

ISLAMIC STUDIES

PART II

Q5

Before the advent of Islam, women in the pre-Islamic era were subjected to severe oppression and social marginalization. They were considered inferior beings, deprived of inheritance, ownership and consent in marriage. In many Arab tribes, female infanticide was practiced due to the shame associated with daughters - a practice that Quran strongly condemned.

Islam elevated women from the depths of social darkness to the heights of spiritual and moral equality, ensuring justice, respect and protection under divine law. Contemporary scholars such as Karen Armstrong and Leila Ahmad recognize that Islam at its advent, was

"the most progressive step in the emancipation of women in the

ancient world."

(Muhammad: A Prophet of our Time)

Status of Women in Islam

Acknowledgement of Complete Personhood of Women in Islam:

Islam revolutionised the concept of womanhood by affirming the complete moral, spiritual and legal personhood of a woman. The Quran declares that both men and women were created from a single soul (Nafs Wahida):

"O mankind! Fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women."

(Surah An-Nisa)

Similarly, both men and women are equally accountable to Allah.

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while being a believer - We surely will cause him/her to

live a good life."

(Surah An-Nahl)

• Order to Respect Mothers Abundantly:

Islam places great emphasis on the honour, service and kindness to the mothers.

"And We have enjoined upon them care for their parents. His mother carried him (increasing her) in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and your parents; to Me is the (final) destination."

(Surah Luqman)

• As a Child and an Adolescent:

Despite the social acceptance of female infanticide among some Arab tribes, the Quran forbade this custom and considered it a crime.

"Whoever has a daughter and he does not bury her alive, does

not insult her, and does not
favour his son over her; God will
enter him into paradise."

(Ibn Harbal).

• Order to Treat Wives in the Best Manner:

Islam regards marriage as a sacred covenant founded upon love and mutual respect. The Quran and Sunnah lay a moral and legal duty on men to treat their wives with kindness, justice and dignity. The Prophet (PBUH) himself set the highest example of gentle conduct, declaring that the best of men are those who are best to their wives.

"The best of you is the one who is best to his wife and I am the best of you to my wives."

(Ibn Maajah).

• Special Relaxation of Women in

Religious Obligations:

Women are exempted from the daily prayers and from fasting during their menstrual periods and forty days after childbirth. A woman is also exempted from fasting during her pregnancy and when she is nursing her baby if there is any threat to her health or her baby's health.

Rights of Women in Islam:

Right of Consent in Marriage:

Islam gave women the right of having consent in marriage

"A previously married woman must not be married till she is consulted, and a virgin must not be married till her consent is asked."

They asked, "O Allah's Messenger, how is her consent indicated?" He replied, "It is by her silence".

(Muslim)

Right to Education:

"Seeking knowledge is obligatory on

every Muslim (Male and female).
(Ibn Maajah)

Thus, Islam ensures right to education. Hazrat Ayesha (R.A) was the greatest female scholar of her times owing to the fact that she was personally tutored by the Prophet (PBUH).

• Right to own Wealth:

In Quran, Allah says
"For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned."

(An-Nisa)

• Right to trade and do Business:

Islam has granted women economic rights, right to own property and run business. Best example is of Hazrat Khadija (RA) who was a wealthy businesswoman who managed her own trade. The Prophet (PBUH) worked for her before marriage.

and even after marriage, her wealth remained entirely under her control. Her example demonstrates that Islam never linked ^{necessity of} ↑ women's participation in economic life.

Muhammad Qutb in his writing "Islam: The Misunderstood Religion" writes on female economic standing:

"Islam occupies a unique position in that it recognized an independent economic status of women and gave her the right to own, use and enjoy it in her own right without any intermediary trustee or mediator."

• Right to Inheritance:

Islam specifically gives women the right to inheritance which is evident by the following Quranic Verse

"Allah commands you concerning your children: for the male, what

is equal to the share of two females. But if there are only daughters, two or more, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one, she gets half."

(Surah Nisa)

• Right to being Provided with All Basic Needs.

Islam instructs men to provide their women with all their basic needs.

"Men are caretakers of women, since Allah has made some of them excel the others, and because of the wealth they spend".

(An Nisa)

Thus, Islam treats women with utmost respect and grants them rights which cannot be undermined. There is much emphasis in Quran and Sunnah regarding women which is illustrated above.

Q7

The Muslim ummah once stood as the world's greatest civilization, leading humanity in knowledge, governance, economy, justice, military power and moral values from the 7th to the 13th century. Within a century of the Prophet's mission, Muslims ruled from Spain to Central Asia and established institutions of learning like Baghdad, Cordoba and Cairo. Today, however, the Muslim ummah faces political weakness, economic dependency, intellectual backwardness and international marginalization. The causes of this decline lie mainly in internal failure combined with external exploitation. Some of these causes are discussed below

Major Causes of the Decline of Muslim ummah:

(1) Political Disunity and Fragmentation:

The Quran commands unity:

"Hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided".

(Surah Al-e-Imran)

Yet the ummah is deeply divided on sectarian, ethnic and national lines. The abolition of the Ottoman Empire in 1924 formally ended Muslim political unity and fragmented the ummah into weak nation states. Due to this, Muslims have weak collective voice at global forums and are easily manipulated by global powers. This has also led to internal wars i.e. Syria, Yemen, Libya, Sudan etc.

Allama Iqbal rightly said "The strength of Muslims lies in unity; division is their greatest weakness."

2) Decline of Knowledge and Scientific Thought:

The Golden Age of Islam was built on knowledge and Ijtihad. Muslims pioneered astronomy, medicine, mathematics and philosophy. Today, most Muslim countries spend less than 1% of GDP on research and development, while advanced nations spend 4-5%. This has led to outdated education systems combined with weak universities and research culture. It has also made Muslims over-reliant on imported technology and the brain drain to the West.

As a result, Muslims have turned from producers of knowledge into mere consumers.

b) Moral and Spiritual Degeneration:

The Prophet (PBUH) said "I was sent to perfect moral character."

(Musnad Ahmad)

However many Muslim societies today suffer from corruption, injustice,

nepotism and lack of accountability. This moral decay has weakened governance and destroyed public interest. When ethics decline, nations collapse from within.

(14) Poor Leadership and Weak Institutions:

The Quran warns:

"Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves."

(Sura Ra'd)

Many Muslim states suffer from authoritarian rule, corrupt elites, weak parliaments and politicized judiciary. Without strong leadership and institutions, development remains impossible.

(15) Sectarianism, Extremism and Internal Conflicts

Legitimate juristic differences have turned into violent sectarian wars. Extremist groups have distorted

the true image of Islam. This has ultimately led to bloodshed among Muslims and foreign military interventions. It has also served as a damage to Muslim soft power and contributed to Global Islamophobia.

Remedies for the Revival of Muslim Ummah

(1) Restoration of Unity and Collective Action:

The ummah must rise above ethnic and sectarian divisions. Platforms like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) should be strengthened for collective diplomacy, economic integration and joint defence strategies. Unity today means a policy coordination, not necessarily a single political state.

(2) Education and Intellectual Renaissance

There is a dire need of

massive investment in modern education and integration of religious and scientific knowledge. Revival of Ijtihad and critical thinking must be ensured together with establishment of world-class research universities. The first Quranic revelation itself was

"Read in the name of your Lord!"
(Surah Al-Alaq)

Knowledge remains the true key to revival.

(3) Moral and Spiritual Reformation:

True revival must be rooted in Taqwa (God-consciousness). Education needs to be character-building and strengthening family institutions. Media should be reformed to promote values and social justice should be revived. Without moral strength, material success leads only to corruption.

(4) Countering Extremism through

Education and Dialogue:

Moderate and authentic Islamic teachings should be promoted and youth must be engaged. Inter-sectarian harmony should be nourished involving scholars of different sects to play their crucial role in the process, as many people follow them and listen to them. Strict actions against terrorist networks should be taken.

The Quran calls the Ummah:

"A community of the middle path."
(Surah Al-Baqalah)

(5) Strong Foreign Policy and Media Strategy:

Soft power is as important as the military power in the modern world. This is only possible through independent decision-making and strategic diplomacy with major powers. Furthermore, Muslim

media networks must be tasked to counter Islamophobic propaganda and thus protection of Muslim interests globally.

Conclusion:

The decline of Muslim Ummah is not a divine curse but a historical outcome of disunity, ignorance, moral decay, weak governance and economic dependency, further aggravated by colonialism and neo-imperialism. The road to revival lies in educational reform, political integrity, economic self-reliance, moral purification and collective unity. If Muslims return sincerely to the true spirit of Islam, not merely its rituals, the restoration of their lost dignity is not only possible but inevitable.