

**MESSAGE
OF
THE PRESIDENT
OF
QURTUBA UNIVERSITY**

THE STATE OF CONFLICT AND OPPRESSION, which the humanity confronts today, is not a clash of religions rather a product of clashing political-economic agendas, where force has taken over diplomacy and violence is undermining the process of dialogue. The absence of democratic values and norms is contributing significantly to the existence of militancy. Social justice is being manipulated on the whims of power. Self-determination in most parts of the suppressed nations and communities is being denied but right to self-defense by the powers is being unleashed in Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Haiti, Sudan, so on and so forth. People are wondering what to choose: anarchy or repression! Dialogue is missing and force and fraud are left in the field to determine the destiny of humankind.

The stage is being set for catastrophe. Communication gap is widening day by day between civilisations. People are being forced to choose out of the given options, but not allowed to find and adopt their own. Humanity is in the midst of the crises of a new kind. There is dire need to develop and revive the East-West relationship and create a heightened awareness of the importance of Dialogue. However, the Dialogue could not be freed from coercions and ulterior motives unless it is nurtured in a culture which allows exchange of ideas, transcending religious and ideological biases. A Dialogue can advance if it is based on mutual respect of each others ideologies. Dialogue should cultivate a culture of respect for human rights and humanitarian law irrespective of all artificial distributions and distinguishes of color, creed and faith of the subjects. The culture of Dialogue, able to place moral bounds on the use of awesome power and brutal technology, generates an environment of

harmony, trust, mutual respect and socio-political and economic justice.

With this background in mind, the Qurtuba Education Forum along with like-minded people has been organizing important programs and get-togethers, aiming to address the question of misunderstanding prevailing between the civilisations. "The Dialogue", a quarterly journal, is set to serve as a platform for exchanges of ideas and communications between the East and the West, fundamentalists and the liberals, conservatives and progressives, orthodox and the modernists and so on. The "Dialogue" holds a set of deep seated multidimensional objectives:

- Firstly, it serves as a platform to provide protection, preservation and promotion of religious and cultural identity of the Muslims.
- Secondly, it is meant to generate dialogue and discussions, removing distortions and presenting the true face of Islam so as to develop its better understanding in the West.
- Thirdly, the West today generally perceives Islam as an enemy and a threat. As a result, Islam is the most misunderstood religion today in Europe and America. The Dialogue intends to urge the West to examine without prejudice the religion of over one billion fellow human beings.
- Fourthly, the Dialogue is an effort to build new bridges of knowledge and cooperation between the Muslims and the Christian West. It intends to remind Muslims and the West that European awakening, represented by the Reformation and the Renaissance, owed much of its inspiration to contact with Islam and universities such as Paris, Oxford and Cambridge came into existence under the influence of the universities of Muslim Spain--facts, of which most of the East and West is "abysmally ignorant".

"The Dialogue" provides a forum for intellectuals to unearth causes of the Muslims nose-dive in acquisition of knowledge and possession of scientific skills. Though lot has been written on the causes and consequences of our absolute state of ignorance and on our standings in the last row of development, without challenging

other views, I humbly opine that underlying reason for our present dismal state lies in our lack of interest in the field of research and non-existence of worthwhile research based facilities in the Muslim World. What an irony that today none of the University, owned by Muslim World finds its position in first 100 universities of the world. None of the Muslim state can claim that their research output matches the state-of-the-art facilities. We are pouring vast amount of money into science and technology, but still we are parasitic upon the Western science and technology. We either lack critical mass of researchers or have got our quest for inquiry and critique crippled by the climate of political repression.

Foregoing in view, "The Dialogue", an intellectual venture of the Qurtuba Education System, has been launched to overarch the gaps. Believing in mutual respect, the journal aspires to bring humanity to interact, establish civilisational contacts, develop our human resources through extension of knowledge and creativity, un-earth truth and inculcate culture of research through dialogue and debate.

Regards,

Prof. Abdul Aziz Khan Niazi

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