



The origin and evolution of Coronavirus pandemic in health science approach and Islamic perspectives

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Abstract

In our previous articles, we have discussed the Islamic strategies for prevention and management of pandemic diseases and the preventive methods of coronavirus in Islamic perspectives and health science approaches. These two papers came first because, if one sees a snake in one room it has to kill first before looking for the source, or if one sees a fire in his/her house the next thing to do is to put the fire off first before looking for the source. Therefore, the current paper intends to discuss the origin and evolution of the coronavirus pandemic in health science approaches and Islamic perspectives. The qualitative, library-based approach will be used as a research method and the data will be exclusively sought from the Qur'an, *Ahadith*, books, journals, and Islamic manuscripts. The findings of this study shed light that, some scientific experts traced the origin of the outbreak to a seafood market, and in one scenario, it was said the virus was through natural selection in a non-human host, the laboratory manufactured and the Muslim clerics called the virus Allah's will to punishment. The paper shows that the diseases have both positive and negative functions in Islam: as a punishment from Allah, as a means of trials and tribulations as well as a means of cleansing from sin. The paper, therefore, concludes that it remains unclear exactly how the virus originated and first spread to humans. In Islam, therefore, it happens with His knowledge and permission because with Him are the keys of the unseen treasures.

Keywords: origin, coronavirus, pandemic, Islamic perspectives, punishment

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1. Introduction

Coronavirus disease has been named COVID19. It was called so because it appeared in late 2019. It was first announced in China on 4 January 2020, especially in Wuhan, that dozens of people were infected [1]. Thus, coronavirus disease spread in China and then moved to Iran through the Chinese working in the Chinese Railways Corporation to build a railway through the city of Qom. Iran is considered the epicenter of the outbreak in the Middle East. According to [2] on 4 January 2020, Italy has also opened a group of sectors for Chinese investment, from infrastructure to transportation. Reports indicate that Lombardy and Tuscany are the two regions that witnessed the largest amount of Chinese investment. The Lombardy region witnessed the first Coronavirus infection on the 21st of last February and is one of the most affected areas. It then spread to almost all the countries of the world [3]. It has led to large-scale disruptions in people's lives across the world. It is killing people of different faiths; the rich or the poor, and even doctors and nurses caring for coronavirus patients have died so far.

Schools have been closed, sports events have been cancelled and religious and cultural institutions shut down around the world as countries try to stem the outbreak. Many countries also imposed closure of the borders and curfew, and then they stopped the Friday and congregational prayers. It is also forcing people to consider the limitations of human endeavour and may lead to people being drawn back towards religion and a return to faith. This disease has given a blow to the global economy and led America to begin to exchange accusations with China [4].

[5] Added that, the pandemic has altered global human consciousness of self and others, like the one which occurred in 1918 and led to the death of millions of people all around the world. It has awakened people's consciousness to the fact that humans can only perfect the art of war against enemies they can see; there is no way one can, like Pharaoh in Ancient Egypt, predict the onslaught of the unknown or go into a war with forces, whose forte and strength are beyond the most potent nuclear arsenals the West can boast of today. If only one virus has occasioned these large-scale tragedies all around the world, imagine if ten of such were to appear in the world, the world would have imploded over the past couple of months.

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In obedience to instructions given by governments all around the world, Muslims and Christians have consequently had to observe social physical-distancing and avoid congregating in mosques and churches on Fridays and Sundays.

2. The Origin and the Causes of Coronavirus

There evidences in many researches that the following may be responsible for the origin of coronavirus:

1. The outbreak was initially traced to a seafood market that sold live animals in Wuhan. Scientists have said that a type of snake may be the original source of the Wuhan coronavirus [6]. However, other infectious disease experts say the ultimate culprit is more likely to be a bat. They said further that coronaviruses are a group of viruses that can cause disease in both animals and humans. They are common in certain species of animals, such as cattle and camels. Although the transmission of coronaviruses from animals to humans is rare, this new strain likely came from bats, though one study suggests pangolins may be the origin [7].

Many reports also traced the bat origin of SARS-CoV. Civets are intermediate and transmission host of SARS-CoV. Epidemiological survey showed that early cases of SARS in 2002-2003 and all 4 cases in 2003-2004 had a history of animal contact through animal trade in wet markets or in restaurants where live animals were kept in Guangdong Province [8]. Molecular detection and virus isolation studies suggested that the pandemic-causing SARS-CoV originated from traded civets in wet markets. This was indirectly confirmed by the massive culling of market civets, which was believed to play a major role in efficiently containing the SARS pandemics and no further SARS case was reported after 2004 [9]. However, subsequent extensive epidemiology studies did not find SARS-CoV in farmed or wild-caught civets, indicating that another animal(s) was involved in SARS-CoV transmission in the animal market or other trading activities and civets are unlikely the natural reservoir of SARS-CoV [10]. Regarding the discovery of diverse SARS-like coronaviruses in bats several years before the outbreak of SARS, two other zoonotic viruses, Nipah virus and Hendra virus, emerged in Asia and Australia and they were both known to be originated from bats. These led scientists to consider bats in the search of reservoirs of SARS-CoV.

In 2005, a breakthrough was made as two independent research groups reported, almost simultaneously, the discovery of novel coronaviruses related to SARS-CoV in horseshoe bats (in the genus *Rhinolophus*) in China, which were termed SARS-like coronavirus (SL-CoV) [11]. These bats SL-CoVs from both mainland China and Hong Kong manifested genome sequence identity of 88-90% among themselves and 87-92% identity to human or civet SARS-

CoV isolates [12]. The unique set of ORFs exclusively found in SARS-CoV was also present in bat SL-CoVs, demonstrating the close phylogenetic relationship between SARS-CoV and SL-CoV. The discovery of bat SL-CoV boosted researchers' interest in coronavirus surveillance studies in bats [13]. In the following years, SL-CoV RNA was detected in *Rhinolophus* species of a wider geographic range in China. The provinces or regions where SL-CoV-positive bats were captured included Hong Kong, Guangxi, Hubei, Shandong, Guizhou, Shaanxi, and Yunnan [14].

2. In one scenario, the virus evolved to its current pathogenic state through natural selection in a non-human host and then jumped to humans. This is how previous coronavirus outbreaks have emerged, with humans contracting the virus after direct exposure to civets (SARS) and camels (MERS). The researchers proposed bats as the most likely reservoir for SARS-CoV-2 as it is very similar to a bat coronavirus. There are no documented cases of direct bat-human transmission, however, suggesting that an intermediate host was likely involved between bats and humans [15].

In this scenario, both of the distinctive features of SARS-CoV-2's spike protein—the RBD portion that binds to cells and the cleavage site that opens the virus up would have evolved to their current state prior to entering humans. In this case, the current epidemic would probably have emerged rapidly as soon as humans were infected, as the virus would have already evolved the features that make it pathogenic and able to spread between people [16].

3. America attacked China for its failure to fight the epidemic and for concealing it since its inception. So, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Zhao Li Jian, responded angrily and wrote on his Twitter account on 13/3/2020, saying according to [17] report on 13/03/2020, "The American army may have brought the Coronavirus to the Chinese city of Wuhan..." On 19/3/2020, Euro News [18] reported that US President Trump repeated his attack on China, saying: "The world is paying a very big price for what they did (referring to China's slow pace in providing information about the new Coronavirus)". Trump described the Coronavirus as the Chinese virus when he posted a tweet on 16/3/2020 on Twitter: "The United States will be powerfully supporting those industries, like airlines and others, that are particularly affected by the Chinese Virus. According to the report of [19] on 18/3/2020, China responded through its Foreign Ministry spokesman on 17/3/2020 and said: "This comment distorts the image of China. We are very angry and we strongly reject it". And when China began spreading accusations that initially mentioned that America was behind the spread of the virus, Washington summoned its Beijing ambassador on 13/3/2020 and a State Department official said: "China is seeking to deflect criticism for its role in 'starting a global pandemic and not telling the world.' Spread-

ing conspiracy theories is dangerous and ridiculous.” On 15/3/2020, the official said, “We wanted to put the government on notice we won’t tolerate it for the good of the Chinese people and the world.” Xinhua agency confirmed “that Beijing’s actions, including imposing strict quarantine on millions of people, have given the world “valuable time” to prepare, which is recognized by the international community.” [19][20]

Thus, a war of words broke out between America and China because of the outbreak of the Covid19 virus (SARS-CoV2), and both countries accuse each other of being the direct factor in the spread of this disease, and although both systems applied in China and the United States are not excluded from being behind the spread of the virus, however, after research, it is likely that there is no concrete evidence that neither the United States nor China was the one that transmitted or manufactured the virus and then proceeded to transmit it to other countries for two distinct reasons:

The first is that both countries are drowning to their ears in this disease!. In China, in addition, the last statistic of coronavirus disease according to [21] on 23/3/2020, the number of the affected reached 81,272, and the number of deceased is 3,273 as stated in the announcement of the National Health Committee in China. Even if it were China who was behind the spread of the disease, it would have at least protected itself. As for America, according to the statistics of those affected by the Coronavirus disease according to [22] on 25/3/2020, the number of deaths from the virus has increased to 704, while the total confirmed cases reached 52,976. The United States ranks third in terms of the number of infections by the virus after China and Italy. [23] also reported on 23/3/2020 that, under the recent measures, a third of Americans are subject to orders to stay at home in seven states, as the states of Louisiana and Ohio announced on Sunday an expanded curfew, thereby joining the states of New York, California, Illinois, Connecticut, and New Jersey. And likewise, if it were America who was behind the spread of the disease, it would have at least protected itself from it [24] [25].

The second is that it is incorrect to say that either country manufactured it because there is no evidence that the virus was manufactured in the laboratory. Now, by comparing the genome sequencing data available for known coronavirus strains, one can strongly confirm Coronavirus has originated through natural processes. This view was supported by data on the virus’s backbone and its overall molecular structure, and whoever wanted to manufacture the virus in vitro, this would show in the backbone of the virus” [24] [25]. The same applies to any other country such as Russia, Europe, Iran, and other Muslim countries, as it is likely affected by one of the two countries, China, and America, in terms of transmission of the disease.

4. On hearing initial reports of the deadly spread

of coronavirus in China, many in the Arab world rejoiced. Arab social media threads called the virus Allah’s will to punish the Chinese for their cruel treatment of the Uighur Muslims of western China [26]. When the virus broke through China’s borders and landed in Iran, the Arab world was even happier. Images of Iran’s suffering as a result of coronavirus, and discussion of its rapid spread throughout the country, went viral on social media. Again, many Arabs claimed this was Allah’s wrath, this time over Iran’s heinous treatment of Sunni Muslims in Iraq, Yemen, and Syria. When the coronavirus first began infiltrating the wider Middle East after its initial outbreak in Iran, many in the Arab world thought it might be an Iranian conspiracy [27].

For instance, in an unusual sermon, Jordanian MP, a former minister and a lecturer at the University of Amman Muhammad Abdulhamid Qudah, called the coronavirus a “soldier of Allah” and said it had been sent to punish both the West and Muslims. He claimed Allah is angry with the world, especially Muslims, because they have failed to obey him [28]. Also, Bashir bin Hassan, a controversial Salafist cleric in Tunisia, posted on his Facebook account, which has over 500,000 followers, that the Chinese are being punished by Allah because of the siege they have set against the Uighur Muslims. According to the cleric, Allah has many soldiers, including both angels and viruses. He added that just as Allah drowned Pharaoh’s soldiers in the sea, he is similarly granting victory to the Uighurs [6].

Again, the Kuwaiti cleric Uthman Khamis stated in a sermon on his YouTube channel that, this is not the first time Allah has visited his wrath upon the world: he also sent a mosquito to kill Nimrod and unleashed the ten plagues to punish the Egyptians. The coronavirus is, thus, another warning to humanity from Allah. The only solution is to return to him and follow his ways; only then will the virus disappear [29].

There is no doubt that coronavirus is a matter of serious concern not just to the West, but to the Arab world as well. As Arab populations succumbed to widespread panic and fear the governments throughout the region scrambling to contain the virus, closed mosques and shut down most activities of the society. Even Islam’s holy cities of Mecca and Medina closed their sacred sites, public prayer has ceased in those cities. The International Union for Muslim Scholars (IUM) released a religious edict forbidding Muslims from praying at mosques and calling on them to protect themselves from infection. The IUM urged Muslims to pray at home and stay away from holy sites [29][30].

Yet, to some Muslims, the avoidance of mosques in times like this and the imposition of restriction of movement or complete lockdowns on cities enjoy credence in Islamic jurisprudence, compliance with government’s instructions by the Muslim has been read

by some critics to mean the acceptance of “a breach in what is considered sacred... (that) humans are now forced to accept that self-preservation is higher than the worship of God and (that) the state is superior to any deity” [31].

3. Islamic Perspectives on the Origin of Coronavirus Pandemic:

According to Islam, everything that happens is from Allah and only from Him. Human beings, whilst having the willpower to do things, have no power to change the outcome or the end result. It is mentioned in the Glorious Qur’an, 9:11: “Nothing shall ever happen to us except what Allah has ordained for us.” The Prophet expressed this very same verse in the following manner: “Whatever has befallen you was not meant to escape you, and whatever has escaped you was not meant to befall you” [32]. No one will completely feel at ease until he/she firmly believes that Allah has already preordained all matters. Therefore, in Islam, it is true that the virus is a creation of Allah. It happens with His knowledge and permission as the Qur’an, 6:59 says: And with Him are the keys of the unseen treasures none knows them but He; and He knows what is in the land and the sea, and there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green nor dry but (it is all) in a clear book. Allah is in full control of the universe and fully aware of all events nothing happens in this world except through the leave of Allah. Therefore, a person who has been suffering from distress should know that Allah is fully aware of all that has happened or been happening to him.

The believer should also know that Allah is aware of every little detail of everything that happens, so much so that not even a leaf falls from a tree without Allah being aware of it: He knoweth whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf doth fall but with His knowledge: there is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered) but is (inscribed) in a Record Clear (to those who can read). (Qur’an, 6:59) No misfortune can happen on earth or in your souls but is recorded in a decree before We bring it into existence: that is truly easy for Allah: in order that ye may not despair over matters that pass you by ... (Qur’an, 57:22-23). Therefore, the believer should take relief and comfort from the fact that Allah is fully and intimately aware of his situations. Any harm or injustice that he has been subjected to by anyone, will not go without a consequence. Or if he is suffering from distress and difficulties, then his suffering is constantly being watched by Allah.

Hence, the coronavirus pandemic which is today creating havoc to the entire human race, irrespective of colour, culture, religion, nationality or status does not come as a surprise in Islam, because the Holy

Prophet of Islam has warned people over one thousand five hundred years ago saying: If unlawful *fahishah* (bad deeds or speech) become common in any group or nation, Allah will punish them with epidemics and diseases which were not known to their forefathers and earlier generations [33]. One of such diseases is a coronavirus which can be contacted through different sources as highlighted above. The above *Hadith* shows that the coronavirus pandemic was not in existence in the olden days. It came into being as a result of human engagement in unlawful acts.

Also, at a superficial glance, this *hadith* seems to almost perfectly predict any pandemic; for this reason, the *hadith* has been used by a number of Muslim writers to argue that coronavirus is a curse from Allah [34]. This is, however, only part of a larger *hadith*. ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Umar said: The Messenger of Allah (SAW) came to us saying, ‘O Muhajirun (the exiles from Mecca)! There are five things when you are tested by them, and I seek refuge by Allah that you should experience them.

1. Whenever *fahishah* have appeared amongst any nation, which the people of that nation commit openly, an epidemic or diseases that they have never encountered before became widespread amongst them.

2. Cheating in weighing (dishonest behaviour in any money transactions) will result in a crisis of poverty and tyranny.

3. Unwillingness to pay *Zakat* (alms) will result in an extended dry season, without rain so much so that if it were not for cattle, it would not rain at all.

4. Damaging the bond between Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) will result in the appearance of an enemy.

5. Leaders refusing to base laws on the revelations of Allah will cause enemies within their own ranks [33][35].

Therefore, the coronavirus pandemic has become one of such diseases and abominations.

Hence, some Islamic scholars argued that, if one understands *fahishah* to mean disobedience of Allah, and argues that this is the cause of coronavirus pandemic, why have the pandemic hit those parts of the world where the laws of Allah are often followed. Therefore, pandemic, epidemic, illness, and disease seem to have both positive and negative functions in Islam.

A. As a Punishment from Allah

All participants were studying at the tertiary level, through the medium of Chinese. They were volunteers paid to participate in this experiment. In Hong Kong, the experiment was conducted in two universities, with 13 students in Hong Kong Polytechnic University and 5 in the Hong Kong InsOne challenge in responding to coronavirus pandemic from an Islamic perspective is the belief of some Muslims that sickness and disease are a curse from Allah. The belief that disease and sickness are a curse from Allah can be under-

stood to arise from specific interpretations of a number of verses from the Qur'an. Interpretation of the Qur'an is indeed a difficult task due to the highly specific and nuanced character of Arabic language. Thus, different interpretations of Qur'anic verses can arise due to different translations or understandings of specific words. For instance, the two versions of the same verse below (Qur'an, 30:41) use different English words in translation from Arabic. The consequence of this is to give two different interpretations of the same verse: "Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought. . . ." (Qur'an, 30:41) "Evil has spread in the land and on the sea because of what humankind has done." (Qur'an, 30:41)

In a similar way, different Qur'anic verses can use different words to describe sickness. For example, in Qur'an Chapter, 21 verse 83, the Prophet Ayub prayed '*innimassanniya al-dhurr*' which translates to 'true distress has seized me.' However in Qur'an Chapter, 38 verse 41, Al-Anbiya is quoted as stating "*inni massaniyaal-syaithan bi nushb wa adzab*, which translates as 'the evil one has afflicted me with stress and suffering.' Thus the use of different key terms to describe illness can lead to different interpretations of the Qur'an, and in this way, some Muslims view illness as merely being seized by distress, while others view sickness as being influenced by Satan. However, when understood in the context of the Qur'an in full with references to other verses, it can be argued that Islam does not, in fact, promote a view of illnesses like coronavirus pandemic as a curse of Allah or punishment for wrongdoing. For example, prophets are surely dearest to Allah, and yet the Prophet Ayub suffered from serious sickness for many years, and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) himself also suffered from illnesses. Indeed all human beings at one time or another face illness. Furthermore, in the Qur'an it is stated '*Wa ma yazhlimu rabbuka ahadan*', which translates as 'your Allah will not be cruel to anyone'. While there may be instances where disease can be spread as a result of deviating from the way of life prescribed by the Qur'an and prophetic traditions as in the case of coronavirus pandemic, it remains the duty of Muslims to respond in a compassionate way to those affected.

For example, when some of the people of Egypt mocked Prophet Musa, they told him: "Whatever be the signs that you bring to us to work your witchcraft, we shall never believe in you". And then Allah, the Qur'an says, "sent (plagues) on them: wholesale death, locusts, lice, frogs, and blood signs openly self-explained: but they were steeped in arrogance, (and were) a people given to sin" (Qur'an, 7:134). Hadrat 'A'ishah asked the Prophet of Allah about the plague and he replied, "That was a means of punishment which Allah used to send upon whomsoever He wished" [36].

In another *Hadith*, he said: Narrated 'Aisha: (the

wife of the Prophet) that she asked Allah's Apostle about plague, and Allah's Apostle informed her saying, "plague was a punishment which Allah used to send on whom He wished, but Allah made it a blessing for the believers. None (among the believers) remains patient in a land in which plague has broken out and considers that nothing will befall him except what Allah has ordained for him, but that Allah will grant him a reward similar to that of a martyr" [36] [37]. In another event, a prostitute . . . was forgiven because of a dog she passed at a well, panting through intense thirst that was almost killing it. She took off her (leather) sock, tied it to her scarf, and drew some water for it. She was forgiven her sins (for doing that) [33] [35] [38].

Is it possible that a cure has not been found for coronavirus pandemic at the stage precisely because they are a punishment from Allah or a warning to people about their disobedience to the will of Allah?

i. If this is the case, how do we explain that there is no cure for cancer? Also, would it not be going against the will of Allah to seek a cure for coronavirus epidemic?

ii. How does the ability of wealthy nations or individuals to afford treatment for a particular disease?

iii. In the case of coronavirus epidemic, to fund treatment for others-does it fit in with the idea that coronavirus epidemic is a punishment from Allah?

iv. Can this *hadith* be used to make excuses for commercial sex work today, or can it be used to show that everyone can receive Allah's mercy?

Therefore, if Allah was 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.

B. As a Mean of Trials and Tribulations

The Coronavirus may be a result of trials and tribulations because, according to Islam, the life of this short and transitory world is but a test and a trial from the Lord. . . the real place to receive rewards and punishments is only the Hereafter. Therefore, in Islam all diseases such as the coronavirus (Covid-19) are tests from Allah and a natural part of life. Such diseases afflict whomever Allah allows them to afflict and they take the lives of whomever He has decided to bring to an end. Tests are natural, albeit difficult, part of life, and should not be surprising for any Muslim when they occur. Allah says, "We shall certainly test you with fear and hunger, and loss of property, lives, and crops. But (Prophet), give good news to those who are steadfast" (Qur'an 2:155). Anyone who is afflicted with the illness, and is patient, will spiritually benefit from that test. The Prophet said, "Whatever trouble, illness, anxiety, grief, hurt, or sorrow afflicts any Muslim, even the prick of a thorn, Allah removes some of his sins by it" [36] [37]. Regarding illnesses leading

to death, the Prophet was asked about the plague. He responded, "It is a torment with which Allah afflicts those whom He chooses, but He has made it mercy for the believers. If a servant (of Allah) is afflicted with the plague and patiently remains in his town, realizing that he has only been afflicted with what Allah has determined for him, he will have the reward of a martyr" [34] [36] [39].

When an individual sits down and reflects upon his difficulties and makes an objective analysis of the events and actions leading to his situations, he will almost always identify some things he did that he should not have done or he did not that he should have done, which led to that situation. For example, for parents who suffer from their rebellious and disobedient teenaged child, it will be found, almost without exception, that they did not arrange his proper Islamic education and a good environment, and did not give it enough priority to engage themselves with his upbringing. Indifference or inaction can be as serious as committing a sin or making a bad decision, which can lead to grave consequences.

Though calamities may hit a believer as a surprise, the reality is that by virtue of being a believer one is supposed to suffer. If a believer understands the Islamic philosophy that this life is a testing ground, then he should realize that this philosophy will be implemented for him in practice while he lives in this testing ground, and not after he dies. Tests are not just limited to seeing whether one performs the rituals or not. His belief and commitments to Allah, and his focus in the Hereafter will be fully and thoroughly tested with calamities and afflictions to gauge the depth of his faith in his heart. Achieving Paradise will not be easy. It will come only with unshakable faith and trust in Allah. Allah, says: Ye shall certainly be tried and tested in your possessions and in your personal selves (Qur'an, 3:186). Do men think that they will be left alone on saying "We believe" and that they will not be tested? (Qur'an, 29:2) 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 (Qur'an, 2:155).

One individual once told another one who was going through tribulations that Allah was displeased with him, and hence his difficulties. This man lacked wisdom, for his comment was offensive to the person who was already distressed. More importantly, his understanding was incorrect from an Islamic perspective. The one who received the comment was a gentleman and also knowledgeable in Islam. Thus, it was not surprising that he decided to digest his remark and refrained from giving a response. There are people who do maintain that incorrect understanding. Whenever they see a believer who is suffering from some calamity or disease, they think that this is a reflection of Allah's wrath on him. They should remember about the Companions of the Prophet who were severely

persecuted or even killed after becoming Muslim, an event that wipes out all past sins. Even the prophets of Allah, who ever walked on the face of the earth, were persecuted by their community without exception. Was Joseph not thrown into a well, sold as a slave, and then thrown back into prison? Did Job not face the severest of trials one after another, and was eventually left out by all except his wife? In fact, the Qur'an tells us that many prophets were brutally killed by unbelievers. These examples should establish the fact that trials and tribulations are not a sign of Allah's displeasure on someone. Quite the contrary, it is rather a sign of Allah's love on someone. The Prophet said: When Allah who is Great and Glorious loves people He afflicts them [with trials] [36] [37] [39] [40].

The punishment in the Hereafter is much severe in fact unimaginable from our worldly perspective than any affliction one can face in this world. Therefore, when Allah loves someone and intends for him or her to go to Paradise, He wipes out his sins and mistakes and rewards him highly by putting him to afflictions in this world.

The stronger the faith, the harder the test, and the greater the reward a believer afflicted with a severe calamity should take comfort from the fact that those who have strong faith are given the harder trials. This is established by the Prophet. When asked about who suffers the greatest afflictions, he replied: The prophets, then those who come next to them, then those who come next to them. A man is afflicted in keeping his religion. If he is firm in his religion his trial is severe, but if there is weakness in his religion it is made light for him, and it continues like that till he walks on the earth having no sin [33] [35] [38] [41]. Why is it, one may ask, that people who are faithful and righteous should have to suffer? To get an answer, we should ask ourselves: is there any achievement without an effort or any fruit without labor? The obvious pattern that we see in our human experience is that those who work hard and go through the process of struggle are rewarded with success in this materialistic world. The greatest reward of everything that one can imagine is Paradise. In fact, the bliss and happiness in Paradise is so great that one cannot even imagine it (Qur'an, 32:17).

How can then one expect that he will achieve this greatest success without him being thoroughly tested to see if he qualifies for it? One should not think that following the rituals, such as making salat five times a day, is enough test for him. The external rituals that we do and the laws of the shari'a that we observe returns immediate benefit to us as they bring peace and happiness to our families and provide us with a healthy social and moral society in which to live and prosper.

Thus, one should not expect that observing Allah's commandments and reaping these benefits in turn is the only test. The real test is the test of the heart where faith lives, and that is tested with affliction and hard-

ship to check if the faith and trust in Allah is firm and well-rooted or is it weak and superficial: Do men think that they will be left alone on saying “We believe” and that they will not be tested? We did test those before them and Allah will certainly know those who are true from those who are false. (Qur’an, 29:2-3) Each believer, therefore, must expect to be tested. The stronger his faith, the harder will be the test, and the greater his reward will be if he remains patient having unshakable faith and trust in Allah. The Prophet said: “The magnitude of the reward is proportionate to the severity of the trial. When Allāh loves a people, He tests them. Whoever accepts that shall be pleased, but whoever is discontent shall be devastated” [42]. And the believers will continue to go through trials and tribulations in their life until their sins are wiped and they die and meet Allah free from all sins. 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” [43]. That is so because Allah, in His mercy and generosity, not only rewards one when he is patient through his trials, but also sheds his sins for the pains and sufferings that he or she goes through. No matter how small the trial or how insignificant the discomfort, Allah will reward him for that and eliminate some sins.

Islam requires believers to put their trust in Allah and utilize the means to protect themselves when possible. The Qur’an teaches, as told to the Prophet, “Say: Nothing will afflict us except what Allah has decided for us.” (Qur’an 9:51). Finally, Abu Hurairah narrates that the Prophet said: “When Allah wants to be good to someone, He tries him with some hardship” [44].

C. As a Mean of Cleansing from Sin

The coronavirus may also be a result of cleansing from sin. This is because according to Islam, the blessings of those who fall sick is that sickness is one of the strongest and most powerful antidotes to the sins that commit. There is hardly anything that will expiate sins that is more powerful than trials and afflictions that befall us. Allah says: “And whatever strikes you of disaster it is for what your hands have earned; but He pardons much (Qur’an 42:30)”. Every sickness and calamity that happens: a death of a loved one, a loss of a relative, financial economic, distress physical hardship, a fever, any type of pain and suffering. For instance, once the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) visited a sick person who was suffering from fever, he said: “I have good news for you. For verily My Lord has told me that fever is my punishment that I inflict upon my believers so that they don’t have to be punished in the hell.” This is a punishment that Allah inflicts so that you are saved from the punishment of the next life. so in fact, it is a blessing in disguise [36] [39] [45]. And once the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) visited a female companion, Umm Sa’ib. She was also suffer-

ing from fever; she was tossing and turning. When Prophet Muhammad asked her: What is the matter? She said: “I have a severe fever may Allah curse it!” The Prophet said: “Do not curse the fever, for verily it forgives sins like a furnace gets rid of the impurities in iron” [46]. When you put iron into the furnace, it is full of impurities; when you take it out, it is 100% pure. So, the Prophet compared the fever to a furnace, and this is a very good comparison because both are burning. And in another *hadith* he said: “It will get rid of your sins like a tree in the fall. When you shake it all, the leaves come down. So too will the sickness get rid of your sins.” Every calamity is for your good. This is something that applies to every single calamity and misfortune. So much so, the Prophet said: “Even if a thorn pricks one of you, it will expiate some of your sins” [36] [39] [45] [47]. In another *hadith*, it was reported that, Hadrat A’ishah (R.A) reported that the Prophet said, “When a believer suffers from illness, Allah purifies him just as the impurities of iron are cleansed in a furnace” [46] [48]. The Prophet was also quoted as saying, “If a Muslim is afflicted in his (or her) body, what he (or she) did when he (or she) was in good health will be recorded for him (or her) as long as he (or she) is ill. If Allah restores his (or her) health and cleanses him (or her from sin), and if Allah causes the person to die, he (or she) will be forgiven.” In yet another *hadith*, narrated in the Muwatta of Imam Malik, we learn of the Prophet’s response to one person who had died. A man said, “He was fortunate,” as he had died without being tried by illness. The Messenger of Allah also said, “Alas for you, if you only knew that if Allah had tried him with illness, He would have wiped out his wrong actions” [46] [48] [49].

Also, Abu Hurairah reports that Allah’s Messenger said: “For every misfortune, illness, anxiety, grief, or hurt that afflicts a Muslim -even the hurt caused by the pricking of a thorn Allah removes some of his sins”. In another *hadith*, it was reported that, Ibn Mas’ud said: “I visited the Messenger of Allah while he had a fever. I exclaimed: “O Messenger of Allah! You have a high fever!” He said: “My fever is as much as two among you (might have).” I asked: “Is it because you have a double reward?” He replied: “Yes, that is right. No Muslim is afflicted with any hurt, even if it is no more than the pricking of a thorn, but Allah wipes off his sins because of it and his sins fall away from him as leaves fall from a tree” [46] [48] [49] [50].

Also, narrated by Abu Saïd Al-Khudri and Abu Huraira that the prophet said: “No fatigue, no disease, no sorrow, no sadness, no hurt, no distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that” [46] [48] [49] [50] [51]. Therefore, in Islam, fever, illness, sickness, diseases, or any calamity or hardship that befalls a believer may not be only punishment from Allah but rather it may be a trial and a mercy from Allah,

for through these afflictions Allah expiates some of the sins of that person.

4. Conclusion

This paper has examined the origin and the causes of coronavirus pandemic by the scientific experts, the America/China belief, the Muslims and Islamic perspectives. The findings of the study shed some light that, there are many theories about the origin and sources for the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, China. Some scientific experts traced the origin of the outbreak to a seafood market, and in one scenario, it was said the virus was through natural selection in a non-human host, the laboratory manufacture and it was called the virus Allah's will to punishment. The paper also showed that the disease seems to have both positive and negative functions in Islam: as a punishment from Allah, as a means of trials and tribulations and as a mean of cleansing from Sin. It recommended that Muslims should be very careful not to jump to premature conclusions. It concluded that it remains unclear exactly how the virus originated and first spread to humans. In Islam therefore, it happens with His knowledge and permission. And with Him are the keys of the unseen treasures and He knows what is in the land and the sea, and there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green nor dry but (it is all) in a clear book.

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