Excerpt: His Highness the Aga Khan on pressures facing Islam and its place in the international world

Aftab Ahmad Khan: How do you visualise the political future of the Islamic world and how could it find a proper place in the international power balance?

Aga Khan: At the present time the Islamic world is exposed to a multitude of pressures, solicitations and, personally, I think that the Islamic world has got to set itself realistic, pragmatic objectives and to avoid linking the name of Islam continuously with matters which are not directly related to the practice of Islam. In a sense, Islam is a faith that governs people’s lives but I do not think that you can carry that interpretation to the point of saying that everything you do is necessarily Islamic, I would like to see a more pragmatic approach - pragmatic in the sense that we have got to come to grips with the realities we are dealing with and perhaps stop linking the name of Islam with every issue. A typical example is that the faith of Islam is not the cause of the demographic dispersal of Muslims throughout the world and Islam has not been the reason for economic imbalances within the world. I think we have to try to seek solutions within the spirit of Islam to all those problems but there is a tendency to associate the word ‘Islam’ with situations which have nothing to do with our faith as such. This is my first comment.

The second comment I would like to make is that there is great diversity within the Muslim populations of the world: they are from different ethnic backgrounds, different languages, different cultural heritage and so long as all segments of the Islamic world are healthy, lively and creative, that diversity is a source of strength and
not weakness. Those who seek to impose a political view on the Islamic World or a religious view are, in my opinion, really not working for the benefit of the Islamic World. There is no way that you can impose a single view on nine hundred million people in so many different countries of the world.

Another point that I would make is that those people who practise the faith of Islam throughout the world must be supported within their own context, i.e. their own social, economic, demographic and ethnic background. That is what, to me, would make the future of the Muslim people strong. I am very open to a flexible response to these issues -- I do not believe there is a monolithic response.

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1983 Pakistan and Gulf Economist Interview with Aftab Ahmad Khan (Karachi, Pakistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/2799/

Click here for this post in PDF format.