

Seminar on Composite Culture of India

"Let's strive to preserve our composite culture and heritage" - Dr Kidwai Dr. A.R. Kidwai, the Governor of Haryana, has said that to ensure resurgent India becomes a global power, we have to preserve our unity and integrity and this is possible only if we work to preserve our composite culture and common heritage. This is a challenge not only for the government, but for the people, for each community and each section of the country if India is to survive in this new modern global society, he said while inaugurating a seminar on Preservation of Composite Culture of India at New Delhi.

Delhi, Delhi, IND, 2008-05-20 12:21:31 (IndiaPRwire.com)Dr. A.R. Kidwai, the Governor of Haryana, has said that to ensure resurgent India becomes a global power, we have to preserve our unity and integrity and this is possible only if we work to preserve our composite culture and common heritage. This is a challenge not only for the government, but for the people, for each community and each section of the country if India is to survive in this new modern global society, he said while inaugurating a seminar on Preservation of Composite Culture of India at New Delhi.

The seminar was organized by **Urdutehzeeb.com** in collaboration with the India Islamic Cultural Centre. Urdutehzeeb.com is the world's largest Urdu language portal.

Pointing out that the European Union has emerged as one of the strongest economic blocks of the world, Dr. Kidwai asked: Is it not possible for us in South Asia to come together and form a union for our economic progress without disturbing our borders. It is high time that we came together to chart out a common path for peace, progress and prosperity.

Baroness Emma Nicholson, a member of the European Parliament, who was a **special guest at the seminar**, said we had to create our own way with half a billion citizens of the European Union. While she said India is unique in its diversity, Europe too has just about every variation of what humanity has created all over the globe. In many ways were more a community of values than of anything else. Unity in diversity is the keynote phrase for the European Union.

Prof. Mashirul Hassan, a wellknown historian and Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia, said in his keynote address that it is in the fitness of things that the seminar is being held in Delhi which has been the cradle of our composite culture. It is the city of Mir, Ghalib, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. Ansari - all protagonists of a composite way of living. The theme of our composite culture was also central to our liberation struggle exemplified by Gandhi, Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose.

He said composite culture does not mean the merger of religious, ethnic and linguistic identities. Composite living means the recognition of those identities. A composite society allows and nurtures those identities to flourish. You cannot have plural nationhood without composite living being embedded in it. Composite culture does not mean imposition of uniformity or homogenization It implies recognition of diversity which has been a characteristic feature of the India society, Prof. Hassan underlined.

Dr. Syeda Hameed, member, Planning Commission, said that the poetry of her great grand father, Maulana Altaf Hussain Hali, was a convergence of communal harmony, feminist thought and educational philosophy. His poetry can be better understood if seen in the context of our composite culture. She said culture was an assimilation of ideas, the cultivation of mind towards a symbiotic structure without boundaries. Thousand of years of Hindu-Muslim interaction led to our cultural

evolution. The ganga-jamuni styles in art, writing, religious practices, customs, social mores and sanctions form the basis of India's composite culture.

Yawar Abbas, a broadcaster and filmmaker, said that an ethically cleansed society is a morally unclean society. It is society which is intellectually bankrupt and socially monotonous and boring. A society that is doomed from the start. It is cross-fertilization which gives a society its strength. This is what gave India its strength. Two of India's 'crowning glories' are a product of this cross-fertilization - Indian classical music and Urdu language. Despite the partition of the country, we are the same people. The mass madness of 1947 cannot destroy the heritage of a thousand years. We made a mistake by agreeing to the partition and it would be a bigger mistake if we accepted the partition in our hearts and reacted in kind to a false two-nation theory.

Dr A.A. Fatmi, Allahabad University, dwelt at length with the Sufi tradition. He said Kabir's writings transcended religious barriers to reach the heights of universal humanity and brotherhood. The Sufis and Bhakti saints like Guru Nanak and others spread this literary-cultural enlightenment across the country and a new composite culture emerged and took deep roots in the society.

Asghar Ali Engineer, a social activist and scholar, said much of the credit for our composite culture goes to the Sufi saints who wrote in regional languages and dialects. Though they were scholars of Arabic and Persian, they did not write in these languages which were read and spoken only by the elite. Baba Farid is an extraordinary example. He chose to write in Punjabi and is one of the most popular poet-saints of the region on both sides of the border. He was the first poet of Punjabi language.

Dr Engineering said that it is a political lie to say that Islam was spread with the force of the sword. It is necessary to debunk this false idea because it spread misunderstanding and hatred among the people. Islam spread in India because of the Sufis who were considered a role model by the people. The universal humanism of the Sufis attracted the people and that is how Islam spread in India.

Others who spoke at the seminar included broadcaster and lyricist from London, Chaman Lal Chaman, former Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University, Prof M N Farooqi, Mr Thomas Deegan, writer, and editor of group editor of Sahara India newspapers, Mr Aziz Barni.

Urdutehzeeb.com, it was announced at the seminar, will hold seminars and conference on the theme in other cities of India

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