

Conferences/Seminars

Qur'anic Concepts of Human Psyche Lahore, Pakistan

Sha'ban 27, 1409/April 3, 1989

During the recent past a number of Muslim psychologists in Pakistan as well as other countries have attempted to develop a greater understanding of basic Islamic sources for an alternate view of human psyche. This is an approach which is quite new for psychologists in Muslim countries who have been trained in the Western intellectual tradition, and have depended on Western sources for their methods, models and content areas of research.

Since the Qur'an is the basic source of Islamic thought, it is not surprising that a number of Muslim psychologists have turned to the Qur'an in order to develop an alternate perspective of understanding the human psyche.

It was therefore proposed that the IIIT should help in consolidating the efforts being made in this respect by sponsoring a seminar for psychologists interested in this area.

Objectives

The seminar aimed at giving the Pakistani psychologists interested in the application of Islamic concepts in understanding human psyche an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas, and to present their views and findings to each other and to teachers and advance students of psychology.

The Seminar

The seminar was organized by the IIIT, Pakistan in collaboration with the Department of Psychology, Government College, Lahore. This department, which is the oldest institution of post-graduate teaching and research in psychology in Pakistan, has a strong tradition of interest in Muslim Psychology. They offer an optional course in Muslim Contributions to Psychotherapy also. The local organizer was Dr. Azhar Ali Rizvi, Chairperson of the above department.

The seminar was held on April 3, 1989 in Falleties Hotel, Lahore. In all, 21 persons attended the deliberations. They included eminent psychologists, social scientists and some scholars of the Holy Qur'an. Apart from the Pakistani participants, two psychologists from Dhaka University, Bangladesh read their

papers. The number of participants was deliberately kept small in order to ensure discussion and exchange of ideas rather than allowing paper-reading or speech-making to be the main features of this seminar.

The seminar was spread over two sessions. The first session was presided over by Prof. Mohammed Ajmal; and the second by Prof. S. M. Moghni.

The First Session

The first session began with recitation from holy Qur'an. Dr. Zafar Afaq Ansari, Head of Social Sciences, IIIT Pakistan, described the work being done by the IIIT in the area of Islamization of knowledge in his introductory remarks. He also explained the objectives of the present seminar, and briefly surveyed the work that has been done in Pakistan and other Muslim countries.

Prof. S. M. Moghni spoke briefly on the process of Islamization of knowledge, and how this objective can be achieved. Dr. Absar Ahmad presented a paper in which he discussed the constructs used in the Qur'an in place of the psychological construct of psyche. He discussed the meanings of *nafs*, *qalb* and *ruh* as explained in the Qur'an. Dr. Mah Nazir Riaz read a paper in which she highlighted various constructs which are presented in Qur'an for the guidance of mankind. Dr. Iffat S. Dar raised the question of the nature of Psychology in a Qur'anic context. She opined that Psychology cannot be a value-free science in the Islamic view, because Islam provides comprehensive norms of behavior. Mr. Shamsuddin Ilyas read a paper on "Development of Religiosity Scale for Muslims". He noted that little research is available on religiosity among the Muslims. This is so because no instrument for such research is available, the existing instruments having been developed for non-Muslims. He presented a plan for cross-national research in this area for development of such a scale.

The Second Session

Dr. Israr Ahmad, a distinguished scholar of the Qur'an, was the first speaker of this session. He quoted various verses from the Qur'an which threw light on the nature of human beings and how they develop. Prof. Abdul Hayee Alawi presented a paper on the Qur'anic concept of mental health. He pointed out the inadequacies of the present Western concepts, and how the concepts derived from the holy Qur'an provide a fuller understanding of mental health and the process of fostering it. Prof. Manzurul Haque emphasized the need for developing a model of personality based on the teachings of the Qur'an. Prof. Abdul Haque presented a paper on the concept of obedience as enunciated in the Qur'an, and as understood among Muslims and

non-Muslim groups. He cited several studies, some of them conducted by himself, which indicated the differences. Prof. Abdul Latif read a paper on what he called Mirrage therapy—a word derived from mirror of self and the famous incident of Me'raj of the Holy Prophet (SAAS).

A detailed discussion followed the paper reading sessions. Prof. Burhan Ahmad Farooqi, a very senior scholar of Islam, made detailed comments on the papers and the questions raised from the audience.

Follow-up Action

During the seminar ten presentations were made. Most of these presentations were in the form of written papers, although some papers were in the form of drafts. Two presentations were oral. The proceedings including the oral presentation and the discussion session, were recorded.

Letters have been written to all the speakers to complete/revise their papers and send them to the editor. The papers will be reviewed and an edited version will be prepared for publication. It is expected that this process will take about six months.

General Comments

The seminar generated an immense amount of interest. A number of people inquired about the proceedings of this seminar and expressed a desire to participate in future seminars on this topic. Many people expressed a desire to read more on this issue. The need for a comprehensive bibliography and a place where all this material is available was emphasized. Many people wanted to benefit from books available in Arabic only. There is a need to translate such books into English and Urdu so that more people may benefit from them. Many speakers emphasized the need for cross-national and joint research projects on problems that are specific to Muslims. A project for developing a measure of religiosity was discussed and it was decided that psychologists from Pakistan and Bangladesh will take up this project jointly. Some participants expressed the need of an Association of Muslim Psychologists and of a research journal. However both these proposals were considered a little premature for the time being.