

Q Discuss the status of classist lifestyle in the light of teachings of Islam.

## Elucidating the Status of Classist Lifestyle in the Light of Teachings of Islam

Classist lifestyle is quite prevalent in capitalist societies of modern era. This lifestyle involves looking down upon the others, extravagance, institutionalized status based hierarchy, pride and arrogance based on wealth and status. Islam

strongly condemns this classist lifestyle. Islam has propounded an economic system against class polarization in ~~this a classist society~~ that involves institutionalization of Zakat, prohibition of interest and hoarding. Islam replaced wealth and socio-economic status with piety (taqwa) as the sole criterion of social honour.

## 1. Expounding Pre-Islamic Classism

Before Islam, wealthy merchant families like Abu Sufyan had higher social status whereas the poor had no social voice. However, Islam ended this class based hierarchical structure.

Farewell Sermon of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.)

“ An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab and a non-Arab is not superior to an Arab. Neither a white is superior to black, nor a black is superior to white, except for piety. ”

## 2- Pre-Islamic Institutionalized Status based hierarchy

Classism is characterized by institutionalized status based hierarchy. Before Islam, slaves were treated as property in classist lifestyle of Makkah. Islam ended this hierarchy, by granting the right to self-respect and dignity even to slaves and servants.

Allah Almighty says in Glorious Quran

cc The <sup>servants</sup> slaves are your brothers whom Allah has placed under your authority. ”

## 3- Examples of Kindness of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) toward Slaves and Servants: The Strongest Evidence that shows Islam ended classist lifestyle

Classist lifestyle is characterized by maltreatment with servants. Before Islam in classist societies, slaves and servants were harshly and miserably treated.

However, following examples from the life

of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) clearly show that Islam ended classist lifestyle.

a. Kind Treatment with Bilal ibn Rabah (R.A.)

Bilal ibn Rabah (R.A.), an Abyssinian slave, became the companion of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.). He was the first caller to prayer.

b. Kindness toward Ans ibn Malik (R.A.)

Ans ibn Malik (R.A.) said: "I served Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) for ten years but he never scolded me."

#### 4. Equality of Mankind: A Core Pillar of Islamic Social System

Unlike classist society, Islamic social system consider piety (taqwa) as the sole criterion of social honour. Allah Almighty says in Glorious Quran: "Indeed, we created you from a male and a

female and made your tribes so that you know one another. Indeed, the most honourable of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous."

## 5. Condemnation of Pride based on Wealth and Status by Islam

Unlike classist lifestyle, Islamic social system condemns pride based on wealth and status. Allah Almighty says in Glorious Quran:

"Indeed, Allah does not like the boastful and self-deluded person."  
(Al-Quran)

Allah Almighty says in

"Do not walk on earth in haughty style, you can neither tear earth apart nor match mountains in height."  
(Surah Al-Isra)

## 6. Core Pillars of Islamic Social System that Reject Classist Lifestyle

The core pillars of Islamic social system include: moderation (Wasatiyah <sup>الوسطية</sup>), human

dignity and social justice. These pillars reject classist lifestyle.

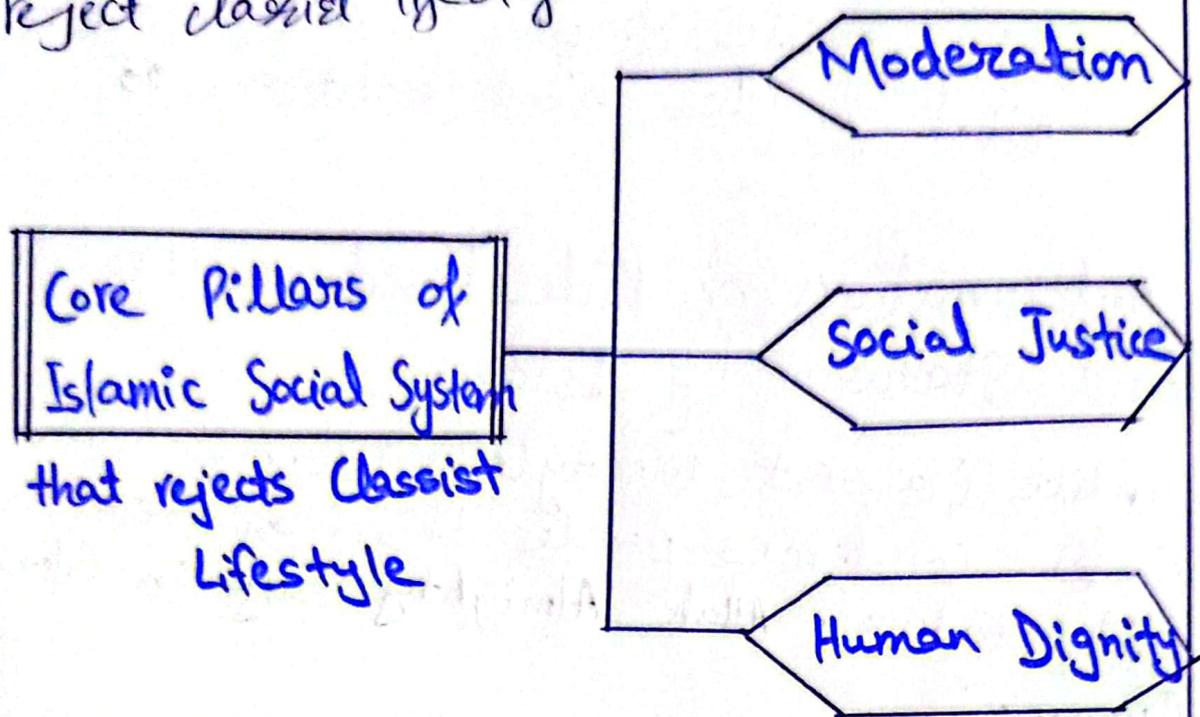


Fig: Core Pillars of Islamic Social System that Rejects Classist Lifestyle

## i- Moderation

Islam is a religion of moderation. Allah Almighty says in Glorious Quran

“And we have made you a balanced nation.” (Surah Al-Baqarah)

Prohibition of extravagance

Allah Almighty says in Glorious Quran

“Indeed, Allah does not like the extravagant.” (Surah Al-Araf)

## ii- Social Justice

Classist lifestyle favors only the wealthy. However, this fundamental principle of Islamic social system ensures ~~that~~ equality for the rich and the poor in following rights: right to economic security, equal access to public welfare, and equality before the law.

a- Right to economic security: Classist lifestyle is characterized by monopoly of ruling elite on markets and economic system. However, Islam grants right to economic security to everyone irrespective of socio-economic status. **Example:** Under Abbasid Caliphate, Muhtazib used to regulate markets for preventing monopoly of the wealthy on markets.

b- Equal Access to Public Welfare:  
**Example:** Caliph Usman (R.A.) used to organize public feasts in which people from different socio-economic classes even

the non-Muslim laborers ate same high quality food as that of leaders of that time.

### c. Equality before the laws:

Example: Under the rule of Caliph Umar (R.A.), the son of Amr ibn al Aas (governor of Egypt) struck a Coptic Christian Egyptian on losing a horse fight (as Christian won against him). The Christian complaint to Caliph Umar (R.A.). The Caliph gave a whip to Christian and told him to strike governor's son <sup>in front of</sup> before public.

### iii. Human Dignity: A Universal Right

According to Islam,  
Human dignity is inherent not earned by wealth or status. Allah Almighty says in Glorious Quran:

“And we have honoured the children of Adam.” (Surah Al-Isra)

“Children of Adam” refer to wealthy as well as the poor.

\* **Protection from Discrimination: Main focus of Islam that Rejects Classist Lifestyle**  
Classist lifestyle is manifested as preference of <sup>nepotism</sup> discrimination over meritocracy. However, Islam rejects it. For instance, in the reign of Caliph Abu Bakr, Usama ibn Zaid (who was the son of formerly enslaved African descent) remained Commander of Military force. This demonstrates that Islam preferred merit to lineage or tribal aristocracy.

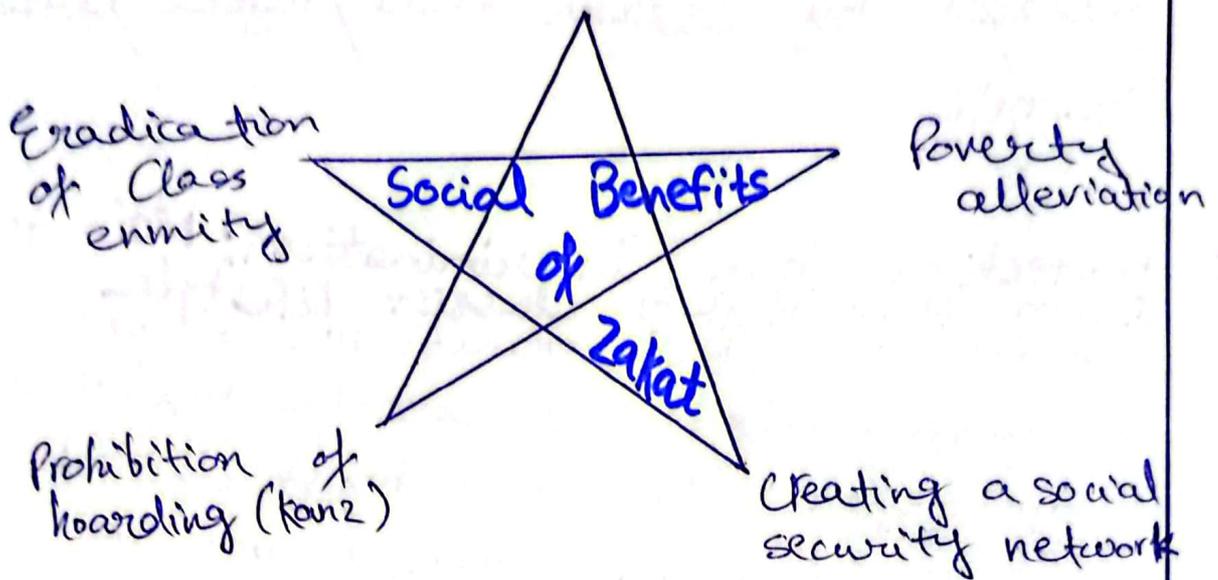
ii- **Protect**

## 7. Islamic Economic System Against Polarization of Classes

a- **Institutionalization of Zakat**

This ensures circulation of wealth, prohibition of hoarding (kanz), poverty alleviation, reduction of class enmity and creating a social security network.

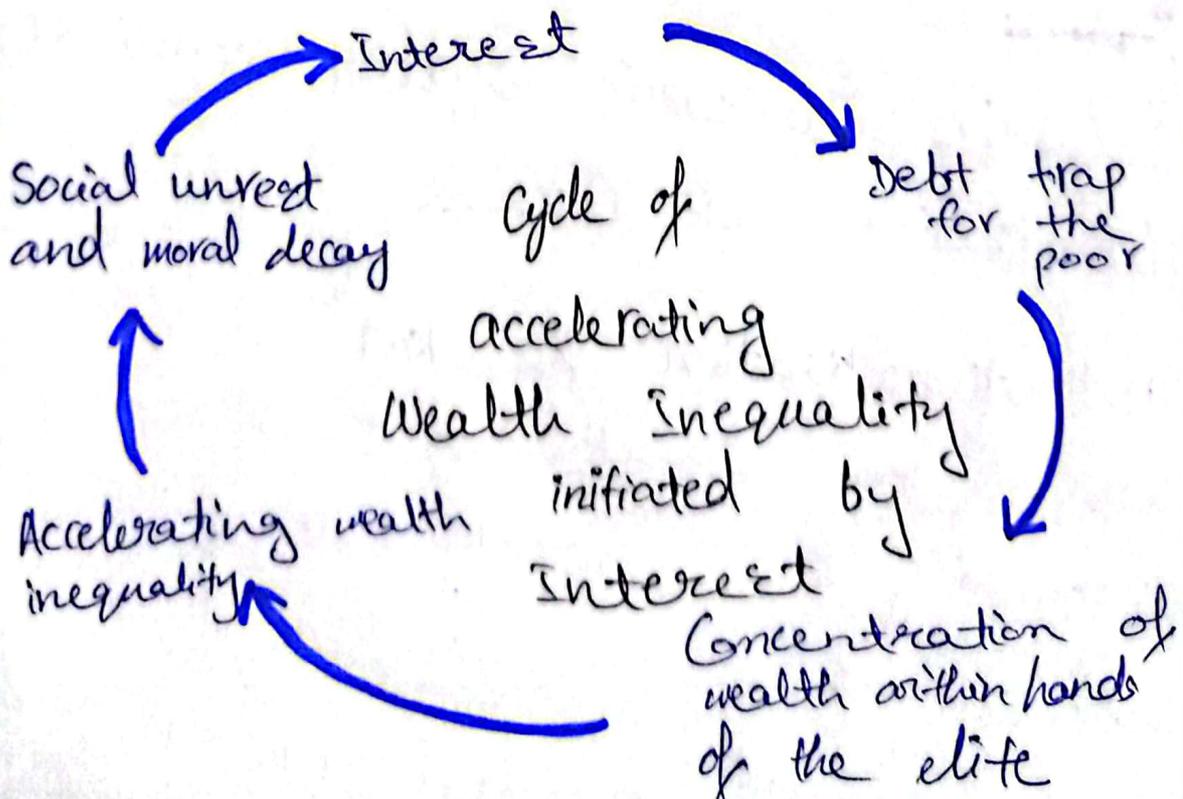
Fig: Social Benefits of Zakat  
Circulation of wealth



## b. Prohibition of Interest (Riba)

Allah Almighty says in glorious Quran

“So that the wealth may not only circulate only among the rich.”  
(Surah Al-Hashr)



# Concluding Thoughts

Classist lifestyle has different manifestations such as prioritization of discrimination over merit, unequal access to public welfare, inequality before the law.

However, Islam strongly criticizes this lifestyle. Islamic social system has three core pillars i.e. moderation, human dignity and social justice.

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