

Fruits for the Week

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Interview article of Prof. Anis Ahmad (cont'd from last week)

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Refuting “Clash of Civilizations”, us or them Different civilizations can co-exist, not clash

In the wake of September 11 triggering off anti-terrorism measures, the “Clash of Civilizations” theory put forward by the American scholar, S. Huntington, in the 90s, has become popular. Anis Ahmad abhorred this theory. He pointed out that different civilizations can accommodate one another. They can communicate and exchange ideas. Even though the mainstream Islamic world resists Americanization, the resistance is expressed by peaceful means, and, in any way, it does not mean clash. The actions of Al-Qaeda violate Islam.

He asked, “Who asks for a ‘clash of civilizations’? An Islamic scholar? Or it is western scholars who say that civilizations are exclusive?” He criticized that scholars like S. Huntington and politicians of the same brand affirm that civilizations are exclusive, and so, other civilizations have no choice but to be Americanized.

Jihad wrongly translated by the West as holy war Jihad does not mean fighting

He reiterated that the Islamic culture values peace. The simple Islamic greeting, *Assalaamualaikum*, does not mean just “Hello”. It means “May God grant you peace”. Further, he said that the often quoted Islamic terminology *jihad* is translated as “holy war” by the West. This, actually, is a distortion and it is unfortunate to be so. *Jihad* does not mean fighting at all. It is another word *harb al-muqadis* which should be translated as holy war.

China & Muslims should urge Americans to be rational

He said, “Don’t think that America’s exclusive approach is used against the Islamic world. No, it is against the whole world. Huntington stated clearly in his book that due to apprehension of a Sino-Islamic partnership, chaos must be created between the two in order to separate them. Now, people in other parts of the world should think how we can politely give suggestions to America. I don’t buy the clash theory.

I believe that both the Islamic world and China can play a constructive role. I advise the Americans to act rationally.”

Refuting the biased view ‘Islam oppresses women’

In general, people’s impression of Muslim women comes from the Taliban rule in Afghanistan: women are covered from head to feet; they are deeply oppressed. Such an image is popular. However, Anis Ahmad refuted that Islam oppresses women. He pointed out what the Taliban government did were un-Islamic. Islam should not be blamed for Taliban’s wrongdoings.

There were female presidents in Islamic countries but none in the US

Likewise, he pointed out that it is against Islamic teachings to bar women from voting as in Saudi Arabia which recently held its first public direct election of local officials, allowing only men to vote, as a pioneer effort towards democracy. He said Islam gives equality to both sexes. It does not forbid women from participating in politics. In some Islamic countries, the ratio of women partaking in politics is higher than that in western countries. Yet, this is not reported. “For instance, there were female presidents in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Have you seen any female president or female chief justice in America? In the Pakistani parliament, as many as 32% of its members are female. What is the percentage in US and Europe? Why has such data not been reported in the western media?”

Regarding a case in Pakistan, which was reported repeatedly by the western media, showing a village woman raped by a group for taking revenge on her family members, he denounced such kind of violence, which is against Islam. He said, “Any mistake done by an individual should not be seen as the mistake of all, the whole nation, or the entire Islamic world. Wrongdoings are also committed in the West but it does not mean that Christianity wants that.”