



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Corona Virus: An Islamic Perspective**

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**ABSTRACT**

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Corona eruption (COVID-19) is today's world major problem. People throughout the world are practicing social distancing, emphasizing to keep themselves clean, moreover preferring to quarantine themselves if gets suspicious of infection-all already endorsed and practiced in Islam. Islam has provided the solution of every problem 1400 years or more ago. In that context, Muslims have their own theological beliefs relating to corona pandemic. The teaching of Islam not only facilitated Muslims but all others (human being) in the world. Corona pandemic has evolved a new face of the world and introduced new social norms for Muslims. However, Quran and Sunnah is perfect guide to answer all questions pertaining to any issue or problem.

**Introduction**

Since the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, Corona Pandemic has been thought out as one of the horrible event confronted worldwide. This pandemic which has been referred to as COVID-19 nearly affected millions of people as its rapid spread not only increased infection rates but also death rates throughout the world (Arnout et al. 2020). The spread of such contagious disease is still very challenging as it paralyzed the whole world. The entire world faced greatest disruption in lives as this pandemic collapsed global health systems. The spread of COVID-19 threatened entire world's system pertaining to health, economy, education, workplace practices, family life, leisure etc. Keeping in view the severity of COVID-19, countries throughout the world intensified efforts on their part to deal with this pandemic.

Throughout the history, it can be apparently seen that lives of nations were not without calamities. At various levels civilizations faced adversity and Islamic history is also full of such examples. In current scenario, Muslims all over the world are equally grappling with the pandemic repercussions. As Islam religion offers

them innumerable ways of coping etc. In this connection, teaching of Islam (Holy Quran and Sunnah) delivers basis for Islamic laws pertaining to all aspects of Muslims' life (Al Eid et al. 2020). No doubt Islam is a complete as well comprehensive religion as it governs and covers all aspects of human life (Rafiki & Wahab, 2014). In another meaning, it has been argued that "*Islam is a tantamount to accepting a way of life-spiritually, politically, and socially-about how to behave in family and public life*" (Ball & Haque, 2003: 315) means all aspects of society are comprehensively covered which can facilitate all humans regardless of race, cast, creed, ethnicity, gender and/or its origin.

In times of adversity, in the context of such unprecedented situation (COVID-19) there is an urgent need for people to consolidate religious, moral as well social values to endure pandemic repercussions. Besides Islamic religion is composed of such integrated system characterized by spirituality, compassion, social solidarity, assistance which best serves all in every aspect.

### **Theological Belief of Muslims Pertaining to Corona Virus**

First, Muslims firmly believe that Allah has created the world and for sure its affairs are also governed by Him. Thus corona virus has also been created by Allah to warn as well punish human beings for their misdeeds. Quranic verses can best unveil current epidemics as it has been already said that, "*All blessings must come from Me (Allah)*" (Surah An-Nahl: 53) and "*(Azab) that is due to the deeds of your own hands, and that Allah does not persecute His servants*" (Surah Al-Imran: 182). Accordingly fighting with this virus seems futile as one have to rely on Allah, "tawakkul" on Allah. To some extent this thinking helped them in reducing fear and panic associated with this contagious disease. However, it made people gratuitously unworried which was and still threatening. As a common fact that nothing is in human control neither virus nor its spread. However, one has to take precautionary measures first then leaving rest to Allah best serves. In this similar context, Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) advised a man to "*tie his camel first and then trust in Allah*" is a well narrated example to understand the philosophy of Islam for Corona pandemic.

No doubt the calamity like COVID-19 is a test for believers from Allah. As in Surah Al-Baqarah, Muslims were told to recite "*al-istirjaa*" every time when calamity attacks, "*And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, who, when disaster strikes them, say "Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajioon"*" (155-157). Muslims recite "*al-istirjaa*" that is "*indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return*" on any event that is hurtful such as on death, theft, job loss, pandemic outburst etc. And those who recite "*al-istirjaa*" in times of calamity are among patient and grateful (Zulkifli Mohammad AlBakri, 31<sup>st</sup> Dec, 2019).

True Muslims firmly belief that everything owned by them is temporary and can be taken back from them at any time either that is health, wealth, family, status

or any other blessing. Despite this Islam do not forbid Muslims to take precautionary measures or seek out for medical treatment. As Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) always encouraged Muslims to strive for medical treatment. According to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) *"Allah has not made any disease without appointing a remedy for it, with the exception of one disease that is old age"*. Hence it has been declared 1400 years ago by Holy Prophet (PBUH) that *"Allah does not bring down the disease unless He also lowers the medicine"* (Bukhari). Thus Muslims needs to deal with corona virus in optimal ways as cure for every disease is available. So true believers who suffer from corona virus attempts on their part to prevent harm by taking right treatment.

Secondly, COVID-19 is a test in the sense that all those people who have been bestowed by Allah in terms of good health, wealth, power, position etc. needs to always seek pleasure of Allah for His countless blessings. One way is to render support for those who are helpless, who are badly affected during corona pandemic. As one of the characteristic of righteousness is *"to help others"*. That's why it is clearly mentioned in Surah Al-Maidah that, *"Help one another in acts of piety and righteousness."* (Al-Maidah: 2) During tough times people becomes self-centered, they usually think about themselves. However, Islam prevents a Muslim from being selfish. And those who decides to help others in any form (cash or kind, emotional, moral support) lessens the burdens of affected groups.

No doubt helping others when wanted is certainly a noble act which permit Muslims to secure benefits not only for this world but hereafter (in terms of delayed gratification). In this context a well narrated hadith by Abdullah b. Umar is, *"Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim, so he should not oppress him, nor should he hand him over to an oppressor. Whoever fulfilled the needs of his brother, Allah will fulfill his needs; whoever brought his brother (Muslim) out of a discomfort, Allah will bring him out of the discomforts of the Day of Resurrection, and whoever screened a Muslim, Allah will screen him on the Day of Resurrection"*. (Sahih al-Bukhari; 2442).

Indeed, Islam provides solutions for all problems especially dealing with pandemic associated threats and fear. As Allah says in Quran that *"Do not be weak, and do not (also) be sad, even though you are the people of the highest (degree) if you are believers."* (Surah Al-Imran: 139). Allah Himself advises not to become weak and those who has strong faith will always respond sensibly to all tests and trials of life instead of being sad or weak. The need is to take lessons from events, incidents, tests, trials. However, Allah advises His servants to have patience in tough times: *"O you who believe, be patient and pray as your helper, Allah is with those who are patient"* (Surah Al-Baqarah: 153). Islam is the religion of optimism characterized by wisdom and positivity. Therefore one has to trust in Allah and His ability eventually he/she gets courage to face and overcome any worse situation. As in Surah Al-Imran Allah said that *"O you who have believed, persevere and endure and remain stationed and fear Allah that you may be successful."* (Surah Al-Imran: 200). As there is great reward for patience.

Praying Allah in difficult time, dhikr, fasting as well sadqah can be helpful in strengthening one's sense of patience. And those who always tries to carry Allah's commands and stay away from His prohibitions will always benefited in maximum ways. As stated, *"if anyone is obedient to Allah, He will make a way out for him. Moreover, provide sustenance from a direction that he does not expect."* (Surah Ath-Thalaaq: 2-3). So, one has to be patient as well obedient as it carries huge rewards here in this world as well in the eternal world here after.

### **Concept of Cleanliness and Quarantine in Islam**

The spread of COVID-19 introduced a new face of this world, created a concept of quarantine and methods of sterilization (cleanliness) which were already emphasized as well endorsed by Islam. Health organizations worldwide stressed on promoting and maintaining personal hygiene. This can be done by washing hands repeatedly for at least 20 seconds and that can limit the corona virus spread. Cleanliness is considered as half of Muslims' faith. Moreover, from centuries Islam has been teaching to promote personal hygiene.

Holy Quran teaches Muslims to keep themselves clean, stating *"Allah loves those who are clean"* (2:222). Centuries ago Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) declared *"cleanliness is half of faith"*. Muslims before daily prayers (five time) perform ablution. Additionally they are encouraged to wash hands before as well after eating something. They have to brush teeth on daily basis, and required to take bath at least once in a week. Moreover grooming nails as well private parts are also essential requirement for a Muslim. In short, all these requirements makes a person clean that do not entirely help in preventing the spread of disease however certainly reduces associated risk.

Furthermore, corona virus is contagious disease. Hence people who suspect themselves to be infected needs to quarantine themselves. This act of them at least keep other persons safe. The principles of quarantine has been developed 1400 years or more ago by Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in order to prevent transmission of pathogens (plague). Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was first who suggested quarantine by isolating infected people to specific place and for a specific time for controlling disease spread. As narrated by Abu Huraira *"There is no 'Adwa-no contagious disease is conveyed without Allah's permission"* (Al-Bukhari, 2007). Thus Islam religion also emphasize and suggest to isolate for controlling epidemics.

In this context, Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated that: *"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"*. Islam prohibit the entry of a person from endemic environment to a healthy environment nor a person's exit from an endemic environment to safe environment. The spread of plague or any other contagious disease are life's temporary hardships. The teaching of Quran for Muslims compels them to consider difficulties as a test as *"they are temporary hardships to strengthen us (2:153-157)*. Moreover, such perspective gives Muslims strength to deal with these

hardships with patience. As Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) declared that *“those who died as a result of pandemics will be considered as martyrs of paradise”*.

Additionally, people can utilize quarantine time in optimal ways like doing *“astagfar”* (seeking forgiveness) as well recitation of Holy Quran. As doing *“astagfar”* gives a sense of relief as well purifies one’s soul. As Allah is the only one who can provide solutions to the problems as well sustenance. As per Ibn ‘Abbas: *Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated that, “if anyone constantly seeks pardon (from Allah), Allah will appoint for him a way out of every distress and a relief from every anxiety, and will provide sustenance for him from where he expects not” (Hadith 1873; Book 20)*. Hence doing *“astagfar”* and seeking Allah’s forgiveness carries benefits beyond one’s thought.

### **New Corona Norms for Muslims**

Muslims comparatively have large families’ as well strong ties. They either live together and/or frequently visits one another’s home as they tend to maintain extended family relations. In this connection, the Quran and Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) encouraged as well inspired Muslims to have strong family connections stating *“be generous to kin” as well “treat the elderly with compassion” (16:90; 17:23)*. Thus Muslims always strive on their part to keep themselves close to family as well relatives as this gives them immense pleasure, comfort and support.

However, COVID-19 transmissibility ranges from 2.24-3.58 (Zhao et al. 2020). And public gathering for sure increases transmissibility thus social distancing was and still recommended as main preventive measure. The spread of corona pandemic made it necessary for everyone including Muslims to apply social distancing. Tighter restrictions not only made it hard for them to visit extended family members but restricted them from hand shaking and hugging with family members, friends and/or colleagues which really made them feel depressing. Furthermore, there are also many other good deeds in Islam which have been forbidden due to COVID-19. Like visiting the sick is not possible, one has to check up for those who are sick on the phone or using social media.

Additionally, congregational prayers in mosques are of much more importance for Muslims but this arrangement carries huge risks during corona pandemic. Thus Muslims were banned to offer prayers in the mosques. Stopping Friday prayer was one of the biggest challenge as it has not happened since its introduction (in 622) by Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In this context some measures were initially taken to continue Friday prayers by keeping social distance but it did not work consequently closed mosques for prayers. However, closure of mosques does not mean to stop daily prayers. It’s very fortunate for Muslims that they can offer five times pray anywhere. In addition to this, congregational prayers during Ramadan (taraweeh) and fast breaking dinners were also restricted. Similarly Eid celebrations were also narrowed to family members who lives together.

Ban was also made on Tablighi Ijtemas. An Islamic revivalist movement-Tablighi Jamaat which was originated in India (Ali, 2003) before pre-partition (Pakistan and India) posed threats of corona spread. As a remarkable membership boost has been taken place over the years in this group from several countries. In March, 2020 Preachers from all over the world had to gather for a Tablighi Ijtema in eastern Pakistan (Lahore city) as well in global headquarter of them located in the Nizamuddin (Delhi) to learn and deliver Islamic texts. As stated earlier that such gatherings were prohibited to stop corona spread. Thus to serve this purpose several scheduled Tablighi Ijtema were cancelled. As these Tablighi Ijtemas' exploded the problem of corona spread (Ur-Rahman, Abi-Habib & Mehsud, 2020).

Moreover, hot spot corona virus badly affected Umrah and Hajj (Islamic pilgrimage). Umrah is the minor as well optional pilgrimage which happens throughout the year whereas Hajj is the main pilgrimage occurs once in a year (first ten days of Zil-Hajj). The Saudi Arabia not only suspended Umrah but this happened first time in 14 centuries of Islamic history that Hajj (2020) has been too called off due to wide as well intense spread of corona virus. Suspension of pilgrimage was a timely as well preventive step taken by Saudi Government as continuation could lead to severe spread of corona virus. In short all types of religious congregations were suspended at local, national and international levels to circumvent virus transmission.

## Conclusion

No doubt corona pandemic would more likely to have devastating impact if people worldwide are still not taking this pandemic seriously. This battle can be only won by adjusting our behaviors as per teaching of Islam such as, promoting personal hygiene by frequently washing hands as well sanitizing them, observing physical distance and quarantining if required. One must try to have optimism in every affair of his/her life. As Islam is the religion of optimism which cultivates hope for bright future through hard work, due diligence, determination, patience, etc. and then having "tawakal" on Allah.

Moreover, in tough circumstances and severe conditions one must not view calamity as evil as it impedes positive thinking which ensures attainment of appropriate solution. As stated in Surah Al-Baqarah, "*But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not*" (Surah Al-Baqarah: 216). So only Allah knows what is good as well what is bad. We need to trust in Allah and support others by rendering our services for the sake of humanity, for the sake of Allah's pleasure.

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