

Seminar on Islamization of Psychology: Petaling Jaya, November-December 1996

A two-day national seminar on Islamization of Psychology jointly sponsored by the Department of Psychology, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and the International Institute of Islamic Thought Malaysia (IIITM) was held on November 30th and December 1, 1996, on IIUM campus in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The main objective of the seminar was to form a network of psychologists in Malaysia in an attempt to Islamize Psychology, that is, to look at human problems and their solutions from the perspectives of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* (traditions of the Prophet). This was considered a step toward the more broader effort of Islamization of Knowledge, the motto which the International Institute of Islamic Thought is so fervently advocating throughout the world. Toward this major goal, some of the related objectives were: finding out the state-of-the-art situation regarding Islamizing psychology; studying the efforts made at curriculum changes and research programmes; and planning for the future.

The welcoming address was delivered by the Dean of Islamic Revealed Knowledge & Human Sciences, Dr. Jamal Barzinji. The Rector of the university, Dr. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman gave the inaugural speech in which he pointed out that although Western psychology has a lot to offer, it seriously lacks the dimension of spirituality. He said that, while discipline and hard work are crucial in exploring any field of knowledge, *imān* (faith) is also a necessary dimension for all human achievements. He asked the participants to design an Islamic framework of psychology and show how this is different from Western psychology.

Keynote addresses were given by Dr. Louay M. Safi, Director of IIITM and Dr. Hassan Langgulong, Professor Department of Education, IIUM. While Dr. Safi talked on "Islamization of Psychology: Some Pertinent Issues," Dr. Langgulong focused on "The Ummatic Paradigm of Psychology: A Preliminary Analysis." Dr. Safi emphasized that the lack of the spiritual component in present theories of psychology have reduced the validity of the discipline. He emphasized the relationship between transcendental and empirical knowledge and that the transcendental component should be the guiding principle for Muslim psychologists rather than the principle of "adaptability" which is inherent in the West. He also suggested four

ways to Islamize psychology, i.e., by integrating empirical and transcendental knowledge, developing the Islamic concept of human nature, advancing empirical work, and developing an awareness of the interconnectedness of psychology with other disciplines like sociology, political science, etc. In a similar vein, Langgulung also pointed out the need to incorporate spirituality as an essential element of the existing paradigms. Further, he said that this spiritual element should be an integral part of the Islamic framework.

The main papers presented are briefly described below:

Social Sciences and Religion: What is the Relationship? - Mustapha Achoui, IIUM/IIITM. The author stated that the social sciences (psychology being one of them) and religion should be perceived as part of one another. Muslim scholars (including psychologists) must integrate these two areas by taking into account their Islamic heritage, culture, and values. He also emphasized that religious thinkers and men of Islamic jurisprudence should cooperate with Muslim social scientists in determining whether or not the principles put forward by the experts are acceptable in Islam. Also, what is being proposed by Muslim social scientists should be publicized. Because of the recent moves toward the social sciences in many Muslim universities, the author felt that the next generation of Muslim social scientists will be better equipped to handle the problems faced by the Islamic thinkers of today.

Islamization of Psychology: Scenario at IIUM- Shamsur Rehman Khan, IIUM. Dr. Khan discussed the nature of efforts made by the IIUM Psychology Department in this direction. He also highlighted the barriers in achieving this goal.

Faith and Human Nature: Islamic and Existential Viewpoints - Fatima Zohra Sai, IIUM. Dr. Sai addressed the question of faith and its relation to human nature from Islamic and Existentialist points of view. While human nature is limited to the biological dimension in the Existentialist theory of Sartre, *al-Rūḥ* is an integrated concept in Islam. Both views consider "belief" intrinsic to human nature. Sartre's analysis of "bad faith" shows that belief is integral to human reality, while the Islamic view proposes that human nature is the state of being pure or Muslim. It is *fiṭrah* at birth but develops by the age of discretion as a result of maturation and learning. *Imān* is seen in Islam as a source of purification of human nature. The paper also discussed

the relation of *al-Qalb* to *Imān*.

Cognitive Restructuring of Muslim Psychologists Towards Building a Firm Faith: A Prerequisite for Islamization of Psychology - Amber Haque, IIUM. The author pointed out that psychology as a branch of knowledge has been dominated by "Western" ideas and influences, leaving Muslim psychologists exposed primarily to non-Islamic and often incomplete approaches of human understanding. Muslim psychologists need to get out of the "lizard's hole" (refers to following Western ideas without proper scrutiny) and look at all psychological phenomena from an Islamic angle which first requires a solid understanding of Islamic principles and concepts. This presentation emphasized the continued development of Islamic beliefs as a prerequisite for the Islamization of Psychology.

Muslim Identity in the Contemporary World - M. G. Hussain, IIUM. The paper pointed out that present day Muslims are a divided lot and they have been pushed to a disadvantageous position, low status and are living in deprived conditions by certain factors within their cultural milieu. However, recent psychosocial, geo-political, and socioeconomic changes and transformations coupled with internal and external threat to their life and property are also bringing them closer to the fold of the community and religion, and leading to the development of Muslim identity as a major segment of the contemporary world. Different social, psychological, and political factors were discussed as parameters of identity development.

Islamization of Psychology Curriculum - Nizar Mohd. S. Alani, IIUM. The emphasis in this paper was on constructing an Islamic theoretical framework of human nature, conducting researches on the hypotheses derived from these theories, and then introducing the Islamic perspective from humanistic as well as scientific approaches. He stated that the elements of faith and the study of human being as God's creation should not be ignored. For methodology, the author said that the existing or newly developed methods to advance knowledge can be used, unless those methods are forbidden by Islamic ethics. The author quoted studies which predict that new perspectives will evolve and older perspectives merge to form new ones as the science of psychology continues to grow and mature.

Islamizing Psychology or Reviving Islamic Psychology- Osman Bakar, University of Malaya. The paper argues that during the peak period of Islamic civilization, psychology was a full-fledged academic discipline

covering both cognitive and behavioral aspects based on philosophy and science. At that time, the West was still trying to find a secure foundation for psychology. Modern psychology, however, is still trapped in a methodological crisis, because of its obsession in emulating the physical sciences. The author is of the opinion that the revival of Islamic psychology is a wiser option as it is in harmony with the Qur'ānic principles and traditions of the Prophet. He also talked about ways of reviving traditional Islamic psychology in the contemporary world.

Islamic Approach to Psychopathology and its Treatment - Syed Ashiq Ali Shah, IIUM. This paper stressed the importance of the individual awareness of self. The psychotherapeutic approach in the Islamic perspective emphasizes self-control, i.e., exercising restraint in pursuing the materialistic goals. It focuses upon reintegration of the individual in the socio-religious mainstream.

A Radical or Traditional Islamic Perspective on Mental Health - Sabeena Watanabe, IIUM. The main contention of this paper was getting the person "back on track," the track being *ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* or the straight path. Higher goals may be set according to the person's *maqām* (or religious status) and among the methods used are *taubā* (repentance) and *jihād* (self-struggle). The whole process takes place within the context of a special relationship between the guide and the guided, enriching them both.

Islamization of Guidance and Counselling: Issues, Problems, and Prospects - Abdul Halim Othman, University Kebangsaan Malaysia and Ahmad M. Raba, IIUM. The concepts of guidance and counselling were discussed from the linguistic point of view as well as from the Qur'ānic perspective. Repentance was introduced as an Islamic way for personality and behaviour change. Dreams in Islamic counselling and in the multicultural context were illustrated.

An Islamic Theory of Arousal and Information Processing - Mohammad Daud Hamza, University Science Malaysia. The author presented a model of consciousness originally proposed by Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (781-847). The structural features of this theory were described.

The Use of a Third Person in Cross-Gender Counselling - Nadiya Elias, University Utara Malaysia. The paper proposed the rationale and guideline for using a professional third person (*zamīr*), in cross-gender counselling.

The audience consisted of students and faculty from several academic institutions of Malaysia. It was generally agreed by the participants that it is the need of the moment for psychologists to make serious attempts at deriving an Islamic framework of psychology in trying to understand human nature from the perspectives of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. It was recommended that similar seminars be held on an ongoing basis, even though, at smaller scale, in order to monitor progress in the goal of Islamization of Psychology.

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National Seminar on Knowledge and the Issue of Islamization: Shah Alam, May 1997

At the core of the ummah's experiences stands the intellectual crisis, because of the absence of suitable methodological approaches. The systems of education in the Muslim world fails to inculcate the good-Muslim-citizen values stressed in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. Certainly, the problem of methodology and epistemological paradigm emerge as the significant issues to be handled.

With this in mind, International Institute of Islamic Thought Malaysia (IIITM) has started contacting scholars, educationists, academicians and intellectual leaders in Malaysia to exchange ideas to discuss the crux of the issue. In order to serve this purpose, IIITM organized a two-day national seminar on "Knowledge and the Issue of Islamization" held at Holiday Inn, Shah Alam, Selangor from 30-31st May 1997. The participants were mostly scholars, university professors, researchers, undergraduate and graduate students from all around Malaysia. The seminar was meant to provide scholars and intellectuals with a forum for exchanging ideas and views on Islamization of Knowledge so as to develop a better understanding of its methodologies, approaches, directions and goals. Also the seminar was meant to provide an appropriate forum for Muslim scholars, intellectuals, students, and community leaders to interact, discuss and provide insights on the direction of the IOK agenda and to foster better cooperation for developing Muslim scholarship.

The seminar was graced by the presence of the Minister of Education, Dato' Najib Tun Abdul Razak. Dato' Najib officiated the