

# INSTITUTE OF OBJECTIVE STUDIES, NEW DELHI

## TWO-DAY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

ON

### THE LIFE AND CONTRIBUTION OF ISMAIL RAJI AL-FARUQI

April 20-21, 2018 AT NEW DELHI, INDIA

#### CONCEPT NOTE

Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi (January 1, 1921 - May 27, 1986), was a Palestinian-American thinker, widely recognised by his peers as an authority on Islam and comparative religion. He spent many years at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and then taught at several universities in North America, including McGill University in Montreal. He was professor of religion at Temple University, Philadelphia, USA, where he founded and chaired the Islamic Studies programme. Al-Faruqi and his wife, Lois Lamy al-Faruqi, were stabbed to death in their home in Wyncote, Pennsylvania on May 27, 1986.

In 1963, after returning to the United States, he was appointed a visiting professor at the University of Chicago's Divinity School. Between 1964 and 1968, al-Faruqi established himself as an associate professor at the Department of Religion at Syracuse University, where he initiated its programme in Islamic Studies. In 1968, he accepted a position at Temple University, as a professor of religion, where he also founded the Islamic Studies programme. He held that position until his death. Al-Faruqi's early emphasis was on Arabism as the vehicle of Islam and Muslim identity. He was also one of those who proposed the idea of integration of knowledge and advocated a value-based education which gets inspiration from the revealed Word of God apart from cosmological insights brought to fore by natural sciences, and founded the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) together with Dr. Abdul Hamid Abu Sulaiyman, former rector of the International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIUM).

Interestingly, it was in the United States several years later that he began to question the foundations of his earlier position about *urubah* (Arabism). In 1968, for the first time he encountered members of the Muslim Students' Association (MSA) at Temple University. The convergence of Muslim students from diverse cultural backgrounds dramatically swayed his perception of Arab versus Islamic identity. In the spring of 1968, while a patient at the Johns Hopkins Ophthalmology Centre, al-Faruqi confided in one of the active members of the MSA, Ilyas Ba-Yunus: "Until a few months ago, I was a Palestinian, an Arab, and a Muslim. Now I am a Muslim who happens to be an Arab from Palestine". During his years as a visiting professor of Islamic Studies and scholar-in-residence at McGill University, a professor of Islamic Studies at Karachi's Central Institute of Islamic Research as well as a visiting professor at various universities in North America, he wrote over 100 articles for scholarly journals and magazines in

addition to 25 books, the most notable being *Christian Ethics: A Historical and Systematic Analysis of Its Dominant Ideas* and a famous booklet on *Islamisation of Knowledge*. He also established the Islamic Studies Group of the American Academy of Religion and chaired it for ten years. He served as the vice-president of the Inter-Religious Peace Colloquium, the Muslim-Jewish-Christian Conference and as the president of the American Islamic College in Chicago. Al-Faruqi viewed the existence of Israel as an affront towards the religion of Judaism due to its state ideology of Zionism.

Ismail Raji al-Faruqi was conversant with the challenges of the time regarding education, because from being an ideologue of integration of knowledge, he was an educationist par excellence. Actually the challenge before him was not only internal as Sir Syed and in some cases even Maulana Mawdudi might have assumed but very much external and a calculated one as he would maintain: “After many attempts to achieve this desired objective foundered, these enemies set out to investigate and to search carefully for more devious methods. They concluded that the strength of the Ummah stemmed from its religion (*din*) and belief (*aqidah*.)”

According to him, at the beginning of the eleventh century A.H. (seventeenth century CE.), orientalist, colonialist, and missionaries laid the groundwork for this new intellectual offensive against Islam and the Ummah.

It seems that Faruqi was aware about the critique of Maulana Mawdudi regarding westernisation of education. He thought that the approach and mentality of such educational movements betrayed a Western outlook and an alien methodology and frame of reference that doomed them to failure. He says that it was axiomatic that what was intellectually or ideologically good for Europe and the West, in general, was not necessarily good or suitable for the Muslim Ummah, “whose existence and destiny are rooted in and dependent upon the Qur'an and the Sunnah”. According to him, “the basic cause of the malaise of the Ummah lay in its current thought processes which suffered from intellectual rigidity and stagnation”.

This intellectual incursion, change, and disruption that was introduced, especially in the social sciences and the humanities was of such enormous proportions as to make the Muslims either overlook Islamic thought and legacy or, at best, to simply study it and treat it as an ancient phenomenon neither needed by nor relevant to contemporary life. It was in this context that Muslim scholars and intellectuals were invited to seek to fulfill their needs in the Western social sciences, not realising that the West had established these sciences in accordance with its own circumstances and goals and this scheme of education was rooted in its ideological world view. As a result, these sciences now tend to reflect the West's values, concepts, and beliefs, upon which all Western aspects of behavior, activity, and social institutions were established. Therefore, though these disciplines are acceptable and compatible with Western objectives, they were bound to clash with Islamic values and guidelines. In this process much confusion has ensued, and the basis of the present conflict, contradiction, and loss of identity and direction could be

traced back to contradiction and weakness in Islamic thought and aims owing to this hard fact of history.

This Westernisation finally led to undermining of foundations of faith and culture of the vulnerable Muslims. “The connection between the manifestations of Western productivity and power and the Western views on God and man; on life, nature, the world; and on time and history was too subtle for Muslim leaders to grasp or, in their hurry to consider. A secular system of education was built, that taught Western values and methods. Soon, graduates who were ignorant of the Islamic legacy began to pour into society.”

The new generations of Muslim graduates nursed suspicion towards ulama and by implication cast aspersions subtly on Islamic legacy. Thus a gap was created between “Westernising secularisers and opponents of secularisation”. The colonialist powers saw to it that the former became the decision-makers in society.

According to these scholars “the intellectual and methodological decline of the Ummah is the core of its malaise.” The educational system is the breeding ground of the disease.

The Western model, rather a caricature of it, has become dominant amidst Muslims also. Like the Islamic model, the Western educational model depends ultimately upon a specific vision, though different from that of Islam, and is animated by a will to realise that vision. Buildings and offices, libraries and laboratories, classrooms and auditoriums teeming with students and faculty are all material paraphernalia of little worth without the requisite vision. It is the nature of such vision that it cannot be copied, only its incidentals can. That is why in nearly two centuries of Westernised, secularised education, the Muslims have produced neither a school, college, university, nor a generation of scholars that matches the West in creativity or excellence. The insoluble problem of low standards in the Muslim world institutions is a necessary consequence of this lack of vision. There is no genuine search for knowledge without spirit, and the Western spirit is precisely what cannot and should not be copied. It is generated by its own vision of life and reality. In short, by its faith.

In such circumstances the integration of knowledge project aimed at the greatest task confronting the Ummah in the fifteenth century Hijri to solve the problem of education. There can be no hope of a genuine revival of the Ummah unless the educational system is revamped and its faults are corrected. Indeed, the system needs to be formed anew. The present dualism in Muslim education, its bifurcation into an Islamic and a secular system must be removed and abolished once and for all. The two systems must be united and integrated, and the emergent system must be infused with the spirit of Islam and must function as an integral part of its ideological program.”

A deep analysis of this malaise made people realise that Islam was presented to the Muslim student in his tender years, with the voice of parental authority. His mind was not

mature enough to understand or to appreciate “objective” claims. His attachment to the Islamic position, therefore, was born out of sentiment, not out of reasoned conviction. Evidently, his commitment to Islam cannot withstand the onslaught of “scientific”, “objective”, or “modern” truth. This is why, in the absence of any counter-presentation of Islamic understanding, a presentation made with the same force of objectivity, the same scientific orientation, and the same appeal of modernity the Muslim college student succumbs to the secular claim and converts to it. “So begins the process of de-Islamisation in Muslim universities. After four years of such alienating influence within the university and an equal, if not superior, influence stemming from the mass media, his peers, and society, the Islamic consciousness of the Muslim youth is ravaged. No wonder that he becomes a cultural freak, a cynic who is at home neither in Islam nor in the West, ready to be swayed by anyone who caters to his whims of the moment.”

What is needed, therefore, is an educational system in which the curriculum of every department is based upon Islamic values, principles and objectives. Furthermore, a four-year course on the principles of Islam as the essence of Islamic thought and civilisation must be introduced as part of the “basic” or “core” programme for all students, regardless of their field of specialisation or profession. It was suggested that this course will be designed to give the Muslim student the values and first principles of Islam as the essence of Islamic civilisation, as well as the historical achievements of Islamic civilisation as manifestations of the first principles of Islam. The course will include discussions of how Islamic civilisation compares and contrasts with other civilisations in essence and manifestations. It also will give the Muslim student knowledge of how Islamic civilisation is the only viable option in dealing with the fundamental problems of Muslims and non-Muslims in the contemporary world.

The task of integration of knowledge (in concrete terms, to Islamise the disciplines or, better, to produce university-level textbooks recasting some twenty disciplines in accordance with Islamic vision) is among the most difficult to realise. The pioneers of this movement felt that no Muslim had contemplated the contradiction of Western knowledge with the vision of Islam. It was the present generation that first discovered this conflict as most of them lived it in their own intellectual lives. But the spiritual torture this conflict had inflicted upon them caused them to wake up in panic, fully aware of the rape of the Islamic soul taking place before their very eyes in the Muslim universities. That is why they started alerting the Muslim world to the evil and seeking for the first time in history to elaborate a plan to arrest it, to combat its effects, and to re-launch Islamic education on its proper track, leading to its pre-destined goal, with the grace of Allah (SWT). These pioneers felt that it was most regrettable that the Muslim world was still devoid of a centre where thinking and planning on such a high level could take place. Therefore, they suggested a proposal for establishing a university that could act as a hub for re-organising Islamic thought where the disciplines would undergo integration with Islamic knowledge and the process was tested in the classrooms and seminar rooms of the undergraduate and graduate programme.

Thus, it was a proposal regarding the great task facing Muslim intellectuals and leaders to recast the whole legacy of human knowledge from the viewpoint of Islam. The objective of the proposal was: “The vision of Islam would not be a vision indeed unless it represented a special content; namely, life, reality, and the world. The content is the object of study of the various disciplines. To recast knowledge in the mould of Islam relates to the Islamic vision. It is necessary to integrate knowledge, i.e., to re-define and re-order the data, to re-think the reasoning and relate the data, to re-evaluate the conclusions, to re-project the goals and to do so in such a way as to make the disciplines enrich the vision and serve the cause of Islam.”

To this end, the methodological categories of Islam, namely, the unity of truth, the unity of knowledge, the unity of humanity, the unity of life and purposeful character of creation, and the subservience of creation to Man and of Man to Allah (SWT) were the values which were envisaged to replace the Western categories and determine the perception and ordering of reality. On the other hand, the values of Islam were supposed to replace the Western values and direct the learning activity in every field. The Islamic values concern: (a) the usefulness of knowledge for man's felicity; (b) the blossoming of his faculties; (c) the re-moulding of creation so as to crystallise the Divine patterns and values of Islam; (d) the building of culture and civilisation; (e) the building of human milestones in knowledge and wisdom, heroism and virtue, piety and righteousness.

Probably the most far-reaching development in the intellectual history of the Ummah is the dichotomy between revelation and reason. It was the advent of Greek logic and its influence upon some Muslims, who were all too anxious to utilise the methods it provided to convince non-Muslims of the truths of Islam that made them indulge in futile theological issues that, eventually, led to a perceived separation of Revelation (*wahi*) and Reason (*aql*). Hellenised Christians and Jews lived for centuries under the aegis of this dichotomy, and many brought it into the Ummah with them when they converted to Islam.

No religious theses based upon personal whims could claim the acquiescence of mankind or of any significant part of it for a long time. When some Muslims placed exaggerated emphasis upon the intuitive at the cost of reason, they unwittingly opened the gates to corruption of the Islamic faith and mind. Unity of Creator, Unity of Creation and Cosmic Order are three ingredients of the Islamic weltanschauung and thus form core of integration process also. Thus, the following categories were highlighted by this new vision of education. Unity of Life, The Divine Trust (*Amanah*), Vicegerency, Comprehensiveness and al-Khilafah.

Finally, anthropology is the boldest of all. In its view, “humanity” means ethnicity and is logically equivalent to and convertible with it. In the last two centuries, its effect has been to whip humankind into a frenzy of ethnocentric consciousness by singling out one subgroup after another, constructing for it an ideology and axiology out of that group's innate characteristics or by declaring to be innate and particular to one ethnic group

whatever is being advocated. Instead of identifying and emphasising what is universally human, anthropology's whole concern is to identify, to develop and to blow out of proportion the particular.

The objectives of the integration of knowledge are to perfect the tools necessary for the Ummah to progress smoothly in its Islamic role, to furnish it with the essential powers and faculties for its proper functioning, and to clarify its vision and its methodology. Achieving these objectives will better prepare the Ummah to succeed in its struggle with a changeable contemporary life that offers vast opportunities as well as serious challenges. In its widest sense, integration means a framework for human life, civilisation, and human transformation. It determines the purpose of every activity, struggle, action, and Islamic social organisation. It gives human life purpose and charts its course. But it would be wrong to neglect or underrate the importance of any of the other diverse aspects of life. Rather, each aspect should receive due attention and consideration. Any task that the Ummah undertakes should be supported by whatever efforts may be necessary to resolve a problem at a particular point in time or a specific stage. Giving priority to the integration of knowledge does not cancel other priorities, nor does it belittle the significance of political, economic, social, academic, and military efforts. It simply means that the integration of knowledge is an urgent, a pre-requisite, a necessary condition, that we are committed to fulfil as a preamble to other requirements in order to achieve perfection in provision, clarification of vision, revival of the power to build, and the ability to withstand encounters. He would often say: "For truth wants to be known, it exerts pressure on the knower to share his vision of it with his peers". In 1982 Al-Faruqi wrote a monograph that outlined the comprehensive framework that was later published by IIIT as the Islamisation of Knowledge. The monograph was based on the discussion in the first Seminar on the Integration of Knowledge held in Islamabad from 4-9 January 1982 (7-12 Rabiul-Awwal 1402), and jointly-sponsored by National Hijra Committee, Pakistan and International Institute of Islamic Thought, Wyncote, Pennsylvania, USA. The key papers were published in the seminar's proceedings entitled "Knowledge for what?" Al-Faruqi's work presented a decisive breakthrough and radical shift of paradigm in projecting the Islamic worldview and reform of contemporary knowledge, as argued by Anne Sofie Roald in *Islamic Studies* (1998): "a major focus of Al-Faruqi's work was the education of a new generation of Muslims, schooled in modern methods, but Islamically-oriented. Believing that many of the problems of the Muslim world are due to its elites and the bifurcation of education in Muslim societies, he addressed this problem in a variety of ways, combining thought with action, and ideology with its institutionalisation and implementation...at the heart of his vision was the Integration of Knowledge...the purpose being to arouse Muslims to become active participants in man's intellectual life and contribute to it from an Islamic perspective.

Al-Faruqi proposed a systematic framework of Islamisation and crafted the principal vision and philosophical ground of the movement, and presented a fundamental argument for the integration of thought "the great task facing Muslim intellectuals and leaders is to recast the whole legacy of human knowledge from the standpoint of Islam. The vision of

Islam would not be a vision, unless it is a vision of something, namely, life, reality, and the world. That vision is the object of study of various disciplines. To recast knowledge as Islam relates to it, is to integrate it with Islamic principles, i.e., to redefine and reorder the parameters and the data, to rethink the reasoning and interrelationships of the data, to re-evaluate the conclusions, to re-project the goals, and to do so in such a way as to make the reconstituted disciplines enrich the vision and serve the cause of Islam.” He emphasised five key principles of Islam, i.e. (1) the Unity of Allah (SWT) (2) the unity of creation (3) the unity of truth and the unity of knowledge (4) the unity of life, and (5) the unity of humanity that defined the Islamic principles. These principles were elaborated in detail in his article “Defining Islamic Traditionalism: First Principles in the Islamisation of Thought” that furnished a significant framework and outlined the principle task and its systematic work plan.

Apart from integration of knowledge in general, he also proposed a well-planned strategy for the following: integrating the social sciences, Islamisation of English. In his principal work on the Islamic English, *Toward Islamic English*, Al-Faruqi provided a constructive analysis of the nature of linguistic distortion of the English language that needed rectification in transliteration (of letters and words) and translation (of Islamic words/concepts and terms/expressions relevant to the Islamic sciences). It strived to enrich the English language with Islamic vocabulary and “inject into them new vision and new spiritual sensitivities”. As he clearly stated in the introductory part: “the English language modified is to enable it to carry Islamic proper nouns and meanings without distortion, and thus to serve the linguistic needs of Muslim users of the English language.” This book attempts to reformulate and reconstruct the translation of basic terms and concepts that have been reduced, and often ruined, through translation such as *salah*, *niyah*, *zakah*, *hajj*, *taqwa*, *siyam*, *fiqh*, *usul al-fiqh*, *hadith*, etc. (of Islamic vocabulary).

This was illustrated in his contention with regard to *salah*: “Consider for instance, the word *salah*, which is often translated as ‘prayer’. ‘Prayer’ is any communication with whatever is taken to be one’s god, even if that is an idol.” To dismantle the confusion of meanings “both in the religion and the culture”, he suggested that the term must be understood as it stands in its Arabic form...constant use of their Arabic form will help to shield the English-speaking Muslims from the onslaught of materialism, utilitarianism, scepticism, relativism, secularism and hedonism that the last two hundred years have established firmly in English consciousness. And it will – insha Allah – inject a reforming and salutary influence into the consciousness of all English-speaking Muslims, pulling them out of their tragic predicament in modern times.” Thus his whole life was full of lessons for the whole Muslim Ummah and his activities as an academic and a visionary of integration of knowledge movement needs due attention. His contribution to this great and novel project is seminal and holds a promise for a bright future for Ummah.

In this regard, Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi proposes to organise a two-day international conference on *“The Life and Contribution of Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi”* on April 20-21, 2018 at New Delhi.

Papers can be written on any of the following themes:

1. Ismail Raji Faruqi –his early life and education
2. Urubah and Arabism in the writings of Ismail Raji Faruqi
3. The project of integration of knowledge and its beginning
4. The formation of International Institute of Islamic Thought
5. The Weltanschauung of Tawhid and Ismail Raji Faruqi
6. Conference on integration of knowledge
7. Towards Islamising English language
8. Integration of knowledge in the context of Social Sciences
9. Educational reforms and malaise of the Ummah
10. Ismail Raji Faruqi –An educationist par excellence
11. Textbook writing and its importance for integration of knowledge
12. The Cultural Atlas of Islam – A marvelous work of Ismail Raji Faruqi
13. The legacy of Ismail Raji Faruqi and his illustrious students and associates: Abdul Hamid Abu Sulaiyman, Taha Jabir Al-Alwani, Zain Ibrahim, Omar Kasule etc.
14. Ismail Raji Faruqi on world religions and interfaith dialogue.
15. Introducing and critically examining major works of Ismail Raji Faruqi

### **Important Dates:**

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| Last date for submission of abstracts (in pdf & doc file)     | March 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2018 |
| Notification of acceptance/rejection of abstracts             | April 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2018  |
| Last date for submission of full paper (in pdf and doc. File) | April 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2018 |

**Submit abstracts at:**

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