



5 things that the Corona Virus taught us about the Ummah thus far?

by



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1. **Ignorance is Contagious!!!**

If ever there was a virus responsible for the death of the intellectual faculty, it is ignorance! A vital lesson that the Ummah should take from the corona outbreak, it is that the levels of ignorance prevalent in the Ummah today are worse than it has ever been! Since the outbreak in China, and its subsequent spread to Iran, Italy, the United Kingdom, etc, the Ummah has been faced with a situation unlike before. For the first time, people witnessed the closure –albeit temporarily- of the Sacred Haramayn of Makkah and Madinah. This caused a great debate amongst people sparking conversations rhyming with eschatology. Nonetheless, as the media continuously reported a daily increase in the number of infected persons, alarm bells began to ring all across the world.

One such alarm bell set off here in the sunny shores of southern Africa, when not a week ago, the president addressed the nation by indicating that the country was not going to standby idly in anticipation of this virus to ruin an already volatile economy. Thus, precautions to quell the virus were put in place in the hope that South Africa does not become another Italy.

In that address, the president prohibited gatherings in which there are 100 or more people, and it was here, that I was reminded of all the jokes people would make of Jacob Zuma when I began to notice that suddenly, all logic went out of the window!

Suddenly, based on the presidential address, the assumption was that if you were at gathering of 100 or less, you were miraculously ‘immunized’ from contracting the corona virus. So people started thinking to themselves, “Oh okay! So if my gathering consists of 99 or 100 –on the head- we are in a ‘safe zone’ and it’s

all fine!” and it was as that moment, when the harshest of realities hits you like an anvil from space causing your internal insight to wonder in amazement, “Really? When humankind is at the technological zenith of its age, we still cannot compute simpleton math?!” and that says a lot about the state of affairs in the Ummah.

Until and unless we do not get to the grassroots issue and progress to make giant strides in mowing out the weeds which are outgrowing the garden of Islāmic knowledge, then we will never be able to rid ourselves of this grave contagion of ignorance which is slowly –but surely– prevailing, and the subsequent ignoramus it produces.

Imām Al-Ghazzālī رحمته الله on How to Deal with Ignorance

I have been inundated with pleas from scholars and the public to ‘respond’ to a certain young lad who took to FaceBook to insult the decision of the Ulamā. I do pity such young bloods, who are themselves misled and who mislead others. My responses to those pleas are reminiscent of the luminaries before me. The great master of Islāmic sciences of his age, Imām Al-Ghazzālī رحمته الله warned us of ignorant folk, but he went one step further and advised us on how to deal with ignorance in our presence.

ثم اعلم أن مرض الجهل على أربعة أنواع: أحدها: يقبل العلاج والباقي لا يقبل أما الذي لا يقبل أحدها من كان سؤاله واعتراضه عن حسده وبغضه فكلما تجيبه بأحسن الجواب وأفضحه وأوضحه فلا يزيد له ذلك إلا بغضا وعداوة وحسدا فالطريق ألا تشغل بجوابه...

*“Thereafter, know that the **disease of ignorance** is of four types: one admits of a remedy whereas the remaining three do not. As for what does not admit of a remedy, one of them includes he whose questioning or arguing is out of envy and hatred. Whenever you answer him with the best, clearest and most evident reply, it only increases him in hatred, hostility and envy. The thing to do is not to indulge him by responding to him...”¹*

There are many out there, like the brother who took to FaceBook and social media by uttering nonsensical views against established agreements by the Ulamā. Imām Al-Ghazzālī رحمته الله warns, that people of this nature essentially harbour hatred, hostility and envy. Engaging with such people is a waste of one’s valuable time. Rather take the time to advise the community at large instead of focusing on the ignorance of a radical few!

May Allāh رحمته الله guide us all and protect us and our families from the greater threat, i.e. IGNORANCE!

2. Ignorant Opportunists will always Rise to the Occasion

¹ Al-Ghazali, Ayyuhal Walad.

Wherever knowledge has thrived, its nemesis (ignorance) has always attempted to prey on those whose *foundations are weak*, and if the corona virus has taught us another vital lesson, it is that the ignorance borne out of the lack Islāmic knowledge rises in times of tribulation. This is because, in testing times, it is the erudite that must bear the brunt and make the tough decisions for the betterment of all. Only when these decisions are taken by those in authority, is when ignorant opposition comes to light.

Just to be clear, when the scholars differ on a matter, albeit in the pursuit of providing the relevant proofs for the positions on those matters which are based on the correct interpretations of the Qur'ān, Sunnah and one of the four schools of Islāmic jurisprudence viz. Hanafī, Shāfā'ī, Mālikī & Hanbalī, then the scholars, amongst themselves apply the rules of 'Adabul Ikhtilāf' (Ethical Disagreement) and respect each other's opinions, as well as the opinions of the opposing proponents. Well, this can be said for proper Islāmic scholarship at least. Fanatics and their fanaticism are built upon the premise of rebellion of envy and hatred in the face of any who oppose their extremist stance.

A typical example of this is the current debate regarding the suspension of congregational prayers for the public by certain mosques. Some scholars opined, that based on the juxtaposing of other regions in the world which did not act in time, and seeing as though the corona virus is now a pandemic, and that it can spread between a minimum of even two people, these Ulamā favoured the principle that *'averting harm is more important than gaining benefit'*² and that *'saving one life is as though one has saved humankind'*³. With these – and numerous other matters- in mind, they agreed -for the safety of the community- that the congregational prayers should be suspended with immediate effect.

On the other hand, other scholars have taken a position stating that the government has not asked for a shutdown of mosques or religious centres etc, and that the allowance of 100 at bare minimum is sufficient to conduct the congregational prayers. These scholars have issued their own evidence for their stance.

The fact that there are two positions on the matter shows the diversity of the religion on one hand, and the tolerance we are to exhibit on the other. However, the problem is when ignorant extremists from either proponent who have no formal Islāmic education, take to social media to air their 'emotions' on the matter; and to perpetuate those ignorant views to even more emotional followers on Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. Ignorance begets arrogance which in turn begets aggression.

This is where the contagious nature of ignorant thinking spreads faster than any virus known to humankind. To add insult to injury, these people don't even realise that the blabber they utter is bereft of all Islāmic foundational knowledge. When they speak, they ooze ignorance of the Islāmic tradition, and in the process, infect others -of the same feather- who suddenly feel inoculated by their new found sense of

² Al-Ashbā Wan-Nazhā'ir by Allāmah ibn Nujaymm Al-Misrī رحمته الله

³ Refer to Sūrah Al-Mā'idah, 5:32

heightened emotion. This 'high' of theirs, further veiled by an egotistical quest for recognition at the most opportune moment, fuelled by their anger and envy of the Ulamā, sparks controversy and confusion in the Ummah. Alas, the end result for the ignorant is to remain in a quagmire of utter confusion. There are innumerable messages circulating on whatsapp which attest to the height of ignorance prevalent in the community. May Allāh ﷻ protect us from wrongful knowledge and grant us beneficial knowledge!

3. Autodidacts are a Dime a Dozen!

The Corona virus has brought about a whole range of lunacy and paranoia coupled with irrational juxtapositions from the autodidacts (self-taught) muftis. These quarrelsome folk who know 'naught' about usūlī (foundational) matters of the deen, -and who assume that Google knowledge coupled with their independent rational inquiry is sufficient-, who then take to FaceBook and utter nonsensical statements against the unified decisions of those who have studied the religion, are responsible for the spread of misinformation within the Ummah.

Majority of the time, there is an agenda against the scholars, and these sad events become opportune moments for them to shine in the limelight and like a sly old fox, they prey on those who, like themselves, share in the agenda and are also likeminded. Any educated person actually listens to the shallowness of their arguments; it will become clear that we are witnessing the end-times indeed!

It is no secret that this writer is a student of the subject of eschatology, and when these incidents manifest in our age, we are reminded of the warnings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and of the return of the Age of Ignorance, as the following narration clarifies,

عَبَدَ اللَّهُ بْنُ عَمْرٍو بْنِ الْعَاصِ يُقُولُ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ " إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْبِطُ الْعِلْمَ انْتِزَاعًا يَنْزِعُهُ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَكِنْ يَهْبِطُ الْعِلْمَ بِهَيْبِ الْعُلَمَاءِ حَتَّى إِذَا لَمْ يَبْقَ عَلِيمًا اتَّخَذَ النَّاسُ زُجُجًا جَهْلًا فَسَأَلُوا فَأُجِبُوا بغيرِ عِلْمٍ فَضَلُّوا وَأَضَلُّوا

*Sayyidunā Abdullāh ibn Amr bin Al-Ās ؓ reported Allāh's ﷺ Messenger ﷺ as saying, "Verily, Allāh ﷻ does not take away knowledge by snatching it from the people but He takes away knowledge by taking away the scholars, so that when He leaves no learned person, people turn to the ignorant as their leaders; then they are asked to deliver religious verdicts and they deliver them without knowledge, they go astray, and lead others astray."*⁴

It is concerning from a socio-moral perspective when people with no formal knowledge of the mechanics and dynamics of the various sciences of the religion follow to offer their 'opinions' to others. Equal to them are those who support such ludicrous statements. Worse than them are those who play both sides of

⁴The Beginning of the End – An Eschatological Endeavour to Unravel the Mysteries of the Modern Age – the Prevalence of Ignorance in the End-Times with reference to Sahīh Muslim - Chapter: The Taking Away Of Knowledge And The Spread Of Ignorance At The End Of Time, Hadith 2673

the coin in order to maintain good ties with both, but in whose heart is envy and jealousy for both as well. May Allāh ﷻ protect us from falling into the abyss of ignorance!

4. **Simple Logic is Out of Stock!**

Only a day after many scholars called for the mosques to suspend all congregational prayer, comparisons were made to the Churches, Temples, airports, shopping malls etc. with a sarcastically smug question asking, “They are not closing, so why are the mosques closing?”. Worse than that is the fact many people actually nod in affirmation of this ludicrously bizarre question!

Nonetheless, let us remind the reader at this point that ignorance is steeped in emotional response, whilst knowledge is premised upon intellectual probing followed by a responsible reply.

Example of complete irrationality - **“The Churches aren’t closing, so why are we closing the Mosques?”**

Frankly, when I first heard this one, I refused to believe that it could stem from the mind of a practicing Muslim, but lo and behold, ignorance never ceases to surprise, because the question is as dull as an overcast day at the beach! Should this kind of ignorant question even be entertained? Here are the simple and most logical reasons why the question itself is one borne out of ignorance,

- a) Do Churchgoers assemble every day, five times a day? Or do they congregate once a week on a Sunday in general? Answer? Once a week on a Sunday. Muslims however, congregate 5 times a day. In the case of an epidemic whereby social distancing is the plea from the medical experts and the government, the question is, “Which religious group is more susceptible from the two to contract the virus?”
- b) Ablution (wudhū) is not a prerequisite for prayer in the Christian faith, but ablution is a condition for prayer in Islām. Hence mosques provide ablution facilities. It does not take rocket science to explain how easily the virus can spread at a mosque due to Muslims congregating to perform ablution, as opposed to the susceptibility of a churchgoer.
- c) Communal towels – due to the necessity of *point b*, towels are supplied in mosques for congregants in order to ease the transition between ablution and prayer in order for the congregant to perform that particular in congregation. This is yet another feature which is not offered at a church.
- d) Prostration – At church, benches are arranged for churchgoers to sit and enjoy their sermons etc. in Mosques however, Muslims pray individually pre/post-congregation. During this time, Muslims prostrate before God upon the carpets provided. The carpets then require disinfection after each and

every prayer...5 times a day!!! Aside from that, if one person is asymptomatic and coughs or sneezes on that carpet, then everyone present is prone to contract the virus!

- e) Congregational prayer – Even if people make their wudhū at home, carry their prayer mats (musallā), then still, during the congregation there is still a high risk of contracting this extremely contagious virus because of the close proximity. Once again, someone who is asymptomatic won't even know that he has the virus and the mosque becomes a scapegoat for its spread in society.

- f) Lastly, and I mean no disrespect, but who on earth asks the religious leaders of one group why the religious centres of another group is not closed??? That is the same as a Christian asking Christian scholarship why the mosques are closing? How would he know? He does not have power over the mosque in the same way that Muslim scholars do not have power over the church. Stop asking ignorant questions!

Still think that the question is a valid one?

5. Muslims are Impulsive & Impatient

Moments after the presidential address, the impulsive keyboard warriors out there took to social media and created mass panic by giving their own uneducated and unauthenticated views on the matter! This caused a simple viewpoint of the president of South Africa to cause pandemonium amongst the Ummah! When will our people learn about 'protocol' and 'procedure'? When will they learn to stick to matters within their area of expertise instead of creating unwarranted discord in the Ummah? That is exactly what has happened.

Instead of exercising a key teaching of the Qur'ān viz. Sabr (patience), the Muslim community chose to give their own 'fatwahs' based on illogical ideals. Those who have done so will be held accountable for every person who was misled by their wayward thinking of an impulsive nature to always have their say in order for others to recognize their status, when in fact they have no formal education in Islāmic knowledge, whatsoever!

Muslims are advised to bear patience in these times and to be responsible enough to ensure that the messages and views we send out during such a volatile time will not further complicate the current predicament we find ourselves in. After all, it is during such times that the Qur'ān gave a message of glad tidings to the patient that they would be rewarded with blessings and mercy from Him, and that those who patiently persevere, will be guided (Sūrah Al-Baqarah, 2:155-157)¹

Qur'ānic Advice to the Public in these Testing Times

The advice to the Ummah during these times is to rather turn to the Ulamā instead of utilizing our rational faculty based on our own perception of things. The Qur'an has advised this when it stated,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

“O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and (obey) those of you who are in authority.”⁵ (And) if you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and his Messenger if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result...”⁶

In both cases, the matter will be brought forth to those who have studied the Qur'an and Sunnah in accordance to the tradition which was passed down for well over a millennium. Remember, Iblis was also very rational in his approach, and it ‘made a lot of sense’, (that fire is better than clay), but this is not about what makes sense, because according to the modern age, ‘seeing is believing’ and if you cannot see something, then it makes ‘perfect sense’ that it does not exist. Yet, Muslims affirm belief in Allāh ﷻ without seeing Him, or His angels, or Heaven and Hell? So not everything has to make ‘sense’ for it to be applied!

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22/03/2020

⁵ According to Abdullah ibn Abbas, Mujaahid, Hassan, Ataa bin As-Saa'ib, IbnAbiNujayj and Abu Ya'laa, the People of Authority are the scholars of Fiqh.

⁶ Surah Nisa, 4:59