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Thought for the Month

Seest thou not that
To Allah prostrate
All things that are
In the heavens and on earth,-
The sun, the moon, the stars;
The hills, the trees, the animals;
And a great number among
Mankind? But a great number
Are (also) such as
Unto whom the
Chastisement is justly due.
And such as Allah shall disgrace,-
None can raise to honour:
For Allah carries out
All that He wills.

Al-Quran- 22: 18

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FOCUS

In India the main cause of backward status of Muslims is a consequence of ignorance, illiteracy and decline in learning. Post-independence Indian Muslims have suffered not only in political, social and economic arena, they also lag behind others in education because as a community of the faithful we have not paid adequate attention to organising and promoting education among Muslim masses. It has not been on our agenda to educate our children and establish good educational institutions for this objective. This negligence has reduced us to backwardness in every sphere of activity. It should therefore not surprise us that in important positions in government, business and in other important sectors our representation is only two per cent while we represent 14 per cent of the population of the country. This state of decadence is mainly due to lack of education and illiteracy. In higher education we cut a sorry figure.

The main reason for this pitiable situation is that we have not included education in our primary agenda; our mission is bereft of academic vision. According to the Sachar Commission Report, the ratio of primary education among Muslims is only 60% while the ratio of high school is reduced to only 17%. The figures related to higher education is just 4%, every low by all criteria and deserves serious attention and sincere efforts for improvement. This educational decline is because we didn't pay adequate attention to education and failed miserably to recognize the relevance and significance of education while it is a fundamental duty and the first command of the Holy Qur'an directing the Muslims to read.

From learning what has befallen the community, now the time has arrived to a well-formulated plan and modus operandi in the light of Islamic teachings, the Noble Qur'an and the Traditions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) in order to educate our young generation. We shall endeavour to achieve the target of 100% education among our children and youth. If the target is achieved successfully, young Muslims will be able to move up the career ladder. Good education will enable our youth to find a respectable place in courts of justice, bureaucracy, media, technology, science, management and in all other areas of work. We should undertake the mission of establishing a large number of schools, colleges and universities and research centres across the country. Masjid should be used as a platform for imparting education. Maktab and Madrasa education should be reorganized and strengthened to meet the needs of contemporary society. Institutions should be established on the ITI pattern to offer professional education. Every institution should be turned into a dynamic and purposeful instrument of change. Everything should be used to serve education. With promotion of education as the main target, it may be imparted under the shadow of a tree, or even private houses may be used to run educational programmes. Take 'spread education, save humanity' as a mission. Follow it with sincerity and seriousness. Start working in this direction with strong determination that we will achieve the target of 100% literacy before the first half of the 21st century.

*From Perspectives, Volume 2: Selected writings of
Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam, pp. 131-132*

Activities of the IOS Headquarters

IOS-Jamia Hamdard jointly organises Conference on the “Role of Religious Diversity in Harnessing Human Values”

A two-day national conference on the role of ‘Religious Diversity in Harnessing Human Values’ was organised by the Institute of Objective Studies in collaboration with the Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard at its convention centre on September 12 and 13, 2023.

Inaugural Session

The Inaugural Session of the conference commenced with the recitation of a Quranic verse by Maulana Adnan Ahmad Nadwi. Prof. Haseena Hashia, Assistant Secretary General of the IOS briefly traced the history of Jamia Hamdard. She also highlighted the activities of the Institute of Objective Studies.

Dr. Mohammed Fazalur Rahman, Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard in his welcome address said that such initiatives and conferences were meant to promote interfaith ideologies, making India’s diverse culture of accommodation and co-existence a vehicle of peace, harmony and prosperity.

Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Hamdard, Prof. M. Afshar Alam, in his inaugural speech said that India was unique because it was the land of diverse cultures & religions. He further said that human values always remained essential for universal brotherhood, which modern educational institutions, like Jamia

Hamdard, brought to the fore for a sustainable society.

In his keynote address, Prof. M. Afzal Wani, Vice-Chairman, IOS, maintained that religion was a dress for humans. It always awakened people of the world. Nature and true faith spoke volumes about the objectivity factor, which was vital to understand and emphasise, he noted.

Prof. Wani held that all preachers of their respective faiths taught tolerance and kept humanity at par. That was one should dress himself in his chosen faith. One should not undress his faith by mingling it with wrong deeds. All prophets and religious figures became relevant in

the faiths of others without hurting others’ religious sentiments. India had been the birthplace of many religions; the world’s prevalent religions reached this region soon after their inception. Mahavir Jain, Buddha and other famous founders of religions were role models in India, he emphasised.

Dr. M.D. Thomas, Director, Institute of Harmony and Peace, New Delhi, highlighted that religious diversity was a significant area of human creation. It was always pivotal for social and cultural diversity. Another important aspect, which must be understood was that the religion was for human beings, and not the human beings were for religion. Hate, separation mindsets and all other

conflicts based on faiths must disappear, while mercy should be inculcated in human lives. The religious leaders and clerics representing different faiths should bring to the fore the realities of current Indian societies plagued with communal disharmony, which could be overcome by initiating inter-faith dialogues, respecting each other’s religious sentiments and propagating human values as the core message of every religion, he stressed.



On the dais (L-R): Prof. Sudeep Jain, Dr. Manpreet Singh, Prof. Akhtarul Wasey, Prof. Z.M. Khan, Prof. M. Afshar Alam, Mr. Ven. Geshe Tenzin Damchoe, Prof. Hamidullah Marazi and Dr. M.D. Thomas. Prof. M. Afzal Wani (on the podium) delivering his key-note address

today’s age of technology, as with the technological boom, strengthening faiths could pave the way for a new dawn. Religion should not be made a hateful term. It should portray love and passion, he emphasised.

As the guest of honour former Vice-Chancellor of Maulana Azad University, Jodhpur, and Professor Emeritus of Islamic Studies, Prof. Akhtarul Wasey, held that true humanity would be sustained only if the believers of different religions adhered to their core values and at the same juncture they equally respected

Keshav Murari Das, President of ISKCON Temple, Delhi, emphasised that all humans had one spirit no matter which religious faith one followed. There might be people with different backgrounds or cultural values, but they had one ideology of humanity. Diversity would always exist, and ultimately, all were one. Life’s values were identical in all religions.

Renowned Sikh preacher from New Delhi, Dr. Manpreet Singh, briefly explained the teachings of Guru Nanak. The diversity in Guru Nanak’s

ideals could be witnessed in this concept that weaker sections of society must be uplifted and scientific temper developed for overall growth. The teachings of Guru Nanak were based on such philosophies of life. Universal brotherhood, love, and justice for all were the core messages of Guru Nanak and that must be spread for global peace.

Former Head, Department of Prakrit Language, Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapith, New Delhi, Prof. Sudeep Jain shed light on the concept of "humanity". All prophets, irrespective of their preached faiths, taught the humanity to respect and love all.

He emphasised that one needed to introspect how humane he was today. The problems in the country today were not due to religion but religious communalism and bigotry. It was time one ascertained being humane, as it would turn one's life to become successful. First and foremost, one had to be kind and merciful, he insisted.

Another guest of honour was Ven. Geshe Tenzin Damchoe, Lecturer and Coordinator, College for Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarah, Dharamshala. He said that one should remain abreast of how to use and respect others' religions. All human emotions were the same no matter which religious faith one followed. That was what humanity and moral values taught about. He called for always remembering to have faith in one's religion, but equally or more important was respecting others' beliefs as well. That was what humanity and moral values best described because everybody's emotions were the same, but the religions were different, he noted.

In his special address Prof. Hamidullah Marazi, Convener, IOS Forum for Inter-Religious Understanding, laid stress the purpose of religion, which was to dignify human beings rather than demean them. People must develop human

values for a dignified life and respect for others unconditionally. As religion created human values and spirituality, one should be loyal to his faith and always equally respect others' faiths without hurting anyone's sentiments. He said that there was the need for a dialogue and not the deadlock. Unless one knew others' religions, he could not be just and humane in assessing religious sentiments.

In his presidential address Prof. Z.M. Khan, Secretary General, IOS viewed this seminar as essential in multiple ways. He said that the Creator Allah created diversity—so who were others to cause hatred? There was need for love of faith and the love of courage. It would go a long way in sharing the message of humanity and human values, he concluded.

Business Session-I

The first business session focused on the theme, '*Divergent Indian Society and Culture: Emergence of Conflicts and Patterns of Mitigation*'. Dr. Safia Amir, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard was in the chair.

Dr. Vijay Kumar, Associate Professor of Education, Apeejay Satya University, Gurugram, touched upon the topic, '*Imperatives for 21st Century Citizens: Diversity, Human Values & Education*'. He stressed that there was diversity everywhere in the caste, religion, culture, and social backgrounds. Transforming humans into humans with values was the actual worth and expression of diversity. One must ensure the holistic development of cultures and focus on lifelong learning, he added.

Dr. A.K.M. Mahdi Hasan, Lecturer, Department of Sunni Theology, Aliah University, Kolkata, emphasised that the communities were recognised by their unique cultures and ethics. India was a culturally divisive nation where there was unity in diversity and vice versa. Ironically, religions today were

used for political gains, which was dangerous.

Dr. Mohammed Fazlur Rahman, Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard, shed light on the relationships between cultures and religions. He said that in Buddhism, non-violence and human values were remarkable traits. The most important hallmarks of the Buddhism were non-violence and prioritising human values over everything, he noted.

Dr. Mohammad Ajmal, Assistant Professor, School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, emphasized that to achieve social objectives, religious tolerance and compassion remained mandatory. Communal harmony played a pivotal role in uniting Indians. That was why 'education on religion was more important than religious education'.

Sadia Parveen, senior research fellow, Department of Urdu, Delhi University, spoke on '*Accommodation of Religious Diversity in India: An Islamic Perspective of Tolerance*'. Her research highlighted conditions and possibilities of religious diversity reflected in innumerable contexts.

Dr. Syed Abdur Rasheed, Assistant Professor and Head, Department of Islamic Studies, Aliah University, Kolkata, dwelt on the cultural diversity for both Hindus and Muslims, especially during the Muslim rulers of India such as Mughals.

Dr. Mubashir V.P., research scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, spoke on '*Inter-Religious Diversity in India: Approach for Plural Existence*'. He said that pluralism was interrelated with secularism. While secularism collapsed in the country in the current scenario, its worst impact on pluralism, too, could be ruled out.

Asharuddeen P., student, Department of Islamic Studies, JMI, spoke on '*Diversity and Harnessing*

Human Values: A Qur'anic Perspective with special reference to Malaysia and nearby regions. He held that his research explored multiculturalism, which remained the paramount value of Malaysian societies. The study debated *Sharia* laws and conversion-related issues, besides other related religious aspects.

Dr. Mohammed Ahmad Naeemi, Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard, stressed that it was right time to highlight both Hindu and Islamic religious values to avoid all sorts of religious intolerance. According to Hindu scriptures, care for others was core to the basic values which Islam too stood for. Non-violence was the most significant truth, whereas forgiveness was the tallest of the facts that Hinduism and Islam propagated.

Dr. Mohammed Muslim, Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, explained the concept of *'Tabyin al-Kalam: Foundation of Interfaith Studies for Harnessing Human Values in India'*.

Connected through online mode were Ritash & Tashi Choedup, freelance writers from Bengaluru & Hyderabad, respectively. They threw light on the existence of human diversity and humanness. They stressed that mere acknowledgement of the diversity context would not suffice.

Dr. Mohd Osama, editor, *Nukush-e-Rah*, Islamic Youth Federation, Azamgarh, connected through online mode, raised the question of why religious tolerance and human rights preserving was still a challenge, especially in the Indian context for minorities. He expressed these caveats while speaking on the topic, *'Mazhabi Rawadari aur Insani Aqdar Muhammad bin Qasim ke Daur-e-Hukumat ke Tanazur mein'*.

Dr. Mohammad Teisir Bin Shah Goolfee, teacher, Islamic Cultural College, VDP, Mauritius, spoke on

'Religious Diversity and Human Values: A Study of Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz al-Saud'. He said that to start a dialogue with others, Muslim nations should come forward to fix their internal problems and errors first. Calling for fighting radicalism, he asked the Muslim leaders to give space to harmony in order to ascertain peaceful coexistence and global prosperity.

The chairperson of the session, Prof. Obaidullah Fahad, former Head of the Department of Islamic Studies, AMU, shared his views on the different research papers presented in the session. He also explained how a research paper should be drafted to ascertain that it focused on the research analysis and remains balanced.

Business Session-II

The second business session focused on *'Responsibilities and Initiatives of Present Religious Leaders and Institutions in Promoting Inter-Religious Understanding and Spirit of Co-Existence'*. While Prof. Sudeep Jain chaired the session, Dr. Waris Mazhari, Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard was the co-chair.

Prof. Obaidullah Fahad spoke on the attributes and benefits of the unity of religions. While presenting his views on *'Religious Diversity for Harnessing Human Values in the Qur'an: A Study of Azad, Maududi and Islahi'*, he emphasised that the foundations of all religions were the same to sustain human values, but their rituals differed.

Dr. Harpreet Kaur Jass, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Studies, JMI discussed *'Punjabiyat: Harnessing Human Values in Contemporary Times'*. She said that there was no fixed definition of 'Punjabiyat'. Punjabi cultural values and traditions existed in both the countries—India and Pakistan.

Dr. Faheem Akhtar Nadwi, Professor, Department of Islamic

Studies, MANUU, Hyderabad, spoke on the *'Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Human Values'*. He emphasised that all religions talked of humanity and none of them talked against human dignity or ill of the contemporary religions.

Dr. Manvinder Singh from the Department of Guru Nanak Studies, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, spoke on *'Sikh Religion's Perspective about the Religious Diversity of the World'*. He said that Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism offered the message of compassion through various types of charities like *Zakat* and *Langar*.

Md. Munawwar Kamal, research scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, JMI, explained the traits of coexistence and mutual tolerance. He said that accepting everyone's best things and honouring others promoted coexistence in harmony.

Isa Hashmi and Dr. Arshad Hussain, from the Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard, focused on *'Human Values and Diversity in Religion'*. Their research was based on human values, human ethics and human morality.

Saba Anjum, research scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard, explained that diverse or diversified societies paved the way for a pluralistic approach. The situation today was of religious conflict, which needed to be rectified, she added.

Dr. Parveen Qamar, Associate Professor, Department of Women Education, MANUU, who joined online, shed light on the multiple factors associated with Sufism.

The other online participant, Zeeshan Ahmad Sheikh, research scholar, Department of Religious Studies, Central University of Kashmir, Anantnag, spoke on religious leaders' role to smoothen the way for religious diversity.

At the end, the chairperson, Dr. Sudeep Jain suggested that religious

leaders must project their lives as religious rather than merely focusing on sermons.

Second Day: September 13, 2023

Business Session-III

Prof. M. Afzal Wani chaired the third business session, which focused on the '*Role of Religious Diversity in Harnessing Human Values*'. He held that the laws were introduced to create a spirit of cohesion and fraternity by helping to stop bigotry in the society. But ironically, little positive implementation was witnessed. He said that Islam introduced *Sadqah* as a spirit of philanthropy and sacrifice that helped boost this aspect.

Mohammed Hussain, research scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard, emphasised that today one should come forward to develop religious harmony, especially when the current hatred was plaguing the social fabric. The government should take measures to sustain human values, thus ensuring all communities to prosper, he said.

Dr. Tanjeel Ahmad, independent researcher at AMU, spoke on '*UCC (Uniform Civil Code) as a Barrier of Religious Diversity Human Values in India: A Discussion within the Framework of the Indian Constitution*'. There was an ardent need to make a committee representing all religious scholars to discuss UCC in detail to arrive at a common place.

Bibi Fatima, research scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, JMI, spoke on '*Impeding Religious Diversity: An Analysis of the Role of Religion and the State in Promoting Human Values*'. She said that religion, in fact, brought cohesion in societies through shared traditional ethics. It was a force and power to empower communities. No religion sanctioned violence and hatred. Historically, religion had always been used as a conflicting force, unlike its message of peace and harmony.

Dr. Mohammad Shafi Bhat, Assistant Professor, Higher Education Department, Government Degree College, Pulwama, connected online, spoke on '*Indian Constitution, Religious Diversity and Human Values*'. He explained the basic features of the Indian Constitution in the context of purpose and diversities.

Dr. Hassan Shareef, Assistant Professor, SAFI Institute of Advanced Study, Malappuram, Kerala, who connected online, spoke on the topic, '*Importance of Studies in Religious Diversity in University Education in India*'. He stressed that religious pluralism and brotherhood for universal unity should be involved in the UG and PG curricula.

The chairperson applauded the researchers for their outstanding presentations. He said that all researchers who presented papers in the session wonderfully carried the theme in their respective research.

Business Session-IV

The fourth business session centered on the '*Role of Judiciary and Religious Texts in Social/ Communal Conflict Resolution*'. Dean, School of Law, Jamia Hamdard, Dr. Saleena K. Basheer chaired the session. Dr. Mohammad Ahmad Naeemi, Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard, was the co-chair.

Dr. Mohammed Ayoob Akram, Assistant Professor, K.A Nizami Centre for Quranic Studies, AMU, spoke on '*Quran-e-Majeed mein Mazhabi Tanawoh ka Tasawwur*'. He underlined an ardent need for understanding such factors broadly. It was high time the communities understood such factors in the context of the Quran and followed religious harmony for human sustenance, he said.

Dr. Kamal Ashraf Qasmi, Assistant Professor, Department of Sunni Theology, Aliah University, spoke on '*Hindu-Muslim Mushtaraka Tahzeeb*

ki Talash Barae Insaani Aqdar'. He explained how Hindus and Muslims coexisted in India as part of Indo-Islamic culture. This needed to be researched further.

He further said that the concept of '*Wahi*' (Revelation) existed in both Hinduism and Islam but had different perspectives. Likewise, the '*Afterlife*' concept was there in the both. There was no conflict in religions as such as they talk of gods.

Saeeduddin Hamid, research scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard, mentioned that diversity defined a society with different thoughts and practices living together.

Mohd. Asif, research scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard, stressed that societies were incomplete without human dignity.

Amir Fahad, research scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, JMI, dwelt on '*Samaji Tanazat ka Hal Insaani Aqdar ke Tahaffuz mein Adlia ki Ahmiyat aur uska Kirdar*'. He held that a society was a collection of humans irrespective of their religious practices or values. Indian culture was diverse. Thus conflicts were bound to happen but not at the cost of diversity.

Joshua Solomon and Shoyeb Khan, research scholars, Department of Educational Studies, JMI, presented their research paper on '*Religious Diversity and Social Media Trolling: Women's Experiences and Its Impact on Mental Health*'. They highlighted how social media transformed the world today, especially its misuse, like trolling, which was causing concern. Their research found that most participants trolled and harassed for their religious faith encountered depression afterwards. The judiciary must note it and initiate laws that mitigate, regulate, and curb social media trolling, their paper emphasised.

Dr. Javed Akhtar, guest faculty, Department of Islamic Studies, JMI, who connected himself in the online mode, emphasised that human values

were always crucial and of paramount importance. But in order to make it possible, equal importance should be given to religious diversity. It was *sine qua non* for a sustainable society, he added.

In her presidential remarks, Dr. Saleena K. Basheer insisted that all religions advocated brotherhood. The need of the hour was to value all faiths, including Hinduism and Islam as both of them respected the ethos of humanity.

Business Session-V

Chaired by Prof. Hamidullah Marazi, co-chaired and moderated by Dr. Najmus Sahar, Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard, the fifth business session centred on '*Need for Promoting India as a Global Destination with Peaceful Social Environment and Religious Diversity*'.

Prof. Syed Jamaluddin, Director, IOS Centre for Historical and Civilisational Studies, Aligarh, spoke on '*Promoting Inter-Religious Understanding and Spirit of Co-existence-How to Proceed*'. He thoroughly described how the Sufi institutions paved the way for communal harmony in the country for centuries. He said that India was diverse with its rich culture, traditions and religions.

Dr. Sheikh Rahim Mondal, Professor and Founder Head, Department of Anthropology, University of North Bengal, Siliguri, spoke on '*Towards Understanding and Comprehending Cultural and Religious Diversities for Harnessing Human Values of Living Together for Creating a Sustainable Society*'. Diversities were cultural, linguistic, religious and much more, but the living in diversity united humans, he observed.

Dr. Bakhteyar Ahmad, Assistant Professor, MANUU College of Teacher Education, Asansol, West Bengal, focused on '*Religious Diversity, Modern Schooling and*

Harnessing of Human Values in Global Context'. He shared several exceptionally well-researched data on education.

Dr. Abroo Aman Andrabi, Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard, spoke on '*The Need for Promoting India as a Global Destination with Peaceful Social Environment and Religious Diversity*'.

The Director, Sadbhavana Institute, Catholic Archdiocese, Delhi, Fr. Babu Joseph SVD., mentioned that religious diversity was critical in Indian societies, where all religions must be respected and valued equally. Beliefs and religious institutions had a vital role to play in this.

Suraqua Fahad, research scholar at Delhi School of Social Work, Delhi University, spoke on '*Trauma-Informed Approaches: Nurturing Resilience in Conflict-Affected Populations*'. The ardent need was to create harmony between different religious ideologies.

Farheen Naaz, research scholar, Islamic Studies, JMI, touched upon '*Role of Diverse Religious Traditions in Promoting Human Values and Global Peace*'. She critically explained what religion was all about. She examined the critical objectives of religion and how people perceived it.

Iffat Khatoon, an independent researcher, JMI, spoke on '*Relevance of Inter-Religious Diversity to Foster India as Global Destination*'. She highlighted how diversity was well-defined as the beauty of India. It was the right time to once again assess the importance of secularism besides rectifying the challenges of multiculturalism and religious diversities.

Darakshan Ishrat discussed cultural coexistence in India. Cultural diversity in India, she said, could also be evaluated in the Quranic perspective of pluralism.

Dr. Pooja Sharma, Assistant Professor, Mehr Chand Mahajan DAV

College for Women, Chandigarh, connected online, focused on the '*Role of Religious Perspective in Fostering Human Values in the Fine Arts*'. She described how this innovative idea equally united the communities on multiple levels.

Muskan Dixit, research scholar, Institute of Engineering and Technology, Rajpura, Punjab, spoke on '*Unveiling the Power of Religious Diversity in Shaping Computer Science Values*'. She highlighted how technology, especially Information Technology (IT) boom directly impacted the social fabric.

Jamaliah Jamil, consultant, LSA Academic House, Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, focused on '*The Quran's Universal Values and Harnessing Humanity in India with 700 Years of Al-Andalus Legacy*'. She based her premise on religious intolerance cases in India and Malaysia, causing divisions. Political balance was a must in the global sphere to help sustain humanity.

Rukhsar Parveen, Assistant Professor, Mats University, Raipur, dilated on '*A Study on the Role of Media Persons in Mitigating Divergences and Peacemaking (with special reference to Tweets of Sudhir Chowdhary and Ravish Kumar)*'. She said that the media, as a fourth pillar of democracy, had been constantly losing its credibility due to the irresponsible approach of a select few journalists.

In his presidential remarks, Prof. Hamidullah Marazi appreciated the impactful and highly research-based research works and their meticulous presentation by both online and offline participants.

He said that there was a need to initiate dialogue with the problematic people to develop solutions that should prove worthwhile for human sustenance. There was no alternative to dialogue, and the intelligentsia and social thinkers must come forward to find a way to bring all communities on

the path of human values and social enrichment.

Valedictory Session

Moderated by Dr. Sumayyah Ahmad, Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, JMI, the valedictory session began with the address of the guest of honour Prof. Rajeev Ranjan Sinha, former Head, Department of Sanskrit Vidya, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Varanasi. He observed that all religions were equal. There had always been a need to study comparative religions, but in no way one should treat others' religions as less in value. It was the right time to 'clean the mirror well instead of cleaning the face'. Religion should be interpreted in terms of conscience to uplift humanity. Responsible persons with faith in religions could take societies forward for the betterment of humankind, he concluded.

Prof. Akbar Hussain, Former Head, Department of Psychology, AMU also spoke as guest of honour. He held that believing in the sacredness of religion, the interreligious understanding of Swami Vivekananda, Maulana Maududi and Sri Aurobindo was necessary as these thinkers and philosophers indeed believed in the faith of humanity. He felt the need for establishing a Centre for Interfaith Dialogue to suppress religious fanaticism. Since the human spirit made a person humane and spiritual, such centres would pave the way for human integrity, he stressed.

The Secretary of Inter-Faith Commission, Catholic Archdiocese, Delhi, Fr. Norbert Herman, focused on making religion a uniting force rather than using it as a political tool. Thus

efforts should be made to ascertain that humanity prospered and the world became a beautiful place for everybody.

In his valedictory address, former Judge of the Allahabad High Court, Justice Zaki Ullah Khan stressed that all cultures in India maintained harmony for centuries. Religious diversity existed here and must remain in future as well. He concluded with these sentences: 'Respect all without considering their specific religious faiths'. Whatever one did or the steps took, humanity should always be in consideration.

Dr. M.A. Sikandar, Registrar, Jamia Hamdard read out the 9-point resolution, unanimously adopted at the conclusion of the conference.



On the dais (L-R): Prof. (Ms.) Haseena Hashia, Dr. M.A. Sikandar, Fr. Dr. Norbert Herman, Justice Zaki Ullah Khan, Prof. M. Afzal Wani, Prof. Rajeev Ranjan Sinha and Prof. Akbar Hussain

The resolution read as —

1. All the people of the world should appreciate significance of the freedom of religion and diversity for every individual and make effort to allow its profession and practice harness human values; without hurting the sentiments of the people of other religions.
2. No individual, group, community or State should attempt to impose any particular religion on any other

individual, group or community using any kind of tactics, influence of power or by creating any kind of difficulties for them in following their own faith.

3. People of all religions must understand the standard human values propounded by their religions and bring them manifestly into their practice to fulfill the purpose of good behaviour for which the religions have come into existence.
4. Effort should be made by the responsible members of all religions and the respective States to prevent emergence of violent communal feelings and undesirable happenings through legislation and executive action without discrimination.

5. The judiciaries, all over the world, must take up the task of establishing the best of the standards of preventing communal violence and promoting harmonic approaches and performance.

6. Academicians should take up the task of highlighting the best human values of all religions and produce better compassionate generations to developing a humane future world.

7. The United Nations should take proactive measures, through its various agencies, for the cause of harnessing human values and for incentivising respect for diversity.

8. Important pillars of democracy like media and protecting agency-police should work to uphold the principles of justice without any discrimination of class, caste, ethnicity etc. These should uphold the standards of preventing communal violence and individual harassment.

9. NGOs and other civil society organisations should adopt different suitable strategies to develop the values of co-existence, tolerance and social harmony.

In his presidential address, Prof. M. Afzal Wani asked how worthwhile dialogue was for humanity in the current context would be when such efforts had been made in the past as well. It was time to understand contextual factors while discussing religious diversity. Thus concrete and collective efforts be made to ascertain global peace.

He recalled the towering role of the late Hakim Abdul Hameed in the field of Unani medicine besides establishing Jamia Hamdard, an institute of eminence. Likewise, another visionary, Dr. M. Manzoor Alam, established the Institute of Objective Studies to offer a platform for scholars and intelligentsia to debate and find rational & objective solutions to many issues faced by Indians in general and the minorities in particular.

Prof. Haseena Hashia proposed a vote of thanks to all dignitaries, guests and audiences whose collective efforts for making the two-day conference a success.

Annual Meeting of Governing Council (G.C)

The 74th Meeting (Annual) of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) was held on 26th August, 2023 in the Auditorium of the Institute at 162, Jogabai Main Road, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-110025 in hybrid mode.

Before taking up the agenda items and starting the business, Prof. Z. M. Khan, Secretary General, IOS welcomed the members and special invitees for attending the meeting and

asked Prof. (Ms.) Haseena Hashia, Asstt. Secretary General, to start the proceedings of the meeting.

In the meanwhile, the Chairman Dr. M. Manzoor Alam, who is hospitalised since 2nd August, 2023, extended his warm welcome to all the offline and online attendees of the meeting, live from the hospital, and conveyed his *salam* to everyone.

Thereafter, the agenda of the meeting of the Governing Council (G.C.) was taken up.

The meeting was initiated with the recitation of some verses from the Holy Qur'an.



A view of the G.C. Meeting

Condolence resolution of all those associated with the IOS, who passed away during April, 2023 to August, 2023, was adopted and *dua* was made for their maghfirat.

The minutes of the 73rd G.C. held on 11th March, 2023, were presented and confirmed.

The Follow-up Report (Action-taken Report) of the last G.C. meeting was presented, which was considered and got approved with certain information/suggestions/decisions.

The Annual Report of the IOS (along with its Executive Summary) for the year 2022-2023 and the Annual Budget of the IOS for the year 2023-2024, were discussed at length and

recommended to the G.A. of the IOS, for its approval.

It was reported that as per the decisions taken during the Office-bearers meeting, held on 15th July, 2023 – The 11th IOS Lifetime Achievement Award will be conferred upon Justice Aftab Alam, Former Justice of Supreme Court of India. The award conferring ceremony will be held on 16th December, 2023 at New Delhi; A two-day national conference on “*Life and Contributions of Maulana Syed Mohd. Rabey Hasani Nadwi*” will be held on November 25-26, 2023 at New Delhi in hybrid mode; and a two-day international conference on “*The Life and Contributions of Dr. Abdul Hamid AbuSulayman*” will be held sometime in Feb./April, 2024 at New Delhi. The G.C. endorsed the above decisions.

It was reported that two MoUs between the Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi have been signed during the said period, with – 1) M.C.E. Society’s Abeda Inamdar Senior College of Arts, Science & Commerce, Pune; and 2) Maulana Azad University, Jodhpur. After going through the report about the MoUs the G.C. expressed its appreciation and emphasised its proper implementation and execution.

In regard to the 15th Shah Waliullah Award it was reported that no nomination for the award, nor any essay could be received till May, 2023. Under this situation, a committee was formed to recommend at least two suitable names for the award to be discussed and finalised in the Board’s meeting of the Shah Waliullah Award.

The reports of the upcoming programmes of the IOS from September to December, 2023 and the on-going research projects were

presented before the G.C., which after going through both the reports, expressed its satisfaction.

The progress reports of the translation of IOS books from English to Urdu and Hindi as well as the translation, review and editing of IIT books were presented before the G.C. members who, after discussing these reports, expressed their satisfaction.

The report about the programmes organised by the IOS during April 2023 to August 2023; The list of the journals/books/reports brought out during April 2023 to August 2023; The report of the progress of work done in the IOS Data Bank during April 2023 to August 2023; The reports about the hits of IOS Website, Current Affairs, Data Bank and Nuqta-e-Nazar during April 2023 to August 2023; and the report about the IOS social media handles were presented before the members of the G.C. who, after going through these reports, expressed their appreciation.

The procedure of the election for the Executive Members and the Office Bearers of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) for a term of next five years (i.e., from August, 2018 to July, 2023) was finalised and recommended to the G.A. for conducting the election accordingly.

Lastly, Prof. Z. M. Khan, Secretary General of the IOS, sought suggestions from the members of the G.C., and special invitees with regard to furtherance of the activities of the Institute.

After getting the valuable suggestions/information from the members and special invitees, Prof. Z. M. Khan concluded that the IOS has to prioritise things and take up work within its capacity.

In the end, Prof. (Ms.) Haseena Hashia thanked the members of the Governing Council (G.C.) and special invitees for their full support and cooperation.

Annual Meeting of General Assembly (G.A.); and Lecture on “Challenges to National Integration in Contemporary India”

The 37th annual meeting of the general assembly of the Institute of Objective Studies took place at the auditorium of the Institute on August

year itself. In the category of seminar on international personalities, the consensus emerged on the name of the noted Islamic scholar, Dr. Abdul Hamid A. Abu Sulayman.

The meeting also approved the memoranda of understanding signed between the IOS and the universities in the past one year. The Mahatma Gandhi Award won by the Institute also came up for the discussion. It was decided to fast-track the translation work and take up some new projects.

The progress of the Institute’s data bank, website and its presence on social media platforms was also reviewed. Further, the Institute’s publication titled *“Towards Creating a Just and Equitable Future in India”*, edited by Prof. Mirza Asmer Beg, was released on this occasion.

The meeting also marked the election of members of the new Governing Council for the next

five-year term. The current Chairman of the IOS was re-elected as the Chairman. Besides Dr. M. Manzoor Alam, those who were elected as members of the Council included Prof. M. Afzal Wani, Prof. Z.M. Khan, Mr. Mohammad Alam, Prof. Haseena Hashia, Prof. M. Ishtiyaque, Dr. Major Zahid Husain, Prof. Mohsin Usmani, Dr. Md. Imteyaz Hassan, Prof. Arshi Khan, Prof. Shamim A. Ansari, Mr. Abdul Basit Ismail, Prof. M. Fahim Akhtar Nadwi, Mr. Ibrahim Alam and Dr. Kaleem Alam.

A lecture on *“Challenges to National Integration in Contemporary India”* was also organised on August 27, 2023 to coincide with the annual meeting of the General Assembly. Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Aligarh Muslim University, Prof. Mirza Asmer Beg delivered the lecture.



On the dais (L-R): Prof. (Ms.) Haseena Hashia, Prof. Z.M. Khan and Prof. M. Afzal Wani

27, 2023. Drawn from several parts of the country, the members took part in the meeting and reviewed the progress of the decisions taken at the last meeting. In the absence of the Chairman of the Institute, Dr. M. Manzoor Alam, who was convalescing at the hospital, the meeting was presided over by the Vice-Chairman, Prof. M. Afzal Wani. The General Assembly approved the action-taken on the proceedings of the last year as well as the Annual Report for the year 2022-23, and unanimously passed the budget for the next financial year.

A decision was also taken to give the eleventh IOS lifetime achievement award to the former judge of the Supreme Court, Justice Aftab Alam. It was decided to hold a two-day national seminar on the ex-President of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, the late Maulana Rabey Hasani Nadwi this

Speaking on the subject, Prof. Asmer Beg said that the political parties raised emotive issues to garner votes. Talk of *Dharmik Asmita* (Religious pride) and *Gaurav* (Glory), sounded ultra-active. Political discourse had shifted from real issues to communalism. There was a discourse of silence and the people were attracted to emotive issues. They devised the combination of caste and identity. That was why they gave tickets to those who belonged to the predominant caste. He held that the identity which was being privatised, might lead to disintegration as the citizens were identified with their religion. Instead of having national identity, Indians had communal identity based on gender, religion, caste, etc. Primary identity of a citizen could not be called national identity as national identity was rationalised. Elaborating on the communal identity, he said that when one met his co-regionist, he would open to him and refer to him as his own man. He noted that when one felt that he was doing something for the country it meant that he had national identity. But, when one had national identity, then he had rational identity. Tracing the history of communalism, he said that it did not happen overnight. Earlier also there was communalism. Thus India did not turn to fascism-like sedation all of a sudden, he insisted.

Prof. Beg observed that media and other factors were instrumental in vitiating the atmosphere. Political power created dangerous things. Today's politics was made more attractive by the speeches that were laced with rhetoric and communal narrative. By these tactics, it became easy to hunt people. In order to justify their actions, superficial measures were taken by the powers-that-be. The

problem of communal perception was much deeper than it looked from outside. They would not let it change because they benefited from it. It was an ugly situation because no real issues were raised in public domain. It was high time for every citizen to think of his responsibility to the republic. In a democracy, he said, citizens played a major role and they should exercise their duty as responsible citizens.



Prof. Mirza Asmer Beg delivering his lecture

Change was imperative and it should come from grassroots level. He said that it is the people who had to decide what to do.

Referring to the scarcity of resources, Prof. Beg pointed out that the new liberal policy was very dangerous. The problem arose due to improper distribution of resources. The US was the richest country of the world but the problem there was also the same. In 1966, the ex-U.S. president Barak Obama's father was kicked out from there. He wanted to know when the countrymen would grow mature to understand things. There was some problem somewhere which led about 14 lakh Indians to leave the country. So far, more than 40 lakh Indians had left the country. He said that the emotive politics by discourse creation was bad and had a limited life span. A community had been ghettoised and that could be understood by the survey conducted in Aligarh recently which revealed that only one percent Muslims visited

homes of their Hindu neighbours. So was the case with the Hindus who also did not visit homes of their Muslim neighbours. That was due to the mindset of the people, he concluded.

Presiding over the lecture, Prof. Z.M. Khan observed that life had three aspects – economic, political and social. He said that the economy and sociology were strong even today. No single group could perform a job on its own. It required integration. This equally applied to the social life of India which was impossible without the integration of Hindus and Muslims. Doubts deepened when there was no interaction and communication between the two communities. The idea of inter-community integration should receive proper attention, he stressed.

The programme ended with a vote of thanks extended by Prof. Haseena Hashia.

Activities of the IOSCHCS

IOSCHCS organises Panel Discussion on 'Preserving Cultural Pluralism in India: A Societal Goal'

A panel discussion on 'Preserving Cultural Pluralism in India: A societal Goal' was organised by the IOS Centre for Historical and Civilisational Studies (IOSCHS) on August 19, 2023 at Aligarh.

Proceedings started with the recitation of a few verses from the Holy Qur'an by Hafiz Aby Talib. It was followed by Prof. Syed Jamaluddin's welcome address and the introductory words on the theme of the panel discussion.

Prof. M. Waseem Raja, Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History said that preserving cultural

pluralism in India was the need of the hour, as the very idea of India, of which the base was, pluralism, diversity, or unity in diversity. Syncretism became base of India's cultural ethos, when people of different faiths took up to celebrate points from different other faiths. Such points of cultural synthesis was only possible in country like India.

Prof. Raja focused on cultural diversity in historical perspective and said, "Culturally medieval period scripts the beginning of new period in the growth of India's composite culture. The architecture that developed during this period was the consequence of the synthesis of the traditions of Central Asia and Persia with the pre-existing Indian styles.

Prof. Raja asserted that Indian culture was pluralistic, since despite all odds there had been unity in presentation and outlook. With so many different cultures in India, there were also many ethnicities, religions, languages, traditions, cuisines, and celebrations that was a part of India's diversity. He added that cultural diversity was about appreciating that society was made up of many different groups with different interests, skills, talents and needs. It also meant that India recognised that the people in society could have differing religious beliefs and sexual orientations. Cultural diversity helped develop and enrich lives. Through exposure to different cultures, traditions, and beliefs, one began to appreciate different viewpoints, ways of living and involvements.

Prof. Raja said that broadly speaking, there were four types of diversity: internal, external, organisational, and worldview. Internal diversity referred to any trait or characteristic that a person was born

with. These might include sex, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or physical ability. Over the centuries, there has been a significant fusion of cultures between Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Sikhs and various tribal populations in India. Diversity meant having a range of people with various racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds and various lifestyles, experience, and interests. The cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity of India helped shape the country's national identity. He asserted that all symbols of cultural diversity needed to be preserved.

Prof. Zainuddin, former Chairman,

not only in regards to racial composition, religious and linguistic distinctions, but also in life style, kinship, marriage rites and customs, inheritance and succession laws and practices and rites related to birth and death. India was, therefore, a pluralist society in both letter and spirit. There were bonds of unity underlying this diversity.

Dr. Khan maintained that though India is culturally diverse, it remained cohesive despite its diversity. In recent past, however, India was facing grave challenge to its constitutional commitment to pluralism with the rise of groups that sought to impose a single identity on the country. In the

past, it was witnessed how non- recognition of the rights and interests of diverse groups in a country could have serious implications for national unity. In most nation states there tended to be a dominant social group whether racial, cultural or religious. Not a single nation state consisted exclusively of a single homogenous cultural group. It was the need of the hour that individuals

and groups embrace diversity and cultural pluralism and learn to live with it, he held.

Prof. Abdul Waheed, ex-Chairman, Department of Sociology, AMU, Aligarh, said that cultural diversity or heterogeneity of people was one of the important characteristics of modern nation-states. Not only multiple diversities had been existing in India since time immemorial but they were also tolerated and encouraged to flourish. This cherished tradition of Indian society was made integral part of the Constitution, which explicitly promised to protect and promote various socio-cultural and religious diversities of India, he noted.



A view of the panelists

Dept. of Sociology, AMU, Aligarh, highlighted the importance of cultural pluralism. The approaches like integrationist and restricted multiculturalist were examined in the context of post-Independence period. Under the restricted multiculturalism, religious freedom and family laws were granted. Insights of sources of inclusion and exclusion were analysed to understand the contemporary situation.

Dr. Ziaur Rahman Khan, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, AMU, Aligarh, stated that there was no denying the fact that Indian society and culture, were characterised by unity in diversity. There was diversity

Prof. Waheed lamented that after 76 years of independence Indian values and constitutional guarantees of toleration, accommodation and inclusion seemed to be under serious threat from the politics of ‘assimilation’ and ‘exclusion’. This increasing trend of ‘social disorganisation’ promoted intolerance of cultural diversities and ineffectiveness of state’s institutions in achieving social and constitutional goals.

Prof. Salahuddin Qureshi, former Chairman, Department of Geography, AMU, Aligarh, said that cultural pluralism was the national asset of India. Puritanism, on the contrary, was a divisive and minus factor which would make any nation vulnerable to decay in the competitive age of globalisation. It was because cultural pluralism was the hallmark of globalisation. Puritanism movement was not only counter-productive, it was also anti-national. Pluralism was productive and progressive. And puritanism was inherently retrogressive and relegating in its designs. Pluralism was natural and indispensable for progress.

Prof. Qureshi observed that ever since the dawn of civilisations, every nation naturally evolved into pluralistic entity. Only few isolated puritans in the human history had themselves stagnated into marginalisation. Citing some examples, he observed that geographically, the nature of the

earth’s surface offered opportunities of cultural pluralism. He said that the cultural pluralism made India a hybrid nation of enormous sustainability. Likewise, Islam in its letter and spirit was cosmopolitan in its genesis. Cosmopolitan pluralism was a humane hallmark of Islam. Hence, Islamic culture was naturally cosmopolitan for the sustainability of mankind.

Prof. Akbar Husain, ex-Head of the Department of Psychology and Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, AMU, Aligarh, spoke on ‘Cultural Pluralism: Psychological Perspective’. His presentation was quite comprehensive because a new social science perspective was found relevant. First he raised the question what was pluralism according to Gandhi. Gandhi’s ideology of pluralism was based on the notion that every person’s conscience was equally valuable and that there was no absolute truth.

He said that pluralism was essential for the successful operation of India’s diverse society in terms of history, art, and culture. For the democratic culture to flourish, a pluralist democracy that granted the general public the freedom of association was required.

Prof. Akbar maintained that in some nations, where cultures might coexist while yet retaining their distinctive characteristics and combining to create a broader, richer whole, this was known as cultural pluralism. He went on to point out that “societies that are customarily

described as culturally pluralistic are those composed of numerous groups that, either by virtue of coalitions between minorities or on the basis of their own critical size, are able to resist being lumped into an undifferentiated mass”.

He said that these notions of cultural pluralism stood in stark contrast to older theories of national cultural variety, which saw assimilation as a desirable and inevitable process. This assimilation process presupposed a unidirectional pattern of cultural change in which new immigrant and refugee groups would eventually resemble the dominant group in the host country more and more.

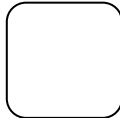
At the end of the discussion, Prof. Asmer Beg, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, AMU, who chaired the event, congratulated the organisers and panelists for the two and a half hour long proceedings. He appreciated in particular the presence of young scholars from AMU’s Dept. of History. He also commented, though in brief, on the highlights of each presentation. His last remark was that everyone believed that cultural pluralism was India’s destiny.

Prof. Syed Jamaluddin presented a vote of thanks to the eminent speakers and all attendees.

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