Approach Paper
2-day International Conference
on
“Crisis in Muslim Mind and Contemporary World”
(March 14-15, 2010 at Patna)

Contemporary times are demanding. Post-modernism, post-structuralism have given rise to end of ideologies, structures and values without replacements. The gap is left open for rapid speed, growth, pragmatism and the guiding principle is neo-functional methodology, that believes in not working on forms, as they believe that the form follows the functioning. This situation has given rise to rampant confusion leading to crisis. Excessive freedom, liberalism and consumerism have acquired the centre-stage. It is dangerous situation and man-made calamities and disasters are looming large including socio-cultural, environmental, ecological degradation at all levels. Chaos and uncertainty are visible. Hence, a clear, committed and carefully carved out purposive vision of future is urgently required.

Muslim ummah has a divine obligation to help the humanity at this hour of crisis. But unfortunately Muslim mind itself is in grave crisis and there is an agreed opinion that Muslim ummah is badly in need of reform. Poverty, backwardness and injustice characterise the face of Muslim lands all over. Pollution and corruption are the order of the day. “Politics in Muslim world are all too often the politics of desperation, economics the economics of deprivation and the culture the culture of despair.” It must also be properly understood that ummah is in no real need of resources, opportunities or values. What it is lacking is sound thinking. It suffers from confused thinking, unpreparedness for paradigm shift, obscured social vision, improper and inadequate education and decline of its institutions. Hence, Muslim mind is in crisis of thought and methodology and needs resources to reform and to gain its mental and intellectual strength. The crisis of Muslim mind would start dissipating as the process of evaluation is in place, otherwise the ummah would further suffer from disintegration and schism, loss of identity, failure of institutions and inability to pull itself out from present state of confusion and bewilderment. Hence, change is needed. This change calls for sound thinking that would result into sound reconstruction. The desired process of change is based on Islamic thought and process is essentially rooted in Islamic doctrines, values and ethics. There is dire need to work on delineating its methods, principles and basic concepts derived from Islamic sources.

In this context, India as a nation and society also occupies a significant place in the whole scheme of things. Reasons are many. Muslims figure in considerable strength numbering nearing 140 million in India. They have already played an effective role in contributing to the growth of Islamic thought and civilisation in multiple ways. Indian Muslims enjoy guaranteed constitutional, political and civil rights in a participatory system. The pace of development in India has also opened up scores of opportunities for Muslims to conduct and participate in development processes. However, they also suffer from crisis of thought and need to work in overcoming the crisis of Muslim mind.
Crisis of Muslim Mind and contemporary world is proposed Topic of an international conference to be organised by the Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi in collaboration with its Patna Chapter on March 14-15, 2010 at Patna.

The conference would be divided into seven business sessions on following themes:

1. Dimensions of Crisis in Muslim Mind
2. Historical Roots and the Crisis of Thought
3. Principles of Methodology of Islamic Thought
4. Need for a Paradigm Shift in the Context of Contemporary Challenges and Needs
5. India as an Emerging Power and Role of Muslims in Development Projections and Processes.
6. Muslim Initiative in Developing Contemporary Civilisational Sciences
7. Muslim Mind and Future of Humanity

Here are the explanatory notes on the themes of business sessions. The contributors should approach the themes on the lines explained as under:

I. Dimensions of the Crisis of Muslim Mind

In regard to identifying dimensions, the range is to be restricted to core determinants. Basically, Muslim mind draws its strength from Islamic principles and practices. Islam as it stands today is supposed to be highly misunderstood religion that has given rise to a situation of crisis of thought and practice. This paradigm calls for adopting a comprehensive view of Islam that includes principles, values, objectives, practices etc. in a balanced fashion. Unfortunately, Islamic paradigm suffers from acute imbalance, extremism, exclusivism and imitative practices like there is no crisis in faith, but in thought, no crisis in determining ends, but in methodology; no reservation in seeking stereotype solutions rather to develop comprehensive Islamic world view; no application to review forms and traditions rather to concentrate on Islamic objectives and principles and finally no effort to avoid conventionalism and go for realism in developing thought and ideas. These areas may constitute the core of analysis of dimensions of the crisis.

II. Historical Roots and the Crisis of Thought

Crisis of thought is the cumulative result of mainly historical reasons and experiences faced by Muslim ummah.

Search for causes of the decline and fall of thought must constitute the central point of inquiry. Main factors may be identified as under:

a. The imitative foreign solutions should be carefully analysed as these springs from western culture based on secularism and materialism.
b. Imitative Traditional solutions imply to rely on derived from Islamic history regardless of relevance in time and space scale.

c. Islamic framework could not be adopted in its comprehensive sense that includes objectives, beliefs, values and ideas.

d. Change in Political base depicted fall of Khilafa, in-fighting among Muslim factions, in flow of Bedouins in big numbers in the fold of Muslim ummah particularly during rise of Islam.

e. Rift between intellectual and political leadership. This could close doors for ‘ijithad’ and gave rise to despotic and dictatorial rule.

f. Intellectual isolation, Taqlid and sectarianism hampered the growth of Islamic thought.

These developments led to no up-dating of methods of inquiry and finally the ummah could develop a psychology of excessive exclusivism.

III. Principles of Methodology of Islamic Thought

Methodology has to be worked out based on following factors:

• Balance among reason, revelation and universe.

• Full utilisation of basic source material-Quran and Sunnah.

• Comprehensive understanding of-unicity, Khilafa and moral responsibility.

• Emphasis on purposeful nature of creation and existence.

• Objectivity of truth and relativity of circumstances.

• Freedom of Decision and Free-will, Conscience and Thought.

• Working on Means and their application.

• A comparative civilisational approach/Help from other disciplines.

IV. Need for Paradigm Shift in the Context of Contemporary Challenges and Needs. A new relevant paradigm is needed for basic reforms and overcome the crisis. Following areas are important.

• Develop Islamic Paradigm to make it relevant to contemporary requirements. Islamic worldview is to be worked out afresh.

• Relate to the Emerging requirements and get ready to meet the challenges.

• Islam has to be viewed as Collective Singularity and Comprehensive Plurality in its manifestation and behaviour.
• Be Ready to accept change and dynamism in theory and practice.

• Develop vision for future with purpose of contributing to human understanding and development.

V. India as an Emerging Power and Role of Muslims

Indian context is important and relevant on following lines:

• Muslims have a special responsibility - loyalty to religion and nation. Demands objective understanding of their complimentarity.

• Awareness about Indian systems - Role and Rights of citizenship.

• Full commitment of inclusive nature of Indian culture and Islamic Values.

• Working out models of inter-community good will as required by Islamic world-view.

• Full scale efforts for capacity building measures.

VI. Muslim Initiative in Developing Civilisational Sciences

Civilisational sciences need to be reviewed and developed as discussed here:

• Comprehensive view to relate Reason, Intellect, Revelation and Laws of Nature.

• Comparative civilisational outlook.

• Working out dimensions of Human existence in Islam.

• Respect for impartiality of truth and reality of human nature specifically in social relations.

• Developing Islamic perspective for understanding social relations and developing civilisational sciences.

VII. Muslim Mind and Future of Humanity

Muslim Thought and Mind are obliged to contribute to future developments:

• Full scale efforts to identify trends of developments at all levels.

• Respect and space for Freedom of Conscience, Thought and Will.

• Awareness about all kinds of global systems and orders.

• Working on preparing modules of relevance of Islamic Thought and its capability to provide direction to humanity.
• Crisis is to be replaced by contribution of Muslim Mind in all relevant fields including science and innovation.
• Development of social sciences should be taken up on priority basis.
• Modern processes should be worked out to achieve future requirements.

Themes of Business Sessions

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