

Speech

by

Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam

Chairman, Institute of Objective Studies

On the occasion of

30th Anniversary Celebrations Programme

National Seminar on

**Towards Equality, Justice and Fraternity in Contemporary India
Creating a Better Tomorrow Through Law**

In collaboration with

Deptt. of English, Aliah University, Kolkata

On April 22-23, 2017 at City Campus, Park Circus, Kolkata



INSTITUTE OF OBJECTIVE STUDIES

162, Joga Bai Main Road, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi - 110025

Tel: 26981187, 26987467, 26989253 Fax: 26981104

Email: ios.newdelhi@gmail.com Website: www.iosworld.org

Respected delegates and guests, honourable members of the press, dear brothers and sisters, friends and colleagues.

We are delighted to be in Kolkata for this historic seminar.
IOS has completed 30 years of its existence.
It is a moment of great happiness and satisfaction for all of us.

I wish to dedicate this day to all our brothers and sisters around the world who have contributed to the continuing success of IOS.

Many of my best colleagues, patrons and friends are no more with us.
But their work, contribution and positive energy is still there.
It is being remembered.

2017-18 are landmark years.
India is celebrating its 70th year of Independence in 2017.
The nation in 2018 will also be observing 70 years of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.
Hindu-Muslim unity was paramount for the Father of the Nation.
It was the cardinal principle on which he based his life and political struggles.
The Mahatma knew that a new India could only be born if Hindus and Muslims were united and Untouchability was abolished.

As we celebrate the 30 years of IOS, the Kolkata seminar is dedicated to 'Creating a Better Tomorrow through Law', under the broad theme of 'Towards Equality, Justice and Fraternity in Contemporary India'.

Most of you who have gathered here are aware of the IOS commitment to upholding the rights, guarantees and entitlements for minorities as enshrined in our Constitution of India.

Over the last three decades we have published pioneering works on Constitution and Law.

Some of the publications include:

- Readings on Minorities: Perspective and Documents (Vols. I, II, III & IV)
- Minorities and State at the Indian Law
- Statute Law Relating to Muslims in India: A Study in Constitutional and Islamic Perspectives
- Communal Riots, the State and Law in India
- Islamic Law in Indian Courts Since Independence
- Human Rights in India: Some Issues.

Besides these works and seminars on similar subjects, the Empowerment series of publications are equally important. Some of the finest minds worked on different aspects of empowerment of Muslims.

Some of the publications are:

- Empowering Women: Paradigms and Strategies
- Empowerment of Muslims in India: Perspective, Context and Prerequisites
- Empowerment of Muslims through Education
- Economic Empowerment of Muslims in India
- Empowerment of Muslim Youth in India
- Empowerment of Muslims in India through Information and Communication
- Social and Cultural Empowerment of Muslims in India
- Political Empowerment of Muslims in India

Please visit the IOS book stall and I request all of you to read and make full use of these publications.

The books provide a road-map for today and tomorrow as outlined in our Constitution of India and the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

IOS as a think-tank of India, and we as Indian Muslims, stand committed to our Constitution. It not only guarantees our rights but as Justice A M Ahmadi has often reminded us, our Constitution embodies all the core values and principles of equality, justice and brotherhood which Islam holds sacrosanct.

It is for this reason that the Kolkata seminar assumes great significance. Our Constitution, and the global charters of human rights, are guiding lights for us today.

There is no doubt our world has become more challenging.

We are living in the age of 'post-truth' and 'alternative facts'. At the global level, there is continuing violence and double-speak by superpowers. Moreover, the misuse and abuse of international law is very distressing.

At the national level, we seem to have made great progress. But the numbers of those marginalized, deprived, hungry and homeless are increasing. Our legal frameworks may be strong but our law courts seem to be working only for the rich and the super-rich. We need to question why India is becoming so sharply divided on every front.

Economic inequality is creating more social tensions.

We need to question whether the Indian Constitution, our laws and our judiciary can unite us.

The India of 2017 is more volatile and chaotic than 1986 when IOS was born. We are witnessing that religion is being used to divide our nation.

I appeal to all the legal luminaries and experts who have gathered here to work on ways and means to counter these divisive forces within the frame-work of our Constitution.

New road-maps and new ideas are required to create the contemporary India where all citizens have equal rights and opportunities.

The nation's strength is its people.

India cannot grow if a huge segment of its people is lagging behind, ignored and disregarded.

The Approach Note prepared for this Seminar details the problems, paradoxes and solutions of our nation in a comprehensive way. Please do read and share your thoughts, action plans.

I hope and pray that the Almighty gives us the power and inspiration to work for the betterment of society in the years and decades ahead.

The IOS vision to create a humane society remains as significant and relevant today. The statement was made public during our 10th Anniversary celebrations in 1996.

We continue to work towards that end.

I do not wish to make any political observations today, even though we are in Kolkata where every person has a strong political opinion.

In this august gathering, all of us are aware of the national issues.

But I wish to highlight that in 2017 India's political tensions are rising and becoming life-threatening situations.

The importance of our Constitutional rights, guarantees and entitlements has never been greater for every Indian.

IOS dedicates itself to creating awareness about these political and social tensions in academic, intellectual and civil society circles.

I have often been asked: From the Indian Muslim perspective, does it seem there will be a new dawn?

My answer is: Not in the near future.

These are dark days for minority and marginalised communities, for the urban and rural poor, for the landless and underprivileged of India.

But that does not mean we lose hope: Instead we work harder to gain, regain and retain our basic political, social and cultural rights.

We have to remain in the mainstream of Indian life and work within the Constitution of India.

It is a tough task.

The failures of the nation have affected the Indian Muslims more than it has affected other classes and segments of Indian society.

This, in more ways than one, is the tragedy of free and independent India: it was the Indian Muslim who fought for India's Independence.

Yet, after Independence, the Muslims have been deprived of the fruits of development which are being shared by other communities and classes.

As a think-tank, IOS is today an all India organisation.

At important intellectual and civil society platforms, we are engaging with the best minds of India and from around the world.

Our seminars, conferences and publications are a testimony to this continuing development.

Having completed 30 years, IOS is dedicating itself to the future.

We are hopeful and positive that our work will help bring in change.

The process may be difficult. But it is not impossible.

We are aware that anti-Islam movements and Islamophobia are on the rise.

It is yet another major challenge we have to counter at the global, regional and national levels.

In the past, IOS has addressed these issues; and will continue to do so.

I once again thank all our well-wishers and patrons for the support they have given us; all our colleagues and friends who have been with us for these decades.

May the Almighty fill us with greater faith and hope and we all work towards a better tomorrow.