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JOURNAL OF *TAWHĪD*IC EPISTEMOLOGY AND INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE

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Editorial Note

This new *Journal of Tawhīdic Epistemology and Integration of Knowledge* (J-TEK) is introduced as part of the IIUMs aspiration and resolve to regain its intellectual leadership as an Islamic University founded upon the philosophy of *tawhīd*. While numerous other journals have already established themselves in various disciplines – most are along Kulliyyah or Institute lines. J-TEK is unique in that it aims to be a university-based journal that presents knowledge from the *Tawhīdic Epistemology* (TE) as well as showcasing the educational experiences of the IIUM. In this sense, J-TEK aims to be the platform to share the aspirations born out of the renewed vision and mission of the IIUM, i.e. of TE and *Ummatic* Excellence.

The IIUM- established in 1983- currently has 14 Kulliyyah and 4 Institutes offering programmes at the UG and PG levels. For this period, the IIUM has primarily functioned as a quality teaching university. In these four decades, the IIUM has produced over 120 thousand graduates from over 130 countries. Our Alumni are doing us and the *ummah* proud in all fields of study as well as being leaders and agents of positive change in the highest levels of government and society. IIUM in this sense can take pride in its contribution to the *ummah* and to humanity at large. About ten years ago, the University embarked on another dimension of higher education, i.e. community engagement. Rather than living comfortably within the safe confines of our classrooms, IIUM took the challenge to engage in the community. Numerous projects and programmes with social impact were conducted and various awards and honours were gained, showcasing IIUMs maturing journey.

However- in the contemporary setting- another central dimension of the university is calling us, and we cannot shy away from this obligation. Central to any functioning university role- including in teaching and community engagement- is the need to excel in research that produces new knowledge. New strategies are needed. The teaching function must continue to improve, especially with the advent of AI technologies. Community engagement must be enhanced to ensure that Universities make a difference to the societies they live-in. However, there is an urgent need to develop unique breakthroughs in knowledge development and policy prescriptions from research based on the unique philosophy of the IIUM.

The nation, the muslim *ummah* and humanity must be served by this alternative paradigm- one in which both revelation and the universe, with the utilisation of all human faculties, presents more effective and meaningful solutions to the challenges facing humanity. IIUM must provide an alternative paradigm that integrates ethics and morality into scientific knowledge development and application to serve humanity Here is where the IIUM- with TE base and with the aim to promote *Ummatic Excellence*- plays a central role. J-TEK hopes to become the platform to harness intellectual insights from within and without the University to promote reform, renewal in a civilizational framework. A noble aspiration.

In the *Qur'an*, the concept of 'lofty ambitions' is expressed through terms that emphasize high spiritual aspirations and the transformative "resolve" required to achieve them. The *Qur'an* encourages believers to aim for the highest goals—both in this life and the next—while radically reshaping individual character and society. While this concept, represented by the phrase *Uluww al-Himmah* (Lofty Ambition/High Aspiration) is not found directly in the *Qur'an*, its components are. *Uluww* means elevation or highness. In a spiritual sense, it implies "making sacrifices and undertaking hardships with an open heart compared to the high station sought" i.e. to reach the lofty stations of the *Ulul 'Azam* (Messengers of Firm Resolve). The *Qur'an* praises the "Messengers of Firm Resolve" (Surah al-Ahqaf 46:35), who demonstrated radical ambition through their persistent struggle to transform their societies despite overwhelming odds. Islam promotes *Ihsan* (Excellence/Perfection) and rejects mediocrity. The command for *Ihsan* (Surah An-Nahl 16:90) is a call to strive for the highest quality in every action, treating every task as an act of worship for the Creator. Transformation in the *Qur'an* (and the Quranic perspective on "radical" change) is often internal first, only then having meaningful and sustainable external transformation. The verse "Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves" (Surah Ar-Ra'd 13:11) is the perfect example for this transformation and societal reform.

Competing for Greatness also has a clear 'value-premise'. Instead of worldly competition, the Quran urges a "race" toward forgiveness and a paradise "as wide as the heavens and earth" (Surah Al-Imran 3:133). The Prophets described their radical missions as purely for *Islah*—reform to the best of their ability—aiming to fix systemic corruption without seeking worldly gain. There are verses emphasising examples of 'Lofty ambitions' through the prayers of the Prophets. "Our Lord... make us leaders for the righteous" (Surah Al-Furqan 25:74). This is an ambition not just to be good, but to lead those who are already good. Also, one has Prophetic

teachings that encourage asking for *Jannat al-firdaus*, the highest level of Paradise, rather than settling for the minimum.

The IIUM has embarked on a journey to strive for this lofty ambition and does so with the resolve required. As an International and Islamic University, we must ensure that the *amanah* entrusted to us is fulfilled. J-TEK is an effort to enhance and inculcate a research mind-set and to encourage all staff of the IIUM to share their knowledge and experience on this journey.

For this inaugural issue of J-TEK, 6 articles are presented. Rashid Moten sets the tone for this issue by elaborating on the concept of (TE) as espounded by Osman Bakar. While still relatively ‘new’ in academic discourse, the ideas underlying TE are very much shared with the Integration of Knowledge (IOK) discourse over the last 50 years or so. The idea of *tawhīd* or Unity is not meant to be confined to just theological studies, but in the case of knowledge and sciences- it is meant to be the unifying principle of all branches of knowledge. There is also a brief comparison of the thoughts of three pioneering scholars on IOK namely Faruqi, Al-Attas and Nasr. The paper by Zacky, Careem and Shafeen extends the argument for IOK to Muslim minority countries, giving the example of Sri Lanka and of the Naleemiah Institute of Islamic Studies- that wants to promote integrated curriculum to produce contemporary professionals who are also well-versed in turath al-Islami. The overview of Islamic education reform in Sri Lanka since the 1960s provides an important background to understanding the evolution of IOK reforms there as well as the internal and external IOK intellectual influencers in Sri Lanka. In particular, the impact of IIUM on the curriculum development of the NIIS is worthy of further analyses on how challenges to genuine IOK efforts can be overcome.

Tofique ur Rahman and El-Muhammady then discuss TE and IOK reforms in Pakistani Madrasa’s with the cases of two madrasa’s namely the Jamia-tur-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran. By adopting a problem-based learning approach, the IIUM IOK reforms are attempted in what is still a very dualistic education system, where educational dualism exists between national/modern schools and traditional madrasas. Locating Islamic educational reform in Pakistan with Faruqi, Al-Attas and particularly Fazlur Rahman, the authors argue that resistance to change- from both modern and traditional education systems required a tool to enable reform to pedagogy-something that PBL provided. pivotal initial step towards developing robust frameworks that integrate the sharing economy with Islamic principles, paving the way for future research in this area.

This issue then has surveys in the form of two bibliometric review articles. The first- an article by Thas Thaker- surveys and reviews literature found in SCOPUS database on the Sharing Economy from Islamic perspectives that identifies trends and emerging issues. While literature in this area is still only about 10-15 years old, interest is growing. This study paves the way for a future research agenda in which the features of Islamic perspectives can be further analysed and operationalised. The second survey by Bendebka and Farhana Syukri looks at the area of International Relations and Muslim Nations utilising the Web of Science database from 2000-2023. As with the IOK agenda, the authors argue that modern IR theory may not be suitable to understand the Muslim world. Hence their call for developing an Islamic theory of IR, one in which both modern IR works as well as our civilizational scholarship together with revelation are utilised.

Finally, in a ‘Reflections’ section, Mohamed Aslam Haneef presents the historical establishment of the IIUM and how TE (without the use of that phrase) and the IOK agenda have been at the base of the Islamic philosophy of education that the IIUM adheres to. Locating the establishment of the IIUM as part of the educational/intellectual reform agenda as part of the wider *qur’anic* agenda of civilizational reform and renewal (*Islah* and *Tajdid*), he argues that reputational integrity of the IIUM cannot happen without reference to the underlying philosophical basis of TE and its manifestation in all academic endeavours. This requirement is the *raison d’être* for the establishment of the IIUM. The establishment of the J-TEK is meant to provide scholars- both within and without the IIUM- an opportunity to present their ideas and thoughts on both theoretical/conceptual as well as its operational/applied dimensions.