

Assignment 2

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Islamic Studies

Q What are the contemporary challenges of Muslim Ummah and their solutions according to Islamic teachings?

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1. Introduction:

At present, the Muslim world, in general, is caught in a downward spiral. Its socio-cultural and politico-economic fabrics are shattered. Almost all Muslim countries are crying for peace and stability. With the emergence of the New World Order, and the 9/11 episode, the conditions of the Muslim world further deteriorated.

2. A glance at the Muslim World:

At times, even a cursory glance at the Muslim world reveals everything as clear as crystal. Every country of the Muslim world is grappling with acute and mighty problems and crises like terrorism, extremism, political instability, economic backwardness, illiteracy and sectarianism. Presently, they are facing a plethora of serious problems in the form of misperceptions about Islam, negative thinking about Muslims in the world, botched interpretations of the noble concept of Jihad.

3. Challenges to the Muslim World.

The Muslim world, despite having huge natural resources of minerals and energy, is facing crises. Though it has been blessed with Islam as a uniting force, its identity is diminishing in the wake of many challenges some of which are as under:

4. Internal Problems

i) Law and order Issues:

At present, the whole

Muslim Ummah in general, and Pakistan in particular, is tangled in an intricate web of law and order issues. There is no letup in heinous and barbaric acts like killing the innocent people, robberies, thefts, terrorism, bomb blasts and violence against women. The state of affairs is aggravating day by day. It's like a grievous punishment from Allah.

It has been said in Surah Al-An'am verse 65: "Say: "He hath power to send calamities on you, from above and below, or to cover you with confusion in party strife giving you a taste of mutual vengeance--each from the other." See how we explain the Signs by various (symbols), that they may understand."

ii) Poverty and unemployment:

All the Muslim states, save some oil-rich countries, are witnessing an acute economic crisis. Pakistan is facing an unprecedented poverty and unemployment owing to which the number of people who commit suicides is on the rise. There is a severe paucity of skilled labour as well.

iii) Deprivation from personal freedom:

In the perspective of human rights too, the Muslim states cannot be ranked higher. Save some countries where democratic system is in place, many countries are those where speaking against the King, Sultan, Khalifa, Sheikh or the incumbent ruler is next to impossible. Media outlets are state-controlled hence they show only one side of the picture.

iv) Sectarianism:

Muslim world is being consumed by unprecedented sectarianism nowadays. The evil, satanic forces have been creating the Shia blocs against Sunnis and the Sunni blocs against the Shias since long. The decade-old Iran-Iraq War was the outcome of these forces' conspiracies. Allah clearly rebuffs divisions among the Muslims in the Holy Quran, stating: "strongly hold fast on to the rope of Allah, and be not yet divided among sects."

v) Lack of Education:

Human being was made "Ashraf-ul-Makhloqat" because of knowledge.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said,

"Gain knowledge even if you have to go to China."

It shows the importance of knowledge. But today, the Muslims are leading in illiteracy, not knowledge. In many Muslim countries, illiteracy rate is as high as 80 percent. Consequently, illiteracy with population explosion is creating problems for the Muslims.

vi) Economic Challenges:

The contemporary world is going through an era of economic interests. More you are economically stable, more you will influence the world.

Karl Marx rightly said:

"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness."

It is extremely flabbergasting to say that Muslim countries are rich in resources like minerals, oil and gas but still they are in the downward slide.

5. External Problems

i) West's cultural invasion:

The West has a covert agenda to imbue the whole Muslim world in general and Pakistan in particular with its culture and civilization. Huge amounts of money are being spent for this very purpose. When a civilization opens the floodgates of lucre to overwhelm the other, the civilization at the receiving end has to face multifaceted adverse effects. Hence, the cultural invasion has become a burning issue for the Muslim Ummah, and it needs to be addressed on a war footing.

ii) The quest of the west to seize resources:

Historically, the West has been perpetually following the policies to get hold of the resources owned by the Muslims to save those for their future use. It is elaborately manifest that the Americans and the Europeans have been indulged into wars only to control the oil resources of the Muslim world.

iii) West's role in internally destabilizing Muslim state:

The west has been following a multi-pronged strategy to destabilize Muslim countries internally so that any Muslim country may not be strong enough to pose a threat to them. They believe that if it happens, then their ascendancy may

iv) be in jeopardy.
Disunity among Muslim:

The immediate and most serious challenge faced by Muslim Ummah is disunity among them. It is contrary to the teaching of Islam. Islam, in order to unite Muslims, has established a bond of brotherhood and equality.

Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran:
"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided."
(Al-Imran 3:103)

v) **Rapid rise of extremism and terrorism:**

Another major challenge, confronting by the Ummah, of course, is the rapid rise of extremism and terrorism in some Muslims. The poor governance of Muslim countries and their failure to prevent the spread of radical material in their educational institutions caused the rise in extremism in Muslims. Besides, the rapid rise of extremism was seen during Soviet's invasion of Afghanistan. To prepare local people to fight with Soviet Union. The students were taught radical material to encourage them to fight with Moscow. The war was won, but the radical thinking was left behind.

As a result, it faced resistance from the local people in the form of TLP in 2007

6. Suggestions to solve Problems

1) Unity of the Ummah:

There are explicit teachings in the Holy Quran regarding unity, the violation of which may invite severe punishments.

Allah says in Surah Al-Hujarat verse 10:

"The believers are but a single Brotherhood. So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers: And fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy."

Mawlana Amin Ahsan Islahi says in this regard:

"This is the punishment for those nations as they, after finding the light of divine knowledge, diverged and aberrated. If someone stumbles in the darkness of night, he may be termed somewhat disabled. But, if one stumbles in the broad daylight, he himself is to be held responsible for his idiocy."

Practical ways and means must be found in which Muslims across countries can become more connected to each other.

ii) Education:

For the advancement in the realm of education, some proposals are suggested hereunder:

- a) Putting in collective efforts to eradicate illiteracy from Muslim societies.
- b) Make arrangements for religious education along with the worldly knowledge.
- c) Establishment of universities of science and technology with shared investments.
- d) Establishing various research institutes to counter the rising influence of the Western

culture, and to implement the deductions inferred thereupon.

iii) Justice:

There needs to be a practical focus as to how to achieve justice in Muslim majority states, and in the fair treatment of individual and communities in society. A society where the privileged and rich have more right to justice, and to avoid criminal sanctions than the weak and poor can never be considered a developed or just one, let alone an Islamic one.

Great Liberal philosopher John Rawls also suggested that an institution is legitimate if it is just. In his words

"Justice is the first virtue of Institution as Truth is of the system of thoughts."

Projects based on identifying injustices and establishing principles of justice, such as due process, rule of law, fair trial, anti-corruption, need to be developed.

vi) Economy of brotherhood

The overarching aim should be able to produce everything the Muslim world needs within Muslim majority countries. Restrictions on inter-country trade and investments should be limited to those necessary, with more freedom to trade. Muslim countries need to

consider how they can further the goals of self-sufficiency and development, rather than just focusing mainly on providing food aid and emergency needs.

v) Media and culture matter

Global media can play an important role in conveying the history and culture of other people and understanding issues, as well as imparting values. We have seen this with the popular Turkish drama *Ertugrul* which has been shown and appreciated in so many Muslim majority countries, as well as in the West. It has demonstrated a global appetite from Muslims to learn about Islamic history, culture and polity.

vi) Interfaith more than inter-faith.

There is currently interest by Muslims at both a global and local level to get involved in interfaith dialogue. This is mainly pushed by Western countries.

Yet despite deep-rooted sectarianism, there is no push to develop intra-faith understanding. Muslims need to engage in intra-faith dialogue within themselves and build understanding across cultural and racial divides, within the community, more than participating in inter-faith initiatives.