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Q. Contemporary challenges of muslim Ummah and their solutions according to teachings of Islam.

Ans. Introduction:

There are several challenges in this contemporary world which muslim ummah is facing for instance economic, socio-political issues and problems related to culture. Some of the challenges with their solutions are mentioned below.

Economic challenge: Economic inequality or disparity and the poverty issues has always remained as a significant problem. The issue is that the wealth concentration remains in the hands of a few.

Solution: According to Islamic teachings and in the light of Quran and Sunnah, giving of Zakat is mandatory which redistributes wealth and helps needy. Zakat is a form of almsgiving. According to Quran (9:60) "The alms are meant only for the poor and the needy and those who are in charge thereof, those whose hearts are to be reconciled and to free those in bondage and to help those burdened with debt, and for expenditure in the way of Allah and for the wayfarers. This is an obligation from Allah. Another solution is to prohibit riba (usury). Quran prohibits riba due to which a fair economic system could be ensured and also the prevention of exploitation.

For example, there are many Islamic banks that operate on the principles of profit sharing and not on the interest. "Allah has permitted trade and has

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forbidden interest" (Quran 2: 275).

Political and Governance instability: There are many muslim countries who are facing poor governance, political instability and corruption problems that at least leads to socio-economic problems and unrest in the country such as civil wars such as in Yemen, Syria etc.

Solution: The leaders chosen should be based on merit and their abilities of governing. The Quran emphasize over the justice and accountability of leaders. In Quran (4: 58) 'Allah commands you to return trusts to their rightful owners; & when you judge between people, judge with fairness. Secondly, governance must involve consultation (Shura) to ensure that the decision reflects the collective will, according to Sunnah (42: 38). The best example includes the governance model during the caliphate of Hazrat Umar (R.A)

Illiteracy: Lack of access to education or high illiteracy rates are also the major barriers in the progress of muslim communities. Due to lack of knowledge of Quran and Sunnah, Islamic nations are not able to practice properly the actual teachings laid down in the Quran decrees therefore they are not able to succeed.

Solutions: According to Islam seeking knowledge is encouraged for all muslims (male and female). According to Quran (96: 1-5); "Read in the name of your Lord who created, created man from

a clot of congealed blood. Read, and your Lord is most generous, who taught by the pen, taught man what he knew not". And according to Hadis (Sahih), seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every muslim.

Social issues: Muslim communities are facing numerous social problems like gender inequality, marginalization of women, youth unemployment and disillusionment.

Solutions: Provision of education can sort out such problems as education empowers individuals and communities. Moreover, for women's rights Islam advocates the women rights in the matter of inheritance, employment and education. As in Quran (4:7), "Just as there is a share for men in what their parents and kinsfolk leave behind, so there is a share for women in what their parents and kinsfolk leave behind - be it little or much - a share ordained (by Allah).

Extremism and sectarianism: The extremist ideologies and groupings for instance ISIS are rising. Other than this, the conflicts between different islamic sects such as conflicts between ~~between~~ sunni and shiah. Thus the interfaith conflicts and extremism is detrimental to peace and ~~or~~ harmony within and outside the muslim Ummah.

Solution: According to ^{the content of} Quran there should be tolerance and peaceful coexistence with

people of other faiths. "Let there be no compulsion in religion, for the truth stands out clearly from falsehood" (Quran 2: 256). Also islam condemns the unjust violence; as in Quran, "Whoever takes a life - unless as a punishment for a murder or mischief in the land - it will be as if they killed all of humanity; and whoever ^{saves} ~~takes~~ a life, ~~of~~ it will be as if they saved all of the humanity" (5: 32). Thus, islam promotes peace. The clear example could be taken of The Charter of Madinah, the society created by the Holy Prophet (P.b.u.h) where muslims, jews and people of other religions lived with harmony.

Cultural crises: Due to the increase in westernization, the islamic cultural identity is perceived to be eroded. As muslims are facing many challenges while integrating into non-muslim societies while maintaining the islamic norms and values. These problems of "globalization" is also leading towards the identity crises among the muslim youth.

Solutions: According to islamic teachings, muslims are encouraged to hold their islamic values and identity while engaging with modern world. "Human beings, we created you all from a male & a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another" (49: 13). Moreover, islam promotes moderate

or balanced life that is embracing of modernity without compromising the core principles of Islam. In Quran it is stated; "We appointed you to be the community of the middle way so that you might be witnesses to all mankind and the message might be a witness to you". (2: 143). The examples of many muslim communities could be taken who maintain their cultural and religious identity while integrating into broader society such as the muslim communities efforts of establishing islamic schools in West.

Family issues: Various social injustice practices could be witnessed in many muslim societies that includes family breakdown, gender inequality etc.

Solutions: In Islam there is a great emphasis over family unit and harmonious relationships. Not only this, Islam grants equal rights to men and women. In Quran, "Do not covet what Allah has conferred more abundantly on some of you than others. Men shall have a share according to what they have earned, & women shall have a share according to what they have earned (4:32). Also, advocates the social justice, "Surely Allah enjoins justice, kindness and doing of good to kith and kin, and forbids all that is shameful, evil and oppressive (16:90) For example, rights of women that were granted in early Islam were revolutionary for their time,

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which included business ownership, inheritance and education.

Conclusion:

The multifaceted approach, ^{according to Islam} should be opted for addressing the contemporary challenges of muslim Ummah. By focusing on education, justice, equity, gender equality, unity, consultation, mediation and cultural preservation, the muslim ummah can overcome the challenges they are facing and can develop a sustainable and harmonious society.