

Contemporary Challenges of Muslim Ummah and their solutions according to the teachings of Islam.

i-Introduction

The history of Islam proves beyond any doubt that it is quite capable of raising man above a purely animal level. The herculean efforts of Prophets and Sahabas shaped a society that was perfect to be followed. But the Ummah gradually moved far from that principles. The contemporary Muslim Ummah faces a myriad of challenges that span social, political, and economic dimensions, reflecting the complexities of modern world. These challenges navigate almost every aspect of the Muslims. In addressing these issues, the Quran offers guidance emphasizing the principles of justice, compassion, and unity.

ii- From Glorious Past to Present Predicaments of the Muslim Ummah

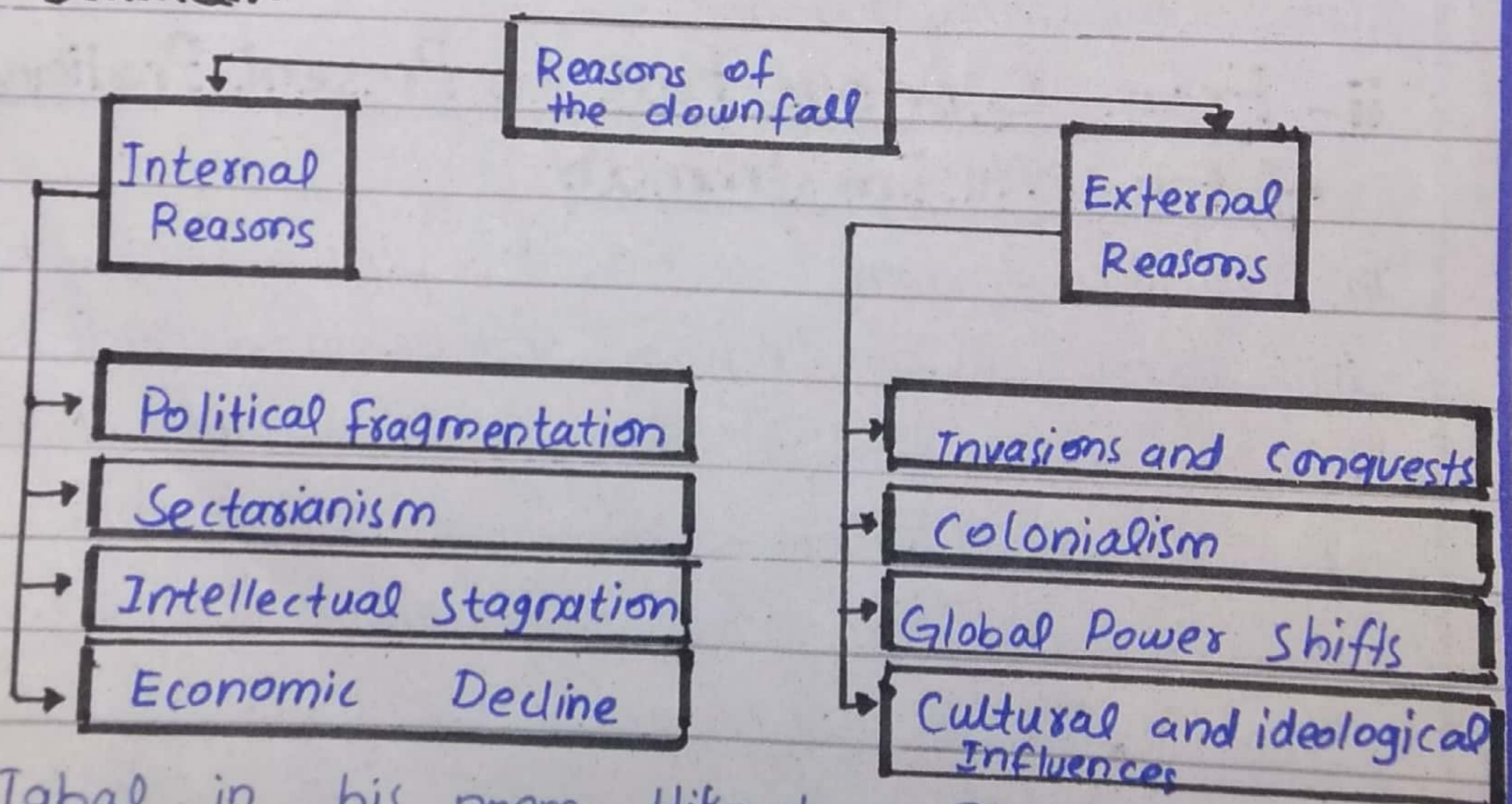
The Muslim Ummah, once at the pinnacle of global civilization, cultural richness, and expansive trade, thrived during its golden eras, notably under the Abbasid Caliphate and the Ottoman Empire. These periods were characterized by remarkable achievements in fields such as mathematics, medicine, and astronomy, alongside flourishing arts and a spirit of intellectual inquiry. Cities like Baghdad, Cordoba, and Cairo became

centers of learning and culture, with scholars like Al-Khwarizmi, Avicenna, and Al-Ghazali making significant contributions that shaped human knowledge. Unfortunately, such golden period couldn't last for a long time. As, ~~total~~ today the Muslim Ummah is challenged with a number of internal and external problems. The Muslims lost their spiritual and moral principles which were the reasons of unity and dynamism that once propelled it to greatness.

“With ease you can divine
To something else is due:
Penury can not cause
Decline of Muslims Rule.”

(Zarb-e-Kaleem, Iqbal)

iii- Reasons for the downfall of Muslim Ummah:



Iqbal in his poem Hikmat-e-Firauni, portrays the reasons for the downfall of a nation as:

"Its creed is to offer loyalty to others,

To build temples with the material of the mosque
Alas! for a nation which has cut itself adrift from God,
Which is dead but does not know that it is dead."

iv - Contemporary Challenges faced by Muslim Ummah

The Muslim Ummah, a global community of over 1.8 billion adherents is navigating a complex array of challenges in global world. Some very important challenges are discussed as follows:

Identity and Integration in a globalised World:

Globalization characterized by increased connectivity, rapid technological advancements, and cross-cultural interactions, has brought about both opportunities and challenges for Muslims world. In such a globalized world, Muslims face the dual challenges of preserving their religious and cultural identity while integrating into increasingly diverse societies. This tension is especially pronounced for Muslim minorities in Western countries, where issues of assimilation, cultural preservation, and societal acceptance^{are} at the forefront.

A core instance of this 'denial of identity' is the obligations on Muslim Women to remove their Hijab in Western countries. Countries like France, Germany, Australia, Britain, and Belgium are on top.

Emmanuel Macron, President of France, has recently ruled out his country's ban on Muslim dress. In an interview, he said:

"I am not specially happy that some women choose to wear Hijab when out in Public, but it must be tolerated."

This forceful adrift from the religious values is the core problem for many Muslims. Muslim scholars argue for a balanced approach, advocating for a 'Western Muslim' identity that harmonize Islamic values with Western societal norms.

"... Muslims should, or at least should be allowed to respect the commandments and regulations of their religion, and to act in observance of what is legitimate and illegitimate in Islam. They should not be compelled to act against their consciences, for this would be a 'denial of identity'."

(Tariq Ramadan: Western Muslims and the Future of Islam)

Political Instability and Governance Issues

The Muslim World is marred by political instability, with many countries experiencing ongoing conflicts, authoritarian regimes, and weak governance structures. The Arab spring which began in 2010, was a pivotal moment, revealed both the deep-seated desire for democratic reforms and the formidable challenges to

achieving them.

Khaleel Abu El Fadl in his book "Islam and the Challenges of Democracy", emphasizes the need for an Islamic framework that supports democratic values and human rights, suggesting that true governance in Muslim-majority countries should be based on justice, accountability, and the consent of the governed.

"Qur'anicly ordained values are: the promotion of social cooperation and mutual assistance in pursuit of justice, the establishment of a consultative and non-autocratic method of governance."

Economic Disparities and Developmental Challenges

Economic challenges are pervasive in many parts of the Muslim world, with significant disparities in wealth and development both within and between countries. The Middle East, and North Africa region, for example, is home to some of the world's richest and poorest nations. Read any Human Development Index report, published the last two decades, Muslim countries with rare exceptions are placed in the lowest rung of these reports.

The 2009, United Nation Development program report placed the Muslim countries as low income, low Human Development rate, etc.

High income countries	HDI Ranking	Literacy Rate (%)
Canada	4	99.0
Qatar	33	93.1
Low income countries		
Myanmar	138	89.9
Mali	178	26.2

Source:
UNDP 2009

Theological Interpretations and Sectarian Dynamics

The Muslim Ummah is not monolithic but encompasses a wide range of beliefs and practices. This diversity is a source of richness but also a challenge. One of the critical facets of this challenge is the internal schism between Sunni and Shia Muslims. This historical divide has led to differences in religious practices, jurisprudence, and interpretations of Islamic teachings. In addition to the Sunni-Shia divide, debates among various ideological groups, such as Salafi, Wahhabi, and traditionalist factions, further contribute to the identity crisis.

Reza Aslan in his book "No god but Gods: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam" advocates for a pluralist understanding of Islam that respects different interpretations while fostering a sense of unity. The challenge lies in promoting dialogue and mutual respect among various Muslim sects and schools of thoughts.

"... Pluralism implies religious tolerance, not unchecked religious freedom."

Injustice and Unfairness

There is a famous saying of Hazrat Ali:

"Societies can exist with Kufr but not with injustice."

Today, in the Muslim countries, injustice has taken many forms. We witness the injustice of other nations upon the Muslim Ummah, but we also witness ~~that~~ this at the position of the one in authority. The one in authority assumes power and oppresses the one below whether it be with wealth, power, status, or rank. Justice is not being served and even the concept of justice seems to be dwindling at all levels.

Human Rights and Gender Equity

The Quran advocates:

"O men! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations"

(49:13)

While Islamic teachings uphold the principles of justice and equality, cultural practices and socio-political structures in some Muslim majority countries often perpetuate gender discrimination.

Islamophobia

This irrational fear and hostility

are fueled by media portrayals, political rhetoric, and cultural stereotypes, which perpetuate misunderstandings and marginalize Muslim communities. The consequences of Islamophobia extend beyond individual acts of bigotry, leading to systematic inequalities in areas such as employment, education, and civil rights.

Former President of U.S. Barack Obama highlighted:

"The enduring faith of over a billion people is so much bigger than the narrow hatred of a few."

V- Solutions to Contemporary Challenges: Insights from Quran.

The Quran, as the foundational text of Islam, offers timeless guidance that can be applied to address the modern challenges faced by the Muslim Ummah. By drawing on its principles, Muslims can find pathways to navigate issues of identity, governance, economic disparities, theological diversity, human rights, and technological advancement. The Muslims should feel the gravity of situation and should plan for the future on this basis.

Reaffirming Unity and Brotherhood

The Quran asserts:

• وَإِنتَصِرُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا

"And Hold firmly together to the rope of Allah,

and do not be divided."

(3:103)

The Quran has thoroughly emphasized on the concept of unity among Muslims. It encourages its adherents to maintain a strong sense of community and avoid divisions that weaken their collective strength. Taking this verse as a bedrock, efforts should be made to facilitate dialogue between Sunni and Shia communities focusing on shared beliefs and values.

Honoring the Agreements

Fulfillment of agreements is a core feature of Islam, as mentioned in Quran:

وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا .

"Fulfill your commitments, Indeed the fulfillment of promise will be questioned."

From domestic daily life to the national and international level agreements, the fulfillment of commitment, agreements, contracts, and treaties is compulsory for their successful completion. Today, the fulfillment of the commitments is not considered mandatory. The Muslims should pay attention to their promises to earn trust on global level.

Embracing Justice and Fair Governance

Islamic principles advocate for justice and equitable governance as cornerstones of a thriving society.

The Quran states:

وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍۭ لَّسِيَ اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا ۗ اَلْعَدْلُوْ
هُوَ اَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوٰى ۗ

“And do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness.”

(5:8)

Addressing social and political challenges requires adherence to fair practices that ensures the rights and dignity of all individuals. Implementing transparent and accountable governance systems can restore trust and stability within Muslim communities, paving the way for inclusive development.

Fostering Tolerance and Respect for diversity

For bringing harmony, and coordination among nations, they should be invited on common grounds. e.g The Holy Quran invites jews and Christians to join Muslims on the common grounds:

“O people of Scripture: Come to word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as Lords besides Allah.”

The Quran celebrates diversity and encourages mutual respect and understanding among different cultures and communities. Combatting Islamophobia and fostering inclusive societies require efforts to promote tolerance

and respect for all other individuals, regardless of their faith or background.

Advocating for Human Rights and Dignity

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ

"Indeed, We have dignified the children of Adam."

(Al-Isra 17:70)

Islam upholds the inherent dignity and rights of every individual. Addressing issues such as gender equality, freedom, and justice requires a commitment to upholding these fundamental principles. Empowering marginalized groups and advocating for human rights align with the Quranic vision of a just and compassionate society.

vi- Conclusion

The challenges facing Muslim Ummah today are multifaceted and require nuanced, context-sensitive solutions. By drawing upon the timeless guidance of the Quran, the Muslim Ummah can navigate the contemporary challenges with a renewed sense of purpose and direction. Upholding these principles can empower Muslims to build stronger, more vibrant communities that contribute positively to the global landscape.