

An Interview With Muhtram Qazi Husain Ahmad Ameer of Jama'ate Islami Pakistan

By Zaheer Uddin

Q: You were a special guest speaker at the 24th ICNA national convention. How did you find the convention?

A: I came here after 17 years. Alhamdulillah, I have personally observed a great difference in ICNA. 17 years ago it was an association of Indo-Pak movement oriented friends. Now it is a movement, Alhamdulillah. Now it has among its members Muslims belonging to all ethnic groups and origins including the Afro-Americans, Hispanics and Caucasians as well as people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other parts of the world. Alhamdulillah, it is flourishing. In future we hope that with the cooperation of other American Muslims they can form a bigger movement in America. And the universal message of Islam can be spread through this movement among the people in America. America is a very important country. Actually the people look at it as a leader of the world in terms of resources and power. Therefore, the existence of this organization and this movement in the American society is a source of strength for the Muslims Ummah at large.

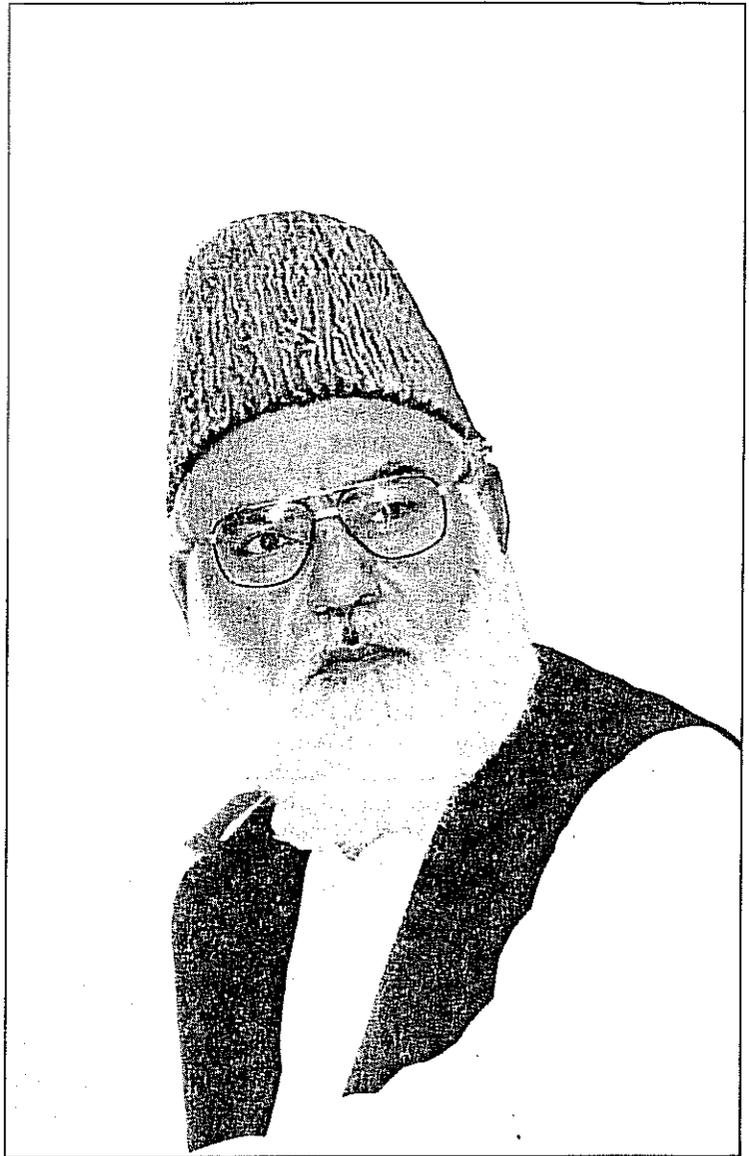
Q: You have earlier visited the USA in 1978 and 1982. Now in 1999 what kind of difference and changes do you find in terms of Islamic work?

A: Actually the world scenario has changed drastically during the last two decades. Then it was a world with two super powers. Now America is the only super power and there is no tussle between Communism and Capitalism. The second difference is that the Muslim community in America has increased. It was a small community of one or two millions of Muslims, now it is 6 to 8 millions strong. Muslims are better organized and have got a goal of giving the message of Islam to others. This is a fast expanding community. This also encourages the Muslims here in America. They are encouraged by the fact that Americans from all walks of life have been converting to Islam. Islam has been accepted by them as the solution of the ills of humanity, and the future order for human family for the service of mankind. There is a big difference in that scenario and the present scenario.

Q: Have you also noticed any difference in the ICNA's work in the last 17 years?

A: Yes. ICNA has expanded. ICNA has got many facets. ICNA has a relief organization, a Da'wah organization and different branches and a number of units, departments, and divisions.

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ICNA's work has increased a lot and is now striving in a vast and many facets of way.

Q: You have met with ICNA leadership and other national organizations like ISNA and the indigenous leadership like Imam Siraj Wahhaj. How do you see the future of Islam and Muslims in this country?

A: In my opinion, the future of Islam and Muslims is connected basically with the indigenous Americans...they can project it. Also the Afro-Americans, Caucasian, native Americans, all are important. Islam and the Da'wah must be addressed to all. It must not be presented at a limited scope for only the colored people or who are the people from African and American descent. The people of different origins must also be given due importance in the ICNA leadership and other organizations, including the local Muslim organizations. ICNA must associate itself with the local American Muslim organization. This should be bridged and

everybody should try for common grounds and to hold themselves into one Muslim Ummah. It is a big challenge from inside. We must present Islam above the ethnicity, languages and we must also try to be above trivial and the small Fiqhi differences.

Q: *In the recent past some people in ICNA have concerns that Jama'ate Islami, Pakistan has been dictating ICNA or ICNA has become a branch of Jama'ate Islami. What are your comments on these concerns?*

A: Actually I do not think that there is any weight on this plea. We all belong to Muslim Ummah. We all belong to one global Islamic movement and we do mutual consultation with each other, take guidance from each other. It is essential. We take guidance even from our youth, and our children. Without mutual consultation the concept of Ummah is not complete. This is not a Pakistani Ummah or American Ummah. Ummah is universal and the message is universal and we must prove it that our leadership is the same. We respect each other. But the condition in different parts of the world are different and therefore, we must address the people according to their language and according to the conditions they are facing. We can adopt different strategies, but essentially this must be understood that we are one global movement and the people should not be defensive on this thing. We must say openly that we are one Ummah but we belong to different organizations. But these organizations are necessary for the spread of this universal Da'wah.

Q: *By any chance does Jama'at dictate any organization out of Pakistan?*

A: Actually Jama'ate Islami does not dictate its own members inside Pakistan. Our way is through consultation: *amrohum shura bainahum*. Dictating is not our way of organization. We do consultation with all the Islamic movements and organizations around the world.

Q: *You meet leaders of different Islamic movements and they visit you also. How is the cooperation among Islamic movements for Islamic work on international scene?*

A: On the international scene we meet and consult with each other. We discuss what is the condition of Islamic movement in different parts of the world. But we do not have any single international organization and this is not possible at international stage. A single leadership or single

Ameer and one strategy for the whole of the world is not possible at this moment. One Ameer and one leadership cannot understand the different environment or the condition people are working and therefore there must be some type of freedom for every location and for every organization. But they must know that we are one Ummah and this is one movement and in this way we are associated with Akhwanul Muslimoon organization and with our brothers in different parts of the world, in Malaysia, in Bangladesh, in Algeria, in Tunisia, as well as in Turkey, in Europe, in America. But, inspite of having different organizations, we do consult with each other and our message and strategy is that we present Islam the religion of humanity, religion of mankind and the religion of peace. And we say and advice our Muslim brothers all over world to prove it with their example and through their model that they are at the service of mankind and they believe in dialogue and they believe in justice and do not believe in terrorism and violence.

Q: *You have been very close to Afghan Jihad movement. You have close contacts with the current Afghan leadership of Taliban. How do you see the future of Afghanistan, and the future of Islam in Afghanistan?*

A: Actually, Afghanistan is in trouble. It is in turmoil. It is boiling. It has not borne the fruit of the Jihad. Russians had been thrown out but Afghanistan is in ruins and therefore to bring real peace to Afghanistan. Taliban must open their hearts to Mujahideen leaders. Mujahideen leaders must enter into dialogue with Taliban. They must respect each other and find some way out of this turmoil. They are inside Afghanistan and therefore I had advised Taliban to accept Mujahideen as their brothers and consult with them. I advised the Mujahideen to accept Taliban to enter into some type of cooperation with each other. Otherwise, the secular forces will keep them in turmoil. They want to keep Afghanistan disturbed until they are weakened and become slaves of the world power and Afghanistan is made secular. The secular leadership is being prepared and they have a plan to impose this leadership on Afghanistan. The West has given a bad name to the Mujahideen and now to Taliban. They are working against both of them. Therefore they must form unity between their own. They must be aware of the coming threat.

Q: *The situation in Kashmir is at a boiling point. What is your comment on the Washington declaration of President Clinton and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif? What is the future of Jihad and Mujahideen of Kashmir after the report of disengagement between India and Pakistan?*

A: I have very carefully read this joint communiqué and I am sorry to say that I could not find a single word of consolation for the Kashmiris or for the Pakistanis, or for the cause in the communiqué. This is the communiqué which is according to the wishes of India. India and the American President got the signature of Nawaz Sharif on a communiqué which is totally reflecting the India's stand on the Kashmir problem. The Kashmir issue is not addressed at all. The communiqué is restricted to the Kargil and the Line of Control. The actual problem of Kashmir is that India refuses to accept that this is a disputed territory and it should be resolved according to the wishes of the people of Kashmir. This is the core of the problem. India must accept that. Unless this is accepted and declared there can be no useful dialogue. It cannot be solved unless India accepts the existence of the Kashmir dispute.

Q: *How can the Muslims in America support Kashmir cause? How can they help and assist them?*

A: Actually they should launch a campaign similar to what they did for Kosova. I did not see that they raised Kashmir issue the same way they did others. Also, there must be organized relief work, media contact, etc. They must write to their Congressmen and Senators; send telegram and organize demonstrations to put pressure on the American Administration.

Q: *We are proud that the Muslims are 1.2 billion from Indonesia to Morocco and from Australia to North America. On the other hand, the Ummah is in turmoil. They are downgraded. They are being suppressed. It looks like they have no honor and dignity. What do you think and how Muslim could rise again?*

A: Alhamdulillah, Islamic movement has got a very popular program for it and the Prophet Muhammed (s) has said that my Ummah will be revived and it will be reformed by the same process on which this was evolved by the Prophet Muhammed (s). ..The Islamic movements through out

the world under the guidance of Maulana Syed Abul A'la Maudoodi (r) and Shaheed Hasan al-Banna (r) and many other prominent Muslim leaders and scholars and Mujahideen have adopted the same attitude and the same process which was evolved by the Prophet of Allah... Call the people towards Allah and to train and purify them, organize them into Jama'ah and work for the service of mankind. In this process we will create an Islamic society, an Islamic government and an Islamic state. Islamic organizations are in every part of the world working towards that goal in their parts of the world. When they will be successful it will be for the service of humanity and for world peace. The Muslims must strengthen their righteousness. They are on the Haq, and therefore, this Haq is their real strength. If the Muslims become practicing Muslims, then Islam will spread very fast. Islamic movements are working towards this goal and, Insha Allah, they will help the Islamic Ummah.

Q: *Jama'ate Islami Pakistan has been active since the creation of Pakistan in 1947 for the establishment of Islam and for the supremacy of Islam in Pakistan. But it seems Jama'at is not close in achieving its goal yet. Is there any thing wrong in Jama'at's strategy?*

A: Jama'ate Islami has its imprint on every aspects of the life of Pakistani society. This is a very effective movement and Islam is recognized as state ideology, this is a big success. It is recognized that the sovereignty belongs to Allah and under its constitution we have got an Islamic constitution and there are quite sufficient provisions in our constitution for the establishment of a just society and Islamic polity. Therefore, Jama'at Islami is successful in its goals and gained a lot and it has done a lot and also today after the failure of PPP and Nawaz League people are looking towards Jama'ate Islami for future leadership. From 1993 onward it did not take part in any election. We have started a process to educate the masses and are launching a strong campaign to assure fair and just elections in future. In that atmosphere, there is every possibility that Jama'ate Islami secure a viable majority, Insha Allah.

Q: *In any way you can forecast or predict when Pakistan will become an Islamic State or Islamic government?*

A: I can see a possibility that in few years an Islamic government can be established

in Pakistan and in near future there are obstacle and there are hindrances and there are challenges but there also a possibility that we will surmount that obstacles and challenges Insha Allah in the near future.

Q: *Last but not least. Do you have any message to our readers and workers of ICNA?*

A: If we are sincere in our purpose and in our basic objectives that all our efforts are to seek the pleasure of our Creator and if we want the success here and hereafter then I demand from all the workers of Islamic Da'wah that they should have very close connection with their Allah through Ibadaat, Dhikr, Salah, Nawafil and Soum and through the service of humanity. I ask the brothers of ICNA to be sincere and to be one 'bunyanum marsoos', and love each other. Their relationships should not only be mechanical and organizational but of love, intense love for Allah and His Prophet, and love of humanity and love for Islam.

Thank you Qazi Saheb for sparing your valuable time. I appreciate very much on behalf of Islamic circle of North America and on behalf of The Message International. ■



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