

PUBLIC ORATION

SPEECH

11 July 2003 at 3:00pm

PROF. KHURSHID AHMAD



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By Senator Professor Khurshid Ahmad

Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, honoured guests, Graduands, and Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is a pleasure and honour to introduce Professor Khurshid Ahmad who is one of the very few spokesmen representing Muslim activists in the fields of politics, economics, and education.

As a young boy he attended the Anglo-Arabic Higher Secondary School in Delhi where he was born in 1932. After the Partition in 1947, he, along with his family moved to Karachi, where he attended Government College of Commerce and Economics. Khurshid Ahmad earned his BA in Commerce in 1953, MA in Economics in 1955, LLB in 1958, and MA in Islamic Studies in 1964 (all first class).

As a student he was involved in student politics, which became his part-time profession in his later life. As an active politician, he has played an immensely important role in Pakistani politics in different capacities ranging from being a Minister of planning and development and a Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission to a Chairman of the Senate's Standing Committee on Finance, Economic Affairs and Planning. He is currently serving as a Senator in Pakistan.

Professor Khurshid Ahmad has been involved in the development of Islamic Economics at academic, political and institutional levels around the world. All major developments in Islamic Economics have, directly or indirectly, benefited from his activism. He founded International Institute of Islamic Economics at International Islamic University in Islamabad, the first ever institution offering formal instruction in Islamic Economics in the world. He is also a founding Chairman of the Institute of Policy Studies in Islamabad and the Islamic Foundation of Leicester, UK. The former is a think tank offering advice to the government and non-governmental organisations on political, economic and social issues, and the latter is a research organisation that has published a number of books on Islamic Economics and Finance. He is also Rector of the newly-established Markfield Institute of Higher Education, an educational arm of the Islamic Foundation, committed to promoting Islamic teachings in an increasingly plural British society.

Professor Ahmad's vision and advice was vital to the establishment of the Centre for Research in Islamic Economics at King Abdulaziz University Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, International Islamic University Malaysia, the Islamic Research and Training Institute at the Islamic Development Bank Jeddah, and numerous other institutions all over the world. The first ever postgraduate programme in Islamic Economics, Banking and Finance offered by Loughborough University also benefited from his support.

His services to Islam and academia have earned him worldwide respect. Professor Ahmad was awarded King Faisal Prize for service to Islam in 1990. Prior to that he was also the first recipient of the Islamic Development Bank Prize in Islamic Economics in 1988. It was in 1998 that he was awarded the prestigious La-Riba Prize in Islamic Finance by American Finance

House. Thus, he is the first and only Muslim who has been awarded with the three most prestigious international Islamic prizes.

Khurshid Ahmad has written/edited/translated more than 70 books in English and Urdu, many of which have been translated in other European and oriental languages. He is indeed one of the greatest Muslim scholars of the present time.

Therefore, Chancellor, I have the honour to present to you, and to the whole University, Professor Khurshid Ahmad for the degree of Doctor of Literature *bonoris causa*.

PROF. KHURSHID AHMAD

SPEECH BY

Prof. Khurshid Ahmad

On the occasion of admission to tie Degree of D. Litt Honoris Causa At the convocation of me Lottghboroogfe University 11th July 2003

Mr. Chancellor, Mr. Vice Chancellor, Senate and Council Members, University Faculty, Graduates. Ladies and Gentlemen.

I deem it a unique honour to join the academic family of the Loughborough University. It is with great humility that I accept this Honorary Degree- of Doctor of Literature and express my deep gratitude to the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor, and the Senate and Council of the University for conferring this honour on me in recognition of whatever little contribution I have been able to make over the last fifty years in the fields of education and research, development of Islamic economics as a social discipline and promotion of better understanding of Islam in the UK, Europe and America. I thank you for this recognition, but would very much like to submit that you have honoured, not just one person, but also a vision, a movement, a community and a galaxy of institutions through which I have worked over the years. The credit for whatever I am and have been able to do goes after God's grace, to my parents who cared to nurture me in the best Islamic and contemporary traditions, to my intellectual and spiritual mentors, particularly Mohammad Iqbal and Sayyed Mawdudi, to my colleagues in the Islamic Movement the Islamic Foundation, the Markfield Institute of Higher Education mi the Institute for Policy Studies, Islamabad; and to the unstinted support I have received from my wife, Azra, my brother Anis, and my sons and daughters, Asma, Haris, Salman, Salma, Umar and Fariha.

As to the young graduates who have today crossed the threshold of formal education and stepped into the challenging arena of practical life, I would like to share with them my conviction that, we, old and young, can have our tryst with destiny only through commitment to a vision to make the world a better place to live in for all human beings, and through sustained efforts to translate that vision into reality.

Education is not merely a matter of information, knowledge and skills, Its real purpose is to prepare new generations to serve those ideals that make life worth living. And it is here that religion comes in - not merely as a set of rites and rituals, but as an approach to life and its problems: an. approach rooted m commitment to our Creator, faith in the primacy of ethics and morality, and a life dedicated toward actualisation of the values of Good, Virtue, Service. Justice, Compassion, and Peace in the life of humanity, both at the individual and collective levels of existence.

Some of the menacing problems that beset mankind today can be traced back to the dis-joint between life and faith, between society and religion, between economics and morality, between technology and values. We have learned to fly in the skies like birds and swim in the oceans like fishes, but have not yet learned to live on the earth as good human beings. That is the challenge all educated persons have to face. We should be open to see and explore

what part religion and moral values can play in enabling us to face this challenge, even if that involves search for a new paradigm.

Freedom, individual, rights, democracy, technological advancement, and economic progress are great achievements of which we are all proud. But how can we ignore the shattering contradictions, appalling Inequities, unending sufferings, and revolting deprivations that haunt large segments of humanity. Poverty amidst affluence, hunger and starvation side by side with conspicuous consumption., mountains of debts along with sky-scrapers of development, explosion of crime and violence despite ascendance of civility, and rampant exploitation and discrimination notwithstanding the emergence of an era of rule of law and international security go to define the predicament of mankind.

To give just one example the U.N, Human Development Report 2003 released this week (July 8, 2003) highlights that while over 1.2 billion human beings the world over are struggling to survive on below \$1 a day, the developed countries of Europe are subsidising every cow to the tune of \$2.5 a day to protect their farm incomes from competition from poor countries of the world, Japan subsidises every cow to the extent of \$7.5 a day. These disturbing and destabilising realities can no longer be ignored. Peace and Justice remain elusive ideals. Yearnings for a Just World Order constitute the core of the unfinished human agenda.

My young .colleagues! The question I want you to reflect upon is: Can this agenda be addressed to merely by tinkering within the socio-economic paradigm under whose spell we operate, or does it call' for not simply some shift within the paradigm but shift of the paradigm? Is it really too much to expect that people belonging to all faiths and residing in all parts of the world may join hands to strive to ensure that our common abode, the world, may become a place where all human beings could gracefully live in honour, justice, fraternity and peace and share liberty and well-being in the same way as they share the Divine gifts of air and sunshine?