



SOCIO-FINANCIAL APPROACHES OF ISLAM: PANACEA FOR PANDEMIC PREDICAMENTS

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Abstract

Purpose: The objective of the study is to assess and accentuate the impact of diverse approaches advanced by Islamic social finance to combat pandemics, predominant historically in distinctive civilizations. The astute study also expounds intellectual and practical attributes for a staunch financial maintenance of pandemic distressed individuals.

Methodology: Approaches related to analytical and qualitative research have been employed by using different research articles.

Findings: Pandemics are perilous for the whole humanity; that's why, Muslims coped with pandemics by dint of their wisdom, knowledge and techniques by employing the revealed injunctions of Quran, Sunnah and Islamic Jurisprudence. Islamic social finance has afforded profuse solutions to jettison the challenges of pandemics by applying various approaches related to Charity, Sadqa, Zakat, Ushr, Inheritance, Hiba, Fitrana, Waqf, Kaffara and Qarz-e-Hasna. These socio-economic tools created strength and courage among individuals and state institutions to get rid of unemployment, robbery, poverty, mendicancy and other insinuations of moral and financial disorders.

Practical Implications: The study has valuable implications for researchers, scholars, academicians, economists, policy makers and disaster management related institutions, administrators of NGOs, social activists and legislators. It creates encouragement and a sense of responsibility for more investigations and planning of socio-economic policies.

Originality: The study is based on original sources and part of the innovative endeavors in the field of finance underlining the paramount significance and utility of the Islamic social finance for the obliteration of the pandemic challenges.

Keyword: Islamic Social Finance, Muslims, Quran, Pandemic, Zakat, Fitrana, Waqf, Usher.

I. INTRODUCTION

Pandemics and epidemics have a dreadful nature with candid historical perspective. That is why, these appalling diseases are considered as the complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon, challenging the whole mankind. This intricate enigma triggered prodigious ravages to prosperity and production, menacing the socio-economic scenarios pertaining to industry, business, culture, tourism, transportation, sports, education, health and the different sectors of (McKee and Stuckler, 2020). These mortal diseases have adversely affected political and social systems, travelling sources, entertainment opportunities, places of worship and holy sites (Blustein, Duffy, Ferreira, Cohen-Scali, Cinamon, and Allan, 2020). These damages cannot be measured because of its heterogeneous nature of disturbing the whole human life by different means and sources (Dols, 1979). It generated family issues and failed the planning about different development projects. The World economies and their savings collapsed severely due to this pandemic situation (Depoux, Martin, Karafillakis, Preet, Wilder-Smith, and Larson, 2020).

Different Muslim societies experienced these diseases in various epochs in different regions of the world. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his respected companions confronted with an epidemic at the time of migration from Makkah to Madina. Hazrat Umar Farooq (R.A) adopted an ideal strategy during the plague of Syria. Different Umayyad, Abbasid, Ottoman and Mughal rulers had to espouse divergent techniques and methods to eradicate the outbreak of pandemics and epidemics. It is striking reality that the Muslims made noteworthy endeavors to exterminate outbreaks. They have taken long-term steps to diagnose these diseases, prepare medicines and treat the patients in a good manner. The provision of adequate education and training for precautionary measures and state arrangements were also ensured by the Muslim rulers (Dols, 1974). The exemplary response of the Muslim communities was based upon the Islamic teachings of Quran and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). It is a matter of immense satisfaction that Islam took a

number of social, economic and financial measures to eradicate pandemics, encouraging people to help the sick through zakat, ushr, charity and interest free loans.

The Islamic economic system provides courage and financial support to human beings during the spread of various natural disasters, catastrophes and pandemics. Muslims practiced an ideal social financial system which includes the tools of Zakat, Charity, Sadaqa, Hiba, Waqf, Fitrana and Kaffara. Islamic social finance develops the ability and capacity of the individuals as well as the institutions of state (Ahmed, 2007; Bayinah, 2017). It provides the financial support in different departments of the governments to reduce individual burden. It plays a remarkable role in establishing small businesses and promotion of social standards of the individuals of different societies. In this way, social challenges and vices of poverty, unemployment, begging, robbery and other deleterious practices can be eliminated. The financial approach of waqf in Muslim societies is strongly relevant in this case because grand projects of Muslim states have been established through this financial tool. Different educational institutions, libraries, hospitals, playgrounds and mosques were constructed and administered through the Islamic concept of the waqf.

These socio-financial tools of Islam have established and promoted peace, prosperity, security and a sense of responsibility in the social and economic domains of Muslims and other religious communities. These valuable instruments and etiquettes of social and financial development also guarantee the solution of human problems during any pandemic or epidemic situation. Assessing the usefulness and effectiveness of these Islamic social finance tools is a scholarly need of researchers and academicians. This research paper is presented to fulfill this intellectual, educational and academic need. Therefore, the objective of this study is to review the usefulness and utility of the Islamic social financial system in pandemic situation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers, scholars and academicians have studied Islamic social finance and its successful utilization in different societies previously and currently (Zauro et al., 2020; Jouti, 2019; Biancone and Radwan, 2019; Biancone and Radwan, 2018; Ismail and Shafai, 2017). They also afforded intellectual opinion and guidance on its role in diverse situations including floods, catastrophes, natural disaster and pandemics. According to Biancone and Radwan (2018), the economic crisis including poverty and unemployment can be easily addressed through Islamic finance especially through its social applications and innovative tools. They focused on unconventional financing alternatives and varied instruments. Asalm et al. (2020) dilated upon apposite policy recommendations for economic revival amid global epidemic of Covid-19. Biancone and Radwan (2019) carried out a study on the Islamic financial perspective regarding the financing social enterprises and opined that Islamic finance showed progressive growth not only in Muslim countries but also in non-Muslim countries. That is why; the Islamic social finance has achieved global attention in the discussions of different ethical, social and financial developments in national and international institutions. Jouti (2019) worked on an integrated approach in Islamic social finance ecosystems for building and maintaining its sustainable impact by applying a conceptual framework that is based on a case study. Moreover, the study focused on the idea that the solution of different social problems depends upon the continuity and strength of economic and business activities. This study concluded that a responsible collaboration is highly essential between the social institutions and organizations for sustainability and productivity of Islamic social finance strategies. Asutay (2012) conducted a study on the failure of Islamic financial institutions in different social fields. He tried to locate some sources that were caused the social failure of the objectives of Islamic finance. He suggested that there should be a non-banking approach for the social and financial development of the people. It includes a proper utilization of Islamic micro-finance, Ar-rahm, Zakat and other sources of Islamic financial system.

A number of studies are available on the analysis of multi-dimensional aspects and utilization of diverse concepts related to the Islamic social finance in some regional backgrounds. Lawal and Ajayi (2019) examined the function of Islamic social finance for the alleviation of different social, financial and humanitarian problems including the shortage of different facilities in the fields of water, food, housing, health and the empowerment which North East Nigeria combated for a long time. They stated some conceptual definitions for the explanation of different thoughts related to Islamic social finance and its tools by using a modified revenue function approach. The analysis exhibited that Zakat, Mudaraba and Sukuk have an effective role in the development and progress of different plans and projects in Nigeria.

Sadaqa and Waqf were analyzed on the basis of active telecoms line subscribers. They concluded that a useful, purposeful and result-oriented legislation must be established for a proper smooth functioning of Islamic social finance including Zakat, Waqf and crowd-funding approach. Muhammad, Maidoki and Sani (2018) analyzed the role and significance of different tools of Islamic social finance for the empowerment of youth, especially in women, in Sokoto State of Nigeria. They considered the Islamic social finance as an intellectual, theoretical and practical approach and deliberated a valuable comparison between the Islamic social finance and the conventional commercial finance. The study also revealed that the social finance strategy of Islamic thought is facing the challenges of continuity and sustainability due to non-availability of legal and administrative frameworks. They suggested that a campaign of social awareness should be launched for the explanation of different concepts of Islamic social finance and its practical benefits. They also mentioned the history of Nigeria including Zakat and endowment committee of Sokoto in 2007 in this connection. Kamaruddin, Muhamed, Ramli and Shukor (2016) have discussed Malaysia for different issues related to the governing of the Islamic social enterprises with the reference of Islamic philanthropic institutions. They also identified some useful approaches of the Islamic social enterprise and mentioned the significance of different Islamic charitable funds.

Pandemic situation related to novel corona virus (COVID-19) diverted the attention of several academicians and scholars to the socio-financial aspects as a resort to different social, moral, ethical, psychological, economic, political and religious challenges. Alabdullah, Ahmed and Nor (2020) discussed the outbreak of coronavirus and other health issues by explaining the data of different countries and states, mentioned in the sources of the World Health Organization. They suggested that systems should be in a continuation mode during the pandemic situation. They recommended that institutions should be well-equipped to confront the unexpected economic turmoil and its detrimental effects. They proposed innovative working strategies on digital platforms for the purpose of continuation and development in the fields of education, health, trade and security. They mentioned that organizations related to Islamic social finance commenced planning for improvement during the post pandemic Phases by granting several relief packages.

Few studies are available on the eradication of pandemic and epidemic issues. Islamic literature provides valuable instructions for pandemic situation in the fields of diagnosis, treatment and socio-financial support. Jorda, Singh and Taylor (2020) conducted the research that has the long-term socio-economic impacts of different infectious diseases and epidemics. The study mentions different dimensions of the core discussions about the diseases including micro-economics, assets, the rate of return, labor, security, wages, and savings etc. Faria-e-Castro (2020) analyzed fiscal policy of United States (2019-2020) during the outbreak of Coronavirus. The study discussed a number of social, economic and financial issues due to the pandemic. Different challenges concerning to the collection of income tax, employment, money transfer, salaries, savings and repayment of loans appear suddenly during this scary time. Fernandes (2020) discussed the economic effects of coronavirus pandemic on different affairs of the world. Buchillet (2007) analyzed the history of pandemics including Small Pox, AIDS, Plague and Cholera in a socio-religious background.

The literature discussed above exhibits noteworthy work of several academicians on varied aspects of Islamic social finance regarding pandemic situations. In the post-pandemic time, it is significant to evaluate moral, ethical, social and financial features of Islamic social finance. This research paper seeks to fulfill this intellectual, social and financial need for the prosperity and well-being of the whole mankind.

III. METHODOLOGY

In this paper, analytical and qualitative approaches of research have been adopted by the utilization of different research articles. The purpose of Qualitative (exploratory) research may be to generate new ideas, enhance researchers' familiarity with the problem through precise formulation of the problem (Naik & Dubey, 2016). Descriptive type of research is specifically designed to deal with complex social issues (Walliman, 2018). More specifically, it's descriptive study to analyze historical episodes, religion, culture, politics and geographical strategies by detailed analysis of relevant study of primary and secondary data through books, research articles, thesis, web-sites, newspapers and magazines. (Muhammad et al., 2020) used religious critical paradigm and referred (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015) for producing knowledge with the objective of critical research.

1. Pandemics in Muslims Societies

Pandemics are dangerous and dreadful diseases that spread from person to person rapidly. These can be caused by plague, colds, cholera, measles, smallpox etc. It is generally thought to be spread by animals and birds but having numerous alternative sources for its dissemination. It is difficult to predict and assess the onset of different pandemics and epidemics (Hays, 2005). Various problems are triggered by the mortal diseases and social activities including worship, politics, business, education and entertainment is adversely affected. Poverty, unemployment, inflation and deprivation rise during pandemic days. Individuals and institutions feel severe pressure in the planning, development and launching of different projects. The shadows of disease and death prevail everywhere. An atmosphere of frustration, anxiety, loss, fear, terror and grievances is visible in a merciless scenario. The first known event in human history of global pandemics occurred in the ancient city of Athens, Greece, in 420 BC and continued for a decade with its multi-dimensional and appalling damages. The second major global plague occurred in Anatolia, another city in Greece, in 165 B.C and remained for fifteen years (Hays, 2005). A major plague is mentioned in the annals of history with reference to Cyprus, which commenced from Ethiopia in 250 B.C and persisted for almost two decades. Then, it spread to other countries via North Africa, Rome and Egypt. It is said to have appeared in Britain in 444 B.C (Zelicoff and Bellomo, 2005). In the history of pandemics, the plague of Justin attacked in 541 AD with note-worthy devastations. The plague, which spread to Egypt, Palestine, and the Byzantine Roman territories, was nothing short of furious and disturbance for the Byzantine Empire of the time (Little, 2007). The United States suffered a plague in the 16th century. About ninety percent of the population fell victim to it (Hays, 2009). Another plague was experienced in China in 1641 A.D, the government of Ming dynasty could not grasp it properly which resulted in a change in power (Zelicoff and Bellomo, 2005). In 1665 A.D, the people of London had to face the plague (Hays, 2005). A study of the details of the various events associated with the long history of pandemics shows that human societies have suffered greatly. These dangerous diseases had been changing their location, duration, symptoms and effects during different epochs.

In pandemic situation, the paramount responsibilities of political and religious leaders, institutions, governments, and intellectuals augments and it is noteworthy that various political, social and religious philosophies are experienced, examined and tested. People focus on the practical application of different systems, social theories and religious theologies. They look forward to the materialistic benefits, physical convenience, financial discounts, diagnose, precautionary measures, medicine and treatment. In this context, the collective response of the followers of a religion is very important during pandemic (Buchillet, 2007). Islam is a humane, kind and merciful religion. That is why, the followers of this global religion have tried their best to protect human-beings in times of pandemics. Muslim societies have faced the pandemics in different eons. When the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) migrated from Makkah to Madinah, there was already a plague in Madinah. During that time, Hazrat Abu Bakar Siddiq (R.A) and Hazrat Bilal (R.A) also fell ill. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) prayed to Allah Almighty for the eradication of the disease and Madinah was saved from this situation due to the blessings of Allah Almighty (Al-Bukhari, 2015). Another disease "Plague of Amwas" spewed in the reign of second Muslim caliph, Hazrat Umar Farooq (Ibn-e-Kaseer, 2010). "Plague of Jarf" erupted in Basra during the reign of the Umayyad Caliph Abdul Malik Bin Marwan and lasted for three days. It is also known as the "Plague of Nobility" because it killed many noble personalities including men and women (Ibn ul Muzi, 2013). Different pandemics appeared several times in the era of Abbassids. During the reign of Caliph Al-Muqtada Bi Amarillah, the plague spread in Syria, Iraq and Hijaz which killed many cattle and wild animals. A severe shortage of milk and meat was observed during this situation. The caliph declared that all people should enjoin one another to do good and forbid sins. After this pious announcement, people broke all musical instruments, bottles of alcohol were thrown everywhere and all the wicked were exiled. The disease was disappeared automatically as a result of these precautionary measures and magnificent conducts (Ibn-e-Kaseer, 2010).

Islam has focused the eradication of pandemics through precautionary measures, treatment and socio-financial reforms as a elucidation to all social, economic, moral and spiritual problems of human-beings. The detrimental effects of infectious diseases have caused severe problems. That is why, Islamic social finance caters for various solutions to human challenges related to pandemics and epidemics. Wherever the Holy Prophet (PBUH) suggested solutions to spiritual and esoteric ailments in his life, he also disseminated instructions on preventive measures for physical ailments (Al-Bukhari, 2015). Muslim doctors conducted research and beneficial treatments of these diseases, adopted in the light of these heavenly and valuable instructions (Ibn-e-Abi Asiba, 2007).

2. Socio-financial Approaches of Islam to counter Pandemics

Islam imparts various socio-financial strategies to thrust aside pandemics and its detrimental consequences. Guidance for an exemplary response in pandemic days is also provided in the revealed book of Holy Quran, instructions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the observations of different Muslim scholars. Economic and financial affairs attain focal standing in the arena of collective human life. In fact, the success of material and physical life depends heavily on social behavior, economic resources and financial cooperation. In case of failure of one's economic resources, one becomes a victim of various social problems of poverty, unemployment and mendicancy whereas financially-strong and affluent individuals can pay close attention to the performance of their religious obligations. Socio-economic life consists of various positive ethical activities within the limits of piety, goodness, morality and law, then a person is considered successful. In view of the importance of economic and financial teachings, Islam has addressed challenges related to the both, microeconomics and macroeconomics. How an individual should behave economically? what are the responsibilities of the state and the society in this concern? It suggests different measures for the economic well-being of the common man as a whole (Jouti, 2019). On the basis of these thoughts, Muslim scholars have played a historical role in shaping the Islamic social finance system according to their own circumstances and physical requirements. On the basis of Islamic thought, philosophy and tradition, an ideal social finance system emerged in the theoretical and practical fields of human life. This system has the outstanding qualities related to worthwhile moral values, moderation, piety, philanthropy, equality, benevolence, circulation of wealth, economic cooperation, justice and help for the disabled and needy persons. In order to refine these constructive features, Islam has adopted the practical strategies and tools of Zakat, Ushr, Waqf, Qarz-e-Hasna, Inheritance, fitrana, kaffarah, sacrifice and Alms bequeathing for the sake of Almighty Allah. The beneficial and justified methods of Sukuk, Mudaraba, Musharaka and Takaful have been introduced and launched for the development, nourishment and growth of different kind of economic and business activities (Muhammad et al., 2018). The main feature of this socio-financial system is to impede unjust measures that violate the human rights. It prohibits the acts related to interest, hoarding, black-marketing and over-charging. Unnecessary accumulation of wealth, stinginess, extravagance and profligacy are never liked in any form in Islam (Asutay, 2012).

For the critical human dilemma of pandemics, the Muslims propounded scholarly research for practical, economic, financial, moral as well as medical solutions for its eradication. Any society or state can alleviate many of the financial adversities of its people by strengthening the system of Zakat (Bayinah, 2017). Islamic system of inheritance is a valuable natural and revealed source of the distribution of the wealth among the diverse social fabrics. People usually write or declare their last decision for the utilization and distribution of their property and wealth near the time of their death. Islam honors and accommodates this last decision of an individual which contains important instructions regarding the distribution of the person's wealth. By following this socio-financial technique, wealth can be distributed into different individuals or institutions. Relief packages provided by individuals and the state are also important during pandemic days. Philanthropists can help a person affected by different diseases by paying Zakat and Fitrana. The atonement system of Islam possesses multi-dimensional benefits. It eliminates sins on the one hand, and encourages financial support on the other. Undoubtedly, on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha, the sacrifice of different kind of animals is a source for the achievement of Allah Almighty's pleasure through the observance of the Abrahamic tradition, but at the same time, this religious act also provides food and financial support for many people. Similarly, charity is another effective tool for the help of needy and it has no limits. Any needy and deserving person can be alleviated financially through this open option mechanism. Waqf is another Islamic socio-financial instrument that can be utilized for the betterment of an individual as well as for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of different societies. By adopting the behavior of social cooperation and utilizing the source of Waqf, cash amounts, ornaments and properties can be given to someone for individual and collective benefits (Ahmed, 2007). It is an admitted fact that interest-free loans provide financial assistance to human beings. Islam has strongly encouraged people to spend their wealth for the sake of Allah. In times of pandemics, setting stipends for people, availability of medicine and transportation, giving food and providing various necessities are in accordance with the Islamic teachings and Muslim traditions. Islamic history is replete with incidents where whenever there is a disaster, earthquake, hurricane or pandemic; Muslims ensure serious attention for a worthwhile social and financial support. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) taught to succor the poor, to provide money to free slaves, to forgive debts, and to meet the needs of travelers. Hazrat Abu Bakar Siddiq (R.A) took steps to set many slaves free on the guidance of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and he paid the required amount to the masters for liberation of those slaves. Hazrat Omar Farooq (R.A) fixed the allowance of the old and needy Jews. Hazrat Usman-e-Ghani (R.A) gave full financial help to the famine-stricken people (Hassan and Choudhary, 2019).

During the pandemics, one can improve one's life for sake of Allah's pleasure for this world and the hereafter by providing assistance and compensation to the pandemic-stricken people in accordance with the spirit of the Islamic socio-financial system. To implement the real vision of Islamic thought, the system of Zakat must be strengthened and made effective in Islamic societies wherein nobody should be granted concession in the collection of usher money. Moreover, the Islamic principles regarding inheritance must be followed stringently in the property distribution. Large stipends and relief packages should be launched by different institutions and governments for the pandemic-affected populace. Furthermore, the significance of the concept of charity must be promoted at the individual and collective level in view of the spiritual and practical acquisitions of zakat, fitrana, kaffarah, qurbani, qarz-e-hasana and waqf. Special steps through the departments of education and media must be undertaken for the encouragement of spending wealth for the Will of Almighty Allah. Conferences and seminars should be organized for the promotion of distinctive Islamic socio-financial approaches including mutual trust, contentment, patience, self-sacrifice, brotherhood, piety and cooperation. Muslim traditions regarding generosity and charity must be incorporated in the educational curriculum at different levels. The Islamic teachings needed be disseminated to the affluent segments for the assistance of disasters and disease-stricken people. Joint venture in different business activities, that Islam has allowed, may be encouraged. Interest, hoarding, black-marketing, stinginess and ill-gotten gains should be discouraged and opposed at all levels. Pandemics bequeathed imperative lessons for the whole humanity that affluent segments of societies must consume their economic resources for the education, health and development of the common people.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study intends to find, evaluate and explore the scope of Islamic socio-financial approaches to combat any genre of pandemics and its adversarial impacts. Pandemics and epidemics are caused by assorted mortal diseases (including plague, cholera, measles and smallpox etc.) which obliterates all human domains, i.e., economy, business, health, sports, culture, tourism, transportation, industry and education. Nobody can predict the onset of any pandemic. The ancient history revealed various pandemics in Athens, Anatolia, Cyprus, Ethiopia, North Africa, Palestine, Egypt and Rome which altered their shape, locality and associated features. Muslim societies also remained victims of these appalling circumstances. They battled wisely and boldly against the pandemics with the help of Islamic thoughts by adopting different techniques through education, training, precautionary measures, state policies and socio-financial activities. They encouraged the well-off to compensate the pandemic-stricken through diverse Islamic social financing tools including Zakat, Qarz-e-Hasna, Sadqa, Fitrana, Waqf, Hiba, Kaffara, Charity and Ushr. In this glorious background, these socio-financial approaches of Islam are the imperative elucidations of multi-dimensional challenges related to pandemics. These tools have provided peace, prosperity and security to the whole humanity, including Muslims and non-Muslims. In nutshell, the Islamic social finance is a logical, justified, valuable and trustworthy system that motivates people to serve and support the human-beings during emergencies, calamities and pandemics.

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