Islamization of Knowledge: Reflections on Priorities

by

Mohammad Nejatullah Siddiqi

Abstract

The assumptions on which the Islamization of knowledge project was linked to the movement for restoration of Islam to a position of leadership and dominance in contemporary society may not have all been correct. Knowledge creation and beneficial use of new knowledge are two distinct though complementary processes. Each has its own requirement. Morality rooted in spirituality is decisive in ensuring that new knowledge is used beneficially. But creation of new knowledge requires freedoms of thought and discussion, encouragement of creativity and innovation, and toleration of dissent and diversity. It requires a mindset that can entertain ambiguity, one that does not hasten to discard potential spoilers of legacies long established as sacred – requirements which the sponsors of the Islamization of knowledge project might have failed to give due weight.

The project can be revived only by recognizing the primacy of expanding knowledge over the necessity of ensuring proper use of knowledge. It is in the nature of the first, expansion of knowledge (by creating new knowledge) that is universal. Differences of faith or moral vision, so important in the context of the second stage (putting knowledge to good use) need not stand in the way of cooperation and collaboration in the first stage. Have the sponsors of the Islamization project neglected this truth? What could be worse: have they abdicated the first step in their eagerness to do justice to the second?

This paper concludes by inviting Islamization enthusiasts to join the rest of humanity in expanding knowledge, while simultaneously work-

Mohammad Nejatullah Siddiqi was educated at Sanvi Darsgah, Jamaat e Islami Hind and Aligarh Muslim University (Ph.D in Economics), both in India. He served as Associate Professor of Economics as well as Professor of Islamic Studies at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) from 1961 to 1983, and he also became Professor of Economics at King Abdulaziz University, from 1978 to 2000 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Currently, he is Professor Emeritus in the Faculty of Business Administration at AMU. He has been associated with University of California, Los Angeles, International Islamic University Malaysia, and the Islamic Development Bank, Jeddah as a visiting professor and scholar. He has authored more than two dozen books in Urdu, English, and Arabic. He is also associated with several academic journals in an advisory capacity. He was awarded the King Faisal International Prize for Islamic Studies in 1982. He has also received a number of other awards and prizes to his credit. Presently, he divides his time between California and Aligarh.

ing for creating universal awareness of what makes use of knowledge
beneficial and prevents the fatal error of allowing laissez-faire in the
use of knowledge.

I also argue that conceiving of knowledge as a tool for power and he-
gemony can be frustrating if not outright destructive. Last but not the
least, we cannot know all that needs be known and, no less important,
not everything is known with the same degree of certainty. Humility
requires we recognize our limits. Ambiguity and a degree of uncer-
tainty is built into the human situation. It cannot be wished away. Hav-
ing adopted a humble stance, the way forward is to share the quest of
knowledge and its proper use with all and everyone.

Section One: History

Since the eighteenth century, the world of Islam had been abuzz with calls
for revival and regeneration. Voices like that of Shah Waliullah (1699–
1762) on the Indian subcontinent, Mohammad bin Ismaiel al-Amir (1688–
1768) in Yemen, and Mohammad bin Abdul Wahab (1792–1803) on the
Arabian peninsula called for a return to pure Islam of the Qur'an and Sun-
nah in order to regain their lost vigor – a loss that was making them vulner-
able to domination by others. These calls were taken up in the nineteenth
century by reformers like Mufti Mohammad Abduh (1849–1905) in Egypt
and Amir Abdul Qadir (1807–1883) in Algeria. By the middle of twentieth
century, men like Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938), Jamaluddin al Afghani
(1838–1897), and Shakib Arslan (1869–1946) had taken up the intellec-
tual challenge posed by Islam's need to revitalize itself. Powerful Islamic
movements led by Hasan al-Banna in Egypt, Syed Abul A'la Mawdudi in
the Indian subcontinent, and Mohammad Natsir in Indonesia were raising
hopes of Islam regaining political power. The move toward Islamization of
knowledge was an offshoot of these developments.

By the middle of the last century, the colonial rulers over Muslim lands
had started departing, leaving in place an educational system – which dis-
paraged natives, their religion and culture, belittled their contributions
to human civilization, and left them wondering how to catch up with the
West. The reformers who knew better rightfully gave top priority to reviv-
ing the self-esteem of their peoples, showing them a path to respectability
and grandeur that projected their own traditions. Understandably, the edu-
cational agenda presented to Muslims was prefaced by a strong criticism
of Western systems – excepting technology that it was argued, could be
enrolled in the service of a revived Islam. Any ambiguity felt in relating
natural sciences, which lay at the base of modern technologies and faith,

and that was to guide the new educational agenda, was sought to be removed by the appeal to the epistemological unity between reason and faith.

The booklet *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Plan* (henceforth referred to as the "Plan"), issued by the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) with a preface by Professor Isma'il R. al Faruqi in 1982, stated:

> The content of divine *amanah*, and therefore of *khilafah,* is the development and establishment of culture and civilization. To institute peace and assurance of life and property, to organize humans into ordered society capable of producing food, of processing, storing and distributing it to all in adequate quantities and quality, to provide shelter, warmth and comfort, communication and ease, to build and make available the tools necessary to realize these goals and, finally, to furnish these opportunities for education and self-realization, for recreation and aesthetic enjoyment, this is the core content of *khilafah*.... Rightly, Muslims understand *khilafah* as predominantly political. The Quran repeatedly associated *khilafah* with political power (7:128; 10:14; 10:73). (The Plan 1982, 32)

> To know one-self is to know how one is different from others, not in material needs or utilitarian realities, but in the view of the world, in moral judgment, and spiritual hope.... Today, to be 'modern' is to be civilizationally conscious; i.e. to be conscious of the nature of one's civilizational heritage, of the essence which produced its various manifestations, of its distinction from other streams of civilizational history, and of its pulls and direction for the future. Without such knowledge, one cannot be the master of his own fate; and certainly one cannot survive in this world. Unlike the past the civilizational forces contending in this century can reach and overtake anyone without invasion or military occupation of his land. They can subvert his mind, convert him to their world view, neutralize and maintain him as a puppet whether he is aware or not. Certainly these forces are contending with one another to dominate the world. And it is the decision of Muslims today whether Islam will be the victor tomorrow; whether or not Muslims will be the subjects of history or merely its objects. (The Plan 1982, 12)

As the two quotes above clearly state, Islamization of knowledge is conceived as a means toward a "political" end: victory of Islam in the current civilizational struggle to dominate the world that the sponsors of the Islamization of knowledge project consider to be the essence of the Qur'anicconcept of *khilafah*. Secondly, the people who are involved, whose energies have to be mobilized for the task, are the Muslims (rather than the humanity at large).

Maulana Syed Abul A 'la Mawdudi (1903–1979), who handled the subject almost half a century earlier, also regarded knowledge to be the key to world leadership *(imamat,* in his own words):

> The first thing to consider is on what basis leadership obtains in this world? What is the thing on whose basis one time Egypt gains the mantle of leadership and the world follows it; Babel becomes world leader, the world following; Greece becomes the leader and the world emulates it; at one time a people who embrace Islam take the lead and the world walks in their footsteps; and sometime Europe becomes the leader and the world becomes its follower? Then what is the thing on whose basis leadership that today belongs to someone is lost to them and tomorrow, goes to someone else? And, then, the day after, leaves them and goes to someone else? Are these mere accidents or there is a method, a rule, involved here? The more this question is pondered over the answer gotten is: Yes, there is a rule, and that rule is: Leadership is always tied to knowledge. Mankind as a specie got vicegerency (*khilafat*) in earth only on the basis of knowledge. (Mawdudi 2009, 56–57)

The proposals presented in the context of infusing knowledge with spiritual insights revealed to humans and the moral orientation designed to make human life worthy of God's approval – hence, leading to felicity in the life on earth as well as success in the life after death – are all addressed to Muslims. The sources from which these insights are to be drawn and the models to be emulated as exemplifying the moral ideals are to be found are all there in the legacy of Muslims. What is missing is *ijtihad* in applying the old dictums on the new situations. Many scholars have, therefore, focused on reviving *ijtihad* in contemporary Islamic jurisprudence. Since jurisprudence covers many areas currently covered by the social sciences, the Islamization project paid special attention to them. Mawdudi laid this down in 1944:

> At this stage we have only one task before us: To prepare suitable leaders and workers for bringing about moral, intellectual and sociological revolution in the world. For this task experts in medicine, engineering or sciences are not needed. We only need people with high class insight into the religion of Islam and the social sciences.... At the present we have to have only five faculties of higher education: Philosophy; History; Economics; Law and Islamic Sciences (each is followed by some details on syllabus). (Mawdudi 2009, 87–89)

The Plan spearheaded by Professor al Faruqi takes a broader view of the task:

> To master the modern disciplines; To master the Islamic legacy; To es-
> tablish the specific relevance of Islam to each area of modern knowledge;
> to seek ways of creative synthesis between the legacy and the modern
> knowledge; to launch Islamic thought on the trajectory which leads it to
> fulfillment of the divine patterns of Allah (SWT). (The Plan 1982, 39)

This is followed by twelve "necessary steps leading to Islamization of
knowledge": mastery of the modern discipline; discipline survey; mastery
of the Islamic legacy: the anthology; mastery of the Islamic legacy: the
analysis; establishment of the specific relevance of Islam to the disciplines;
critical assessment of the modern discipline: the state-of-the-art; critical as-
sessment of the Islamic legacy: the state-of the-art; survey of the Ummah's
major problems; survey of the problems of humankind; creative analysis
and syntheses; recasting the disciplines under the framework of Islam;
the university textbook; dissemination of Islamized knowledge (The Plan
1982, 39–47).

Under the fourth step relating to the Islamic legacy, due weight is given
to the context: "their works must need be analyzed against their historical
background, and the relations of the problem at issue with the other de-
partments of human life and thought identified and exposed" (Plan 1982,
41). But, surprisingly, there is no awareness of the need to expand human
reach by creating new knowledge. It is surprising because knowledge as a
stepping-stone to leadership and power cannot possibly be based only on
knowledge accumulated in the past, however "purified/Islamized."

With the *khilafah* assigned to humankind as a whole, the revelation –
especially in its last edition, the Qur'an – addressed to whole humankind,
knowledge basically tending to be universal, and only the future available
to be shaped, one wonders why it is a particular people (in this case, Mus-
lims) and their legacy and their spaces that are targeted by the Islamization
of knowledge project? Is there nothing left to be learnt from other legacies
cherished by other peoples?

No direct answer is available, but here are clues to an answer:

> It is true that the *ummah* is in many respects backward and non-
> developed by comparison to other *umam*. But in the respect of possess-
> ing the truth, the ideological statement of it which is most conducive to
> religious, ethical, and material prosperity at the same time, the *ummah* is
> second to none. Because of Islam, the *ummah* alone possesses the vision
> required for the felicity of humankind, for history to be as Allah (SWT)
> has desired it to be.

> Hence, the Islamic thinker is called upon to confront the problems facing the world today and to contend for their solution according to Islam. As carriers of the Islamic vision, the *ummah* is today the only viable speaker for the human masses of the earth whose cause is lost between imperialists-colonialists, and revolutionists seeking to throw off their yokes.... Certainly these problems constitute another area of reference for Islamic thought, planning, and action, that is of crucial importance for the *ummah'*s felicity as well as the felicity of humankind. To solve these problems and to lead humankind to felicity, that is to prosperity with justice and dignity, cannot be separated from the Islamic hope. (The Plan 1982, 44)

Similar if not greater, expectations from Islamization of knowledge, in the context of the Ummah's role at the world level are envisaged by Mawdudi in the 1941 lecture that laid down the framework for introducing Islamic ideas and values in philosophy, history, economics, law, and other modern disciplines:

> The people produced by this kind of education and training will have the power to change the current of events. Their research-based critique will shake all the foundations of the *Jahiliyah* [Ignorance] – based sciences and the civilization of Ignorance [*Jahiliyah*, in his word].The sciences they produce will have so much force that those stuck with the viewpoints of Ignorance will be brought around to the Islamic viewpoint. The results of their research will influence even Europe, America and Japan. Reasonable peoples from everywhere will be drawn towards their ideas. Their theories of living and the system of life devised by them will dominate the world of ideas and thought, so much so that it will be impossible for anyone to follow in practice any system of life opposing it.... (Mawdudi 2009, 80)

In sum:

> Islamization of knowledge is viewed as an epistemological and civilizational necessity not only for the Muslim *Ummah*, but also for mankind at large....

> The Muslim *Ummah* is uniquely qualified to reconstruct human knowledge through an integrative approach and comprehensive reading of the two books of Allah: revelation in Quran and Sunnah, and creation in the physical world. (Jamal Barzinji, in Haque 1999, 12)

> Methodologically speaking, restoring the divine order to the spheres of knowledge means that revelation has to be reinstated as a source of knowledge. This has to be done without bouncing to the other extreme

one finds in traditional knowledge, whereby notions found in the divine text are dogmatically interpreted, without regard to knowledge acquired through worldly experience. (Louay M. Safi, in Haque 1999, 43)

The main contribution of Syed Mohammad Naquib al-Attas, who credibly claims to have launched the idea of Islamization of knowledge earlier than the IIIT Plan, lies in his notion of *adab* (Attas 1993, Preface, xiii; 105,107–110, 149–52)*. Adab* is defined as '"discipline of body, mind and soul; the discipline that assures the recognition and acknowledgement of one's physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities and potentialities, the recognition and acknowledgement of the fact that knowledge and being are ordered hierarchically" (Ibid., 105). The potentiality of the concept *adab*, is lost, however, in the thicket of the author's ill-conceived hierarchy in human relations and his anti-'levelling' tirade (Ibid., 110). Attas also talks of *kashf* as a source of knowledge, besides revelation (Ibid., 160–61), but this line of thinking with obvious affinities to *tasawwuf* did not find any takers.

All three lines of approach noted above are uneasy with the traditional division of knowledge between Shar'iah and the mundane, but none stood up to the challenge posed by challenging that (damaging ?) distinction. The Qur'an does not entertain this duality, even though revealed guidance forms the bedrock or rules we follow. For there are *ayat* (signs) in the revealed book as well as in God's creation, the cosmos:

> Soon shall We show them Our Signs on the horizons and in their own beings until it becomes clear to them that it is the Truth. Is it not enough that your Lord is witness over everything? (41:53)

Signs of Allah in nature invite us on a journey of exploration and discovery. There is scope of exploring meanings and discovering nuances in the revealed guidance too.

The right approach to knowledge would be to undertake both journeys simultaneously: exploring the universe (including our inner selves), as well as exploring the meanings of Qur'an and Sunnah. The Shar'iah mundane division of *'ilm* (knowledge) could be a functional device in curriculum making. But its current tyranny of downgrading all knowledge other than that in religious books has had devastating impact on Muslim psyche and Islam's destiny. As reported by Aslam Haneef, Taha Jabir al-Alwani has it right when he says that an imbalanced understanding of reality may occur when Muslims are not paying due attention to Allah's signs in the universe (Haneef 2005, 103–104).

A perceptive critic of the Islamization of knowledge project, Ziauddin Sardar may have a point when he says: "to accept the disciplinary divisions

of knowledge as they exist in Western epistemology is to make the world-view of Islam subordinate to the Western civilization (Sardar 1985, 101). He rightly emphasizes values rather that ideas (sometimes called truths): "*ilm* can be acquired from revelation as well as reason, from observation as well as intuition, from tradition as well as theoretical speculation. While the various ways of studying nature and reality are equally valid in Islam, all are subservient to the Quranic revelation. As such, Islamic epistemology emphasizes the pursuit of all forms of knowledge within the framework of eternal values which are the corner-stone of Muslim civilization" (Sardar 1985, 102–103).

This would require focusing on the interpretation and elaborating upon the implications of Islamic values as time and space changes. Unfortunately, this has not been the top priority of Islamization scholars. Even the pioneering elaborations like those of Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman define Islamic values mostly in terms of what it is not rather than in terms of what it is or could be. Having given potent examples of how early responses to changing circumstances met the needs of society while preserving its core values, no contemporary advice emerges to set an example for the younger scholars (Abu Sulaiman 1989: 34–35; 61–63) .

Section Two: Question Marks

Linking *imamat* (world leadership) to knowledge (*'ilm*), is not as solid an assumption as linking *khilafah* to knowledge which has a solid basis in the Qur'an (2:30; 6:165) . Worldly power has been linked by the Quran to *salah* (21:105; 24:55) as contrasted by *fasad* (7:56; 27:48; 11:116; 28:83). However, its continuation is often ascribed to the test of life, *ibtila'* – the divine purpose in creating humankind that serves as the main objective of creation in which other secondary objectives are based (6:165; 5:48).

World leadership for Muslims seems to have been construed by the sponsors of the Islamization of knowledge project as a necessary adjunct to the *khilafah* bestowed upon humankind as a whole. That claim lacks evidence. The role of the Ummah's leadership (*imamat)* must be so conceived as not to undercut God's purpose in testing humankind. In other words, testing peoples, and therefore the freedom of choice that is implied in life being a test, is prior to and more important than striving "for history to be as Allah (SWT) has desired it to be" as suggested in the Plan (44).

Must knowledge be seen as a stepping-stone to power? Where does political power stand in the hierarchy of Islamic objectives as conceived

within the framework of the divine purpose in creating humankind? How is creation of new knowledge, or expansion of knowledge, related to *khila-fah* and *imamat*? How far is creating an environment for beneficial use of knowledge, new and old, crucial for *khilafah* and *imamat*? Is it not more efficient to focus directly on the whole humankind insofar as the task of creating more knowledge and striving for its beneficial use is concerned, rather than working for the world leadership/domination of the Muslim peoples – a project that is bound to generate hostility and create conflicts.

Knowledge, especially its creation, has its own requirements. Free-doms, especially of thought and association, are crucial for creativity to flourish. Also, new knowledge is created by individuals, often working voluntarily as teams. Institutional arrangements like universities or houses for translation attracting knowledgeable people from foreign lands help. But new knowledge cannot be, has never been produced to order, under regimentation. On the other hand, ensuring beneficial use of knowledge, new and old, has its own requirements. While we know that these require-ments relate to worldview, spirituality, and moral vision on life, we don't know much more. It is, therefore, necessary to be cautious and proceed with humility. Arrogance, sometime in the garb of an all-knowing mentor, will be counterproductive, if not outright destructive. The possibility of *fasad* is tied to the privilege of knowledge (*'ilm*) with freedom of choice. Taking away freedom to guard against *fasad* is not the solution. It was re-jected by the Creator Himself (Qur'an 2:30). So what do we do? Therein lies the challenge! But it is important to see there is a problem, only then can we face it. I doubt whether we saw it correctly over half a century of the Islamization saga.

As I shall note in a subsequent section, all the practical measures taken by us during the last half century were directed at making knowledge use-ful (knowledge that we thought was already there, in our own legacy or in the contemporary West). There is hardly any step taken so far to create an environment conducive to creating new knowledge, expanding the human reach. Why? It either indicates a misconception about knowledge itself, its sociology in particular, or an error in assigning priorities. It could be both.

It is understandable if projects relating exclusively to Muslims are con-fined to Muslims only – in location, funding, and engagement. What if a project by its very nature involves others, requiring we benefit from their legacies, their thinking, and their experience? It appears it never occurred to Islamization of knowledge sponsors that going open about it and enlist-ing cooperation from all – irrespective of religion, ethnicity, or location – may be helpful. Again, we come across a phenomenon that could have

been caused by either a misconception about knowledge, especially its creation, or about the ultimate goal of the whole exercise: world leadership for Muslims or human felicity, whatever the political arrangements.

Lastly, we cannot avoid asking if Muslims are really charged with the responsibility of becoming world leaders, dominating the world, and reordering it in accordance with Islam? The issue of means is not raised here. It could be entirely peaceful, nonviolent, and persuasive. But still the question remains: is the Islamic mission to convey and invite, by words and by deeds, or must it end in world domination? It appears the Islamization of knowledge project, born of and nurtured by the movement for restoring Islam to power, is still tied to an approach focused on political power. It is high time it reexamined the premises of the Islamic movement as articulated at a time Muslim lands were occupied by foreign powers, took a fresh look at the relevant provisions in Qur'an and Sunnah, and took cognizance of a changing world, which may not entertain a world leader, much less a dominant power.

Section Three: Lessons of Practice

The idea that introducing Islamic concepts and precepts into modern knowledge created mainly by the West – coupled with a fresh approach to knowledge revealed to Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, aided by a critical assimilation of Muslim contributions during the past – will lead to reemergence of Muslims as world leaders attracted lot of attention. Some institutions tried to bring together traditional 'ulama and modern-educated Muslim faculty under the same roof, in order to raise a new crop of Muslim students equipped with both kinds of knowledge, modern and traditional. Some institutions dedicated to research in special disciplines – but manned by scholars with knowledge of Islamic sciences like *tafsīr*, *hadees*, and Islamic jurisprudence – also came into being. International Islamic universities, especially those at Islamabad and Kuala Lumpur, were manned by some of the very people who authored the Islamization agenda. A critical appraisal of what has been done over the quarter century since the agenda's inception will be instructive. (Unfortunately, I do not have the resources and energy to undertake a detailed appraisal. However, my experience, first as a student of Sanvi Darsgah Jama 'at e Islami Hind at Rampur in India in the early fifties of the last century, then my association with the two above-mentioned universities in advisory capacities, and my work at the Islamic

economics center at Jeddah, extending over more than two decades, might lend some credibility to my observations).

Half a century of dedicated efforts certainly did not go waste. But it is no exaggeration to say that these achievements brought us nowhere near the goals we had set. Valuable work on curriculum development was done, some wonderful literature was produced, a number of academic journals launched under aegis of the project earned due recognition. Islamic economics entered even into Western academia, thanks to the universal acceptability of its not so loyal offspring, Islamic finance. But the progress in modern disciplines was little noticed. No convincing solutions were offered to many vexing problems of contemporary societies, including the crisis-ridden financial sector and crumbling family relations. No sizeable numbers were attracted to Islam because of the works Mawdudi expected to result from the project. The Plan al Faruqi lived long enough to see taking off did not, could not, produce the path-breaking studies he expected. The Islamization project vis-a-vis knowledge, like its counterpart in socioeconomic and political order, could not reach anywhere nearer to the victory of Islam in civilizational confrontation. Certainly, something has been missing.

I hasten to add that there is no justification for pessimism or despondency. Given more time, better results may be obtained. However, the waning enthusiasm and the visible shift of attention and resources toward activism rather than intellection and influencing thinking do not auger well for the project of Islamization of knowledge. Add to it the short span of patience on part of those valuing fieldwork more than education and research, and you have grasped the reason why the followers of our beloved Prophet, the mercy for mankind, respond so harshly to others as well as their own when they find them at fault. So, it is our duty to seek answers to some of the questions raised above.

Section Four: Possible Answers?

Maybe the crucial error was to regard the future as a mere extension of the past – that is, following the same trajectory. The Muslim approach to regeneration has largely been focused on a highly glorified view of selected patches of the Islamic past and efforts to recreate a future in the image of that past. That the future could be so different as to defy any replication of the past was rarely taken into consideration. This failing can be excused in case of someone speaking in 1941, even in 1982, but to adhere to it

in 2011 is simply inexcusable. We do not know what the world will be like fifty or one hundred years from now. But one thing is certain: it will be very, verydifferent from what it is today. Knowledge accumulated to date will appear, at those dates, as outdated and antiquarian as nineteenth-century sciences appear to us today. What good, then, can come about from "Islamization" of knowledge if its impact is limited only to knowledge accumulated in the past? We need a methodology for creating new knowledge with full awareness of the need to make the use of new knowledge beneficially assisted by a moral vision rooted in spirituality. This we cannot do alone. Even if all the Muslims of the world became Islamization enthusiasts, they can undertake this task only in cooperation with the rest of humanity. The reason lies in the way new knowledge is created and used. It is created in the process of living by hundreds of millions of individuals, including some working for institutions, spread across the globe and its use is only partially amendable to regulation by the social authorities of different countries. This applies to all kinds of new knowledge, not only to what relates to industrial production. Rearing a child, bringing up teenagers, marital relations and family structures, neighborhood designs, town planning, governance at various levels, international cooperation in finance, healthcare, handling crimes and criminals, poverty alleviation, conflict management and maintaining peace ... every aspect of our life is impacted by the advent of new knowledge and how it is used.

Another feature of the recent Islamic movements, including the Islamization of knowledge project, has been that they have being consequence-focused (that is, result focused) rather than process-oriented. Consequence-focused people get angry with a world that would not let their dreams come true. They tend to be totalitarian, organization wise. They have little patience, tend to be short-term-ists. Process-oriented people are less aggressive, more patient, able to take a longer view. Humility comes easily to them, as they believe reconstruction is in God's hand and their vocation is only to try their best. Lastly, consequentialists easily become hegemonic, whereas process-oriented groups are more modest in their aspirations. They can easily mesh into a pluralistic world.

These assertions are bound to be challenged, but this article is not the forum to anticipate the objections and respond to them. Nevertheless the reason I have made these assertions is the deleterious impact of consequentialism on performance and perseverance. As the chances of success recede, protagonists get frustrated. Many are allured by activities that seem to lead to quick results. What can put us back on the track and renew our

commitments to the original vision is realizing the primacy of faithfully observing the processes, derived as they are from Qur'an and Sunnah, instead of result seeking, which is not guaranteed anyway.

We have emphasized our being different from others to the extent that we forget the extent to which we are similar. Taking life as a whole, Muslims are like anybody else. In body and habitat, in mind and the stresses of modern living, in social relations and facing uncertainties of a future yet to dawn ... it is difficult to distinguish and separate Muslims from others. It is in Muslims' own interest to remember this – as they share the same living space with other human beings. As this is applied to knowledge and its use, all human beings have similar stakes.

Preventing killer epidemics and containing them if and when they occur, preventing production of weapons of mass destruction and working toward their elimination, handling environmental issues like global warming, maintaining peace, preventing hunger, alleviating poverty, and ensuring dignity for each and all ... are some from among several problems involving creation of knowledge, its dissemination, and the use that requires universal cooperation. Arguments that promote exclusiveness do not serve our real interests.

Another fallacy resulting from expecting the future to be a replica of the past is the view that the world shall always have a leader. That there has to be a world leader who must dominate in order to set things right, keep order, lead to prosperity, and maintain peace is a mere assumption. As things are, we seem to be headed toward a world without a dominant leader. Again, we can excuse seers who failed to imagine such a scenario in the days gone by, but no longer now. To invite the Ummah to struggle for something that has no place in future shape of things is inappropriate. To declare it to be an Islamic duty of all Muslims is to obscure their religion for them.

How could more than two centuries of revivalist thinkers and movements have led us to such an impasse? Good question. But they never thought for the future awaiting us. Neither should we blame them, nor could we stick to the agenda they left behind. A fresh recourse to the Qur'an and Sunnah is the need of the hour. Unfortunately, it is not possible to detail that in this study. Instead, I will proceed to some musings on what needs to be done.

Section Five: A Way Forward (No Foreseeable Results Guaranteed)

Top priority belongs to freeing Muslims from the fear of going wrong if they think. Over the last few centuries, following orders has been emphasized so much as to leave ordinary Muslims paralyzed in situations where there are no orders to follow.

Next in order of importance is the inhibition created by some against the common Muslim going directly to the Qur'an and Sunnah in order to find solutions for their problems, personal as well as social. Despite their powerful appeal, the likes of Mawdudi, Syed Qutb, and al Faruqi could not, in the eyes of overwhelming majority of common Muslims, debunk the claim of the traditional 'ulama that the privilege of finding Islamic verdicts on any issue belongs to them only.

Exclusivity, the tendency to do it alone, to the exclusion of the rest of humanity, in facing the myriad problems of the day – from those relating to raising children, saving the family from collapse, finding a means of relaxation that does not destroy morality, financing growth, and working for poverty alleviation ... they crave for something in their glorious past to guide them and save them from the humiliation of borrowing from the West. Not content with the general guidelines found in the Qur'an, they tend to emulate models of behavior rooted to and suited for entirely different circumstances. Islamization can succeed only if it responds to the situation by encouraging fresh thinking, frank discussion, mobilizing all available insights into the matter irrespective of their authorship. It is precisely this attitude that has been, with some exceptions, missing from the Islamization of knowledge project and needs to be reinjected into it. There must be something in the contemporary Muslim psyche resisting the call for fresh, independent thinking to solve the newly arising problems. To alay their fears of committing errors and thereby risking eternal damnation if they responded positively to calls for *ijtihad*, we need something more powerful than we could afford till now.

As stated above, these efforts have to be inclusive, inviting every human being to participate and contribute. There is no justification of confining them to the Ummah. I do not belittle the Ummah-focused Islamization projects – schools, universities, research institutes.... They have a role, a necessary one. It is our duty anyway to arrange for Islamic education and training for our children and for looking at life in all its walks in the perspective of a *tawhidic* view on life. But that is not enough for the "Is-

lamization of knowledge," which by definition is a universal rather than a communal affair.

Delinking Islamization of knowledge from a quest for world leadership and political power; changing the focus from Ummah to humanity at large; expanding the search for solutions involving all rather than 'ulama only; encouraging Muslims to think, speak up, listen, discuss, tolerate dissent, and accept decisions made through mutual consultation ... all these steps are necessary but not sufficient conditions for realizing our objectives: knowledge responding to the changing needs of the time that is used in a beneficial way, and guided by a moral vision rooted in spirituality. This moral vision, and the spirituality needed to sustain it, is fortunately available to us in Qur'an and Sunnah. What is needed is reaching out to humanity to build a consensus around this vision. How do we go about it?

(Assuming that I had the capacity and courage to attempt it, this is not the place to elaborate upon that process. As it stands now, I do not have all the answers.) But the important thing is not the details. It is recognizing the need for working toward a universally shared moral vision that is important. Once the need is recognized, Islamization votaries can join together in discussing how to fulfill that need. A universally shared moral vision need not necessarily be rooted in any one legacy only. Accepted that the spiritual truths that create the right moral visions fully be inhered in the Qur'an and Sunnah, it is nevertheless true that remnants of divinely revealed spiritual truths still abound across the globe in all communities. Building a consensus on a morally inspired quest for knowledge has to recognize this reality and utilize it fully.

Islamization of the Social Sciences

The above are the larger issues involved in my review of the Islamization of knowledge. I would now turn to the more congenial "practical" issues that deserve attention. Islamists rightly gave priority to modifying the social sciences in the light of Islam. They correctly emphasized the fact that all the human sciences reflect the ethos prevailing in the West after Reformation. These disciplines were children of Enlightenment raised with skepticism, if not outright hostility, to all things religious – a peculiarly Western phenomenon. Why should people in the East, especially the Muslims, in general and Islam in particular endorse that stance as no such hostility was perceived by them? There was a strong case for introducing morality in human sciences like economics, political science, psychology,

and sociology since their presumably amoral stance in the West has been demonstrated to be serving the vested interests of the dominant classes of society at the national level, and that of imperialism at the world level. It is a line of argument with a great potential for universal acceptance. Many others also see the need for bringing social sciences closer to moral values. There is a need for joining hands with them while we invite them to join us in evolving a universally acceptable moral vision. This may lead to better results than trying to develop Islamized textbooks in every subject. These textbooks, if ever available, will circulate among Muslims only who will still need the conventional textbooks to complete their education. The exercise cannot be expected to have much impact on the respective disciplines themselves. Contrary to this, any result of a joint exercise is likely to have a wider appeal.

A number of institutions were established for promoting Islamic values in natural sciences too, like the one under the aegis of the Organization Of Islamic Conference with headquarters in Islamabad. They are still there, but the failure to distinguish between the entirely different requirements of making knowledge useful and creating new knowledge that afflicted the movement since beginning thwarts meaningful progress. They do serve, however, the purpose of reminding the world that Muslims pioneered many a scientific discoveries in the past. The task of networking Muslim scientists and serving as a link between them and professional forums at the world level is taken half-heartedly, if ever at all. Here too a change of priorities is called for.

Islamization-of-knowledge teams continue working at the fringe of institutions of modern learning in Muslim countries and communities, if not outside them. This keeps them starved of manpower and financial resources and severely restricts the reach of Islamization ideas among Muslims while decreasing their credibility among others. This situation must be remedied by bringing these teams in the mainstream. This can happen if we sympathize with the objectives of modernizers and they see in the objectives of Islamization something not hostile to what they do but likely to add value to what they are doing. Unfortunately, our approach so far has not being geared to that end. Rather, it overemphasized the differences between our approach and that of the Muslims patronizing Western-type education among Muslims. It is easier to navigate the globalized scenario around us if we emphasized similarities rather than the differences. The change of stance is a must if we want to avoid marginalization leading to irrelevance.

Knowledge permeates the media – film, television, radio, print media – which involve a greater population of humans than the academia. It is high time due attention was paid to this audience. More and more knowledge is now flowing through the Internet. Both in creation of new knowledge and its use; the role of the Internet is increasing considerably. Thanks to the Internet the role of individuals, male as well as female, is also increasing. This applies to the delivery of knowledge and the spread of its various uses as well. Internet was not there when the Islamization-of-knowledge plan was launched. This calls for a review of existing strategies as well as of the institutional arrangements for the promotion of Islamization. The costs and benefits of creating a physical facility bringing together teachers and students, research scholars and professors, providing them with libraries, etc., has to be compared with the costs and benefits of creating and maintaining an efficient interactive website, providing access to digital libraries and involving relevant people from across the globe.

Section Six: An Agenda for the Future

In conclusion I suggest a renewed effort. The first step should be identifying a few basic values shared by almost everybody, by the entire humanity. These would include justice and fairness (*'adl*), compassion and benevolence (*ihsan*) and mutual accommodation and cooperation (*samaha, ta'awun*). The emphasis should be on expanding knowledge as well as on preserving knowledge accumulated so far, while creating a consensus on commitment to be guided by moral values in using knowledge.

I think the crux of the matter is translating values into institutions and behaviors appropriate for our time and place. We differ in this regard from earlier generations in the volume of scientific knowledge, knowledge based on observation and experience, but we share with them this need to use scientific knowledge under the guidance of values such as truth, justice, beauty, and goodness.

Research in revealed knowledge as well as in social and natural sciences should be directed more and more toward problems facing all peoples. Ecological imbalances, global warming, water shortage, world peace, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, poverty alleviation, increasing inequalities, failing states, corrupt democracies, crumbling families, insecure neighborhoods, increasing levels of anxiety, new epidemics, etc. While specialization is absolutely necessary, every Muslim should be encouraged to approach Qur'an and Sunnah directly for personal as well as

public matters. We should try to create an environment of free and frank discussion, decision by mutual consultation, and accommodation of diversity in thought and action. Power relations should be left to be shaped by convenience, local traditions, and popular aspirations. Knowledge, its acquisition, importation, and use should not be seen as a means to political power and domination. The teaching of Islamic sciences should be updated to include later development, rather than being frozen in fifth century AH. Latest thinking on social economic and political issues, informed by the bitter experiences of recent decades, should guide the teaching of social sciences. The inspirations Muslim scholars derive from divine guidance could also be utilized at that stage.

One of the very first stages of adopting this agenda would be for the small group of Islamization scholars to team up with the other Muslim intellectuals and educationists. Simultaneously Muslim intellectuals and educationists would reach out to non-Muslim intellectuals and educationists, including men of faith, for meaningful dialogue and cooperation. It is high time we came out of our narrow shells and breathed freely, exploring the vast possibilities of global cooperation.

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