

Foreign Aid and its Impacts on Cultural Norms of Islamic Society An Analytical Study in the Light of Seerat-un-Nabi (SAW)

*Dr. Sadia Gulzar**

Abstract

Foreign Aid is provided for the assistance of a nation. Foreign economic assistance includes humanitarian, political and developmental aid. It may be granted to strengthen a military ally or for some special purposes. After the incident of 9/11, Pakistan became the ally of the United States and appeared as the biggest beneficiary of United States' military and economic assistance in South Asian region. United States has also granted aid to different Muslim countries for peace and for diplomatic and political stability. Nevertheless, every economic agenda of non-Muslim countries has a particular purpose. They are making Muslim countries financially weaker through conditional debts with high rate of interest. Contrary to this, teachings of Holy Prophet (SAW) have no space for any such economic policy which may exploit any individual or a group. Conditional aid of non-Muslim countries and donor organizations is distorting cultural and social norms in Islamic society. Islam strictly prohibits interest-based debt and conditional economic assistance. The Holy Prophet (SAW) accepted gifts from non-Muslims. However, He (SAW) did not accept any conditional debt or aid which could affect Islamic norms. Purpose of this research paper is to highlight the objectives of non-Muslim countries which are providing aid to Muslim countries and to analyze its impact on the Islamic norms in the light of Fiq Al-Seera. Research paper follows descriptive and analytical methods.

Key Words- Foreign Aid, Cultural Norms, Donor Organizations, Muslim Countries, Seerat-un-Nabi (SAW)

Foreign aid is considered a major element for a developing nation. It includes interest-based loans, financial assistance and necessary goods. Foreign aid is divided into two main categories; military assistance and economic aid. It involves a transfer of capital or commodities such as food, arms, technical advice and training programs. Foreign aid is delivered from one nation to another and occasionally the aid is delivered through international organizations such as International Monetary fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Four main categories of foreign aid are mentioned below:

* Assistant Professor: Institute of Islamic Studies University of the Punjab, Lahore

1. **Bilateral Aid:** Economic resources are directly provided from one state to another. American bilateral assistance lays emphasis on economic development, progress and democracy.
2. **Military Aid:** Military aid is a type of bilateral aid, with a twist. It usually directly obliges one nation to either purchase arms or to sign defense agreements. Israel is the largest beneficiary of the USA military aid and she is receiving \$3 billion annually from USA.⁽¹⁾
3. **Humanitarian Assistance:** These programs are mostly devoted to address emergencies. It is delivered to protect and assist refugees, internally displaced individuals and to provide emergency food aid.
4. **Multilateral Aid:** This is provided by several countries instead of one. These initiatives are implemented by international organizations such as UNICEF or the World Bank.⁽²⁾

America is a developed nation and has the largest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) share globally. “Foreign aid is delivered by America to different countries to support world peace, security, progress and to provide humanitarian aid during times of disaster. The first USA aid program started after World War II. However, afterward a milestone for foreign aid took place in 1961. President Kennedy signed Foreign Assistance Act and founded the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) which is the first American foreign aid agency. Currently, America manages foreign assistance programs in more than hundred countries through more than twenty different United States government agencies.”⁽³⁾ Victoria Williams reports that “some groups in donor nations have criticized foreign assistance as unproductive and improvident. Most of the Americans believe that foreign aid puts away twenty percent of country’s budget while most of the beneficiaries of foreign assistance do not deserve it or do not consume it prudently.”⁽⁴⁾ USA has great influence on different nations through

¹ Sean Ross, What are the different Types of Foreign Aid? 26 August 2016, <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/082616/what-are-different-types-foreign-aid.asp>, retrieved 15 August 2018

² Taylor Resteghini, Types of Foreign Aid, <https://borgenproject.org/types-of-foreign-aid/>, retrieved 15 August 2018

³ Department of State (US), What is U.S. Government Foreign Assistance? <https://www.foreignassistance.gov/>, retrieved 15 August 2018

⁴ Victoria Williams, Foreign Aid, Encyclopedia of Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/foreign-aid>, retrieved 15 August 2018

economic assistance policy. Victoria Williams states “US also provided aid to spread its language, culture or religion.”⁽¹⁾

Holy Prophet (SAW) also accepted gifts from non-Muslims. Whenever a meal was presented, he would ask whether it was a gift or a charity. If he was told that it was charity, he would ask his companions to eat that. Nonetheless, if it was a gift, he would hurry to share it with them.⁽²⁾ “A Jewess carried a poisoned (cooked) sheep for Holy Prophet (SAW) who ate from it. After eating it, he felt that the food was poisoned. He sent for her and when she was brought before him, he did not order his companions (RA) to kill her.”⁽³⁾ “When Khaibar was conquered, Holy Prophet (SAW) was presented with a poisoned (roasted) sheep by the Jews. Holy Prophet (SAW) called all the Jews and they confessed their plot. When they were asked what made them do that. They replied that they wanted to testify the truthfulness of the prophet-hood of Holy Prophet (SAW) by seeing if the poison would harm him (SAW).”⁽⁴⁾ It is also the point of view of Nijaht ullah Siddique that “if Muslim states receive aid from International organizations and well-wisher non-Muslim countries, it should not effect the benefits of Muslims and Islamic state would not be offended.”⁽⁵⁾

Presently, Foreign aid is affecting the social norms of Muslim countries. Ethical values have great importance in Islam. It imparts ethical and moral values which confer dignity and honor to its true followers. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was an embodiment of the Holy Quran and practitioner of these values. In this research paper foreign aid and its influences on Islamic society in the light of Seerat un Nabi (SAW) has been discussed under following headings.

1. Empowerment of Women and Social Issues

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has faith in women’s equal rights and provision of opportunities for them as breadwinners, peace-builders and leaders. They must have access to education, healthcare and technology. They must have control of resources, lands, and markets. In Afghanistan, Promoting Gender Equality in National

¹ Ibid

² Al-Bukhāri, Muhammad bin Ismail, *Al-Jāmi al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (Riyadh: Dar-ul-Salam, 1999), *Hadiths* No. (2576)

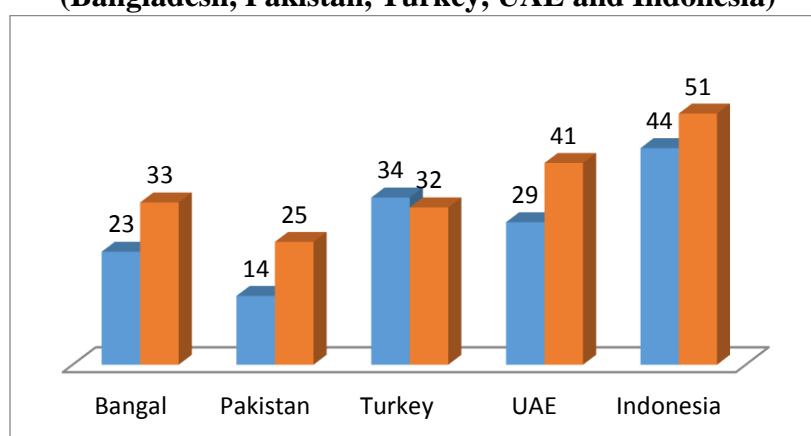
³ Ibid, *Hadiths* No. (2617)

⁴ Ibid, *Hadiths* No. (5777)

⁵ Nijaht ullah Siddique, *Islam ka Nazreah Malkeet*, (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1991), 02(45)

Priority Programs, (PROMOTE) Partnership is the largest investment USAID have ever made to advance women and girls in development.⁽¹⁾ In Muslim countries, cultural and social norms influence females' decision to find their share in the labor market, selection of work and mobility. These customs work at various levels of society, such as religion, caste and area which discourage females in taking up work. In a few Muslim countries, female participation rate in labor force has been shown in following graph.

**Labor Force participation rate, Female (Percentage of female Population Ages 15+) (Modeled ILO Estimate)
(Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, UAE and Indonesia)**



(World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>)

According to the graph, women labor force participation rate has increased in the labor market of Bangladesh, Pakistan, UAE and Indonesia. “In Turkey, almost one-half of the population is women. Women participation in economic activities declines due to structural transformation from agriculture to industry and urban migration, economic constrains and lastly personal and family characteristics.”⁽²⁾

Islam demonstrates the concept of “Equity” instead of “Equality”. A few special issues cropped up by economic empowerment of women in the Muslim countries. Co-education and mixed-gender working places have given rise to numerous social issues and the downfall of moral values.

¹ Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>, retrieved 25 August 2018

² Ceyda Özsoy, Sevilay Atlama, „An Analysis of Trends in Female Labor Force Participation in Turkey”, *Challenges for Analysis of the Economy, the Businesses, and Social Progress*, p. 813

Social life has been degenerated in the economic race of bringing women equal with men. In Islam, male and female status is same for both of them and the standard of superiority is piety. However, their scopes are different. The financial support of family is the responsibility of men and taking care of the family and the bringing up of the children is the duty of women.”⁽¹⁾ According to the teachings of Islam, along with household duties, women may take part in different sectors. **Being citizens of an Islamic state, women may perform economic activities taking the example from the life of Holy Prophet (SAW)’s beloved wife; Hazrat Khadija (R.A).** “Hazrat Sauda Bint e Zamau (RA) did the work of leather dyeing.”⁽²⁾ “Hazrat Zainab Bint e Hajash (RA) also worked and utilized a part of that income in charity.”⁽³⁾ It is a fact that the caretaking of the family is the foremost duty of a woman. Yet, Islam allows women to take part in economic activities. However, Men must be given preference in the disciplines which necessarily demand men like salesmen and traffic constables. Nonetheless, there are disciplines where the inclusion of women is indispensable. For example, in the educational institutes for women and in women’s wards in hospitals, women can be preferably appointed. America has also influenced the government of Saudi Arabia^{(4)*} and she has taken a series of social reforms. “On August 1, 2017, government of Saudi Arabia declared an important tourism project. It was aimed to turn fifty islands and a string of sites on the Red Sea into luxury resorts.”⁽⁵⁾ Saudi

¹ Muslim, Muslim bin Hajaj, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (Riyadh: *Dar-ul-Salam*, 2000), Hadīth No. (4724)

² Ibn Hajar, Ahmad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad, Abu'l-Fadl, *Al-Isabah fi Tamyiz Al-Sahabah*, (Beirut(Lebanon): *Dar Al Maarifa*, 2004) , 04(2485)

³ Ibn Abd al-Barr, Yusuf ibn Abdallah ibn Mohammed, Abu Umar, *Al-Isti'ab fi ma'rifat al-ashab*, (Egypt: Maktab Al Nadat), 4 (1861)

* On May 20th, 2017, Government of Saudi Arabia signed an agreement with United States of America to purchase arms from US worth US\$110 billion effective instantly plus another \$350 billion over the next 10 years. This agreement is considered significant for the relations of both nations to counterbalance the influence of Iran in the region.(Ali Vitali, U.S.-Saudi Arabia Sign More Than \$110B Arms Deal Amid Trump Visit, 20 May 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/trump-s-first-foreign-trip/u-s-saudi-arabia-sign-110b-arms-deal-plus-another-n762546> , retrieved 27 August 2018).

⁵ Saudi takes first steps to more liberal society, The News, 11 December 2017

Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman has initiated cultural openness project. The legendary Egyptian singer Tamer Hosny performed for first concert in Jeddah, on March 30th 2018. Crowd of Saudis, approximately ninety percent women, attended it. The Saudi crown provided women the right of entrepreneurship without the consent of a male relative. Women started walking in public without a male guardian. In December 2017, the Saudi kingdom issued licenses for the setting up of cinema halls despite the opposition of powerful religious officials who consider films as “immoral” or “open doors to evil”. Muhammad Bin Salman also lifted the ban on the driving of women. Uber, in Saudi Arabia, is now considering the recruitment of female drivers. Women in Saudi Arabia were permitted to attend a professional football match on 1st January 2018. Moreover, Women were also allowed to attend the country’s national day last September in Riyadh.”⁽¹⁾

In Pakistan, women’s empowerment can also be seen in sports. They are taking part in many sporting events on international level. It is reported that “on 14th January 2007, President Musharraf inaugurated men and women marathon in spite of a strong criticism from religious parties. They were incensed on the women athletes who took part in the sporting event.”⁽²⁾

In Islam, women can enjoy sports as we can take examples from the life of the Holy Prophet (SAW). “Hazrat Ayesha (R.A) narrated that a number of Abyssinians came to demonstrate an armed fight in the mosque. Holy Prophet (SAW) invited her (to see that fight). He (SAW) veiled her. She (RA) began to see their sport till it was she who turned away from looking them.”⁽³⁾ “Hazrat Ayesha (RA) narrated that while she (RA) was on a journey with Holy Prophet (SAW), she (RA) had a race with him (SAW) and she (RA) took him (SAW) over. Later on, when she (RA) had gained weight, she (RA) ran another race with him (SAW) and in that race he (SAW) took her (RA) over and said that that was for that outstripping.”⁽⁴⁾ However, free intermixing of males with females is prohibited in Islam. Islam disallows women participation in games that are broadcasted and

¹ Angy Essam, First time pop concert stages amid culture liberty in Saudi Arabia, 2 April 2018, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/4/46778/First-time-pop-concert-stages-amid-culture-liberty-in-Saudi>, retrieved 20 August 2018

² Lahore Hosts massive international marathon, Dawn, 15 January 2017

³ Muslim, , *Sahih al- Muslim*, Hadith No. (2064)

⁴ Abu Dawud Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath al-Azdi as-Sijistani, *Al-Sunan*, (Riyadh: *Dar-ul-Salam*, 1999), Hadith No. (2578)

enjoyed by males. Their play-grounds must be separate where no man may visit.

Islam detests music and pictures because they spoil youngsters. Youth can change the destiny of a nation. Nevertheless, if the policies of governments put them on evil ways they will not benefit their countries. So, it is imperative to engage youth in healthy activities rather than putting them into the deeds which become the root cause of their destruction.

2. Liberalism/ Individual Rights:

One of the purposes of the foreign donors is to communicate with such organizations that assist foreign governments according to their directions. These organizations also help foreign governments to access any region of targeted states. The Government of United States of America has influenced many nations through its economic assistance policy. US is helping and promoting rights of lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender (LGBT). For example, in Azerbaijan, a group of gay marchers paraded through the capital city Baku. Even though homosexuality was decriminalized in 2001, LGBT people in the Muslim countries complain the suffering, oppression and harassment. These people are not legally allowed to marry and have no legal protection against discrimination.⁽¹⁾ The United States Embassy has organized the first ever gay, lesbians and transgender pride celebration ceremony in Islamabad. Washington also ensured them to support their cause in Pakistan. The United States Embassy issued a press release on June 26, 2011. Charge d' Affaires Ambassador Richard Hoagland said, "I want to be clear that the US Embassy is here to support you and stand by your side every step of the way".⁽²⁾ BBC called "Religious Conservative" the people who protest against this event. According to BBC news, in Pakistan, a group of religious conservatives has condemned this event and considered them illegal. They said that it is the most awful, social and cultural terrorism against Pakistan and the second most dangerous attack by the America after drone and missile attacks.⁽³⁾

¹Azerbaijan: First ever gay pride 'mini rally' held in country capital with no arrests or harassment, 13 September 2013, <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2013/09/13/azerbaijan-first-ever-gay-pride-mini-rally-held-in-country-capital-with-no-arrests-or-harassment/>, retrieved 20 August 2018

²US Embassy holds gay, lesbian ceremony in Islamabad, The News, 3 July 2011

³ Pakistan: Religious groups condemn US embassy gay event, 4 July 2011 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-14010106>, retrieved 25 August 2018

Islam strictly disallows the homosexuality because it is unnatural. It can cause numerous diseases. The Nation of Hazrat Loot (AS) used to have sex with men instead of women. Allah Almighty said in the Holy Quran:

وَلَوْطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ (80) إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِنْ دُونِ
النِّسَاءِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ (81) وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أَنْاسٌ يَتَطَهَّرُونَ
(82) فَانجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ (83) وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطْرًا فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ⁽¹⁾

And Loot, when he said to his nation, do you commit immorality which was never committed by anyone before you in the worlds (Mankind and Jinn). Indeed you practice your lust on men instead of women. Rather, you are a transgressing nation. His nation had no answer but to say that banish them out of your town, indeed they are the people who want to be chaste. Then, we saved him and his family, except his wife, she was among those who remained behind. And we showered upon them the rain of stones. Then see what the end of the sinners was.

Liberalism in the west also provides legal liberty, of sexual-relation, to male and female without the agreement of marriage. The results of adultery are annoying pregnancy, baby-dumping- the gravest sin, abortion and everlasting emotional and psychological agony. This sin is also increasing in Islamic countries. “Dr Agha Xaher Gul said “that 2.2 million pregnancies are aborted in Pakistan, each year. Fifty women out of every 1,000 women have an abortion at least once in life-time and married women include them.”⁽²⁾ In Islam, relation without Nikah is unlawful and its punishment has been declared in Holy Quran and Hadiths Nabvi (SAW). Punishment of adultery in sharia is: if married then death by stoning⁽³⁾ and if unmarried, then hundred lashes⁽⁴⁾ for a righteous society.

The main reason of increased adultery is lack of modesty in the society. Holy Prophet (SAW) said: (الحياء لا ياتي إلا بخير).⁽⁵⁾ Modesty has a key role to play in character building. So, it is responsibility of an Islamic state to purify the society. Government should take practical measures to

¹ The Qur’ān 7: 80-84

² 2.2 m Abortion taking place in Pakistan annually : Expert, The Nation, 24 April 2017

³ Al-Bukhāri, *Al-Jāmi al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Hadīth No. (1175).

⁴ The Quran 24:2

⁵ Muslim, *Saḥīḥ al- Muslim*, Hadīth No. (156)

eradicate negative impact of liberalism which destroys youth. Government should develop Islamic environment. Hazrat Umer Farooq (RA) said:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، أَطِيبُوا مَثَوَاكُمْ، وَأَصْلِحُوا أُمُورَكُمْ، وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ، وَلَا تَلْبَسُوا نِسَاءَ كُمُ الْقِبَاطِيِّ.⁽¹⁾

O People, you stay in a modest environment, reform your affairs and keep the awe of Fosterer who is Allah Almighty, and do not dress your women in Egyptian costume.

3. Reforms in the Education Sector:

Foreign Aid also affects the educational policies of the Muslim countries. Foreign donor's agenda is to promote female education, co-education, English language and moderate curriculum.

Holy Prophet (SAW) did not distinguish education of men from women. He (SAW) said, "It is obligatory for Muslims to acquire knowledge."⁽²⁾ "On the day of Eid -ul-Fitr, after the prayer, Holy Prophet (SAW) came towards the women, advised them (to do good deeds) and ordered them to give alms. Hazrat Bilal (RA) had his cloth stretched in which women were throwing alms."⁽³⁾ Once, Holy Prophet (SAW) himself promised a woman to visit her house to teach her. He (SAW) went there and educated her."⁽⁴⁾ This is an emphatic example of the importance of education for women.

In Pakistan, due to conditional aid, educational curriculum has been revised. The poetry of Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal (RA) is a great source of inspiration and motivation for youth. He delivered the message of hope and dignity to Muslim Ummah. So, his poetry has been excluded from educational curriculum. Material related to Jihad has also been omitted because it is alarming for West.

Liberty and rapid advance of media is helping foreign donor countries and international organizations in the fulfillment of their purposes. Co-education and liberty of media has indulged youth in moral crises. In Islam, the purpose of education is to build character and purify human beings.

Foreign donors also lay emphasis on introducing reforms in madrassas according to their own priorities. For example, the United States assisted \$51 million to university of Nebraska-Omaha between 1984 and 1994 to

Tabri, Abi Jafar Muhammad bin Jareer, *Tareekh-e-Tabri*, (Beirut: *Darul- kutab al Ilmia*, 2003), ¹
2(573)

²Ibna Maja, Muhammad bin Yazeed, *Al-Sunan*, (Riyadh: *Dar-ul-Salam*, 1999), Hadith No. (224)

³Al-Bukhāri, *Al-Jāmi al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Hadiths No. (98)

⁴Ibid, Hadiths No. (7310)

produce special textbooks in Dari and Pushto. These books are based on Jihadi beliefs. More than thirteen million books were distributed among Afghan refugee camps and Pakistani madrassas.⁽¹⁾ President Musharraf was obliged to apply political boundaries and regulations on largely autonomous madrassa system. He introduced reforms in madrassas and revised their curriculum. Jihad material has been excluded from curriculum of madrassas.

However, Madrasas and religious groups always worked for national security and integrity as a “B” team against external forces. In fact, external factors are destroying peace of Pakistan. According to a news reporter, Mohammad Bilal has filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court to put a ban on the activities of the USAID for allegedly collecting data of registered voters. It has reached sensitive areas of Pakistan. Through this process, one of objectives of USAID is to create security problems in Pakistan.⁽²⁾ The concept and scope of humanitarian assistance never permits any nation to interfere in the internal affairs of other nations or violate civil liberties of inhabitants.

Conclusion:

An Islamic government may borrow debt from non-Muslim nations. Nonetheless, Islam strictly disallows usury-based debt, conditional debt and aid. As Allah Almighty says in Holy Quran:

وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا⁽³⁾

Trading is same as usury, whereas Allah Almighty has permitted tra⁽⁴⁾ding and forbidden usury.

On the other hand, Allah Almighty mentions that infidels spend their wealth to fulfill their special purpose.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ لِيَصُدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَسَيُنْفِقُونَهَا ثُمَّ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَةً ثُمَّ يُغْلَبُونَ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ يُحْشَرُونَ⁽⁵⁾

Definitely, the disbelievers spend their wealth to turn (Muslims) away from the path of Allah, they would continue spending it, then at last it would be

¹ Yosri Fouda & Nick Fielding, *Masterminds of Terror*, (New York: Arcade Publishing Inc., 2003), p.42

² *Lawyer Petitions IHC for ban on USAID Activities, Dawn, July 6th, 2017*

³ The Qur’ān (2:275)

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⁵ The Qur’ān (8:36)

an agony for them and they will be overpowered and the disbelievers shall join together towards hell.

Islam dislikes plead for debt. It is mentioned in Hadith-e-Nabvi (SAW): “The one amongst you, who keeps on begging until the day he meets Allah Almighty, will not have even a single piece of flesh on his face.”⁽¹⁾ “The one who disgraced himself by begging, his wealth will not be blessed and his condition becomes so miserable that he eats but is not satiated and the upper hand is better than the lower.”⁽²⁾ The manifestation of above mentioned hadiths is obvious in contemporary economic conditions of begging countries.

Foreign assistance has added to the reliance of Muslim countries on donor agencies. To make Muslim countries free from external influence, it is mandatory that they should develop their natural resources and generate economic resources rather than pleading other nations and international donor organizations. Moreover, they must enhance their economic integration. Governments of Muslim countries would not compromise on dynamiting Islamic values.

Seerat un Nabi (SAW) makes it obligatory both for men and women to acquiring knowledge. So, women may learn and participate in economic activities and even run their own businesses. Women may enjoy different events. However, Islam puts forward some limits. They may perform economic and social activities within Islamic boundaries. Their intermixing and getting-together with males is prohibited. Marriage is permissible only between a male and a female and any relation without marriage is detestable. Educational policy of Islamic state must be uncontaminated by foreign influence, for it has definite Islamic purposes. A sovereign of Islamic state is answerable for his deeds. So, he must be cautious of Islamic values and thus considerate about “Moderate Islam” reforms, for these reforms make people astray from the path of piety.

¹ Muslim, *Sahīh al- Muslim*, Hadīth No. (2396)

² Ibid, Hadīth No. (2387)