Chapter 10
Social Work in Islam, Socio-Religious Revelations, and Conflicts

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ABSTRACT

To provide effective social services to different cultural groups requires cultural understanding which is often missed in recent social work education programs and textbooks. The use of fundamentally different social work knowledge and a different approach in every different cultural group is the key to effective social work in different areas. How to adopt social work in working with Muslim communities is an unresolved question so far. It can be done only by focusing on possible client characteristics, understanding the level of difficulties, and requirements from the perspective of the social workers. Issues of spirituality, different levels of understanding and working knowledge of working professionals, and understanding expectations of clients are relevant. All the educational institutions, agencies, and social workers must put up coordinated efforts to achieve the objective of localized social work for Muslim clients.

INTRODUCTION

Islam has a long history of care for its fellow human beings. Charity, generosity, and compassion for fellow human beings is a consistent message of the Prophet to his people. From this profound religious foundation Muslim social workers have translated these commands into a profession providing fundamental human services to others. The social work community understands that to provide the very best services one must provide services that are localized to the community, culture, and religious environment within which they work. The challenge as social workers is then how to provide localized services while maintaining strong professional ethical standards. This chapter explores this dilemma by examining the adaptations of the childcare facilities located in a religiously and culturally diverse environment. It is where this pragmatic meets the theoretical that we see the challenges of providing culturally relevant, localized services and yet meet the pragmatic needs of the on the ground experience of social work.

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In the beginning of the chapter it is necessary to give a perspective of the Islamic view of social work and the difficulties faced by workers in the helping professions working with Muslim clients. What are the fundamentals of Islam as a religion? If social workers know and understand exactly what Islam is and how it is perceived in today’s world it will be easier for them to work with the followers of Islam.

Islam was promulgated in Arabia in the 07th century CE. All Praise up to Allah who suffers for us. Islam as a religion is itself a message of peace and Security. The Prophet (PBUH) himself asserted that, “the creation the Universe is God’s family”. Islam in Arabic means submission, surrender and obedience. This is clearly seen in its religious connotations, where it is a complete submission and obedience to the Allah.

Many religions are followed across the world and Islam is the second largest after Christianity. There are almost 200 million Muslims worldwide (largest number after Christianity). It is one of the youngest religions in the world as well. Islam is created in the 07th century, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia of present day by prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

ISLAM TODAY: CHALLENGES AND THE REALITY

Radical Islam is a buzz word now which has strong negative connotations and implications for the majority peaceful and faithful Muslims. This terminology links Islam with acts of violence. Islam is a religion which is very strict for its followers and because of this strictness sometimes followers become radical in thoughts. There are groups in Syria, Iraq and many parts of the world which try to establish a kingdom of Allah but for most followers these groups do not understand the philosophy of Islam. Islam is rapidly spreading across the world and subsequently there are doubts in the international circles about the future of Islam and its followers. With each act of violence in the name of Islam then it will become more difficult for social workers to work with Muslim clients. It bears repeating that the vast majority of religious Muslim populations follow Islam which says, “Render service to mankind in order that your creator should be pleased with you.” The Muslim workers in the helping professions who render service to mankind in the spirit of the Prophet are often are doing the work of Allah.

CONCEPT OF PHILANTHROPY IN ISLAM: ITS BASIS AND DIMENSIONS

Islamic injunctions make acts of charity obligatory but not limited to obligation only. In every religion it is compassion which has been given the highest place in philosophy. Humanitarianism is one of the basic themes of Islam. Salat (prayer) is obligatory for a Muslim. To help the poor and needy is not merely “polite” or “nice”; it is the duty of all faithful Muslims. The prayer (Salat), fasting during the month of Ramzan (Roza) and the pilgrimage to Mecca (Haj) are three pillars of Islam. Within these; pillars, the Quran encourages followers to serve humanity. Charity, generosity, hospitality and the care of the less fortunate are clearly duties for the faithful followers.

The Quran says: “But righteous is the one who… gives away wealth, out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free” (2:177). “So give to the near of kin his due, and to the needy and the wayfarer. This is best for those who desire Allah’s pleasure” (30:38)
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