
ISLAMIC PSYCHOLOGY IN THE VIEW OF MAULANA ASHRAF ALI THANVI: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Psychology is the emerging branch of traditional psychology. It is totally the contributions of prophetic teachings, acts, directions and work of the eminent Muslim scholars including Al-Kindi, AlFarabi, IbnSina, Imam Ghazali and Ashraf Ali Thanvi etc. The Holy prophet (PBUH) is the founder of Muslim psychology. He taught the divine codes revealed by Allah to him time to time. The aim of this paper is to review and collect viewpoints of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi regarding psychology and psychotherapy from Islamic perspective. To collect data for this paper different data bases were searched for research articles on Thanvi's teachings and books of ashraf Ali Thanvi were also studied to gather information related to psychology and psychotherapy. The gathered information was divided into different heading of theory of personality, theory of mental disorders, theory of personality, group therapy, meditation and treating the Nafs, etc.

Keywords: Islamic Psychology, meditation, Muslim scholar, Ashraf Ali Thanvi.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Psychology “the subfield of traditional Psychology works almost on all domains of psychology in the context of Islamic teachings, history and values, while Islam is an Arabic word means obedience or surrender. Islam is a religion means complete submission and obedience to Allah. Islamic Psychology is another name of “Ilm Ul Nafs” in Islamic literature. Roots of Islamic Psychology can be traced back to the life of Muhammad (PBUH). The holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH) the father of modern Islamic psychology, always teach us about Tauheed (oneness of God) and Equality of all human beings. He completely accomplished complexes of superiority and inferiority. He said During the Farewell Pilgrimage (Khutbah Hajjatul Wida) openly in this regard

“Indeed, your blood, your wealth, your honor is sacred to each other, just as this day of yours is sacred in this city of yours. Indeed, no one commits a crime except against himself. Indeed, none commits a crime for which his son is accountable, nor does a child commit a crime for which his father is held accountable. Indeed Ash-Shaitan has lost hope of ever being worshipped in this city of yours, but he will have compliance in what deeds of yours you consider insignificant, which he will be content with.”¹

The holy prophet gave the solution of all problems; there was no concept of prejudice or discrimination in group and out group. Muhammad (PBUH) paid attention to inner self. According to Divine’s instructions we must have to control our inner self, then there is a reward for us otherwise there is punishment for wrong doing. Disciplining and controlling the soul means that you have good command and control over all your body parts like hands, feet and eyes etc. These are the Divine instructions to control these all and use them positively not in the activities of sin or immorality. Quran says

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“But unto him who shall have stood in fear of his Sustainer’s Presence, and held back his inner self from base desires, paradise will truly be the goal!”²

He also stressed on exercise to be relaxed from depression and other disorders. We can trace many quotations from the teaching of the Holy Prophet for the treatment of psychological disorders. A simple quotation from the Holy prophet for the treatment of depression is “Look at those below you in worldly matters and those above you in religious matters”³ healthy life, spirituality, soul purity, thoughts clarity, intensions correction and character buildings are the Sunnah of the Holly Prophet (PBUH). Quran Says

“Obey God, obey the Prophet (s) and obey those charged with authority over you”⁴

Today psychologists and all mental health professionals are agreed that psychological disorders and human crisis have some spiritual or religious etiology and their solution need religious and spiritual values. The Muslim psychologists and intellectuals can play a role to device theories, methods and effective psychotherapy techniques for psychological disorders from the Islamic point of view. The aim of this will be to bring human towards nature.⁵

Contributions of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi

Mulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi was also called as Hakim-ul-ummat and Mujaddid-e-Millat. Thanvi was a renowned Muslim scholar, theologian, Sufi mystic and reformer of the nation in the Twentieth Century. He was from Uttar Pradesh India, but his influential contribution makes him Ḥakīm alUmmah or the wise man of the nation. Maulana (the master) was not basically trained psychologist but his work on human personality and behavior was from Islamic perspectives. His followers posited him an exemplary author and spiritual jurist. Thanvi has written so many books on different areas but they all are for the reformation of humanity. Some of his important books are translated into different languages. The most important books of thanvi which were studied and searched for psychology and psychotherapy related materials are, Tarbiyyat-ul-salik, Heavenly Ornaments: A classic manual of Islamic sacred law, The life and teaching of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi, Ashraf Alswanih: A biography, Answer to modernism, Shariah and tariqah, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi ka Tariq e Islah, Takabar or iska Ilaj, Advices of Hazrat Thanvi, The road to Allah and Remedies from the holy Quran.

Concept of Normality and Abnormality in Mental Health

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi approach to normality is normative. Physical aspects are considered next to religious and spirituals aspects. Thanvi attention was towards mental health not towards mental illness. This approach is also prevalent in modern psychology. The branch of Positive Psychology works on this approach. Thanvi explained the same approach according to religious and spiritual point of view. According to him environment had great effect on the development of personality.^{6,7} The child is born innocent, but the society where they are living effects their personality and mental health. Innate capabilities and environmental factors both play a significant role in the development of someone personality. Relationship between God and the creatures and relationship among all human beings is the base of normality and abnormality. If the connection between God and human is strong (living life according to Divine codes) there will be less chances to proceed towards abnormality (less mentally effected), if the connection is week (works against Divine codes) there will more chances regarding abnormality (more mentally effected).

Normality is associated with ethics while abnormality is associated contrary to ethics. Thanvi explained that Unity of self and self-trust is the sign of strong mentality and individuals with strong mentality will also contemplate and acts positively. Thinking and acting positively will lead the individuals towards God and it will also make the connection stronger. According

to him psychological disorders due to organic etiology needs medications, while disorders due to functional etiology needs treatment through techniques of psychotherapy.⁸ Ignorance, pride, jealousy, lust and hypocrisy are the examples of mental disorders from Islamic perspective. The teaching of Thanvi is interesting for psychologists because Thanvi and psychologists both are involved in the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. He also argues about two forces in every human being like destructive and constructive forces and how they are utilizing these forces.⁹ According to him these forces are mostly learned some from their parents and some from the other members of the society including peers etc. All human beings have the ability to learn, relearn and unlearn both negative and positive attitudes and behaviors, which are necessary for personality shaping. Broadly we can comment that Thanvi also worked the role of parents in shaping personality.¹⁰

Theory of Personality

According to Thanvi personality is the unit of the whole individual characteristics. An individual is the combination of Ruh, Qalb, Nafs and the body. Ruh is the place in fitrah where God's imprint resides and it is also pure and invariable. Ruh creates vibration in the body like an electric shock and it is also something physical residing in the heart. There are some innate characteristics in the individuals; some of them are common while some are specific to this individual. These innate human characteristics are collectively called Ars. Spirituality tries to combine both the internal and external factors of personality. Al-Ghazali also explained this concept that there are four aspects of an individual personality. They are Nafs, Ruh, Qalb and Aql. Aql in other words is intellect through which an individual tries to understand the material world. He stressed mostly on Qalb. An individual behavior, past and future is influenced through these four.^{11, 12} Quran refers three aspects of self; Nafs, Qalb and Aql, but Qalb is considered the central aspect.

Allah Says in the Holy Quran

*"The believers are only those who when Allah is mentioned, feel a fear in their hearts"*¹³

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said

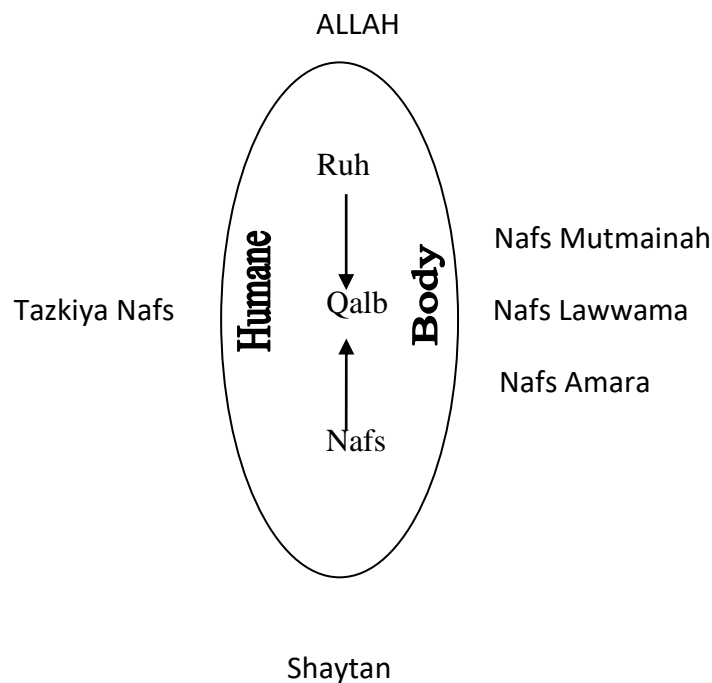
*"Truly in the body there is a morsel of flesh which, if it is sound, all the body is sound and which, if it is diseased, all of it is diseased. Truly it is the heart"*¹⁴

According to Thanvi Nafs is considered the Self while heart is the central component of human personality. Heart is the source of knowledge while Ruh and Nafs vary only in their characteristics. Therefore, we say that Ruh is present in every individual before birth, while Nafs is a force in the human beings which desire something. It may be constructive or destructive. It works on pleasure principals like concept of id by Freud. Like Quran and earlier Muslim scholars Thanvi also reported three stages of Nafs, they are Nafs Ammara, Nafs Lawwamma and Nafs Mumaina. All the mentioned terms are virtually the same but their context is different. Qalb (heart) have direct association with God, angels, Satan and other human beings in the society. Prophet said

*"Wealth is in the heart and poverty is in the heart. Whoever is wealthy in his heart will not be harmed no matter what happens in the world. Whoever is impoverished in his heart will not be satisfied no matter how much he has in the world. Verily, he will only be harmed by the greed of his own soul"*¹⁵

From Islamic perspective Qalb is central and ever changing while the physical heart pumps blood to all parts of the body. Some of the researchers used the word soul alternate with Qalb, while soul is in the form of a force.¹⁶ Personality traits have roots from Quran.

Personality components like Id, Ego and Superego have resemblance with Nafs-al-ammara, Nafs-al-lawamah and Nafs-al-mutmainah. While Ghazali explained Nafs in two meanings like the 1st is anger and appetite of a person while the 2nd is soul or self of an individual and then the self (Nafs) is divided into Ammara, Lawamah and Mutmainah.



Thanvi Model of Personality

These terms are used and have a wide range of meanings. In a balanced and healthy individual consciousness is central to Qalb, it opens to Ruh, it controls and directs Aql. The Qalb together with Aql directs Nafs.¹⁷ Internally all the humans have both constructive and destructive forces. Both the forces are pulling an individual towards him. God has created us in a state of balance known as hemostasis. It is now depended upon certain factors like parental training, type of society where an individual living and the overall environment. Parents, especially mother can play a significant role in the development of child personality, but in case of wrong trainings by the parents or teachers can make the child prone to mental disorders. According to Thanvi every human being comes to the world innocent (free of sin), but it is up to them, that to what extent they can save themselves from involving activities of sin. Sin and related activities will shadow their intellect to identify, in turn these practices will pull them towards Satan and their bond with God will become gradually weaken and weaken and it last will be broken. Their Qalb will become totally under the influence of evil and sin. Adultery, complacency, theft and embattlement etc are some acts which pulling an individual towards Satan.^{18, 19}

Theory of Mental Disorders

According to Thanvi when there is detachment of an individual from Fitrah, nature and from humanity there will be more chances to catch mental disorders. Attachment to God work as a base for mental health. Detachment from God accomplishes distinction between good and bad. There are different stages of attachment to God. Mental disorders are sometimes connected with functional disorders including, jealousy, plitudinous, niggardliness, suspicious and mistrustful etc. Thanvi divided mental disorders into organic and functional type. Organic disorders are treated through medications while functional disorders need psychotherapeutic interventions.²⁰

Causes of Mental Disorders

According to Thanvi the main cause of mental disorders is the detachment and escape from God and humanity. When there is a detachment from God there will be more chances of mental disorders because the individual will think irrelevantly, if the cognition is disturbed there will be more chances for some abnormal symptoms. There are also stages of mental disorders. Thanvi said the human being is under the influence of two powers, constructive and destructive. The constructive power guides an individual towards nature while destructive power works beyond the nature. Therefore, balance between these powers is necessary.²¹

According to him an individual must be aware from these powers. Otherwise, the imbalance will lead to mental disturbances. During psychotherapy sessions there will be concern on the solution of this conflict. Imbalance between these powers is due to conflict between actions and intentions. He stressed on the significance of environmental factors.²² Challenges and difficulties in life are necessary and it also pulls the people to feel grief, but they don't know that this state of grief is temporary and sometimes it is test from God side. Persistent state of grief sometimes leads to depression. Grief is opposite to happiness. In Quran Allah told Muhammad (PBUH) not to feel grief over disbelievers

“And do not be grieved (o Muhammad) by those whose hasten into disbelief. Indeed, they will never harm Allah at all...”²³

Therapeutic Methods

Currently in the Western or mainstream psychology they are now accepting the role of religion and spirituality. Much importance is given to religious and spiritual topics concerned with mental illness and their intervention. The Western Psychologists are also agreed that religious and spiritual psychotherapeutic practices can play a positive role in the treatment and solution of psychological issues. Some researchers named them a “theistic approach of psychotherapy”. Cognitive behavioral therapy is the common technique used by most of the Muslim psychologists in the form of spiritually integrated cognitive behavior therapy. The main focus of this technique is to change the detrimental and problematic beliefs into more supportive and positive beliefs. But here the most important thing is the client assessment.²⁴ If the therapist came to know about the cause of the issue, then it became easy to be treated. If the therapist understands that the cause of this illness is religious or spiritual results from detachment from Allah almighty. Then the therapist will be able to work out on the ways how to refine the affected soul and how to re-attach the client to God. Foundations of religious and spiritual interventions will revolve around the client's spiritual development; this focus will enhance the chances of therapeutic effectiveness.²⁵

Reading Therapy

Reading therapy is basically a type of individual therapy. In this type of therapy, the clients were instructed to write down all their presenting complaints and problems. Strong rapport between client and therapist is required for this technique. Exchange of letters was done for rapport development, but it is also obvious that sometimes the client needs direct guidelines. This technique is like free association of Sigmund Freud. After writing or listing the client's complaints, they will be checked, if there is ambiguity or something questionable, the client was questioned to clarify. Then the client's complaints were assisted to plan treatment. The clients were provided some reading material including books of different Muslim scholars according to their complaints²⁵. They were also directed to learn some verses from the Holy Quran. Strong belief in God is required to get full benefits from this therapy. The overall purpose of the reading therapy was the purification of the affected and shadowed soul.²⁶

Reading therapy is also closely associated to a contemporary technique known as Bibliotherapy. When the client is unable to describe their state of mind or body, like what is happening in his mind or body. The ambiguous or unclear state of mind and body. In cases like

this the therapists are directing the clients and provides some relevant literature to clarify their state of mind or body. Aim of the given literature was the provision of information, support and guidelines. This concept is not limited to Thanvi approach or Islamic Psychology but it is also prevalent in different therapies like different behavioral therapies. Facilitation of clients and attainment of therapeutic goals are the common concepts of reading therapy. Some of the researchers reported this technique as spiritual bibliotherapy, which is the reading of sacred text for the purification of soul. The therapist will not only provide and read the material but will also explain and interpret in details to get the required goal.^{27,28} Another research reported significant association was reported between the individuals participating in bibliotherapy sessions conducting by Sufis for self-achieving. In contemporary psychotherapies reading literature is used is an adjunct fragment of the therapeutic intervention. Reading of stories or narrations are common in the treatment of drug addiction treatment.²⁹

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi view revolve around patient will and the effort they are interested in the cure of illness or disease. The counselor will only assist whenever the client need help in understanding etiology of the disease, intervention, precautions or complications, but the most important thing is the patient trust upon their counselor and abilities of counselor. In current scenario the researchers are using bibliotherapy to treat panic conditions, anxiety problems, depression, weight loss, academic issues and know about understanding individual differences,^{30,31} helping students to learn, grief reaction, separation disorders, child abuse and rehabilitation of individuals.³² According to³³ bibliotherapy is an effective and efficient tool in devising and to reinforce therapeutic intervention. Bibliotherapy can be utilized in psychoeducation and basic health services.³⁴

Communication Therapy

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi worked for the purification of human self through his communication therapy. He removed pain of people and filled their heart with satisfaction. According to him changes in the heart and changes in the mind can change the whole human being. Through his therapy he tried to establish close association with God. Pleasure of Allah is that to spent life according to God's will. Perfect life is that if it is spent according to Sunnah and Shariah. Due to materialistic desires the people left right path which further proceed to psychological disorders. This is the main cause of psychological disorders. Through therapy we may boost our self-esteem of client and it leads to catharsis. The Islamic therapy turns around the Divine codes revealed by Allah to Muhammad (PBUH) and these codes have diminished the concept of superiority and inferiority complexes. These are the codes of justice and equality for all human beings. Invited of the Holy Prophet to come under a single entity of Islam has abolished all prejudices, discriminations, ingroup and outgroup conflicts.

Thanvi in his communication therapy focused on self-actualization and self-analysis. According to him sermons of Muslim scholar works like some best spiritual therapeutic techniques of group therapy. He used to sermonize some important topics which the clients want to listen and they expect their solution in it. This therapy needs a close association and need certain time from the client to spent with the therapist. The therapists are using and Quranic parables and stories of earlier messengers and Muslim scholar in front of group of individuals. Communication therapy works on the principles of group therapy. Quranic parables contain instructions and leading qualities. These parables have changed life of the people earlier and we may adapt these parables in our condition today.³⁵ Individuals working as spiritual therapist need to have more proper mental and physical functions, necessary for positive thinking. Individuals with strong spirituality are said to live strong and productive life. Overall spirituality and religion have apposite association with psychological health and wellbeing.³⁶

Inconsistent beliefs and unpleasant feelings lead to psychological problems. This therapy encourages the client to follow the pious teaching and adopt healthy life style. The therapist is the assets and trust of the client.³⁷ Researchers reported that reading Quran in Arabic (original) or other languages have profound effect on individuals in relieving of psychological issues. Reading and meaning of Quran can be considered as a therapeutic technique. Listening of different parts of Quran like Yaseen, Rehman etc works like a strong therapeutic intervention technique.³⁸

Meditation

Meditation is a Sufi word used alternatively for Muraqiba. Muraqiba means to take of or to keep an eye or to help deepen the understanding of sacred life forces. Currently it is practiced for relaxation or stress reduction. It is practiced from thousands of years. It works like mind-body complementary medication. Meditation is for the production of deep mind relaxation. The Holy Prophet regularly practiced meditation. Before prophethood he regularly visited Mount Hira to practice meditation and to get balanced emotional and intellectual state. Quran says

“The patient, the true, the obedient, those who spend (in the way of Allah), and those who seek forgiveness before dawn”³⁹

Due to meditation, the Holy Prophet was able to get balance between spirituality and logic necessary for supreme convincing power. There are a lot of acts, sayings and quotations of the Prophet which we can use as therapy for different psychological and physical disorders.

“They are the repenters, the worshipers, the praisers, the meditators, the bowing and prostrating, the advocators of righteousness and forbidders of evil, and the keepers of GOD's laws. Give good news to such believers”⁴⁰

Meditation needs your full attention to eliminate stressful thoughts which is creating issues in the mind. Meditation is practiced in a specific place where no disturbance occurs. It will give you a sense of relaxation and quietness, which is necessary for both emotional and physical well-being.

“During the night, you shall meditate for extra credit, that your Lord may raise you to an honorable rank. And say, “My Lord, admit me an honorable admittance, and let me depart an honorable departure, and grant me from You a powerful support”⁴¹

It also produces coping to fight against stressful thoughts and feelings. Meditation will keep you centered with internal peace and harmony. According to Thanvi there are five stages of Muraqiba. They are Yajis, Khatir, Hadees e Nafs, Hum and Azam. Lack of mindfulness to present is the barrier in progress.⁴²

Individual and Group Therapy

Reconnection to Allah is possible through group therapy. Researchers reported that group therapy is an effective way of management for psychological disorders like ASD, PTSD, Anxiety and Depression. Thanvi focuses on the establishment of therapeutic alliance. Therapeutic relationship between therapist and client was the initial step of Thanvi therapy. According to him the therapist and client have a close spiritual relationship; because the client knows the only person can help to get rid of the problem is the therapist. The therapist must be skillful to know and deal the client issues. The therapy should be empathetic and less directive. Behavior change toward right direction makes the client strong and confident. This strength and confidence make the client able to understand and resolve their issues efficiently. Most of

the time in the khaqah the client was dealt in groups but they were also free to discuss issues individually. The clients were engaged in different activities like listening of speeches and exercises in groups. From his books it is identified that there was no specific number of sessions. It was fixed after assessment and recovery from first session.⁴³

The procedure and techniques of therapy used by the Holy Prophet and great Muslim scholars are also currently prevalent in modern day therapies. Technique of group therapy is utilized in common societal issues like drug addiction treatment, students' academic and common classrooms issues. Through group therapy we can enhance sense of hope and self-esteem and self-confidence among group members. Therapy of all types need consistent sessions to get the maximum results. In this regard Prophet says

*"The most beloved deeds to Allah are those that are the most consistent, even they are few"*⁴⁴

As an active member of individual or group therapy the clients are required to resent and involve their self in all the activities and obey the directions of the therapist. The clients must care about starting and termination timing of the session. All the names and information of all the clients in the group will be confidential for both therapist and clients. They will not share this information with irrelevant persons out of the group members.

Treating the Nafs

God is the basis of cleansing human soul. It is the almighty Allah to grant purification. All the human beings have an expectation and make efforts towards purifying their Nafs. Quran says

*"Truly God alters not what is in a people until they alter what is in themselves"*⁴⁵

The Nafs presents different ideas and thoughts to the person. It tries to distract them from good deeds to evil deeds. The person should suppress his Nafs to follow the right path of Deen. While treating the Nafs a person should set aside for a short time in the morning and night before going to bed. A person should sit alone and try to free the heart from all thoughts. Quran Says

*"It is God who purifies whomsoever He will, and they shall not be wronged so much as the thread of a date stone"*⁴⁶

Guide your Nafs like "O Nafs! You are like a merchant in this world. Your capital is your life and its profit is that world, it should attain salvation in the hereafter. If you attained the goal your wealth, your business will be considered profitable. If you have not attained the goal (salvation) you have lost great. The time is very precious. It can't return in the life". O Nafs be grateful to Allah that his granted you another day in life. Make taubah from all your sins and never commit them again. You will spend that entire day in remembrance and obedience of Allah. Guide your Nafs and reform yourself to follow straight path towards Allah on daily basis.⁴⁷

Conclusion

Islam the most growing religion of the world. Islamic codes are those principles of Allah revealed through the Holly Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). These codes are practiced with full enthusiasm from the date of revelation to till date by all Muslims without any discrimination. Islam is the religion of oneness of God and equality. Acts of the Holy prophet are also weight like sacred codes and it is necessary for Muslims to obey these acts. From the mentioned literature it is concluded that the Muslim psychologists must be aware from the methods of spiritual healing used by the Holy Prophet or great Muslim scholars. The contemporary Muslim

psychologist must try to take help from the techniques of early Muslim scholars. These techniques have universal efficiency by obtaining strong association between the contaminated soul and God. They are also suggested to take interest in traditional psychotherapy methods and adopt them according to their own culture and religion.

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