**Keynote Address**

**Tariq Husain**

**At the**

**ALIGARH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION FUND RAISER**

**June 18, 2016**

**Dr Abdullah Abdullah**

**Mr Masood Farshori**

**Dr Aftab Ansari**

**Members of the Executive Committee**

**Members of the Board of Trustees**

**Brothers and Sisters**

**The Young who are also the Future**

**Assalam o Alaikum**

**I am honored to be with you todays on this auspicious occasion for the Aligarh Alumni Community to help educate a thousand students again in 2016.**

**I have been thinking what I could say to a learned and committed group like this one. I focused on recent events (mostly tragic) in which “Muslims” and “Islam “were in the news. I wondered why, as a community, we are in the news. I then thought about the fifty seven members Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) and its reputation and role. I have had the opportunity and privilege to work with many OIC countries; also with the Islamic Development Bank. And having spent a lifetime in the World Bank I had many opportunities to work in Both OIC and Non OIC countries. The difference in development levels and prospects between these two groups is stark. I have thought a lot about why. And that is what I was thinking when I was deliberating on what to say tonight.**

**If I am asked to ask the most important factor for the stark difference between the OIC and the Non OIC – it is “being behind in Education”. That should not be—because Islam admonishes Muslims to seek knowledge—to go to China (from Saudi Arabia) to seek it. But , today , that is not what Muslim communities do. Sad but true.**

**I thought about what you do when you give scholarships or help kids to get to college. And you have been doing it since 1975. I remembered a passage from an essay by Jean Jacques Rousseau in which he explains Education in words which are can move one’s heart. Let me share those words with you---**

**GIFT OF EDUCATION**

**“ We are born weak, we need strength**

**Helpless, we need Aid**

**Foolish, we need Reason**

**All that we lack at birth . all that we need when**

**we come to mens’ estate**

**Is the Gift of Education”**

**That is what the Aligarh Alumni Association tries to do. Today, that is what we are assembled here to do with one thousand, maybe more, Muslim kids in India.**

**Wonderful to participate in this glorious effort. But is our effort commensurate to the need of the Muslim kids in India. To get a sense of adequacy I looked at the status of Muslim education in India.**

**Let me share three comparisons:-**

**This is based on an All India Survey by the National Sample Survey Organization of India in 2008. The situation may have improved a bit during the last eight years. I hope so.**

**But, let’s see what it was then.**

**I.\*\*\*\* FIRST Comparison**

**Percentage of Muslims of all ages who had completed post-secondary education---**

**Muslims---- 2.1 %**

**India ------10 %**

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**Way behind as a community??**

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**II\*\*\*\* Second Comparison**

**University Age Enrollment –India vs China**

**India 2008 China**

**Percent enrolled 10 22**

**Number enrolled (million) 13 27**

**Number enrolled**

**in early 1990’s (millions) 5 5**

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**China is way ahead and has grown significantly faster. Till early 1990’s India was**

**Following economic policies which partially explain this relatively poorer performance.**

**Muslims as a community were way behind the other communities**

**III.\*\*\*\*Third Comparison**

**Inter generational—Muslims vs other religion and minorities.**

**In this analysis the following assumptions were used.**

**Current Generation--- Age Group between 22 to 35 years**

**Previous Generation---Age Group beyond Age 35 years.**

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**Variable compared---Percentage of these groups who attended high level education—that is post-secondary.**

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**Generation**

**Current Previous Difference**

**Age—22-35 Age –More than 35**

**Muslims 5% 3.3 1.7**

**Other Minorities 15.3 % 9.2 6.1**

**Hindus 23.5 % 15.6 7.9**

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**Muslims ,as a community were behind and remained behind in this intergenerational comparison**

**The Picture is daunting because millions of Muslim kids are being left out from receiving the Gift of Education. And, so far, they seem not be catching up.**

**One can feel helpless**

**or ask**

**What MORE can we do? What ELSE can we do ?**

**What MORE –we can do right away. Instead of 1000, we can attempt to educate 1500.**

**Still a drop in the ocean of ignorance. But, 50 % more than we did last year.**

**What ELSE—you may have do some thinking about leveraging your actions. That is for a later day.**

**For Today--- when we look at this wonderful group in the room---it should be possible to attempt the MORE by increasing our contributions to expanding our Gift of Education to the Muslim kids back home.**

**Let’s do some rough arithmetic—**

**A scholarship is about US $ 100 per year.**

**500 more scholarships will cost US $ 50 000.00 more**

**Is that a large sum for all of us??**

**Any loving couple in this room can easily spend US $ 100 for a dinner for two in a fancy Restaurant?? For us that is an evening out .We hardly notice it.**

**But, for that kid who will get the scholarship it means:--**

**Opening a vista; a link with Hope; an opportunity to Dream.**

**Is that a hard tradeoff to make? Can we not give up a dinner for a scholarship??**

**Actually, we do NOT have to give up the dinner either. We can have the dinner—and give the scholarship.**

**It is that gift of education when we were kids that has enabled us to be able to do that.**

**Should we give that gift to those kids back home?**

**I think each of us will make our own choice—but, in terms of being able to do it, most of us can.**

**So, let me begin by donating an ADDITIONAL $ 1000.00 for ten scholarships.**

**Let me also share with you another passage about the “Meaning of life”—**

**This one is a passage from Ralph Waldo Emerson.**

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**MEANING OF LIFE**

**“ To laugh often and love much, to win the respect of intelligent persons and the affection of children; to earn the approbation of honest critics, to find the best in others ;to give oneself ,to leave the world a bit better , either by a healthy child ,or a garden patch or a redeemed social condition.**

**To know that one life has breathed easier because you have lived, this is to have succeeded.”**

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**I hope that together we can give the gift of education to many more than what we did last year and through that action begin to feel the**

**“ happiness that more than one life may breathe easier because we decided to act today””**

**Thank you and May God Bless you.**

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**Tariq Husain June 18, 2016**