

# INDIAN UNION MUSLIM LEAGUE

NATIONAL CONFERENCE, 15th & 16th January 2010 at : Shihab Thangal Nagar, Bengaluru

## IUML Vision 2020

Muslim community in India is passing through a significant phase in its history. Two apparently complimentary trends- intensive anti-Muslim campaign orchestrated by Sangh Parivar and emergence of extremism within the community-have been simultaneously at work. But the situation is not very dim as a section in our community paints. One can't be very pessimistic while seeing a discernable makeover in the community. This shift is very apparent in the field of political participation. Alienation and growing extremism cannot overshadow the real advancements that the community made in relation to the participation in governance.

The Indian Union Muslim League is the real champion of this transformation. A closer look at the history of our party would reveal how Muslim League has been instrumental in this process of change. Indian Union Muslim Leagues since its inception itself represented a remarkable chapter in the history of Indian Muslims who were caught up in the traumatised experience of partition.

Formation of Indian Union Muslim League offered material for re-orientation of our identity along a nationalistic line. Emphasising more on the slogan "honourable existence", Qua'de Millat Ismail Saheb, inculcated the need of creating a cohesive 'Indian Muslim' identity. Pious leadership of Seyd Abdul Rahiman Bafakhi Thangal and Pankkad Seyd Pukkoya Thangal elevated this identity to greater spiritual heights. With their ahead of time visions, our great leaders like K.M. Seethi Saheb and C.H.Mohamed Koya Saheb could preside over the destinations of millions of Indian Muslims. Seethi Saheb's accession to Speakership in Kerala legislative assembly and C.H. Mohamed Koya Saheb's attainment of Chief Ministership represent two major landmarks in the history of Indian Muslims empowerment. Immaculate presence of late Panakkad Seyd Mohamedali Shihab Thangal in the League leadership gave our party a strong and enviable 'moral fabric'. Finally, a birth in central ministry (a long cherished dream) through E. Ahmed Saheb characterizes a distinctive phase in Indian Muslim League history. This event itself marks the journey of a party from the state and experience of 'untouchability' to the state of 'partner in power'.

Muslim League is a party with a distinctive sense and character. Through the proper utilization of political power for the upliftment of community, League has attained the status of a 'much sought-after brand' in global Muslim politics. In the age of growing disempowerment and estrangement of Muslim community all over the world, this 'Muslim League model' stands apart with high stake in political participation. Similarly, League is the only Muslim organization that maintains consistent presence in the Indian Parliament all along its history. Since independence, many organizations have come with tall claims to represent the Indian Muslim politics but most of them vanished failing to withstand the test of time. It does not mean that the way we travelled was with full of roses. We have struggled a lot to make a brighter past and present. Taking cue from past and present, there is the need to attune a stunning future. But, the political strategies of old mould, for sure, would not serve this purpose. This document, therefore, suggests a set of guidelines for the reorientation our party making sensitive to the present issues.

### **1. Political: Enhancement of Participation in Governance**

As we are fully aware, the low participation of Muslims in nearly all political spaces has an adverse impact on Indian democracy and polity. In a democratic society like India, a reasonable representation of various communities in governance is necessary to enhance participatory governance. The proper political participation provides a necessary influence and opportunity to change or at least to influence events which enable our meaningful participation in the political process. The current statistics show that the country is far from attaining such a goal. Enhancement of participation at various levels is the sole remedy to such a situation.

The priorities should be given to address new challenges and to work out programme strategies to attract the youth and new social groups. A thorough re-thinking of old social base, accommodation of new social groups, formation of various groups for specialized professional groups including IT professionals and new labour force are the related priorities.

Regular Orientation programmes are needed for the ordinary workers to educate the developments in different fields; national and international politics, economic change, media and new means of communication, human rights, environmental protection and women empowerment and so on.

## **2. Social: Commitment for the creation of pluralist society**

For multicultural and multiethnic nation like India religious pluralism is an essential requisite for the survival of its society. Our religion has given prime importance to pluralism and religious tolerance. Intolerance towards others can never be defined in the spirit of Quran as the Holy Book stands for amazingly broader range of tolerance and peaceful co-existence. 'Clash of civilizations' sounds thus sounds quite foreign to our ideology. In its history, Islam has always spoken for the 'dialogue of civilizations' and cultures.

## **3. Economic: Need for micro-level economic interventions**

Muslims are the worst-hit community under the new economic regime. Studies have shown that the community, many of which are artisans, odd jobbers and petty traders are witnessing a rapid decline in their living conditions in the face of the current economic reconfiguration. On the other side, there is a newfound economic mobility among Muslims mainly due to the remittance from the Gulf. We have a time-tested system of zakat with a view to lessen the effects of economic imparities. And there is a considerable section of faithful Muslim population keeping aloof from the bank interest.

Given this, what is required is a collective effort to channelize the excess wealth that rich people in our community possess in a constructive way. Introduction of microcredit system strictly adhered to Islamic financial rules is the most appropriate solution which seems to have a high potential to bridge the gap between the poor and the rich in our community.

Other avenues in which we can engage the rich people in the community (especially high-profile NRI businessmen) are to chart out localized poverty alleviation strategies, set up an Islamic financial banking and support initiatives for self-employed youth. Setting up Islamic financial institution with the back up of our front organization, KMCC would be an appropriate step in this context. Encouragement should also be given to support individual/family based business and enterprising activities across rural and urban spaces.

## **4. National level think tank**

For last two decades, Muslim League has felt the need of platform for a meaningful dialogue bringing together scholars, professionals and intellectuals in the community. But what we need more appropriately is a group of organic intellectuals to speak up for our rights and to make heard the previously excluded voices of Indian Muslims. Our brothers in distress (especially Dalits) have succeeded in creating such an organic intelligentsia. Our party has a plan to initiate a dialogue and float a platform for organic intellectuals to come out and express themselves. The ideal proposition for this is to create a national level think-tank incorporating scholars from different fields including theology. The proposed think-tank is expected to have a role in policy making. The activities would also involve regular interactions with ulemas of different streams. The Party would get benefit out of such dialogues and brainstorming sessions.

## **5. Research Centre and Data Bank**

A research centre with state-of the art facilities and properly updated data bank on various socio-economic indices of the community like education, employment, poverty, and standards of living is also proposed. Research in the fields like community history, migration studies, maritime studies, electoral studies can also be promoted under the activities of this centre.

## **6. Archives and Audio-Visual Documentation Centre**

It is a painful reality that Muslim League so far has no centralized integrated documentation activities. Materials on our party history are totally scattered or under individual possession. A national level archives for the preservation of rare material with audio-visual documentation unit seems to provide a real solution to this problem.

## **7. Media Cell and Core media group**

Muslim League feels the need of launching a media cell and a media lobbying group in order to counter the negative stereotyping and 'vilification' of Muslims in the media. This will be an appropriate move to make the media debates in favour of the community or at least to lessen the damages caused by such debates. Formation of a core media group with journalists showing inclination to the League ideology and habitual lobbying among the media persons can also be included in the activities of the media cell.

## **8. Human Rights education and Legal Aid cell**

An awareness campaign is to be initiated to make our workers acquainted of constitutional provisions like human rights commission. The Muslim League is giving a thought to have a genuine mechanism to get national and international audience for violation of Muslims' human rights. Formation of a legal aid cell under the party to provide legal assistance to needy people in the community is in the pipeline.

## **9. Empowerment of Women**

Enhancement of the role of women in the party and government is, obviously, our long-committed agenda. In view of the impending constitutional changes providing special reservation for the women in the Parliament and State Legislative Assembly seats, Muslim League also cannot keep aloof from it. Women empowerment and realization of their rights, however, come solely through education. Effort to make them self-dependent seems to be the other means of empowerment. Self-help groups to address local and proximate income generating issues could be made a part of such a holistic approach.

## **10. Appropriation of Technological innovations**

Science and technology are not esoteric spheres of thought and activity but should be rooted in people's knowledge and understanding and addressed to their needs. For several centuries in history, Muslims were the harbingers of many technological inventions. But there is a widely-held misconception at present, often being circulated by the anti-Muslim forces that the community and its doctrinal orientation are not compatible with new technology. This is not true by all means. Historically, we have constantly been on the forefront in appropriating the technological innovations. And what we witness at present is the increased engagement of the community with new technology. This trend is very apparent in places like Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Muslims' engagement with new technology is a significant and interesting phenomenon as it has collectively brought many changes in pattern of life. Many of the Muslim organizations in Kerala have taken the advantage of IT to have wide reach for their ideologies among larger section of population. The proliferation of Islamic webistes, blogs, you tube clippings, social networking sites and other related sites for expressions of beliefs and articulation also have increased tremendously. Muslim League workers in this context should make use of new technologies and global means of communication for the propagation of our ideology. We should not spare any attempt to reach out to such professionals or utilize them for community's benefit. The utilization of technologies also involves dissemination of new technologies for needy people in our society. Efforts have to be there to make our community well-equipped in terms of acquaintance with the global means of communication.

## **11. Environmental Protection**

Environmental degradation and consequent climate change is a major matter of concern which attracted so much of global attention in the event of global summit on climate change. But Muslim community, as a whole, pays little attention to the frenzied global debates on environmental issues and its wide-range repercussions. The Party has sensed the urgency and need to address such sensitive issues with a due concern they deserve.

## **12. Civil Society Organizations and NGOs**

In order to be sensitive to many previously unheard issues, there is the need to initiate the process of establishing single-issue-oriented NGOs under the patronage of the Party. Such civil society organizations eventually would strengthen the Party as they play an important role in recognizing real issues of the people. Civil society organizations also will help us in institutional development.

## **13. Primacy on Education and skill development**

As we know, Muslims League leaders were instrumental in establishing many prestigious educational institutions all across Kerala. But we have witnessed a slow down trend with collective efforts giving way to individual one in establishing new educational institutions. The party workers should be on the front-run in setting up educational institutions in the locality. So, instead of running new institutions in individual capacity, the League members should make such an occasion a point to ensure the involvement of local League units. Financial assistance to the needy students through various Merit Scholarship Programmes should also be made a mandatory activity for each local unit.

The Party members should focus on skill development and capacity building amongst the poor at the grass roots. Some of the core ideas could be: provide inputs into community organizations to support skills up-gradation and enable the setting up of a Panchayat Resource Centre for training.

#### 14. Guidelines for Strengthening Organization

The first and foremost task of each IUML worker is to have a well organized unit of the party at primary (ward or division), municipality, panchayat, taluk and district level. In order to run the party machinery effectively, we must strengthen the organizational set up and broaden the party work in accordance with the policies of the party. For a concerted and coordinated move at the national level, there is the need of a uniform policy throughout India with regard to party structure, political alliances and grass-root level organization.

After strengthening organizational set up, every state committee should review the organizational apparatus at state and district level within one year from today and organize front organizations namely; youth, students, women and trade union. The first priority should be given to strengthen the base of the parent body, the IUML and the formation of frontal organizations should be completed in accordance with the following guidelines.

1. The youth who endorse the ideology and policies of the Muslim league should be organized under the banner of Muslim Youth League. The Youth wing of the Party should focus its attention to implement all programmes of the party in the areas of politics, education and culture. Poverty alleviation of the community and relief work and welfare programmes for the benefit of the economically and educationally backward sections of the community. The Youth League should also focus their attention to stall anti-muslim campaign let loose by the fascist elements and extreme activities of the members of the community which create ill-will and disharmony between the Muslims and other communities. The nefarious design of these overzealous people who endeavor to tarnish the image of Islam and Holy Quran should also be resisted through the established means and democratic process.
2. The State committees should strive hard to organize Muslim Students Federation in Madrassas, Upper Primary and High schools, Colleges and other educational institutions wherever there are sufficient number of Muslim students. The first and foremost duty of MSF is to propagate the basic ideals which IUML stands for and to motivate the members of the community to prosper against the odds. They must try to inculcate fundamentals of Islam and understand the changing world around them. Maintain their identity and promote unity among the Muslim students. Being disciplined, obedient and dynamic in learning modern science and technology, history, culture, they must widen the horizon of knowledge. They must also try themselves to be a role model to the future generation to understand and promote cohesion, unity and also to make them fit enough to live in plural society holding own identify and faith. The state committee and district level committees should extend all help and encourage them to realize their success in their states and wherever they need help including finance to pursue their studies.
3. **Women's Organisation:** Women's political and social empowerment has gained much of attention in the current political debate. In view of the impending constitutional changes providing special reservation for the women in the Parliament and State Legislative Assembly seats, Muslim League also cannot keep aloof from it. We should make them realized their prime duty; to building a happy home based on the principles of Islam, to strengthen the moral fabric of our society and to perform the duties as daughter, mother and wife. Besides, they should also be sensitive and vigilant to the social, economic and political changes taking place in our country. Our sisters should also be convinced of the important role they have to play in building up the community and the nation as well. Their participation in the governance of the country has become very vital though active politics may not be possible for every woman. They can always support and cooperate with achieving participatory representation in the democratic institutions like Panchayati Raj, Legislative Assembly and Parliament, for the welfare of the community. They are really a very vital force in deciding the electoral outcomes. The State Party leadership should take cautious and correct steps in organizing Women's League units at state and district and if possible at local level.
4. Trade Union activities are warranted widely in the country there is an imperative need for the Party to have labour unions at the national and the state level. Kerala State where all the different front organizations of the party are very much strong, should be a role model for other States to organize trade unions along the line of Swatantra Thozhilali Union.

It is the responsibility of the National and State leadership to provide proper guidelines for up-to-the mark functioning of front organization. There should be a consistent effort from the side of IUML at each level to monitor the activities and programmes of the front organizations. IUML is all set to organize a special national meet within six months in order to float Muslim Youth League, Muslim Students Federation, Women's league and Trade Union at the national level.