

Conference Report

Dr. Ahmad Totonji's visit to Bangladesh

Dr. Ahmad Totonji, Vice President of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), U.S.A. visited Bangladesh for three days from 17th to 19th August 2005. During the visit he addressed four select gatherings of intellectuals, educationists, bankers and physicians. Besides he met at BUT office with its executives. On organizational issues of the BUT, Dr. A. Totonji made some policy guidelines to gear up the activities.

Dr. A. Totonji in his meeting with BUT officials and members traced the background of the establishment of IIIT and narrated the situation specially before and after 11 September' 2001 and reiterated that the position of Islam and Muslims though at present in crisis will *ins hallah* improve of any injustice and unlawful activities in carrying its mission and message. That is why even after the incidence of 11 September 2001, people are coming to Islam in an increasingly greater number, though president Bush's Policy had long been inimical and unjust with regard to Islam and Muslims without any valid reason. This is because people's conscience do not accept the false propaganda.

Some Islamic movements have "failed to make difference between local culture and Islamic culture, which is a reason for the backwardness of the Muslims". Covering face of woman is a local culture and has nothing to do with Islam", Dr. Totonji said.

In the gathering of intellectuals, tried to briefly identify the major reasons for the backwardness of the Muslims Ummah and what should be our response. Underlining the reasons for which Muslims today are lagging behind Dr. Totonji said: "We do not give much emphasis on research and development (R & D) and therefore we cannot formulate appropriate strategy to defend our rights and are exploited by others." He called upon the new

generation "to be innovative and achieve excellence to put an extra effort whenever work demanded and become the master of one's own profession and achieve the best possible."

Dr. Totonji urged upon the intellectuals and scholars of the Muslims Ummah to work with confidence so that the prolonged stagnation in the intellectual field of the Ummah is removed and the challenges of modern civilization can be competently tackled. He advised to follow the Prophet (SM) who was alone, to start a revolution of changing heart and behavior of mankind with wisdom and by upgrading the level of understanding. He suggested to ignore differences amongst different groups of Muslims with an agreement on minimum points on which there are no disagreements. Dialogue with people of other faiths also improves situation and reduce confrontation. Morale of the Ummah is to be upheld and upgraded. Islam by virtue of its potentiality and merit can encompass all people irrespective of their faiths to offer a peaceful society. This is why despite Bush's barbarian policy of 'Might is right' many scholars, intellectuals of civil society and general people of the U.S.A are not that much inimical to Islam and Muslim as Bush is.

In the gathering of educationists, Dr. Totonji gave importance in infusing the spirit of *Tauhid* to all social sciences which is the basis of 'Islamization of knowledge' program. He urged upon the parents to take care of childhood education of the children, because childhood education builds up the structure of personality.

- Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Recommendations of the Workshop on the *Islamization of Knowledge*

Recommendations of the Workshop on Economics

In the field of economics, six speakers presented their definitions of Islamization and what they considered to be the deficiencies of modern economic theories. One major problem, in their view, has been the obsession of economists with "economic rationalism," which has left them unable to solve pressing economic problems such as massive poverty, inequality of income and wealth, inflation, unemployment, stagflation, and others. Islamic

economics, having as its focus the shift from the material sphere to the human sphere, from civilization to culture, from self-interest alone to a mix of self-interest and altruism, as well as taking into consideration specific social objectives, presents a viable alternative methodology for dealing with mankind's present economic problems. It was also stated that Islamic economics would have to confront other problems associated with the unethical consequences of advancement, restrictive and discriminatory trade practices, and flaws in the current models used by development economics.

The session closed with several recommendations: a) Researchers and experts should begin to Islamize economics by studying it in detail to see which elements can be Islamized and which should be discarded, b) The Qur'an, the Sunnah and other relevant Islamic literature, especially from the early period of Islam, must be understood and then utilized to create a new theoretical framework and to embark upon empirical research, c) Empirical research and the data to be gathered and used must conform to Islamic norms, d) An Islamic framework, consisting of the available tools of conventional disciplines plus others such as non-financial ratios and rates indices and functional forms, must be developed, e) The indexing and references of relevant Islamic sources should be undertaken to help the experts in their research, f) Results should be distributed throughout the academic and other concerned communities so that all will benefit and be helped in their own research, and g) A separate workshop should be convened to highlight methodological issues, tools of analysis and interpretation, philosophical foundations, both in India and in the world at large.

Recommendations of the Workshop on Anthropology

Participants distinguished Islamic anthropology from its non-Islamic counterpart by saying that it : a) is a living faith and cultural tradition, b) contributes to cross-cultural and comparative insights, and c) can participate in the establishment of a universal science of man because of the relevance and utility of Islamic insights and perspectives.

The following recommendations were made: a) The undertaking of an anthropological reconstruction of Islamic society during the time of the Prophet (SM), b) Archaeology of the Qur'an, c) The

explication of Islamic values. institutions. and cultural patterns in a comparative framework involving past and present civilizations. d) Correction and refutation of earlier studies done by biased orientalists and colonialists. e) The study of al Biruni as and anthropologist. with special reference to his *Kitab al Hind* and *Al Athar al Baqiyah fi al Qur'an al Khatiyah*, f) A comparative appraisal of Ibn Khaldun, and g) Laying the foundations for an Islamic medical anthropology.

Other recommendations. relevant to Islam in the Indian context. were: a) An ethnographic survey of Muslims in India. which would focus on identifying problematic areas relating to the process of Islamization and the socioeconomic problems of Indian Muslim communities. b) The study of Muslim tribal communities in India. and c) making use of al Birunis *India: An Ethnographic Supplement* (his observations on Indian culture. corroborated and substantiated by recent anthropological and sociological research).

Recommendations of the Workshop on Mass Communications

The following recommendations were made; a) An anthology of mass communications should be prepared in order to introduce the field to Muslim scholars, b) A workshop entitled "Mass Communication: An Islamic Perspective" should be held under the auspices of the Islamic Journalism Society, c) An International Directory of Muslim Scholars in the field should be prepared. d) The current activities of the Feature and News Analysis (FANA) should be strengthened and its feature and clipping services introduced to the Muslim world media. e) A select number of existing Muslim magazines and newspapers should be strengthened and disproved. f) Active contacts should be established and maintained with professional Muslims. and g) A center for mass communications research and training should be established. A proposal to this effect should be submitted to Dr. 'AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, current rector of the International Islamic University (Malaysia).

Recommendations of the Workshop on the Islamization of Law

Such an undertaking must take into account three specific factors. and then strive to come up with suitable solutions. These are: a) Muslims forming a relatively large religious minority within a non-Muslim country are usually governed by Islamic law in personal matters. However, Muslim personal law is no longer pure, due to the additions by various people and legislatures.

Thus, research must be done in the Shariah so that viable alternatives, which will gradually lead to the re-Islamization of personal law, can be proposed and implemented, b) Muslim majority countries. Here Muslims are faced with the legacies of either non or anti Islamic political, economic, educational value and other systems imposed upon them by colonialism. A complete review and subsequent revision of the entire corpus of law and legalistic/juristic practice was deemed necessary in order to bring the existing legal framework into accordance with Islamic legalistic practices and concepts. Emphasis should be placed upon such issues as procedural laws (i.e. evidence), the legal position of non-Muslims in an Islamic state, criminal law, and constitutional law, and c) The interaction of Islamic law with international law. Islamic law also has very little to say about issues such as public and private ownership, civil and criminal liability, and has nothing to say about space laws, marine laws, administrative laws, public international law, and other types of legislation common in the world to day. Work must be done in these areas to bring Islamic law up to date, and also to make its concepts worthy of study by non-Muslim legal experts.

The panel recommended some practical steps to begin this process: a) Providing relevant material to scholars of modern law. Jassas al Razi's *Ahkam al Qur'an* And Ibn al 'Arabi al Maliki's *Ahkam al Qur'an* were suggested, as the panel thought that these two books would give researchers direct insights into the sunnah and acquaint them with the interpretations and arguments of Muslim jurisconsults of the past. Works of Shawhani were also mentioned, and b) After the researcher has become competent in this field, he should switch over to a comparative study of Islamic legal systems.

Recommendations of the Workshop on Philosophy

The case of philosophy was held to be different from that of other sciences. As it has become blurred over the centuries due to suppression and Westernization, much work needs to be done to purify it and then to restore it to its original purity. Such efforts must encompass the fields of ontology, epistemology, cosmology, logic, aesthetics and ethics. Islamic philosophy must be freed from its imposed task of meeting the needs of the imperialists and colonialists, and turned towards meeting the needs of the Muslims. To accomplish this, it was stated that the following must be done:

a) Writing a critical history of Islamic philosophy and pointing out the un-Islamic elements for teaching philosophy, c) Preparing sound Islamic textbooks to deal with all areas of philosophical inquiry, d) Encouraging intellectual initiative to deal with new philosophical thought and concepts, e) undertaking a critical appraisal of contemporary philosophical schools from an Islamic viewpoint, f) Striving towards inter sect understanding through a comparative study of their concepts, to achieve Islamic unity, g) Evolving an Islamic philosophy of religion, based on a comparative study of major world religions, in order to highlight Islam's universality and practicality, h) Exploring the possibility of providing an Islamic foundation to the philosophies of science, mind, history, society, politics, law and hermeneutic, and i) Holding workshops for the specific purpose of developing effective strategies to carry out these steps according to an agreed-upon plan of action.

Recommendations of the Workshop on Sociology

Participants agreed that this field was started by the West, which still dominates it, and that it- therefore has no Islamic values in its concepts. What is needed, therefore, is a complete overhaul of Sociology. This can be accomplished by identifying the non-Islamic concepts and theories in the field and then seeking to replace them with Islamic alternatives based upon the two primary sources of Islamic thought: revelation and reason. This is imperative, for Sociology is a normative and value-oriented science, not a pure science like others. One helpful source of information was stated to be the writings of Ibn Khaldun. In the case of India, the writings of al Biruni on India were stated to be helpful. A call was also made for the holding of future workshops.

Recommendations of the Workshop on education

After stating the necessity of Islamizing the entire educational system, as this will affect all disciplines taught in schools at any level, the discussants put forward a long-term plan and an immediate plan for India. In brief, the first one called for the unification of traditional Muslim and modern educational systems, starting from the early grades and gradually working up to the college and university levels. As there is some resistance to such an idea, workshops and seminars to achieve a unity of purpose should be held. The immediate plan envisioned familiarizing teachers with the meaning, importance, and

methodology of the Islamization of Education. This is to be done through the holding of seminars and workshops, along with the publication of suitable texts, teaching aids, and other instructional materials: Teachers must also be made aware of the importance of setting up specific objective, the use of educational psychology, and the methods and pedagogy of teaching. It was recommended that the Departments of education in the A.M. U and the Jamia Millia Islamia work together in this field and design an in-service education program for teachers.

Recommendations of the Workshop on History

This workshop produced several recommendations, among them : a) The need to prepare working papers on all major branches of history, b) The regular publication of articles and textbooks on history from an Islamic perspective, c) The active involvement of students and research scholars under the aegis of various colleges and universities, and d) The holding of a seminar on Ibn Khaldun as a model philosopher of Islamic historiography. It was also recommended that the results of such studies be widely dispersed and translated, and that seminars and workshops be held in different areas of India so that a large number of people could participate.

- Institute of Objectives Studies, New Delhi, India

Recommendations of the anti-terrorism "Dhaka Declaration" adopted at the U lama Conference

The Following recommendations were adopted at the conference:

Introduction:

People of all faiths are practicing respective religions peacefully in Bangladesh. This Ulama Conference is adopting the following recommendations in response to those who are destroying the peace and order of the country through bomb blasts, terrorism and killings, disrupting the daily lives of the people by creating panic and fear.

1. Those who want to disrupt the peaceful environment by creating chaos and harm, are the enemies of Islam. They

deserve severe punishment in the hereafter. It is needed if necessary, to take serious steps to stop their misdeeds. Allah Taa'la says in the Holy Quran : "The recompense of those who wage war against Allah and His messenger and do mischief in the land is only that they shall be killed or crucified or their hands and their feet be cut off on the opposite sides, or be exiled from the land." (Surah Ma'idah: 33)

2. Allah Taa'la says in the Holy Quran: "That if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief in the land - it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind." (Surah Ma'idah: 32). Presently, those who are killing human beings by bomb blasts or any other means are the killers of the entire mankind. They are not only the enemies of Islam; they are enemies of mankind as a whole. Allah Taa'la says: "You shall not kill-for that is forbidden by Allah-except for a just cause" (Surah An'aam: 151)
3. If any kind of enmity arises toward any country, nation or race due to any cause, there is no permissibility in Islam to treat them with injustice. Allah Taa'la says: "and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety, and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is well Acquainted with what you do." (Surah Mumtahina: 8-9)
4. In a peaceful society, where all citizens fully enjoy their social, economic and religious rights, creation or anarchy cannot be approved by any means. Peaceful co-existence is the responsibility of every citizen. Jihad, Qital of fighting of Islam aims at establishing peace, safety and security, not at destroying them. Once a man asked Sa'ad (r): has not Allah Taa'la said: "fight against them until temptation is removed and 'Deen' becomes for Allah only". Then Sa'ad said: "We have fought until temptation has been removed and you and your companions want to create temptation" (Sahih Muslim). It is clear that there is no scope for anarchy in a civilized, stable and peaceful society.
5. It is one of the major responsibilities of the state to take measures according to the rules against terrorists after arresting them in order to ensure peace and security of the common people of the country. Today's conference fervently appeals to all concerned to discharge this responsibility properly.

6. It is very necessary to hand over the persons carrying out bomb explosions and terrorist activities. This conference fervently appeals to all peace-loving citizens to inform the law enforcing agencies if they know their whereabouts and activities of these disruptive elements.
7. Islam is a simple and well-balanced code of life. Extremism is not acceptable in Islam. Allah wishes easiness for His servants not hardship for them. Allah Taa'la says: "Allah wants easiness for you; not hardship for you." (Surah Baqarah: 185) Allah Taa'la says: "Allah does not wish to burden you" (Surah Ma'idah: 6). He also says: "Allah would lighten your burdens, and man was created weak" (Surah Nisa: 28). The Messenger of Allah says: "Ease and don't create difficulty, give good news and don't make despaired"
8. Recently we have seen some confusing explanations of Islam, Iman, Kufr, Nifaq, Shirk, jahiliah and Jihad from some persons. Such misinterpretations lead to extremism in society. This conference strongly believes that superficial knowledge about the different important aspects of Islam and the lack of proficiency in Arabic language are mostly attributable to this confusion and erroneous explanations. So this conference fervently calls upon all people of the country to reject those who are spreading confusion among the people by putting up strange explanations of different aspects of Islam, disregarding the views of the authentic scholars.
9. Because of extremist attitudes and superficial knowledge, a group of people are trying to establish Islamic government through violence instead of the disciplined codes prescribed by our religion. Unfortunately, in many cases, such extreme views have been receiving undue circulation among the common people due to the lack of proper understanding of Islam and Shariah from the authentic sources of reliable Islamic scholars, books and publication. This conference urges all concerned to be careful about acquiring knowledge from such half-educated people. This conference also advises all concerned to consult knowledgeable Ulamas for perfect and unequivocal knowledge about all aspects of Shariah.
10. Before taking measures against anyone on charges of bomb explosions and terrorism, it is very essential to make proper

investigation against the charge according to the rules, so that justice is not denied and human rights are not violated.

11. People arrested on charges of their involvement in any act of terrorism or indiscipline are considered innocent until their crimes are proved. It is, therefore, not lawful to term anybody a terrorist or to dishonor him carrying out propaganda against him.
12. It is not permissible to arrest any citizen for harassment or oppress him in remand without any witness and evidence. It is also not desirable to create terror in the society in the name of arrest.
13. It is very necessary to take enough measures to rectify the spirit and thought of citizens who choose self-destructive ways of terrorism and explosions inspired by the wrong faith and ideas. This conference calls upon the Government to keep the doors of negotiation and forgiveness open if anyone wants to give up such crime and return to the right path.
14. Bomb explosions, terrorism and suicide attacks are a national problem which call for unified efforts. This conference believes that the cordial efforts of every conscious citizen of the country can solve the problem without simply blaming each other. So, the conference fervently calls upon people all strata, irrespective of caste and creed, including political parties, religious leaders and leaders of different professional organizations and journalists of the electronic and print media, to come forward cordially to solve the problem.
15. According to Islam, suicide is a Kabirah (Great Sin). If anyone kills himself his destination will be Jahannam (Hell). Allah Taa'la says: "And you shall not kill yourselves. Allah is merciful to you". The messenger of Allah said: "Who commits suicide by any instrument of this earth; he will be punished in the Hereafter by the same thing". The Messenger of Allah also said: "A person was wounded in the Jihad and committed suicide for not enduring the pain of wound, then Allah Taa'la said: "My servant took his life himself early, so I made my Jannah (Heaven) prohibited for him".

So according to Islam, those who are killing themselves by suicide attacks in Bangladesh are committing great sins.

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