The image of Islam in the West and responsibilities of Muslim ummah

1. Introduction

The negative image of Islam in the Western world requires muslims devoted efforts to improve it. This image has been prevalent in west due to most mis-interpretation of Islamic ideology and itis principles. However, this image can only be turned positive, if muslim ummah realize and fulfill its duties and responsibilities.

2. The image of Islam in the West

a. Islamophobia, a fear about Islam

b. Linkage of Islam with terrorism

c. Notion of anti-women religion

d. Sectarian extremism

e. Anti-science religion

f. Advocate of social or gender inequality

3. Reasons behind the image of Islam in west

a. Lack of cohesion and unity among muslims

b. Dormant role of OIC

4. Responsibilities of Muslim ummah

a. Launch anti-Islamophobia campaign

b. Ensure women rights

c. Condemn extremism and terrorism.

d. Create awareness and educate the true principles of Islam

e. Advancement in the field of science and technology

f. Adopt Islamic teachings and seerat-un-nabi

5. Conclusion

"No human race is superior; no religious faith is inferior. All collective judgements are wrong. Only racists make them" (Elie Wiesel) This means that neither any religion nor any race is inferior. Infact, it is the human's thoughts that shape the image of anything. Similarly, west has created the negative image of Islam. It perceives Islam as a threat for the global peace and stability. This haterd and prejudice against the Islam can only be vanished if muslims fulfill their responsbilities. The west thinks/terms fear of islam as Islamophobia. It has linked Islam with terrorism and sectarian extremism. West sees Islam as anti-women religion. Similarly, west has declared Islam advocate of social

inequality. moreover, west takes Islam as anti-science and conservative religion. This adverse perspective of Islam has various causes that include misinterpretation of Islam, lack of cohesion among muslim ummah and ineffectiveness of OIC. However, muslims have ability to portray Islam as positive religion. For this purpose, muslims have to launch stern anti-islamophobia campaign to eradicate prejudice against Islam. Similarly, muslims need to change their conservative mindset by advancement in science and technology and ensuring women rights. Another step may be educating others true espirit of Islam. Moreover, adoption of seerat-un-nabi(and promotion of unity among muslim ummah can have far-reaching impacts in this regard

strong

In a nutshell, the negative image of Islam in the western world requires muslims efforts to improve it. This image has been prevalent due to misinterpretation of Islamic ideology and its principles. However, this image of Islam can only be made positive, if muslims realize and fulfill their duties and responsibilities.

Islamophobia is the most commonly perceived image of Islam in the west. This fear of Islam in west has numerous causes that include misunderstanding about Islam, linkage of terrorism with Islam, rising influence across the world etc. Haterd against muslims and their religion has obscured huge/ exacerbated in the past few years. Muslims, particularly in west are experiencing prejudice and discrimination in every aspect of life. Islamophobia is being manifested in the forms of hate speeches, social boycot, and even violence. Council on American-Islamic Relations documented shocking 182 percent increase in bias motivated incidents targeting muslims between october and november 2023. Hence, this shows that west has perceived Islam in the form of Islamophobia.

Another image of Islam that is prevailing in

western world is that Islam supports terrorism. This notion emerged due to the brutal activities of some militant muslim groups. Muslims are identified as terrorist in western countries who mercylessly kill unarmed and innocent people including children across the world. The **9/11 incident** is considered most pertinent precedent in this regard in which world trade centre in USA was targeted. The attack was launched by Osama bin laden who was a muslim. Similarly, **Daish, taliban** and other **militant** organizations have been involved in multiple terrorist attacks globally. To conclude, it can be said that some muslim militant groups have distorted the peaceful image of Islam across the globe

　　　　　Similarly, another image of Islam that has been

Date:——— Day:———

created in west is that Islam is an anti-women religion. It is due to the intense restrictions imposed on women in the name of Islam. The proponents of this viewpoint opines that women are considered inferior to men in Islam. Islam has deprived women of their basic rights of education, employment and freedom. **The Afghanistan** which is a muslim state has imposed **ban** on the education of women. Similarly, doors of employment have been closed on them. Women cannot move freely there. Women have been deprived of leadership positions. Such sorts of measures in a muslim state have created various misconceptions about freedom of women in Islam.

Sectarian extremism is an another factor that has played a key role in shaping image of muslims in the west. Muslims are divided into two major sects, Sunni and Shia. Both these sects are based on contradictory beliefs, values and practices which has often resulted into extremism against each other. Sectarian extremism has given birth to a negative perception about Islam and its followers. globally. Saudi Arabia and Iran are two major countries that are leading sunnism and shiaism respectively across the Muslim world. This sectarinism has resulted into various proxy wars between the both countries. Wars in Syria(2011), Yemen(2015) and Iraq are the pertinent example of sectarion extremism. To recapitulate, the sectarianism has portrayed

extremist picture of Islam across the west.

Moreover, Islam is seen as the anti-science religion in the western world. It is considered that scientific inventions and discoveries are against the teaching of Islam. Some muslims donot use medicines as they termed it haram!

Similarly, some/few groups of muslims think that ~~and~~ mobile phones, and social media are merely the source of vulgarity and moral degradation. Similarly, contribution of muslim world in the development as well as in the invention in the field of science and technology is like a drop in the bucket. Muslims have forgotten to follow the footsteps of renowned muslim scientist like **Jabar-bin-Hayan, Al-Biruni, Ibn-al-Haytham, Al-Khwarizmi** etc. Therefore, west has considered Islam as anti-science religion.

Another image of Islam that is predominant in west is that Islam is an advocate of social or gender inequality. In muslim culture, male are usually breadwinner, while women are responsible for childcare and domestic duties. Similarly, women have to cover their body in Islamic society that is perceived as oppression on women and raise questions about personal freedom and choice. West claims that Islam is a conservative religion.

In Pakistan, particularly in the tribal areas of KPK and Balochistan, intense restrictions are imposed on women, leading to social inequality. In a nutshell, west sees Islam as a region of propagating social inequality.

There are multiple reasons behind negative image of Islam in western world. The foremost reason is the lacku of unity among muslims. Disputes within the muslim community such as sectarian violence and desire to rule the muslim world, have significantly contributed in portraying adverse image of Islam. Saudi Arabia is leading Sunni bloc, while Iran is leading Shia bloc in the muslim world. This sectarnism has resulted into various wars between the both blocs. These internal divisions have overshadow the peaceful teachings of islam, showcasing the opposite perception of Islam.

Similarly, another supreme reason of negative picture of Islam in west is inefficacy of Organization of Islamic Cooperation. OIC was

established in 1969, and it consists of 57 muslim member states. It is one of the important functions is to protect the true image of Islam. But, unfortunately, it has failed in performing its duty. Every other day, the cases of defaming Islam, particularly in west, are reporting but, OIC does nothing except passing resolutions and condeming these heinous acts. The main reason of it is failure is the lack of cohesion and unimty among member states. Due to internal disputes, OIC members fail to reach on consensus. To recapitulate, it can be said that the organization which was made on the name of Islam. has now failed to protect and promote the positive image of Islam.

Although West has emphasized the negative image of Islam and muslims, but this image can be altered only if muslims perform their responsibilities in painting postive image of Islam.

There are various responsibilities of Muslim Ummah, cheif among which is launching anti-islamophobia campaign globally. For this purpose, Muslim leaders as well as muslim scholars need to present peaceful image of Islam on international forums like United Nations. Prime Shahbaz Sharif in addressing 79th session of United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 2024 expressed his concern over rise of Islamophobia by saying that;

"Islamophobia is a global concern, and we must combat this scourge together."

Hence, by collaborate efforts, muslims can negate the

idea/notion ~~and~~ of Islamophobia.

Another responsibility of muslims is to grant all the rights to women that are bestowed to women in Islam. Muslim ummah must/have to manifest the real status of women that is awarded to them by Islam. It can only be possible by providing the rights of education, employment, marriage, property and freedom of speech *to women* within the islamic state. Infact, Islam is the only religion that has provided dignity and equal status to *both* women and men.

Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

"I command you to be kind to women"

Hence, it is the duty of muslim ummah to portray Islam as women-friendly religion.

Condemning extremism and terrorism is "another" core responsibility of muslim ummah to create positive image of Islam in western world. It is imperative to address extremist ideologies and actions that are contributing to negative image of Islam in west. It includes promoting the true, peaceful teachings of Islam. Islam has given immense importance to the life of human beings. According to Quranic verse:

" Whoever kills a human being is considered to have killed all mankind. Whoever saves the life of a single human being is considered to have saved the life of all mankind".

To recapitulate, presenting the anti-extremist and anti-terrorist ideology of Islam is the foremost responsibility of muslims.

In addition to it, muslims have to create awareness and educate people about the real principles of Islam. It includes participation in religious debates, use of media for promoting islamic ideology and manifest teachings of Islam by actions/conduct. Moreover, educational institutes can play Key role in this regard. Open mosques days is another way of educating others about Islam in which non-muslims can visit mosques, ask questions and learn the islamic teachings. Similarly, religious scholars hold a Key position in creating awareness about misconceptions of Islam and promoting islamic values. Mufti Menk is a renowned religious scholar who is using social media platform like youtube and instrogram for propagating islam. Hence, by educating others, muslims can improve their status.

Furthermore, contribution in the field of science and technology is an another way to depicit the true picture of Islam. For this purpose, muslims need to alter their mindset. Muslim countries have to allocate larger funds for Research and development. There is a dire need to establish research centers and universities that focus on innovation and research. King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) that is located in Saudi Arabia, is providing platform for scientific and technological education and research. To conclude, muslims have to focus in the scientific and technological field in order to negate the idea that islam is an anti-science religion.

Moreover, there are various responsibilities of muslim ummah, but the prime

responsibility is that muslims should themselves follow *~~Deen~~ Islam /seerat-un-nabi* to teach the real meaning of Islam. Now-a-days, Islam has just confined to words. Muslims donot actually following the life of Holy Prophet (PBUH). Once Mark Twain said, "Action speaks louder than words but not nearly as often." It implies that people make claims all the time, but it is very rare that people do what they say. Muslims are passing through similar situation They do teach Islam, but they donot follow it. Hence, if muslims wants to present positive image of Islam, then they have to act upon the commandments of Almighty Allah.

In summation, Islam is frequently viewed through the negative lens in the west. In western societies, the misconceptions about Islam includes Islamophobia, Islam-terrorism nexus, sectarian extremism, anti-women belief, perpetuate societal inequality and hostility towards scientific development. However, there are numerous factors that are contributing to it include min-interpretation of Islamic teachings, dormant role of OIC and profound disunity among muslims. Despite this negative image of Islam, muslims can still play significant role to root out misconceptions and misunderstanding about Islam. First of all, muslim needs to practically adopt seerat-un-nabi. Similarly, Muslims have to unite, spread awareness about the true positive image of Islam. They have to manifest Islam as women friendly religion as well as

prioritize advancement in science and innovation. Last but not the least, they have to initiate a campaign against Islamophobia worldwide.