



# IOS NEWSLETTER

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## Thought for the Month

O mankind! We created  
You from a single (pair)  
Of a male and a female,  
And made you into  
Nations and tribes, that  
Ye may know each other  
(Not that ye may despise  
(Each other). Verily  
The most honoured of you  
In the sight of Allah  
Is (he who is) the most  
Righteous of you  
And Allah has full knowledge  
And is well-acquainted  
(With all things)

Al-Quran- 49:13

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## FOCUS

The blend of admiration, respect, and affection which the devout Muslim feels for Muhammed is an impressive fact of religious history. Rarely will he mention the Prophet's name without the benediction "Peace be upon him!" And today as for thirteen centuries the faithful will be found praying, "Salam upon you, O Prophet of God."

Despite their fervor for the Prophet, however, Muslims never mistake him for the earthy cornerstone of their faith. This place is reserved for Islam's bible, the Koran. So great was Muhammed's personal regard for it that he considered it the only miracle God worked through him – his "standing miracle" as he called it. Meaning "to read" or "to recite", the purposes for which it was intended, the Koran is perhaps the most read book in the world. Certainly it is the most often memorized and possibly it exerts the most influence on those who read it.

The Koran is four-fifths the length of the New Testament. It is divided into one hundred fourteen chapters or *surahs* which with the exception of the short first chapter that figures in the Muslim's daily prayers are arranged in almost exact order of decreasing length. Thus, Surah Two has 286 verses, Surah Three 200 down to Surah One Hundred Fourteen which has only six.

Muslim attitudes toward the Koran run the full gamut one finds in Christian approaches to the Bible but tend to be fundamentalistic. According to the strictly orthodox view, the Koran's every letter was directly dictated by God. Its words came to Muhammed in manageable segments over twenty-three years through voices that seemed at first to vary and sometimes sounded like "the reverberating of bells" but gradually focused in a single voice that became identified as Gabriel's. Some Muslims take the references to this angelic intermediary literally; others say he may have been raised by Muhammed's mind the hours of its greatest fervor. In either case no orthodox Muslim doubts the divine origin of the words themselves. Emblazoned on Muhammed's mind, they were recorded by his followers on bones and bark and leaves and scraps of parchment with God preserving their literal accuracy throughout.

Islam assumed that the Bibles of the Jews and Christians too were originally authentic revelations from God, which fact entitled those who hold them sacred to be classed with Muslims as "People of the Book." Nevertheless, the Old and New Testaments share two defects from which the Koran is free. Having been revealed at earlier stages in man's spiritual development when, as with a child, he was capable of receiving the full truth, they are incomplete. Beyond this, the Jewish and Christian Bibles have in the process of transmission become partially corrupted, a fact that explains the discrepancies that occasionally appear between their accounts and parallel ones in the Koran. Exemption from these two limitations makes the Koran the final and infallible revelation of God's will. Its second chapter caps the latter point categorically: "There is no doubt in this book".

From *The Religions of Man* by Huston Smith, pp. 202-203.

## Activities of the IOS Headquarters

Dr. M. Manzoor Alam, Chairman, IOS addressed the 11<sup>th</sup> Doha Interfaith Dialogue Conference on “Role of Youth in Enhancing the Value of Dialogue” held at Doha, Qatar on March 25-26, 2014. Dr. Alam spoke in Plenary Session-I which was devoted to discuss youth and dialogue.

Dr. Alam said that

We have first to know what dialogue is *not*, before coming down to what dialogue is. And from there we have to proceed to placing it in its historical perspective and see how in today’s context the youth can have a role in enhancing its value.

So, first what dialogue is not. Dialogue is not about establishing a “we versus they” equation and creating a hegemony for *our* own ideas vis-à-vis *their* ideas. It is not about creating a hierarchy of ideas.

It is also not about an exchange of blames nor for trading of charges. Additionally, dialogue is not about agreement or disagreement.

Now, what dialogue is. It is a healing process. A warm, human gesture. An open-ended exchange of ideas without forcing anyone to take a certain position or insisting on anyone to take a stand.

### IOS ROLE

Over the years, the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS), headquartered in New Delhi, has contributed to this process with its own international seminars and symposia on interfaith, inter-civilisational dialogue. In the meanwhile, we have had similar conferences on inter-community linkages within India, communities here meaning faith and ethnic communities.

Besides these we have held international conferences on the issues of youth within and outside India. In India the population of persons between 15 and 19 years is 250 million. If we include persons up to 25 years, the number crosses 300 million.

You can imagine the scale and potential of our young population.

With so much energy and enthusiasm available, the country is set to harvest a great demographic dividend. In the case of India (like China) a huge population base is an asset, not a liability as the Malthusian economists of the 50s and 60s feared. India has an edge in one sense over China. Its population has grown at more than double the rate of China over the last three decades as China has observed one-child norm over the decades. The result is that China does not have enough youth compared to the ageing population, which the younger generation has to support.

The fears of a “youth bulge” (which, according to demographers and other experts, leads to war, mass violence, political upheaval and civil unrest) have not come true in India. The Muslim world as a whole has remained peaceful (except for external aggression and civil strife in a few countries) despite the fact that a large proportion of the Muslim world is youthful, with a population of 780 million persons below 25 years of age.

The youth are not a liability if we do not waste them and keep them unhealthy, uneducated and untrained.

### OUR TRACK RECORD

In October 2008, we organised an international conference on “Towards Human Understanding Through Dialogue” in New Delhi with an impressive representation of religious leaders of Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism from India and several other countries.

In 2009, the IOS organised a lecture by Dr Ataullah Siddiqui. The lecture was titled “Interfaith Dialogue: Issues and Challenges” and it left a deep impression on a highly-educated audience. Another similar talk that left a deep impression and set people thinking was “Dialogue Among Civilisations: An Arab Perspective” in 2008.

A major national seminar was held by the IOS on “Fostering Inter-

Community Linkages in India” in 2003.

One of our most widely covered conferences was “Inter-Civilisational Dialogue in a Globalising World” in 2005 that was attended by India’s Prime Minister and half a dozen of his cabinet colleagues, judges, intellectuals, academics and foreign dignitaries like Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, former deputy prime minister of Malaysia.

With a rich and diverse background like this the IOS should be able to contribute to the present discourse.

Today’s youth are the leaders of tomorrow. Full of buoyant energy, hope and enthusiasm, the youth also have time on their side. On the other hand, the older generation has experience and wisdom to share with them. This is a nice combination.

As today’s youth are going to be the leaders of tomorrow, it is important for Muslim youth to join the interfaith dialogue on way to maturing into future leaders. It is important for our youth to remember that the current phase of the dialogue was initiated in the wake of extraordinary Islam-baiting. Everyday the Western media was full of anti-Islam messages. It was quite evident that all this was not a spontaneous phenomenon, but some hostile groups were deliberately forcing an Islam versus West confrontation through drumming up Islamophobia.

Our youth must realise that as the responsibility of practising Islam, it is also their responsibility to establish peaceful relations with other faith groups on the basis of mutual understanding through dialogue and co-operation for common good.

So far the need for such dialogue has firmly been established. The intensified dialogue since 2008 has certainly reduced the Islam-baiting level in Western media even as the Western confrontation with some Muslim nations is yet to cease completely.

Our youth have to remember that the Quran clearly describes the single

human family of classes, creeds, colours and castes as the children of a single pair of primordial parents. This being the case, it requires that as followers of Islam we try to establish dialogue across races and religions in the family of Adam and Eve (peace be upon them).

As religions we have family values and a morally ordered world as commonly-shared goals. We thus can come together on preventing the ruin of the institution of family because of live-in relationships, lesbianism, gay movement, bisexuality and transvestitism. Some humane, democratically-approved a non-violent way of forestalling this trend has to be found out by leaders of major faiths.

### THE ROAD AHEAD

The youth, including the Muslim youth, are uniquely positioned in life to be able to influence the course of events and shape the very spirit of the age. Being the largest component of the workforce, the youth have the greatest opportunity to mix with and interact with each other across faiths, nationalities and races.

The same holds good for colleges and universities, bureaucracies and armed forces across the world. In those areas of life religious and sectarian differences are muted and de-emphasised as fellow-feeling is high. In those circles of mainly youthful people the idea of interfaith understanding will readily take root if we work towards it with sincerity and dedication.

The Muslim youth must insist on certain basics: no Islam baiting as Muslims are required to respect other people's prophets and other religious figures. Dialogue must go on as it is required by Islamic principles. As per the Qur'anic injunction and the Prophet's (PBUH) example, Muslims must work with others for common causes and common good.

In addition, our youth (and elders) must remain sensitive to, and supportive of, others in their moment of sorrow. We must come to the aid of people hit by natural catastrophe, civil

wars, extreme poverty, illiteracy and disease without making any distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims.

As Muslims we must recognise that we lack cadres of trained disaster-management workers, food workers, social activists and human rights workers. Merely by making their presence felt in these areas the Muslim youth will not just be empowered, but get connected with humanity across faiths and ethnicities. That will enhance the value of interfaith dialogue.

### IN ESSENCE

The forces of globalisation today, and the forces of history always, generate certain negative features like racial and nationalist ideas of supremacy, brutal power play, economic and social inequality, injustice and loss of human dignity.

The focus of all future dialogue should be the elimination of the above features from our social and political lives. Dialogue is about the establishment of justice, equality, liberty and human dignity. This is what the Islamic spirit calls for and other major religions would certainly agree upon.

An important goal of such dialogue is the creation of a humane world. If justice is denied to oppressed people we will never attain peace. Peace will also elude us as long as the gap between the rich and poor keeps widening. These issues must never be forgotten in dialogue as they are the foundation of dignified human life. The youth have to lend support to this vision.

### **Chiefs of National Commission for Minorities, Delhi Minorities Commission, and Akhtarul Wasey Honoured at IOS**

The Institute of Objective Studies (IOS), organised a 'felicitation ceremony' to honour Mr. Naseem Ahmed, IAS, on his appointment as Chairman, National Commission for Minorities, Prof. Akhtarul Wasey, who joined as Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities in India and Mr. Qamar Ahmad, IPS, on his appointment as

Chairman, Delhi Minorities Commission at the Conference Hall of the IOS here.

Presiding over the function, the Chairman of the IOS, Dr. M. Manzoor Alam readily accepted Prof. Akhtarul Wasey's suggestion to take the notice of the U.P. government's indifference to the plight of Urdu-medium schools and the present state of affairs in the Urdu-medium schools in Delhi where a fairly good number of teachers, vice-principals and principals possessed no knowledge of Urdu.

Referring to the endeavours of the IOS in the field of research and analysis of the issues pertaining to the minorities, particularly Muslims, he lamented that the institutions and organisations engaged in the uplift of the community had not made full use of the outcome of these studies. He highlighted the lack of interest among a host of Muslim intellectuals and public figures who did not even bother to acknowledge his letters, let alone reply to them. But, it would not prevent him from writing to them in future, he said.

Introducing the three dignitaries, the Secretary-General of the IOS Prof. Z.M. Khan held that they excelled in their fields. While Mr. Naseem Ahmed proved his acumen as an able administrative officer, Mr. Qamar Ahmad left an indelible imprint on Delhi as a competent police officer. He described Prof. Akhtarul Wasey as a prolific writer, scholar of Islamic studies, thinker and a perfect orator. He was all praise for Prof. Ishtiyah Ahmad, recently appointed as Vice-chancellor of Magadh University, Bodh Gaya (Bihar), who had been closely associated with the activities of the IOS.

Prof. Ishtiyah Ahmad also introduced the three to the audience. Mr. Qamar Ahmad in his address said that after retirement from the police service, he joined a private company to look after security and transportation management. After assuming charge as Chairman of Delhi Minorities Commission, he had set himself for the task of ensuring equal opportunities to

the Muslims. He believed that his experience as a police officer would stand him in good stead as far as the problems of Muslims of Delhi were concerned.

He informed that one district of Delhi with a big concentration of Muslims had been chosen to monitor the implementation of the Prime Minister's 15-point programme. While advising Muslims not to feel neglected, he said that he would do everything within the powers conferred on him to ensure their uplift. He admitted that though the Minorities Commission was a recommendatory body, a lot could still be done through various instruments like NGOs. He informed that about 16 NGOs were engaged in imparting training to the youth in computer applications and mobile phone repairing.

Prof. Akhtarul Wasey, Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities in India, said that the Commission was appointed in 1957 in pursuance of provisions under the Indian Constitution. He observed that the report of the Commission was annually tabled in both Houses of Parliament for debate. He explained that a person from a linguistic majority could turn into a linguistic minority when he or she enters another state inhabited by a population speaking a different language.

He made an impassioned plea to the Chairman of the IOS to take notice of the disinterest shown by the government of U.P. to the Urdu-medium schools that were running without teachers. He also cited the case of Delhi where Urdu-medium schools had such teachers, vice-principals and principals did not know Urdu. He urged the IOS to provide inputs about them, so that the Commission could act on it. Lauding IOS as the only Muslim think tank in its own right in India, he remarked that at a time when government institutions had virtually become non-functional, the Institute could positively contribute to the study of the condition of the community.

Newly-appointed Chairman of the National Commission for Minorities,

Mr. Naseem Ahmed, pointed out that for a long period during his career he remained anonymous. He said that he was even unaware of those who were instrumental in his new assignment. He assured that he would spare no efforts to do whatever he could in his capacity as the head of the minorities' panel. He favoured voicing demands of the community repeatedly so as to be heard. He recalled his association with the IOS, particularly with regard to its lead to organise discussions on important issues like waqf amendment legislation and the anti-communal violence bill. He emphasised the need for delivery of ideas, views and care not to let the community's voice get fragmented. He sought time to get down to taking stock of the situation.

Earlier, each of the honoured guests was presented with a bouquet, a shawl and a memento.

The felicitation ceremony opened with the recitation of the Holy Qur'an by Dr. Nakhat Husain Nadvi. While the proceedings of the function were conducted by Mr. Mushtaq Ahmad.

### Canadian delegation's visit to the Institute of Objective Studies

"The activities and programmes undertaken by the IOS are of great significance. We are familiarised with it while being in Canada." The view was expressed by the chief of a delegation from Canada, Dr Saeed Faizi Nadvi, President of Al-Nadwa Centre, Canada who visited the Institute on March 14, 2014.

He appreciated the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) for taking an initiative for commemorating the 1000th anniversary of Abul Qasim al-Zahrawi a legendary physician and surgeon.

On the occasion, Prof Z. M. Khan, Secretary General of the Institute, presented him with some research publications brought out by the Institute such as *Political Empowerment of Muslims in India and Empowerment of Muslims Through Education*.

Maulana Khalid Husain Nadwi introduced the various welfare and academic activities of the IOS.

Dr Nakhat Hussain Nadwi emphasised the need to work with more focus on the academic activities.

### Key-Note Address at AMU Seminar

Two-day National Seminar on "Traditional Versus Modern Education: Vision and Planning of Muslim Institutions" on March 1-2, 2014 organised by Centre for Promotion of Education and Cultural Advancement of Muslims of India (CEPECAMI), Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh

I wish to thank Prof Shamim A. Ansari, Director for having brought us all together to discuss the subject of "Traditional Versus Modern Education: Vision and Planning of Muslim Institutions" being organised by the Centre for Promotion of Educational and Cultural Advancement of Muslims of India (CEPECAMI), Aligarh Muslim University.

This subject is supremely important: there can be no denying its importance.

From the Islamic perspective, from the global, national and regional perspectives, education remains the key which can unlock the benefits of modernity.

Without education, any community or nation would be rootless and completely left behind in the 21st century.

We all know the value of education, the question today is: How do we ensure that the Muslim Ummah gets the benefit of modern education?

At the start, let me assure the august audience that the Institute of Objective Studies, over the last 26 years, has been conducting seminars and conferences, publishing surveys, reports and books that have influenced policy decisions - at the Centre and in

the States – regarding Muslim educational and economic uplift.

IOS has brought academicians and experts from all over the world - the US, UK, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, Malaysia, Indonesia - to add value and share their experiences in the context of India and Indian Muslims, especially in the field of education with the collaboration of education experts as well as those well-versed in education management and administration. We also published a series of books on education and empowerment of Muslims in various fields, including empowerment of Muslims through education.

I am sure this seminar will throw up new ideas and thoughts on this subject. We welcome this churning of thoughts

**But I consider it my duty to ensure that our focus should remain on the Sachar Committee Report.**

The Report has provided us with all the evidence, policy frameworks and recommendations on Education.

***We do not need reinvent the wheel now.***

Let me begin with the questions the Report raised, especially in the context of education:

- Does the Muslim community have adequate access to education & health services, municipal infrastructure, bank credit, & other services provided by Government/public sector entities?
- How does this compare to access enjoyed by other socio-religious categories in various States?
- What is the level of social infrastructure (schools, health centers, Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) centers etc.) located in areas of Muslim concentration in comparison to the general level of such infrastructure in various States?

**\* In the context of Madarsa Education, it was stated:**

- Madarsas have become a symbol of Muslim identity in India.

Labeling of Madarsas as a den for terrorists is extremely worrisome for the Muslim community.

- Madarsas serve as an important instrument of identity maintenance for the Community. Many a time Madarsas are the only educational option available to Muslim children, especially in areas where no schools have reached the Muslim masses.
- Madarsas, where they operate are rendering useful service as far as literacy is concerned. However, there is an urgent need to recognize that a very small percentage of Muslim children actually attend Madarsa education.

\* A need to work out a mechanism whereby Dini Madaris can be linked with a higher secondary board so that students wanting to shift to regular/mainstream education can do so even after having passed from a Madarsa is increasingly being stressed upon. The provision of 'equivalence' to Madarsa certificates/degrees for subsequent admissions has been emphasized.

I wish to question this audience: have you or your organization been able to address these issues?

If yes, please share your experiences; if not, then we need to re-focus and reorient our efforts in these directions.

**Modernizing Madarsas** by the government has been a very contentious issue with many differing viewpoints amongst the Community, the Sachar Report commented

- Madarsas modernization scheme of the government have not really provided much relief to the community as far as quality education is concerned. However, Madarsa 'modernisation' does not mean only having science/mathematics teachers and installing computers.
- There is a segment of the Muslim population that is against the modernization programme. This is primarily due to an underlying fear that in the name of modernization executed through state

intervention, Madarsa autonomy will be compromised. Cumbersome forms and a higher registration fee have also been an obstacle and kept many away from getting registered with the Madarsa Board wherever it exists.

**In brief, I also want to underscore the key observations from the Report**, which has great meaning for all of us who have gathered here:

- The relative deprivation in education of Muslims vis-à-vis other socio-religious communities calls for a significant shift in the policy of the State, along with the **creation of effective partnership with private and voluntary sectors.**
- Given the vastness of the population to be served and the limited resources available with policy makers, the emphasis on provisioning of a minimum level of school education by the State seems justified. That does not mean, however, that the State can withdraw from participation in higher levels of education.
- **With regard to school education, the condition of Muslims is one of grave concern.**

The data clearly indicates that while the overall levels of education in India, measured through various indicators, is still below universally acceptable standards, the educational status of the Muslim community in particular is a matter of great concern.

- When alternative indicators of educational achievement, more representative of the progress made in education, are considered, a significant disparity between the status of Muslims and that of other socio-religious categories (except SCs/STs) can be noted. For example, both the Mean Years of Schooling (MYS) and attendance levels of Muslims are low in absolute terms and in contrast to all socio-religious categories except in some cases SCs/STs.

**In fact, in several contexts, SCs/STs are found to have overtaken Muslims.**

- Analysis of time trends indicate that, despite overall improvement in educational status, the rate of progress has been the slowest for Muslims.

In other words, while educational attainments of Muslims have improved over the years, it has done so at a more gradual pace than other socio-religious categories, so that the expected convergence has not occurred.

Instead, the gap between Muslims and advantaged sections has actually widened since Independence, and particularly since the 1980s.

In fact, a steady divergence in the level of achievements has seen traditionally under-privileged SCs/STs catching up and overtaking Muslims in several contexts.

Attainments at the **graduation level and in technical education** are low for all: Even at these low levels Muslims lag behind in both areas.

That the share of Muslims is poorest in streams having brightest employment prospects is of special concern.

This has serious long-term implications for the economic empowerment of the Community and consequently for economic development of the country.

The Sachar Report has also dispelled several myths regarding the Muslim community. I feel it needs to be highlighted today:

- There is also a common belief that Muslim parents feel that education is not important for girls and that it may instill a wrong set of values. Even if girls are enrolled, they are withdrawn at an early age to marry them off. This leads to a higher drop-out rate among Muslim girls.

Our interactions indicate that the problem may lie in non-availability of schools within easy reach for girls at lower levels of education, absence of girl's hostels, absence of female

teachers and availability of scholarships as they move up the education ladder.

- The changes in educational patterns across socio-religious communities suggest that SCs and STs have reaped at least some advantages of targeted government and private action supporting their educational progress.

**This reflects the importance of affirmative action.**

While the nature of affirmative action that is required needs to be assessed, a sharper focus on school education combined with more opportunities in higher education for Muslims seems desirable.

In a paper titled Post-Sachar Evaluation of the Condition of Education of Muslims in India Reshmi Sengupta, makes the following points.

**In terms of literacy levels,** results show that Muslims have lower levels of literacy as compared to other socio-religious categories, except for that of Hindu SCs/STs.

Comparing results from the NSSO 68th (2011-12) and 62nd (2005-06) rounds show that literacy levels among Muslims in the urban and the rural areas have increased from 2005-06 to 2011-12.

All the socio-religious categories experience an increase in the levels of literacy from 2005-06 to 2011-12, and Muslim OBC males and females experience the highest increase in the levels of literacy as compared to any other SRCs.

Gap in the levels of literacy among Muslims in the urban and the rural areas still exists in 2011-12 when compared to their respective national averages.

However, the overall gap in the levels of literacy among Muslims is slightly decreased in 2011-12 from 2005-06.

Gender gap in literacy is still prominent in 2011-12 with Muslim males having higher levels of literacy than Muslim females.

With respect to the current rate of **attendance in an educational institution**, the results show that the current rate of attendance is lower among Muslims as compared to other socio-religious categories, with Muslim OBCs having the lowest attendance rate.

From 2005-06 to 2011-12, increase in the rate of attendance of children age 6 to 14 years is highest among Muslim OBC children as compared to children from other socio-religious categories.

However, the overall rate of attendance is lower for Muslims (especially, for Muslim OBC children) in comparison to other socio-religious categories.

As compared to other socio-religious categories, **Muslims have the highest percentage of individuals who have never attended any educational institution**, although the percentage of individuals who are currently not attending any educational institution is almost similar across the socio-religious categories.

For children age 6 to 14 years among Muslims, specifically Muslim OBCs, have the highest percentage of children never attended any school.

Moreover, the percentage of children not currently attending any school is highest among all the categories of Muslims (including, Muslim general and Muslim OBCs). Interestingly, between 2005-06 and 2011-12, the decrease in the percentage of children who have never attended any school is also highest among Muslim OBCs.

A decrease in the percentage of children who are currently not attending any educational institution is evident among Muslims children, particularly among Muslim OBC children.

With regard to the **status of educational attainment**, an increase in the percentage of Muslims completing any specified levels of education is found from the analysis. In comparison to all the other SRCs,

except Hindu SCs/STs, and for all the levels of education, Muslim OBCs have the lowest rate of completion.

Muslims still perform poorly with respect to higher levels of educational attainment. A slight increase in the rate of completion for Muslims is evident for diploma and certificate courses.

Dear friends, while there is evidence of some improvements, we can see that we have a long, long way to go.

We need to mobilize our resources and create groups which can share these objectives for the educational development of the Muslim Ummah.

This is a task which will take many decades and many generations to accomplish; we will need to work, train and mentor the new generation to also understand these challenges.

It will require us to provide the synergy between the Islamic perspective, the global and national perspective, and the regional needs.

The IOS has created platforms on which we can build together.

We hope we can work together for a better tomorrow without losing our faith, our vision and our focus.

### **Recommendations/Suggestions**

1. Developing of an autonomous educational corporation by the government of India for providing financial assistance to Madrasas for modern education and promoting women education.
2. Opening a chain of coaching and guidance centres for Muslim students all over India for admission to professional and vocational courses and competitive exams, besides helping madrasa graduates transition into modern education.
3. Orientation of madrasa teachers at madadris by experts on contemporary subjects.
4. Promotion of Qur'anic research methodology/alternative research methodology on issues related to

humanities – both at university and madrasa level.

5. Affirmative action for Muslims in educational sectors in view of their backwardness as per the findings of Sachar Committee/Rangnath Mishra Commission Report in line with SCs and STs.

Thank you, Prof Shamim A. Ansari for this opportunity to here and sharing my thoughts and concerns.

*Contd. from page-8*

They were busy with fighting Muslims whereas a good number of Italians, British, Germans and French etc came to the Arab universities in Spain for seeking their superior knowledge.

Europe sought to eliminate or subdue Islam during eleventh-twelfth centuries and launched several Crusades for this purpose. However, they were finally defeated in 13<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> century and in the counter attack the Muslims occupied several countries in Eastern-Central Europe. The Christian Europe was compelled to do some real soul-searching. They sought to understand why and how Islam was able to survive, even flourish after two severe military onslaught, the Crusades and the Mongol invasion. In fact the two tragedies – from Muslim point of view – had almost crushed Islam militarily and yet it survived, even emerged stronger, especially if we keep in mind the Ottoman conquests in Europe. After soul-searching, Europe concluded that it was the superior knowledge of the Muslims which saved them from extinction and annihilation.

With this realization, Europe did exactly the same that Muslims had done in their early glorious centuries. They set out to seek knowledge which at that time was available with the Muslims. They acquired from the Muslims the intellectual base which enabled them to become the intellectual leader of the world. They began to translate Arabic knowledge in European languages at a time when Muslims were slowly going into intellectual slumber. They built upon

the Muslim intellectual heritage and became what they are today – the intellectual leader of the world. But the Muslims are yet to fully come out of their deep intellectual slumber.

## Lessons from History by *Ishtiyaque Danish*

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

While reading the long Islamic history, we come across two phenomena which we notice but probably with less attention that they deserve. The first of the two phenomena is the intellectual/academic movement that the Muslims launched under the obvious Quranic influence. We all know about the overwhelming Islamic emphasis on knowledge and deliberation. The Prophet Muhammad, as the first interpreter of the Quran, has also highlighted the importance of knowledge and deliberation through his actions and sayings. It was therefore natural that the early Muslims would make all out effort to acquire and promote knowledge.

People knew the art of writing when Islam began its journey in Makkah. The Prophet made arrangement for committing the revealed Quran to writing which encouraged Muslims to learn the art of writing. When in Madinah, the Prophet set up several mosques in the city and elsewhere which also served as a school. Mosques served, even serve today, as schools or centre of learning where people soon began to flock in droves for seeking knowledge.

Understandably the Muslims first sought to preserve the Quran and the Hadith by memorizing and committing them to writing. Thereafter, they embarked upon seeking knowledge from wherever they could get it. The

early Muslims included the Arabs who had conquered the large part of the then civilized world and were so proud of their linguistic skill and excellence that they considered other people as ‘Ajam’, the dumb. But soon they realized that the Ajam had books and knowledge that they had not. So they bowed before the people they had subjugated as pupil to learn from them the sciences they had. They spent huge money to hire the services of bilingual persons to translate the intellectual/academic treasure of other languages into Arabic. The works they translated into Arabic dealt with a host of subjects including humanities, natural and social sciences. In so doing the Muslims saved and preserved a great deal of ancient knowledge from extinction.

But the Arab/Muslim contribution to the common fund of humanity – knowledge, wisdom – has not been just its preservation through translation from a dying language to a living one, the Arabic which was fast acquiring the status of a truly international language. In fact they also contributed in two other ways. First, they questioned and critically examined the acquired/received knowledge and cleansed it through observation and experimentation. Second, they built upon the received knowledge and made their own original contribution in almost every branch of knowledge. The original Arab Muslim

contribution to human civilization and knowledge was enormous which fair-minded people have begun to appreciate and acknowledge.

The intellectual richness of Muslims had a profound impact on the West. When the Normans re-took Sicily from the Muslims, they initially sought to expel them from the country. But soon they realized that the intellectually and commercially vibrant Sicily would lose its luster as well as the status of being a great centre of international trade if they threw the Arabs and their language into the sea. As a result they decided to patronize the Arabic language and knowledge and in so doing produced one of the greatest scientists – al-Idrisi, the rare genius that mankind has ever known.

Along with Sicily, Spain was a great centre of learning that progressed and prospered under the Muslim rule. Surprisingly the Spanish and their cousins, the Portuguese were quite late in learning the Arab sciences when compared with other Europeans.

*Contd. on page-7*

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