

Two-Day National Seminar

on

“Pandemics and Narcotics: A Religious Perspective”

(7 – 8 April, 2021)

(Call for Papers)



Organized by

Shah-i-Hamadan Institute of Islamic Studies

University of Kashmir

Srinagar – 190006

NAAC Accredited Grade "A+"

Concept Note

Human encounter with the communicable diseases, epidemics, and pandemics dates back to antiquity. The earliest recorded pandemic happened during the Peloponnesian War (c. 5th Century BCE). It passed through North Africa and as much as two-thirds of the population died. In 1350 CE, an outbreak of the bubonic plague started in Asia and by 1347 CE, it spread throughout Europe rapidly. Dead bodies became so prevalent that many remained rotting on the ground and created a stench in cities. In 1918, avian-borne flu was detected in Spain resulting in 50 million deaths, and became famous as the Spanish flu. In the late 1980s, a syndrome was identified that destroyed a person's immune system, resulting in death by diseases that the body would usually fight off, and came to be known as AIDS. In 2003, after several months of cases, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) emerged and was believed to have started with bats, spread to cats and then to humans in China, followed by 26 other countries, infecting thousands of people.

In late 2019, the outbreak of a severe acute viral respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2) was reported from Wuhan, China and was soon declared as a pandemic by the WHO on March 11th, 2020. By the end of March 2020, people in almost every part of the world had been affected by the public health control measures that were implemented to limit the transmission of this virus. Although the threat that SARS-CoV-2 posed to physical health was central to the public health control measures that were implemented around the world, the implications of the strict lockdown regulations on psychological well-being were far extensive. The constant stress and uncertainty as a consequence of COVID-19 have aggravated the mental health of common people and misuse of opioids and stimulants is also on the rise, with some experts opining that pandemic-related strains, from economic stress and loneliness to general anxiety about the virus, are a major driver for this increase.

The magnitude and shape in which this novel pandemic manifested itself led many to look for answers and seek solace from whatever means possible, both material and spiritual. This is primarily due to the fact that beyond the economic and healthcare strains of the COVID-19 pandemic, it poses a profound threat to human connection and welfare. One such avenue towards which anxious masses have taken recourse is **Religion**. Recent studies have shown that during a period of a public health crisis, adaptive features of religious coping have appeared to offer a potential opportunity for sustaining human well-being and that less substance abuse has been reported among highly religious people than less religious people.

Christian belief propounds that pandemics are regularly succeeded by a spiritual revival. They believe that a pandemic and its subsequent consequences are bound to induce a pining and a longing for God out of isolation under conditions of fear and wonder. From the

Buddhist perspective, two theories are most applicable to explain the pandemic: 1) a cause and effect relationship; everything comes with a reason and certain diseases happen when the conditions are right at a certain time. 2) *karma*: the impact of our deeds. The adherents of the **Hindu religion** also claim that in many of their religious scriptures like **Atharva Veda, Upanishad, Puranas**, various explanations are provided for the causes of epidemics and possible ways have been recommended to fight them based on mental, spiritual, medical, and physical methods. In **Islam**, the **Qur’anic** teachings respond to the predicament of the existence of evil and suffering in the context of finding a spiritual lesson in every suffering, for a believer needs to be tested to discover his/her true essence. Such an approach to suffering encourages believers to nurture self-awareness and to espouse a constructive attitude in respect to their responsibility to self and society to maintain and enhance the well-being of others.

As COVID-19 has swept across our country and the world, our Department has felt the need to engage in an academic reflection and conversation about faithfully responding to this global challenge. Against this backdrop, a two-day national seminar on **“Pandemics and Narcotics: A Religious Perspective”** is being organized from **7th to 8th April 2021**. The seminar will primarily focus on providing a detailed and analytical overview of major world religions (Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism etc.) viz-a-viz the pandemics and narcotics/substance abuse and their practical social significance. It will also aim at generating an expedient discussion among the scholars of various religious backgrounds, academicians, and experts of this field on the principle themes of the topic in a comprehensive manner.

Important Dates:

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| 1. Last date for submission of Abstracts: | 25 March, 2021 (up to 4:00 pm) |
| 2. Notification of acceptance of Abstracts: | 25 March, 2021 (10:00 pm) |
| 3. Last date for submission of full papers: | 5 April, 2021 |
| 4. Seminar dates: | 7 – 8 April, 2021 |
| 5. E-mail for submission of Abstracts and Papers: | seminarpanku@gmail.com |

Registration Fee

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| 1. Faculty Member (Paper Presenters): | Rs. 1000/= |
| 2. Research Scholar (Paper Presenters): | Rs. 700/= |
| 3. Registration fee for participation only: | Rs. 200/= |
- (Participants will join the seminar online)

Link for Registration: <https://forms.gle/tGoXBkWs5cGakbuX9>

About the Department

Shah-i-Hamadan Institute of Islamic Studies was established at the University of Kashmir in 1988. It is located at Naseem Bagh, Hazratbal. It provides studies and research in the subject of Islamic Studies at Post-Graduate, M.Phil, and Ph.D. levels following an interdisciplinary approach. To date, over 90 candidates have been awarded Ph.D. and M.Phil degrees and more than 20 candidates are currently pursuing their doctorates in the department. The institute has a good record of UGC NET/JRF (conducted by the University Grants Commission, New Delhi) qualifiers and other research and academic activities in which the Department has endeavored to provide a platform to scholars and academicians across all religions on a global scale. The institute has also organized several national and international seminars, conferences, and workshops on different and important academic themes. In the last year, two international webinars were conducted (on the themes of **Islamic Perspective on Contemporary Biomedical Issues and Tasawwuf (Sufism) and Inter Religious Dialogue: Concept and Contemporary Relevance**) amid the COVID-19 pandemic while earlier this year, an online three-week International Interdisciplinary Research Methodology Workshop was also conducted by our Department which was graced by more than 152 participants from national and international institutes all over the world. Our major thrust and research areas cover a broad range of themes including Mysticism, Comparative Religion, Ethics, Area Studies, Gender Studies, and comparative study of Fundamental Human Rights.

Prof. Manzoor Ahmad Bhat
Director Seminar

Email: manzoor_is@kashmiruniversity.ac.in
Contact No:-9419035366

Dr. Nasir Nabi
Co-ordinator (Day-I)
Email: drnasirnabi@uok.edu.in
Contact No: 7006613747

Dr. Burhan Rashid
Co-ordinator (Day-II)
Email: dr.burhanrashid.kn@gmail.com
Contact No: 7780976646