

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE IN PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT AND CURRENT TRENDS IN PSYCHOLOGY

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SUMMARY:

In the light of Qur'an and Hadith the study of Human Behavior as such and its application to the growth and development of a healthy society is the main purpose of the Divine Guidance. Islam and the teaching of Allah's apostle clearly shows us the direction of study and research in the field of Human Behavior, both individual and groups. The stories given in the Qur'an are the examples, explanation and indications of the deviant as well as the expected normal behavior of human beings. Thus Qur'an and Hadith both jointly lead us to a comprehensive study of psychology as a science.

INTRODUCTION

Islam is the most natural way of life for human beings. The significance of religion in understanding of human behavior and moulding the personality of human being. Brohi (1974)¹ says, "Islam has regarded religion as a methodology and a technique for enabling mankind to live this life (Hayatudduniyaa) ably and effectively here below on earth, to be able to win the reward of an eternal life hereafter (Akhirat). The strategy of Islam was to present the perspective in which man could discover his real place in the scheme of things and was also the purpose why he has been brought into being on earth. Islam invites man to understand his role on earth and helps him to fulfill the law of his own being to the end that he may be able to reap the rich harvest of eternal life."

Unfortunately the present trends in the Western psychology are by and large contrary to the Islamic Ideology. The Muslim psychologists who are trained in the Western psychology are bringing home some adverse effects and ill teachings. Badri² says, "Theories and practice which are largely the product of the Western Civilization of Christians and Jews have, for long, dominated the social science departments of Universities in Muslim countries and the press, the radio and television have helped to establish their alien concepts among the Muslim masses."

Author's own research, "An investigation of Culturally oriented Personality Differences Between Pakistani and American Students" has revealed that the current standard psychological tests and measuring instruments developed in the West are by and large unsuitable for application in the Muslim population. Some of the tests are contrary to the

Islamic Ideology and their interpretations may be misleading.

This paper is, therefore, 1) evaluating the need of developing Islamic Psychology, 2) need for defining the criteria of "Normality" in Islam, 3) enunciating the Islamic Theory of Personality based on Qur'an and Hadith, and 4) developing our own standard battery of Psychological Tests for use in the clinical, educational and industrial area in the Muslim countries. The paper proposes to form a special committee of Muslim Psychologists to work on these important issues.

NATURE OF MAN

In understanding the theories of personality presented in the western literature and to compare it with what Islam has to offer in the understanding of human behavior we have to look into the nature of man, purpose of its creation and also how man has been viewed by Allah Subhanahu Wa Taala in Qur'an and in other scriptures. In such an analysis we have to look for the relationship of various theories so far developed and the research work done so far and see if it can be utilized for Islamic Psychology. It is evident that some of the old concepts have been redefined in the Western psychology, eliminating the religious biases and spiritual connotations. Thus we have to develop a purely Islamic (in the light of Qur'an and Hadith) and scientific viewpoint in the study of the attitudes, or image of man in order to understand the human behavior.

It is a scientific fact and reality that by merely looking at a product or machinery or watching its operation one can not determine its optimum working capacity and criterion of performance. For such information we have to look into the operating instructions or its manual, manufacturer's specifications and designer's or its creator's conceptualization of the product. The same principle applies to the study and understanding of human behavior. The present day Western psychology is primarily based on the conceptions of man advanced by classical scholars, who were also human beings themselves, such as Hippocrates, Plato, and Aristotle followed by scores of other thinkers and philosophers in the intervening period, mostly Western. Hall and Lindzey (1970)³ in the introduction of their book have enumerated four main sources of influence upon the present day Western Psychology and particularly the

Theories of Personality. These influences are the clinical observations beginning with Charcot, Janet, then Sigmund Freud, Jung and McDougall, etc. The second source of influence is that of Gestalt tradition and that of William Stern. According to the Gestalt movement the segmental or fragmented study of small elements of behavior could never prove enlightening. The third influencing source is the experimental psychology and the learning theories. The fourth source is the psychometric approach with its focus on the measurement and study of individual differences. There are some other sources such as Genetics, social and anthropological and logical positivism that have been influential in the development of the current theories of personality. In all these approaches there are obvious differences. Hall and Lindzey (1970)⁴ says, "These striking differences among personality theories, however, imply that almost any statement that applies with detailed accuracy to one theory of personality will be somewhat inaccurate when applied to many other theories." It is very important to note that none of these approaches or none of these Western scholars has taken into consideration what the Creator of mankind says about His creations and how He defines the personality or the criterion of normal human behavior. This spiritual or cosmic approach to the understanding of human behavior should be more objective, impartial, unbiased, valid and accurate and scientific in nature.

We all know that long before Hippocrates or Plato came on the stage to observe the human behavior. Allah Subhanahu Wa Taala taught, gave knowledge to and defined the expected criterion of Human Behavior. This knowledge and the criterion were then repeatedly sent to mankind and they were reminded of it through various Prophets and Messengers such as Syedna Ibrahim, Syedna Moosa, Syedna Essa (PEU) and many more and finally this message was completed through the Holy Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). It is not understood how we can ignore the Creator's instructions and guidance and the guidelines and still claim to have developed a theory of personality? How can we claim to have understood the human behavior in total? How by ignoring this important aspect of the truth can we develop a theory or theories of personality which could be perfect, objective and universal as well as culture free.

Western psychologists and scholars have stressed the importance of motivational process as crucial for the understanding of human behavior. Sigmund Freud and McDougall are said to have been the first ones to give serious consideration to the motivational process. McDougall's theory of social behavior really is nothing but a theory of personality taking into account and consideration the social motivation, and the theories developed by the experimental psychologists. Still such formulations do not take into

consideration of man's existence in the cosmos and the interacting influences. So far as the motivational approach is concerned in the Western psychology it has only a superficial application and they have side tracked many of the causative factors that generate motivation. The entire structure and the foundation of motivation is changed when a Muslim submits himself to Allah Subhanahu Wa Taala and to His will. After affirming his Kalama his entire perspective of life, his life goals, and motivational processes are changed. His every movement is then geared to be within the will of Allah and for His pleasure. Further the motivational process is dynamically changed if a person believes in the life hereafter and the day of judgment. Allah Subhanahu Wa Taala says in the Holy Qur'an:

"Say: Lo! my worship and my sacrifice, and my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the Worlds." (Al Qur'an: vi, 162).

This is the fundamental and the basis of a Muslim's motivational process. This also provides a basic frame of reference for the development of personality and a guideline for all human behavior. Such important consideration would then become the basic assumption in the development of any theory of personality or Islamic Psychology.

When faith and religion become a way of life for an individual or a group of people, then all the current theories of personality or group dynamics or group processes, or those of the social interaction and the entire basis of motivation for action and human behavior would then be dynamically changed. This single important influencing factor has been ignored or at least not taken into proper consideration in the Western psychology.

QUR'AN & HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

Qur'an presents a complete code and conduct of human behavior and the laws related to it. Thereby we can say that Qur'an is defining the code of ethics as well as the criteria of normal and abnormal behavior. There are examples given in Qur'an which are the basis for further research. This available data in Qur'an can help us in the understanding of the human behavior; its nature and anticipation of the developmental and growth processes. Qur'an is then supplemented by the tradition of the Holy Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and put it into applicable form and practice and moulds our lives accordingly. These things are to be extracted and presented in the form of applicable format. Qur'anic observations provide guidance in all phases of life and in all walks of human behavior, including the clinical psychology, physical and mental health, social life and research in the cosmos and the subterrarians of the earth and lead us to the "MAAREFAT-E-ILLAHI" — in the understanding

of the universe and the very nature and characteristics of Allah Subhanahu Wa Taala.

According to the Gestalt approach the personality theorist's conviction is that the adequate understanding of human behavior will evolve only from the study of the 'whole person'. This may be partially true. According to the Islamic point of view personality of man or human behavior can only be evaluated or understood in relation to Allah and the entire perceivable universe. The so called "Whole Person" is just a tiny little part of the universe and playing its assigned role. He can not be understood in isolation from the rest of the creations and detached from its Creator. The work of the clinical psychologist, the experimental psychologist and that of the other Western psychologists may very well be of some great use and may serve as an integral part of the study of the whole. The Islamic Psychologist will then finally be required to integrate the available research material and all the Western theories and formulations in putting together the Islamic concepts of Man and human behavior. In order to accomplish this the Muslim psychologist will have to be more speculative, more understanding of Qur'an and Hadith, should have full knowledge of the current and recent work done in the West in the field of psychology and should be able to utilize the available literature in integrating the knowledge. He should also take into consideration all the scriptures so far revealed and the Message of Allah completed with the Holy Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). His guideline will then be defined in Qur'an i, 5, 6, 7.

Qur'an very well guides mankind to a specific and definite way of life which is designated by Allah Subhanahu Wa Taala. In the first chapter of Qur'an man is guided to ask his Creator as follows:

"Thee alone do we serve, and Thee alone do we ask for help.⁵

Guide us on the Right Path, the path of those upon who be Thy blessings,⁶ nor of those upon whom be (Thy) wrath, nor of those who are lost."⁷

In response to the above prayer, Allah Subhanahu Wa Taala says to the believers:

"And in that case, We could certainly have given them a great reward from Ourselves."⁸

"And we would surely have guided them the Right Path."⁹

"And he who obeys Allah, and the Messenger, then such a one is with those whom Allah has blessed, viz. the Prophets, and the Truthful, and the bearers of testimony (or martyrs), and the good: And what a goodly company are these."¹⁰

"This is the eminence from Allah; and sufficient is Allah as one who knows."¹¹

There are many more verses supporting and relicating this single message that Allah is the one who guides mankind in their behavior and that mankind is to follow only Him and Him alone. Any approach in understanding the human behavior has to be in this respect and should take into consideration the relationship between mankind and its Creator.

It is an accepted fact that people from different racial, ethnic backgrounds and cultures have altogether different patterns of personality development. These differences are very well recognized in Islam. The one single proof that Qur'an is universal and that its teachings are universal and applicable for all times is that Qur'an itself recognizes the cultural, racial, and ethnic variations among mankind. Allah Subhanahu Wa Taala says in Qur'an that He has created people in; different tribes, clans and races so that they can identify each other and recognize each other. This indicates that we must anticipate variations in human behavior largely based on cultural variations and ethnic or geographical locale. In spite of this variation Qur'an provides a common and general frame of reference for human conduct. This frame of reference is sufficiently flexible to accommodate all the expected variations present in human nature and makeup.

CODE OF HUMAN CONDUCT:

This also proves that Allah Subhanahu Wa Taala never provided a very rigid code of human conduct which may oppose the very nature of human beings lest they could never adjust to it. The nature of man is flexible, innovative and creative unlike other living organisms on the face of the earth. The Islamic Psychology has to take into consideration and into account this aspect of human nature and the ability to adjust.

As a result of this flexible nature of mankind, people tend to respond differently to different stimuli, which also includes all the psychological tests and measurements. Based on this assumption, it would be necessary to take such differences into consideration whenever any personality tests, projective or non-projective, are used in research or clinical practice. In his study Klienberg (1949)¹² indicated the difficulties encountered in interpreting the test results when used in other than the standardization group. The projective tests are relatively less culture-bound but they have their own limitations. Mead (1962)¹³ enumerates such limitations. Her major criticism bears on the subjective interpretation of symbolism by the culture-bound clinician. Clearly symbolism of subject's responses may be interpreted differently in different cultures. A review of literature provides

scores of studies in support of cultural differences on various psychological tests. It has also been observed that the use of these tests and techniques in a different culture only brings out the racial, cultural and ethnic prejudices and biases rather than the personality characteristics or individual pathologies of the subjects tested.

ANALYSIS OF A STUDY:

Before any new tests or theories are developed or any modification is made, it is also necessary to find out how far the currently available tests are invalid, and where they need to be changed or modified. In order to provide a reasonable answer to this question a study was undertaken by this author in 1973.¹⁴ This study was undertaken as a pilot study or a pilot project in that direction with the hope that it would generate new research and would have pioneering significance in developing psychodiagnostic tools and treatment modalities and relevant theories suitable for Islamic society and culture.

The subjects of this study were an equal number of male and female comparable student population from American and Pakistani cultural background. The subjects were matched for age, sex, and educational level. All the subjects from Pakistani culture were Muslims and had at least two years of college education in Pakistan. The subjects from the American cultural background were all non-Muslim white Caucasian. The battery of standard psychological tests used included Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI); Sixteen Personality Factor (16PF); Allport, Vernon, and Lindzey Test of Values; Personal Orientation Inventory (POI); Rorschach Inkblot Test; Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).

The results indicate that the Pakistani subjects scored significantly differently than their counterpart Americans. The study concluded that the psychological tests are culture-bound and the results should be interpreted with cultural relativity. The various conclusions of the study indicate the need of developing altogether new theories, tests and standardization in the Islamic culture. The need of Islamic psychology is an eminent outcome of this study.

NORMAL BEHAVIOUR:

So far we have discussed the need for the development of Islamic Psychology, a need for the development of Islamic Theory of personality and understanding of the human behavior in the light of Qur'an and Hadith. Another equally important and significant issue is the criterion of normality. The available literature on defining the normal behavior and normality is more confusing and this confusion then in turn leads us in other related areas of

psychology. Psychologists from various disciplines have tried to, but have not yet been able to reach a conclusive definition of normality of human behavior. This has further been complicated by segmentalization of psychology and multiplicity of viewpoints without a common ground or objective realization.

Normative and statistical concept utilizes the bell-shaped curve for determining statistically normal distribution of human behavior. This is particularly applied in the field of mental testing and personality assessment by using various psychological tests. Here the concept of normal is most exorably tied to the statistical concept of average. This concept of normality of behavior cannot be entertained by Islamic Ideology, the reason being very simple. If a group of one million people in a country or local setting believes and practices idol-worship or engages in any non-Islamic activity, then their behavior will be statistically speaking, but cannot be considered as the desired or normal behavior from the Islamic Ideology. The behavior of non-believers and idolators, no matter how average that may be in their own group, will still be a deviant behavior from the Islamic point of view and surely not desired by Allah.

Besides the statistical concept there are some ideographic and idealistic concepts to define the normal behavior. Such an approach is by and large influenced by the psychoanalytic movement. Freudians and neo-Freudians view the human organism as endowed with built-in energy serving as a potential that could be actualized in time.

A number of sociologists have also attempted to develop techniques of integrating institutional structural role functioning and individual behavior. Here they are merely dealing with the organism alone and the hypothetical energy contained within it. Without knowledge of the nature of this energy and the characteristics of its development one really can not determine the criterion of normal behavior or the normal flow of interaction in social terms. Goffman (1961)¹⁵ Straus et. al (1964)¹⁶; Srole et. al (1962)¹⁷; Stanton and Schwarts (1954)¹⁸; and in another context, Parson (1964)¹⁹ have developed such techniques of integrating the roles. It is notable that these bridging studies rarely include theoretical models of normal behavior from hierarchy of levels, including interpersonal elements.

Parson states that we must look to social structures to determine their significance in producing the individual's optimum social capacity. According to Parson, each individual is socialized to develop a capacity for effective performance of specific roles and tasks. The big question for us Muslims is that those who are born and raised in the Western culture and the non-Muslim environment can they be expected to perform the roles prescribed by Islam? How the personality and behavior of the Muslims trained in the

alien culture can be evaluated from Islamic point of view? As a corollary to this we may ask how the theories of personality and formulation about the criteria of normality developed in the non-Islamic culture can be applied in the Islamic culture (here we are not talking about the culture of the Islamic countries but we are referring to the Islamic culture as defined by Qur'an and Hadith).

From the Cross-Cultural perspective various disciplines of social sciences have made an effort to define the criterion of normal human behavior.

Anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1934)²⁰ tends to subscribe to the concept of cultural relativity. She believed that a universal valid criteria of normality might ultimately be found. Wegracki (1939)²¹ distinguishes two approaches that most anthropologists accept in viewing normality. First, the statistico-relative approach assesses normal behavior relative to the culture in which it is performed. The second approach, functionalism, evaluates the function of behavior within the total economy of the personality while accepting the premise that behavior is in part culturally determined.

More than any other discipline, anthropology has emphasized the culture-bound determinants of behavior. Thus far universal personality or universal normal behavior has not been defined as there is no universal culture per se. What culture can be more universal and better than the one defined and prescribed by the Creator of mankind? For a universal culture the criterion has to be determined and defined by someone much superior and more powerful than the human beings themselves.

Qur'an is very explicit about the criterion of human behavior.

"And when We gave into Moses the scripture and the Criterion (of right and wrong), that ye might be led right."²²

Further Qur'an says:

"Oh ye who believe! If ye keep your duty to Allah, He will give you discrimination (between right and wrong) and will rid you of your evil thoughts and deeds, and will forgive you. Allah is of Infinite bounty."²³

"And most certainly We gave Moses and Aaron the criterion (for right and wrong) and light and a reminder for those who, practice reverence."²⁴

"Those who fear their Lord in their hearts; and they stand in awe of the Hour."²⁵

"And this (Qur'an) is a blessed reminder which We have sent down, and you then going to deny it?"²⁶

"And most certainly We gave Abraham the right path before, and we knew him."²⁷

"Blessed is He who has gradually sent down this discrimination (criterion of right and wrong)

upon His servant, that he may be warned to the people of the world."²⁸

"He to who belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and who has not taken a child nor is there any partner with Him in the kingdom, and He makes all things then measures them out a complete measurement."²⁹

Here we see that Allah Subhanahu Wa Taala has verily made it clear for mankind that there are criteria of human behavior and that only He can determine such criteria and that only He can give this ability to man to discriminate between right and wrong. A further research based on the study of Qur'an and Hadith is necessary to explore and define the criteria of human behavior and to find out what Allah means with the limits set for such discrimination.

CONCLUSIONS:

To conclude this paper we can say that the function of the Islamic psychologist would be the integration of all the available knowledge formulated within the framework prescribed by Allah. Such integration then would be universal and culture free. The application of such integrated knowledge in the fields of education, socialization and clinical application and in the study of human behavior would then lead to a universal culture and universal brotherhood. A universal conflict-free society can only be developed if the motivational process and the theories of personality and human behavior are in conformity of some universal and external criteria. The development of Islamic psychology for a universal application in itself would be an "Ijtihad". Now is the time that the Muslim trained in the Western school of thought bring up his Islamic training and knowledge, teachings and understanding of Islam, Qur'an and Hadith in enlarging and enriching the field of psychology. If he can do this, he would be fulfilling the Will of Allah and helping put humanity on the right path — the Straight path repeatedly mentioned in Qur'an as the "Siratal Mustaqeem".

It is time that the Muslim Social Scientists in general and the Muslim Psychologist in particular should come forward, pool their resources, knowledge and spirit and work towards the following objectives: 1) evaluate the need of developing Islamic Psychology; 2) define the criteria of "Normality" of human behavior as applied in Islam and Islamic point of view; enunciate the Islamic theory of personality based on Qur'an and Hadith; 3) develop our own standard set of battery of psychological tests for use in the clinical and industrial and education areas of the Muslim countries and the Muslim communities throughout the world. This paper proposes to form a special committee of Muslim psychologists to work on these important issues.

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⁴Ibid.

⁵Al Qur'an i, 5

⁶Al Qur'an i, 6

⁷Al Qur'an i, 7

⁸Al Qur'an iv, 67

⁹Al Qur'an iv, 68

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²³Al Qur'an viii, 29

²⁴Al Qur'an xxi, 48

²⁵Al Qur'an xxi, 49

²⁶Al Qur'an xxi, 50

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