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Thought for the Month

And they (sometimes) say:
 "There is nothing except
 Our life on this earth,
 And never shall we be
 Raised up again."
 If thou couldst but see
 When they shall be made to
 stand Before their Lord
 He will say:
 "Is not this the truth?"
 They will say:
 "Yea, by our Lord"
 He will say:
 "Taste ye then the Chastisement
 Because ye rejected Faith."

Al-Quran- 6: 29-30

FOCUS

The history of Islam in Africa covers an expanse of around fourteen centuries. It impacted numerous and different tribes and races spread over the continent. The new faith of the Arabs entered the region from the east and the north and extended its influence in almost all parts of the continent.

The Arabs under 'Amr ibn al-'As' command were the first to introduce Islam in Africa when they marched towards Egypt in 640 AD. The Byzantine troops, who were in possession of the territory, had no vacate, leaving behind the vast Christian population under the mercy of the Muslim Arabs. Al-As, however, preserved the sanctity of the churches and also guaranteed autonomy to them in all ecclesiastical matters. He also did not confiscate the church property and committed no spoliation or pillage. The Christian population (Copts) remained in peace and there is no such evidence of their persecution or undue pressure and widespread conversion to Islam by the ruling government. It is to be mentioned that quite a number of them had come into the fold of Islam even before the conquest of Egypt was complete and they set an example for others to follow in the coming few years.

Large number of conversion is reported during the regime of Muawiyah, which also lead to the fall of the revenue. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Christian Coptic population in Egypt was reduced to a minority of meager percentage. The Christian Nubians, however, resisted the Muslim expansion for almost six centuries and retained their independence through different treaties with the Arabs. The migration towards the end of the thirteenth century of the Arabs in Nubia (region along the Nile) and their marriages with the Nubian women weakened the power of the Nubian princes. Later after the establishment of the Funj dynasty in the fifteenth century, the Christian Nubians seemed to have drifted towards Islam and by the end of the following century, Christianity had completely disappeared from Nubia.

Islam went forward from Egypt to different parts of the continent through three different directions. It reached the eastern coastal region via Red Sea, passed through the Nile Valley to reach Sudan, and to the Maghreb region in the north it went across the western desert. The Arab nomads from Egypt were the chief architect in spreading Islam and bringing the people of Sudan and Maghreb to Arab culture. On this other side, their seamen from Egypt formed commercial centers along the Red Sea and Africa's east coast.

*From An Encyclopaedic Compendium of Muslim Communities
 in the World, Vol. V, Africa by Javed A. Siddiqui, pp. 9-10*

Editor

Prof. Sanghasen Singh

Circulation Manager

Syed Arshad Karim

Correspondence Address

162, Jogabai Extension
 Jamia Nagar, New Delhi
 PIN-110025
 India

Phone 26981187,
 26989253, 26987467

E-mail:

info@iosworld.org
ios.newdelhi@gmail.com

Website:

www.iosworld.org

Activities of the IOS Headquarters

IOS Lecture on “Salient Features of Constitutional Values and Principles”

The Institute of Objective Studies, under its lecture series programme on “Constitution, Democracy and Rule of Law in India” organised its 4th lecture on the topic “Salient Features of Constitutional Values and Principles” by Dr. Kushal Pal, Associate Professor & Head, Department of Political Science, Dyal Singh College, Karnal, Haryana on February 4, 2023 at Institute’s Auditorium.

Dr. Kushal Pal, defining democratic principles in a language easily understandable by all and sundry, emphasised that in democracy diverse ethnic identities play vital roles. Democracy and Constitution should be understood and defined contextually as constitutional values are integral for every Indian citizen, he said.

“Indian Constitution has never been a rulebook, but it is more than what is perceived. It, instead, manifests transformation through constant evolution for the betterment of contemporary societies”, he said. Dr. Pal emphasised, “how socialism and secularism terms have been effectively used and evaluated in today’s democracy”.

Dr. Pal pointed out that a wrong perception of democracy exists in the Indian societies according to which democracy is an election exercise. In fact, democracy is a passage that empowers people for their overall participation in the growth path for which people must inculcate the habit

of discussion, dissent, debate and decision-making. Participation was more important than voting—democracy needed to be understood in a broader context, he emphasised.

Another essential factor Dr. Pal spoke about was to make Indian democracy and Constitution even more vibrant. “Respect for minorities” for the success of democracy, public opinion, freedom of the press, freedom of judiciary and the separation of power is amongst the most crucial prerequisite for strengthening democratic values. He further said that India witnessed a multi-party system due to its exemplary growth of democratic ideals.

To bring awareness about the social system, Dr. Pal held that socialism was

percent of wealth. Such an imbalance devalued the meaning of socialism in the present era, he added.

Dr. Pal further stressed that in Indian context, the Constitution was a holy book for all irrespective of everybody’s faiths and religious persuasions. It was because the philosophy and essentials of all religions were the same and oriented to human sustenance. The beauty of democracy was that secularism connected with federalism brought diversity and thus empowered the country rather than weakening it. In the familiar context, common masses loved and admired each other. Although certain political factors always tried to bring friction among them to destabilise the ascent of secularism, he observed.



Dr. Kushal Pal delivering his lecture

directly connected to the policies and programmes of respective governments. He gave an example of how Russian socialism proved a milestone as an alternative governance model and became a pathfinder for global empowerment wherever it was followed. Several other developing countries followed Russia in due course of time with their specific restructuring and attained success.

Ironically, in the current Indian context, socialism was unfortunately limited to the Preamble only. The cause of global concern was that the world’s 1 percent population owned 40

The architect of the Indian Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, had foreseen India’s amalgamation while drafting it. He ensured elaborate arrangements for the Constitution to sustain and strengthen over the period with scope for ensuring diversity having room for sustainable growth and empowerment,

he noted.

Dr. Kushal Pal expressed the hope that India was autonomous with its internal and external policies due to its beautiful and accommodative Constitution. It sustained enduring values incorporated over time. Social justice was alive in India due to the masses and not due to political parties. Therefore, the role of conscious people became vital to ensure the overall growth of Indian societies.

In the closing remarks, Dr. Pal enlightened the audience that there is hardly any need for a population control programme. There was no

relation between population growth and religion. Anybody who was well-educated and ensured of quality education would voluntarily contribute to the nation's development. The governments must provide adequate educational facilities and healthcare for the masses to empower them for sustainability.

He concluded by shedding light on how print and social media in present India, played a constructive role in voicing the concerns of the masses, unlike electronic media with fast losing impact due to its portrayal of events in wrong ways.

Prof. Shuja Shakir, Professor & Head, Department of Political Science, Dr. B. A. Marathwada University, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, in his presidential address proposed a new resolution for social and constitutional empowerment of India. He endorsed the views expressed by the speaker that basic structure of India's Constitution could not be altered as Justice, Socialism, Liberty are in its DNA, which hardly changed. He reminded everybody of how the British had created gap between the minority and majority communities for political gains in India.

The leaders today must advocate liberal pluralism. Ironically, there was a hue for corporate and capitalistic pluralism, which the British brought to damage Indian societies. He thanked the Institute of Objective Studies for organising this programme and congratulated Dr. Kushal Pal for delivering such an excellent lecture, which was followed by a lively Question-Answer session. He further emphasised that the worst phase was not permanent. If India encountered a politically biased trend today, it would

no longer continue tomorrow as positive changes were bound to come.

Prof. Haseena Hashia, Asstt. Secretary General, IOS, welcomed guests with the introduction of Dr. Kushal Pal and Prof. Shuja Shakir. She thanked the audience present both offline and online, for their presence in the programme. She proposed a vote of thanks with the remark that such lectures were the need of the hour to empower Indian societies for advocating pluralism, socialism and secularism.

IOS Lecture on “Democracy is not merely Rule of Law but Mutual Respect among Communities and Individuals”



Mr. Vidya Bhushan Rawat delivering his lecture

A lecture on “Democracy is not merely rule of law but mutual respect among communities and individuals” was organised by the Institute of Objective Studies on January 21, 2023.

Presided over by Prof. Arshi Khan from the Department of Political Science, Aligarh Muslim University, the lecture began with the recitation of a verse from the Holy Qur’an by Hafiz Athar Husain Nadwi.

Delivering the lecture, author and human rights activist, Mr. Vidya Bhushan Rawat said that today rule of law had many connotations due to its application. For instance, U.S. attack on Iraq and Afghanistan was termed as

the rule of law. Similarly, about 4500 families were uprooted in Haldwani town of Uttarakhand in order to vacate the land owned by the railways. This action was also defended in the name of the rule of law. Thus, there was a big gap between rule and the practice. The rule of law was best practised in Britain where the Prime Minister was chargesheeted for not following traffic rules. He commented that whatever the *Baba* of Nagpur was screaming loudly was also a rule of law. He stated that the West termed the Russian attack on Ukraine as anti-rule of law as it should have some international standard. It defined the existing practice of the rule of law. He opined that the rule of law had certain positive

aspects too. Off late, the concept of democracy had undergone change with majoritarianism occupying the centre-stage. This was due to the domination of minorities over the political discourse in the last 75 years. This led to every community demanding share in the power structure. But, Muslims and

adivasis did not become so vociferous, he noted.

He underlined the importance of autonomous institutions in a democracy. Referring to merit, he said that it had always been subjective. Merit always dominated to control the system. He complained that universities and colleges were not organising lectures and seminars on such subjects with the result that debates and discussions were not held. When people demanded their share in power structure, then they would be branded as *Netas*. He observed that the narrative was built according to the governance. Rules must be based on structural standards as was done in the

case of United Nations and its specialised agencies. He argued that it was the duty of the State to calm down people when they were agitated. Crisis might brew of socio-economic equality was not ensured. Referring to the latest law, he said that now, one would be guilty if did not prove that he was not guilty. These days, the state said 'no' to the order passed by a court to release a convict because he was a 'threat' to peace. He insisted that rules were framed taking into account human rights, cultural diversity and cultural togetherness. India was its best example where the Constitution framing was a big achievement. As against this, Pakistan took ten years to frame its Constitution. Pakistan too tried to make itself a homogeneous country, but failed, he said.

Mr. Rawat held that Indians were fortunate to have inherited a rich legacy and cultural diversity which was reflected in the Constitution. In this connection, he mentioned the composition of the Azad Hind Fauj led by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose which was composed of all the communities. As the President of the Congress session in 1938, Netaji spoke of cultural affinity in the country. Indians should celebrate shared legacy and the legacy of the freedom movement. Sometimes, people did not understand their legacy. But the fact was that today, all the things were linked to each other. He asked for celebrating people, literature, history, culture, philosophy etc. He firmly believed that the legacy of freedom movement was very rich and could not be done away with. He said that legacies of kings should not be celebrated. Instead, legacies of the popular movements, festivals, and respect to each other, Gandhi, Nehru, Maulana Azad, Hasrat Mohani, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and joint syncretic culture should be celebrated. At a time when prejudices were being sought to be played up by certain forces, efforts should be made to discourage them. Laws were being twisted to suit a certain ideology. He

urged the people to strengthen the Constitution. He spoke against the government's stand of the collegium system to appoint judges of the Supreme Court.

In his presidential remarks, Prof. Arshi Khan, summed up Mr. Rawat's lecture and observed that judiciary had the power of judicial review of the Constitution and the laws by the government. It examined if a law passed by the government was ultra-vires of the Constitution, it could then strike down such a law. In this respect, the U.S. judiciary was more powerful than the Indian Supreme Court. But, the judiciary in the United Kingdom was less powerful than the Indian apex court.

Holding that the Constitution was supreme in the Indian system of governance, he said that it was a book to guide all the three organs of the government. Besides, it was the guardian of the rights of the citizens. The Constitution also laid down the principle of the separation of power that put under check the encroachment of one organ on powers of the other. Judiciary was the ultimate protection of individual rights whenever they were under the threat, he concluded.

10th IOS Lifetime Achievement Award presented to Mr. K. Rahman Khan

The tenth "IOS Lifetime Achievement Award" was conferred on the Former Union Minister for Minority Affairs, Mr. K. Rahman Khan at an impressive function organised by the Institute of Objective Studies on December 29, 2022 at the speaker hall of the Constitution Club of India, New Delhi.

The function began with the recitation of a verse from the Holy Qur'an by Adnan Nadwi. The Secretary General of the IOS, Prof. Z.M. Khan, welcomed the guests and introduced the Institute by highlighting its activities. In his speech, he said that K. Rahman had been associated with the IOS for a long time. The Institute

had completed three and a half decades of its existence with steady progress and widening the scope of its endeavours as a non-political and non-profitable organisation. It had gained recognition in all relevant quarters at a national and international plane for promoting research, conducting surveys on relevant themes, publishing books and journals in the areas of national concern and pressing challenges of civil societies, awarding scholarships to meritorious university scholars, actively participating in social welfare, educational and management fields. He observed that the focal areas might also be identified for developing development models suiting to Indian masses, particularly the poor, marginalised and deprived sections; initiatives to foster world peace, and strive hard to develop mechanisms and environment for conflict resolution.

Prof. Khan noted that the IOS had specifically tried to create linkages with other NGOs on practical levels by creating synergy for collaborative efforts and programmes. Another notable area had been to work on regional problems and profiles of marginalised sections of society in different regions of India. He said that the Institute had become a trendsetter in the fields of conceptual and investigative research on the Quranic approach to human problems and the problems of Muslims in India. He invited suggestions for making the Institute more meaningful.

Prof. Khan's speech was followed by the reading out of the citation by S.M. Shafiq which read as "A legislator, a parliamentarian, and educationist, a master of the accounting profession, an intellectual of global standing, an editor of reputed newspapers, a social activist..., the life and times of Mr. K. Rahman Khan are embellished with achievements, glittering with causes he has upheld in the Parliament of India, in the Karnataka State Legislatures, impacting and benefitting the lives of

millions of people in India and across the world... “In 1994, Mr. Rahman Khan stepped into the national stage. For the next twenty-four years, Mr. Khan left his mark in the Upper House/Rajya Sabha as an hon’ble Member of Parliament, a Deputy Leader of his party, the Indian National Congress, a Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilisers. Indeed, a brilliant political career, unmatched by his peers”.

“In 1966, upon his initiative in Rajya Sabha, a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on Waqf was formed after he successfully highlighted the loopholes and gaps to be filled in the Waqf Act, 1995 for the benefit of the Muslim Ummah, including humanity at large...” Deeply connected with the finest and the most refined facets of life and learning, Mr. Khan’s contributions as a patron of cultural, educational, artistic and scientific causes are legendary. Innumerable Trusts, Foundations and Civil Society bodies have benefited from his patronage...” The Institute of Objective

Studies deems it an honour and privilege to present the Tenth IOS Lifetime Achievement Award to him in recognition of his selfless and dedicated services to the nation”.

Prof. Furqan Qamar, Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, presented the scroll of honour to K. Rahman Khan.

Chairman of the IOS, Dr. M. Manzoor Alam, presented a cheque of One Lakh rupees to K. Rahman Khan as the amount carried by the award.

A memento was presented to him by the Former Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, Harish Singh Rawat. Addressing as the chief guest, Harish

Rawat said that he saw K. Rahman Khan working in different capacities. Whichever institution he worked for, he did its complete makeover. He saw his work in educational and social fields and his role as a parliamentarian. Describing him as a perfect personality, he noted that as the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, K. Rahman Khan conducted proceeding of the House in a decent manner. On a number of occasions, he displayed maximum restraint and caution while giving his ruling on difficult and contentious issues. He used to be tough on several matters, but his explanation was very convincing to both treasury and opposition benches.

wanting in his efforts to empower new generation with education. He observed that he learnt a lot from Rahman Khan. Referring to the state of affair today, he said that the number of well-meaning persons was sharply declining. Such people had been putting the shortcomings under wraps in order to avoid giving grist to the propaganda machinery. Things had changed now as the history was being sought to be re-written. They wanted to negate the facts of Indian history, down-playing the sacrifices made by great leaders. He maintained that earlier, people used to vote on the basis of the qualities of the candidates. But today, the mood of the country was being changed to suit the whims

of certain people. Quoting the senior Congress leader, Rahul Gandhi who said that he wanted to ‘open shops of love in the corridors of hatred’, he said that instead of knowing the identity of a person he should be listened first. He described Rahman Khan as a lighthouse who spread light to illuminate whoever came into its contact.



Mr. Harish Singh Rawat presenting the Memento to Mr. K. Rahman Khan

As a Union Minister for Minority Affairs, his proactive initiatives were acclaimed by the community. His contribution in the field of education was peerless as he opened several educational institutions in Karnataka, his own state, for the benefit of Muslims and other communities. In public life, he encountered several difficulties, but overcome them in the long run.

Harish Rawat observed that Rahman Khan launched a number of schemes for the benefit of the minorities. He was always very sincere about his work and had a sense of belonging to the welfare of the community. He was never found

By honouring K. Rahman Khan, Chairman of the IOS, Dr. M. Manzoor Alam had honoured the society, he added.

Speaking as the guest of honour, Prof. Furqan Qamar commented on the current situation and said that it could be likened to the time existent during the Britishers which prompted the famous Urdu poet, Akbar Allahabadi to say that “The rivals lodged an FIR with the police that Akbar uttered Allah’s name even in this age”. Under the prevailing situation, the IOS was doing yeoman’s service by not sticking to subjectivity and engaging itself in inter-faith dialogues for proper understanding of one’s religion and its

practices. He felt proud of the recipients of the lifetime achievement award being given by the Institute of Objective Studies to the eminent personalities who made exceptional contribution in different fields since 2007. Enumerating the names of the awardees in the list, he held that K.R. Rahman fully deserved the award. In this connection, he recited a couplet of the prominent Urdu poet, Allama Iqbal. Since the function was being held in the Constitution Club, the Constitution of India should be safeguarded. He noted that Rahman Khan symbolised all the things enunciated by Dr. Iqbal in his poem, “*Lub Pe Aati Hai Dua Banke Tamanna Meri...*” But unfortunately, a student was punished by the school for singing this song. He remarked that both Harish Rawat and Rahman Khan rekindled identical hope. He concluded by saying that he served as a member of the committee on the minorities set up by A.R. Antulay, the then Union Minister of Minority Affairs.

In his special address, the Vice-Chairman of the IOS, Prof. M. Afzal Wani, observed that the Institute reflected values and the vision of the Constitution. It also reflected the dignity of governance in the country. He said that K. Rahman Khan was assertive and had a vision. People knew what he did for their welfare. He did his best to educationally and socially empower the people. He had been a benefactor of the people and thus the society must appreciate his sincerity. He had challenges before him as was reflected from his biography. He held that Rahman Khan piloted a bill to amend the Waqf Act in the face of stiff opposition to it in 2013. His life was a light in the darkness, Prof. Wani concluded.

Addressing the function, K. Rahman Khan, said that he had been associated with the IOS for the last three decades. Describing the Chairman of the IOS, Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam as an intellectual, he noted that he had been discussing a number of issues relating to the community and nation. IOS contribution in the field of data collection, publication, research, etc., was noteworthy. Referring to the psyche of the Muslim community, he said that sentiments had gripped leading to the loss of proper vision among them. He admitted to have benefited from the guidance of the IOS chief. Laying stress on the need for a dialogue among the stakeholders, he noted that he had been holding regular

was due to training one underwent. He maintained that he has been connected with the educational institutions for the last 55 years. He set up schools, engineering colleges and other institutions. Besides knowledge, one needed initiatives to be taken for success. He complained that the Muslim community was very sentimental and less inclined to take initiatives. In a diverse society, every community has a participatory role which could not be termed as communal. If one could not help himself, nobody would come forward to help him. He said that he was first Muslim to open a medical college, an engineering college and several degree colleges. In order to educationally empower Lingayat community in



A view of the audience

consultations on various issues. He criticised those who said that nothing substantial was done in the matter of awqaf and everything was lost during the period. This simply meant that they became oblivious to the sacrifices made by the leaders of the community. He asked the members of the community to always adopt positive attitude that was the only key to success.

K. Rahman Khan, claimed that he was the first Muslim chartered accountant of Karnataka. Underlining the importance of education, he said that it played an important role in changing the life of an individual. This

Karnataka, several educational institutions were opened and they were smoothly running for the last 100 years. He asked the Muslims to become givers and not seekers. He thanked Allah for granting him an opportunity to work for the benefit of his community. He

was of the firm opinion that if one had ability then help would definitely come his way.

K. Rahman Khan, called for holding dialogues to end an atmosphere of conflict. There should be no occasion of conflict. An atmosphere of goodwill and brotherhood should be created to sustain secularism. Communal harmony and brotherhood were the prerequisite for progress and prosperity. He said that the onus of saving the Constitution rested on everybody. He recalled the statement of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who warned at the Round Table Conference in

London that if proper steps were not taken, India would end up a majoritarian state. He held that the bills on data centre and equal opportunities commission were introduced by him in parliament. He vowed to continue his struggle for the cause of society. In his presidential remarks, the Chairman of the IOS, Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam observed that the legacy of the IOS Lifetime Achievement had been rich, and this year too, the honour was being dedicated to someone whose phenomenal life and actions were nothing short of an inspiration. The 10th IOS Lifetime Achievement Award was being bestowed on a warm and gracious person whom he has known for decades. He said that throughout his active life, K. Rahman Khan Saheb had helped people and reached out to institutions which needed his help and support. With an innate desire to help community at large, his immense contribution for the upliftment of the Muslim community was also commendable, he noted. Referring to the contribution of K. Rahman Khan in the areas of waqfs and waqf management, he said that he gained immensely from his knowledge and insights. While attending a programme organised by the IOS on waqf, he patiently listened to the challenges faced by the waqf management and promises to do everything to help in his capacity, he concluded.

Mujaddid IOS Centre for Arts & Literature remembers noted Urdu poet, Akhtarul Iman

Prof. Qazi Obaid-ur-Rahman Hashmi, founding member of the Mujaddid IOS Centre for Arts & Literature, presented his paper on the

poetry of the famous Urdu poet, Akhtarul Iman at a function, organised by the Centre at the auditorium of the IOS on December 24, 2022.

In his paper, Prof. Hashmi said that Akhtarul Iman was a unique Urdu poet who set new standards of Urdu poetry. His *Nazms* (A form of descriptive poetry) formed a valuable part of Urdu literature. Instead of sticking to *Ghazal* (poetry of romantic love) writing which predominated among Urdu poets, he preferred *Nazm* writing and excelled in it. He was born in a small town, Qila Pathargarh in Bijnor district of Uttar Pradesh on November 12, 1915. His father, Hafiz Fateh Mohammad, was an Imam in a mosque

more than 50 films. Besides dialogues, he wrote verses and stories. In recognition of his contribution to Urdu literature, he was honoured with the prestigious Film fare Award. Several other awards were also come his way. He passed away in Mumbai on March 9, 1966.

Convenor of the Mujaddid IOS Centre for Arts & Literature, Mr. Anjum Naim held that Akhtarul Iman was an eminent Urdu poet of his time. But the Urdu community did not do justice to him. Urdu lovers deprived him of the place he deserved. It was a tragedy that several such Urdu poets remained out of the pale of recognition, he said.



Prof. Qazi Obaidur Rahman Hashmi presenting his paper

The function was presided over by the prominent public intellectual, Dr. Khwaja Iftekhhar Shahid. A number of journalists including Ahmad Javed, Suhel Anjum, Safi Akhtar and Waseem Fahmi, etc. were present on the occasion. The function began with the recitation of a Qur'anic verse by Hafiz Athar Husain Nadwi.

IOS Condolence on the demise of Dr. Mohd. Kamal Hassan

With immense grief and sorrow, Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam, Chairman, Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi, offered his deep condolences on the sad demise of Professor Emeritus Tan Sri Dr. Mohd. Kamal bin Hassan, who passed away on February 23, 2023 in Malaysia due to post-surgery complications. *Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi rajewoon!*

Dr. Hassan was an eminent academic and Islamic scholar, specialising in contemporary Islamic thought, particularly pertaining to the Southeast Asia region. He was the Rector of the International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIUM) from 5th April, 1998 to 31st May, 2006.

where he also used to teach Islamic studies in a seminary attached to it. He held that Akhtarul Iman received early education in Bijnor and shifted to Delhi later.

Prof. Hashmi maintained that Akhtarul Iman did his graduation from Anglo-Arabic College in Delhi. Then he went to Aligarh Muslim University for pursuing master's course. But he had to leave Aligarh without completing his post-graduation to earn a livelihood. He joined All India Radio as a staff artist. But, as the fate would have it, he went to Mumbai in 1945 to try his luck in film industry. He joined Filmistan as a dialogue writer. He was credited to have written dialogues for

To mark his contributions to the country, he was chosen to be a National Academic Figure in 2017 by Government of Malaysia. He left IUM on 30 July, 2018 after 42 years of service to Malaysian education, on which IUM awarded him the title of Professor Emeritus. Before exiting IUM, he was a Distinguished Professor at its Centre of Islamisation.

“Dr. Kamal Hassan was deeply attached with me and stayed at my residence when he visited Delhi first time. I used to meet him and interact on various issues during my visit to Malaysia. He was a great admirer of the Institute of Objective Studies, Dr. Alam said.

He was deeply associated with the IOS and attended several programmes organised by it. He was also a member of the advisory board of the IOS bi-annual journal ‘*Journal of Objective Studies*’.

May Allah accept all his good deeds, bless him with the choicest place in the heaven and grant *sabr* to all in the grieved family to bear this loss. *Aameen*.

Book Review

“*The Role of Communication in Political Empowerment of Women Panchayati Raj functionaries: A field study of Baramulla District in Kashmir*”, authored by Ms. Afsana Rashid and published by the Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi in 2022; Pages: 123; Price: Rs. 395.

Political and social empowerment of women is a key area where all societies fail to some extent, more so in our Indian society which remains patriarchal. Kashmiri society, being traditional and rural, suffers more than other Indian areas. In India, despite all the progressive policies adopted by successive governments since Independence, the representation of women in Lok Sabha during 1952 to 2014 has been only 6.91% while in Rajya Sabha for the same period it has reached only 9.62%. In other walks of life, too, women are lacking, more so in Kashmir. Political roles of a few women from aristocratic families and dynasties are deceptive and do not offer the real picture on the ground.

An attempt was made to empower women at various levels by reserving seats and constituencies for women. Here too, either aristocratic women grab the opportunities or their males rule through the façade of these women.

Panchayati Raj is a good route for women empowerment at the grassroots level. Panchayati Raj came to Kashmir during the Maharaja’s time in 1936. Later, in free India, legislations were made in 1951 and 1958 for village and block level Panchayati Raj. This was replaced by another legislation in 1989, but these did not provide for any provision to ensure women’s participation. Only in 1996, reservation for women was introduced in the Panchayati Raj legislation of Jammu & Kashmir on the lines of the

Central Act. This study shows that the presence of women at the grassroots level has been negligible in Kashmir. The author says that reasons for this include the secondary status of women in the Kashmiri social hierarchy and the political unrest in Kashmir for the last three decades. Moreover, the Panchayati Raj remained defunct in the state for several years. However, since 2011, there is a 33 percent reservation for women in Panchayati Raj structures. As a result, women’s representation in these structures has gone up considerably.

The role of communication and media as well as education is very important in achieving these results. This field study focuses on the status of Kashmiri women in Baramulla district in the Valley of Kashmir. This is an important contribution. Only through such field studies will we be able to get an idea of the real situation of development in our society on the ground.

I must add here that the Kashmiri society woke up to the importance of media quite early since early 1990s to be precise. This led thousands of young Kashmiri students to join media departments in Kashmir universities and elsewhere and today they are present in many local, national and international media organisations giving a voice to the Kashmiri people.

Reviewed by Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan

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