



IOS

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## Thought for the Month

And they (sometimes) say:  
 "There is nothing except  
 Our life on this earth,  
 And never shall we be  
 Raised up again."  
 If you could but see  
 When they are confronted  
 With their Lord!  
 He will say:  
 "Is not this the truth?"  
 They will say:  
 "Yeh, by our Lord!"  
 He will say:  
 "Taste ye then the Penalty  
 Because ye rejected Faith"  
 Al-Quran- VI: 29-30

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## FOCUS

Faruqi contends that there is a clear distinction between Christianity and Christendom. He invites Muslims to be very clear about the two. Christianity, he argues, is God's religion and cannot be indicted under any circumstance. But Christendom is different from Christianity. To be able to distinguish between the two, he finds, 'is a great intellectual achievement'. Christendom, which emerged in the West, developed its own way of understanding Christianity, and sent missionaries along with the colonialists to the non-Western world. He argues that it is Christendom which is culpable of 'two arch-enemies of the contemporary Muslims; colonialism and mission'. Colonialism was responsible for the displacement and dispossession of Muslims both physically and psychologically. Missionaries, Faruqi claims, played 'the role of colonial governor, trader, settler, military, physician and educator' and in some cases 'missionaries were caught doing the workings of the colonial power, and used by the latter to [their] advantage'. He encourages both Muslims and Christians to work together 'to lift this Satanic burden', as he puts it. He is optimistic and finds hope in the Church's statements such as *Pacem in Terris* and *populorum Progressio*, the Pope's encyclicals of 1963 and 1970.

On the question of mission, Faruqi argues that 'Western Christian mission to the Muslim world was never a mission of Jesus, but a mission of the Western figuration of Christianity arrogantly asserted in words, hardly ever exemplified in deeds'. He accepts the duty of mission as a divine duty both in Islam and Christianity. But he points out first, the perception of Christendom of non-Christians where 'the majority of mankind are declared enemies whom it is the duty of the faithful to "convert"'. Second, the missionary's home [i.e. the Western countries] is increasingly secularized'. On these two points he finds it is difficult to accept that mission to non-Christians is a genuine mission.

Faruqi suggests two ways to overcome this problem. First, since missions are financed and carried out by organizations and Churches, the Vatican and World Council of Churches, are in a position to cease such activities. However, the work of Orientalists, 'being individual in nature and often financed by autonomous colleges and institutions cannot be commanded to stop'. Alternatively, both Muslim and Christian scholars can jointly produce accurate and honest works on Islam.

He appreciates the difference Christian theologians draw between *Kerygma* and *diakonia*; however, he asserts that even in *diakonia* the Churches have never come forward to explain what criteria they are applying. He considers that one essential element in such an endeavour is the consent of the people the Churches want to serve.

Second, he suggests that to learn about others' convictions, to analyze, criticize them and share with 'one's own knowledge of the truth', is a noble task. 'If this is mission, then Islam and Christianity must missionise to the ends of the earth.' He points out the equivocation of the term 'mission' and suggests the word should be dropped from the 'vocabulary and the term "dialogue" be used to express the man of religion's concern for man's convictions'. 'Dialogue then', he says, 'is a dimension of human consciousness... It is the fulfillment of the command of reality to be known, to be compared and contrasted with other claims, to be acquiesced in if true, amended if inadequate, and rejected if false.' Dialogue, then, becomes the removal of all barriers,... and disciplines our consciousness. 'Dialogue in short', he argues, 'is the only kind of inter-human relationship worthy of man!'

(From “Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century” by Ataulah Siddiqui, published by Palgrave Macmillan, 1997, pp. 93-94)

## Activities of the IOS Headquarters

### Lecture on Parenting and Child Development

The hope for Muslim societies lies with the future generations, Islamic scholar Dr Abdul Hameed Ahmad Abu Sulayman said during a lecture on 19.3.2010. He was delivering a lecture on “Parenting and Child Development” at the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) auditorium.

He said the nearly 60 OIC countries, generally referred to as the Muslim world, were wallowing in backwardness because they had lost their “worldview”.

“The result is there for all of us to see: the Japanese economy is 11 times bigger than the whole Muslim world’s economies put together”. He pleaded for Muslims to reclaim the pristine Islamic worldview to get their rightful place under the sun.

To him one way of doing that was to raise future generations on the virtues and values of Islam as propounded in the Quran and exemplified by the Sunnah (the Prophet’s [PBUH] ways).

Dr. Suleiman emphasised the simplicity and directness of the Quranic message which was “alloyed with all kinds of philosophies and fantasies over the generations”. That destroyed the strength of Islam, according to him. “The influence of the convoluted Greek philosophy wreaked the worst havoc”.

Another factor that distorted the Islamic worldview was the Arab reversal to their pre-Islamic tribal ways. That undermined the very edifice of thought, belief and practices that was known by the first generation of Muslims as Islam.

He ended the discourse on a warning: “If you do not raise your children on the Islamic principles to live as Muslims of the future, rest assured you are going to live the lives of slaves for another 300 years”.

He said the ulama (Islamic scholars) did not know social sciences, and the Muslim social scientists did not know the scriptures. A blend of the two would help restore the Muslim perspective. Future generations of Muslims had to be comfortable with both.

His lecture was followed by an interesting question-answer session.

The programme began with a recitation from the holy Quran by Maulana Abdullah Tariq. IOS General Secretary Prof. Z.M. Khan presented a brief account of activities of the IOS and



**Dr. Abu Sulayman (in the middle) delivering his lecture**

its programme for its 25 anniversary celebrations next year.

The IOS Chairman Dr Mohammad Manzoor Alam proposed a vote of thanks.

## Activities of the IOS Chapters

### CHENNAI CHAPTER

#### Seminar on The Challenges of Pluralism

##### DAY-I

Indian ulama have to work assiduously to develop a fresh understanding of Islamic texts in the context of present-day life and create a new interpretation of Islamic law, Prof. A R Momin, former head of department of sociology in Bombay University, said while addressing a seminar in Chennai. The seminar was organized by the IOS Chennai Chapter on 27-28 February, 2010.

Prof. Momin was delivering his keynote address at a two-day seminar on “The Challenges of Pluralism and the Middle Way of Islam” at New College. He said “Islam is accommodative of pluralism” in its laws and social mores as demonstrated by the historical record of Ottoman, Andalusia (Arab Spain) and medieval India.

Quoting from the Quran Prof. Momin emphasised that Islam recognised and accommodated ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. He juxtaposed it with the observation that in India respect for and accommodation of diversity was reflected not only in the country’s religious and ethnic landscape but also within the fold of Hinduism.

Quoting from the Rig Veda, he said “The Truth is One, but the sages call It by different Names”. That stance had been validated by the inclusion of more than 25 words of Dravidian origin in the Rig Veda and many more in later Vedas, he added.

In this regard, China is the binary opposite of India as its ethos is mono-cultural, according to Prof. Momin.

Prof. Momin also pointed towards the contribution of Indian Muslims to the advancement of the multi-cultural ethos in arts and letters, culture and architecture. As the world was getting increasingly diverse and hybridity rather than uniformity was the central theme of life, accommodation and celebration of diversity would be the right choice.

Earlier, in his welcome address Dr. Karamathullah Bahmani, coordinator of (IOS) Chennai chapter, while welcoming the audience and guests said that by now IOS was known worldwide and enjoyed an affiliate status with the United Nations (Social Roster) largely because of the tireless efforts of its chairman, Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam.

Mr. Habibullah Badsha, former advocate general of Tamil Nadu asserted, “pluralism is inbuilt in Islam, and its beauty lies in resilience of its message”. He advised Muslims not to

talk about backwardness all the time. "Hold your head high and forge ahead", he exhorted Muslims, especially the youth.

The seminar, which was jointly organised by the Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi and New College, Chennai, began with the recitation of Quran by Mr. Abdur Raheem Patel.

Prof. Z M Khan, secretary general IOS, presented highlights of 24 years of its research and publication work, as well as of seminars and symposia organised by it. He said so far IOS had published over 200 titles, has been offering scholarships and publishing several journals, besides running different websites.

IOS had also started several centres like IOS Centre for Applied Social Research, IOS Centre for Computer Education and IOS Multimedia Centre. IOS would observe its Silver Jubilee in the 25th year of its existence in 2011, he announced.

In his presidential address, Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam, chairman of IOS remarked that human dignity lay in the freedom of choice, which was possible only when a multiplicity of options was available. "Islam offers you the choice to select or reject", he said pointing towards Islam's acceptance and celebration of diversity.

He said that of late trends were marked which de-emphasised the unity of Godhead, unity of knowledge and unity of Creation in all its diversity. IOS work always focused on that unity in all its research, symposia and seminars.

IOS organised over the last few months seminars from Kashmir to Kerala, UP and Bihar. He made an appeal to participants to access different websites run by IOS and its affiliates to be able to interact with it.

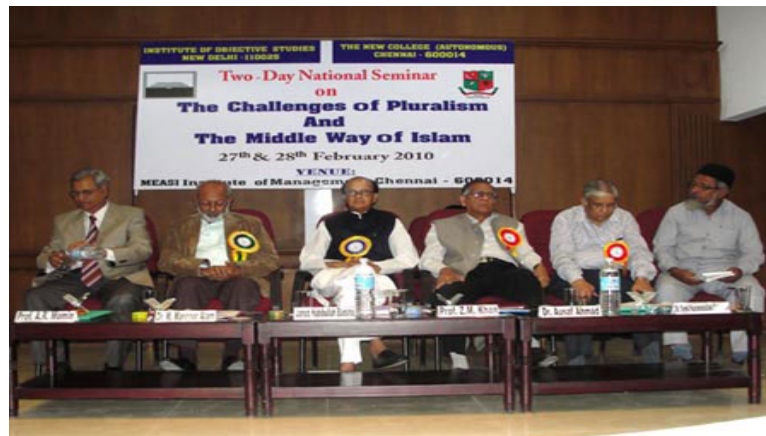
The programme was conducted by Capt. Zahid Hussain, who heads the NCC at the college and teaches in economics department. Capt. Hussain also proposed a vote of thanks.

## DAY-II

The second day's proceedings began with a recitation from the holy Quran by Capt. Zahid Hussain. The session chairperson Prof. Z.M. Khan's introductory remarks followed.

Prof. Khan observed in his introductory remarks that pluralism was "not merely a concept from political theory, but an idea and a practice with extremely wide ramifications". Human rights, civil rights, minority rights and a plethora of allied areas were in its domain, touched upon and elaborated in documents like the Indian Constitution and UN Conventions.

"And yet, minorities continue to suffer worldwide", he pointed out. Driven by good intentions, pluralism and



A view of inaugural session

its practice were caught in all manner of paradoxes and contradictions. To overcome these limitations minorities themselves had to take the initiative "and look hard to find out precisely what is wrong and where".

Prof. Khan continued, "We can be sure of certain things: institutions have to be built and protected". He explained that institutions functioned in a certain social, economic, moral and political environment. That environment subtly and deeply influenced the functioning of these institutions. Hence, the environment, too, had to be kept in mind and to be corrected for the entire edifice to be efficient and meaningful.

Prof. Khan quoted an insightful remark of former Chief Justice of India A.M. Ahmadi to clarify the point. In one of his addresses Justice Ahmadi had said that most of the time Indian judiciary worked competently, independently and

impartially, but on rarest of rare occasions its competence, independence and impartiality were compromised. That was because the people running the institution of judiciary were only human and it was as natural for them to be influenced by the prevailing environment as for anyone else. "That's why we have to build institutions and to be mindful of the environment in which they function", he concluded.

Prof. M. Abdul Khader stressed the need for community-based initiatives for empowerment of Muslims. In his scheme of things the mosque stood at the centre of primary educational activity. He pleaded for a primary school and a library to be attached to every mosque and for utilising the potentials of the imam and the mosque management committee. He talked about the Kerala model patterned on these lines that had met with extraordinary success.

Prof. A.M. Abdul Kalam argued for a return to the pristine values of early Islam to meet today's challenges. Early Islam had a provision for accommodating religious, cultural and ethnic diversity.

Mr S.H. Mahboob Ali elaborated upon the same theme saying the Charter of Medina, a vital document of the first Islamic state that was headed by the prophet (PBUH) himself, recognised and protected the rights of minorities. This state recognised the weekly holidays of Jews (Saturday) and Christians (Sunday) along with Muslims (Friday). It allowed non-Muslims to practise their faith freely with full protection of law. This state, which also signed treaties with non-Muslim states, was a prototype of the pluralist state of today, he asserted.

In their jointly written paper Dr S. Karamatullah Basha (of Economics Deptt. New College, Chennai) and Prof. Captain Zahid Hussain (also of Economics Deptt., New College) argued that traders and sufis spread the message of Islam through love and understanding more than any warrior or conqueror did. The latter category came in the second wave, mainly of Turks.

The authors pointed out that Muslim poets, writers and artistes were part of the project of Indian pluralism that built a multi-cultural ethos. However, pluralism sustained a serious setback because of communal politics and organised mass violence against minorities.

They pleaded for a range of remedial measures – legal, economic, political and social—to set things right and bring pluralism back on the rails. The paper was presented by Dr Basha.

Prof. M. Fakhir Ismail said in his paper that Islam, being “a complete way of life”, accommodated pluralism, and all that Muslims had to do was adhere firmly to it.

### Valedictory Session

This session was chaired by Prof. A.R. Momin and the valedictory speech was delivered by IOS chairman Dr Mohammad Manzoor Alam. Dr Alam put the concept of pluralism in the context of a fast-globalising world, a world characterised by the emergence of new forms of imperialism.

“The global hegemon is out to turn our democratic republic into a banana republic”, he remarked pointing towards new stresses on the country’s sovereign authority.

The plural heritage of the country was under tremendous pressure from different sides, external as well as internal. Also, there was a growing tendency to understate or ignore the contribution of Muslims to the mosaic of India’s composite culture.

He announced an IOS project to study a large body of archival material to properly evaluate the contribution of Muslims to India’s independence. “This large body of archival material has not been studied so far”, he said.

Dr Alam said 2011 would be the Silver Jubilee Year of IOS, which would be marked by year-round celebrations, a large output of printed work as well as internet content, and a plethora of important seminars and symposia all over the country.

In his presidential address the chairman of the session and important member of IOS fraternity, Prof. A.R. Momin, elaborated on the points made by Dr Alam.

The second day’s programme was interspersed with lively question-answer sessions in which the audience interacted with speakers. Capt. Zahid Hussain proposed a vote of thanks.

### KOLKATA CHAPTER

#### Seminar on Western View of Women in Islamic Tradition

A seminar organized by the Kolkata chapter of the IOS on 21.2.2010 and presided over by Dr. Manzoor Ahmed Vice-Chairman of the IOS, took strong note of the ever growing unjustifiable critical references to Islam by a section of people in the western countries and some others misled by them.

Among those who presented their papers were Prof. Imtiaz Ghulam Ahmed, Dean of the Faculty of Law, University of Calcutta, Prof Sarfaraz



A view of audience

Ahmed Khan, Dr. Syed Hashmat Jalal, Mrs Atiya Mushtaque, Mr. Md. Ariff, Mrs Rukhshi Ilyas, Miss Lubna Salim, Miss Anam Rizvi and Dr. M.K.A. Siddiqui.

The speakers wondered at the mental bankruptcy and dishonesty of the critics for their irrational criticism of the status and position of women, one of the strongest points of Islamic culture. The external visibility of some Muslim women, with a head-scarf, for example, though makes her somewhat comparable to the Christian priestess or nun, yet the westerners insist on taking it as a symbol of slavery and hold her religion as repressive, outmoded and barbaric

The speakers in the seminar drew comparison between the sets of principles, as laid down in the Judeo-Christian scriptures on the one hand, and Islamic tradition on the other, and convincingly showed that Islam conferred upon the female folk over 1400 years ago the dignity, equality and rights that had remained a dream for their sisters in the Judeo-Christian west, until the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Quoting irrefutably authentic references to the effect, the speakers held that Judeo-Christian tradition provides ample evidences of a belief in decisive inferiority of women. She is regarded as ‘temptress’ and one with whom “the sin began” and resulted in the expulsion of man from heaven”. The Quran, it was pointed out, held both Adam and Eve responsible for the violation of the Divine orders, in equal measure. Islam not only granted women right to education but made it obligatory to them as it was for men. Talmud however forbids Jewish women to study the holy book Torah and some of the Jewish holy men went to the extent of declaring “Let the words of Torah be rather destroyed by fire than imparted to women”.

The rigours of impurity and contagious uncleanness imposed on Jewish women during their periods by Old Testament are absolutely incomparable.

Restrictions are also imposed on the husbands of Jewish women during their periods. Similarly according to Bible (Lev : 12-15) the duration of

mother’s ritual impurity, in case she gives birth to a female child, is twice as long as it is in case she gives birth to a male child. St. Tertullian, it was pointed out, addressed women as Devil’s gateway, and destroyer of Gods image. St. Augustine, is known to hold that a woman remains a temptress, whether she is a wife, mother or sister.

Not only in the matter of education but also in inheritance, ownership, management and disposal of property, as also in matters of choice of mate and in matters relating to opting out of wedlock, if it becomes necessary, women in Islamic tradition enjoy all

rights which the other contemporary traditions denied until their outmoded and oppressive laws were reformed under tremendous social pressure and under the teeth of opposition. Despite reforms these laws have not fully achieved the rationality and temperance of the Islamic law. Centuries old suppression has given rise to various movements including one known as 'western feminism' and this feminism in its extreme form lays emphasis on individuality and rejects the concept of 'mutuality' a key word to denote the functioning of a Muslim family. The disastrous effect of this western attitude is already visible, and among its manifestation are enormous rise in the divorce rate, growing number of families in society without a male head as also the irrelevance of marriage as an institution. Muslims are not critical of the west for what they do but do not want their religion to be maligned. They want it to be adequately understood.

Among the possible causes of Islamophobia in the West, it was opined, that besides its hegemonic ambitions western civilization lacked in democratic pluralism, it has an irrational fear of being demographically over taken by the immigrant population, and irresistible urge to stop the impact of Islam in the west.

The magnitude of opposition, rather resistance, to Islam in the west was considered alarming. Developments in the west particularly in the U.K. and USA was seen as indicating that the west had discovered an adversary in Islam, after the demise of the Soviet Union. For Islam this battle is for survival with dignity and for the West it is for dominance and hegemony.

Dr. Manzoor Ahmed who presided over the seminar summarised the proceedings and spoke at length on the

uniqueness of the Islamic laws which gave respectability and dignity to women and elevated their position which even today remains exemplary. Citing a tradition he said it is laid down that if an individual has to maintain both his present and in case his resources are inadequate he is required to give priority to his mother, similarly he has to give precedence to daughter over his son if the resources at his disposal are scarce. Speaking of the uniqueness of the Islamic laws he quoted a non-Muslim



**Prof. Manzoor Ahmed addressing the gathering**

political leader as saying that if a common civil code is imposed in this country 90 percent of the laws will have to be taken from the laws of the Shariat.

Earlier Prof. I.G. Ahmed in his characteristic manner elaborately elucidated the uniqueness of the various rights granted in the shariat to women



**A view of audience**

and held that it could be no better, and there was no substance in the criticism by certain quarters either in India or in the west.

Dr. M.K.A. Siddiqui conducted the seminar and Mr. Nesar Waris proposed vote of thanks.

## **PATNA CHAPTER**

### **International Conference on Crisis in the Muslim Mind**

#### **DAY-I**

Patna: The human civilisation is afflicted by a crisis of faith today as it is unable to handle the spiritual and moral legacy of major religions, the Governor of Bihar Debanand Konwar said here today.

In his inaugural address at a two-day international conference on "Crisis in the Muslim Mind and the Contemporary World" at A. N. Sinha Institute Mr. Konwar explained that the malaise affected not the Muslim mind alone, but "mind, the human mind as such".

The crisis was not confined to a particular religious denomination, he emphasized, again asserting that the human civilisational heritage was largely a "sum total of religious teachings of Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Jain, Sikh and other prophets, avatars, sufis and saints."

He pointed out the process called in Western philosophy "thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis" was a continuous one that affected all thought, including religious thought. Quoting Rabindra Nath Tagore's dialogue with Mahatma Gandhi in which the former told the mahatma that "once we evolve beyond nationalism, we will reach the stage of humanism", Mr. Konwar appealed to religious leaders to make that giant leap to humanism.

The conference theme is based on ideas conveyed in Dr. Abdul Hamid Ahmad Abu Sulayman's book of the same title, which has been translated into several languages. Dr. Sulayman, a thinker of Arab origin who is a former rector of

International Islamic University of Malaysia, presented the key-note address.

In his address he said the current beliefs and practices of Muslims had veered away from the core values of pristine Islam. Today, Muslims were no longer able to relate their thoughts and actions to the standards set in the Quran. He briefly touched upon the history of this progressive affliction that began from the days of fourth rightly guided caliph of Islam, that is, from the very first generation of Muslims.

The crux of the issue was that instead of relying primarily on the Quran the Muslim world was relying on the myriad interpretations of the holy book.

He said “the Quranic principles were applicable in the past and are applicable today”. One of the reasons behind he malaise was that ulema (Islamic religious scholars) had failed to cope with advances in social sciences and their ever-newer methodologies.

Muslims had been trying to look at today’s issues in the framework provided by yesterday’s religious scholars. He emphasised the point that religious texts had to be understood in today’s context. The spirit of the age had to be taken as a major determinant of religious stance.

The conference was jointly organised by the Institute of Objective Studies in clooboration with the Forum for Literacy, Awareness and Muslim Education (FLAME). The forum president Dr. Ahamd Abdul Hai said in his welcome address that Islam (which, in Arabic means peace) had today become synonymous with “bomb explosion” was originally meant to be a message of peace.

“Wama arsalakum illa rahmatul lil alameen”, Dr. Hai quoted the Quran, which means that the Prophet

Muhammad (PBUH) came to earth as God’s Kindness for the entire creation. He said Muslims must overcome the drift and return to this primary message of the religion.

Prof. Z.M. Khan, introducing the



**Prof. Z.M. Khan, Secretary General IOS, Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam, Chairman, IOS, H.E. Debanand Konwar, Governor of Bihar, Dr. Ahamd Abdul Hai, President, Forum for Literacy Awareness and Muslim Education (FLAME), Patna, Dr. Abdul Hamid Ahmad Abu Sulayman, Former Rector of International Islamic University of Malaysia**

subject, observed that Patna was selected as the place where to hold the conference because of the intellectual vibrancy and the long tradition of learning associated with it.

“No seat is ever left vacant in auditoriums here, and students invariably come to us for asking questions and clarifying points”. Sometimes they came even to the hotels where the speakers were staying, he explained.

He said the essential responsibility for finding solutions to the problems of Muslims lay with Muslims themselves.



**A view of audience**

“Patna should have some of its abundant human resource reoriented, trained and even some new talent created”, he pointed out.

Earlier an introduction of IOS was given by Dr. S.F. Rab from Patna chapter of IOS.

Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam, Chairman of IOS, said that whether it was ancient Patliputra, medieval Azimabad or modern Patna, this city had always been a seat of learning, which encouraged them to organise this important conference here.

The Quran does not address Muslims alone, nor does it concern itself with a particular age or location. This has to be grasped clearly, Dr. Alam asserted.

He said it was the mind that drove the matter and the concept that underpinned the material reality. Hence things must be clear at the level of mind and of concept.

The programme began with a recitation from the Quran by Dr. Shoukat Ali, and a vote of thanks was proposed by Shafi Mashhadi, secretary of FLAME.

## DAY-II

Islamic scholars diagnosed the “Crisis in the Muslim Mind” here on the second day of a two-day conference on the issue, finding its etiology in reversal to “Arab tribalism, influence of antiquated Greek philosophy, and Muslim religious scholars’ loss of touch with developments in human knowledge”.

Prof. Abdul Hamid Ahmad Abu Sulayman, an Islamic scholar and author of the book *Crisis in Muslim Mind*, articulated factors that led to “a distortion of the Islamic world view”.

Today, in the Muslim world people “with a religious appearance in cohort with some intellectuals have joined rulers in a power dispensation to the detriment of common Muslims”, Prof. Abu Sulayman said.

“If you oppose the autocratic system, the ulema (clerics) will send you to hell and the rulers will consign you to prison”. This had brought the quality of life of Muslims to the level of animals.

To rise above this sub-human existence Muslims should seek guidance from the Quran rather than through the medium of clerics.

In his paper Dr. Shakeel A. Khan of the economics department of Oriental College Patna observed that the Islamic economic model offered protection from periodic upheavals witnessed in the modern western economic model.

This session on “Principles of Methodology in Islamic Thought” ended with a summing up of the ideas by the session chair Prof. A.R. Momin, former head department of sociology, University of Bombay.

In the next session “Muslim Mind and the Future of Humanity” Prof. Momin put the issue of “Muslim intellectual crisis” in the context of the larger humanity’s condition.

The challenges that beset the humankind in the 21st century were of two kinds: one type being social, cultural and existential, while the other one ideational and epistemological, he elaborated.

“The social, cultural and existential challenges of our era include globalisation, especially the worldwide diffusion of global lifestyles, individualism and consumerism, conspicuous inequalities of income, power and resources and widespread poverty and the exclusion and marginalisation of large number of people in Asia and Africa.”

Racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and flagrant violations of human rights posed a serious threat to societal stability and cohesion in many countries across the world, Prof. Momin said. He argued for a morally ordered universe that was based on religious teachings.

In his paper Prof. Abuzar Usmani, former head of Urdu department at Ranchi University, explained “the role of youth in shaping a better future for humanity”. He was critical of the freewheeling, non-committal, non-absolutist ideas of post-modernism that, in his view, had the potential to lead the youth astray and cut loose from their cultural moorings.

Prof. Shamshad Hussain, former V-C of Nalanda University summed up the ideas of the session in his presidential remarks.

The conference adopted a number of resolutions one of them being the establishment of a college of social and human sciences to run courses for award

It would not be wrong to conclude that a great majority of Muslims does not qualify even to be lower divisional clerk. The situation is, therefore, very grave and the task ahead is enormous. A lot of concerted effort is needed.

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**Dr. Abu Sulayman addressing the gathering**

of degrees/diplomas at Patna.

In his valedictory address, Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam, Chairman, Institute of Objective Studies called for a paradigm shift in the study, interpretation and practice of Islam.

***Contd. from page 8***

India is developing fast and the apprehension is that the Muslims will miss the bus again unless they receive an empowering education quickly enough. What we mean by an empowering education? Let us explain.

The lowest graded government job is one of the lower divisional clerk for which minimum qualification is intermediate or ten plus two with typing skill or computer literacy. Now see what exactly is the situation? Over 300 million people are still illiterate in India a good number of which must be Muslims. And of the 700 million literate people a great majority is just able to read and write which can not be branded as empowering education. One must be qualified at least to get the job of a lower divisional clerk for being called educationally empowered.

## **A Lot More is Needed to be Done** by Ishtiyaque Danish

**The views expressed in the article do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of the Newsletter (editor)**

A full-fledged Ministry of Minority Affairs was created in 2007. Veteran Congress leader Mr A.R. Antulay was the first choice to head this ministry. The functions assigned to the ministry overlapped with those of others and Mr. Antulay had to work hard to give his ministry an independent shape. Mr. Antulay is very old and his vast experiences might have helped him as well as the ministry in its early days. The fact, however, is that the ministry failed miserably during his stewardship in fulfilling people's expectations. The fund allocated to the ministry for carrying out welfare measures for minorities remained largely unspent.

The new minister, Mr. Salman Khurshid seems to be gradually overcoming the problems which are numerous and complex. Until September 2009 the ministry had spent less than five per cent of the funds allocated to it. Some reports suggest that things have improved since then and by December 2009 some 17% of the allocated fund was spent on various schemes launched to benefit the minorities.

Mr. Khurshid, in a sense, had to start afresh and now seems to have overcome some of the problems facing the ministry since Mr Antulay's time. The advantage with Mr Khurshid is that he is relatively young, dynamic, energetic and focused. He is also free of seniority syndrome or complex which probably has helped him in solving some of the problems his ministry faced. Let us hope he would overcome the remaining obstacles as well. We specially hope that he would soon develop a viable mechanism to implement his ministry's programmes effectively.

It would be appropriate to critically appreciate the ministry's programmes and offer constructive suggestions. Let us all become stakeholders in the affairs of the ministry.

A flagship scheme of the ministry is distributing scholarships to increase minorities' participation in the higher education sector. It is good that the scheme is being implemented through the UGC which has enormous experience in the field. One just hopes that the UGC acts a bit faster than it normally does. The problem, however, is that the total number of scholarships is just over 700. The number must increase to many thousands indeed. We have our reason.

The 11<sup>th</sup> plan (which would end in less than two years) allocation for multisectoral development of minorities in 90 earmarked districts is Rs. 2750 crores. However, the approved fund for implementing minority-specific schemes was Rs 1562 crores out of which only 77 crores was spent upto September 2009 which is a mere 4.93% of the approved funds for 2009-10 and 2.8% of the 11<sup>th</sup> plan allocation. It means huge amount remains unspent. And surely one easy and fruitful way to use the money should be increasing the number of fellowships.

The Ministry of Minority Affairs has announced over 700 scholarships for pursuing higher education. One scholarship is worth Rs. 12000/- per month and thus the seven hundred scholarships would cost a total of Rs. 122500000/- per annum which is less than one per cent of the approved fund (Rs 1562 crores) for the fiscal year 2009-10. One wonders why it has not been 10% of the approved fund as it would have created many thousand scholarships. We must keep in mind that multi-sectoral development of the minority-dominated 90 districts has to primarily focus on education, healthcare and housing. Therefore the demand for increase in the number of scholarship is not without reason.

We all accept that education is the key to empowerment. Education, therefore, must receive the focused attention of the Ministry of Minority Affairs. The ministry may be well-advised to focus not only on higher education but also on primary and secondary education. One wonders if it would be possible for the MMA to set up schools on the pattern of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas in the minority-dominated districts? If it ever happens, it would surely go a long way to educationally empower Muslims and other minorities.

A cursory look at the district level religious data reveals that a majority of districts have Muslim population between 8 to 15 percent. However, the 90 minority-dominated districts are the ones which have over 20% minority population. The need, therefore, is to also identify and earmark the districts with eight and above percentile of minority population for multi-sectoral development as it would help more and more members of the minority communities.

Just by opening schools we can not empower Muslims educationally. A big problem is how to reduce high dropout rate

of Muslims in schools? Another problem is how to improve the quality of education at primary and secondary levels? These require far-sighted policies and long-term strategies. Above all, we need to create an effective and honest mechanism to implement the schemes we make.

*Contd. on page 7*