases up to \$750,000 for failing to self-isolate – and even imprisonment for not obeying emergency laws in some places (Aizaz Khan).

In stark contrast to this, Muslims in the time of the Prophet (SAW) and thereafter practiced social distancing and isolation as it was a religious injunction. Sayyidina Umar (R.A) once encouraged a leprosy woman who was circumambulating the Holy Ka'bah in Mecca to go back to her home as it would be better for her (and others). After Sayyidina Umar's demise, a man told her that the one who forbade her had passed away so she could go and circumambulate the Ka'bah as she pleased. She replied: *"I am not going to obey him when he is alive and disobey him when he has passed away."* Indeed, this is a beautiful example that reflects the spiritual power and impact of the Prophet (SAW) and his rightly guided Khalifas (Aizaz Khan).

3. Hygiene

If there is one thing people have learned over the past several months, it is proper hand washing techniques and thorough hygienic practices a hallmark of Islam. Any Muslim child can quote verbatim the tradition that states: *"Cleanliness is half of the faith"* (Muslim 432). Before each of the five daily prayers, a Muslim performs an ablution that comprises of ritual cleaning from head to toe with clean water. The Prophet (SAW) also taught through his practice that the right and left hands should be used to handle pure and impure things respectively, further committing to a high standard of cleanliness on a day-to-day basis.

Furthermore, when he sneezes, the Prophet (SAW) would cover his face and muffle the sneeze, effectively containing the spread of airborne bacteria and viruses. In this regard, it is reported that: *"Whenever the Prophet (SAW) sneezed, he would cover his mouth with his hand or a piece of cloth suppressing the sound this way"* (Tirmidhi 126). In essence, Muslims are taught that physical cleanliness and spiritual purity have a close affinity with one another. Thus, the glorious Qur'an teaches: *"Indeed, Allah loves those who turn to Him [repenting] and He loves those who keep themselves clean and pure"* (Qur'an 2:223).

4. Seeking Medical Treatment

Islam, as taught by the Prophet (SAW) is a practical and progressive faith-based system. The Prophet (SAW) encouraged people to seek medical assistance alongside relying on the power of prayer. Once, he was asked by a group of Bedouins if it would be considered sinful if they did not seek medical treatment. He replied: *"Seek (medical) treatment, O Slaves of Allah, for Allah does not create any disease but He also creates with it the cure, except for old age"* (Ibn Majah 17).

The Prophet (SAW) also clarified that seeking medical assistance coupled with divine intervention was the key to successful treatment: *"Every disease has a cure. If a cure is applied to the disease, it is relieved by the permission of Allah the Almighty"* (Muslim 55).

5. Free Medical Care

Free medical care and financial assistance during a pandemic are crucial in ensuring successful control of the spread of illness. If the citizens of a nation know that they will be provided and cared for, they will be more likely to follow restrictions that could otherwise put them in financial distress. The *bait-al-mal* (public treasury) was conceptualized in the time of the Prophet (SAW) and formally established during the Khilafat of Sayyidina Umar (R.A). The taxes collected in this treasury were used to provide for the poor, disabled, elderly, orphans, widows and others in need. The government was also made responsible to stockpile food supplies in case of disaster or famine.

It is reported that Sayyidina Umar (R.A) was on his way to Syria, when he came across a group of Christians afflicted with leprosy. He immediately ordered that a medical allowance be provided to them from the government treasury so they could seek medical treatment. Sayyidina Umar (R.A) also ordered Muslims to keep a close watch on prisoners and provide for all their medical needs as required (Aizaz Khan). In essence, Prophet Muhammad's teachings around pandemics propose an infection control mechanism that calls for both faith-based and practical measures to be taken in order to effectively contain infectious diseases.

Today, world leaders have two equally important responsibilities – solving the Covid-19 crisis and improving the way we respond to outbreaks in the future. Without a doubt, the history of Islam's battle against pandemics is indispensable and could very well guide our infection control systems now and in the future.

Challenges Faced by Muslims in the Period of Corona Virus Pandemic

As the world faces the greatest disruption of our lifetimes, Muslims throughout the world are also grappling with the repercussions of corona virus pandemic. But the Islamic cultural, spiritual and theological dimensions offer Muslims myriad ways of coping to new social norms. Muslims have relatively large families and tend to maintain extended family relations. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) encouraged Muslims to keep strong family ties. The Qur'an inspires Muslims to be generous to kin the Qur'an reads: "*Allah commands justice, the doing of good and giving to kith and kin, and He forbids all indecent deeds, and evil and rebellion: He instruct you, that you may receive admonition*" (Qur'an 16:90). In another verse, Allah (SWT) command believers to be kind to parents and treat the elderly with compassion. The verse reads:

Your lord has decreed that you worship none but Him and that you be kind to parents, whether one or both attain old age in your life, say no to them a word of contempt, nor repel them but address them in terms of honor (Qur'an 17 Verse23).

These teachings have resulted in Muslims either living together as large families or keeping regular weekly visits and gatherings of extended family members. Many Muslims feel conflicted

about the need to apply social distancing on one hand and the other, he need to be close to family and relatives for comfort and support. Tighter restrictions on movement in some parts of Australia (NSW and Victoria) mean Muslims, like everyone else in Australia are not allowed to visit extended family anymore (Ozalp). One of the first changes brought about by social distancing has been to the Muslim custom of shaking hands followed by hugging (same gender) friends and acquaintances, especially in mosques and Muslim organizations. After a week or two of hesitation in March 2019, the hugging completely stopped, making Muslims feel dismal. Visiting the sick is considered a good deed in Islam. However, in the case of COVID-19, such visits are not possible. Therefore, checking up on those who are sick with phone calls, messages and social media is possible and encouraged.

Closure of Mosque and Friday Services

Congregational prayers in mosques are important for Muslims in instilling a sense of being in the presence of the sacred, and a sense of being with other believers. Accordingly, they line up in rows with shoulders touching. This arrangement is extremely risky during a pandemic. Australian mosques are now closed because of corona virus (Ozalp). All over the world the case remains the same for a very long period which was never experienced before.

Deciding to skip daily congregational prayers was not too difficult for Muslims but stopping Friday prayers has been more challenging. Friday prayer is the only Muslim prayer that must be performed in a mosque. It consists of a 30-60-minutes sermon followed by a five-minute congregational prayer conducted just in the afternoon. Stopping Friday prayers on a global scale has not occurred since it was introduced by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in 622 CE, after he migrated to the city of Madina from the persecution he and his followers endured in Makkah.

Iran was the first to ban Friday prayers on March 2019 While countries like Turkey and Indonesia tried to continue Friday prayers with social distancing, it did not work, and soon the entire Muslim world closed mosques for prayer services (Ozalp). Fortunately for Muslims, the closure of mosques does not mean they stop daily prayers altogether. Hence, Muslims can pray five times a day wherever they are and often home is a place where most praying takes place. The void left by ending of Friday sermons in mosques has been filled to some extent by Friday sermons offered online.

Covid-19 Effects on Ramadan and Annual Pilgrimage to Makkah

Two of the five pillars of Islamic practice are the fasting in Ramadan and the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims refrain from eating, drinking and marital relations from dawn to sunset on each day of the month. This part was not affected by COVID-19. What is affected are the evening breaking of fast dinners (*iftar*) and daily evening congregational prayers (*tarawih*). Muslims generally invite their friends and family members to these dinners. In Western

countries, the invitations include non-Muslim acquaintances as well. As such, the effect of the cancellation of *iftar* dinner was felt by both the masses and the well-to-do Muslims because of the great reward feeding the poor attracts in Islam. The three-day end of Ramadan festive celebrations (*eid*) was also limited to family members who live together.

The Pandemic's Effect on Pilgrimage was far Greater

The minor (optional) Islamic pilgrimage (umrah) happens throughout the year, intensifying near Ramadan. With Iran a hot spot for corona virus Saudi Arabia suspended entry to Iranians and all other pilgrims as early as February 27, 2020. Pilgrims all over the world felt the effect of the cancellation of 2020 pilgrimage.

The main pilgrimage (*hajj*) season occurs in late July 2020. Although the spread of the virus was slowing down by July 2020, probably, pilgrimage involving more than two million people from just about every country on earth would almost certainly flame the virus into a second wave. Saudi Arabia has canceled the main pilgrimage for 2020. In the 14 centuries of Islamic history; pilgrimage has not been undertaken several times because of war and roads not being safe. But this is the first-time pilgrimage was called off due to a pandemic. As pilgrims reserve their spot and pay the full fee months ahead, the cancellation of hajj resulted in losses of savings for millions of Muslims and caused massive job losses in the pilgrimage industry (Ozalp).

The Balance between Precaution and Reliance on God

An early debate in Muslim circles around corona virus has been a theological one. Muslims believe Allah (SAW) created the universe and continues to actively govern its affairs. This would mean the emergence of the virus is an active creation of Allah (SWT). Like other religious groups, some Muslims argue that corona virus was created by God to warn and punish humanity for consumerism, destruction of the environment and personal excesses. This means fighting the pandemic is futile and people should rely (*tawakkul*) on Allah to protect the righteous (Ozalp).

Such thinking may help in reducing the sense of fear and panic such a large-scale pandemic pose, but it can also make people unnecessarily complacent. Most Muslims counter this fatalistic approach by arguing that while the emergence of the virus was not in human control, the spread of the disease certainly is. They remind us that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) advised a man who did not tie his camel because he trusted in God thus: "*Tie the camel first and then trust in Allah.*" Prophet Muhammad (SAW) himself sought medical treatment and encouraged his followers to seek medical treatment, saying: "*God has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it, with the exception of one disease-old age*" (Bukhari 326).

Further, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) advised on quarantine: "*If you hear of an outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; if the plague outbreaks out in a place while you are in it, do not*

leave that place” (Bukhari 426). Sometimes affliction inevitably comes our way. The Qur’an teaches Muslims to see life’s difficult circumstances as a test — they are temporary hardships to strengthen us (2:153-157). Such a perspective allows Muslims to show resilience in times of hardship and tribulation, with sufficient strength to make it to the other side intact.

In times like this, some people will inevitably lose their wealth, income and even their lives. Prophet Muhammad advised the grieving that property lost during tribulations will be considered charity, and those who die as a result of pandemics will be considered martyrs of paradise. As Muslims continue to deal with the corona virus pandemic, they, like everyone else, are wondering how their lives might be changed afterwards.

Conclusion

This pandemic has clearly shown without a shadow of doubt how divine power controls the world. The Coronavirus pandemic has created one of the most serious public health crises in recent history. Within a few weeks of its emergence in China, it spread all over the world and left its impact on all aspects of people’s lives. The high rate of infection has increased pressure on medical resources and services, and intensified demand for basic medical supplies. For the current generation, the pandemic has brought to memory the legacy of major pestilences both in the pre-modern and modern periods. Islamic ethical deliberations on the Covid-19 pandemic build on an existing tradition that emerged in connection with preceding incidents of epidemics, especially those associated with the plague.

This tradition began with commentaries on specific references in the Islamic foundational sources, which eventually developed into detailed and systematic discussions across the various genres of the normative tradition including theology, jurisprudence, and mysticism. What is remarkable about this tradition is its continuous evolution considering the recurrent episodes of epidemics, which made ongoing interpretation and reinterpretation necessary. The example of contagion illustrates this process of ongoing construction, as competing Prophetic reports have usually been reconciled in order to remove seeming contradictions – in line with a more active rather than passive or fatalistic attitude towards pandemics (Shabaana10).

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