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## Contemporary Challenges of Muslim Ummah and their solutions according to Islamic Teachings

Muslim Ummah is facing numerous challenges including socio-economic underdevelopment, political challenges, bad governance and lack of scientific and technological development. These challenges directly or indirectly are affecting marginalized groups creating a sense of deprivation and alienation among them. These challenges are also reflected in Pakistan with the emphasis on sectarianism and Jihadi Culture.

### Socio-economic Underdevelopment

Poverty, overpopulation, illiteracy, unemployment and inequitable distribution of resources are the most common problems faced by the Muslim Ummah. Half of the population of Afro-Asian Muslim countries live below poverty line and out of 57 OIC member states, more than one-third are least developed countries. In addition more than half of the population of Muslim countries have a literacy rate of less than 50%. The expenditure on technology and science is insanely low and out of 70 most corrupt countries on Corruption Index, 35 are Muslim.

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## Political Challenges

Most Muslim countries are under autocratic or dictatorial rule. There is lack of political participation and democracy. The absence of fundamental rights, freedom and rule of law results in increase of radicalism and militancy.

## Extremist Movements

Muslim World has faced a steady growth in extremist movements and militancy. These are sometimes internally directed against their rulers and the West at other times. The Taliban established their "model" of rigid Islamic rule and turned Afghanistan into a heaven for Islamic extremists, which in result is affecting neighbouring countries.

Al-Qaeda emerged as a focal terrorist network targeting Western interests and pro-Western countries. This violence is adversely impacting Muslim Ummah and has led to the growth of Jihadi culture.

## Sectarianism

The growth of sectarianism particularly the Shia-Sunni violence is a major cause and manifestation of

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extremism - This Shia-Sunni conflict has fueled various things including Islamization drive, Iranian revolution and Iranian and Gulf countries' proxy war in Pakistan. The sectarian divide is growing greater day by day and if the Muslim Ummah does not call for its solution, it would result as one of the major threats to overall Muslim identity.

## Role of Madarssahs

The Madarssahs have been seats of learning and symbol of Islamic heritage. They continue to perform, useful social function providing free education, boarding and lodging. Madarssahs increased during the Afghan-Jihad and are blamed for extremism. Majority of Madaris are imparting religious education according to their fiqh however they generally lack modern education and focus on indoctrination. Due to absence of modern education, they are misinterpreted to be involved in militancy. Though it is not true in all cases but some of them are actively found to be involved in sectarianism and militancy. The government efforts for Madarssah reforms continue facing resistance due to the strong idea

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of modern education being western induced, taking Muslims away from their religion.

## Misinterpretation of Islamic Injunctions

The misinterpretation of the Quranic verses and Hadith, without reference to the context promotes religious hatred and extremism. This hatred is not only against non-Muslims but people from the rival sects too. The emphasis on militant and extremist interpretation of Jihad and justification of terrorism is growing greater due to misinterpretation. Quranic verses and Hadith preaching religious tolerance, peaceful co-existence and promoting humanity are clearly ignored.

## Minority Rights and Discrimination

Discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities remains a significant issue in many Muslim countries. This kind of marginalization results in social exclusion, economic disadvantages and restricted access to education and employment.

## Blasphemy and Hudood Laws

Blasphemy and Hudood Laws pose another serious challenge for Muslim countries.

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as they can be misused to unfairly target people, limit their freedom and lead to unfair treatment, causing human right problems and social conflicts.

## Denial of Women Rights

In many Muslim countries women face significant restrictions on their rights, such as limited access to education, employment and legal protections. Despite Islamic teachings that advocate for women's dignity and equality, their rights are being forfeited resulting in social and economic disadvantages.

## Absence of Ijtihad

The lack of Ijtihad (independent reasoning) in some Muslim societies limits the ability of adapting to modern contexts. Without Ijtihad, societies struggle to address contemporary issues effectively leading to difficulties in intellectual and social development.

## Solutions According to Islamic Teachings

Addressing the challenges faced by Muslim Ummah involves solutions from

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The Islamic teachings. Socio-economic disparities can be resolved through fair distribution of wealth and resources. This can be exemplified by Zakat and Sadaqa to alleviate poverty and economic inequality. Provision of education should be taken far more seriously as it is the basic right of humans according to Islam. To tackle political instability and authoritarian rule, leaders should take example of Shura (consultative decision making) which ensures inclusive and representative governance. The rise of extremist movements and terrorism can be countered by promoting co-existence and tolerance by reflecting to Quranic verses. In addition educating people to read and understand Quran themselves can also aid in decreasing extremism and such practices. Sectarian conflicts and religious divides can be reduced by emphasizing the Quranic principle of "Ummah" (community) encouraging dialogue among different sects and promote mutual understanding and respect. Reforming Madrasahs to include both modern and traditional education aligning with Islamic values of learning can highly benefit the Muslim community. Additionally Muslims

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should advocate for rights of minorities and women as preached by the Islamic teachings. Muslims should also make room for Ijtihad, so that they may be able to address contemporary issues which will result in intellectual and social development of Muslim Ummah.