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Exploring AbdulHamid AbuSulayman's Views on the Contemporary Challenges towards Higher Education in Muslim Countries

Nur Irdina Hakimah NorAzali*

Nur Suriya Mohd Nor**

Abstract

This study seeks to explore the critical views of AbdulHamid AbuSulayman (1936–2021) on the contemporary challenges towards Higher Education in the Muslim countries and their solutions. Professor Emeritus Dato' Dr. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman (1936–2021) was a scholar, educationalist, institution builder, a leading intellectual and creative thinker in the Muslim world. Throughout his ten-year tenure as International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) Rector, he has made remarkable efforts to enhance the Islamisation of disciplines and the integration of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and human sciences. The significance of this study lays in extracting the crux of the problems faced by Higher Education in the Muslim countries by studying the original works and writings of AbdulHamid AbuSulayman including the Crisis in Muslim Mind, Revitalizing the Higher Education and others. The Muslims have contributed outstanding point in history through the development of numerous fields of knowledge and skills, especially in education and even the world's first higher education institutions were established by Muslims in the Islamic world, that later setting example for the establishment of many universities in Europe at twelfth century. However, due to many internal and external challenges imposed towards the Muslim civilization, it has consequently affected the higher education. Hence, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman's meticulous works in elucidating the afflictions in higher education expand from the seriousness of the threat, the extent of the crisis from which it suffers and efforts required to rescue it from further declining. This research employed qualitative methodology that incorporates the approach of collection data from the primary and secondary sources. The major approaches, namely descriptive, evaluative and critical analysis are implemented throughout the study to analyse data.

Keyword: AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, higher education, challenges, Islamic thought, Islamisation

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Introduction: AbdulHamid AbuSulayman's biography and his important works

Professor Emeritus Dato' Dr. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman (1936-2021), one of the most important figures in the history of contemporary global Muslim scholarship, was the Rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) from 1989-1999. He was conferred the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education in IIUM. During his tenure, the University grew to a world class on a new campus that is considered landmark in functional modern Islamic architecture. According to various biographies, he was born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and received his BA and MA at the University of Cairo and a PhD in International Relations at the University of Pennsylvania in 1973. Among his global affiliations are: (1) Secretary General of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY). 1973-79. (2) Founding member of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), 1972, and its former President, 1985-87.¹

At an early age, he developed the reading habit and inquisitiveness that consequently developed his intellectual journey to produce sharp critical and analytical mind and personality. According to Professor Dr. Berghout Abdelaziz in his article entitled "*AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Civilizational Education for Transformation*" stated on one occasion, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman mentioned he read the book of "*Fall of Al-Andalus*" by Muhammad Abdullah A'nan in his very young days and reading such a book and being conscious of the deep crisis of the Islamic civilization from an early age undoubtedly accelerated his intellectual maturation process.² In addition, he even portrayed in his writing that as a child he opened his heart and soul to the *Ummah's* trials and anguish. During his childhood, seeing the Muslim pilgrims pouring into the sacred place yearly from all different countries and cultures has left indelible impacts on his upbringing and intellectual journey. Thus, he used to observe the unwanted and dismaying characters and deeds of many Muslims in the compound of the sacred place. He mentioned based on his upbringing in Mecca, he was confused by the declines of Muslim from the pride and level of civilization of the early years of Islam to the current position of weakness and decline. The urgency crisis fills his heart with determination and conviction that things must change. Living and being exposed to multi diverse cultures in

¹ Muhamad Mumtaz Ali, *Issues in Islamization of Human Knowledge Civilization Building Discourse of Contemporary Muslim Thinkers*, Third (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2019), p. 121.

² Abdelaziz Berghout, "AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Civilizational Education for Transformation," *Journal of Education in Muslim Societies* 3, no. 2, 4, 2022.

the Islamic and Western worlds has provided him with a rare opportunity to fathom both the Islamic and Western epistemologies, philosophies, methodologies and applications of knowledge.¹

To further draw the bigger picture of AbdulHamid AbuSulayman's views on the contemporary challenges towards Higher Education in the Muslim Countries, it is worth highlighting his important books and writings that discuss the crux of the crisis in the Muslim *Ummah*. His book entitled, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind* describes a deep analysis of the Islamic intellectual crisis as manifested in the history, civilization, culture and sociopolitical context of the *Ummah*. This seminal book proposed many important steps toward rejuvenating the dynamism of the Muslim mind and civilization especially the framework and methodology in Islamic thought² It is interesting because he observed the cause of the crisis from the perspective of problem in thinking methodology that is the crux of the crisis that consequently caused many conflicts. He reiterated his ideas on the crisis in the Muslim *Ummah* and its causes in several of his writing including *Revitalizing Higher Education in the Muslim World: A Case Study of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)* where he enlightened the importance of higher education to the process of the civilizational renewal in the Muslim *Ummah* by scrutinizing the challenges faced by the higher education in the Muslim countries and proposed the solutions. This research seeks to explore his views particularly on the specific challenges towards Higher Education that perhaps demonstrates insights to empower and revitalize the Higher Education in the present and future.

The Crux of the Crisis in Muslim *Ummah*

To begin the exploration of his views on the contemporary challenges towards the higher education, we must understand his core idea on the crisis in the Muslim *Ummah* that has caused other degradations. It has been ninety-eight years after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim *Ummah* has been emasculated and degraded. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman explained the *Ummah* has been suffering from a number of maladies that includes underdevelopment, division, tyranny, and oppression as well as injustice, poverty, ignorance and disease. Amir Shakib Arslan, a great scholar and politician also portrayed the reality of the *Ummah* in his book, *Our Decline: Its Causes and Remedies* that the

¹ Berghout, p. 5.

² AbdulHamid A AbuSulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind* (United States of America: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993), p. 22.

condition of Muslim have reached the very abyss of degradation.¹ For example, an examination of the top ten (10) economies in the world revealed that no single Muslim country is among the top ten (10) leading global economic powers as stated in Table 1 below.²

S/No.	Country	Value in Trillions
1.	United States	20.4
2.	China	14
3.	Japan	5.1
4.	Germany	4.2
5.	United Kingdom	2.94
6.	France	2.93
7.	India	2.85
8.	Italy	2.18
9.	Brazil	2.14
10.	Canada	1.8

Source: International Monetary Fund (2018)

The above issues in the Muslim Ummah addressed by AbdulHamid AbuSulayman are very serious problems but he also asserted that they are just the side effects of the real malaise of the *Ummah*. It is in fact the cloudiness of the vision, the weakness and the deterioration of contemporary Islamic thought and its methodology, that underlies such present maladies such as corruption, inadequate education and others.³ He explained:

One factor contributing to the lack of clarity in contemporary Islamic vision is the psychological impediments that have left the Muslim mind as tame as household pet. In other words, it does not have enough courage to analyze its intellectual legacy or what it holds as sacred. Thus, it cannot understand what is really important, distinguish between what is fundamental and absolute and what is temporary and limited or even appreciate what is essential and what is matter of performance and style.⁴

He further elaborated:

¹ Amir Shakib Arslan, *Our Decline: Its Causes and Remedies* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2014), p. 1.

² Babayo Sule, "The State of the Muslim Ummah in Contemporary World," *Randwick International of Social Science (RISS) Journal* 1, no. 2, 154, 2020.

³ Ali, *Issues in Islamization of Human Knowledge Civilization Building Discourse of Contemporary Muslim Thinkers*, p. 133.

⁴ AbuSulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, p. 28.

Factor that burdened the Muslim mind is the Ummah's intellectual and political leaders whether by design or otherwise, despaired or ever having complete monopoly on leadership. What each group sought, then, was to force its own kind of terrorism on the Ummah. (1) political leadership: practiced sort of material terrorism (2) intellectual leadership: practiced a sort of psychological terrorism. These two groups engaged to ensure the continued pacification, weakness and subjugation of the Muslims vis-à-vis the leadership in their private and public lives.¹

Consequently, due to the collapse of the leadership's powerbase, the Ummah cannot defend themselves from the foreign colonial powers² and Muslim mind was divided between either in the groups that (1) to reject (2) to accept everything without differentiating between historical fact and fiction or distinguishing between the means and the end.

In addition, AbuSulayman elaborated the cause of the crisis in Muslim mind also influenced by the rift between political and religious leadership. It is a consequence from the strategy of the new political leadership as he described earlier. The strategy of new political leadership was to restraint the religious intelligentsia and to force its members to do as they were told by applying increasing amounts of pressure. Thus, lot of the great *ulama*, especially those four who founded the schools of legal thought encountered severe torture and exemplary punishment. It has led to the removal of the intellectual leadership from all practical and social responsibility within the Ummah.³ In an article, *Islamization of Knowledge with Special Reference to Political Science* AbuSulayman clarified the early condition before the restriction towards religious leadership took place:

During the reign of the Righteous Caliphs, the leaders struck a harmonious balance between religion and politics. The caliphs' faith and practices fully adhered to Islamic values and objectives and consequently won the confidence of their subjects. The fruits of their experience and thought were utilized for the welfare of the Ummah. There was no dichotomy or conflict between the temporal and the spiritual. The caliphs firmly believed that

¹ AbuSulayman, p. 29.

² AbuSulayman, p. 29.

³ AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, "Islamization of Knowledge with Special Reference to Political Science," *American Journal of Islam and Society* 2, no. 2 (December 1, 1985): 266, <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v2i2.2770>.

human reason was fallible but could be utilized within the limits set by divine revelation.¹

Nevertheless, when the leadership lost its strength, the gulf between religion and politics widened, and there followed more and more dependence upon reason. As a result, academic pursuits did not adhere strictly to the spirit and objectives of Islam and increased the tendency in the popularity of rhetoric, philosophical and theological discussions, and sophistry.² Another struggle confronted by the Muslims as the result of the rift between political and religious leadership was academic pursuits became more inclined towards explicating *Shari'ah* texts, the Arabic language and jurisprudence. AbuSulayman further elucidated the consequence of this struggle:

This tendency led to more concentration on second-rate thought, authentication of texts, and the compiling of glossaries and historical trivialities. The result was a state of intellectual incompetence which closed off the gates of Ijtihad and promoted concentration on textual studies in a repetitious way and from a theoretical view point only.³

Furthermore, it is even affected the relationship between the concepts and purposes of religion on the one hand, and between social life and institutions on the other. For instance, the sciences of theology became entangled in philosophical arguments and rational debates that had no relevance to the Islamic or to those issues which were of concern to it. For AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, such intellectual activity exhausted the Muslim minds and blurred true Islamic vision among Muslims, thus affecting the Muslims intellect when it came to the matters of the “seen and unseen” (ie revelation, reason, faith and determinism, free will and divine names and attributes and a whole list of futile intellectual sophistries that contributed nothing to the Ummah, it's thought or its faith).⁴

The Importance of Higher Education in the Reforming the Muslim Ummah

In the light of above discussion, the real problems faced by the Muslim Ummah are also associated with the external and internal factors such as the crisis of thought, the rift of the intellectuals and political leaders and

¹ AbuSulayman, p. 267.

² AbuSulayman, p. 267.

³ AbuSulayman, p. 268.

⁴ AbuSulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, p. 46.

colonization. Thus, to reform the Muslim Ummah, AbdulHamid AbdulSulayman emphasized on the role of higher education. He mentioned clearly in his writing entitled: *Revitalizing Higher Education in the Muslim World: A Case Study of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)* that the Ummah will not be able to progress and take its proper place among nations unless higher education is revitalized and reformed.

Past Muslim civilization proved that higher education played important role in nurturing intellectualism and advancement in knowledge. The higher education in the Muslim world have contribute remarkable impacts to the other human civilization. It can be seen from the modern universities that still reveal significant traces of Islamic origin in terms of the structure and general character. Al-Attas described, “the early Western universities were modelled after the Islamic originals.” Although the Western historians of higher education not quite forthright concerning the origin, George Makdisi the most important authorities on the subject of the Islamic educational influence on Europe mentioned in his article that this happened due to the civilizational pride:

Few chapters in the history of Western culture are as fascinating to read as that of the rise and development of universities ... (which) are justly the pride and joy of those who cherish the traditions of Western culture. Small wonder, then, that claims on their origins as possibly owing to influence from the Muslim East should be opposed, at time, politely, more often by simply ignoring the claim.¹

It is apparent that higher education in Muslim civilization has inherently influenced other human civilization including Western. For him, it is essential that the efforts of Islamic workers and the leaders focused on three matters:²

- 1) The future of the Ummah i.e., working among Muslim youth;
- 2) The role of academic institutions in achieving Islamization and clarifying the Islamic perspective toward knowledge, civilization, and the preparation of new generations qualified to carry the eternal message of Islam to all humankind;

¹ Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas: An Exposition of the Original Concept of Islamization* (Kuala Lumpur: International Inst. of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1998), p. 182.

² AbuSulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, p. 145.

- 3) Guiding the future course of human civilization in fulfillment of the Ummah's responsibility to correct the progress and though of humankind.

Furthermore, he further explained that practical application of Islam's civilizational ideas will never possible to be achieved unless Islam's epistemological sources and its methodology become a part of Ummah's focus and implemented in the education of all Muslims. Therefore, educational institutions also included in the major arena for change.¹ as appropriate education and learning are the right foundations for the dynamic human energy. However, when the higher education in the Muslim world started to adapt the Western secular models due to the influence by the Western organizational framework, it started to decline. Ottoman University or Dar Al-Funun in the early Kemalist Revolution in Turkey noticed that "... in many cases there is no unity of objectives or ideals among the faculty members even within one department." In addition, many other universities in the Middle East and the Muslim world, stating that:

Unlike the college and university in their earlier days, the present institution seems somewhat devoid of a living unifying philosophy. The teachers are of heterogenous backgrounds and philosophies of life...there is little unity of purpose to bind them together"²

Challenges towards Higher Education

Therefore, the distortion of the comprehensive purpose of higher education led to many problems including confusion in Islamic thought and the methodology in thinking. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman highlighted two challenges of higher education in Muslim countries:

1) The Imitations and Replications of the Western ideologies

According to AbdulHamid AbySulayman higher education in Muslim countries faced with the affliction of imitations and replications of the Western ideologies:

The first affliction is that of imitation and replication. The majority of higher education systems and philosophies in Muslim countries are Western in character, alien to Ummah's conscience and cultural goals. Based on the imitation and

¹ AbuSulayman, p. 149.

² Nor Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas*, p. 195.

duplication, these systems fail to take into consideration the nature of Islamic Civilization, as well as its special characteristics and values. These values are based on the principles of tawhid and deputation, the purposefulness and moral dimensions of existence, the unity of its foundations and the complementarity of its material and spiritual and moral as well as secular and eternal dimensions.¹

Modern Western science that is based on the conjectural foundation has become destructive and problematic to the Muslim that is according to *Mumtaz Ali*, we cannot lay on the false foundation as it consequently affected all other technical dimensions.² The secular, materialistic and atheistic Western thought and ideologies have led world to the path of destruction. Having the fact that Francis Fukuyama described in *The Great Disruption* that the real cause of failure blind following of the modern Western mind and even he realized that modern societies are caught up in an unpleasant circumstance, but he still argued that it does not mean that contemporary liberal societies are fated to descend to the levels of moral decline and social anarchy.³ The irony is that Fukuyama and other writers who shared the same views are unable to see beyond and still insist that man's reason capable in guiding him. He even stated that by nature, human beings are capable of designing and creating their own moral rules and social order.

AbdulHamid AbuSulayman reiterated that imitation of the foreign solutions resulted bitter experiences to the Ummah in many of his writing including an article entitled *Islamization of Knowledge with Special Reference to Political Science*. He elaborated from the case of Turkey during the reign of Saleem 111 and in Egypt ever since the reign of Muhammad Ali. Both of the countries tried to imitate the technical, organizational and intellectual styles of foreign countries such as secularism which they imposed through state intervention. But the imitative experiments have ended in miserable failures as can be seen by the utter helplessness and deteriorating conditions of Turkey and Egypt. Thus, he

¹ 'AbdulHamid Abu Sulayman, *Revitalizing Higher Education in the Muslim World: A Case Study of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)* (London; Washington: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2007), p. 10.

² Muhammad Mumtaz Ali, *Islamization of Modern Science and Its Philosophy: A Contemporary Civilizational Discourse*, second (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: IIUM Press, 2019), p. 47.

³ Muhamamd Mumtaz Ali, *Critical Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, First (Selangor, Malaysia: Thinker's Library, 2008), p. 78.

concluded the imitation of foreign styles is fruitless as both of them have failed to achieve the objectives set up for the Ummah.¹ In the case of higher education, the project of modernizing the education system in the Ottoman Empire began as early as 1734 when Sultan Mahmud I established the first modern military schools. The aim is to produce a modern military, which would later lead to the establishment of secular schools under the *tanzimat* reformation beginning in the mid-19th century. Major changes in education in the Ottoman Empire came in full force when Sultan Selim III initiated the program of the *Nizam-i Cedid* in 1789. The blind imitation of the West that characterized many of these educational reforms was criticized by thinkers such as Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani.²

2) Distortion of the Comprehensive Islamic vision

Second affliction of higher education is the distortion of the comprehensive Islamic vision. He described:

...the distortion of the comprehensive Islamic vision, together with the blights, superstition and charlatanism that have crept into the culture of Muslims bringing their development to a stop, and distorting their mentality, spoiling their knowledge, daily practices and educational methods. Moreover, it has drawn from the power derived from dependence on God and observance of divine examples in all their endeavors and life pursuits...³

The cloudiness of the Islamic vision among the Muslim Ummah are caused by several factors and the crux of the crisis laid on the issues of Islamic thought and its methodology. It has caused the higher education in the Muslim world has failed to generate new disciplines and disseminate new knowledge. According to AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, the Ummah understanding of an Islamic outlook has remained unclear.⁴

One factor contributing to the lack of clarity in contemporary Islamic vision is the psychological impediments that have left the Muslim mind as tame as household pet. In other words, it does not have enough courage to analyze its intellectual legacy or

¹ AbuSulayman, "Islamization of Knowledge with Special Reference to Political Science," p. 264.

² Faisal Malik, "All That We Lost: The Colonized Mind and the Decline of the Islamic Education System," 2019, https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/the-colonized-mind-and-the-decline-of-the-islamic-education-system#ftnt_ref66.

³ Abu Sulayman, *Revitalizing Higher Education in the Muslim World*, p. 11.

⁴ AbuSulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, p. 28.

what it holds as sacred. Thus, it cannot understand what is really important, distinguish between what is fundamental and absolute and what is temporary and limited or even appreciate what is essential and what is matter of performance and style.¹

Solutions proposed by AbdulHamid AbuSulayman to revitalize Higher Education²

1) Improvement of methodology of Islamic thought

AbdulHamid AbuSulayman stated that what is needed by the Muslim intellectuals is the reformulation of Islamic methodology of Islamic thought: He said:

Islamic countries need a new framework for Muslim social thought, one that is based on a systematic and objective investigation of the social aspects of human life. Only then is the achievement of a viable modern system of philosophical and moral Islamic values possible. Together with the fulfilment of this need, inductive and deductive methods must be rigorously applied to Muslim social studies. It is not surprising that *ijtihad* ceased by the end of the fourth century AH, because the source material was the same, the method of deduction was the same, and no fresh input or feedback through new and continuous empirical investigations was available in the fields of jurisprudence and social studies. Unless Islamic social sciences and humanities are genuinely established along with their textual bases through empiricism and unless both induction and deduction are applied in these fields, *ijtihad* must, for all practical purposes, continue to be considered as closed and Muslim thought will lack dynamism and productivity.³

It is the responsibility of the Muslim intellectuals in our time to realize them the cause of development of Islamic methodology and Islamic thought. For AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Muslim thinkers of the present must have to achieve clear and workable framework of the Islamic social system, of the social sciences, and of their relationship to the external world.

Contemporary Muslim thinkers and scholars should realize that ad hoc and causal reflections on the issues of Muslim social life and

¹ AbuSulayman, p. 28.

² AbuSulayman, p. 25.

³ AbuSulayman, p. 143.

system no longer enough. They have to create Islamic social and human sciences, to systemize the goals and methods of their studies of Islamic life, to concern themselves in their studies with the facts of social life and with its nature and interactions as much as with Islamic texts and regulations, and to create and develop comprehensive inductive and deductive Islamic methodology.¹

AbdulHamid AbuSulayman argued that that the substance and the structure of social institutions always changed according time-space context. Therefore, it is necessary to revise the methodological structure. He wrote:

The substance and the structure of social institutions at any point of space and time reflect the need and the rationale of a specific society. With the progression of time and the change of space, the substance and structure of social institutions should also change.²

It is imperative to for Muslim intellectuals to study and analyze the classical Islamic methodology and the traditional way of applying it in the field of Islamic thought to identify shortcomings.³ The jurist's work was in many ways logical and systematic within the existing conditions and frame of mind. Whereby, Muslims are continuously facing new changes, needs, challenges and pressures.

In addition, AbuSulayman discussed the basis for reform and he divided them into three salient areas: If we desire to reform our knowledge, culture and civilization; steer the Islamic movement in the right direction; and invigorate the Muslim character; formulate plans for Islamic dawah (preaching); we must initiate reform in each of the following areas: Firstly, we must rectify the relationship between divine revelation and reason as manifested in our lines of thinking. Secondly, we must redefine knowledge in a way that leaves no ambiguity about concepts such as Ijtihad and roles such as that of the faqih. In this respect, there must be a clear-cut distinction drawn between *Ijtihad* and *Ifta* in the light of the current trends in Islamic thought. Thirdly, we must reorganize and reorientate the methodology of Islamic education and instruction in order to put an end to the confused dualism that divides

¹ Ali, *Issues in Islamization of Human Knowledge Civilization Building Discourse of Contemporary Muslim Thinkers*, p. 144.

² AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, "The Islamic Theory of International Relations: Its Relevance, Past and Present" (Thesis, United States, University of Pennsylvania, 1973), p. 101.

³ Ali, *Issues in Islamization of Human Knowledge Civilization Building Discourse of Contemporary Muslim Thinkers*, p. 137.

knowledge into intellectual, social, religious and legal categories, thereby creating further dualism in the leadership.

Framework of Islamic thought represents a comprehensive view of life and the universe. For AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, it is essential that we first comprehend the concepts of the “seen” and the “unseen” in Islam. He summarized the most important principles and among them are: ¹

- 1) Life has purpose which is moral good; it was not created without a purpose
- 2) The original, eternal relations between everything in the universe are beyond what the human mind is capable of comprehending.
- 3) The most important feature of unseen world, particular concern to man is the existence of Allah.
- 4) The resurrection of all souls in the Hereafter will be time reckoning when man will be either rewarded or punished according to his deeds in this life.
- 5) This world is the place for positive action for building and for putting things in order. Everything in it has been made subject to the will of man in his mission as khalifah on earth, populating it, putting it in order, subjecting everything in it to his good will and not abusing it by spreading corruption throughout it.

Sources of Islamic Methodology²

Wahy (Revelation): *Wahy* as a source of knowledge and guidance in human life is the truth which Allah revealed to His Messengers so that they might convey His commandments to humankind and guide and teach them the purpose of their existence. The essence of the message which *Wahy* brought to humankind is its explanation of their relationship to Allah, and the aims of their existence in the universe. The relationship of human, the creature, to Allah, the Creator, is one of submissive discipline and control, not one of enslavement and degradation. Humans are the most honored of Allah’s creations because Allah has favored human being with free will. If human being adheres the truth of their own accord, they will be superior and do

¹ AbuSulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, p. 65.

² AbuSulayman, pp. 68–72.

well. But if they follow their own whims and ignore the truth, they will become vulnerable ¹

Therefore, Allah said in the Quran: “There has come to you from Allah a light and a perspicuous Book-wherewith Allah guides those who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leads them out of darkness, by His will, unto the light-guides them to a path that is straight” (5: 15-16). According to Muhammad Mumtaz Ali in *“Islamization of Modern Science and Its Philosophy”* we are told in the Quran that to comprehend the true picture of the world and truth about it we need to understand a few fundamental claims of the Quran. We refer to Al-Quran not as sacred book of religion but as a book like any other book. But it contains remarkable data about the truth and reality of life and the world.

The Quran has made several claims such as the Quran claims that knowledge, ignorance, speculation and conjecture are not equal. To understand life, the world and to know how to achieve development and happiness in the world, it stresses, we need true authentic and universal knowledge. It is not wise therefore, to lay the foundation of understanding and development of life and society on the basis of ignorance, speculation and conjecture. It will tantamount to the rejection of the rational and empirical approach to understanding. Ignorance does not mean illiteracy but rather ignorance of the metaphysical realities. ²

Thus, one must have true, comprehensive, universal and authentic knowledge about himself and this world. And the only source for man know truly, authentically and realistically about metaphysical and physical realities is through the knowledge -true, authentic and universal knowledge. This true, authentic and universal knowledge of metaphysical and physical realities is that which alone reveals to man the true picture (the metaphysical truth) of the origin of life and the world and his position as well as purpose of the creation and shows the path for the development of life and society. ³

Knowledge was the basic cause of the progress and development of the Ummah. At its very beginning Islam managed to build up the structure and character of the Ummah on the firm basis of knowledge acquired through its proper sources, namely: divine revelation and active reason. Divine guidance endowed the Prophet Muhammad with a clarity of vision that enabled him to weave an exemplary pattern of a life. The Qur'an

¹ AbuSulayman, p. 69.

² Ali, *Islamization of Modern Science and Its Philosophy: A Contemporary Civilizational Discourse*, p. 103.

³ Ali, p. 104.

explicitly encourages the gaining of knowledge and education as well as the value of learning from experience. The first revelation calls upon the prophet and humanity to seek education and acquire knowledge in accordance with the divine guidance:

Read in the Name of thy Lord and Cherisher. . .

Here, an important question is what are the consequences faced by the humanity if they neglected the Revelation as the source of Truth and Reality in their life. For Kamal Hassan, the secular, atheistic, agnostic it leads to the path of destruction and the continuation of the domination of Western paradigm will bring more crises disasters and injustices in the world. For instance, 2009 global economic and financial crisis, which has been considered as the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s, appears as a major sign of the larger systemic moral decadence of an unjust contemporary anthropocentric civilization: a civilization anchored in the European Enlightenment period and constructed upon the dominant worldview of secular humanism which has dethroned God and, instead, deified autonomous human reason.¹ Thus, he argued that education system based on the Islamic worldview, culture and civilization possessed right solutions to the humankind. Islam in fact in line with the reality and represents the Truth of this world.

Second source of Islamic methodology according to AbdulHamid AbuSulayman is reason which is the instrument humans use to understand, distinguish and compare insights, and it is the means of carrying out responsibilities in the seen world. It is reason which distinguishes between true *wahy* and false, between misleading lies, fabrications, and myths. In addition, the role of reason is to understand the seen world through establishing the authenticity of the *wahy* and then by understanding its purpose concerning human existence in the seen world. The role of the Muslim mind is to shape the seen world and perform the duties of khalifah in accordance with the directions and aims of the Divine Will.

Likewise, it is reason which enables human to choose and face the consequences of the choices they make. The Muslim mind derives its strength, stability and uprightness from its understanding of *wahy*. It is capable mind, completely absorbed in its role as khalifah² Based on his explanation, that Islamic disciplines must be based on *wahy*, reason and

¹ Mohd Kamal Hassan, "A Return to the Quranic Paradigm of Development and Integrated Knowledge: The Ulul-Albab Model," *Intellectual Discourse* 18, no. 2 (2010): 186.

² AbuSulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, p. 70.

the laws and standards that Allah has imposed on creation. Therefore, the new Islamic disciplines will be distinguished by their comprehensiveness and openness to any means capable of producing knowledge beneficial to humankind.¹ There is no dichotomy between Revelation and reason.²

Probably the most far-reaching development in the intellectual history of the Ummah is the dichotomy between revelation and reason...The dichotomy was accepted such logic to continue to dominate the field of intellectual discussion...especially under the influence of Sufism...Sufism advocated a purely intuitive and often esoteric methodology, and, hence found no fault with estrangement between reason and revelation.

...the call of Islam was rational and critical. Invariably, it invited men to use their intelligence, to apply their critical faculties to all claims, to consider the alternatives, to always be cogent and coherent, to say nothing but the truth of which one is absolutely certain, to always seek correspondence with reality and to shun conjecture, guessing, and supposition. Practically every page of the Quran contains such exhortations, injunctions, and commands. Without reason, the truths of revelation cannot be appreciated; nor can they be recognized for what they are.

Additionally, human reason must submit to the revelation if it intends to comprehend the truth and reality otherwise an independent human reason cannot comprehend the truth and reality of this world. Allah SWT taught human being about physical world as well metaphysical world and motivated him for observation, thinking and understanding. This is in fact the formula for Islamic methodology. The reason will be well-balanced only when it submits to the guidance of revelation as to the ultimate aim of existence.

2) Islamisation of knowledge

Thus, education is a must to nurture the spirit of seeking true knowledge and intellectuals in the society in every level of education. Here, AbuSulayman strongly believes Islamisation of knowledge and education are the Muslim Ummah's top priority. It was said:

¹ AbuSulayman, p. 72.

² Ali, *Issues in Islamization of Human Knowledge Civilization Building Discourse of Contemporary Muslim Thinkers*, p. 149.

For the Ummah, the “Islamization of Knowledge” is, at the moment, a matter of utmost priority. It aims at developing a methodology for Islamic ideology -purifying it of all the aberration, corruption, isolation, inertia and division from which it has suffered over the centuries. It aims at reinvigorating Islamic thought and methodology by giving it access to the main fountainheads of the legacy of the Ummah.¹

The importance of Islamisation of knowledge underlined by AbdulHamid AbuSulayman is to free the Muslim mind from its shackles and purifying it, empowering the scientific mentality with the complementarity of Revelation with the pure human nature on the basis of Islamic fundamentals including Tawheed, justice, fraternity, mutual consultation and solidarity.²

Integration of educational systems

Furthermore, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman supported the Islamization of knowledge movement and integration of two educational systems because he considered this issue as the integral to another crucial element in Islamic thought and its methodology. The importance of the integration of two educational systems is followed:

To establish a unified educational system, in which Islam is the motivating and guiding power, the Islamic educational system must be united with the secular system. The knowledge of Syariah must be made available to all members of the Ummah. Everybody must have a viable mastery of the sciences of the Shariah since it constitutes the norm (Minhaj) or method of Islamic existence. The knowledge of Islam and of its civilization is not meant for the few. The vision of Islam is not meant for, nor needed by, the specialist alone. It is for all humans and is designed to elevate all those possess it to a higher level of existence.³

Conclusion

Understanding the crisis happen in our Muslim Ummah definitely a must but it has to be followed by the systematic plan of action. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman’s views on the crisis in Muslim mind and his recommendation

¹ Ali, p. 131.

² AbuSulayman AbdulHamid, “Islamization of Knowledge: A Look Ahead -The Next Ten Years,” *Unpublished Paper*, 2006, p. 7.

³ Ali, p. 127.

on the methodology of Islamic thought are among the greatest contributions to the Muslim Ummah to wake up from the long crisis. It is almost a hundred years Muslim Ummahs has lost the *khilafah* (28th of Rajab 1342 Hijri or 3rd March 1924), the last true legitimate leader of the Muslims was deposed in Istanbul, and the last government that ruled by the law of Allah (swt) was discarded and replaced with the leaders of secularism.

It is imperative for us to take stock of the significance of what we have lost in the past century, and understand what is the response that Allah (swt) requires from us. As a matter of fact, the enemies of Islam will continue imposing their worldview and ideologies but Muslims Ummah that has been occupied with the source of Truth, Quran surely guided by Allah SWT in every action. Allah mentioned in Quran that: “Their intention is to extinguish Allah’s Light with their mouths; but Allah will complete His Light, even though the disbelievers detest it. Quran (61:8)

Hence, to empower the higher education, Muslim Ummah must be critical in understand and thinking as we cannot easily adopting or borrowing other modern Western solutions or any foreign solutions. The methodology in Islamic thought proposed by AbdulHamid AbuSulayman thus gives benefits to the Ummah as one of the solutions to curb the crisis in the Muslim mind. However, it should be continued and developed by the Muslim intellectuals today. In addition, to the methodology of Islamic thought, he also considered Islamization of Knowledge as the sound basis of the reformation in the Muslim Ummah. In his brief work, *Revitalizing Higher Education in the Muslim World: A Case Study of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)*, he stated clearly that:

...Thus, a complete mastery and proficiency of subject matter will result. This would remove the prevailing helplessness and lethargy, harness the dynamic faculties of thought, study, and research to focus on temperaments and occurrences, in applying the principles of reason and natural laws, and the guidance of revealed knowledge.¹

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