

**7th Sir Syed Ahmed Khan
Memorial Lecture**

by

Dr. Rafiq Zakaria
the eminent Islamic Scholar

under the joint auspices of
Sir Syed Group of Schools

and

**West Bengal Minorities Development
and Finance Corporation**



The Hon'ble Mr. Md. Salim

*Minister In charge,
Department of Minorities Development & Welfare,
Self Employment Scheme for the Urban unemployed,
Department of Youth Services,
Technical Education Department,
Government of West Bengal
inaugurated the lecture series.*

Mr. Justice K. M. Yusuf
*Former Judge, Calcutta High Court
presided.*

FOREWORD

The SIR SYED GROUP OF SCHOOLS (SSGS) is a registered voluntary organisation working for the upliftment of the marginalised and disadvantaged in the slums of Kolkata since a long time through education, healthcare, vocational training and capability building programmes. The towering personality of SIR SYED AHMAD KHAN with his strong foresight and farsight has been constant source of inspiration for SSGS team since its inception.

The SSGS has been organising birth anniversary of SIR SYED every year on 17th October through SIR SYED AHMAD KHAN MEMORIAL LECTURE series delivered by noted and renowned academicians and intellectuals of our country as mentioned below.

1997 Prof. Khalique Ahmad Nizami, Former Vice Chancellor Aligarh Muslim University and Ex-Indian Ambassador to Syria

1998 Dr. Pratap Chandra Chunder, Ex- Minister of Education and Social Welfare, Govt. of India.

1999 Janab Saiyid Hamid, IAS (Retd.), Chancellor, Hamdard University and former Vice chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University.

- 2000 Prof. Amlan Dutta, former Vice chancellor,
Viswabharati, Santiniketan.
- 2001 Prof. Dr. Tahir Mahmood, former
Chairperson, National Commission for
Minorities.
- 2002 Shri Siddharta Shankar Ray, Eminent Jurist
and Former Chief Minister of West Bengal.

The Seventh Memorial Lecture was delivered by eminent scholar of international repute DR. RAFIQ ZAKARIA on 17th October 2003 in Kolkata at Sisir Manch Auditorium on the topic "WHAT HAS GONE WRONG WITH INDIAN MUSLIMS". We have the privilege of presenting before you the said scholarly lecture in a booklet form for circulation among a cross section of public.

We believe that our publication of Memorial Lecture Series will benefit a large circle of scholarly people and research workers and the students of Indian History and reform movements.

With these words we trust that in the days to come, many more such works on SIR SYED will be forthcoming with cooperation from one and all.

Kolkata
November 11, 2003

Anwar Premi
Hony. Gen. Secretary
Sir Syed Group of Schools

7th SIR SYED AHMAD KHAN MEMORIAL LECTURE

WHAT HAS GONE WRONG WITH INDIAN MUSLIMS

By
Dr. Rafiq Zakaria

It is a pleasure to be in Kolkata. It has such a hoary past. And the present has been so different from the past - the old splendour with its regal environment has given place to popular radiance, where the will of the people is the dominating factor. I am grateful to your esteem organisations to have given me the opportunity to address such a distinguished gathering. However within a short span allotted to me it is difficult to cover such a complicated subject as Old Attitudes of Indian Muslims and the New Challenges which they must face. They are today misunderstood, misrepresented and shunned and discarded. In a large measure their leadership is responsible for what has happened to them especially after partition; it is a tragic tale, which has few parables in human annals.

Let me make it clear, at the outset, that whether in politics or in intellectual pursuits, my objective has been to strive for the fulfilment of the basic needs of Indian Muslims and to try and help them, in my own humble way, to adjust themselves to the changing pressures of free India. I have kept myself miles away from communal politics because as Iqbal

has said nothing debases a person more than communal politics. Before I dilate on the old attitudes of Indian Muslims and new challenges that they are required to face and what I have done in my own humble way in the course of the last sixty years in active politics as well as in intellectual activities, I would like to recite a poem in Urdu which the great Urdu poet Anand Narain Mulla gave me when I was the chancellor of Jamia Urdu, Aligarh. I was then not as old as I am today but the poet was. His poem has been both a source of guidance and comfort to me. May I recite it, with your permission, Mr. Chairman:

میرے ناداں رفیقو، یارو
 اتنا کمزور نہ جانو مجھ کو
 یہ سچ ہے کہ میں بوڑھا ہوں، جواں سال نہیں
 اب بہت دور نہیں منزلِ آخر میری
 پھر بھی رکھتا ہوں وہی حوصلہ اور عزم ابھی
 میرے بازو میں سکت ہے، مری کشی میں ہے دم
 آج تک میں کسی طوفاں سے ہارا تو نہیں
 ڈر کے ڈھونڈھا کبھی غیروں کا سہارا تو نہیں
 کبھی گھبرا کے کنارے کو پکارا تو نہیں
 اور اس ساعتِ نازک میں بھی
 اپنی کشتی کسی ساحل کے حوالے تو نہ کی
 اپنے اڑتے ہوئے پرچم کو اتارا تو نہیں
 اور طاقت کے غلاموں کی غلامی تو نہ کی
 میری غیرت کو گوارا یہ نہیں

موت منظور مگر یہ مجھے منظور نہیں
جب تک دم میں ہے دم یہ ہو گا نہ کبھی
چھوڑ دوں اپنے وہ خوابوں کے جزیرے، وہ افق
اور سینے کا کسی اور طرف رخ پھیروں

My unknown comrades and friends
Do not take me to be old and frail
It is true I am old, no longer young and robust
I am not too far away from the final call
Still I have the same courage and determination
My elbows are strong
My boat is still intact
I have not been blown up by any storm
Frightened, I did not seek the support of others
Nor did I ask for any shelter
During a critical moment
I did not leave my boat to others
Nor did I ever lower my flag
I refused to surrender before the powers that be
My honour did not accept
That I compromise myself
I preferred to rather die
Until there is life in me
I shall not give up my dreams
I shall not allow my boat
To take a different direction.

This objective has therefore guided my course of action all through, along with the other responsibilities that I had to bear; but what has troubled me is the lack of sympathy for Indian Muslims that I found everywhere. There were many

declarations of sympathy from many quarters alright but no real concern for them in practice. I joined politics as a college student in 1938 and soon plunged into it, but the course I adopted was the one which alienated me not only from my community but also from my family. They felt I was betraying them. I opposed Mr. Jinnah's Two-Nation theory, participated in the Quit-India movement and was jailed; subsequently when I went to London for higher studies I took more active part in India's struggle for freedom along with the late Mr. V.K. Krishna Menon and was elected as the Chairman of Indian Students' Societies in Great Britain and Europe.

Meanwhile, despite my opposition to the division of the country, which I consider to be the greatest blunder that our leadership committed, I wrote and spoke against it then in both British and Indian newspapers but the die was cast; I was too small a person to undo it. The Aftermath proved horrendous, especially for Indian Muslims of divided India. I have narrated in my book: *The Price of Partition* the various phases of my struggle for freedom of our country and the encounters that I was privileged to have with the leaders of the Congress, the Muslim League, and the leading Britishers and other foreign dignitaries especially during the crucial period of the forties both in India and in the U.K. and some other countries of Europe. I believe that Indian Muslims have suffered the most as a result of partition; they were supposed to be freed of Hindu domination but it has put two-third of the Muslims in undivided India into permanent Hindu domination - those in India and to some extent even in Bangladesh, which is economically dependent on India. Partition divided a united, vibrant Muslim community into three parts: Pakistani Muslims, Indian Muslims and Bangladeshi Muslims, and tore all the religious and cultural bonds that had united them. All contacts between them have

been lost; no ties remain, which had made them one. In undivided India, out of the eleven British Provinces, in five the Muslims had their own governments; at the Centre, being one third of the total population, they played a decisive role. In Princely India some of the major States were ruled by the Muslims.

Indian Muslims, believe me, have now become a miserable lot; it is a travesty of truth to describe them as pampered. Their condition socially, educationally and economically is worse than that of scheduled caste. In education, their dropouts at the 10th level are 65 percent; 40 percent at the 12th level; their participation in graduate and post-graduate levels is less than 5 percent; it is not even 1 percent in professional colleges. As a result of this backwardness, young Muslims find it difficult to compete for jobs. Even otherwise those who are qualified remain unemployed because of the prejudice they encounter everywhere. In the Government services, both in the States and at the Centre, their percentage is hardly 2 percent; in private sector it is worse. They do not get easily licenses, quotas or shares in cooperative enterprises. In IAS, IPS, IFS, their number is so small that they barely have any say in any department of administration. Politically their representation at every level in the Panchayats, Jilla Parishads, Municipalities State Assemblies or Parliament has been steadily declining. Facts and figures are easily available and they present a dismal picture. In my book *The Widening Divide* I have given full details and all the statistics.

The role of the Muslims in freedom struggle has been significant; right from the time of the 1857 revolt they were in the forefront of the fight against the British. There were three major movements for freedom launched by the

Mahatma: one, the Khilafat and the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920) in which the majority of participants were Muslims; two, the Salt Satyagraha and the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930) in which, as testified by Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his autobiography, one-third participants were Muslims; the biggest segment from the North-West Frontier Province under the leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan; and three, the Quit India Movement (1942), in which despite Jinnah's opposition, 15 percent of the Muslims participated; in Ahmednagar jail out of the 12 most distinguished prisoners, three were Muslims. Likewise, among those who sacrificed their lives for India's freedom, more than 50 percent were Muslims. The pages of the story of India's freedom struggle shine with such names as Maulana Mohamed Ali, Maulana Azad, Dr. M.A. Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Mazharul Haq, who until the last breath of their lives remained loyal to the Congress. In the Round Table Conference Maulana Mohamed Ali told the British: "Either give my country's freedom now or you will have to give a piece of land here for my grave." In a few days he died in London. It is a pity that due to the emotional support that Indian Muslims foolishly gave to Jinnah's demand for Pakistan, all these sacrifices have been wiped out and a wrong impression is sought to be created that Indian Muslims did not fight for the freedom of their country.

ہم نے اپنے خون سے سینچا ہے گلزارِ وطن
کیا قیامت ہے کہ مجرم ہم کو ٹھہراتے ہیں لوگ

Maulana Mohammed Ali declared in anger:

سرکش نہیں، باغی نہیں، غدار نہیں ہم
پر ہم پہ تقاضائے وفا اور ہی کچھ ہے

Some diehard Hindu communalists and the present Pakistani elite put Sir Syed, who was then the pre-eminent Muslim leader, in the same category as Mr. Jinnah. It is a lie. Sir Syed remained, until the very end of his life, an upholder of Hindu-Muslim unity. Yes, he opposed the Congress, for he feared that the British would single out the Muslims if they joined that organisation and would again be persecuted as rebels against the Raj. He also voiced his differences with the Hindus' sometimes even bitterly, but he never compromised on his loyalty to India or to its unity. He declared: "Both my Hindu brethren and my Muslim co-religionists breathe the same air, drink the water of the sacred Ganga and the Jamuna, eat the products of the earth which God has given to this country, live and die together. Both of us have shed our former dress and habits, and while Muslims have adopted numerous customs belonging to the Hindus, the Hindus have been vastly influenced by Muslim manners and customs. I say with conviction that if we were to disregard for a moment our conception of God-head then in all matters of everyday life, the Hindus and Muslims really belong to one nation (*qaum*)... and the progress of the country is possible only if we have a union of hearts, mutual sympathy and love.. I have always said that our land of India is like a newly-wedded bride whose two beautiful and luscious eyes are the Hindus and the Musalmans; if the two exist in mutual concord, the bride will remain forever resplendent and becoming, while if they make up their mind to see in different directions, the bride is bound to become squinted and even partially blind."

Today all that is history; in divided India Muslims have been reduced to hewers of wood and drawers of water. They have no voice in anything; they have no say in any new of development; However what is most distressing is the

decline in Hindu-Muslim relations. It has reached the nadir. I have tried in my own humble way to break the barriers and reconstruct the bonds of unity. I did so when I was in Government in my State and in the Centre in different capacities, but I am sorry to state that I failed to receive the help and cooperation that I needed. Neither community seemed to be interested in removing the cobwebs of prejudice and work for a harmonious relationship. Of late a terrible divide has been created, which does not auger well for the future. What happened in Gujarat has shattered my faith in sustaining communal harmony. Hindus and Muslims have been ranged against one another in such a diabolical manner that one shudders to think what lies in future for the teeming millions of our land, which prides itself on being the best repository of composite culture. In my latest book: *Communal Rage in Secular India*, I have given vent to my apprehensions and put forth certain suggestions, which, by and large, have been welcomed by a large number of Muslims and even by a section of discerning Hindus. These need to be seriously considered and urgently implemented.

It is no use moaning about what has happened to Indian Muslims; we have to look ahead and go forward. I think the best way is the one which Sir Syed showed to the Muslims in the wake of the revolt of 1857; he pondered hard, went through sleepless nights, consulted all and sundry and then came to the conclusion that the Muslims must give up their antiquated attitudes and change their traditional outlook. He wrote and spoke frankly that the old order had changed, giving place to new. And they must face the changes that it has brought in its wake. That was how they could come out of the slough of despondency and rebuild their lives.

Sir Syed was both a revolutionary and a wide-

ranging social and religious reformer; but he was also a pragmatist, above all a man of action. He was so moved by the plight of his co-religionists that he decided to do whatever he could to uplift them. He struggled hard to fulfil his objective and spared no effort to achieve success. He gave top priority to befriend the British, remove their prejudices against the Muslims and establish cordial relations between the rulers and the ruled. Unless he created a favourable environment, he believed he could not help his people. He then approached them, and pleaded with them to give up the old ideas and reconsider remoulding their mindset to cope with the changing situation. It was a hard task and he had to face many hurdles. Prof B.A. Dar has put what Sir Syed did cogently and succinctly: "Mere revival of Islamic learning as it then existed was of no use at all in the face of the onrush of Western knowledge that was pouring in with full vehemence, backed as it was by the secular authority of the British. The orthodox group could only magnify the danger inherent in these new forces, but they had no vision or programme to meet the new situation in a constructive and creative way. Their cry of jihad against the British, passive or active opposition to the New Learning, or mere revival of old, antiquated knowledge that had unfortunately come to be associated with Islam, was perfectly ridiculous. The whole libraries of such knowledge had become obsolete in face of the extensive and intensive researches in almost every sphere of human knowledge made by the West He was the first man in modern India to realise the necessity for a new interpretation of Islam that was liberal, modern, and progressive. It was in this atmosphere of doubt and despair that Sayyid Ahmad came forward with a new way of meeting this challenge from the West. He stood for co-operation in the political field, assimilation in the cultural field, and reorientation and reinterpretation of the Islamic ideology in the intellectual field. He was misunderstood and

misrepresented by the Ulama whom he attacked with all the force at his command for their lack of sense,, for their blind allegiance to an Islam that was, according to him, nothing more than a parody of the teachings of the Qur'an and the Holy Prophet, for upholding a system of religious thought that had long outlived its utility." To put it simply it was to discard the old and prepare for the new. It is the same situation that Indian Muslims face today; the circumstances of those times were different; the challenges were different, but I see a common current which runs through the plight of the Muslims then and now.

To prepare the ground for transforming the attitude of the rulers and making them to respond to the needs of the Muslims Sir Syed gave the utmost attention to providing the right type of education to his co-religionists which would fit in the change; he, therefore,, worked hard to set them apart from the hold of the old system. He was convinced that unless the mindset of the community change any progress was not possible, adhering to the old habits and out-of-date traditions would be disastrous for them. These had to be overhauled if the Muslims were to take their rightful place in the new world that was emerging, throwing overall the old which had become obsolete. It was the most difficult undertaking that Sir Syed undertook; as Iqbal has said:

آئین نو سے ڈرنا، طرزِ کہن پہ اڑنا
 منزل یہی کٹھن ہے قوموں کی زندگی میں

To be afraid of the new
 And remain stuck to the old
 This is the destination
 Which nations find difficult to reach.

To do this, Sir Syed needed a laboratory to perform the experiments and show the results. That was the motivation behind his founding the M.A.O. College, which after his death, has magnified into the magnificent Muslim University of Aligarh. However in that laboratory, he experimented many of his novel ideas; these angered most of the established custodians of religion; they even took a delegation of the ullama to the Grand Imam of Masjidul Haram in Kaaba and obtained his fatwa, declaring that Sir Syed for his heretical activities deserved to be killed *Wajibul Qatat*; but Sir Syed neither faltered nor failed; he stuck to his course of action and went ahead. He made the foundation that he laid for the upliftment of the Muslims so strong that come wind, come rain, nothing could topple it. Neither political intrigues nor religious upheaval. He believed as an Urdu poet has said:

زلزلہ اونچی عمارت گرا دیتا ہے
جو ہیں بنیاد کے پتھر، انہیں ڈر کا ہے کا

Earthquake can destroy tall buildings
But those which formed the foundation
What can it do to them.

But to confine Sir Syed's greatness to Muslim University at Aligarh will be wrong; he spread his wings of ideas far and wide to cover the whole lot of Indian Muslims spread all over the country. He was determined to change their outlook and make them, once again worthy of the glorious inheritance to which they belonged. For that he reminded them that Islam developed its splendid civilization because it went on changing from age to age, from country to country, from people to people absorbing new discoveries in every sector of human development. It never shied away in

throwing away the old conventions and outmoded doctrines and absorbed the new discoveries and creations. He told the Muslims that what the British had brought to India were new ideas, which were essential for progress; new vistas which broadened knowledge; new opportunities, which assured better existence. They could not be taught in the hackneyed madrassas then operated; in fact they were an analogy of what the real madrassa of the past were, which produced Avicenna, Averroes, Al-gazel, Rhazes, who brought light and learning to Europe when it was groaning under darkness. Following in their footsteps new centres of learning had to be established, he emphasised, to implement current requirements. Moreover, to get the best out of the Muslims they had to cultivate the British whom until then they had regarded as their worst enemies. In the wake of the victory at Badar, what did the Prophet do? Told the prisoners teach what they knew to the Muslims and they would be freed. He told his followers to go as far as China to acquire new knowledge.

Sir Syed told the Muslims bluntly that unless they cooperated with the British, they could not succeed in the new life that they had to face. He pleaded with them, with all the force at his command, that they had to win the goodwill of the rulers. However inimical their attitude might have been towards them in the past it was their duty, he averred, to remove their cobwebs and gain their confidence. This could not happen unless the Muslims changed their style of thinking and living. He told them with unparalleled courage that they had to discard all that they had been used to; the changing circumstances demanded a different approach and a different outlook. He went to the extent of showing the Muslims how to dress differently, walk and talk differently and even how to dine with the British in a manner which varied considerably



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from theirs. He wrote a book about it. I need not narrate here the whole galaxy of reforms that he advocated; they were published in the journal *Tahzibul Akhlaq*. The religious ones he formulated in his *Tafsir*, which are both bold and innovative. His friend and biographer Maulana Hali, whose love for Islam was second to none, realised that the community had to undergo a radical transformation if it were to survive. Inspired by Sir Syed he wrote a moving poem, in which he appealed to the Prophet to save his followers.

اے خاصہ خاصانِ رسل، وقت دعا ہے
 اُمت پہ تیری آکے عجب وقت پڑا ہے
 دولت ہے نہ عزت نہ فضیلت نہ ہنر ہے
 اک دین ہے باقی سو وہ بے برگ و نوا ہے
 فریاد ہے اے کشتی امت کے نگہباں
 بیڑا یہ تباہی کے قریب آن لگا ہے

Oh my most special Prophet
 This is the time for prayer
 Thy followers are in the grip of
 Trouble after trouble
 They have neither wealth nor reputation
 Nor have they ability or knowledge
 Only the religion is there
 But it is adrift and helpless
 My complaint to you
 The guardian of the ship of religion
 That a terrible calamity seems in store for thy followers

Another great poet Moulvi Mohamed Ismail

explained in few verses the essence of the struggle for survival of the community that Sir Syed had launched:

یہ جنگ نہیں توپ کی یا تیغ و تبر کی
اس جنگ میں ہے کچھ جاں کی جوکھوں کی نذر کی
یہ جنگ ہے اخلاق اور علم و ہنر کی
یہ جنگ ہے تحصیلِ عمل اور نظر کی
یہ جنگ نہیں وضع و مروت کے منافی
اس جنگ سے مافات کی ممکن ہے تلافی

This is not a war of swords and of daggers and hatchets
In it there is no risk of life or of loss of wealth
This is a war of character and of knowledge and skill
This is a war of action and of outlook
It does not negate courtesy and consideration
This war may compensate all one's losses.

Akbar Allahabadi, in his inimitable style, complained:

ایک سید کیا کرے اور بیٹھ کر دس کیا کریں
حضرتِ حالی کے اشعارِ مسدس کیا کریں
در حقیقت مہربانی قوم کی درکار ہے
ہم اکیلے بے کس و زار و بے بس کیا کریں

What can one Sayyid — or even ten put together do?
What can even the inspiring verse of Hali fulfil?
Truly, it is the community which must respond and act;

People like us - forlorn and helpless—
What can we poor alone do?

But Sir Syed changed the whole atmosphere so dramatically that hundreds of his co-religionists, big and small, great and eminent, gathered round him and by the time he had passed away the whole environment had changed; the transformation that he brought about in every sector was unbelievable. He roused the patriotic spirit among his people with the result that Maulana Mohamed Ali, at the height of the Non-Cooperation Movement addressed the following couplet to him.

سکھایا تھا تمہیں نے قوم کو یہ شور و شر سارا
جو اسکی انتہا ہم ہیں تو اسکی ابتدا تم ہو

He had asked Hali to write his famous *Mussadas* and after reading it he said:

خدا پوچھے گا محشر میں کہ کیا لایا ہوں دنیا سے
تو کہہ دوں گا کہ حالی سے مسدس لکھ کے لایا ہوں

Sir Syed's achievement were stupendous and they were radical, comprehensive and all-sided.

Having successfully performed the task that he had undertaken and brought the community round to his way of thinking, he could proudly say, in the words of Majrooh Sultanpuri:

میں اکیلا ہی چلا تھا جانب منزل مگر
لوگ ساتھ آتے گئے اور کارواں بنتا گیا

I was walking alone towards the goal
But people joined me and it became a caravan.

Sir Syed spent his whole life under the British raj; he strived, therefore, to adjust the needs of the community to suit the compulsions of the new regime. In doing so he did not compromise the fundamentals of his religion; in fact he fought governors like Sir Milliam Muir and made him realise that his presentation of the life of the Prophet and his mission was wrong.

From the life of Sir Syed and what he did to uplift the community we can learn so much; he has left us the guidelines on the basis of which, I feel, we will be able to come out of the rot. In my humble way I have tried to follow in his footsteps and have urged upon Indian Muslims to adopt his way in free India that has come to us in the wake of partition and rebuild our relations with the dominant Hindus. That was the way, as I have explained, Sir Syed went about; he first built the relationship between the Muslims and the ruling British to create the necessary infrastructure to uplift the community; we have in the same way to work towards improving our relations with the Hindus..

There are people who want the scars of partition to be kept alive and reinforce the divide; we have to make the Hindus realise that though Jinnah asked for partition it were Nehru and Patel who accepted it. Why did they agree when Gandhi pleaded with them to stand firmly for united India. The demand was wrong; but its acceptance was worse. Lincoln fought a civil war to preserve the Union. To blame the Muslims alone for partition would not be right; in any case what good can such argument do now. That sort of politics has outlived its utility; it can only hamper our progress. In the last

50 years, I am afraid, the so-called leaders of Indian Muslims have failed to take a realistic view and to prepare the Muslims for cooperation instead of confrontation with the dominant Hindus; nor have they bothered to tackle the real issues troubling the community. They politicised non-issues and widened the divide between the two communities. They indulged in power politics, which brought no relief to Indian Muslims. Their cries for the redressal of grievances fell on deaf ears because there was neither sympathy nor concern for them among the ruling Hindus. Some people thought that shouting slogans, holding demonstrations, demanding justice under the provisions of the constitution would produce the result; but nothing of the kind happened. Their wailing, fretting and fuming only brought more ill-will against the Muslims; they resorted to confrontation but that turned out to be counterproductive. None of these methods brought any succour or protection to the Muslims. The divide on the contrary between the two communities became wider and wider. The sufferers were the common Muslims.

It is high time Indian Muslims do some introspection and take stock of what has landed them into this terrible plight; the way to fight and overcome it is to generate more and more goodwill all around and winning over the ruling class. Too much hatred has taken place and it must be removed. Hindus must be made to understand that divided both would fall; it is in the interest of the two communities that they should cooperate with one another and help the nation.

My plea to Indian Muslims is that they must see the light of day and move in a different direction so that they can go forward and not backward. They must discard their worn-out prejudices and outmoded habits and adjust themselves to the requirements of the changing times. They must harness



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their inner strength and learn to be self-reliant. They must give up asking for doles which will only cripple them. In order to survive, they must learn to stand on their own feet. For the fact is it that they have at present no true friends; political parties pretend friendship only to obtain their votes. After the elections they conveniently forget their promises. This has been proved time and time again but only the wise take the hint and correct themselves.

Therefore better social contacts will give them what they need rather than politics. Even secularism has not been of much use in ameliorating their lot; nor have Muslims of other countries bothered about them.

The well-known American columnist Thomas L. Friedman has asked a pertinent question: "Why is it that when Hindus kill hundreds of Muslims it elicits an emotionally muted headline in the Arab media but when Israel kills a dozen Muslims, in a war in which Muslims are also killing Jews, it inflames the entire Muslim world?" Then there are the religious extremists, patronized mostly by Pakistan who spread terror everywhere and bring shame and disgrace to their co-religionists. Their gruesome actions further alienate Muslims from non-Muslims. They pull Muslims out of the confines of modern life with the result they are shunted out from everywhere. Furthermore the suicidal rage of these fanatics, as a critic has said, is dragging down one of the finest civilizations that the human race ever witnessed. To quote Meer Hashim:

زندگی ایسے خلاؤں میں بسر ہوتی ہے
ہم سے اب دور ہے امروز بھی فراد کی طرح

Some of our leaders also whip up religious frenzy at

the slightest pretext which only further inflames communal passion and, in the end generates more illwill among the Hindus. The worst affected by such tactics have been the Muslims in the rural areas who constitute more than 70 per cent of the Muslim population in India. They are troubled and distrusted by their Hindu neighbours for no fault of theirs; consequently they have developed a fear complex which makes them incapable of leading a peaceful life. The Muslims in urban areas manage to shout and agitate; they are even able to make some ripples but what is the end result? None of these leaders visit villages so they are unaware of the fallout of their actions on the poor and hapless who live in the remote parts of the country. In what words can I explain the degradation through which they are passing their lives. As the poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz has said:

اب کوئی پوچھے بھی ہم سے تو شرح حالات کہیں
دل ٹھیرے تو درد سنائیں، درد تھے تو بات کریں

There are no doubt many Hindus whose hearts bleed for Muslims; but what sustains hatred among large sections of Hindus against Muslims is the intellectual justification for it by several leading Hindu intellectuals who proudly speak on the distinction between "us" and "them". The Nobel Laureate V. S. Naipaul denounces Muslims *en masse* and justifies the vengeance that has spread against them. This is not confined to a small section; it has infected the rich as much as the poor; men as much as women; the young as much as the old; even children are no longer free from it. Teachers in schools and lecturers in colleges openly talk against Islam and Muslims. Hence concerted effort has to be made by both sides to remove the cobwebs of

misunderstanding and both Hindus and Muslims must work for a genuine camaraderie, which will erase the root cause of growing alienation.

Indian Muslims must, therefore, join hands with liberal Hindus to work zealously for harmony between the two communities; they must shed their prejudices and by their behaviour create a friendly environment for improving Hindu-Muslim relations. They should encourage more and more get-together and social contacts. Every effort needs to be made to break the divide; no prestige should be allowed to come in the way. Hatred can be overcome only by love; that is the time-honoured rule of human relationship. To preserve multi-religious ties is urgent as well as basic for the preservation of secularism. By their conduct Indian Muslims must get to gather more and more Hindus on their side. This is as important for safeguarding their religious and cultural heritage.

True, the response may not be as easy and heart-warming from the Hindus; but the Muslims must remember the saying, "a hand caught between an anvil and a hammer has no choice." History has unfortunately put them in that position. The younger generation in particular should be freed of the burden of the past; it must be helped to recast their lives by looking forward to a meaningful existence with their neighbours. They must be armed both educationally and socially in such a way that despite all odds that their parents had to face and the hurdles that they have to cross, their future should be so planned that they could be able to ensure it without any let or hindrance. They have the intelligence and the energy, the talents and the urge; what is needed now is the proper harnessing of these. For them *aaram* should be *haram*. In the words of Iqbal:

خون رگ معمار کی گرمی سے ہے تعمیر
بے محنت پیہم، کوئی جوہر نہیں کھلتا

It is the mason's blood and sweat which builds
Perpetual labour alone brings out the jewel's lustre.

They will succeed if parents shed their old, traditional habits, give up their outdated notions, and encourage and help their sons and daughters to get the best of education and the right type of training; the scope is wide now with the professions, both old and new providing more and more opportunities. Apart from medicine, engineering, pharmacy, there are now the new fields of computer education and technological information. In the fifteen colleges and institutes of higher learning which I have founded in Maharashtra, I find Muslim girls are performing better than the boys, ranking in the merit list in University exams. They have charisma, intellect and more importantly, the urge to learn which should be assiduously encouraged. One of the most successful Muslim women entrepreneurs Mrs. N L. Kidwai, who has made into Fortune's 50 has said: "Hard work and passion can get you anything; you just have to put your mind to it. Initially, it is also important to get oneself fully qualified, so go out and get yourself well-qualified."

On their part, the young Muslims must try and acquire excellence and perfection in their chosen disciplines and so equip themselves that after the completion of their studies they can be frontrunners wherever they go. Patronage is given to the privileged, for Muslims there is no patronage; in their case, therefore, merit alone will count. Their future will be assured if their results are commensurate with the task

entrusted to them; if they do well they will be able to cut across the communal prejudice against them. The competent and merited will always be in demand. At the same time Muslims should cultivate an attachment to both their Indian and Islamic heritage, exhibiting equal pride in them. They must face new challenges, boldly and fearlessly. Islam has been recently much distorted by Muslim themselves on one side and much maligned by non-Muslims on the other. Moreover its noble values are openly violated by its own dignitaries for selfish purposes; all this has shattered its glorious legacy of enlightenment and intellectual advancement for which the whole human race is indebted to it; it is for the young Muslims to revoke the wrong that has been done to Islam and revive its right heritage.

Islam needs to be projected, in view of the ill-informed propaganda against it, in its true pristine colour - as a dynamic, progressive force which teaches its followers to move forward and not backward. They must, by their forceful and constructive exertions, reclaim Islam's glorious past and bring back the spirit of compassion which some of their greatest saints and philosophers, poets and scientists, fostered through their immemorial works.

They brought fraternity where hostility prevailed; they encouraged cooperation where confrontation prevailed. Indian Muslims must disarm the terrorists and disown the bigotry which has made Muslims pariahs everywhere. They must, by their example, transmit Islam's message of tolerance and brotherhood to the world and give to the non-Muslims the assurance that their religion stands for "live and let live". Their reformation should rejuvenate Islam and be the beacon light for the rest of the Muslim world which is still mired in obscurantism and totalitarian stranglehold.

The values of democracy, human rights and civil liberties that India has nurtured and under which she has flourished should be taken by Indian Muslims to the oppressed Muslims, wherever they be. They can, if they try, give the latter the much-needed lead.

They must also direct their energies in taking full advantage of globalization and try to utilise fully their talents to come up on the top. That is how the most oppressed have always redeemed their destiny. The Jews were the most prosecuted in Europe for many centuries; but they strived hard and fully utilized their talents. They worked so strenuously that they won laurels in every discipline and achieved distinction in every field. Today they exercise enormous influence in every sector, science, literature, finance and even politics. That is the way to overcome the plight in which circumstances have landed Indian Muslims. They must heed what the Urdu poet Sikandar Ali Wajid told them and aim to reach the highest peak of achievement:

اغیار مہر و ماہ سے آگے نکل گئے
الچھے ہوئے ہیں صبح کی پہلی کرن سے ہم

Others have gone beyond the moon and the sun
We are still embroiled
In the first ray at the dawn.

The Quran admonishes the faithful that "God never changes the condition of a people unless they themselves want to change it." Will the Indian Muslims accept the challenge to change and reorientate their mindset? In the first place they must put their House in order and so equip themselves as to meet the modern requirements. They must not shut themselves up from the outside world and lock

themselves in such a way that they would not be able to go ahead and partake of the benefits of the technological advancement and the new opportunities that the modern discoveries offer.

The rage of the communal Hindus against the Muslims, however politically motivated, can be overcome by the Muslims if they make a sustained effort to convince them that they should have no fear of them and assure them that they harbour no enmity towards them nor are they in a secret conspiracy with Muslims elsewhere to harm them. They are as much the sons of the soil as Hindus and as committed to its glory and prosperity as Hindus are. The misdeeds of some of the Muslim rulers in the past and a few of the self-appointed Muslim leaders in the present should not blind Hindus to the fact that their ties with Muslims are old and strong and cannot be broken, whatever be the odds. As Sardar Patel said, just as the waters of the rivers can not be separated so also Hindus and Muslims. There is much more common between the two communities than the differences that are talked about. In recent years the negative part of their relationship has been focused due to certain unfortunate incidents; these have been exploited to foment the rage among the communal Hindus against the Muslims. I admit, however, that the task is most difficult; the communal Hindus have been so indoctrinated that their prejudice would not go away so easily. These communal Hindus are of a different breed; they lack the sense of justice and fair play of the British of which Sir Syed took advantage to help the Muslims. Secular Hindus must, therefore, come out courageously and fight boldly to prepare the ground for the furtherance of communal harmony.

However, whatever the odds, Muslims have to take

the lead and rebuild bridges with the Hindus; to make them appreciate the true facts of their common relationship and to remove the causes that have brought about the alienation. Once the goodwill, mutual trust and confidence are restored, they will be able to bring to the fore the wealth of their many-splendoured collaboration in every field, which spreads over a thousand years. That is the crying need of our times; India demands of both Hindus and Muslims to work for accord and not discord. Ben Jonson said: "All accord is born of contraries", while the Pope said: "All discord is born of harmony not understood". India contains the second largest Muslim population in the world; it cannot be wished away. It is an integral part of the nation. And a nation, as Lincoln told the Americans on the eve of the civil war, which is divided against itself, cannot stand:

These words of wisdom should awaken both the communities to the urgent need of rebuilding India, as a united, strong and prosperous nation, so that it ensures stability and security for the people; for this a pragmatic understanding of each others' needs and difficulties has to be sincerely fostered; Hindus and Muslims must realize that hate will only corrode their energies and weaken national strength. Allama Iqbal, who gave us in the days when nationalist fervour had gripped him, the soul-stirring and immortal anthem: *Saare Jahaan say achaha Hindustan Hamaaraa*, had also written another famous poem at the same time called *Naya Shawala*, the new shrine. Through its evocative words he called upon Hindus and Muslims to erect a new temple of unity; it was to outshine all other shrines. Such a temple is needed today more than ever before,

سچ کہہ دوں اے برہمن! گر تو برا نہ مانے
تیرے صنم کدوں کے بت ہو گئے پرانے

اپنوں سے بیر رکھنا تو نے بتوں سے سیکھا
 جنگ و جدل سکھایا واعظ کو بھی خدا نے
 تنگ آکے میں نے آخر دیر و حرم کو چھوڑا
 واعظ کا واعظ چھوڑا، چھوڑے ترے فسانے
 پتھر کی مورتوں میں سمجھا ہے تو خدا ہے
 خاکِ وطن کا منجگو ہر ذرہ دیوتا ہے
 آ، غیریت کے پردے اک بار پھر اٹھا دیں
 بچھڑوں کو پھر ملا دیں نقشِ دوئی مٹا دیں
 سونی پڑی ہوئی ہے مدت سے دل کی بستی
 آ، اک نیا شوالہ اس دلیں میں بسا دیں

If you don't mind, oh Brahmin
 I must tell the truth —
 These idols in your temples
 These idols have grown old.
 They teach you to hate your kith and kin
 So does the Mullah climb the pulpit
 And preach aggression and war.
 In disgust, I have shut my ears
 To the chants and the calls
 From both, ' the temple and the mosque.
 In stone, oh Brahmin, you seek God
 I see Him in the dust of my motherland.
 Let the temple bells mingle with the muezzin's call,
 Let us erase every trace of alienation
 And break the barriers of separation.

There must be a real awareness among Indian Muslims that they have to gird up their loins and prepare for reconciliation with Hindus on the basis that each respects the religious and cultural conventions, traditions and sentiments of the other. It has to be, as Gandhiji used to say,, a true "union of hearts".

I have been expressing these views frankly and freely through my writings and speeches and I am glad to find that Muslims on the whole have begun to respond; the Urdu Press has published my views prominently and have carried on discussion on their pros and cons. But I must also admit that in certain circles I have been bitterly criticized; some persons have accused me of being a coward, who wants Indian Muslims to surrender; I have also been told that I am trying to take away the spirit of *mard-i-Mujahid* and turn Indian Muslims into the slaves of the Hindus. I refute vehemently this charge; my call is not for surrender but for cooperation; my call is for mutual give and take and not for confrontation; my call is for tolerance and not for alienation and my call is for realism and not for wishful thinking. History tells us that there are times when discretion is better part of valour; The Quran has also admonished the faithful to exercise *hikmat*, when the occasion so demands. What I devoutly wish is that Indian Muslims, harassed and persecuted as they are, by conditions beyond their control, should shed their old habits and inbuilt prejudices and prepare themselves to become an asset and not a drag on the nation. They have to exert themselves and so sharpen their talents and utilise their capacities that in the competitive world they are sought after and not ignored. The challenges are, no doubt somewhat insurmountable; the atmosphere is also not very congenial; but as a Urdu poet has said:

طوفان کی زد سے بچ کے گزرنا نہیں کمال
موجوں میں غرق ہو کے ابھرنا کمال ہے

It is no achievement to come out of the storm
To struggle with the waves and overcome them
That is real victory.

And as I have told you, you have to do all this alone because you have hardly any friends; most of them have deserted you; but you cannot and should not give up; you have all the intelligence and the inner strength which can take you to the top; that has to be your aim; that has to be your determination.

سخت دشواریوں پہ چھائیں گے
پاؤں ہرگز نہ ڈگائیں گے
ہم کو تقدیر سے ہی لڑنا ہے
اب نہ پیچھے قدم ہٹائیں گے

We shall overcome difficulties
Our feet shall not tremble
We shall even fight our fate
We shall neither falter nor fail.

Iqbal has put it both picturesquely and forcefully:

یہ آجیو کی روانی، یہ ہم کنارے خاک
میری نگاہ میں نا خوب ہے یہ نظارہ

ادھر نہ دیکھ، ادھر دیکھ اے جوانِ عزیز
بلند زورِ دروں سے ہوا ہے فوارہ

The stream flows, slowly touching the earth
I don't like this show of smoothness
Look here, young man, and not there
See the vigour within which the foundation brings forth
with full force the water within itself.

So you have to wake up and come out triumphantly
of the storm which has caught you without bothering whether
your leaders will be able to help you or not:

سفینہ چور، ساحل دور، بے بس نا خدا لیکن
سہارے سو گئے تو بے سہارو تم نہ سو جاؤ

The boat is battered
The shores far, far away;
The captain has given up hope
But you cannot go into slumber
Awake, whatever the odds
And row on, undaunted
Until you reach the shores.

Do not waste your energies in search of leaders;
most of them are self-seekers. To describe a couplet of Ghalib.

لیڈروں کی کی نہیں غالب
ایک ڈھونڈو ہزار ملتے ہیں

There is a doha about Krishna, which I think is equally pertinent.

بنسری ہاتھ میں لے کر چھڑکو نیلا رنگ
ہر کوئی کشن بنے تو رادھا ناچے کس کے سنگھ

The moral is clear; don't run after leaders; there is no need for it.

As Maulana Rumi, whose *Masnavi* is regarded by Muslims as the Quran in Persian, has said:

نا خدا در کشتی ماگر نہ باشد گو مباش
ما خدا داریں مارا ناخدا درکار نیست

DR. RAFIQ ZAKARIA



Dr. Rafiq Zakaria has had a distinguished career in fields as varied as law, education journalism, politics and Islamic studies. He is a Chancellor's gold medalist of the Bombay University and Ph.D. with distinction from London University. He was called to the Bar from Lincoln's Inn. From his student days he was active in the freedom struggle, both at home and abroad. After a successful legal career he was elected to the state legislature of Maharashtra. From 1962

he served as a cabinet minister in the state government for 15 years. In 1978 he was elected to Parliament and became deputy leader of the ruling Congress Party in Parliament when Mrs. Indira Gandhi was its Leader. He was given various important assignments including that of Prime Minister's Special Envoy to the Muslim world in 1984. He has thrice represented India at the United Nations, in 1965, 1990 and 1996.

Dr. Zakaria is a scholar of international repute. He is the author of over 15 books, including *A Study of Nehru*. His rejoinder to Salman Rushdie, entitled *Muhammad and the Quran*, published by Penguin International, has become a world classic. He has written several other books on the history and jurisprudence of Islam which have been universally acclaimed. An eminent educationist, he has founded more than a dozen educational institutions of higher learning in Mumbai and Aurangabad. He was, for almost a quarter century, the Chancellor of Jamia Urdu of Aligarh. He has chaired several important Government of India committees. He has been passionately involved in the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity and has delivered prestigious memorial lectures at various universities on its different aspects.