

Interview

An Interview of Dr. Ahmad Totonji

Q: What is the future of Islamic movement in Bangladesh? Are you optimistic to establish a true Islamic Govt. in Bangladesh?

A: The future of Islam in Bangladesh is extremely bright. Bangladeshi people are Muslims and they are not just Muslims but they are willing to sacrifice for their religion. Islam is their religion and their way of life. They would like to be ruled by the principles which they agreed. Therefore, we could not be surprised if sometime people choose for themselves to adopt the Islamic principles in their government as well. This is a democratic process. When people want something they vote for it and the whole world is approaching towards this kind of work. Future of Islamic movement in Bangladesh is bright because they have always been in the middle path. They do not believe in extremism. They go excess is no way. That is why you can see that when some problems happen by extremists, Islamic movement are the first people to disagree with it. Because their path is different and these people try to win.

Q: When this Islamic government can take place here?

A: We have a Muslim government in Bangladesh. We are all Muslims and *Alhamdulillah* the minorities are also representing. So, you should not term it really an Islamic government nor Non-Islamic government, it's a Muslims government. And in politics you try hard what is possible. If the people today majority wants certain way you will go that way. They get more education in their religion they want to incorporate more to what Allah wants them to have to do. I'm sure they will not hesitate.

Q: Islamic movements in the world so far failed to form any government. How do you evaluate this?

A: Bangladesh is an example for many Islamic movements for the other Muslim countries to follow. They have tried to see their best what is the interest of the *country* first. In politics it is the act of the possible and the Islamic movements always try their best to play fairly and democratically with the others and share in guiding the destiny of the *country* to the best of all of its citizens. Therefore, they have hesitated to join any of the group when their platform was more useful for the people of the country. It is not the matter that one group must rule, it is a consensus at each time at of who is presenting the best land and platform for their country.

Q: How do you evaluate Indo-Pak situation? Do you think that the Kashmir problem will be solved in the near future?

A: I'm really not an expert on Indo-Pak question. But if you ask me in general principle - the governments of the two countries are wise, they are saying enough is enough from the bloodshed, they want to save their resources for the betterment of their *country* instead of more destruction. It is very encouraging for both the countries the way they handle the relationships and we are sure that they will come to a very amicable solution, especially that United Nations have made lot of resolutions to solve and people in the region usually listen reasonable suggestions and we hope that they will come quick conclusion in this issue.

Q: After collapse of the Soviet Union six (Islamic) republics emerged with Muslim majority population. Do you think that they have a chance to become a truly Islamic republic *country*?

A: As you know at the time of the Soviet Union these countries and the people were deprived of any Islamic knowledge. They were deprived of places of worships. Various governments of Soviet Union, they mistreated different ethnic Muslim groups, many were killed but Islam remained in the hearts of the people. So, when Soviet Union collapsed these people wanted to back their

roots. In a very short period of time thousands of mosques were established. Naturally they want to practice their religion. They welcomed anyone who came and talked their religion because they had not any opportunity. They welcomed publications in the local languages and Russian languages, because they were deprived often in the previous era. People who have been for seventy years subjugated to all kinds of pressure and deprivation of the knowledge of the religion. Muslims love their religion, they would like to have guidance.

Q: Reforms of the OIC is the need of time. In what direction this reform can take place?

A: OIC is a very important organization. It was 'the dream of the Muslim Ummah in the second part of sixties that they should have a platform, which they can meet, they could interact, they can exchange information, they can have some dialogue among the Muslims. The expectation was very high and the early administration of OIC tried whatever they could. Now when we judge them we see that they could have done better. Let us look forward and say how we can improve it. The Muslim countries must give support to see how they can bring better understanding among the Muslim countries, how they can have more trade and cultural exchanges among them, how can they facilitate visas and formalities of meeting among the nations. Perhaps OIC can play a very important role in setting up commissions in each of the fields and see how they could facilitate this public demand and actualize it through their government for the benefit of all Muslims and Humanity at large.

Q: Reform in the United Nations is imminent. How Muslim countries can play a significant role in this reform? Do you think that there should be permanent seats in the Security Council for the Muslim countries?

A: The Muslims are very happy that world at last is realizing that the Muslims could be more participants in the world affairs in a

positive manner. Indeed a permanent representative in the United Nations will give one fifth of the world an effective positive voice for the betterment of Humanity rather than sidelining between one and a half billion/two billion Muslims of the world.

Q: Recent London bombing poses a serious threat for British Muslims. How do you evaluate this situation?

A: It is very unfortunate whenever any people in the world make mistakes, it is not attributed to their religion and Britain has its own example in Ireland. But when a Muslim makes a mistake or a few crazy people act in a manner which the society does not like, we attribute it to two billion Muslims of the world and we brand all of them in name which is not befitting to the civilized nations. Of course the Muslims in Britain are suffering, they have suffered because of this, but we believe in the wisdom of the British nation.

Q: Is there any possibility of Muslim renaissance in near future? Do you think that Muslims will be able to attain honorable positions in the world?

A The renaissance of the Muslims is obvious, you feel everywhere. The Muslims have wakened and they are looking to get their fair share in the world affairs for the betterment of the Humanity. The Principles of justice in Islam is one of the greatest principles and we feel that this can be adopted for entire humanity to deal with justice.

Q: At the present crisis moment what should be the prime duty of a Muslim?

A: At this critical time in the history of Humanity, the Muslims have the responsibility to outline the true and wonderful principles of Islam for humanity and encourage them to accept them for betterment of the entire humanity. Muslims can really show to the people that when the Muslims adhered to their principles and follow the command of their faith, lot of justice and fair play was there. Let us be objective in study of Islam.

Interviewed by Mir Lutful Kabir Saadi