

**Summary of the proceedings of one-day seminar  
on  
Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi and the Integration of Knowledge  
held on  
Saturday 8 Feb, 2020 at Calicut, Kerala**

**Speakers:**

1. Khalid Musa Nadvi
2. Fathima Sherin K.P
3. Shuaib P. V
4. Abdul Raoof C
5. Naseeha Bint Hussain
6. Zeba Shireen

**Introduction**

The discipline called the integration of knowledge has derived from the Islamic concept of God and concept of knowledge. In Islam knowledge comes from two sources, one is revelatory and the other through empirical observation and study. In that sense it is also closely related to the basic structures of its metaphysics which is made-up of revelation, tradition, reason, experience and intuition. The main damage done to Islamic concept of knowledge was due to the colonial influence and westernization. The secular education introduced by colonial powers has split education in Muslim world into two water-tight spheres. In contemporary times the idea of integration of knowledge has been discussed by many Islamic scholars.

In 1936 Sayyid Abul A'la Moududi in his work *Ta'alimat* discussed the need for integration of knowledge. He was responding to the views of conservative and modernist scholars regarding the Muslim education system. He wanted a critical analysis of western social sciences and to restructure them in accordance with concept of knowledge in Islam. Later 1978, the Malaysian scholar Syed Muhammad al-Naqib al-Attas in his seminal study *Islam and Secularism* argued that Islamisation of knowledge would liberate Muslims from the evils of secularisation. Seyyid Hossein Nasr, the Iranian scholar has also made considerable contribution to the integration of different disciplines and dealt with the sources of human knowledge especially in his work *The Ideals and Realities of Islam*.

This thinking has been taken up and developed by many scholars. Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, the scholar from Palestine continued the discussion and struggled to start a movement called *Islamisation of Knowledge*. It has been mission to restructure Islamic thought on the basis of teaching of the Qur'an, the humanitarian, global and civilisational principles based on unity of God and the Prophethood. It is an attempt to recapture the positive Islamic vision with the view of reforming Muslim approach to education. The knowledge derived only through new empirical views of the western knowledge has been in service of colonial and imperialistic invasions. The scientific knowledge produced by west helped the western countries to exploit the natural resources with no regard to the environment. It placed the western man at the top of modernity and progress.

The integration of knowledge includes specialisation and exploration in different disciplines and reconciles new observations with Islamic concept of knowledge. This

integration will help Muslim world do away with current dichotomy and fully use the potential of *Ummah*. It will stimulate Muslim leadership and unleash new forces to serve Islam and the humanity. The ‘Integration of Knowledge’ is the reconstruction of certain forms of knowledge to the contents of Islamic science, or the struggle to fortify the position of Islamic science within the context of contemporary knowledge, including its various perspectives and points of view. It involves multiple approaches to the various forms of modern thought in the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, including metaphysical, epistemological, ethical and methodological premises regarding knowledge.

### **Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi**

Was born in Palestine in 1921. He graduated from American University, Beirut in 1941. When Palestine was occupied by Zionists in 1948, he went to the US. He studied at Harvard and took Ph.D from Indiana University. From 1954 to 1958, he was at Al-Azhar University studying Islam and later at McGill University studying Christianity and Judaism. After extensive research and academic work at McGill University, he taught at Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, Chicago University and Syracuse University. At the time of his death, he was professor of religion at Temple University, Philadelphia. He and his wife were murdered in their Pennsylvania home in 1986.

He was one of the founders of International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), Washington and chief architect of the Islamisation of Knowledge Project. The *tawhidic* principle formed the basic foundation in al-Faruqi’s thought that emphasized the value of truth and knowledge. His work *Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life* extensively outlined the principle and notion of *tawhid* and set forth an integrated philosophy of life based on the structure and foundation of *tawhid* and its premises. He argued that *tawhid* is the basic and unifying principle of Islam that comprises of five principles, duality, ideationality, and teleology, malleability of nature and responsibility and judgement. Alluding to the pattern of God in nature, he expounded the fundamental notion of *tawhid* in the world view of Islam.

He asserted that *tawhid* stood at the core of Islamic consciousness that defined its fundamental essence and worldview, projected by the transcending values and definitive worldview and concept of oneness or the unity of God. The philosophical construct of *tawhid* also formed the basic premise in the project of integration of modern disciplines based on the three underlying principles of unity: 1) The unity of knowledge which will abolish the dichotomy between acquired and revealed sciences. 2)The unity of life which will eradicate the distinction that some sciences are value-involved and some are value-free. 3) The unity of history which will remove the separation of knowledge into individual and social sciences, forming all disciplines that are at the same time humanistic and *Ummatic*.

## Excerpts from the talks

### **1. Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi and the Integration of Knowledge**

**Khalid Musa Nadvi**

I come across the writings of Ismail Raji al-Faruqi for when I was working with Islamic student movement. It was a period when students were curious about the foundation stones of human knowledge. My student organization organized a conference under the banner ‘Humanization of Education’ inspired by Al-Faruqi’s thought. The basis of his thinking is the Qur’anic ayah: And He taught Adam all the names (2:31). The word ‘asma’a in the ayah refers to the fundamentals of knowledge. This is synonymous with Islamisation of knowledge. The Qur’an also says to read in the name of Allah (96:1). This idea of reading is very crucial because everybody reads using his intelligence. Hence Islamisation of knowledge is reading the universe, the people and the society. There is another ayah: those of His servants only who are possessed of knowledge fear Allah (35:28).

Allah has created many things for human beings.

1. Rain
2. Seeds
3. Stones of different colour

Al-Nas, Al-Dabbath, Al-An'am: These three creations are related. Al-An'am sometimes referred to separately. Then there are four other actions done by human beings alone:

1. Recitation of Qur'an.
2. Mandatory prayer.
3. Spending money in the way of Allah.
4. Meditation about the hereafter.

### **Humans alone**

Of Allah's creations human beings are more important because humans alone read, pray, spent and meditate about the hereafter. So when we discuss the integration of knowledge and totality of knowledge the verse I have referred to get more significance because Allah asks if those who know and those who do not know alike? (39:30) this question is raised just after another question which involves three factors: the midnight prayer, thoughts about the hereafter and hopes for the mercy of God. The Prophet called Abu Haqam, Abu Jahal. This naming itself is very significant because it brings us to the conflict between real knowledge and pseudo-knowledge.

Talking about Kerala, I think the idea of Islamisation of knowledge became somewhat popular among Muslim educationists and thinkers decades ago. I remember late K.C Abdullah Moulavi of Chennamangallur in Calicut District, taking initiative to start a revolutionary intermediate course called the Arts and Islamic Course (AIC). This was a pioneering experiment. Many Muslim educational institutions introduced similar courses. However there was lull in pursuing the concept of Islamisation. It is only later in the first decade of the new century Muslim

students studying at central universities or similar institutes started showing interest in Islamic disciplines, thanks to the efforts of many student organizations. There has been wider concern about the status of traditional Islamic disciplines and interest in confronting new concepts and ideas. These students have acquired knowledge about branches of Islamic knowledge not by attending formal courses offered by traditional Islamic colleges but through informal means.

### **An Institute**

It has now become the need of the hour to develop our own study programmes for integration and Islamisation of knowledge. There are many girls and boys doing medicine, engineering, law, sociology, history etc. interested in parallel courses. My proposal is to start a course for the integration of knowledge under Al-Faruqi Institute. This course may have five subjects following the line of Ameen Hassan Islahi. The syllabus is to be comprehensive and modern, including the study of the Qur'an, the *Sunnah*, and Islamic history and related topics. When offered online or through study centres, it may change the perspective of the students. That will be something like a revival of ideas put across by Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi many years ago.

(*Khalid Musa Nadvi is a graduate of Darul Uloom Deoband, Lucknow and teaches at Islamiya College, Kuttiady, Calicut District, Kerala*)

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### **2. Principles of Integration of Knowledge**

**Fathima Sherin K.P**

When we discuss the principles of integration of knowledge, it will be very appropriate to talk about the contribution of Ibn Khaldun, the 14<sup>th</sup> century Arab savant- philosopher. His *Muqaddimah* (Introduction to History) is an elaborate survey of the science of historiography. The sixth chapter of *Muqaddimah* is a precise elucidation of the dynamics of history.

God Almighty has created humans with great intellectual capacity and as a result he remains at the top of the biological hierarchy. Humans are capable of travelling beyond his ken and he uses tools to explore the universe and learn new things.

According to Bin Chaldean—discretion, conscience, searches for theories and praxis are certain qualities which make humans unique. He introduced a coherent theoretical perspective on human intelligence. He has divided different branches of knowledge into two : (1) Intellect: humans are born with it and they acquire the knowledge through it. (2) The knowledge produced by the ancestors. The basis of traditional knowledge in Islam is the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. For a Muslim the beginning of the pursuit of knowledge is the study of the Qur'an.

Natural philosophy is something being continuously developed by humans. It includes logic, natural science, and philosophy, mathematics which is further divided into geometry, arithmetic and astronomy. During the Middle Ages especially during the time of Abbasi kings all branches of science were developed extensively. The

basic precept that influenced Muslim scientists and thinkers was that any study that contributes to the realization of divine phenomena is worth pursuing.

The current debate about Islamisation of disciplines has much to learn from the philosopher and thinkers of the past.

(*Fathima Sherin K.P is from Puthanathani, Kerala pursuing legal studies*)

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### **3. Problems of Indian historiography**

**Naseeha Bint Hussain**

When we survey Indian historiography one feature that attracts our attention is its North Indian bias. It may be because most of the early historians came from north, especially from Bengal. We read flattering history of the Mauryas, the Guptas and other dynasties and glorification on the basis of unverifiable adventures of petty kings and emperors. But when we come to the Muslim rule, a negative picture is presented in accordance with the political objectives of colonial historians.

Coming to the South, it is more pathetic. The historical records and narratives about south Indian kings were rudimentary and one is forced to derive historical facts. Sangam literature or traditional folk tales especially to tell stories about the Pandyas, the Cheras and the Cholas. The Deccan Sultans did not fare well either. In the history text books, used in our schools and universities their names are casually referred to.

Coming to Kerala historiography the problem is slightly different. It is mostly hagiographic writings by palace historians. The long struggle led by the Dalits, Muslims and many sub-altern communities are swept away. Tipu Sultan becomes an ogre in the history books written by the dominate castes of the state as they had to face economic and social challenges created by the egalitarian laws of the Mysore kings. Comparably, the historic 1921 rebellion of the Mappila Muslims of Malabar was presented purely as a sectarian revolt against the British. Great heroes like Variyamkunnath Kunjahammed Haji and Ali Musliyar were portrayed as villainous fanatics.

#### **Heavily Hinduised**

The historical narrative by north Indian historian was also heavily hinduised. Jiban Mukherjee, for instance, argues that Indian resistance against occupation started during the Slave Dynasty. To historians like Dipesh Chakrabarty and Sumit Sarkar, India was North India. Leftist historians like Irfan Habib, and K.M. Panikkar went against the dominant narrative and followed Marxist historiography.

Sometimes even anti-colonial struggles received improper attention from the traditional historians. While it is true that the 1857 revolt the British is now officially called the First War of Independence, the role of many prominent Muslim leaders in the fight is not properly acknowledged.

The role of women in the country's struggle for freedom is also not extensively studied. Names like Azghari Begum of Muzaffarnagar, Abadi Bano Begum, and Amjadi Bano Begum, Begum Nishatunnisa Mohani, Sadat Banu Kitchlew and Meher Taj are some of the women fighters who demand deeper study.

### **Problem of Sources**

It is true that scientific historiography was absent in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century India. It was the British historians who first tried to cook up a history of the subcontinent. The records available at badly maintained palace archives, the travelogues of foreigners, and the records kept by the colonial administration became the main sources for historians. The Bengali upper caste historians had to invent a unified Hindu India and write history books from the savarna perspective. In south, it was mostly the records and notes kept by the British collectors became the basis of history.

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### **4. Indian Sociology: A Critical Review**

**C. Abdul Raoof**

Sociology is a branch of knowledge that studies human social behaviour and conceptualises activities of humans as social beings through scientific investigation and analysis. It is often considered a part of anthropology. Every society goes through different phases of social experience. Hence it becomes important that we should study variety changes and progress of society from social angle. Sociology is not merely a branch of science. It depends upon all sectors of knowledge touched by humanity. In other words, sociology is a branch of science dependant on history, anthropology, economics, and biology etc. It could be seen as mix of many disciplines.

Some sociologists focus on studying and developing theories as some other are interested in research that would help improve human welfare and progress. Sometimes even micro level study of a particular community or people becomes part of widening investigation. Social stratification, mobility, religion, secularisation, law, politics, governance, social institutions, gender, sexuality and social change have enlarged the study of sociology. The enquiry has extended in due course to topics like of social capital, punishment system, legislation, pedagogy.

### **The development of the discipline**

Sociological studies started early in human history but took concrete shape in the second half of 18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. Right from Plato, we can see scholars and thinkers trying to find out the prime movers of human activity. Confucius in China has written extensively about the different clusters of the Chinese society. In early Muslim writings we can see gleanings of sociological observation.

Now it is a given that Ibn Khaldun, the master thinker and philosopher of 14<sup>th</sup> century is the father of sociology. Though European sociologists are reluctant...to recognize this fact, Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* is the first treatise dealing with human social activity with objectivity and rigour. He is the first thinker who analysed social cohesion and competition and put across social motives behind rise and fall of kingdoms.

In the wake of the French revolution, sociology underwent a sea change. It was removed from religious and philosophical thought and pure materialism and secular idioms took over. In the second half of 18<sup>th</sup> century, Auguste Comte and Denis Diderot indirectly presented European society as the acme of human growth. Comte later became something like the father of modern sociology. This in turn reshaped sociology in western perspective of modernity and growth.

### **Sociology in India**

Indian sociology was the brain child of the British colonial rule. Indian sociologists were mostly drawn from the upper castes. Needless to say early Indian sociological studies paid more attention to find justification for caste system in India. G. S. Ghurye from Maharashtra founded the Indian Sociological Society and promoted the study of Indian society. He was a Brahmin and a Sanskrit scholar and his world view influenced his disciples like M. N. Srinivas, A.R. Desai and D. Narain. For many years Ghurye's *Caste and Race in India* remained the basic text book for sociology students. The book is an apolitical and prosaic analysis of Indian society. M. N. Srinivas, a Brahmin from Mysore followed his footsteps and buttressed the Brahmanical Social Order. He is the proponent of the theory of Sanskritisation and he calls the castes mere social classification and the process that India has witnessed is the "lower castes" adopting the culture and lifestyle of the savarnas.

Some leftist sociologists used Marxist tools to analyse Indian society. Scholars like D. D. Kosambi, A. R. Desai, and Gail Omvedt treaded a different path sometimes using Marxist terminology but they could not overcome the dominant Brahmanical narrative of Indian social formation.

On the other hand, modern western sociology has not been able to come out of secularism and materialism. Social Darwinism still exerts its evil influence in many spheres. Indian sociological study has to come out of the well-trodden path with markers put up by early social scientists and develops new perspectives to dissect and study Indian society.

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## 5. Islamic Law, Western Law

Zeba Shireen

Right from the 1<sup>st</sup> century Hijri scholars were debating if human reason alone would be able to solve the physical and spiritual problems of humans. And some thinkers argued that by observing the human social life and the way humans interact with nature one could reasonably form opinion about the virtues and vices of human race. It is now taken for granted that a moral or a set of logical laws is needed for smooth functioning of the society. From the illiterate to the elite a legal system is needed.

A question raised by early Muslim thinkers was related to the question of reason. The question is whether even logically sound laws are enough to teach the Muslim community how to lead a peaceful life. Reason is the ability found only in human beings and it is the gift of God. So Muslim thinkers and jurists stressed the need to use reason as a parameter to find out if some action is good or bad. Reason is to be used with the help of Divinely Revealed Knowledge because reason alone will not produce beneficial results. The Buddha allegedly stood for pure reason but Buddhism as a religion has turned out to be idolatrous and polytheistic.

The Muslim scholars depended up on the Qur'an as the basic document to develop a legal system. Muslims think that the Qur'an is a document with perpetual relevance. It is compendium of ethical lessons, practical legal instructions and elucidation of the cosmic system created by god. Prophet Muhammad is the exemplar of ideal human life setting a model for his companions. His life is recorded in detail, both words and deeds. This becomes *Sunnah* the second important repository of laws.

Prophet's companions could easily understand the Qur'an as it was in their mother tongue and they had the Prophet as guide and philosopher. But latter day generations had to develop their own methods to understand the holy verses. Linguistics and the science of etymology were developed to understand and evolve new meanings. Islamic legal system is the product of deliberations and debates of great thinkers and they were successful in putting across Islam as a complete code of life.

Western law on the other hand lacks the spiritual dimension though in the beginning the Roman, Hebraic and Christian religions had helped shape the legal system. It has to be changed and reshaped over centuries to cope up with the growth and development of human society. Materialism deprived it of the moral principles to a great extent. However when we go deeper we can see that the modern juridical system still heavily depends up on the spiritual side of human existence. For instance we can see that the basic human rights now seen enshrined in many conventions and constitutions, including ours, are drawn from religious principles.

Fundamental rights like right to life, right to equality, right to dignity and right to privacy etc. have religious origin. See the verses from the Qur'an.

..... *whoever slays a soul, unless it be for  
manslaughter or for mischief in the land it is an*

*though he slew all men; and who ever keeps it alive it  
is an though he kept alive all men (5.32)*

*Do not spy on one another (49:12)*

*Do not enter any houses except yours until you have  
sought their permission and saluted them (24:27)*

*People should not ridicule others who may be better  
than themselves; nor should any women ridicule other  
women who may be better than themselves. (49:11)*

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