THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19: ISLAM’S STAND BASED ON THE H’ADITH

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Abstract: The appearance of COVID-19 as a pandemic has shocked the whole world recently since the ending part of 2019. Although different views are found available from different religious viewpoints, the subject has attracted the whole world with the exercise of communal dialogue in India particularly when some cases have been reported to be found in the participants of Tablighi Jamaat (an unorganized Islamic reform movement) gathered at Nizamuddin Markaz (center) in Delhi. Whatever may be the purpose of those communal talks amongst people trying to make either the conservative Muslims responsible or the government administration concerned, it is the duty of a Muslim to make it clear in front of the world the views concerning pandemic based on the hadiths. The hadiths are the collection of Islamic traditions that contain the sayings, advice, or instructions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The paper is an effort to present the stand of Islam on pandemic and infectious diseases and how a Muslim should react to a COVID-19 like circumstances.

Keywords: COVID-19, worldwide impact, Islamic view.

Introduction

Like a pandemic, COVID-19 has shocked the whole world recently since the ending part of 2019. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), also known as 2019-nCov, 2019- Novel Coronavirus is “an infectious disease caused by a new virus. The disease causes respiratory illness (like the flu) with symptoms such as a cough, fever, and in more severe cases, difficulty breathing. You can protect yourself by washing your hands frequently, avoiding touching your face, and avoiding close contact (1 meter or 3 feet) with people who are unwell.” [i]

This deadly disease has taken about more than 70 thousand lives to date including the people belonging to several countries like America, China, Italy, Spain, etc. that are advance not only in resources but also in the health service spheres. As a consequence, COVID-19 has been able to prove itself irresistible in front of medical science that could not save a large number of victims even after leaving no stone unturned. India, being the second-largest country in the world in terms of population, naturally should be full of tension considering some deficiencies concerning the fight against Corona,
particularly due to a large number of uneducated and ignorant people in terms of health consciousness. Religious conservatism of various sections of people has been surely another factor for such tension.

Discussion and Analysis

It has been observed that although different religious sections of people, devotees, etc. gathered in various places in India could not move forward dispensing those congregations for protection through following the norms such as social distancing which is due to the sudden declaration of lockdown. The government should have declared such lockdown consulting the state governments at least 5/6 days before so that people from different states could reach their homes. Regarding foreign nationals also, the Government should take a similar step so that if unable to send back them to their home countries, they could stay in quarantine without any trouble.

Anyway, what is more, alarming and detrimental in such a situation happened in India, has been witnessed in the form of a communal game that has been played by the media (both electronic and social). The case is concerning the congregation of Muslims from all over the world at Nizamuddin Markaz in Delhi. The Tablig Jamaat was scheduled to be held from 13-15 March 2020 with a gathering of lakhs of people from several countries all over the world. After the program was over, most of the devotees left except 1-2 thousand including some foreigners and residents of other states who could not leave immediately for this or that reason; and then due to the Janta Curfew (people’s curfew) on 22nd March as well as the sudden declaration of lockdown on 24th March 2020 for 21 days, they could not move further. However, the Nizamuddin authority is responsible for not having postponed the program in a situation when COVID-19 had already created a panic like situation in various countries although not in India. They argue that they had regular correspondence with the concerned government authorities and did not postpone the program, particularly when the union government of India notified on 13 March 2020 that there was no health emergency till then in the country.

Interestingly, those of the devotees left as well as those remaining, from amongst them some were found COVID-19 positive and the media began to make not only the Tablig Jamaat but also the whole Muslim community responsible for spreading the disease all over the country. It is a matter of utter disappointment that when the disease has been proved as a threat for all irrespective of caste, creed, religion, etc. why a particular community or religion should be made responsible for the fault or no fault of a particular organization belonging to the community. It might be, it is an agenda of a particular political force to gain vested interest through communal polarization.

Anyway, whatever might be the cause behind such allegation, it is the duties of the Muslims to let all concerned know about the view of Islam regarding an epidemic, pandemic, infectious diseases, etc. The article will try to present the stand of Islam in this regard based on the most authentic data as laid in the Hadith.

On being prepared and taking precautionary measures [ii]

❖ Usāma b. Zaid said the Prophet (ﷺ) said:
إذا سمعت بالطاعون بأرض فلا تدخلوها وإذا وقعت بأرض وانتبه بها فلا تخرجوا منها
“If you hear of a plague in a land do not enter it; and if it breaks out in the land where you stay, do not leave.”[7]

❖ Usāma b. Sharīk narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:
تَداوْا عبادِ اللهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يضَعْ دَاءً إلَّا وضَعَ له دَوَاءً

“Servants of Allāh! Make use of medical treatment, for Allāh has not made any disease without creating a cure for it.”[8]

❖ Abū Huraira narrated that Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:
لا عَدْوى ولّ طِيَرَةَ، ولّ هَامَةَ ولّ صَفَرَ، وفِرَّ مِنَ المَجْذُومِ كما تَفِرُّ مِنَ الأسَدِ

“There is no unbidden contagion, no evil omen, no death bird (hama), no tape-worm (safar), and one should keep away from a leper as one keeps away from a lion.”[9]

❖ Abū Huraira narrated that Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:
لا يُودُّن مُرْضَنُ عَلَى مَسْحٍ

“Do not quarantine the healthy with the infected.”[10]

❖ Abū Mālik al-Ash’ari reported that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said:
الطُّهورُ شَطرُ الإيمانِ

“Being clean and pure is half of faith.”[11]

❖ Mu’ādh b. Jabal said that th Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said:
الصدقةُ تُطفِئُ الخطيئةَ

“Charity wipes away sins.”[12]

On supplications [iii]

❖ Salmān narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said:
لا يَردُّن مُمْرِضٌ عَلَى مُصِحٍّ

“Nothing revises the Decree of Allāh except supplication.”[13]

❖ ‘Uqbah b. ‘Āmir said:
The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said to me: ‘Say.’ I said: ‘What should I say?’ He then recited Sūrat al-Ikhlās, Sūrat al-Falaq and Sūrat al-Nās, and then he said:
لم يَتعوَّذُ النّاسُ بمثْلِ هَٰنِئٍ أو لّ يَتعوَّذُ النّاسُ بمثلِ هَٰنِئٍ يَمِثَّلُهُ

‘People have never sought refuge in Allāh with anything like this,’ or ‘the people have never sought refuge with Allāh by anything greater than this.’[14]

❖ Abū Huraira reported that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said,
مَن قالَ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الَّذي لّ يضرُّ معَ اسمِهِ شَيْءٌ، في الأرضِ، ولّ في السَّماءِ، وَهوَ السَّميعُ العلَّامُ، ثلاثَ مُرَاتٍ، لم تُصِبْهُ فَجَأةً بَلَاءٍ، حتّى يُصْبِحَ، ومَن قالَها حينَ يصبحُ ثلاثُ مُرَاتٍ، لم تُصِبْهُ فَجَأةً بَلَاءٍ حتّى يُمْسَى

‘Whoever recites three times in the morning and three times in the evening this supplication: ‘Bismillāhi al-ladhi lā yadurru ma`as-mihi shai`un fi al-aridī wa lā fi al-samā`i, wa huwa al-Sami` al-`Alīm (In the Name of Allāh with whose name there is protection against every kind of harm on earth or in heaven, and He is the All-Hearing and All-Knowing),’ nothing shall harm him.”[15]

❖ ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān reported that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said:
مَن قالَ مِنْقَالِ هَٰنِئٍ يَصِبّحُ وَحَينَ يُمْسَى أَعُوذُ بِكَ لِمْ يُداْرَكُ مِنْ شَرِّ الْآثَامَاتِ

‘Whoever recites three times in the morning and three times in the evening: ‘Bismillāhi al-ladhi lā yadurru ma`as-mihi shai`un fi al-aridī wa lā fi al-samā`i, wa huwa al-Sami` al-`Alīm (In the Name of Allāh with whose name there is protection against every kind of harm on earth or in heaven, and He is the All-Hearing and All-Knowing),’ nothing shall harm him.”[16]

❖ Anas b. Mālik narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) used to say:
اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْبَرَصِ، وَالْجُنُونِ، وَالْجُذَامِ، وَمِنْ سَيِّئِ الأَسْقَامِ

“Allāhumma innī à’ūdhu bika min al-bars, wa al-junūn, wa al-judhām, wa min sayyi` al-asgām: O Allāh, I seek refuge in You from leprosy, madness, communicable disease, and evil diseases.”[17]

❖ On the authority of ‘A’isha, Mother of the Believers:
The Prophet (ﷺ) used to recite the following prayer upon those who were unwell: 'Allāhumma rabbi al-nās adhhib al-ba's, wasfi Anta al-Shafi, là shifā' a illā shifā' uka, shifā' an là yughādiru saqama: O Allāh, Lord of all humans, take away the affliction and grant healing, for You are the Healer, there is no heal but yours—grant us a cure that leaves no trace of sickness.’

“When the Prophet (ﷺ) fell sick at the end of his life, I took his hand and wiped it over his body and recited these words. He withdrew his hand from mine and said: ‘O Allāh, forgive me and give me the best company,’ and those were his last words.”[18]

On solitude and self-isolation [iv]

❖ ‘Uqba b. ‘Āmir said:

سأقث: يا رسول الله ما النجاة؟ قال: أمسِكَ عليكَ لسانَكَ، وليسعْكَ بيتُك، وابكِ على خطيئتِكَ

I asked the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), “How can salvation be achieved?” He replied, “Control your words, keep to your home, and weep over your sins.”[19]

On upholding people’s rights [v]

❖ ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

كلُّكم راعٍ، وكلُّكم مسؤولٌ عن رعيَّتِه، فالإمامُ راعٍ، وهو مسؤولٌ عن رعيَّتِه، والرجلُ راعٍ في أهلِه، وهو مسؤولٌ عن رعيّتِه، والمرأةُ راعيةٌ في بيتِ زوجِها، وهي مسؤولةٌ عن رعيَّتِها

“All of you are guardians and are responsible for your duties. The ruler is responsible for his subjects, the man is in charge of his family, the woman is responsible for her husband’s house and their children. All of you are guardians and are accountable for your responsibilities.”[20]

❖ Abū Huraira reported that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said:

عَلَيْكَ السَّمْعَ والطّاعَةَ في عُسْرِكَ ويُسْرِكَ، ومَنْشَطِكَ ومَكْرَهِكَ، وأَثَرَةٍ عَلَيْكَ

“It is obligatory upon you to listen to and obey the authorities during prosperity and adversity; whether you are willing or unwilling, even when someone is given undue privileges over you.”[21]

❖ Anas b. Mālik reported that Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

أَنْتُمْ أَعْلَمُ بأَمْرِ دُنْياكُمْ

“You have better knowledge and expertise in the material affairs of the world.”[22]

❖ It was narrated from ‘Amr b. al-Ās that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said:

مَنْ تَطَبَّبَ وَلَمْ يُعْلَمْ مِنْهُ طِبٌّ قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ فَهُوَ ضَامِنٌ

“Whoever practices medical treatment when he is not known or qualified for it, will be held liable.”[23]

❖ Ma’mar b. ‘Abd Allāh reported Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) as saying:

لا يَحْتَكِرُ إلّ خاطِئٌ

“No-one hoards except for the crook.”[24]

On communal behaviour and good conduct [vi]

❖ ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said:

الزَاحِمَونَ يَرِحُمْهُمَ الرَحْمَنَ، ارْحَمْوهُمْ أُهْلُ الأرْزَاقِ يَرِحمُهُمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ

“The merciful are shown mercy by al-Rahmān. Be merciful to all inhabitants of the earth, and you will be shown mercy from the One above the heavens.”[25]

❖ On the authority of Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh, the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

كُلُّ مَعْرُوفٍ صَدَقةٌ

“Every act of goodness is considered an act of charity.”[26]
On the authority of Abū Shuraiḥ al-Khuzāʿī that the Prophet (ﷺ) observed:

من كان يؤمن بالله وليوم الآخر فليحصين إلى جاره؛ ومن كان يؤمن بالله وليوم الآخر فليكتم ضنفه. ومن كان يؤمن بالله وليوم الآخر فليقل فَنَّزِرُوا أو لَسَكَتُوا

“Whoever believes in Allāh and the Last Day should do good to his neighbour. Whoever believes in Allāh and the Last Day should show hospitality to his guests, and whoever who believes in Allāh and the Last Day should either convey goodness or remain silent.”[27]

Abū Mūsā al-Ash’ārī narrates that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

يمسرا ولا تمسرا، وبشروا ولا تعفروا، وتطاعة ولا تغلبوا

“Show leniency to others and do not be severe nor harsh. Give people good news and never be repugnant. Work together and do not be divided.”[28]

On the authority of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās, that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبَّ أن يَتَوَلَّى رَضَيْحٌ كَمَا يُحِبَّ أن تَوَلَّى غَزَالَهُ

“Allāh loves that His concessions are used, in the same way He likes His commandments to be upheld.”[29]

Anas b. Mālik reports that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

لا يؤمن أحدكم حتى يحب لأخيه ما يحب لنفسه

“No one of you becomes a true believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself.”[30]

Nu’mān b. Bashīr reported that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said:

مثَلُ المؤمنين في تَوَادِّهِمْ، وتَراحُمِهِمْ، وتَعاطُفِهِمْ مثَلُ الجَسَدِ إذا اشْتَكى منه عُضْوٌ تَداعى له سائِرُ الجَسَدِ بالسَّهَرِ وَالْحُمَّى

“The believers—in their mutual kindness, compassion and sympathy—are like one single body. When one of the limbs suffers, the whole body responds with restlessness and fever.”[31]

‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar reported that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said:

من كان في حاجة أخيه كان الله في حاجته، ومن فرح عن مسلم كربة، فرح الله عنه كربة من كربات يوم القيامة، ومن ستر من أعيان في مسلم، ستُر الله بيدك

“Whoever fulfils the needs of his brother, Allāh will fulfil his needs; whoever removes the troubles of his brother, Allāh will remove some of his troubles on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever conceals the shortcomings of a Muslim, Allāh will conceal his shortcomings on the Day of Resurrection.”[32]

On the authority of Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh, the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said:

خَيْرُ النَّاسِ أَنْفَعُهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ

“The best person is the one most useful to others.”[33]

Abū Sa’id narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said:

من لم يشكر الناس لم يشكر الله

“Whoever doesn’t express thanks to people, has not shown gratitude to Allāh.”[34]

A concluding chapter containing a comprehensive hadith

On the authority of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās who said:

كُنتُ خلف رسول اللَّهِ ﷺ يومًا فقال: يا غلام، إني أعلمك كلمات، أحفظ الله يحفظك، أحفظ الله تجد له، أحفظ الله تناجاه، إذا سألت قائم المشركين، وإذا استمعت فأطعه الله، وإذا استمعت فأطعه الله، يا أبا، يا غلام، أحفظ الله تناجاه، أحفظ الله تجد له، إني أعلمك كلمات، أحفظ الله يحفظك، إني أعلمك كلمات، أحفظ الله يحفظك، إني أعلمك كلمات، أحفظ الله يحفظك، إني أعلمك كلمات، أحفظ الله يحفظك

One day I was behind the Prophet (ﷺ) riding on the same mount and he said, “Young man, I shall give you some words of advice: Be mindful of Allāh and Allāh will protect you. Be mindful of Allāh and you will find Him before you. If you ask, then ask Allāh alone; and if you seek help, then seek help from Allāh alone. Know that if the entire world comes together to benefit you in any way, they would not be able to do so except with what Allāh has already prescribed for you; and if they were to come together to harm you in any way, they would not be able to do so except with what Allāh has already prescribed against you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried.”[41]
Conclusion

From the above discussion and analysis, it is crystal clear that Islam never allows ignorance and superstition, etc. regarding a disease be it a common, epidemic, pandemic, or infectious one. However, Islam holds that such diseases may be a consequence of the sins committed by people who are warned by the almighty through such diseases that could be overcome by people through care, safety, precaution, etc. as well as through repentance of sins. The hadith testifies this as the following:

On plagues and trials, along with an encouragement to be patient and to anticipate Allāh’s reward [vi]

❖ ‘Ā’isha, Mother of the Believers, said:
ما أحب أن يُصِيبُ المُسْلِمَ، مِن نَصَبٍ ووصَبٍ، ولّ هَمٍّ ولّ حُزْنٍ ولّ أذًى ولّ غَمٍّ، حتّى الشَّوْكَةِ يُشاكُها، إلّ كَفَّرَ اللََُّّ بها مِن خَطاياهُ
“Never is a believer afflicted with discomfort, illness, anxiety, grief or mental anguish, or even something as trivial as the pricking of a thorn, except that Allāh will expiate his sins on account of his patience.”[5]

❖ Abū Huraira reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:
إذا مَرِضَ العَبْدُ، أوْ سافَرَ، كُتِبَ له مِثْلُ ما كانَ يَعْمَلُ مُقِيمًا صَحِيحًا
“When a slave of Allāh suffers from illness or goes on a journey, he is credited with an equal reward of whatever good works he used to do when he was healthy or at home.”[6]
References

[ii], [iii], [iv], [v], [vi] https://www.islam21c.com/islamic-thought/40-hadith-for-pandemics/?__cf_chl_jschl_tk__=880e56e9b4d693e63a55be21907710550b2e5e4b-1586235915-0-AfN-nsOd7qNHTOc32BfwI73C_09_45nGaSJgJSFGeMF7SqRBuAk-r4XFrexNv_71BGRNtK1Jngq0ffGsPtLgDsbmJXswGS5M9OTKOcnJVsNXVA8qs9icsxiOEfkFrdyKACnxLQ7PKZVUpTevigyg-NccTrVprAizXaGn6J_n8A9kwq7gdPSr3gt8qPbVKYut_pYoa9-CmfBXEG3NYad7JkHALrF4qmInkUGNW7_E-a82K_HTS6uPSJZs5oRjbcSKUo93L16ocQ9mTwcWODE4vEonQYVSZgj0lz8mq0cvYbwZLFFNpL3ePas8KBDVlglWJ5l0XxgF9EtkHv86VercVsf-TydvSDwTMgPiOaq4EdEeG0MoJbuhNdH9uoxJgdY4JvAberiNtY8B3MCJYC Retrieved on 07 March 2020