
COVID-19 PANDEMIC BLESSING OR AFFLICTION: REFLECTION ON THE QUR'ĀNIC IMPERATIVE ACTS IN THEIR PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: *The recent Coronavirus disease Covid-19 is the illness caused by a novel coronavirus and now called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV). The main focus of the present study is reflection on the Qur'ānic imperative acts in their pragmatic perspective. This global pandemic encompassed the whole world swiftly hence the world's natural reaction to this epidemic is to guess and explore the root causes of this infectious disease. Different people have different opinions according to their religious teachings, experience, observation, background knowledge, social, and cultural perspectives. None can give a final word about its reasons as all such epidemics are Allah's 'Hikmah' (wisdom) and only Allah Subhanahu wata'ala (SWT) knows His own intentions in such catastrophe and vast disaster. They may be interpreted as punishment of our evil deeds and at the same time realization and a reminder to return to the teachings of the Supreme Being and ultimate reward. Moreover, the suffering that reminds us of Allah (God) is better for our soul than His Blessings that result in His disobedience and thanklessness due to our love and attachment to this ephemeral world ignoring Allah Almighty's guidance. The Holy Qur'ān and the Bible make it clear implicitly and explicitly that the disbelievers are generally punished and at the same time believers are tested. The disease of Hazrat Ayub (Job), a just man, is the best example (Al-Qur'ān 21:83). God allows natural disasters to happen because, in His infinite Wisdom, He knows that they can serve His purpose of bringing souls to eternal success. Out of evil Allah brings good.*

KEYWORDS: Pandemic, blessing, affliction, reflection, Qur'ānic imperative, speech acts, pragmatic.

INTRODUCTION

The word "Pandemic" originates from the Greek pan meaning "all" and demos "the people"; and the word is commonly taken to refer to a widespread epidemic of contagious disease throughout a country or one or more continents at the same time (Honigsbaum, 2009). However, the internationally accepted definition of a pandemic as it appears in the Dictionary of Epidemiology is straightforward and well-known: "an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people" (Harris, 2000). A February study of nearly 140 patients at the Zhongnan Hospital of Wuhan University in China identified a typical pattern of symptoms associated with

COVID-19. About 99% of the patients developed a high temperature, while more than half experienced fatigue and a dry cough. About a third also experienced muscle pain and difficulty in breathing.

The most common symptoms of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment. More rarely, the disease can be serious and even fatal. Older people, and people with other medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), may be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill. It starts with a fever. That's the most common symptom among people who get the coronavirus that's sweeping the world. At early stage the symptoms may not be felt after a person has been infected. A recent study found that the virus' average incubation period is about five days. Once symptoms do appear, they can be similar to those of pneumonia.

The divine theory of disease, asserts that illness is punishment sent by an angry god as chastisement for disobedience or sin (Snowden, 2019 p. 10). The existing situation is alarming for the whole world. We need to find its cure and medication whatever is possible but at the same time a sincere and serious reflection is inevitable at all levels worldwide either our religious, social and cultural life is aligned with the teachings of revealed Messages from Allah (SWT) or otherwise. The history of mankind is self-evident that Allah's Blessings for the humanity are always there but at the same time His punishment for our evil deeds is well recorded. The world of today needs ponder over the antonyms like humanity and animality, humanism and animalism, spirituality and bestiality, blessing and damnation, and so on and ultimately return to Allah (SWT) with whole-hearted repentance. We cannot apprehend and comprehend Allah's 'Wisdom' حكمة. Many Prophets had miracles, but they were time bound. Their miracles do not exist now, but the miracle of the Qur'an is perpetual. It will continue until the end of the world and it is available for all to see.

Linguistic theories can apply to the Quranic discourse as an example of holy books. Nelson (2001) summarizes the unique linguistic richness of the Holy Quran when saying that, "the beauty of Quranic language and style is itself considered a proof of the Divine origin of the text." The speech acts theory is one of these linguistic theories that apply to discourse in all languages including Arabic. Nonetheless, speech acts are usually investigated when they occur in daily conversations or political discourse. Few studies analyze speech acts in religious discourse, like that of the Quran, the Bible, or the Torah. That is because Allah's miraculous language is not like any human language as Allah challenges people to draft even one verse like the verses in the Quran. In essence, it shows how imperative sentences used in the Quran can provide several functions and pragmatic meanings in addition to explicit commands or requests.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A pandemic is an epidemic of disease that spreads across a large region, for instance multiple continents, or worldwide. Throughout history, there have been a number of pandemics of

diseases such as smallpox and tuberculosis. One of the most devastating pandemics was the Black Death (also known as The Plague), which killed an estimated 75–200 million people in the 14th century. Other notable pandemics include the 1918 influenza pandemic (Spanish flu) and the 2009 flu pandemic (H1N1). Current pandemics include HIV/AIDS and the 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic. A new strain of coronavirus which originated in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, in late December 2019, has caused a cluster of cases of an acute respiratory disease, which is referred to as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

According to media reports, the major outbreaks of COVID-19 have occurred in the United States, central China, Western Europe, and Iran. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization characterized the spread of COVID-19 as a pandemic. The simple reason is carelessness and absence of appropriate medical tests, medicine and spread of evil in different forms. WHO COVID-19 updates on June 27, 2020 are that confirmed cases: 9653048; confirmed death toll: 49, 1000; and number of the countries badly affected: 216.

Infectious diseases result in 25% of the annual global deaths (Dry and Leach 2010). Epidemics arising from these diseases are unpredictable, carry uncertain, varying risks, and narratives in different contexts (Scoones 2010). Pandemics are for the most part disease outbreaks that become widespread as a result of the spread of human-to-human infection. There have been many significant disease outbreaks and pandemics recorded in history, including Spanish Flu, Hong Kong Flu, SARS, H7N9, Ebola, Zika (WHO, 2011b) (Rewar, Mirdha, & Rewar, 2015) (Maurice, 2016). The pandemic related crises have been associated with enormous negative impacts on health, economy, society and security of national and global communities.

Covid-19 marks the return of a very old and familiar enemy. Throughout history, nothing has killed more human beings than the viruses, bacteria and parasites that cause disease. Mass killers – for example, take the mosquito-borne disease malaria. It has stalked humanity for thousands of years, and while death tolls have dropped significantly over the past 20 years, it still snuffs out nearly half a million people every year. However, catastrophes can change the course of humanity. The plague of Justinian struck in the 6th Century and killed as many as 50 million people, perhaps half the global population at the time. Smallpox may have killed as many as 300 million people in the 20th Century alone, even though an effective vaccine – the world's first – had been available since 1796.

Healthcare was much more fragmented then, too. In the industrialized countries, most doctors either worked for themselves or were funded by charities or religious institutions, and many people had no access to them at all. Virus was a relatively new concept in 1918, and when the flu arrived medics were almost helpless. They had no reliable diagnostic test, no effective vaccine, no antiviral drugs and no antibiotics – which might have treated the bacterial complications of the flu that killed most of its victims, in the form of pneumonia. Public health measures – especially social distancing measures such as quarantine that we're employing again today – could be effective, but they were often implemented too late, because flu was not a reportable disease in 1918.

The lesson that health authorities took away from the 1918 catastrophe was that it was neither reasonable to blame individuals for catching an infectious disease, nor to treat them in isolation. The 1920s saw many governments embracing the concept of socialized medicine – healthcare for all, free at the point of delivery. Russia was the first country to put in place a centralized public healthcare system, which it funded via a state-run insurance scheme, but Germany, France and the UK eventually followed them. The U.S. took a different route, preferring employer-based insurance schemes – which began to proliferate from the 1930s on – but all of these nations took steps to consolidate healthcare, and to expand access to it, in the post-flu years.

A hundred years on from the 1918 flu, the WHO is offering a global response to a global threat. But the WHO is underfunded by its member nations, many of which have ignored its recommendations – including the one not to close borders. COVID-19 has arrived at a time when European nations are debating whether their healthcare systems, now creaking under the strain of larger, aging populations, are still fit for purpose, and when the US is debating just how universal its system really is. Depending on how bad this new pandemic gets, it may force a rethink in both regions. In the U.S., for example, we have already seen heated discussion of the costs and availability of COVID-19 testing, which could help revive the proposals to make healthcare more affordable.

We have to think that we have to change our mind-set and work together as a human species to be organized to care for one another, to realize that the health of the most vulnerable people among us is a determining factor for the health of all of us, and, if we aren't prepared to do that, we'll never, ever be prepared to confront these devastating challenges to humanity. It doesn't show not only the dark side of society but also the heroic side. A really good example is our doctors, nurses and other paramedical staff in the pandemic crisis. They put their lives and their futures at risk for no self-interest whatsoever and no reward, but purely because they were committed to defending the lives and health of the weakest people in the world.

Now another aspect of the literature related to the present study is “imperative speech acts and their pragmatic aspects”. The term imperative is used in a number of ways in the linguistics literature. In one use, imperative is a semantic modality. Imperatives are directives conveying an illocutionary force of commanding, prohibiting, suggesting, permitting, or requesting by the speaker. In speech act theory, a locutionary act is the action of making a meaningful utterance and illocutionary act is performing an intentional utterance, and perlocutionary act talks about producing the effect of the meaningful, intentional utterance. Moreover, "Anything that can be meant can be said" is the core of the speech act theory (Searle, 1969). It is considered to be one of the most pragmatic theories that researchers have studied in the recent years, and it adds a great value to linguistic universals since all speakers employ speech acts to speak their minds and express their ideas. Austin, 1962, is the first to talk about speech acts as part of the pragmatic theories in a clear and innovative way. He thinks that actions can be achieved through words like ordering, requesting, apologizing, promising, etc., and the speaker expects a kind of reaction on the part of the listener.

A speech act has three elements: (i) Locutionary act: The utterance of grammatical constituents, (ii) Illocutionary act: The speaker's intention and attempt to achieve certain "communicative purposes" such as promising, warning, greeting, reminding, warning, commanding, prohibiting, etc., (Nemani & Rasekh, 2013). Despite the fact that one illocutionary act can be expressed through different linguistic patterns, Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) think that laypeople associate certain speech acts with particular structures. For instance, commands and requests are often bounded to imperatives. Consequently, Levinson (1983) suggests that we should distinguish between the three types of sentences; imperatives, interrogative, and declarative and the illocutions of commands, questions, orders, requests, assertions, etc., (iii) Perlocutionary act: The effect that the speaker intends to have on the hearer's feelings, actions, or thoughts (Nemani & Rasekh, 2013). The speaker can persuade, puzzle, influence, embarrass, delight, or entertain the hearer (Vanderveken & Kubo, 2002). The difference between illocutionary act and perlocutionary act is that the former can be discovered directly from the utterance and the way it is realized, but the latter depends on the surrounding conditions of the utterance realization (Levinson, 1983).

Moreover, pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics and semiotics that studies the ways in which context contributes to meaning. Secondly, pragmatics is the study of how context affects meaning, such as how sentences are interpreted in certain situations (or the interpretation of linguistic meaning in context). Linguistic context is a discourse that precedes a sentence to be interpreted and situational context is knowledge about the world. In the following sentences, the kids have eaten already and surprisingly, they are hungry, the linguistic context helps to interpret the second sentence depending on what the first sentence says. The situational context helps to interpret the second sentence because it is common knowledge that humans are not usually hungry after eating. Thirdly, pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on conversational implicature (the action of implying a meaning beyond the literal sense of what is explicitly stated. For example, saying the picture is nice and implying I don't like the frame). This is a process in which the speaker implies and a listener infers meaning(s). Very simply, Pragmatics does not deal with language as such but with language use and the relationships between language form and language use.

In a word, pragmatics studies language that is not directly spoken. Instead, the speaker hints at or suggests a meaning, and the listener assumes the correct intention of the speaker. In a sense, pragmatics is seen as an understanding between people to obey certain rules of interaction. In everyday language, the meanings of words and phrases are constantly implied and not explicitly stated. In certain situations, words can have a certain meaning. We might think that words always have a specifically defined meaning, but that is not always the case. Pragmatics studies how words can be interpreted in different ways with different meanings based on the context.

Al-Saidi (2016) based on Searle (1969) and Baker (2011) defines the pragmatic function as "the illocutionary force a given speech act entails in addition to the meaning it expresses and it refers to the embedded associative connotations of a word or an expression that carries

implicit meanings". In a relevant study, Mawadda, (2016) studied commissive utterances in the translation of surah Joseph pragmatically. The researcher focused on the types of commissives in the said surah and the politeness strategies utilized. Al-Saidi, et al. (2013), attempt to investigate the act of prohibition to show how this kind of speech act is used in the Qur'an and the Bible. The researchers analyzed the act of prohibition syntactically, semantically and pragmatically.

Hypothesis

The present Covid-19 is blessing and affliction at the same time for the whole world irrespective of their religion, place, power and status.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study are:

1. Is Covid-19 pandemic blessing or affliction?
2. What type of reflection specifically on the Qur'anic imperatives is going on in the world?
3. What are the lessons that the people may learn through this pandemic?

Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Explore either the pandemic covid-19 is blessing or affliction,
2. Determine the level of reflection on the Qur'anic imperatives.
3. Find out some lessons that the humanity is expected to learn.

Significance of the study

This study is significant as it deals with the prevailing situation of coronavirus worldwide. This pandemic is really alarming one for the whole humanity and proving an eye opener for us. If we learn some lessons from the existing scenario the future world may be different with positive attitude worldwide and at all levels making this short-lived life meaningful.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study used descriptive method to explore maximum available literature on the prevailing situation of Covid-19 in the world. The researcher explored specifically religious, cultural and social perspectives related to the present topic.

Data Collection and Analysis

Man is the main topic in the Holy Qur'an because Allah (SWT) loves His slaves. All revealed Messages, Prophets and Messengers have been sent for guidance of mankind. The collected data includes specifically some Qur'anic verses as the topic demands to answer the research questions and objectives of the present study. The Qur'anic verses have been displayed in four different tables – Table-1: The Most Celebrated Prophets' (AS) Suffering a Blessing in Disguise; Table-2: Pandemics as Affliction; Table-3: Pandemics as Blessing and Table-4:

Imperative Acts as Repentance' Reminders. Moreover, for better understanding and the ease of the reader, some explanation on the relevant Qur'anic verses has been given.

The Most Celebrated Prophets' Suffering a Blessing in Disguise

The life stories of five Prophets raised in rank by Allāh (SWT): Prophet Nuh (AS), Prophet Ibrahim AS, Prophet Musa AS, Prophet Isa AS, and Prophet Muhammad (SAW). These five Prophets were all given the highest of standings in the eyes of Allāh (SWT) because of their response with strong will and determination towards the trials and tribulations that He gifted them with. The companion, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas asked, "O Messenger of Allah, which of the people are most sorely tested?" He said, "The Prophets, then the next best and the next best. A man will be tested in accordance with his level of religious commitment. If his religious commitment is strong, he will be tested more severely, and if his religious commitment is weak, he will be tested in accordance with his religious commitment. Calamity will keep befalling a person until he walks on the earth *even* with no sin on him."

Some Qur'anic imperative acts with pragmatic meanings are as follows:

Table – 1: Prophets' suffering and hardship

Qur'anic Verse	Qur'anic imperative acts	Pragmatic meanings
71:1	We sent Noah to his People (with the Command): "Do thou warn thy People before there comes to them a grievous Penalty."	<u>Noah (AS)</u> Guidance past lesson
71:5-6	He said: "O my Lord! I have called to my People night and day: "But my call only increases (their) flight (from the Right).	Disbelievers' stubbornness
71:26-27	And Noah, said: "O my Lord! Leave not of the Unbelievers, a single one on earth! "For, if Thou dost leave (any of) them, they will but mislead Thy devotees, and they will breed none but wicked ungrateful ones.	Disbelievers produce disbelievers
11:32	They said: "O Noah! thou hast disputed with us, and (much) hast thou prolonged the dispute with us: now bring upon us what thou threatenest us with, if thou speakest the truth!?"	Challenge/Inviting punishment
21:68	They said, "Burn him and protect your gods, If ye do (anything at all)!"	<u>Ibrahim (AS)</u> gods helplessness
21:69	We said, "O Fire! be thou cool, and (a means of) safety for Abraham!"	Allah is Almighty
37:106	Verily, that indeed was the manifest trial	Great people great trial
28:7	So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses: "Suckle (thy child), but when thou hast fears about him, cast him into the river, but fear not nor grieve: for We shall restore him to thee, and We shall make him one of Our apostles."	<u>Musa (AS)</u> Allah Almighty is the best planner.
28:9	The wife of Pharaoh said: "(Here is) joy of the eye, for me and for thee: slay him not. It may be that he will be use to	Allah's Hikmah/Wisdom/ planning always wins

	us, or we may adopt him as a son." And they perceived not (what they were doing)!	
28:20	And there came a man, running, from the furthest end of the City. He said: "O Moses! the Chiefs are taking counsel together about thee, to slay thee: so get thee away, for I do give thee sincere advice."	No harm if Allah saves someone
19:30	He (Jesus) said: "Verily! I am a slave of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet;	<u>Isa (AS)</u> Response to Non-believing Jews
19:36	(Jesus said): 'And verily Allah is my Lord and your Lord. So worship Him (Alone). That is the Straight Path. (Allah Religion of Islamic Monotheism which He did ordain for all of His Prophets)."	Islamic Monotheism
3:54	And (the unbelievers) plotted and planned, and Allah too planned, and the best of planners is Allah.	No harm is possible if Allah saves
3:55	Behold! Allah said: "O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself and clear thee (of the falsehoods) of those who blaspheme; I will make those who follow thee superior to those who reject faith, to the Day of Resurrection: Then shall ye all return unto me, and I will judge between you of the matters wherein ye dispute.	Allah is the most Supreme planner. Allah's promises
46:35	Therefore patiently persevere, as did (all) apostles of inflexible purpose; and be in no haste about the (Unbelievers). On the Day that they see the (Punishment) promised them, (it will be) as if they had not tarried more than an hour in a single day. (Thine but) to proclaim the Message: but shall any be destroyed except those who transgress?	<u>Muhammad (SAW)</u> How to deal with disbelievers. You have just to convey the Message.
47:1	Those who reject Allah and hinder (men) from the Path of Allah,- their deeds will Allah render astray (from their mark).	Warning and realization
42:13	The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah - the which We have sent by inspiration to thee - and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein: to those who worship other things than Allah, hard is the (way) to which thou callest them. Allah chooses to Himself those whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him). (Islamic Monotheism)	Guidance (Islamic Monotheism)
17:81	And say: "Truth has (now) arrived, and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish."	Ultimately Truth won

DISCUSSIONS

Prophet Nuh (AS), called upon his own family and tribe to worship Allāh (SWT) for 950 years, and all he got from them that was ridicule. Even after hundreds of years, less than two hundred people responded to his call, and even his own wife and child turned their backs on him. Did he lose hope, as any of us probably would? No, he was patient. Patience and contentment were also fiercely held by the other Prophets of the strong will as they bore the weight of their Prophetic Duties, and these were their medals of honour. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an, "And construct the ship under Our Eyes and with Our Inspiration, and address Me not on behalf of those who did wrong; they are surely to be drowned" (11:37). To reply to the mockeries of the disbelievers, Prophet Nuh (AS) said: "And you are going to know who will get a punishment that will disgrace him [on earth] and upon whom will descend an enduring punishment [in the Hereafter]" (11:39). Eventually when the Ark was built, Prophet Noah (AS) and his believers patiently waited for the command of Allah (SWT). Allah revealed to him that when water miraculously gushed forth from the oven at Prophet Noah's (AS) house that would be the sign of the start of the flood, and the sign for Prophet Nuh (AS) to take action.

Prophet Ibrahim AS was in Exile since his early age. In his adulthood, he was thrown alive into a fire that blazed for days by a wayward king. He was later tested with the absence of a child in his first marriage, and when Allāh (SWT) finally gave him a son through his second, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was then commanded to lay down his son as a sacrifice. From his youth Ibrahim (AS) wholeheartedly believed in one God and rejected the worship of the idols, in fact the Qur'an talks about how he challenged his father, family, and people around him and even debated with the Emperor Nimrod. The glorious Quran tells the story as follows "O Prophet have you not thought about the man who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord, because God had given him power to rule? When Ibrahim said, it is my Lord, who gives life and death, he said I too give life and death. So Ibrahim said God brings the Sun from the East: so bring it from the West. The disbeliever was dumbfounded: God does not guide those who do evil" (Qur'an 2:258). He denounced their polytheism and attempts to associate idols with the Almighty Lord. The Quran shows Ibrahim's passion for God and his shunning of the idols when it narrates the story of Ibrahim smashing the idols. Ibrahim said "How can you worship what can neither benefit nor harm you, instead of Allah? Shame on you and on the things you worship instead of Allah (SWT). Have you no sense? They said, burn him and avenge your gods if you are going to do the right thing" (Qur'an 21: 66-68).

The incredible story of Musa (AS), in its totality, represents the eternal struggle and conflict between truth and falsehood; between tyrants and the tyrannized; between oppressors and the oppressed. "Allah took Musa from his mother, only to return him with his safety guaranteed. He removed Musa from Egypt, only to return as a Messenger. He cornered Bani Israel between the sea and pharaoh's army drowned only to eliminate their enemy from existence." Prophet Musa (AS) had to face the tyrant that was Fir'aun and lead a tribe that constantly lost their way. The Qur'an mentions many tyrants, but none more tyrannical than the Pharaoh of Moses. Where is he now? Where are Qaaron and Haamaan? Where are 'Aad and Thamud? Where are Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab? Allah says in the Qur'an, "And say, 'Truth has come, and

falsehood has departed. Indeed is falsehood, [by nature], ever bound to depart.'" (Qur'an 17:81) We learn from Musa (AS), as well as his mother, unflinching trust in Allah. After he had done as Allah commanded, and Bani Israel obeyed Musa (AS) in leaving Egypt, Pharaoh pursued them with his ill intention to eliminate them in their entirety. But who was it who was in fact eliminated in their entirety?

Prophet 'Isa (AS), who was raised by a single parent, faced poverty, and was slandered by his own community. The Jewish priests felt this child Jesus was dangerous, for they felt that the people would turn their worship to Allah the Almighty alone, displacing the existing Jewish tenets. Consequently, they would lose their authority over the people. Therefore, they kept the miracle of Jesus's speech in infancy as a secret and accused Mary (AS) of a great misdeed. The Glorious Qur'an affirms that Allah the Exalted did not permit the people of Israel to kill Jesus or crucify him. What happened was that Allah saved him from his enemies and raised him to heaven. They never killed Jesus; they killed someone else. Allah the Almighty declared: And because of their saying (in boast), "We killed Messiah Jesus, son of Mary the Messenger of Allah," - but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but the resemblance of Jesus was put over another man (and they killed that man), and those who differ therein are full of doubts. They have no (certain) knowledge, they follow nothing but conjecture. For surely; they killed him not (i.e. Jesus, son of Mary): But Allah raised him (Jesus) up (with his body and soul) unto Himself (and he is in the heavens). And Allah is Ever All-Powerful, all-Wise.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW), is the best model for learning the lesson through his suffering with patience and determination who lost his loved ones one after another even before he was born, and at an early stage, who suddenly found himself being called a liar even though he had been known all his life as "Ameen and Sadiq" (the trustworthy one) He (SAW) had left Makkah in the cover of the night, all while being so poor to the extent that he had to tie stones to his stomach to soften the sharpness of hunger. If this is the life Allāh (SWT) had written for the most beloved of His creations, then perhaps we should rethink why trials are but necessary in our lives. There are many reasons why Allāh (SWT) would test the Prophets, and us, with hardship. Some of trials are to cleanse our soul, to teach us gratefulness, and to remind us to remember Him. When faced with hardships, we should try to remember and turn to what the Prophets taught us: "to bear them with patience and contentment, by constantly turning to Allāh (SWT)." The Prophets also experienced certain tests and trials. The Prophet Ayub (peace be upon him) was also one of the celebrated Prophets. His example illustrates: that those who remain patient under the stress of all circumstances, are never deprived of high rewards. The Holy Quran affirms: "And surely we try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and crops, but give glad-tidings to the steadfast, who when a misfortune befalls them, say lo! we are Allah's (possession of Allah) and to Him shall we surely return. Such are they on whom are blessings from their Lord, and mercy. Such are the rightly-guided" (Qur'an 2: 155-157).

For those who have emigrated, and were evicted from their homes, and were harmed for striving in My cause, and have fought and got killed, I will surely wipe out their bad deeds and admit them into Gardens beneath which rivers flow; a reward from Allah. Allah has the best reward (3:195). At the time this was happening it may have seemed like great hardship

and adversity. However, being driven out of his hometown was the turning point in his life. In Medinah, his followers increased manifold so did his power. After a few years, he was able to form a powerful army and retake Makkah and destroy all the stone idols at the Kaaba.

Pandemics as Affliction

Allah ever commands both believers and disbelievers to opt for success in this world and the life after death. The calamities, catastrophe, disaster whatever are in fact clear reminders for mankind to realize their transgression, come back, repent and ask for the forgiveness of Allah the Most Gracious the Most Merciful, the Almighty. But when they prove heedless then sooner or later their punishment is certain. This temporal life is a continuous test for man either he follows Satan or Allah's commands. The verses 34:21 and 35:45 nicely depict the Qur'anic imperative acts in their pragmatic perspective: (i) 34:21: "But he (Iblis/Satan) had no authority over them, except that We might test the man who believes in the Hereafter from him who is in doubt concerning it: and thy Lord doth watch over all things" (34:21), (ii) "If Allah were to punish men according to what they deserve. He would not leave on the back of the (earth) a single living creature: but He gives them respite for a stated Term: when their Term expires, verily Allah has in His sight all His Servants." (35:45)

Table-2: Pandemics as Affliction

Qur'anic Verse	Qur'anic Imperative Acts	Pragmatic Meaning
17:22	Take not with Allah another object of worship; or thou (O man!) wilt sit in disgrace and destitution.	Warning (believe in Islamic Monotheism)
79:17	"Go thou to Pharaoh for he has indeed transgressed all bounds:	Call to Islamic Monotheism
84:24	So announce to them a Penalty Grievous,	Warning to stubborn disbelievers
81:26	When whither go ye? (Then where are you going?)	Come back to Allah (SWT)
81:27	Verily this is no less than a Message to (all) the Worlds:	Guidance/ invitation
36:59	"And O ye in sin! Get ye apart this Day!	Final decision of punishment
43:89	But turn away from them, and say "Peace!" But soon shall they know!	Non-believers' destiny
44:10	Then watch thou for the Day that the sky will bring forth a kind of smoke (or mist) plainly visible,	Disbelief in Islamic Monotheism and its punishment
52:31	Say thou: "Await ye!- I too will wait along with you!"	Warning and promise of punishment
2:41	And believe in what I reveal, confirming the revelation which is with you, and be not the first to reject Faith therein, nor sell My Signs for a small price; and fear Me, and Me alone.	The Qur'an confirms Torah and Gospel. Don't misinterpret the Revealed Messages for worldly gains.
2:42	And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when ye know (what it is).	Disbelievers know the Truth but they are hiding it intentionally.

3:85	If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost (All spiritual good).	Allah's Religion is only Islam (Monotheism). Disbelievers are losers. All prophets are Muslim. (Also listen Prof. Moshe Sharon, Hebrew University of Jerusalem Lecture on Islam, Sep. 11, 2015).
2:135	They say: "Become Jews or Christians if ye would be guided (To salvation)." Say thou: "Nay! (I would rather) the Religion of Abraham the True, and he joined not gods with Allah."	Abraham (AS) religion is Islamic Monotheism.
2:140	Or do ye say that Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes were Jews or Christians? Say: Do ye know better than Allah. Ah! who is more unjust than those who conceal the testimony they have from Allah. but Allah is not unmindful of what ye do!	Pragmatic aspect of the verse is that "all Prophets are Muslim". How can Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac Jacob and other Tribes be Jews or Christians?
3:65 *	Ye People of the Book! Why dispute ye about Abraham, when the Law and the Gospel Were not revealed Till after him? Have ye no understanding?	Abraham (AS) lived long ago and before the Revelation of Law and Gospel. Hence he cannot be a Jew or Christian.
3:59	The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: "Be". And he was.	Allah is "All-knower of every creation" (36:79).
3:71	Ye People of the Book! Why do ye clothe Truth with falsehood, and conceal the Truth, while ye have knowledge?	Disbelievers conceal the Truth intentionally.

Discussion

Ye People of the Book! Why dispute ye about Abraham, when the Law and the Gospel Were not revealed Till after him? Have ye no understanding? (3:65) Allah censures the Jews and Christians for their dispute with Muslims over Ibrahim Al-Khalil and the claim each group made that he was one of them. Muhammad bin Ishaq bin Yasar reported that Ibn `Abbas said, "The Christians of Najran and Jewish rabbis gathered before the Messenger of Allah and disputed in front of him. The rabbis said, ` Ibrahim was certainly Jewish.' The Christians said, ` Certainly, Ibrahim was Christian.' So Allah sent down, (O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Why do you dispute about Ibrahim,) meaning, ` How is it that you, Jews, claim that Ibrahim was Jew, although he lived before Allah sent down the Tawrah to Musa How is it that you, Christians, claim that Ibrahim was Christian, although Christianity came after his time" This is why Allah said, (Have you then no sense) Allah then said, (Verily, you are those who have disputed about that of which you have knowledge. Why do you then dispute concerning that of which you have no knowledge) This Ayah criticizes those who argue and dispute without knowledge, just as the Jews and Christians did concerning Ibrahim (AS). Reflect on "Islamic Monotheism" and return to Allah SWT the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful and Almighty. The Qur'an used the word din for all such traditions in Quran 3:85

(And whoever seeks a religion [din] other than Islam—it will not be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter) and Quran 109:6 (unto you your religion [din], and unto me, mine).

If We grant the human being a blessing he turns away and distances himself, yet when adversity touches him he implores profusely (Qur'an 41:51). Many people are either oblivious of, or need to be reminded, of God's absolute authority and our true place in this huge universe. Hardship and adversity are reminders of just how weak and fragile the human being is. As such, they serve as reminders of how much we need Allah (SWT) in every minute of our lives. O people, you are the ones who are in dire need of Allah (SWT), whereas Allah (SWT) is the Rich and Praiseworthy One (Qur'an 35:15)

In Qur'anic idiom, "Islam" (lit. "submission") is the term for the religion (din) shared and proclaimed by all the Prophets. Noah, upon him peace, said to his people: I am commanded to be of those who surrender [to Him] (Quran 10:72). Jacob, upon him peace, enjoined his children: so do not die save having surrendered [unto Him] (Quran 2:132). Moses, upon him peace, said to his people: O my people! If you have believed in God then trust in Him, if you have truly surrendered [unto Him]! (Quran 10:84). The disciples said to Jesus: We believe in God—bear witness that we have surrendered [unto Him]! (Quran 3:52).

Pandemics as Blessing

We cannot imagine the limits of Allah's love for man. The chain of Prophets and Messengers and the Revealed Messages are the irrefutable evidences of clear Guidance for mankind and their success in this and the eternal life. However, man has a choice how to live in this ephemeral and fleeting world.

Table-3: Pandemics as Blessing

Qur'anic Verse	Qur'anic Imperative Acts	Pragmatic Meaning
2:155	Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere,	Blessing in disguise
2:156	Who say, when afflicted with calamity: "To Allah We belong, and to Him is our return":-	Believers' belief about tests/trials
2:157	They are those on whom (Descend) blessings from Allah, and Mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance.	Blessing through test
29:2	Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, "We believe", and that they will not be tested?	Believers' belief test
29:3	We did test those before them, and Allah will certainly know those who are true from those who are false.	Passing the test is compulsory and mandatory under Allah's Law

3:92	By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love; and whatever ye give, of a truth Allah knoweth it well.	Charity is a test with reward
2:214	Or do ye think that ye shall enter the Garden (of bliss) without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? they encountered suffering and adversity, and were so shaken in spirit that even the Messenger and those of faith who were with him cried: "When (will come) the help of Allah." Ah! Verily, the help of Allah is (always) near! Test/Trial	Test/Trial loaded with Allah's Blessings
2:45	Nay, seek ((Allah)'s) help with patient perseverance and prayer: It is indeed hard, except to those who bring a lowly spirit,-	Tests demand patience
18:46	Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world: But the things that endure, good deeds, are best in the sight of thy Lord, as rewards, and best as (the foundation for) hopes.	Temptation of this ephemeral world versus good deeds for eternal rewards is a hard test.
8:25	And fear tumult or oppression, which affecteth not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong: and know that Allah is strict in punishment. Warning	Catastrophes are experienced by all but the pious people will be rewarded in the Last Judgment.
42:30	Whatever disaster strikes you is but a consequence of what your own hands have earned, but He pardons much	Punishment we are given in our worldly life cleanses us.
9:103	Take <i>Sadaqah</i> (alms) from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it, and invoke Allah for them. Verily, your invocations are a source of security for them; and Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower. (Hilali & Khan)	Allah loves helping the needy people (<i>masakin</i>)
9:104	Know they not that Allah doth accept repentance from His votaries and receives their gifts of charity, and that Allah is verily He, the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful?	Seeking forgiveness through repentance
41:51	When We bestow favours on man, he turns away, and gets himself remote on his side (instead of coming to Us); and when evil seizes him, (he comes) full of prolonged prayer!	Man's thanklessness
2:216	Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knoweth, and ye know not.	Man does not understand Allah's <i>Hikmah</i> (Wisdom/foreseeing good or bad)
8:28	And know ye that your possessions and your progeny are but a trial; and that it is Allah with Whom lies your highest reward.	Everything we are blessed with in this world is a test

21:35	Every soul shall have a taste of death: and We test you by evil and by good by way of trial, to Us must ye return.	The Day of Last Judgment is inevitable
2:66	We decreed this to be a deterrent punishment for their time and for what is to follow, and an advice for the reverent.	These tests prove preventive and discouraging for further sins.
32:21	We shall let them taste the lesser punishment before the greater punishment so that hopefully they will revert.	Lesser punishment is for mankind's repentance; return to Allah (SWT); to save from the greater punishment.

Discussion

Suffering through hardship and adversity is also a reminder for people who tend to take God's blessings for granted. Despite all the blessings given to the human by God, the human being is unappreciative and generally thankless. A little reminder in the shape of hardship or adversity may hopefully remind the human not to take God's blessings for granted and can be taken away any time as Allah (SWT) wills. If you were to count God's blessings, you could not encompass them all. The human being is indeed transgressing, unappreciative (Qur'an 14:34). It can also be said that God, being the Most just, would not punish us twice for the same sin. This means that the punishment we are given in our worldly life cleanses us and no further punishment is due in the Hereafter. The concept of cleansing the human from sins in this life is a Qur'anic truth. It can be achieved through experiencing hardship and adversity. Hardship and adversity are also decreed by God to cleanse the people of sins they have already committed. Some of the bad things that happen to us are a direct result of sins we have committed: Whatever disaster strikes you is but a consequence of what your own hands have earned, but He pardons much (Qur'an 42:30)

There are a number of reasons why God decrees hardship and adversity to befall people. Even the genuine believers experience hardship and adversity at some stage in their lives in accordance with God's wisdom and divine plan. It is God's design to subject people to various tests entailing hardship and adversity so as to test their faith, their resolve and their trust in God. To pass the test, the human must maintain his belief in God, and also his conviction that only God can relieve his hardship. The believer will always maintain his prayer and call unto God. Hardship and adversity are also decreed by God to cleanse the people of sins they have already committed. Some of the bad things that happen to us are a direct result of sins we have committed. It can also be said that God, being the Most just, would not punish us twice for the same sin. This means that the punishment we are given in our worldly life cleanses us and no further punishment is due in the Hereafter. It can also be achieved through the giving of 'sadaqa' (charity) for the specific reason of cleansing the soul from sins which have been committed. Suffering through hardship and adversity is also a reminder for people who tend to take God's blessings for granted. Despite all the blessings given to the human by God, the human being is unappreciative. A little reminder in the shape of hardship or adversity may hopefully remind the human not to take God's blessings for granted.

Adversity and hardship are also very effective reminders for those who are too much absorbed in the worldly life. Those who are too distracted by the material world are not as devoted to God as they should be. Due to their being too preoccupied with this worldly life they do not seek God nor call on God as they should. Hardship and adversity are in such case decreed in the hope that they will realize that there is more to their life than the illusive material pleasures.

Hardship and adversity are decreed by God in order to serve as deterrents against sins and unrighteousness. Once the human being is touched with hardship, illness, or any kind of adversity, the human being has time to think of what befell him. It is hoped that the adversity a person suffers will act as a deterrent, not just for him who suffered it, but for those around him so as to deter them as well from committing sins and violating God's law. Finally, hardship and adversity can be blessings in disguise. At the time of those happening, the human being who does not see the bigger picture perceives them as hardship and may wonder why God inflicts such suffering upon him. This perception is due to the inability of the human being to see the divine purpose. God who can see the bigger picture may have decreed such suffering as a blessing in disguise. It may be that you hate something when it is good for you, and it may be that you like something when it is bad for you. God knows while you do not know. We have a number of examples in the Quran of events that entailed suffering and hardship to those upon whom they were decreed. However, it was shown subsequently that they were in fact blessings in disguise:

A profound example of compassionate punishment can be found in the story of the people of the garden (aṣḥāb al-jannah) in Sūrat al-Qalam. Despite full awareness of the precedent set before them to share a portion of the garden's harvest with the poor, they conspired to deny the poor their share the night before. Then, in the early hours preceding the harvest, they agreed with one another to deny any needy person access to the garden. When they reached the garden in the morning, they saw that Allah had punished them by completely destroying their garden during the night. After initially blaming each other, they collectively took responsibility, acknowledged their mistake, and sought Allah's forgiveness saying, "Perhaps our Lord will exchange for us something better than it. Indeed, we are toward our Lord desirous" (Qur'an 68:32).

Allah (SWT) explicitly mentioned as both a test and a punishment, can be a mercy to people. Had Allah not subjected them to this "nearer punishment," they may have never turned sincerely to Allah and may have been held accountable for their crime in the afterlife.

Imperative Acts as Repentance' Reminders

There is no compulsion in religion (2:256). Man has a choice in choosing right path or wrong one. He may go for good or bad deeds and will be rewarded or punished as he deserves even equal to the weight of an atom (99:7-8).

Table-4: Imperative Acts as Repentance' Reminders

Qur'anic Verse	Qur'anic Imperative Acts	Pragmatic Meaning
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17:36	And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).	Don't follow anything without knowledge.
82:6	O man! What has made you careless about your Lord the Most Generous/Beneficent?-	Whatever He/Allah SWT did, is doing or will do is far better than what man wants. Man proved thankless.
57:21	Be ye foremost (in seeking) Forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden (of Bliss), the width whereof is as the width of heaven and earth, prepared for those who believe in Allah and His apostles: that is the Grace of Allah, which He bestows on whom he pleases: and Allah is the Lord of Grace abounding.	Seeing forgiveness from Allah (SWT) is a source of earning <i>Al-Janah</i> (Paradise)
42:47	Answer the Call of your Lord (i.e. accept the Islamic Monotheism, O mankind and jinn) before there comes from Allah SWT a Day which cannot be averted (i.e. the Day of Resurrection). You will have no refuge on that Day nor there will be for you any denying (of your crimes as they are all recorded in the Book of your deeds) (Hilali & Khan).	Warning to accept Islamic Monotheism
55:9	And observe the weight with equity and do not make the balance deficient.	Justice
2:123	Then guard yourselves against a Day when one soul shall not avail another, nor shall compensation be accepted from her nor shall intercession profit her nor shall anyone be helped (from outside).	Never forget the Day of Judgment
2:124	And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the Nations." He pleaded: "And also (Imams) from my offspring!" He answered: "But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers."	Allah's Promises never change
4:14	But those who disobey Allah and His Messenger and transgress His limits; will be admitted to a Fire, to abide therein: And they shall have a humiliating punishment.	Transgressors would be punished
30:41	Evil (sins and disobedience to Allah) has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned (by oppression and evil deeds), that He (Allah) may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return (by repenting to Allah, and begging His Pardon). (al-Hilali and Khan)	Evil doers are punished so that they repent and seek Forgiveness from Allah (SWT)
4:2	To orphans restore their property (When they reach their age), nor substitute (your) worthless things for (their) good ones; and devour not their substance (by	Allah (SWT) forbids misuse of orphans' property and wealth.

	mixing it up) with your own. For this is indeed a great sin.	
2: 219	They ask thee concerning wine and gambling. Say: "In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit." They ask thee how much they are to spend; Say: "What is beyond your needs." Thus doth Allah Make clear to you His Signs: In order that ye may consider-	Allah's command and Law are for reflection
9:84	Nor do thou ever pray for any of them that dies, nor stand at his grave; for they rejected Allah and His Messenger, and died in a state of perverse rebellion	Never pray for rebellions
3:104	Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity	Preaching results in happiness
65:5	That is the Command of Allah, which He has sent down to you: and if any one fears Allah, He will remove his ills, from him, and will enlarge his reward.	Believe in the Qur'an to attain success.
7:96	If the people of the towns had but believed and feared Allah, We should indeed have opened out to them (All kinds of) blessings from heaven and earth; but they rejected (the truth), and We brought them to book for their misdeeds	Believers are blessed but disbelievers suffer.
8:33	But Allah was not going to send them a penalty whilst thou wast amongst them; nor was He going to send it whilst they could ask for pardon.	Allah (SWT) is swift in reckoning but not in punishment.
4:161	That they took usury, though they were forbidden; and that they devoured men's substance wrongfully;- we have prepared for those among them who reject faith a grievous punishment.	The transgressors should wait for their punishment.
67:25	They ask: When will this promise be (fulfilled)? - If ye are telling the truth.	Disbelievers challenge because of their ignorance.
67:26	Say: "As to the knowledge of the time, it is with Allah alone: I am (sent) only to warn plainly in public."	The knowledge of Resurrection time is with Allah (SWT)
67:27	At length, when they see it close at hand, grieved will be the faces of the Unbelievers, and it will be said (to them): "This is (the promise fulfilled), which ye were calling for!"	Ultimately the unbelievers will face utter grief on the Day of Resurrection.
9:105	And say: "Work (righteousness): Soon will Allah observe your work, and His Messenger, and the Believers: Soon will ye be brought back to the knower of what is hidden and what is open: then will He show you the truth of all that ye did."	Man deeds would be shown on Resurrection.

Discussion

If any harm touches the human being, he implores Us on his side, sitting down or standing up. Then, when We relieve the harm from him, he carries on as if he had never implored Us about a hardship which had touched him! What the excessive ones used to do was thus adorned for them (Qur'an 10:12). Hardship and adversity are decreed by God in order to serve as deterrents against sins and unrighteousness. Once the human being is touched with hardship, illness, or any kind of adversity, the human being has time to think of what befell him. It is hoped that the adversity a person suffers will act as a deterrent, not just for him who suffered it, but for those around him so as to deter them as well from committing sins and violating God's law. We decreed this to be a deterrent punishment for their time and for what is to follow, and an advice for the reverent (Qur'an 2:66)

Allah mentions retributive punishment being executed in various ways that destroyed prior rebelling nations, "So each [nation] We seized for their sin; and among them were those upon whom We sent a storm of stones, and among them were those who were seized by the blast [from the sky], and among them were those whom We caused the earth to swallow, and among them were those whom We drowned. And Allah would not have wronged them, but it was they who were wronging themselves" (Qur'an 29:40). The second type of punishment in this life is not meant to be a decisive judgment, but a deterrent that aims to bring people back to Allah and to reform society. Allah mentions this type of punishment in the Qur'an immediately after mentioning the punishment of hell-fire. "And We will surely let them taste the nearer punishment short of the greater punishment so that perhaps they will return." (Qur'an 32:21) The companions of the Prophet (SAW) and early scholars have interpreted the "nearer punishment" as the difficulties, ailments, and general tribulations of this life that Allah subjects His servants to with the purpose of encouraging them to repent and turn back to Him (Ibn Abbas).

Allah (SWT) explicitly mentioned as both a test and a punishment, can be a mercy to people. Had Allah not subjected them to this "nearer punishment," they may have never turned sincerely to Allah and may have been held accountable for their crime in the afterlife. Moreover, an important point to be kept in mind is that it is beyond human perception to pinpoint the exact causes behind specific afflictions. Allah warns us about speaking on His behalf without knowledge, saying, "Or do you speak about Allah that which you do not know?" (Qur'an 2:80)

For a quick view of the overall approximate (not accurate) picture of Monotheism, Polytheism, Atheism, disbelievers, good and bad deeds of believers and non-believers, pie-charts have been developed by the researcher as follows:

- (i) Muslims: 23% and non-Muslims: 77%

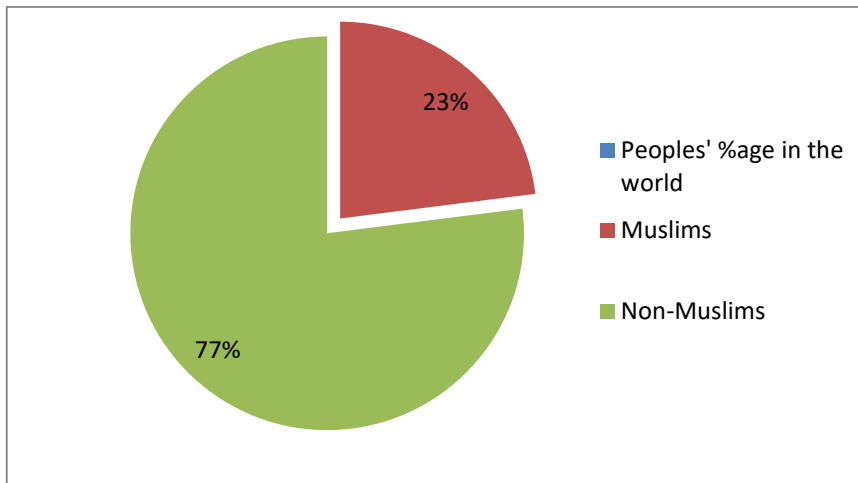


Figure 1: Muslims and non-Muslims %age in the world.

This pie-chart shows that only 23% of the world population, i.e. Muslim believes in Islamic Monotheism whereas 77% people in the world don't believe in pure Islamic Monotheism for one or the other pretext.

(ii) The next pie-chart reflects Islamic Monotheism, Jews and Christian Monotheism, Atheism (unaffiliated to any religion) and Idolaters (mushrikeen).

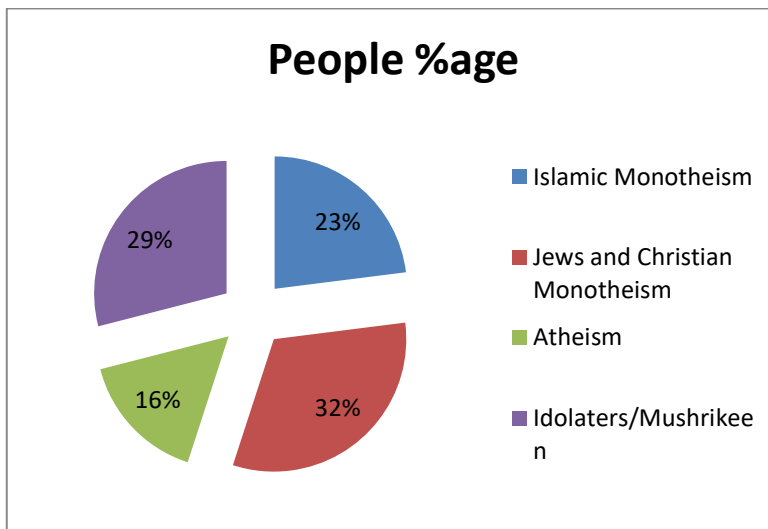


Figure-2: This figure specifically includes Muslims' Islamic Monotheism = 23%, Jews and Christian Monotheism = 32%, Atheism (unaffiliated) = 16% and Idolaters/Mushrikeen = 29%.

Social and cultural Perspectives

The existing situation is self-evident that government in all affected countries have failed to anticipate and support citizens through the social and economic impacts of pandemics, from mandatory quarantines and travel restrictions to closing schools, workplaces, and local businesses. This is an unquestionable sign of social inequality "Evaluating the interaction of

epidemics and society in the past provides background necessary to confront the questions raised by the general public during the recent challenges of SARS, avian flu and Ebola” (Snowden, 2019 p. 6) But at the same time there were also important advances in immunology and diplomacy: The flu vaccine had been developed in the 1930s and ’40s, and most of the public health agencies we recognize today, including the CDC and WHO, were established in the ’40s. Epidemics like the coronavirus outbreak are a mirror for humanity, reflecting the moral relationships that people have toward one other, the historian Frank M. Snowden says. A central concern of *Epidemics and society* is to examine not just epidemics but also the strategies society deployed at various times to combat, prevent, cure and even eradicate them” (Snowden, 2019 p. 4).

In his new book, “*Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present*,” Frank M. Snowden, a professor emeritus of history and the history of medicine at Yale, examines the ways in which disease outbreaks have shaped politics, crushed revolutions, and entrenched racial and economic discrimination. Epidemics have also altered the societies they have spread through, affecting personal relationships, the work of artists and intellectuals, and the man-made and natural environments. Gigantic in scope, stretching across centuries and continents, Snowden’s account seeks to explain, too, the ways in which social structures have allowed diseases to flourish. “Epidemic diseases are not random events that afflict societies capriciously and without warning,” he writes. “On the contrary, every society produces its own specific vulnerabilities. To study them is to understand that society’s structure, its standard of living, and its political priorities.”

Epidemics are a category of disease that seems to hold up the mirror to human beings as to who we really are. That is to say, they obviously have everything to do with our relationship to our mortality, to death, to our lives. “Such events provide important lenses to examine the affected societies and the way in which they are constructed – the relationship of human beings to one another, the moral priorities of political and religious leaders” Snowden, 2019 p. 5). They also reflect our relationships with the environment—the built environment that we create and the natural environment that responds. They show the moral relationships that we have toward each other as people, and we’re seeing that today. That’s one of the great messages that the World Health Organization keeps discussing.

The main part of preparedness to face these events is that we need as human beings to realize that we’re all in this together, that what affects one person anywhere affects everyone everywhere, that we are therefore inevitably part of a species, and we need to think in that way rather than about divisions of race and ethnicity, economic status, and all the rest of it. These are really deep philosophical, religious, and moral issues. The epidemics have shaped history in part because they’ve led human beings inevitably to think about those big questions. The outbreak of the plague, for example, raised the whole question of man’s relationship to God. Epidemics also, as we’re seeing now, have tremendous effects on social and political stability.

CONCLUSION

In the light of the research questions, objectives and collected and analyzed data of the present study, it is not difficult at this stage to conclude that sufferings occur to teach us that we must adhere to Allah's natural and moral laws. It is sometimes to punish those who violate Allah's natural or moral laws. It is to test our faith in Allah and to test our commitment to human values and charity. Whenever we encounter suffering we should ask ourselves, "Have we broken any law of Allah?" Let us study the cause of the problem and use the corrective methods. "Could it be a punishment?" Let us repent and ask forgiveness and reform our ways. "Could it be a test and trial for us?" Let us work hard to pass this test.

Believers face the sufferings with prayers, repentance and good deeds. The non-believers face the sufferings with doubts and confusions. They blame Allah or make arguments against Him. May Allah keep us on the right path, Amen! Man's realization of the purpose of the life in this ephemeral world and ultimately his return to Allah (SWT) with repentance and good deeds are the most important aspects for our reflection. We can plan everything but with certain limitations. Ever expected catastrophes are usually beyond the control of science, medical or worldly power. For example, Science can estimate the limits of an earthquake but unable to stop the earthquake. Similarly, worldly power becomes powerless, humble and ineffective at the critical moments of different natural calamity and plague.

Reflect on "Islamic Monotheism" and man's return to Allah (SWT) the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful and Almighty for the Final Judgment. The Qur'an used the word 'deen' for all such traditions (Quran 3:85) "And whoever seeks a religion 'deen' other than Islam—it will not be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter" (Qur'an 3:85) Moreover, the Qur'an says, "unto you your religion (deen) and unto me, mine" (Qur'an 109:6).

Recommendations

The researcher recommends further studies on the calamities such as Corvid-19 pandemic, other epidemics and plagues with different religious, social and cultural perspectives for the benefit and guidance of the whole humanity.

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