

Seminars, Conferences, Addresses

The Role of Muslim Psychologists in the New Paradigm of Human Development

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Lahore, Pakistan

The Islamization of Knowledge movement is gaining steady momentum among Muslim scholars. Efforts are being made to examine different academic disciplines from an Islamic perspective, which is a clear indication of the growing desire to develop a new framework of knowledge. One result of this is the above-mentioned conference, which was organized by the Society for the Advancement of Muslim Psychology (SAMP), Pakistan, with the collaboration of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), Pakistan.

SAMP was founded by Syed Azhar Ali Rizvi, chairman of the Department of Psychology, Government College, Lahore, some ten years ago. Among the society's objectives are:

to promote the cause of Muslim psychology as a basic as well as an applied science, and of Muslim psychologists as academicians and professionals working for the welfare of the individual and the society; to explore ways and means of improving the quality of training, research, and professional competence of Muslim psychologists; and to apply the teachings of the Qur'an and hadith and the interpretations of eminent Muslims thinkers in the diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of those who need psychological care.

The conference was inaugurated by Rector Malik Meraj Khalid, Benazir Bhutto, prime minister of Pakistan, and Mian Mazoor Wattoo, chief minister of Punjab, sent special messages of goodwill.

Rizvi highlighted the theme in his introductory address and expressed the view that the predominant problem of the Muslim world was "underdevelopment" due to economic reliance on the West and other foreign nations. This has caused an inferiority complex among Muslims. Current development planning by the United Nations and other international agencies has failed to solve the problems of Muslims, who occupy a major position in the Third World. New development planning must be undertaken if these problems are to be resolved. If Muslims want to end this deplorable situation, they must rediscover their identity. Since the search for identity is a problem, we have to seek its remedy in that discipline. Thus, he linked psychology with the problem of development. Rizvi pointed out further that

psychology must concern itself with the specific conditions in which people live, for their behavior is shaped by their social, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Any effort to understand an individual without reference to his/her sociocultural context is inappropriate. Similarly, since a nation's character is shaped by its cultural perspective, its social, cultural, and religious aspects must be studied if its psychology is to be understood.

Thus, Rizvi rejected the idea of applying western psychology to Islamic society. In the case of Muslim-majority Pakistan, the discipline of psychology has to be Islamized before it can be applied to Pakistani patients. This is also true, he added, of the the Muslim world as a whole. Most papers presented in this conference also stressed this point.

Several important proposals were made in an attempt to provide guidelines for psychological work. Among these were the modality of translating and standardizing the Crown Crisps Experimental Index (CCEI) in order to make it relevant and useful in Pakistani Muslim society. In view of the rampant moral corruption in Muslim societies, the conference recommended the implementation of the Qur'anic theory of moral development.

Ijaz Haider (head, Department of Psychiatry, Postgraduate Medial Institute, Lahore) highlighted the role of religion in psychiatry. A religious person, he argued, believes in God and His supreme power. When one suffers an ailment, one's belief in God provides confidence, which plays a vital role in recovery. "Patients who are depressed often say that they have suicidal ideas, but it is religion which prevents them from indulging in this [suicidal] process."

Conference participants were unanimous in their opinion that Muslim thinkers and philosophers made remarkable contributions to psychology in the past. It is pertinent, therefore, to treat their achievements as the foundation for Islamizing this discipline. The ideas of Fakhṛ al Dīn al Rāzī and Muhammad Iqbal on human personality, al Ghazālī's view on the human soul, and Ibn Sīnā's study of the human mind were cited to illustrate the achievements of Muslim thinkers in psychology.

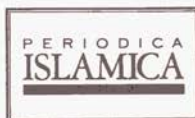
The last session was a symposium entitled "The Psychological Crisis of the Ummah: Attributes, Causes, and Remedies." Speakers presented a comprehensive analysis of the sociocultural condition of the ummah and suggested some remedies. Apart from external factors, the behavior of Muslims as a community is also a source of the problems now facing the Muslim world. The ummah, in general, and the Islamic resurgence movements, in particular, have been negative in their approach to changing world conditions. For example, they were opposed to communism and now have begun to resent perceived American hostility. However, Muslims have made no considerable headway in reorganizing themselves in such a way that they will be able to devise and implement effective solutions to their problems. Similarly, they have been so busy recalling their glorious past that they tend to forget the challenges of the future. At the same time, they have shown little passion for innovative research or an ability to come up with fresh ideas. In sum, they have been intellectually sterile. Parti-

Participants suggested some remedies: the ummah should be positive in its approach and concentrate on self-reform and, subsequently, efforts to unite its resources, and Muslims should be pragmatic and future-oriented when facing the challenges of the present and the future.

This was a stimulating conference. The participants' enthusiasm provided a basis for optimism about the future of the Muslim world and indicated that efforts aimed at the Islamization of knowledge are likely to bear fruit.

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