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The Transformation of Islamic Studies: An Ethical And Methodological Analysis

Muhammad Mumtaz Ali ¹

Abstract: The field of Islamic Studies, like any other discipline, necessitates ongoing research and refinement. However, the nature of this research—whether theoretical, empirical, or a combination of both—remains a critical question. This inquiry prompts a reconsideration of Islamic Studies, prompting a re-evaluation of its scope and methodological foundations. Historically rooted in a limited perspective that framed Islam solely as a religious phenomenon, this paper contends that such a narrow conception fails to capture the comprehensive essence of Islam, as portrayed in the Qur’an. Islam, according to the Qur’an, is a holistic worldview encompassing a way of life, a source of values, morals, laws, and universal principles crucial for cultural and civilisational development. The argument presented herein posits that the scope of Islamic Studies must transcend the confines of traditional religious studies. Instead, it advocates for a paradigm shift towards a more comprehensive examination that includes issues related to worldview, way of life, culture, and civilisation. This paper asserts the imperative need for a transformative approach in Islamic Studies, advocating for a broader research program that addresses the multifaceted dimensions of Islam. Utilising a qualitative method of content analysis, this paper aims to explore and analyse the scope and objectives of Islamic Studies, identifying research problems that extend beyond conventional religious frameworks. Ultimately, the paper seeks to situate Islamic Studies within a broader cultural and civilisational context, emphasising its role in fostering human and social development.

Keywords: Islamic Studies, Subject-Mater, scope, *Din*, religion, civilisation

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Introduction

According to Carole Hillenbrand (2020), the Islamic Studies, as taught in the West, is a discipline that seeks to explain what the Islamic world has achieved in the past and what the future holds for it. Its past is indeed rich. The Islamic Studies as a multidisciplinary and academic field studies the subjects such as religion, history, theology, culture, law, and social issues that are considered as part of Islam. The growth of modern Islamic Studies in the Muslim world has been credited to the West. It is said that the medieval Christians, “motivated by polemical ends, aimed at establishing self-authenticity and pre-eminence, by attributing to Islam, often pejoratively, error or wilful misappropriation” (Nanji, 1997). According to some others, the discipline of Islamic Studies focuses on the study of history of Islam and Islamic philosophy. Islamic studies, as a discipline, is taught in many universities in the West and in the East. It is asserted that it is a branch of knowledge that seeks to study “a wide-ranging series of issues and developments in Islamic Studies, in order to profile the ‘state of the art’ in the discipline” (Ahmed & Sonn, 2010).

From all over the world, academics come from many different backgrounds and disciplines and focus to study and have knowledge on Muslim societies as they are today and as they have been in the past. It is said its past is indeed rich. For Bustami, the Islamic Studies is considered as one of the modern academic fields of the study of Islam (Khir, 2007). At present, at the heart of the discipline of Islamic Studies is the investigation of Islam as a faith and a practical guide for everyday life in a secular environment and the languages of the Muslim world. In this sense, the discipline of Islamic Studies, it is argued, refers to the study of Islam as a religion that focuses on the history, texts, and theology of Islam, its doctrines and faith system (Musa, 2004; Faisar Ananda & Sugianto, 2004). It is also asserted by academics that its primary focus is on religious knowledge through basic religious texts. The study of the Qur’an and the Hadith are taken and studied as the primary religious sources. The scope of Islamic studies includes the study of theology, Sufism, legacy of Islamic civilisation, social and legal sciences of Islam, inter-faith dialogue and Muslim contribution to natural and physical sciences (al-Mahmood, 2010). All these studies are related to Muslim communities and Muslim religion. They have nothing to do with the rest of humanity.

For some others in the West and East, in Islamic Studies the focus of the discussion is on Islam as a religion. Religion is generally considered as the product of culture and history. A few others say Islamic Studies refers to the academic study of Islam and Islam is taken as religion and religious traditions. It refers, according to some others such as Azim Nanji (1997), Richard C. Martin (1996) and Shiraz Thobani (2010), to the study of traditional forms of religious thought and rituals. For many, it is the discipline that focuses on the investigation of Islam as a faith and religion. So, Islam in Islamic Studies is not studied as worldview, the way of life, the source of culture, and civilisation. It is not studied as a living player and actor that is capable of guiding life and society. Life and society are not the main subject matters of Islamic Studies. Islam has been considered as the reality of the past. As a religion, Islam deals with faith. It is studied by orientalist and Muslims in general as one of the living religions of the world.

According to Richard C. Martin (1982), Islam began during the seventh century in present-day Saudi Arabia whereas the truth is that Islam began with the Prophet Adam (pbuh). Currently, Islam and its worldview, the way of life, the source of values and morals, the source of culture and civilisation are not the main concerns of Islamic Studies. Hence, in Islamic Studies, Islam is introduced as religion and Islamic thought as religious thought. Before we further investigate to understand the nature and problems of research in Islamic Studies and its subject matter and scope, it is imperative for us to know more about Islam, its aim, scope, and methodology. We need to know, in a comprehensive and holistic manner, the truth about Islam based on sound ethical search.

What is the Truth about Islam?

Is Islam a religion and faith constructed by any human mind in a specific historical period as claimed in the modern world? The fact is that most people, Muslims and the followers of other faiths and ideologies, understand it merely as a religion based on some doctrines and belief system. Basic issue here is how to answer this question related to the truth and reality of Islam. Can we answer this question based on speculation and conjecture as answered by philosophers and thinkers? If we answer based on conjecture, can we consider it as an

ethical search? Can we depend on speculation and conjecture if we deal with some basic metaphysical issues? Dependence on speculation and conjecture and neglecting for knowledge-based answers would fulfil the criteria of an ethical search. What is the truth and reality about Islam? Do we find some knowledge about this question? I argued that certainly we find knowledge about Islam, its origin and history in the Qur'an. The Qur'an is, in fact, the Book of Knowledge. Based on that knowledge one can argue that Islam is not a mere religion. Hence, it is not the truth that Islam is a religion in a limited sense. It is introduced in the Qur'an as *al-Dīn* - which means the world view and the way of life, code of conduct, and source of values, and laws as well as a scheme of life and society - source of culture and civilisation whose goal is to guide people to achieve Comprehensive, Holistic, and Sustainable Development (CHSD) in time and space context for success here in this world and in the next world. The discipline of Islamic Studies must present Islam in the above-mentioned sense.

Islam: Its Beginning and Place

Many scholars think Islam began during the 7th century Christian Era (Esposito, 1983). It is not the truth and reality. This trend is the distortion of the truth and reality of Islam (Ali, 2023). The claim that Islam is a religion like any other religions such as Hinduism or Christianity is not confirmed based on the knowledge which is contained in the Qur'an. The Qur'an does not state that Islam was revealed during the 7th Century but begins with the life of mankind on earth. Islam, according to the Qur'an, began with the first Prophet - the Prophet Adam (pbuh) and his progeny. It is neither the product of history in a specific historical period nor any human mind. It started with the history of mankind. Islam was not founded by any human being. It was revealed to mankind from the Creator of the entire universe, Allah SWT for the guidance of mankind. In this way, Islam enjoys the central role in the scheme of life and society. The name Islam and Muslim were not given by human beings. They have been given by the Creator Allah SWT. This truth about Islam was given to mankind through the knowledge which reached mankind by means of revelation. So, the source of Islam, about its origin, history, its engagement with generations of people is knowledge - True, Authentic, and Universal Knowledge (TAUK). See the following statement of the Qur'an:

Believers bow down and prostrate yourselves before Your Lord and obey [serve] Your Lord and do good that you may prosper. Strive in the cause of Allah in a manner worthy of that striving. He has chosen you [for His task], and He has not laid upon you any hardship in Din. Keep to the faith of your father Abraham. Allah named you Muslims earlier and even in this [Book], that the Messenger may be a witness over you and that you may be witnesses over all mankind. So, establish Prayer, and pay *Zakah*, and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protector. What an excellent Protector; what an excellent Helper (22: 77-78).

Allah SWT declares that the Prophet Abraham (pbuh) and Ismael were Muslims who wanted their progeny to be Muslim. It is recorded in the Qur‘ān as historical evidence. See the following *ayah*:

... Abraham and Ismael praying: Our Lord! Make us Muslim [submissive to You] and make out of our descendants a community [of Muslims] that submits itself to You and show us the ways of Your service [obedience] and turn to us in mercy (2: 127-128).

The Prophet Abraham was a Muslim and it is reconfirmed in other verses of the Qur‘ān. See the following statements of the Qur‘ān:

Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian; he was a Muslim, wholly devoted to God. And he certainly was not amongst those who associate others with Allah in His Power [Divinity] (3: 68).

Say: “We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the descendants [of Jacob] and in what was given to Moses and Jesus and in what the other Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are those [Muslims] who submit to Allah” (2: 136).

The Name Muslim Was Given by Allah SWT

One can see in the Qur‘ān that not only was Prophet Abraham a Muslim but all other Prophets (pbut) were Muslims. In the above-mentioned *āyah*, 2: 136, a few Prophets (pbut) are mentioned who said

they were *Muslimūn*. The Arabic world *Muslimūn* is used. According to the Qur'an not only is Islam the way of life which was granted by Allah SWT but also the name Muslim was given to all the Prophets (pbuh) by Allah SWT and to all those who came before and after them and submitted to Allah SWT. The Arabic term *Muslimūn* is used in the following ayah.

Recall when...Abraham and Ismael praying: "Our Lord! Make us [Muslim] submissive to You and make out of our descendants a community that submits [of Muslims] itself to You and show us the ways of Your service [obedience] and turn to us in mercy (2:127-128).

In other *āyah* it was made clear that the system of life which was followed by the Prophet Abraham (pbuh) was the same which was followed by all other Prophets (pbuh) and they all said that they were *Muslimūn*.

Say: "We believe in Allah and what was revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and to Isaac and Jacob and his descendants, and the teachings which Allah gave to Moses and Jesus and to other Prophets. We make no distinction between any of them; and to Him do we submit." (3: 84)

Hence, it is logical to say that a Muslim is one who follows Islam as the worldview, the system of life and society and submits to that worldview and the way of life. That is why Islam is literally explained as submission. Islam means submission to Allah SWT through His system of life and guidance. This submission is conscious with a sound understanding of Islam, life and the world which is based on Knowledge granted to mankind by the Creator Allah SWT. All this understanding is not the result of human speculation or faith and belief systems but Knowledge. This Knowledge and its Truth are subject to all kinds of examination and critical analyses. It is made clear in the Qur'an, about this Knowledge, that if anyone does not find any concrete evidence, he/she is free to reject it because not a single claim of this Knowledge is without empirical evidence.

Further, it was made clear that Allah SWT bestowed upon the Prophet Abraham (pbuh) and his offspring, the Prophet Ishaq (Issac)

and Yaqub (Jacob) and each of them the same way of life - the *dīn*. He did guide them to the Right Way as Allah SWT had earlier guided the Prophet Noah (pbuh) to the Right Way, and his descendants. Allah SWT guided the Prophet Daud (David) and the Prophet Sulayman (Solomon), the Prophet Ayyub (Job), the Prophet Yusuf (Joseph), the Prophet Musa (Moses) and the Prophet Harun (Aaron) to the same way of life. Thus, He rewarded those who did good (6: 84); Allah SWT said: [And of his descendants] We guided Zakariya [Zechariah], Yahya [John], Isa [Jesus] and Ilyas [Elias]: each one of them was of the righteous (6:85); [And of his descendants We guided Ismail [Ishmael], al-Yasa [Elisha], Yunus [Jonah], and Lut [Lot]. And each one of them We favoured over all mankind (6:86); Likewise, We elected for Our cause and guided onto a Straight Way some of their forefathers and their offspring and their brethren (6:87); Abraham was in the self-same way [as Noah] (37:83). Through all these messages it was made clear that Islam is the only way of life which is suitable for mankind. It was made clear repeatedly in the Qur'ān. Allah SWT said: "He has prescribed for you the *Din* [Right Way] which He enjoined upon Noah, and which was revealed to you [O Muhammad], and which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus, commanding: Establish this *Din* [the way of life for the benefit of people] and do not split up regarding it..." (42:13).

Nature of Islamic Studies and Islamic Thought

Islam as the worldview and the way of life is universal and all-inclusive and Islamic Thought, thus, developed based on Islamic worldview is also all-inclusive. Islam is not a religion which was revealed during a historical period. Islam as the worldview and the way of life existed since the inception of life on earth. The first man was also the Prophet (pbuh) of Allah SWT who lived with Islam and taught to his progeny Islam as the worldview and the way of life. Life on earth began based on Islam and created culture and civilisation, maintained peace, harmony and environment of love and fraternity. Islam, throughout history, implemented rule of law in societies. As the worldview it is truly universal, hence, does not make any discrimination between people of the world. They belong to the one single family of humanity.

There is no superman or lower man. No upper caste, no lower caste, no white man and no coloured. All are created in the same capacity and with equal status as human beings but different from all other creatures. Islamic Studies as a discipline must stand to promote the above truthful and realistic and universal worldview, the way of life, the source of morals and values among people of the world. Muslims have been instructed to share this truth with everyone: Do not confound Truth by overlaying it with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the Truth (2: 42). Islamic Thought is an umbrella concept like Islam, it cannot be taken as the study of a particular religion. In its studies it includes all aspects of life, society, state, and government. It stands for the comprehensive and holistic development of culture and civilisation.

Islamic Thought is not based on human conjecture or contemplation but, rather, on Islamic worldview and the Islamic way of life that naturally produces an Islamic culture and Islamic civilisation. Its subject matter is life, society, state, government, development, and wellbeing of people irrespective of ethnicity, race, colour, language, and religion and ideologies. Rule of law and dissemination of justice are its goals. As a worldview it is founded based on three pillars, namely: *Tawhīd*, the Prophethood and *Ākhirah* (the understanding and reality of the next world).

As the way of life, it stands to show to people of all times the Right Path of Development - *Sirāt-al-Mustaqīm* and the real meaning of *falāḥ* (Success) here in this world and in the next world. It is repeatedly reminded in the Qur'ān that Islam is the Right Way of Life. There are many places in the Qur'ān wherein we have been reminded about the Right Way for the benefit of people, society, government, and state (Ali, 2023). Why do these reminders appear again and again in the Qur'ān? It is made clear that for good and successful living, in peace and harmony with prosperity and happiness, we are in dire need of Allah's guidance. It is also made clear that the East and the West; the heavens and the earth all belong to Allah SWT, and it is He who guides whomsoever He wills onto the Straight Way. However, it does not mean that we do not need to search to find out the Right Way. We need to search and supplicate consciously and work hard for the Right Way then only will we be guided to the Right Way (2: 150). Allah SWT through the Right Way directs us in matters on which we may disagree with each other due to lack of clear understanding. "Allah guides whomever He wills

onto a Straight Way (2: 213)”. In another verse, it is said in the Qur’ān that Allah SWT teaches us to the Right Way as He has full knowledge of everything (2: 282). Allah SWT assures us: Whoever holds fast to Allah, will certainly be guided to the Straight Way (3: 101).

It is also clearly reminded that the Right Way stands distinctly from wrong ways. Now it is up to us to follow either the Right Way or wrong. We all are at liberty. In all matters of life, we are totally free to choose any line of thinking and action. There is no compulsion: “The Right Way stands clearly distinguished from the Wrong” (2: 255). Hence, Allah SWT guides people who struggle for the Straight Way (4: 68). Allah SWT does not direct the wrong doers to the Right Way. Allah SWT does not set the deniers of the Truth on the Right Way (2:264) because He has made His signs clear to every one of us. Now it is for us to recognise what is right and what is wrong. If we fulfil this condition, then we are guided to the Right Way (1:6; 3:103). What matters to us and needs to be accepted? The Truth and Reality of life and the world. There are still many people who do not understand the importance of the Truth and Reality of life and the Right Way as shown by Allah SWT. Due to their ignorance and arrogance, they do not take these matters seriously and do not follow the Right Way. They assume that they can think and design right way:

These are the ones who have purchased errors in exchange for guidance. This bargain has brought them no profit and certainly they are not on the Right Way (2:16).

Those who have refused to follow the Way of Allah resemble cattle; when the shepherd calls them, they hear nothing except shouting and crying; they are deaf, dumb, and blind, and so they understand nothing (2:171).

And whoever exchanges *iman* for unbelief has surely strayed from the Right Way (2:108).

The Current Literature on Islamic Thought

In current literature on Islamic Studies and Islamic Thought, Islam is being continuously presented as religion against the truth and reality of

Islam and confined to the religious thought and religious studies, even by some good scholars. For example, the *Observing the Observer: The State of Islamic Studies in American Universities* (Ahmad, Bukhari, & Nyang, 2012) covers, in the field of Islamic Studies, subjects such as the study of Western approaches to Islamic Studies, the study of the Quran, gender studies, Sufism, interfaith dialogue, and critical analysis of other religions. In the departments of Islamic Studies in American universities and elsewhere, Islam as the worldview, its authenticity, truthfulness, and universality, its comprehensive and holistic nature have not been studied.

The editors of *Islamic Studies Today*, published by Brill (Daneshgar & Saleh, 2017), include in it subjects such as Islamic Exegesis and Tradition, the Qur'an and Qur'anic Studies, Islam, and the Qur'an, and Tafsir etc. as part of religious studies. They focussed on the Qur'an and *tafsir* as an academic exercise of a religious book. The main theme of the Qur'an, man and society, culture and civilisation have not been the main concerns of Islamic Studies programs. The Qur'an is not taken as the Book of Knowledge and Guidance but as a sacred religious book of Muslims. These subjects were not touched. The Qur'an, Islam and their study as an academic discipline must focus on how the Quran and Islam can play a role towards the development of a healthy civilisation free from crisis and crimes. For the editor of *Contemporary Islamic Thoughts* (Rahman, 2012) the materialistic approach "towards religion forced religious intellectuals to reevaluate the actual state of Islamic disciplines, renovate their methodology, and write new texts for contemporary learning" (Ahmad, Bukhari, & Nyang, 2012). Hence, he sees the studies of Islam as religious studies and scholars and intellectuals as religious experts.

Abdullah Saeed, the author of *Islamic Thought: An Introduction*, published by Routledge, London, considers the Knowledge granted to mankind since the inception of life on earth through the process of revelation or transmission as religious knowledge (Rahman, 2012). Therefore, for him, all studies related to Islam are taken as religious studies. The study of Islam and development of Islamic thought are confined to the domain of religion and religion, including Islam, is confined to the followers of that religion. He asserts, "This book is not a history of Islam, Islamic culture, or Islamic civilisation. Its primary focus is on Muslim doctrines, the development, production and transmission

of religious knowledge, and the key trends, schools and movements that have contributed to the production of this knowledge” (Ahmad, Bukhari, & Nyang, 2012, p. vii). What an understanding of Islamic Thought! The Quran from the first page to the last page repeatedly reminds the whole world about the True, Authentic, and Universal Worldview, the True, Authentic, and Universal Way of Life, about the laws of rise and fall of civilisations, and the aim of life that has been now confined by the Islamic Studies into the fold of religious studies.

Contrary to above-discussed books, Shaykh Taha Jabir Al-Alwani in his book, *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (Al-Alwani, 2005) genuinely presents the scope of Islamic Thought and its themes representing true Islam. He argues that his book presents, “the reader with a collection of studies, all of which deal with reform-oriented and goal-oriented Islamic intellectual issues and belong to the same intellectual approach: The Islamisation of Knowledge, which has been active since the 1950s, promotes knowledge and thought, as well as their accompanying elements and philosophy, dedicated to achieve a culture that widens one’s intellectual horizons and expands the opportunities for cultured and civilised interaction between cultures and civilisations” (Al-Alwani, 2005) based on a true, authentic, and universal worldview (Ali, 2023).

Focus on Islamic Studies: Methodological Consideration

What is the role of scholars and researchers in Islamic Studies? As scholars, they must educate people for the proper development of themselves and their societies through the adoption of the True Worldview and Right Way of life. For this purpose, they must present Islam to them in its proper cultural and civilisational perspective. Recognition and Acknowledgement of Allah SWT based on Knowledge and understanding are the prerequisite for any process of cognition and development of civilisation. The existence of Allah SWT as the Absolute Truth and Reality is the foundation of epistemology and philosophy which must be an integral part of educational philosophy. The Qur’an must be introduced in the educational system as the Book of True, Authentic and Universal Knowledge (TAUK), Guidance and Mercy (7: 52); (21:7). Islam should be taught as the True, Authentic and Universal Worldview, the Way of Life, the Code of Conduct and

Values. Islam means submission to the Will of Allah SWT through the practice and implementation of the *Shariah*. The *Shariah* is not the Islamic law in a limited sense but is a program and scheme of life, a means of moral conduct, a source of cultural and civilisational development too.

The Qur‘ān speaks about various types of people such as *Muslimīn* (the Muslims those who submit to the will of God), *Mu‘minīn* (the believers those who have faith in God), *Ṣādiqīn* (the truthful or honest ones), *Ṣiddiqīn* (the truthful and righteous), *Shuhadā’* (the martyrs - those who die in the way of God), *Ṣālihīn* (the righteous or virtuous), *Mūqinīn* (those with firm conviction), *Ṣābirīn* (the patient ones), *Ṣāmitīn* (the listeners or those who hear attentively), *Mushfiqīn* (the compassionate ones); *Munfiqīn* (those who spend for the sake of Allah), *Mustaghfirīn* (the repentant or those seeking forgiveness), *Dhākirīn* (those who remember God), *‘Ābidīn* (the worshipers or servants of God), *Rāki‘īn* (the humble or those who bow down before God), *Sājidīn* (the prostrators those who bow in prayer), *Muqnitīn* (the submissive or obedient), *Ṭayyibīn* (the pure or good-doers), *Khāshī‘īn* (the humble or those filled with awe), *Khā‘ifīn* (the fearful or those who fear God), *Qānitīn* (the devout or obedient), *Hāfizīn* (the guardians or protector), etc. What is their role towards the development of culture and civilisation? Do we teach about them in Islamic Studies and recognise them in our societies? Does our educational system produce them? All these aspects are fundamental for our understanding of a good civil society. Can we ignore them? Are not all these aspects an integral part of Islamic Studies? Is not the rejection of Islam as the True, Authentic, and Universal Worldview, going against the Truth and Reality of Life and the World and creating *fitnah* (crisis and chaos) and *fasad* (destruction and crimes) in life and society.

Are all studies and research in Islamic Studies directed towards the proper explanation of Islam? Do they educate people properly so that they can guarantee development in their societies? For this goal are they not bound to explain one of the fundamental principles of Islam: *Amar bi-l-Ma‘rūf wa Nahi ‘an-l-Munkar* - propagation of right and virtuous things and prohibition of vices and evils as recognised by Allah SWT? The scholars and researchers in Islamic Studies must study the past and present heritage of mankind and plan for the betterment of the future of mankind in the light of the worldview of Islam.

For this purpose, scholars of Islamic Studies are bound to follow their own criteria of study, analysis, and examination based on the criteria of the revealed Truth and Reality of Life, society, and the world. No dimension of life can be ignored. They must take life in a comprehensive and holistic manner. Life is not divided into compartments. Focus is on a balanced and moderate development of people and societies in a comprehensive and holistic way in accordance with the True, Authentic, and Universal Knowledge (TAUK). They must educate and guide the whole process of development of societies, governments, and states in line with the perspective of TAUK. They are expected to clearly explain the advantages of Islamic perspective and harm of secular perspective for human development. Their position is an independent position. They are guided and motivated by the Qur'an and Sunnah in the time-space context. They are neither unaware of current circumstances nor totally under their influences. They must study Muslim and human heritage critically in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah and adopt an independent position suitable for their existing societies. They work based on their own agenda. They have their own topics and titles for further research. They should work according to their own vision and mission.

Observation and Historical Experience

Scholars of Islamic Studies and Islamic Thought must work based on the principles of observation, experiment, critical thinking, use of skills of comparative studies, use of historical facts, and rational and scientific approaches. They are not blind followers of the West and modern world, not even the Muslim world. Their approach must be critical and creative. They should stand for the creation of an alternative culture and civilisation by proposing a new model of development which must be built up based on sound spirituality and moral excellence. Their observation and historical experience should remind us that life and society cannot be developed without seeking help from the only One and true God - Allah SWT and His guidance.

We need the only one and true God - Allah SWT and His true guidance because we are convinced of this. The scholars and researchers in Islamic Studies are bound as the experts of Islam to explain this Truth to the people of the entire world. They should not be ready to sacrifice

Truth for the sake of worldly material benefits. With untiring research and all their intellectual contributions, the scholars and researchers in Islamic Studies are under an intellectual obligation to convince people around the world to realise the Truth and Reality of Allah SWT.

Empirical Realities

Who can deny the empirical reality of millions of cases of child abuse, child force labours, child refugees, child illiteracy, child ill-health, child unhygienic conditions, child suicides, child deaths due to lack of proper nutrition and child pornography? Globally, it is estimated that up to 1 billion children aged 2-17 years, have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional, violence or negligence in the past year (“Violence against children,” 2022). Total number of migrant children in 2019 from January to December are estimated at 202,945. A new UN report finds that some 19 million children were displaced within their own countries due to conflict and violence in 2019 (“19 million children,” 2020).

Globally, the rate of illiteracy among youth from aged 15 to 24 has increased from 83 per cent to 91 per cent over two decades. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for children, adolescents, and young adults aged 15-to-24-year-olds. Over 25 million images are reviewed by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children annually (“The issue,” n.d.). That’s over 480,769 images per week. Other than this, the production of weapons of mass destruction and wars, conflicts and violent activities are obvious. The world has witnessed the first world war, second world war, cold war and now war against terrorism. It seems that the modern world cannot live without the complex of war. Humanity has been divided into nations and nations fear their neighbouring nations. Hence, they are forced to buy weapons. As a result of this, they spend the maximum budget on defence every year. The false pride of a nation allows it to kill and destroy the people of other nations. Hence, scholars and researchers in Islamic Studies need to plan their own program of research in the context of our contemporary needs so that they can save humanity. They must be able to differentiate between the basic needs of people and the problems created by religions, worldviews, ideologies, and unfounded perspectives.

How to Deal with Islamic Intellectual Heritage: Methodological Consideration and Principles

We must realise and admit that at present all those who are involved in Islamic Studies programs need to demonstrate their determination for the quest for new knowledge, creativity, and empirical approach, and scientific understanding based on Truth and Reality of life and the world. Now we all are under the obligation to bring about change, first in our thinking from negative to positive and then change in society from underdeveloped to developed. We are bound to dedicate all our scholarship and research to serve humanity and save people from self-destruction, suicides, crisis, crimes, corruption, chaos, and the fire of Hell in the Next World. For this purpose, we must follow a new methodology and also few but new universal principles of validity and authenticity of our research methods. We must look for fresh interpretation of everything and development of new thoughts relevant to our situation. For this, we need to follow certain principles. I outline a few of them:

1. The first and the fundamental methodological principle to deal with Islamic heritage is the principle of recognition of the difference between divine knowledge and its human interpretation.
2. The second principle is the principle of permanent and change; whatever is Divine, it is subject to our understanding and whatever is human it is subject to critical study, examination, and analysis.
3. The third principle: based on analysis of heritage it is subject to improvement, addition, and innovation.
4. The fourth principle: for the process of analysis and examination first we seek guidance from the Qur'ān and Sunnah and then study and analyse the heritage.
5. As a fifth principle we should not go first to heritage. We should first develop a framework of the Qur'ān and Sunnah and based on it we should deal with any subject, past or present, any topic, title, or issue of our research. This exercise must be based on the framework of the following:
 - a. the Qur 'ān,
 - b. the Sunnah,

- c. the Biography of the Prophet (pbuh),
 - d. the Heritage of Islam,
 - e. the long-term goals,
 - f. the short-term goals and
 - g. the goals of urgent issues.
6. As a sixth principle we should not simply always respond to the issues and problems created by other religions, worldviews, and ideologies.
 7. According to the seventh principle we should study and conduct research but based on our own plan of study. We should develop our own process of analysis and examination according to our own worldview, vision, and mission in line with the Truth and Reality of life, society, and the world.
 8. As an eighth principle, we should differentiate between various perspectives within the community of scholars of Islamic Studies. The perspective of the traditionalists, the modernists, the liberalists, the progressive, the reformist, and finally revivalist.
 9. As ninth principle we should liberate our contemporary discourse in Islamic Studies from the influences of other traditions and perspectives which are harmful for humanity.
 10. As per tenth principle we need to understand that in the discourse of Islamic Studies there is no place for the use of phrases and terminologies which do not reflect the Truth of Islam, such as the use of the phrase before Islam as there is no period before Islam, use of the word verse for *āyah*, use of monotheism for *Tawhīd*, use of scripture for revealed books especially the Qur‘ān, use of theology for *Uṣūl-al-Dīn* because theology is the term which is used in Christian scholarship. It does not reflect the empirical and rational approach of *Uṣūl-al-Dīn*. The use of terms such as faith or belief for Iman are not suitable in Islamic discourse. Iman is a cognitive term whereas belief refers to doctrinal foundation. The use of religion for Islam is not appropriate and in the same way the use of the term divinity for the Power of Allah etc.

Concluding Remarks

As the scholars and researchers of Islamic Studies, we must differentiate between the spiritual and moral needs of people and the material needs. Material needs cannot be fulfilled properly without spiritual and moral foundation. Justice cannot be done to anything unless they are intimately treated within the paradigm of the Truth and Reality of life, society, and the world. The strong foundation of spirituality and morality of life cannot be laid down without accepting the central role of Allah SWT in the scheme of the universe, life, and society. It is the acceptance of Allah SWT and His guidance which constitutes the real meaning of spirituality which can guarantee peace, harmony, and prosperity for all. Realisation of the truth and reality of Allah (SWT) based on True, Authentic, and Universal Knowledge (TAUK) is the master key to the path of peace, harmony, prosperity, and development. Hence, the whole structure of the idea of Islamic Studies as an academic discipline requires the whole transformation of it. Its philosophy and goals both need a new transformation in order to be relevant to our time and context.

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