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The Decline Of Islamic Identity And The Rise Of Negative Identity, Causes And Social Consequences: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

This paper offers a comprehensive analytical study of negative identity and its far-reaching effects on the moral, social, and intellectual dimensions of society. It examines how identity, when separated from ethical, constructive, and faith-based principles, transforms into a divisive and destructive force. The research underscores that the decline of Islamic identity, founded upon unity, justice, tolerance, and mutual respect, contributes significantly to the emergence of sectarianism, prejudice, and social disintegration. By engaging both sociological perspectives and Islamic teachings, the study argues that negative identity erodes collective consciousness, fosters extremism, and diminishes the capacity for critical and creative thought. Consequently, such identity crises weaken social harmony, moral responsibility, and national cohesion. The paper concludes that the restoration of a positive and Islamically guided identity is vital for cultivating social solidarity, intellectual growth, and sustainable peace within modern societies.

Key Words: *Negative Identity, Islamic Identity, Social Fragmentation, Sectarianism, Prejudice, Tolerance, Constructive Thinking, Social Harmony, Islamic Perspective.*

Introduction

In every age, Society of human [1]beings has been shaped by the collective sense of who people believe they are –their identity. Identity, whether personal, cultural or national, acts as the moral and psychological compass through which communities and individuals define their place in the world. It unites people through shared values, tradition and beliefs, nurturing social harmony and progress. However, when this identity becomes fragmented, distorted or placed by hostility and division, it transforms into what scholars' term negative identity.

Negative identity represents a psychological and social deviation that distances individuals from their constructive and authentic sense of self. When members of a society begin to associate their identity with prejudice, sectarianism, extremism, intolerance, and arrogance, the foundations of social harmony and national unity start to weaken. Such tendencies not only breed moral and intellectual decay but also threaten the stability and collective future of the nation.

From a sociological perspective, negative identity disrupts the balance between the community and the individuals. It diminishes the sense of shared destiny that is essential for collective progress. From a moral and spiritual perspective, it represents a departure from the divine

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principle of human brotherhood emphasized in all religious traditions, particularly in Islam. The Quran insistently warns against division, arrogance, prejudice, Sectarianism, extremism and mutual hostility, urging believers to hold fast the rope of Allah and remain united as one Ummah.[i] When individuals disregards these principles, they fall prey to chaos, moral decay, and eventual decline.

Therefore, this analytical study seeks to explore the adverse impacts of negative identity on individuals in a comprehensive manner and examines how negative identity shapes destructive social behaviors and erodes the ethical, cultural, and intellectual fabric of society.

Literature Review

Research on social deviant trends has been ongoing for some time, as evidenced by the following studies:

1. Identity: Youth and crisis written by Erik Erikson [ii]
2. The religious impacts of territorial change on the individual: a research study in the light of international law by ishtiaq ahmad ,UOS –lahore institute of social sciences ,session -2014-17

These books explain that when individuals fail to achieve a stable and positive sense of identity they often adopt a negative one as a defense mechanism. This distorted sense of self leads to feelings of alienation, aggression, and rejection of societal values, which eventually damages social harmony and collective progress. However, both these researches and many other considerable books, while foundational, do not explore the religious, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of negative identity particularly in the context of Islamic society. Therefore, this study focuses and approaches the issue from a moral and faith-based perspective, analyzing how negative identity undermines collective values, weaken social unity and contradicts Islamic teachings. This study adds a new dimension by linking the concept of identity crisis with the Quranic and moral framework that guides the formation of a healthy and positive social identity.

Research Questions

1. How might the negative identities shaped by different social, cultural, and ideological dimensions evolve in individual and what lasting effects could they imprint upon the destiny of a nation?
2. What are the fundamental factors that contribute to the development of multiple identities among individuals and how do these factors influence their sense of Islamic identity?

1.Identity

There are numerous definitions of "identity" have been offered. According to the Cambridge Dictionary,

> "Identity is who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others."[iii]

In other words, identity refers to, who an individual is, or to those characteristics that distinguish one person or group from another.The renowned psychologist Erik H. Erikson[iv] defines identity as:

> "Identity is a sense of self that provides sameness and continuity in personality over time."[v]

According to the sociologist Richard Jenkins[vi]:

> "Identity is the human capacity—rooted in language—to know 'who's who' (and hence 'what is what')."[vii]

Further elaborating on the concept of identity, Erikson writes:

> "Identity is described and defines in as many ways as there are disciplines that used this very concept be it psychology, sociology, political science, cultural anthropology, cultural studies, gender studies, linguistics, and so on. The two major components of identity are identifier and identified. It derives its meaning from "who I am?" and "who I am not?" Therefore, it is simultaneously uniqueness and sameness[viii]."

2.Negative Identity

Negative Identity is a social and psychological concept and theory that emerges when an individual or a group constructs its sense of self upon characteristics, attitudes, or ideologies that are deemed undesirable, controversial, or socially, religiously, or culturally unacceptable.

The term was first articulated in written form by the eminent psychologist Erik H. Erikson, who defines it as:

> "Negative identity refers to an identity that is formed based on all those roles and identifications that had been presented as most undesirable or dangerous by one's family and community."[ix]

Among later scholars, James Marcia[x] expanded and elaborated upon Erikson's notion, suggesting that "negative identity" may represent one of the possible responses within the four stages of identity development in youth. According to Marcia, this often arises as a consequence of weak familial and social support, leading young individuals to adopt identities that oppose accepted norms and values.[xi]

In the same context, "Dr. Khalid Masood"[xii] observes:

> "Negative identity emerges when an individual or group bases its self-definition upon opposition and reaction to others, rather than upon its own authentic values and positive attributes."[xiii]

In Islamic sociocultural perspective, any identity—whether social, religious, political, or cultural—that undermines or overshadows "Islamic identity" and contributes to the fragmentation of the Muslim Ummah can rightly be considered a negative identity.

In essence, "Negative identity" is a broad term signifying the process by which the basic and genuine identity of individuals, communities, or social groups is obscured, weakened, or replaced. It denotes the preference for external or alien identities over one's original and intrinsic selfhood, thereby eroding authenticity and moral coherence.

3.Islamic Identity

Viewed from a sociological perspective, the foundation of human identity in Islamic teachings rests upon the principle that all mankind originates from a single lineage. The Almighty created the first human pair—without the agency of parents—and from this pair, the entire human race came into existence and spread across the earth. The Holy Qur'an declares:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَى وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ[xiv]

"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes."

In the earliest stages of human existence, the offspring of this primordial couple constituted a single community, united in faith, language, and way of life. There existed no distinctions of race, tribe, or social status. Yet, as the human population increased, diversity naturally emerged: languages, customs, and ways of living evolved, and

variations in climate and geography produced differences in color, appearance, and disposition.

These distinctions, in themselves, are part of the Divine order and a manifestation of natural diversity. However, when such differences give rise to feelings of superiority, prejudice, or exclusion based on race, nation, language, or lineage, Islam unequivocally condemns them. Such biases, according to Islamic teachings, constitute negative forms of identity, for they disrupt the moral unity of mankind and contradict the Qur'anic vision of equality.

Islam stands in contrast to all societies built upon racial, national, or territorial identities. It seeks to construct a moral, spiritual, and principled community in which the bond of unity is founded upon ʿaqīdah, ethics (akhlāq), and Sharīʿah. Within such a society, every member enjoys equal dignity, rights, and social standing—no one is inherently superior or inferior by birth, lineage, or profession.

True honor, in Islam, is not derived from wealth, ancestry, or worldly rank, but from Taqwā. As the Quran proclaims:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ [xv]

"Verily, the most honorable among you in the sight of Allah is the one most righteous. Muttaqi "

As a religious standpoint, Allah has established Islam as the sole and authentic identity for humankind. The Qur'an affirms:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِندَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ [xvi]

"Indeed, the religion before Allah is Islam."

And again Quran says :

هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِن قَبْلُ وَفِي هَٰذَا [xvii]

"He (Allah) has named you Muslims before, and in this (Book) as well."

Hence, Islam negates all other religious identities, declaring them unacceptable before God:

وَمَن يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَن يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ [xviii]

"Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter."

Thus, the Qur'an establishes a universal and divine identity for all humanity—the identity of Islam.

Nevertheless, any social, political, cultural, or national identity that weakens, obscures, or subordinates the Islamic identity, thereby causing division within the Ummah, must be regarded as a negative identity.

4.Society

The English term "society" itself derives from the Latin "socius", meaning companion or associate, while the word "sociology" is formed from socius (Latin: companion) and logos (Greek: study or discourse), literally meaning "the study of companionship" or "the study of social relations."[xix]

Similarly, MacIver provides a lucid definition:

> "Society is the system of social relationships through which we live. It is a web of social relationships, and it is always changing."[xx]

Thus, society may be understood as a living, dynamic network of human relationships—a continuously evolving web of interaction, cooperation, and interdependence.

The term "معاشرہ" is used for society in Urdu language which is derived from the Arabic root ʿĀsharah' (عاشرة), which conveys the meaning of living together, social interaction, and mutual association.This root also appears in the Holy Qur'an in a similar sense, as in:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ [xxi]

"O assembly of jinn and humankind."
Here, the term Maʿshar (assembly or community) denotes a collective of beings bound by interaction and mutual engagement.
In light of these linguistic and conceptual foundations, the following section undertakes an analytical examination of the impacts of negative identity upon society.

5. The Effects of Negative Identity on Society:

5.1 The Fragmentation of the Social Fabric

Among the most profound consequences of negative identity is social fragmentation. When an individual or a collective begins to define its sense of self in opposition to its genuine, intrinsic identity—rejecting or demeaning others in the process—such a mindset inevitably becomes the precursor to social disunity. A careful reading of history reveals that the evolution of societies has often been shaped, and sometimes fractured, by the rise of divisive and exclusionary identities.
In the pre-partition era of the Indian subcontinent, social cleavages repeatedly emerged from conflicting collective identities. Following the ascendancy of the East India Company, Indian and British identities stood in stark contrast, dividing the social landscape. Later, the shared anti-colonial struggle momentarily united Hindus and Muslims under a single banner of freedom, yet, once the British Empire receded, the Indian polity again splintered along religious lines. The Muslim community itself was divided—between those who envisioned coexistence within a united India and those who sought a sovereign homeland. The latter movement, grounded in the Two-Nation Theory, culminated in the partition of British India into two independent states, Pakistan and India, each formed upon distinct religious and cultural identities.
In the subsequent decades, Pakistan itself witnessed new forms of identity-based fissures. The emergence of Bengali and Punjabi nationalisms sowed the seeds of further division, leading ultimately to the secession of East Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in the early 1970s. Present-day Pakistan comprises eight administrative units—four provinces, the federal territory of Islamabad, the former tribal areas (FATA), Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan. Yet within these, diverse linguistic, ethnic, and regional identities—Sindhi and Muhajir in Karachi, Baloch and Pashtun in Balochistan, Punjabi and Saraiki in Punjab, and Gilgiti and Balti in the northern areas—continue to generate periodic tensions that threaten national cohesion.
Religious divisions, too, have multiplied over time. The initial binary of Muslim and non-Muslim gave way to intra-Muslim schisms: Shia and Sunni, Deobandi and Barelvi, Ahl-e-Hadith, and within these further sub-sects defined by intricate theological differences. Each layer of this hierarchy of identities deepens the rift within the ummah.
Political identities are similarly fractured. The ideological split between the religious and the secular—has produced a multitude of factions. Almost every major religious school of thought sustains multiple political parties, many of which align themselves with foreign patrons: some look to Riyadh, others to Tehran or Ankara, each imagining salvation in a different external power. Even secular parties are polarized along ideological lines—some idealize the American or European model, others look toward China or even Russia for inspiration.
On the socio-economic plane, the nation is stratified into rigid categories: feudal lords, tribal chieftains, political and military elites, industrialists, upper, middle, and lower classes, as well as the destitute and impoverished. For over seven decades, these fragmented identities have collectively fueled social discord, class antagonism, political polarization, and sectarian animosity.
In essence, negative identity corrodes the moral and social unity of a people. When individuals and groups anchor their sense of belonging not in shared values or constructive purpose, but in

the rejection of others, the result is a divided nation—estranged from its own essence and perpetually at odds within itself.

Unfortunately, these negative identities have come to dominate us, eroding the spirit of Islamic and national unity. Hence, as history bears witness, there remains a grave apprehension that such divisive tendencies may once again lead—God forbid—to our geographical fragmentation and the painful repetition of national disunity.

5.2. Sectarianism

Among the fundamental causes that give rise to sectarianism in society, the most significant is negative identity. Every faction strives to assert its own distinctiveness and individuality, seeking to appear superior to others. Each group regards itself as the true bearer of divine guidance, while considering others misguided and astray. Often, this conviction does not stop at mere belief; rather, it extends to the issuance of various religious verdicts against others, as if such denunciation were essential to prove one's own righteousness.

This sectarian attitude breeds intolerance and fosters the growth of extremist tendencies within society. Yet the Qur'an and the Sunnah offer no sanction for such divisive conduct. Islam categorically prohibits sectarianism. Alas, it is a matter of deep regret that, despite professing to be Muslims, we have neglected the explicit commandments of the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him), choosing instead to follow our own inclinations.

Consequently, the Muslim community has become ensnared in a web of conflicts and dissensions that lead only to loss and ruin. People have clung so rigidly to their negative identities that they perceive their chosen affiliation as the sole path to salvation and paradise.

It is worthy of reflection that when the Qur'an and Sunnah clearly condemn sectarian division, why does this malady persist? The principal reason lies in the failure to explain these divine injunctions properly and to cultivate sound intellectual and moral awareness among the youth. The younger generation grows up believing that only their sect is upon the truth, while all others are misguided. Sectarianism is an inevitable companion of negative identity, and if this tendency continues unchecked, it may intensify even further in the future

5.3. Extremism

A negative identity inevitably breeds extremism within society. When individuals define themselves primarily by opposition to others, they begin to act with excessive zeal — defending their allied identity and fiercely opposing all rival ones. Every effort is then directed either toward glorifying one's own group or denouncing others, as though salvation and success rest solely upon allegiance to that singular identity. This disposition gradually pushes society toward a perilous brink, where intolerance, abusive speech, and even open conflict become commonplace.

In contrast, an Islamic society discourages all forms of extremism and advocates moderation (اعتدال) in thought, speech, and action. The Prophetic tradition consistently teaches balance and warns against excess. A striking example is found in the narration of Anas ibn Mālik (RA):

> "When a woman among the Jews was in her menstrual period, they would expel her from the house, would not eat or drink with her, nor live together with her under one roof. The Companions asked the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) about this. Thereupon, Allah revealed: 'They ask you concerning menstruation. Say: It is a discomfort; so keep away from women during menstruation' (Qur'an 2:222). The Prophet (SAW) then said: 'Associate with them in your homes, and do everything except marital relations.' The Jews then remarked, 'This man (Muhammad) does not wish to leave any of our customs without

> contradicting it!' Hearing this, Usayd ibn Ḥuḍayr and 'Abbād ibn Bishr (RA) came to the Prophet (SW) and said, 'O Messenger of Allah! The Jews say such and such—should we then also refrain from all contact with our wives during menstruation?' The Prophet's face changed color, and they realized that he was displeased. They left his presence, and soon thereafter, a gift of milk was brought to the Prophet (peace be upon him). He sent someone to call them back, and when they returned, they knew that he was not angry with them.'"[xxii]

The Jews and Christians had adopted a harsh and extreme approach in this matter, expelling women entirely during their menses. Allah Almighty, however, guided the Muslim community to a middle path — permitting all forms of companionship except the conjugal act itself.

This Hadith offers a timeless moral for contemporary societies plagued by fanaticism and extremism. It demonstrates that going beyond the limits prescribed by the Shari'ah — whether in love or in enmity — is unacceptable. True Islamic teaching rejects both exaggeration and rigidity; it calls instead to moderation, mercy, and balance in all human conduct. Hence, Islam leaves no room for extremism, for it stands upon justice, harmony, and the golden mean between excess and neglect.

5.4. The Decline of Tolerance

Due to the rise of negative identities, particularly those rooted in sectarian or religious divisions, our society today is gripped by such tension that tolerance has nearly vanished. This decline is evident even among the educated and influential classes — those who should be the torchbearers of understanding and civility. They can scarcely endure each other's presence; to sit together seems unimaginable, and at times, even to look at one another appears intolerable.

Yet, a study of Islamic history clearly reveals that Islam commands tolerance and kind conduct even toward non-Muslims — let alone between Muslims themselves. If the Qur'an and Sunnah enjoin forbearance and courtesy toward followers of other faiths, how then can Islam ever permit harshness, estrangement, or hostility among the believers?

Indeed, the very identity and distinction of the Muslim Ummah rests upon the spirit of tolerance — that noble ability to maintain intellectual and theological differences without allowing them to breed enmity or division. True Islamic etiquette confines disagreement to the realm of ideas and prevents it from degenerating into personal or sectarian hostility.

In contrast, contemporary society has strayed far from this principle. Whether in matters of religion, politics, or ideology, people no longer acknowledge the virtues of those who differ from them — often refusing even to tolerate their existence. Consequently, intolerance has cast a deep shadow over communal harmony, leaving behind bitterness and division.

Sectarian and ideological diversity has existed in this region for generations; however, the pervasive intolerance we witness today was not always characteristic of our past. Consider, for instance, the relationship between Deoband and Aligarh — two distinct educational movements serving the Muslim community in their own ways. Despite their differing approaches, they maintained cordial relations and recognized the importance of mutual intellectual benefit.

"Deoband and Aligarh represented two separate systems of education, each designed to meet the diverse needs of the Muslim community. Yet, both institutions not only shared cordial relations but also acknowledged the necessity of learning from one another."

Such examples from our recent past attest to the presence of religious and political tolerance among our elders and leaders. Unfortunately, today the opposite trend dominates — intolerance emanating from various ideological and sectarian identities has become widespread. This growing phenomenon is deeply troubling, for it poses a grave threat to the moral and spiritual well-being of our younger generation.

Our general attitude is paradoxical: if someone of an opposing belief expresses a desire to understand our viewpoint, we welcome them with open arms; yet, if one of our own begins to explore another ideology, we hasten to condemn them as misguided. Reading books authored by thinkers of different persuasions or listening to lectures by scholars of alternate viewpoints is, in our perception, a sign of deviation rather than intellectual openness.

However, the hallmark of an Islamic identity lies in the virtue of tolerance and restraint — that one must control anger even in the face of disagreement and treat those of differing opinions with dignity and respect. Once intolerance takes root in a society, justice becomes impossible, for disagreement is met not with reason but with aggression. And when religious emotions are provoked in such an environment, people lose all self-control, and violence quickly follows.

The Ummah of Islam, as described in the Qur'an, is one of moderation, justice, and balance — free from extremes of excess and deficiency. Allah Almighty says:

وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا[xxiii]

"And thus We have made you a community of moderation, that you may be witnesses over mankind, and the Messenger be a witness over you."

Because of this quality of balance, fairness, and moral excellence, the Muslim Ummah was declared the best of nations — a people who embody the middle path between excess and deficiency.

Unfortunately, our current social reality stands in stark contrast to this divine ideal. Today, intolerance among the youth has reached alarming proportions. Minor disagreements often escalate into violence, and taking a human life has become disturbingly commonplace. News of bloody conflicts sparked by trivial religious, political, or social disputes has become a daily occurrence. Such incidents vividly reflect the decline of tolerance and the rise of aggression within our collective social behavior — a moral and cultural crisis that demands urgent reflection and reform.

5.5. Prejudice

Among the inevitable consequences of negative identity, prejudice stands as one of the most persistent and destructive forces. Every political, religious, national, or social faction harboring a negative identity tends to view its opponents with disdain, considering them inferior and unworthy of equal regard. Yet, when Almighty Allah has declared that no distinction exists among human beings save that of Taqwā (piety), how can man — and especially a believer — adopt such an attitude of superiority that perpetuates arrogance and division?

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ emphatically abolished all traces of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. In his Farewell Sermon (Khutbah Ḥajjat al-Wadāʿ), he proclaimed:

> "O people! Your Lord is One, and your father is one. Know that no Arab has superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab; neither a white over a black, nor a black over a white — except by virtue of Taqwā(piety and righteousness)."[xxiv]

Through these noble words, the Prophet ﷺ nullified every form of social distinction and transformed humanity into a unified brotherhood, where collective effort and mutual respect became the foundation of societal progress. In a society free from prejudice, narrow-mindedness, and arrogance, people cooperate sincerely — and especially the youth — who then become the architects of genuine social development.

5.6. Arrogance

Within the framework of negative identity, people of various ethnic or tribal affiliations often exhibit a sense of superiority over others. Tribes and communities such as the Pashtuns, Baloch, Sindhis, and Punjabis take pride in their distinctive traits, and many misuse these distinctions

to establish a divisive and negative sense of self-identity. The same trend appears within religious and political spheres, where allegiance to one's group breeds exclusivity and disdain for others.

This mirrors the attitude of Israel (Banī Isrāʾīl), who considered themselves the sole heirs of salvation and dismissed others as insignificant. In stark contrast, Islam and true monotheism (tawḥīd) reject all notions of racial or ethnic superiority. The Qur'an acknowledges the diversity of tribes and nations not as a basis for pride, but as a means of mutual recognition and cooperation.

As the Holy Qur'an declares:

> "O mankind! We created you from a single man and a single woman, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most righteous."[xxv]

This verse reveals that even between man and woman, superiority exists only on the basis of righteousness and piety. Hence, disputes arising from ethnic or national identities are the offspring of ignorance and jāhiliyyah (pre-Islamic arrogance).

It is inconceivable that a true believer — one who professes faith in Allah's oneness — could simultaneously harbor feelings of racial arrogance or inferiority. The noblest of people are those who employ their faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect in gratitude to Allah and in the pursuit of righteousness.

5.7. Sense of Superiority

Among the social consequences of negative identity is the development of a false sense of superiority, whereby a person begins to regard his own self, sect, or group as inherently better than others. Not only does he consider his own affiliation to be the only true and righteous one, but he also actively promotes this belief through words and actions, denying altogether the legitimacy or correctness of other sects and groups. Yet this is a matter whose ultimate judgment rests with Allah alone on the Day of Resurrection — for it is He who will decide whose path was truly accepted in His sight.

Abu Hurayrah (RA) narrates an incident that reflects this moral principle. He said:

> "A man from among the Muslims and a man from among the Jews once quarreled. The Muslim said, 'By Him Who gave superiority to Muhammad (peace be upon him) over all the worlds!' The Jew replied, 'By Him Who gave superiority to Moses over all the worlds!' Upon this, the Muslim struck the Jew in anger. The Jew then went to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and informed him of what had happened. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'Do not give me superiority over Moses. On the Day of Resurrection, people will fall unconscious, and I shall be the first to regain consciousness. Then I will see Moses holding onto the side of the Throne. I do not know whether he too was among those who became unconscious and awoke before me, or whether Allah had exempted him from that state.'"[xxvi]

In this Hadith, the Prophet ﷺ forbade any form of comparative exaltation that could become a cause of conflict or enmity, as happened when the Muslim struck the Jew merely for asserting the superiority of Moses (peace be upon him). The Messenger of Allah ﷺ — despite his exalted status, nobility, and closeness to Allah — prohibited even his own followers from declaring him superior to other Prophets in a manner that might breed division or discord.

If such restraint and humility were enjoined by the Prophet ﷺ himself, then how can it be permissible in our age for every sect or group to claim exclusive possession of truth, to regard

itself as the only rightful follower of divine guidance, and to spread ideas that foster arrogance, intolerance, and extremism? Indeed, such attitudes are wholly contrary to the Prophetic spirit of humility, unity, and mutual respect that Islam commands and that is a growing fear that negative identity may lead to the escalation of extremism

5.8. The Decline of Constructive Thought

The presence of negative identities inevitably gives rise to a variety of religious, political, and social prejudices, and such prejudiced minds become habitually engaged in perpetual comparison and rivalry with others. Their primary concern lies in asserting the superiority of their own identity and diminishing that of their opponents. This attitude fosters bitterness and hostility, rendering the collective strength of the Ummah incapable of any constructive endeavor. People thus become accustomed to destructive modes of thinking, showing little or no inclination toward positive or productive pursuits.

Consequently, references to the Qur'an and Sunnah are often restricted to polemical debates — used merely to affirm one's own doctrinal stance or to refute another's — while hundreds of divine injunctions that call for reflection, progress, and societal reconstruction are neglected. Politically, the youth remain preoccupied with advancing the interests of their own party or factional identity, leaving no room for the pursuit of broader, creative objectives. Hence, the decline in developmental momentum and the absence of constructive thought within society have become an undeniable reality.

When one turns to social media, the moral decay becomes painfully visible. Posts of vulgar and indecent nature are commonplace, and the comments beneath them are often even more degrading. The sharing of obscene images and videos has become a habitual pastime for many young individuals. Disturbingly, such posts attract thousands of views, and comments — a reflection of the moral inclinations and intellectual direction of today's youth. The absence of constructive thinking inevitably halts national progress and sets the country on a path of decline and deterioration.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the rise of negative identity within society reflects a profound moral and spiritual disconnection from the principles of truth, justice, and unity that form the essence of human civilization. When individuals begin to define themselves through lenses of prejudice, sectarianism, and arrogance, the collective conscience of the nation gradually erodes. Such identities divide hearts, weaken intellectual vision, and replace compassion with hostility.True social progress cannot be achieved through fragmented identities, but through a return to moral clarity and mutual respect — values deeply rooted in the teachings of Islam. The Quran repeatedly warns against arrogance, prejudice, and division, emphasizing unity, humility and justice as the cornerstones of a righteous community.[xxvii]

The need of the hour is to revive a sense of shared belonging, where diversity becomes a strength, not a source of division. Only then can society rise above intolerance and rediscover the harmony that sustains both faith and humanity.

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[iv] Erik H. Erikson was a German-born American psychologist and psychoanalyst, renowned for formulating the theory of psychosocial development that delineates the progressive stages of human psychological growth. Born in Germany in 1902, he later migrated to the United States, where he made significant contributions to the understanding of human personality and

identity formation. Erikson introduced the seminal concept of the "Identity Crisis", a term that profoundly influenced modern psychology, particularly in the study of adolescence and youth development. His pioneering work illuminated the complex processes through which young individuals construct their sense of self amidst the challenges of social and cultural expectations. His most celebrated work, Identity: Youth and Crisis (1968), presents a comprehensive exploration of both positive and negative identity, examining how individuals either integrate or reject societal roles in their quest for self-definition.

Wendy Lovgren , A Life of Erik H. Erikson, W.W. Norton & Company, 1993.

[v] Erikson , Erik H. Identity : Youth and crisis. New York: W.W .Norton & Company ,1968, p.50

[vi] Richard Jenkins (1948–2016) was a distinguished British sociologist who served as a Professor at the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom. His scholarly work primarily centered on social identity, ethnicity, and culture. Jenkins' research offered profound insights into the ways individuals and groups perceive themselves and others within the broader web of social relations. His influential book, Social Identity—now regarded as a foundational text for students of sociology—presents identity as a dynamic process shaped by social interaction, group affiliation, and cultural context. Through this work, Jenkins emphasized that identity is not a fixed attribute but a continual negotiation between self-perception and societal recognition.

Jenkins, Richard. Social Identity. 3rd Edition, Routledge, 2008.

[vii] Ibidi ,p.5

[viii] Erik Erickson , Inac and Unal,2013;p 225

[ix] Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, W. W. Norton & Company, 1968, p. 172

[x] Marcia was born in a middle-class family on February 10, 1937, in Cleveland, Ohio, and spent his childhood in Columbus, Ohio. He grew up practicing tennis, drama, speech, and music. Marcia explored different subjects including history, English, and philosophy, and he graduated in 1959 with a bachelor's degree in psychology from Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio. He also received a master's and a doctoral degree in 1965 from Ohio State University in clinical psychology. Marcia began his professional career in 1965 as a professor and director of the psychology clinic at the University at Buffalo. Harmons, L. N. (n.d.). James Marcia - American Board of Assessment Psychology. https://www.assessmentpsychologyboard.org/edp/pdf/James_Marcia.pd

[xi] Marcia , J.E. (1966) Development and validation of –Ego Identity status. Journal of personality and social psychology ,American psychological Association ,1966 Vol 3(5) p. 555

[xii] Dr. Muhammad Khalid Masud (1941–2021) was a distinguished Pakistani jurist, philosopher, and intellectual. He served as the Chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology and as the Director General of the Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad. His scholarly contributions encompass a wide range of subjects, particularly the relationship between Islamic thought, modernity, and religion. Through his prolific writings and academic leadership, Dr. Masud profoundly influenced contemporary discourse on Islamic jurisprudence and intellectual renewal in the Muslim world.

"Obituary: Dr. Muhammad Khalid Masud."Dawn, April 2, 2021.

[xiii]Khalid Masood , Islam awr Jdeed Zehni Raviea , Edara Tahqiqat Islamia Islam Abad 2004, p 89

[xiv] Surah al-Hujurat, 49:13

[xv] Surah al-Hujurat, 49:13

[xvi] Surah Āl ʿImrān, 3:19

[xvii] Surah al-Hajj, 22:78

[xviii] Surah Āl ʿImrān, 3:85

[xix] R.gosling and S.taylor, principle of sociology, University of London UK, p 16

[xx] R.M, Maclver, society: An introductory Analysis, The Macmillan press Ltd 1950,p13

[xxi] Surah al-Rahman, 55:33

[xxii] Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Hayd, Hadith no. 302; also narrated in Sunan Abu Dawud
[xxiii] Surah al-Baqarah, 2:143
[xxiv] Ibn – Hisham , Seerat al Nabaveia, Vol 4, p260
[xxv] Surah al-Ḥujurāt, 49:13
[xxvi] Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Anbiya, Hadith no. 2411; also in Sahih Muslim
[xxvii] Al-Hujurat .10:13