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CONTENTS

Editorial	1
<i>Fauziah Fathil</i>	

Articles

Roadmap to Social Reconstruction from Surah al-Hujurāt: Safeguarding Society from Misinformation and Disinformation	4
<i>ASM Delowar Hossain</i>	

The Rate of Divorce among Muslim Couples in Malaysia: A Legal Analysis of the Causes and Consequences	25
<i>Hassan Suleiman and Nurul Afifah bt Mohamad Farid</i>	

Physical Learning as the Preferred Learning Style among IIUM Malay Undergraduates	44
<i>Nur Atiera Binti Yunus and Iyad M. Y. Eid</i>	

Imam Ahmed Raza Khan and the Revival of the Islamic Astronomy in India	57
<i>Naseeb Ahmed Siddiqui</i>	

Book Review

Abdul Rahman Hj Abdullah, <i>The Polemic of Salafi-Wahabi: Untangling the Tangle (Polemik Salafi Wahabi: Merungkai Kekusutan)</i>	84
<i>Makmor Tumin</i>	

Editorial

This June 2023 issue of IIUM Journal of Religion and Civilisational Studies encompasses a wide range of topics related specifically to Islamic religious studies, history of Islamic civilisation as well as contemporary social studies.

The first article “Roadmap to Social Reconstruction from Surah al-Hujurāt: Safeguarding Society from Misinformation and Disinformation” by ASM Delowar Hossain examines various aspects and impacts of misinformation and disinformation in contemporary society. The advent of modern technology poses an arduous challenge to acquire true information and with that comes countless adverse effects such as chaos, misunderstanding and even aggression. Discussed against the background of past and contemporary events that took place in different parts of the world, the author advocates a social reform by incorporating the Social Reconstruction philosophy outlined by al-Quran in Surah al-Hujurāt. The philosophy entails a process of self-development by emphasising on the importance of verification of information and involves a holistic approach in the sense that the authentication process should include various responsible parties. Only then, as suggested by the author, the society will enjoy peace and stability.

Reflecting on the social condition in Malaysia, “The Rate of Divorce among Muslim Couples in Malaysia: A Legal Analysis of the Causes and Consequences” by Hassan Suleiman and Nurul Afifah bt Mohamad Farid seeks to identify the causes and effects of *ṭalāq* or divorce among Muslim couples in Malaysia in view of the increasing number of failed marriages in recent years. After pointing out some valid reasons for divorce, the authors attributed some common factors leading to divorce such as lack of understanding between spouses, financial factors, failure to fulfil responsibilities, infidelity, etc. The authors then dwell on the adverse effects of *ṭalāq*

particularly on the divorcees and children of broken families which include not only social and psychological issues, but also financial implications.

“Physical Learning as the Preferred Learning Style among IIUM Malay Undergraduates” by Nur Atiera Binti Yunus and Iyad M. Y. Eid is a case study on the preferred learning mode i.e., physical or face-to face learning among IIUM (International Islamic University Malaysia) undergraduates during the Covid-19 pandemic. Using a sampling technique involving ten (10) undergraduates, the findings of the study illustrate that the students prefer the physical learning to online as it enables them to have a better communication with instructors and fellow students which in turns permits them to have a better focus and concentration in their studies. While the pandemic may be a thing of the past, yet the input is certainly deserving of note by various parties concerned with the learning and teaching methods at tertiary level.

The next article, “Imam Ahmed Raza Khan and the Revival of the Islamic Astronomy in India” by Naseeb Ahmed Siddiqui is meant to highlight the contributions of a Muslim scholar from India, Ahmed Raza Khan. A mathematician and astronomer, Ahmed Raza Khan sought to revive the past legacy, that is the *Maragha* movement which signifies intellectual criticism of past and modern doctrines or sciences. Going through Ahmed Raza’s four main works on astronomy, the author demonstrates in length the scholar’s attempts to refute Copernican astronomy, particularly in relation to Earth’s motion theory using various sciences such as mathematics, logic, philosophy and modern physics. Apart from these sciences, Ahmed Raza also made use of information contained in the Quran which resulted, as pointed out by the author, a new planetary model that is worth looking into. Certainly, this paper by Siddiqui enables readers of history and Islamic civilisation to appreciate and acknowledge Imam Ahmed Raza for who he was, namely an all-rounded scholar with a critical mind of his own.

Finally, there is a book review by Makmor Tumin. The said book is *The Polemic of Salafi-Wahabi: Untangling the Tangle (Polemik Salafi Wahabi: Merungkai Kekusutan)* by Abdul Rahman

Hj Abdullah (published in 2021 by Rimbunan Islamik Media Sdn. Bhd.). The book engages with the issue of divergence or division among Muslims where the author explains the root cause of such divergence which led to the birth of Ash'arism and Maturidism (*Ahlul Sunnah wal Jamaah*) on one hand, and Wahabism or Najdi Dawah on the other. He also dwells on the factors that contribute to extremism and the proper etiquettes in expressing different views. While acknowledging that the work is useful for readers to have a better understanding of the subject matter, the reviewer maintains that the provided information might enhance further the existing divergence as some readers might use the arguments that suit them to strengthen their own convictions especially since the religious split or division the Muslim community involving the two groups has long existed. The reviewer is also of the view that the book should persistently stress to readers on the need to refer to the two primary sources for Muslims i.e., Al-Quran and As-Sunnah in case of differences in views. Lastly, the reviewer acknowledges the fact that accumulative wisdom is something to be expected as people encounter changes in their lives with the passing of time hence, differences in views or divergence in the society is a common scenario.

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I would like to extend my gratitude to all contributors and reviewers who involved in this June issue. It is hoped that their valuable ideas and works will contribute to the enrichment of knowledge particularly in civilisational studies and be of interest to scholars and readers of history and civilisation worldwide.

Finally, I also wish to express my gratitude to all members of the Editorial Board, our Editor Dr. Mohd Helmi Mohd Sobri, and Associate Editor Dr. Alwi Alatas, without whose efforts and dedication, the publication of this issue will not be possible. Thank you.

Fauziah Fathil
Editor-in-Chief
June 2023

Roadmap to Social Reconstruction from Surah al-Hujurāt: Safeguarding Society from Misinformation and Disinformation

ASM Delowar Hossain¹

Abstract: This study attempts to examine the issue of reckless use of the tongue in terms of spreading misinformation and disinformation in the Muslim society. It envisions a roadmap of social reform by incorporating perspectives of Social Reconstruction philosophy as applicable in Islam in the light of Surah al-Hujurāt. It is of utmost significance because misinformation and disinformation have devastating consequences. Moreover, with modern technology, they can spread like wildfire causing more damage instantly. To address this issue, we focus on the sixth verse of Surah al-Hujurāt, which discusses the social impact of misinformation and disinformation and illustrates a process of self-development that can limit chaos and build trust to improve social conditions. This work utilises a qualitative study whose findings demonstrate that Surah al-Hujurāt is pivotal in fostering Islamic values in Muslims thereby safeguarding society as a whole from misinformation and disinformation.

Keywords: Keywords: Surah al-Hujurāt, Social ills, Social reconstruction, Misinformation and Disinformation, Rumor.

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Introduction

The Muslim world is facing many problems that challenge the stability of the society. The reckless use of tongue can be attributed as one of the problems, specifically the spread of misinformation and disinformation. While this discussion primarily revolves around inappropriate actions of the tongue, it also includes actions with similar implications in today's world such as text messages, emails, images, videos, audio, and other forms of multimedia or social media. They are so widespread that sometimes they may appear to be something insignificant. Nevertheless, they have devastating consequences. It is even more alarming in this age of information technology. Considering this grave danger, it is extremely important to address this issue on an urgent basis. Due to the nature of this unprecedented challenge, there is not much work in the literature addressing this issue, specifically within the context of social reconstruction of Muslim society.

There have been commendable works in the recent literature exploring misinformation. Haque, et. al (2020) discuss combating misinformation in a Muslim country (specifically Bangladesh) which is overwhelmed by chaos, hate crimes and killings. To combat misinformation, the authors suggest imposing technological constraints to limit misinformation. However, they were not intended to bring virtues to the members of society and transform society for the better. Sule and Yahaya (2020) offer Islamic but general solutions for the Muslims; they state that as Muslims, it is very important "to reflect on the teachings of Glorious Qur'an in our various homes and apply it in all of our social dealings which also include the activities on the social media ... Muslims will be able to avoid the evils that are associated with it and also guide one on the proper way of using most of the social media applications, be it Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram etc." (p. 18). While these are appreciable guidelines, they do not offer paths to social reconstruction. Tais (2019) discusses reconstructionism as one of the two distinct directions of modernist Islamic thought among contemporary Muslim thinkers in the Maghrib. They attempted to locate modern Western intellectual legacy and practice such as democracy, freedom of thought, and individual liberties within Islam. Their goal was to reimagine Islamic legacy. The author also mentions that, in this process, their Western intellectual

thoughts became more direct, and they somewhat embraced the secular political system.

Similar to the modernist view, Supriyadi, Julia and Firdaus (2019) discuss reconstruction within the context of Gender Equality. They suggest reconstructing traditional interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah to make space for women's leadership in Islam for current times. Additionally, they recommend that “any forms of interpretation of the sources of Islamic teachings that are contrary to the principles of justice and ignores the spirit of Islamic teachings that uphold the equality between men and women need to be reconstructed” (p. 106). While the authors consider Islam as a part of this reconstruction process, it is not Islamic at the core because the entire process is not guided by the traditional understanding of the Quran, Sunnah, or pious predecessors. However, there are other works that address social issues strictly based on the Quran and sunnah, specifically based on Surah al-Hujurāt. Javid (2019) discusses guidelines of Ethics and Morality that are found in Surah al-Hujurāt. Khasawneh and Al-Jamal (2017) presented the best ways of establishing interpersonal relationships on the basis of Surah al-Hujurāt. Waqar and Haq (2021) offer an overview of Surah al-Hujurāt and explain fundamental guidelines of a peaceful and fulfilling social life. Azzuhri (2020) goes further and presents the concept of constructing an ideal society based on Surah al-Hujurāt specifically starting with the issue of misinformation and disinformation as they can lead to major conflict in society. The author offers semantic analysis and composition examination of the word “tabayyanu (verification)” from the sixth verse of Surah al-Hujurāt along with beneficial exegesis promoting virtues in society. While these Qur’anic works are thought-provoking and inspiring in their discussion of one or more social issues, they are very limited in scope as they do not address the big picture of social reconstruction based on Surah al-Hujurāt with the corresponding implementation process. This work intends to fill that void and present a roadmap of social reconstruction upon Islamic principles in the light of Surah al-Hujurāt.

This study examines various aspects and impacts of misinformation and disinformation in the society. It envisions a roadmap of social reform by incorporating perspectives of Social Reconstruction philosophy and utilise its tenets as applicable in Islam in the light of Surah al-Hujurāt. To that end, verse six of Surah al-Hujurāt is explored which

primarily identifies tongue-related ills, specifically misinformation and disinformation. It discusses the social impact of such actions and illustrates a process of self-development by emphasising the importance of verification of information. When the ideas of this verse pertaining to character development are implemented, the long desired social reform will be ensured.

The goal of this study is to propose and detail explicit methods to safeguard the society from the harms of misinformation and disinformation and to transform its members such that it minimises chaos, builds trust, and fosters peace and stability in Muslim societies. This transformation or social reformation will require a simultaneous multi-pronged approach from different sectors of society, such as the government, educational institutions, media outlets, family units, and more. Ultimately, it will pave the way of success in both this life and in the next and as such, this study is of utmost importance because misinformation and disinformation with current technology can cause irreversible harm, spread hysteria, result in discord and aggression, and loss of confidence in the society.

This study adopts a qualitative approach whose findings are generally interpretive and based upon the examination of writings, experiences and reflections on the subject matter. Since this study investigates the issues of the Muslim world to pave the way for the reconstruction of their societies, it is essentially a study of the human experience. In other words, it is a study of perceptions surrounding events and circumstances and therefore, the qualitative approach is appropriate and justified. In general, this work examines the contents of the body of materials regarding social conditions around the world, specifically the Muslim world in relation to complications caused by misinformation and disinformation. Additionally, it explores Quranic exegesis and relevant texts specific to surah al-Hujurāt from both classical and modern sources to lay the foundation for a social reform that can lead to stability and peace.

Due to the qualitative nature of this work, there are inherent limitations in that. It depends solely on observation and subjective experience and does not involve quantitative information. Furthermore, it primarily depends on the content analysis of various subject matters without the involvement of any interviews or first-hand information.

Another limitation of this study is that it focuses on Muslim majority countries. Consequently, it excludes issues pertaining to Muslim minorities such as those in the West. It is not feasible to go into the fine details of all Muslim societies across the world as they are of different socioeconomic backgrounds, cultures, and ethnicities. Resultantly, this work is forced to generalise the discussed social issues as no single formula can address an issue from every background. Rather, the solution needs to be contextualised when discussed or applied within certain social settings of a country or a culture.

This work is outlined as follows: firstly, it presents the overview of Social Reconstruction philosophy as it is the theoretical framework of this study. Secondly, it discusses the problems of misinformation and disinformation along with their intricacies and implications on society. Thirdly, we determine several pre-conditions that need to be satisfied prior to pursuing true and meaningful Islamic social reconstruction. Next, verse six of Surah al-Hujurāt is analysed to finally outline the steps of implementation of the social reconstruction philosophy from the verse's standpoint.

Social Reconstruction

Social reconstruction is founded upon Pragmatism, a philosophy derived from subjective human experiences in which truth is relative and changing. Social Reconstruction philosophy promotes reform towards a just and better society through transformative education (Gutek, 1997). In the early twentieth century, Social Reconstruction finds its root among the progressive educators with pragmatic and social ideas such as John Dewey. Later, it was further developed by others including George Counts. After some ups and downs, finally in 1950, Theodore Brameld, laid the foundations of social reconstructionism (McNeil, 1990). Social Reconstructionists viewed the state of the society as troubling because it failed to reconstruct itself to adapt to the challenges of a rapidly changing world. They proposed a critical study of the past and to use inquiry, questioning, and experimentation to address the current challenges towards a new social order. They believed that the educators in the school system can be a vehicle towards a new social order by developing innovative curriculum, policies, and practices (Gutek, 1997). They are in the best position to take on such a noble,

delicate, and complex task of social reform within the school system by educating future leaders. They claim that the present educational process is heavily influenced by the need of economy; it is too narrow and stagnant and does not offer the vital imagination and creativity to meet the current challenges. Teachers need to focus on critical issues and instead of just giving answers, they should raise more questions thereby stimulating students' thinking process and engaging them to have an active say in education. Unless overhauled, it will repeat the past and preserve the existing order of the broken society rather than being a means of its transformation. To make this overhauling effective, such a learning process need to be more action-oriented and more meaningful and centred around the social life of the students. It also should critically look into real world problems such oppression, violence, and inequality and hunger as such issues often raise controversy; moreover, there should be focus on inquiry, analysis, discourse, and perspectives (Beaudrie, et al., 2015). While this philosophy manifests noble ideas, it is essentially secular and therefore, may not be fully compatible for implementation in Muslim societies.

Misinformation and Disinformation: Intricacies and Implications

Cambridge Dictionary defines misinformation as “wrong information,” whereas disinformation as “false information spread in order to deceive people”; both can be deceptive in effect. An act of deception can be explained as “intentionally causing another person to have or continue to have a false belief that is truly believed to be false by the person intentionally causing the false belief by bringing about evidence on the basis of which the other person has or continues to have that false belief” (Mahon, 2003, pp. 189-190). The deceptive information includes fake news, edited pictures and realistic deepfake videos that have the potential of harming individuals and societies by opening the door of mistrust, criminal accusations, extortion, and aggression. The information that people are exposed to can affect their perception of reality and truth; it can even alter their views about relationships, economics, politics, etc. (Pierre, 2020). When deceit becomes prevalent, it can lead to growing scepticism making it more challenging to believe the truth. The modern lies became so flawless and widespread, many people tend to be confused about the right course

of action (Shao, Ciampaglia, Varol, Flammini, & Menczer, 2017). For instance, in 2019, following the fire at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, there were many fake videos and online posts portraying the Muslims as the cause of the fire; it resulted in a growing aggression against the Muslims in France (“Islamophobic Fake News Explodes After Notre Dame,” 2019). In 2018, a violent mob killed a number of people based on a lie about a child abduction that spread on WhatsApp (Gowen, 2018). A study published by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 2018 claimed that false information over social media spread to a broader audience in a faster pace than the genuine ones (Vosoughi, Roy & Aral, 2018). It is also evident in the 2019 Spanish election that harmful lies against the Prime Minister reached a fourth of the population through WhatsApp (“Whatsapp: Social Media’s Dark Web,” 2019). The continuous exposure to false information may have a considerable impact on the audience to the point they may accept lie as truth; this phenomenon is known as the “illusory truth” effect (Fazio, Brashier, Payne & Marsh, 2015). A primary example can be the 2016 US Presidential election where the victory of Donald Trump was attributed to the spread of numerous pro-Trump false information prior to the election through Facebook (Blake, 2018). Another recent example of such type of misinformation can be the insurrection at the US Capitol Building on January 6, 2021. Congressional hearings, news media and other documents established that the spread of false information (largely on the digital media) was the primary cause of such a disgraceful and painful event in the history of United States (Rapport, 2021; Grant, 2022). The spread of such lies and harmful information is alarming because it can lead to the destruction of society from within.

It has become even more worrisome with rapid developments in the field of machine learning, that can be utilised to generate data that has grave implications regarding privacy, ethics, politics, security etc. (Qadir & Suleman, 2018). The recent development of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) models, including Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), have made it difficult to identify genuine digital artifacts from fake ones. With these technologies, it becomes easier to produce realistic looking handwritings, images, videos and fake evidence; they can produce the handwriting of a person which he never wrote, produce audios and videos showing the person saying or doing things which he actually

never did. For instance, researchers from the University of Washington utilised previous videos of President Barack Obama and produced fake videos synchronising his lip movements saying arbitrary statements (Suwajanakorn, Seitz & Kemelmacher-Shlizerman, 2017; University of Washington, 2017). Changing the words of a person in a video has become as easy as editing the text of a video transcript (Fried, 2019). Samsung has developed an algorithm that can use a still image of a person to produce videos showing that person speaking (Zakharov, Shysheya, Burkov, & Lempitsky, 2019). While these technologies and corresponding activities may appear entertaining, they will have devastating consequences if released for public and unrestrained use (Metz & Blumenthal, 2019).

It is important to fathom the potential consequences of such advancements. For instance, a forged document can harm someone's personal and business interests, strain personal relationships, mislead court proceedings, etc. With fake audios and videos, it can show a person involved in embarrassing matters, thereby destroying his honour and family life, and opening the door to blackmail. Furthermore, extortion can be used to serve certain political, economic, and military interests. Within the context of economics, false information can change the direction of the stock market impacting the lives of millions of peoples and businesses. In the area of intelligence and national defence, such misleading information can be grounds justifying an invasion or pre-emptive attack. Even worse, in many cases, such misleading evidence can be deliberately generated as a false pretence by the invading nation. Evidently, there are much broader implications beyond just privacy, ethics, politics, economics, and military.

While misinformation and disinformation have always been shown to have serious consequences, they have become more concerning in the Internet Age where a problem in one place becomes a global issue in no time; the Muslim world is no exception to this. In relation to scandals in the entertainment industry of Indonesia, Nathalia, Chatterjee, & Fahmy (2010) writes in Reuters that "Indonesia's highest Islamic authority has forbidden Muslims from viewing gossip content in the country's media after a celebrity...scandal dominated television news in the past month". Sometime rumour about a person is more than negativity and obscenity that may affect part of the society; it can have other implications such as military, political, and economic. A

profound example of it is when Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr was killed in the battle of Uhud. A rumour was started that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was killed and consequently, the Muslims lost their resolve and some of them stopped fighting (Mubarakpuri, 1996). Moreover, as recently as 2016, based on a false news report, it was believed that Pakistan's defence minister issued a nuclear threat against Israel (Goldman, 2016). Finally, in a local election in 2017 in Indonesia, lies spread over social media to get one candidate elected over the other (BBC News, 2017).

Reckless use of tongue is irresponsible behaviour that can cause pain, spread hysteria, result in discord and aggression, and loss of confidence in the society. It can destabilise the society; they must be addressed in an urgent and serious manner. It requires a holistic approach of social reconstruction as presented in Quran, specifically in Surah al-Hujurāt, that can bring integrity, trust, and positivity in the society through the development of virtual and responsible character.

Pre-conditions of A Meaningful Social Reform for Muslims

As mentioned earlier, Muslims have engaged in social reconstruction initiatives; however, in many cases their efforts were not fully consistent with Islamic principles. Therefore, it is important to shed light on the preconditions of a meaningful social reform for the Muslims. It is to be noted that the ultimate success for the Muslims in both lives solely depend on the obedience of Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ). Muslims must calibrate their thoughts towards full compliance with Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), putting aside all social norms and personal views. Muslim must address all of their issues, including social reform, based on the guidance of Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) which surely will ensure their personal and communal benefit. According to Ibn 'Āshūr (2006), Allah's sharia (legal system), in general, is about protecting rights, benefiting people, and warding off harm from them. Specifically, it preserves and guarantees the indispensables of a healthy society, namely: religion, life, intellect, property, lineage, and honour (p.118). Therefore, obedience to Allah and Messenger (ﷺ) at all levels and at all times is not an option but an obligation, as Allah said: "It is not for a believing man or woman – when Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) decree a matter – to have any other choice in that matter. Indeed, whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) has clearly gone

astray” (Surah al-Aḥzāb, 33:36). Moreover, for lasting public welfare, He commanded Muslims to refer to Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) in any dispute: “O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination” (Surah al-Nisā’ 4:59). In this verse, Allah commanded to obey the ruler (authority) as well; however, in case of disagreement, people are to refer back to Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ). The Prophet (ﷺ) emphasised the matter by saying: “A creature is not to be obeyed when it involves disobedience to the Creator” (Mishkat al-Masabih, Book 18, *ḥadīth* No. 36, Sahih).

Quran explicitly associated the obedience of Allah to the obedience of the Prophet and obligated the people to obey the Prophet (ﷺ) without any form of opposition and hesitation: “But no, by your Lord, they can have no Faith, until they make you (Muhammad) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission” (Surah al-Nisā’, 4:65).

While compliance with the guidance of Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) may be understood by many Muslims, sometime there are issues in terms of understanding the interpretation or application of such guidance. It is important to understand that the interpretation and application of Islam must be consistent with that of the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) as they were the best of the people and with the best of the understandings regarding the details of this religion. Their importance and superiority in interpreting and implementing Islam is clearly established from the religious texts below: “Say, (O Prophet,) ‘This is my way. I invite to Allah with insight – I and those *who follow me*’” (Surah Yūsuf, 12:108). Furthermore, Allah has endorsed, praised, and is pleased with the actions of the companions. He is also pleased with those who follow their footsteps throughout the time: “As for the foremost – the first of the *Emigrants and the Helpers* – and *those who follow them* in goodness, *Allah is pleased with them* and they are pleased with Him...” (Surah al-Tawbah, 9:100). In addition to the endorsement of Allah, the Prophet (ﷺ) spoke in the honour of his companions: “Do not revile my companions, for by the One in Whose hand is my soul, if one of you were to spend the equivalent of Uḥud in gold, it would

not amount to a *mudd* of one of them, or half of that” (Bukhari, Book 62, *ḥadīth* No. 23). Prophet (ﷺ) also said: “... for those of you who live after me will see great disagreement. You must then follow my sunnah and that of the rightly guided caliphs. Hold to it and stick fast to it. Avoid novelties, for every novelty is an innovation, and every innovation is an error” (Abū Dāwūd, Book 42, *ḥadīth* No. 12, Sahih). It is a clear command for the generations to come to stick to the original sources of religion as found with the companions without innovating. As the companions taught Islam to their students (*tābi ‘ūn*: followers or successors), the excellence of those students was established. Moreover, the excellence of the students of those students (*tābi ‘ al-tābi ‘īn*) was also confirmed since the practice of the first three generations was to persevere in learning what the Prophet (ﷺ) brought, then to preserve in acting upon what they had understood. The significance of those golden generations is clearly established from sunnah: “The best people are those of my generation, and then those who will come after them, and then those who will come after them and then after them” (Bukhari, Book 81, *ḥadīth* No 18). Once the Muslims fulfil this basic condition of obeying Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) upon the understanding of the golden generations, it will put them in the right direction towards a successful social reconstruction upon Islamic theology.

Surah al-Hujurāt: A Roadmap to Social Transformation

Surah al-Hujurāt is the 49th chapter of the Qur’ān. It is a Madani surah revealed in the 9th year after the Hijra when people were accepting Islam in large numbers. The name of the Surah is based on a word (*hujurāt*, meaning apartments) in the fourth verse. It primarily teaches Muslims basic manners (Philips, 2006).

Islam has long ago recognised the social problems of the tongue. Due to their harmful consequences in the society, many of them are even considered as major sins (Backbiting in Islam and Its Expiation, 2002). Specifically, Islam has taken a firm stance against misinformation and disinformation to save the society from the spread of evil. Allah says in verse 6 of Surah al-Hujurāt: “O believers, if an evildoer brings you any news, verify (it) so you do not harm people unknowingly, becoming regretful for what you have done”. Al-Maḥallī and al-Suyūṭī (2007) say this verse was revealed regarding al-Walīd b. ‘Uqbah as he was

sent by the Prophet (ﷺ) to Banū al-Mustaliq to confirm their allegiance to Islam. He was concerned about his security due to some pre-Islamic conflict with them. Once he reached the area of Banū al-Mustaliq, the people came out in large numbers to meet him; consequently, he felt threatened and ran back to the Prophet (ﷺ). Based on his fear and erroneous assessment, he informed the Prophet (ﷺ) that they wanted to kill him. As a result, the Prophet (ﷺ) wanted to dispatch an army against them. Fortunately, Banū al-Mustaliq came to Prophet (ﷺ) and explain the situation to him; thereby avoided a bloody tragedy. Ibn Kathir (2003) says that Allah commanded the believers not to rush to conclusion in any matter prior to verifying information, especially when it is from people of no integrity; otherwise, it may result in sorrowful consequences and remorse. This guiding principle is to be followed on receipt of news.

Al-Sa'dī (2018) says that any information received from a wicked person should not be given the same status as that from a truthful person, because an evil person has the disposition to propagate incorrect or falsified information which is why Qutb (2015) says that the verse specifically mentions evil doers as they are more likely to lie. If a person has a shady character or an uncontrolled tongue, that itself can be sufficient ground for rejecting or further verifying that information. As the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “it is enough for a man to prove himself a liar when he goes on narrating whatever he hears” (Muslim, Introduction, *ḥadīth* No 5). If the information relates to the matters of religion, such as narrations from the Prophet (ﷺ), then the Muslims need to be extra careful when accepting or relating them because the Prophet (ﷺ) said “lying about me is not like lying about anyone else. Whoever tells a lie about me deliberately, let him take his place in Hell” (Muslim, Introduction, *ḥadīth* No. 5). The Prophet (ﷺ) also said: “do not lie upon me; indeed, whoever lies upon me will enter the Fire” (Muslim, Introduction, *ḥadīth* No. 1). Accordingly, it was the practice of the scholars of hadith to be reluctant in accepting narrations from people whose reliability was not established. Therefore, people need to be meticulous about verifying information in order to properly practice only the authentic aspects of the religion.

Mawdudī (2006) says that no government should take action against any person, or a group solely based on information received from people whose characters are in question. Doing so will upend

the lives and properties of innocents just merely on suspicion based on unreliable sources. Taking such information without verification can even lead to political and military consequences; a few such instances are listed below.

1. In the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), his companions made the first migration from Mecca to Ethiopia, where they were safe from the harm of the idol worshippers. However, due to the spread of a rumour that the ruling elite of Mecca had become Muslims, they returned to Mecca only to realise that the rumours were false. As a result, they were captured by the elite once more and subjugated to abuse (Mubarokpuri, 1996).
2. Muṣ‘ab ibn ‘Umayr (may Allah be pleased with him) was killed during the Battle of Uhud. Unfortunately, in the heat of battle, a rumour started that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) himself was killed leading to many of the Muslims to become depressed, hopeless, and thus many abandoned their weapons simply awaiting death on the battlefield (Mubarokpuri, 1996).
3. The infamous story of slander against ‘Ā’ishah, the pure wife of the Prophet (ﷺ), which resulted in a lot of anguish for the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) as well as for the Muslims. She was later cleared of the charge by Allah Himself (Surah Al-Nur, 24:11-20). These events show that the actions based on unconfirmed information often led to negative outcomes of catastrophic proportions (Mubarokpuri, 1996).

People in the society deserve to live in security, harmony, and peace. No one has the right to cause confusion, fear, and instability by spreading harmful information. However, that does happen as people usually like to talk about exciting new information. The Qur’ān identifies these actions as the characteristics of the hypocrites in the following verse: “when they have any alarming news, they broadcast it” (Surah al-Nisā’, 4:83). Considering the three unfortunate historical occurrences discussed above, it is important to visualise how they would have been exponentially worse in modern times with the Internet at our disposal. People must be extra careful today when posting comments, liking, and sharing on social media because such

actions only popularise the content even further by means of advanced algorithms. Therefore, people must not rush to forward information as Allah dislikes those who are hasty, as He states: “humankind is ever hasty” (Surah al-Isrā’, 17:11). Meticulous vetting of information and thoroughness is required in these situations because “two qualities which are liked by Allah are forbearance and deliberateness” (Muslim, Book 1, *ḥadīth* No. 25). Although this is applicable in dealing with simple everyday news, it is even more important when doing so with news that are religious in nature. Those who contribute to the spread of misinformation and disinformation, even unintentionally, bear some responsibility. People need to contain harmful information by restricting its speed and reach (Tandoc Jr, Lim & Ling, 2018). Muslims must take inspiration from their pious predecessors who travelled around the world and made tremendous sacrifices to verify Prophetic narrations; their legacies resulted in an authenticated religious foundation, leading to a comprehensive legal system and healthy society. In general, Muslims are obligated to stay on the side of clarity and shy away from doubtful matters as the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “give up what is doubtful to you to that which is clear” (Tirmidhī, Book 37, *ḥadīth* No. 104, Sahih). Hence, Muslims need to carefully assess the message and messenger from multiple reliable sources to attain certainty prior to acting upon it. In today’s world, it is not a difficult task because of the availability of advance technological tools. However, Qutb (2015) clarifies that there should not be unnecessary suspicion about all people and every piece of information; otherwise, it will lead to hysteria in the society damaging mutual trust among the people. There needs to be a middle ground. In some cases, information from evil people can be accepted upon verification or observation of any indicators or circumstantial evidence of truthfulness of the statement. It is evident in the incident when *shaytān* (devil) gave information regarding Āyat al-Kursī (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:255) to Abū Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him). The Prophet (ﷺ) approved the information received from *shaytān* and said, “he told you the truth, though he is a liar, and he himself was the Satan” (Bukhari, Book 59, *ḥadīth* No. 84).

The discussion clearly establishes that one of the conditions of social stability is the regulation of the tongue. Hence, if a Muslim hears doubtful information, he must ask for proof as the Quran says: “Bring your proof, if you are truthful” (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:111). Then, if it

is not substantiated, he should not believe it or repeat it; additionally, he must leave it and advise others to do the same. Muslims need to be conscious about Allah and suppress their desire of short-term excitement. They need to be patient and thoughtful which can act as a guardrail against rumours.

Implementation Steps

The values and measures discussed above need to be cultured within the society for a successful and lasting social reform. According to social reconstruction philosophy, education must be the principal means for sketching a clear and precise social action plan. Therefore, there must be discussions, dialogues and debates in the society including parents, teachers, community leaders, labour leaders, religious scholars, and students towards decisive working plan. To that end, there need to efforts at all levels in the society. Specifically, the parents and the teachers ought to play a positive role in the homes and schools respectively. To play such role, they themselves need to be aware of the necessity social reform and actively take part in self-development and be willing to be the role model for those who look up to them. Consequently, there must be relevant trainings for parents, teachers, and ordinary people in general as misinformation and disinformation can start at any level in the society.

Parents. Firstly, as the member of the society, parents as adults need to be trained with the Islamic values so the society remains safe from misinformation and disinformation. Such trainings can be offered through adult learning centres in the community. Furthermore, they need to be trained to prepare the next generation for a lasting social reform. The parents have a greater role of culturing children than the school teacher because prior to attending school, children are taught at home. In other words, the parents are the primary and the first teacher of children and are expected to take part in the moral learning process of their children at home rather than solely relying on the school. Therefore, they need to be trained to infuse Islamic social values into their children; such training can be offered through various prenatal and postnatal workshops, and community learning centres. Moreover, parents are to be involved in the planning process of moral learning programs in schools.

Teachers. There must be a fresh look upon the educational process involving teachers training, curriculum design and instructional methods. When the child is ready to go to school, then the teachers have a role to play not just by educating them but also being an outstanding role model. If the teachers themselves are lacking fundamental values, then they cannot motivate students merely by lectures. Therefore, teachers must be provided with on-the-job training in addition to whatever training they receive as an ordinary member of the society. They also must be trained to develop viable curriculum where various Islamic solutions to social ills (including those of the tongue) are integrated; furthermore, the training should include effective methods of transferring that knowledge to the student so that results in positive social outcomes. It is important to consult the behavioural sciences to recognise people's value system so that the path to reconstructions becomes easier, of course anywhere that contradicts basic values of Islam then we are to take the Islamic values.

Media. To integrate precautionary measures in the society in information age, the general population requires information literacy training that will allow them to navigate through the process of understanding and using information in a proper manner (Parrott, 2018). These precautions apply to the media industry and journalism more than any other sector because their words reach a larger audience quickly with large-scale implications (Ahmed, 2018). Therefore, Siddiqi (2012) emphasises that they must be ultra-careful and need to be trained to work within the Islamic framework.

Government. The government has the overall responsibility to address any social issue at the higher level since they have the needed resources and authority. They can bring integrity, trust, and positivity in the society by training the public servants at various levels. The process can start at the hiring stage of employees and refresh the training on a periodic basis. Such training should include all the branches of government, including military, law enforcement, legislative, judiciary etc. Companies can institute required trainings while governments may have civil service exams (or their equivalents) to ensure that these concepts are indeed hard-wired into government officials, employees, office holders, etc. The government also sets the standards for national tests and the topics studied herein can also be incorporated into exams (such as college-entrance and other licensing exams). When the key

sectors of the society maintain higher standard, the society becomes peaceful and stable.

Conclusion

This work discusses the issue of widespread misinformation and disinformation and its impact in the society. It further illustrates the values and processes of self-development from surah al-Hujurāt towards a social reform that can protect the society from social ills including misinformation and disinformation. Finally, the actual process of implementation through social reconstruction philosophy is presented. To culture such noble characters, Muslims need more than just courses or training in social science; they require active and perpetual consciousness of Allah and longing for the life of hereafter. When such a level of consciousness is developed, it works as a guardrail at the individual level which then transforms the society.

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The Rate of Divorce among Muslim Couples in Malaysia: A Legal Analysis of the Causes and Consequences

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Abstract: Cases of *ṭalāq*, or divorce, among Muslim couples in Malaysia have increased significantly in recent years. At least 200,000 Muslim spouses have gotten divorced between 2017 and 2021, raising concerns about the Islamic family institution in the country. This paper aims to identify the causes of *ṭalāq* among Muslim couples in Malaysia as well as the consequences of marriage dissolution for the family. The paper adopted the qualitative method to study the issue. The methodology included the content analysis of published materials and primary textual references from the Qur'ān and Sunnah that are related to this topic. The study found that psychological issues, social growth, schooling and future relationships could all be impacted by *ṭalāq* on children. The parents will experience identity issues, changes in their way of life and changes in their financial situation. Based on the interpretation of Qur'ānic text related to *ṭalāq*, many Islamic scholars and jurists agree that the parents or relatives should be responsible for a divorced woman's identity in the same way as her former husband. Thus, alimony for divorced women given from her relatives is indeed compulsory. In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that the marriages of Muslim couples in Malaysia are significantly impacted by the typical causes of divorce.

Keywords: *Ṭalāq* (divorce), Muslim couples, Malaysia, Causes, Consequences

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Introduction

Malaysia is a racially harmonious country in which all citizens can practice their religion freely. Muslims in Malaysia also have the freedom and right to practice their religion. Muslim couples in Malaysia are permitted to wed because the family institution is highly valued in Malaysian Islamic law. A husband and wife's relationship should be built on a firm foundation of love, affection, intimacy, tranquillity and stability. As Allah (SWT) states in the Holy Qur'ān:

And among His Āyat (signs) is that He created for you mates from among yourself, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Āyāt (Signs) for those who reflect. (30:21)

However, this raises the question of whether people live up to the ultimate purpose of marriage by building their marriage on mutual love, care and harmony. This study has brought up the fact that the answers might not be positive, given the recent steady increase in divorce rates, particularly in Malaysia.

Divorce has been prescribed by Allah (SWT) as the last choice for preserving human wellbeing. As Allah states in the Qur'ān: "And if they decide upon divorce – then indeed, Allah heareth and knoweth all things" (2:227). Even though it is still a strongly discouraged method in Islam, especially when it is used without critical reasoning, the main objective is to resolve the problem of marital divorce, which poses a threat to the family. In this context, Islamic family law and personal faith in Allah should serve as a guide to reducing divorce cases in Malaysia and other Muslim countries.

The Concept of *Talāq* (Divorce)

Divorce is stated in the Malaysian Islamic Family Law (Federal Territories) Act (1984) as *perceraian*, which is the formal dissolution of a marriage, according to the English-Malay Dictionary of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Luqmān & Siti, 2019). Divorce, also referred to as the dissolution of marriage, is when a civil or religious court legally separates a married couple. Once the divorce lawsuit is concluded, it permits the spouse to get remarried.

Divorce is referred to in Arabic as *ṭalāq*, which also means to “liberate or undo the knot” (al-Asbahanī, 1412AH). *Ṭalāq*, as used by Islamic scholars, refers to the annulment or dissolution of a marriage’s legal standing. In accordance with the Sharia, *ṭalāq* refers to the act of pronouncing a word that signifies divorce in order to dissolve a marriage. Some *fuqahā’* (Islamic jurists) believe that the divorce law is *makrūh* (reprehensible) (Ibn Qudāmah, X/1986). This quotation is a reference to the ḥadīth of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), in which he said that “divorce is the most despised of all authorised actions in the eyes of Allah” (Ibn Mājah, ḥadīth No. 2018). It is crucial to note that the *‘ulamā’* (scholars of Islam) have varying opinions about the authenticity of the aforementioned ḥadīth, with some of them opining that it is *da‘īf* (a weak ḥadīth), owing to a weakness in both its chain of narrators and textual content because something cannot be despised and allowed at the same time.

The Valid Purpose for Divorce in Islam

Marriage is a holy connection that unites a man and a woman; Islam teaches that this act allows human beings to achieve the noble objective of procreation on this earth. However, in this sacred union, the husband and wife must behave honourably and decently towards one another. It is forbidden for a husband to divorce his wife in an effort to hurt her because doing so would destroy this honourable institution, emotionally damage the wife and possibly sever her relationship with her children. According to several ḥadīth, the indefinite separation of a man from his wife is seen as one of the major and grievous sins and is one of Satan’s favourite deeds. For example, in one such ḥadīth, the Prophet (SAW) said that “divorce is the most despised of all authorized actions in the eyes of Allah” (Ibn Mājah, ḥadīth No. 2018).

Having said this, divorce, however, must not be considered a closed door. There are genuine cases where divorce is the only option available. As Allah (SWT) indicates in the Qur’ān: “But if they separate by *ṭalāq* (divorce) Allah will provide abundance for every one of the spouses from His all reaching bounty, and Allah is Ever All sufficient for His creatures’ need, All-Wise” (4:130). This verse implies that if a married couple is unable to coexist, they would resort to divorce as a last resort.

In fact, if each party finds a new partner as a result of the divorce, both parties may be happy.

If such is their goal, Allah (SWT) will most certainly favour them. However, Islam has totally forbidden women from seeking a divorce without any valid reason. This is based on Abū Dāwūd's report on Thawban's authority that the Prophet (SAW) said: "If a woman asks her husband for a divorce without some strong reason, the odour of paradise will be forbidden for her" (Abū Dāwūd, hadith No. 2226).

Here are a few valid reasons for divorce, supported by evidence:

1. When one spouse becomes abusive and inflicts physical, mental or emotional torture upon the other spouse, and is not willing to change by taking practical measures through therapy or counselling. The Islamic principle states, "There shall be no inflicting or receiving of harm." In Islam, *zulm* (injustice) is not tolerated, regardless of who the perpetrator is.
2. If either the husband or wife fails to fulfil the objectives and purposes for which marriage was initiated, this can result in incompatibility between them, which may be expressed in their irreconcilable differences in temperaments, likes and dislikes. Allah (SWT) says: "The two parties (husband and wife) should either hold together on equitable terms, or get separate with kindness" (2:229).
3. The occurrence of adultery and fornication involving one or both spouses. Trust and confidence are the foundation of marriage, as the main goal of marriage is to uphold the chastity and modesty of both spouses. Thus, infidelity could be a significant factor in its breakdown. Divorce is the best course of action after this foundation has been corroded and destroyed and there is no opportunity to repair it, unless there is sincere repentance from the offending spouse. Allah (SWT) proclaims:

If both (husband and wife) fear that they would not be able to keep the limits ordained by Allah SWT, then there is no sin on either of them if she gives back (the dowry or a part of it) for her Khulu' (divorce). (2:229)

According to this Qur'ānic verse, if one spouse engages in adultery or fornication – both of which are considered as infidelity – then he/she has transgressed Allah (SWT)'s bounds and the offended spouse can then ask for a divorce.

4. The failure of a spouse to meet their marital obligations is a ground for divorce. For example, if the husband, who is seen as the family's provider, shirks his obligations and the wife decides she cannot tolerate his shirking any longer, the latter can seek for a divorce.

In Islam, any one of the aforementioned reasons can be considered a valid ground for *ṭalāq*. If, in a legitimate case warranting a divorce, a husband refuses to divorce his wife, then she is certainly justified by Sharia law to approach the proper legal authority to get a divorce (*khulu'*) or *fasakh*. The judgement of divorce thus rendered by such authority can be deemed as valid in Islam. Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Zayla'ī al-Ḥanafī (may Allah have mercy on him) mentioned a priceless act for the purpose of divorce:

Then, because marriage governs the interests of both their worldly and religious pursuit, Allah Almighty legislated marriage for the benefit of His slaves. Then, once the allotted number of people had passed, he forbade her to see him before she married another spouse, to be polite even in his rage. This was done in order to test himself in separation as he had tested her in marriage. (Zayla'i et al., II/1313H, p. 188)

The question thus becomes, why is the decision to divorce made by the husband rather than the wife, despite the fact that the latter is a contract partner?

In order to preserve the marriage and to weigh the risks of doing so quickly and carefully, the husband who pays the *mahr* (dowry) and spends money on his wife and the house is typically more aware of the effects of divorce and is far from reckless in an unwise manner. With this in mind, the following are some of the reasons for considering why divorce is in the husband's hands:

1. A woman is often more affected by emotions than a man. Therefore, if she is able to divorce, she may seek a divorce for trivial reasons that do not warrant the disintegration of her married life. The man

is more rational, though this does not negate that there are men who are less rational.

2. Divorce will incur certain financial setbacks, such as the deferred payment of the dowry, the maintenance of the waiting period, *mut'ah* granting after divorce etc. These financial matters and others will cause the man to slow down the process of the divorce, so it would be in the best interest to leave it in the hands of the person who is more concerned about the marriage. If the woman is not financially harmed by the divorce, the process would not be further hindered by its impact and emotions incurred.
3. On the relationship between a man and a woman, Allah (SWT) states in the Holy Qur'an: "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the others, and because they support them from their means" (4:34). Islamically, it is the husband who provides for his wife throughout their marriage, paying her the immediate dowry prior to consummation and the deferred dowry following or upon her divorce.

Even if the wife works and earns a monthly income, she is not accountable for household bills or the children's food and housing because it is not *wajib* (mandate) in Islam that the wife shares in her husband's financial responsibilities. One exception to this is if she wants to work on her own in order to support her spouse. Allah (SWT) clearly mentions about the husband's responsibility in the Qur'an:

Let the man of means spend according to his means: and the husbands whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him. Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. After a difficulty, Allah will soon grant relief. (65:7)

And the dad of the born baby shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable basis. (2:233)

The Phenomenon of *Ṭalāq* in Malaysia

Malaysia is a Muslim-majority nation, but regrettably, it is also one in which, like other Islamic nations, the divorce rate is still high. The number of *ṭalāq* court cases in Malaysia from 2017 to 2021 are presented in the figure below:

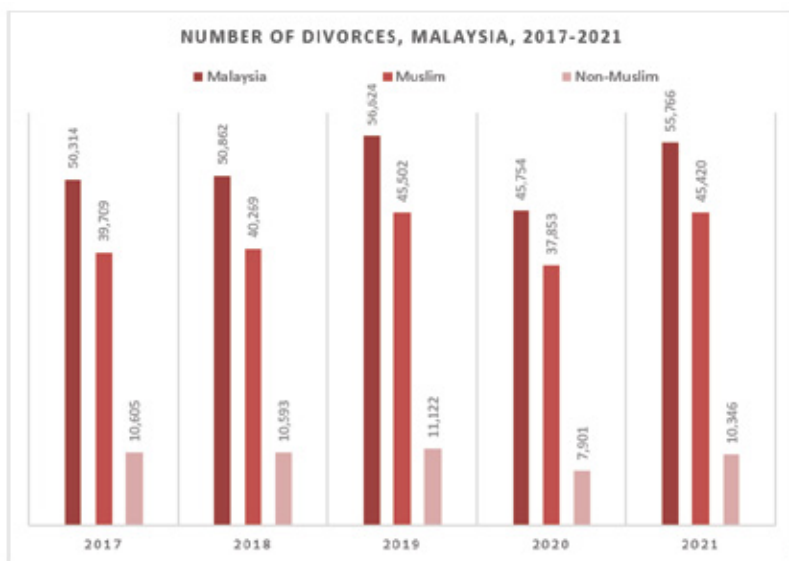


Figure 1: Divorce rates among Malaysian Muslim and Non-Muslim Couples

Figure 1 above depicts the number of divorces in Malaysian couples from 2017 to 2021 according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2021). The statistics demonstrates a significant number of divorces among Muslim spouses, with a steady rise from 2017 to 2019. However, the Sharia Court only processes divorce cases using Section 47, which is divorce through *ṭalāq* pronouncement with the approval of the husband and wife only. There was a minor drop in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, which has been ravaging Malaysia since early 2020. With 55,766 divorce cases in 2021 and a cumulative total of 45,420 in Muslim divorces, the number of Muslim couples filing for divorce is significantly higher than the 37,853 divorce cases among Muslim couples in the previous year.

The news media *Berita Harian* (Rodzi, 2022) has reported that the highest number of divorce cases in Muslim couples recorded nationwide in 2021 occurred in developed states such as Selangor and Johor. Of the total 45,420 divorce cases registered nationwide in 2021, Selangor recorded 8,811 cases, followed by Johor with 5,058 cases, Perak with 4,215 cases, Kelantan with 4,093 cases, Kedah with 3,873 cases, Pahang with 3,409 cases, Terengganu with 3,358 cases, Sabah with 3,027 cases, Federal Territory with 2,785 cases, Negeri Sembilan with 2,477 cases, Penang with 1,932 cases, Melaka with 1,597 cases and Perlis with 785 cases.

Primary Causes of *Talāq* in Muslim Couples in Malaysia

Based on the statistics on the divorce rate in Malaysia, there must be some factors and causes that lead to a higher rate of divorce among Muslim couples in the country.

The Director General of the Syariah Judiciary Department of Malaysia (JKSM), Datuk Dr. Mohd Naim Mokhtar, reports that the various causes that lead to the separation of a husband and wife include physical and emotional factors. Among the main causes identified are a lack of understanding between spouses, financial factors, failure to fulfil responsibilities, infidelity and family interference. There are also various forms of violence, including physical and emotional abuse, that cause divorce (Rodzi, 2022).

Additionally, in a comprehensive study in Malaysia, according to Shafiyah Iqlima in her writing entitled “Polemik Penceraian di Malaysia” (“Divorce Polemics in Malaysia”), the main causes of divorce are irresponsible attitudes and personalities of spouses, lack of understanding, anger issues and infidelity (Mohamad et al., 2021).

Negligence of Responsibility

According to Datuk Dr. Mohd Naim Mokhtar, the main cause leading to divorce among Muslim couples in Malaysia is a husband’s failure to fulfil responsibilities. As the head of a household, the husband needs to fulfil the rights of his wife. If this right is fulfilled properly, the household will surely be happy and peaceful and there will be feelings of love and

compassion for each other. Among the wife's rights are dowry, good treatment and external and internal alimony, including food, drink, clothing, education, health, shelter and other basic needs that need to be provided based on the husband's ability (Mohamad et.al, 2021).

Allah (SWT) expresses in the Qur'ān on the husband's duty: "Upon the father is the mothers' provision and their clothing according to what is acceptable" (2: 233). The obligation is not caused by the wife's need for the life of the household, but arises by itself without looking at the circumstances of the wife. Based on the description of the wife's rights that should be fulfilled by the husband, it can be concluded that the task of a husband is immense. To make a loving home, the wife's rights must be learned and put into practice.

Infidelity

According to Motivation and Family Counseling Consultant, Dr. Robiah Hamzah, husbands commit the majority of cases of infidelity. This fact is represented by an average of 10 household counselling cases that have been referred to her, eight of which were cheating husbands. The newspaper *Sinar Harian* also reported a case of a cheating husband who was willing to have sex with another woman after safely performing the Hajj (Mohamad et.al, 2021).

Several reasons can cause a husband to cheat on his wife, among which include immaturity, addiction, self-doubt, lack of support and selfishness. Nevertheless, there is no justifiable reason why a husband must cheat on his wife. Therefore, cheating is unacceptable in Islam, and it is forbidden for Muslim men to cheat on their wives. According to Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him): "The Prophet (SAW) said, "He is not one of us who cheats us" (Muslim, *hadīth* No. 101).

Domestic Violence

Another factor that contributes to divorce is domestic violence, which is brought on by the husband's physical and emotional abuse. Women are more likely to experience domestic abuse, according to both international and domestic statistics.

The Domestic Violence Act 1994 (Act 521) defines domestic violence as one or more of the following acts: a) wilfully or knowingly placing, or attempting to place, the victim in a state of fear of physical injury; b) causing physical injury to the victim; c) compelling the victim by coercion or threat to commit any conduct or act; d) confining or detaining the victim without the victim's consent; e) committing treason or destruction or damage to the victim's property; f) causing psychological abuse and; g) causing delusions by using any substance without the victim's consent (Mohamad et al., 2021).

In 2019, there were 2,459 personal protection orders (PPOs) granted by the courts, of which 76.4% were awarded to women as a result of threats and violence from their husbands, according to the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development. During the expansion of COVID-19, when the government began issuing MCOs (movement control orders), this situation worsened, resulting in a 22% rise in domestic violence, based on police data. The government pledged in its Budget 2021 to address this issue by providing MYR21 million to neighbourhood social assistance organisations to help end domestic violence.

Communication Issues

Lack of comprehension and communication issues are among the causes of divorce. Communication issues include using foul language against a spouse, failing to comprehend the spouse, communicating in a different language and other issues. For a relationship to be successful and joyful, communication is essential.

A married couple can demonstrate trust, respect and deference for what the other spouse thinks and believes by having open and honest communication. Additionally, effective communication can help a marriage survive challenges, but poor communication can turn a minor disagreement or argument into grounds for divorce.

Additionally, a lack of communication will make the couple's conflicts and related behaviours worse. Each side may start acting in ways that are meant to irritate and lay blame on the other. Ultimately, this leads to ongoing arguments that cannot be solved without good

communication skills and, in turn, unfortunately leads to many problems, particularly divorce.

Financial Problems

Financial hardship could also impact the stability of a marriage causing discords between the spouses.

Both the husband and wife have their respective responsibility to fulfil at home. As the head of the household, in Islam, a husband is required to totally support the family, while it is the wife's role to care for the home. A husband who failed to support his family will inevitably generate strife. Then, assuming that the couples could not cohabitate anymore due to incessant quarrels, they will eventually decide to end their marriage.

Therefore, married couples should prioritise their demands and jointly put each other's needs first and their egos aside. Every issue that arises in the home should be addressed by the family members first since there is always a solution.

Additionally, the economy must be able to meet family needs, just as compassion must be possessed by every member of the family. The wife's responsibility is to take care of all domestic necessities, while the husband must work to support the family. Regardless of how much money the husband makes, the woman must accept it and express gratitude in order to avoid arguments over money that could end in divorce. As Allah (SWT) says, "No soul shall be burdened with a weight that it cannot bear" (2: 233).

Third-party Interventions

Based on the law, a third party means anyone, whether a male or a female, consisting of a family member of a husband or wife, a loving couple or the surrounding community, who is the cause of disharmony in a person's marriage (Syari'ah Criminal Enactment State of Selangor, 1995). Family interference, mainly from the husband, contributes to divorce cases. According to Mohamad et al. (2021), the intervention of a third party includes the in-laws who attempt to split the couple's

household. Most husbands who are faced with this issue do not show any effort to improve the situation, eventually leading to divorce.

Third parties involving loving couples also contribute to divorce cases among Muslim couples. The husbands usually apply for divorce because they wish to marry another, but do not want to go through the legal polygamy process. There are cases of divorce applications being filed because wives cannot accept the practice of polygamy. This is also the case among wives who usually seek divorce because they want to marry a more affluent man.

The involvement of third parties that endanger the harmony of a marriage is recognised as a criminal violation and is taken seriously by both Sharia and Civil law. Act 559 of the Syariah Criminal Offences (Federal Territories) Act 1997, Part V - Miscellaneous Offences contains at least three provisions relating to a third person in a marriage. These provisions are intended to maintain the peace of the *ummah* (community) and prevent the dissolution of a household institution. However, the general public is still ignorant that such provisions exist.

The Consequences of *Talāq* for the Family

Consequences for the Parents

Men and women may experience divorce with varied effects on their wellbeing, such as changes in one's way of life, changes in the economy and identity issues, among others.

Life changes. Custodial parents who get divorced endure major life changes as a result, such as change in living situations, economic disadvantage, loneliness due to loss of social connections, and parental role strain caused by increased workload having to look after children while working outside the home.

Numerous studies have compared the health of married persons and those who are going through a divorce. Studies from the United States have shown that divorced persons generally indicate less happiness, more depressive symptoms, more social isolation, more traumatic life experiences and more health difficulties than married people (Amato, 2012; Chlen & Mustafa, 2008).

Divorce usually leads to some stressful life events. These stressors include a drop in living standards, which typically happens as a result of separating one household into two and losing economies of scale. People who were once married frequently move, which is a time-consuming and difficult event. Given that a second parent is no longer present in the home to share daily childrearing duties, parents who retain primary custody of their children (often mothers) frequently feel the pressure of solo parenting. In a similar vein, non-resident parents (often fathers) frequently experience sadness about the lack of regular contact with their children. Newly divorced individuals frequently discover that they move apart from former friends since married couples tend to associate with other married couples. Finally, disagreements about residency and access to the child can still arise between the former married parents. All of these stressful parts of getting a divorce could hurt people's physical and mental health.

The advantages of marriage are also lost after a divorce. Many people find comfort, friendship, a stable sexual partner and financial stability in marriage. Additionally, spouses frequently support one another in leading better lifestyles and reducing potentially harmful behaviours, such as excessive drinking or smoking. In other words, divorce results in both the loss of a positive component and the addition of a negative factor (greater stress).

Economic changes. One of the effects of divorce on a parent is economic change. Before their separation, spouses would typically work together to meet their daily needs. However, divorce occurs after issues arise between them and could not be resolved. Of course, this has an impact on how they describe their finances. Both spouses' capacity to work and succeed is lessened as a result of the divorce since they are unable to maintain their composure and serenity once it occurs. The result is that they have trouble concentrating at work. Reduced performance, loss of ideas and a lack of innovation are all effects of a lack of attention.

Additionally, financial difficulty and becoming an overly involved parent are two of the strongest effects of divorce. In reality, one issue that arises while facing a financial crisis is how to finance two separate families with the income and assets that previously supported just one. Additionally, many parents over-involve themselves in their children's

activities throughout the divorce filing phase. Due to this, the majority of overly involved parents are not narcissists but rather battling their issues, frequently alone (Chlen & Mustaffa, 2008).

Identity problems. It is true for women that separation is linked to an identity problem. One study's findings showed that after divorce, women frequently experience a lack of identity and a sense of rootlessness (Damota, 2019). This is particularly true for women whose identities were once intertwined with those of their husbands. Before getting divorced, many women define themselves in terms of their partners or children. In order to build their social network of contacts, wives may also rely on their husbands. After divorce, women who previously relied on their husbands for self-definition struggle with identity. In our contemporary life, they probably need to create their own social network and reinvent who they are. Women who work outside the home report fewer identity issues following a divorce. However, in Islam, a divorced woman's parents or relatives are responsible for her identity. This is because Allah SWT states: "An heir shall be chargeable in the same way" (2:233).

According to al-Imām bin Kathīr, when interpreting the verse,

The heir who is parents or relatives shall be responsible for a divorced woman's identity in the same way as her previous husband, and this is the opinion of the majority of the companions and scholars; thus, the Hanafi and Hanbali school of thought used the verse to prove the obligation of alimony for divorced woman given from her relatives. (Ibn Kathīr, I/1414AH, p. 351)

Consequences on the Children

Divorce may have an impact on a child's future relationships, education, social development and psychological health. Additionally, the effects of divorce on children continue for a long time and persist into adulthood. Adults with divorced parents have lower levels of education, higher rates of depression, poorer incomes, worse physical health and a higher likelihood of divorcing in the future.

Effects on children's psychology. Children who endure divorce are more likely to encounter and develop psychological issues. A study supports the claim that children from divorced families display a higher level of depression and anxiety. Moreover, the authors of the study also found that children who experience parental divorce tend to have more emotional, social, behavioural and learning problems than those from intact homes. Children with divorced parents also tend to display greater levels of anxiety, depression, anger and antisocial behaviour than those whose families remain intact. Children seem to lose a part of themselves when their parents' divorce and one moves out. It is common for children to experience emotions such as anger, sadness, confusion and, in some cases, even guilt. Divorce trauma includes emotions such as hate, despair, betrayal, loss and occasionally rejection and abandonment. Regardless of how long their parents have divorced, these emotions are still there for many teenagers (Aishatul et al., 2019).

Effects on children's social development. Compared to parents who have been happily married their entire lives and have set a positive example for their children, youngsters from divorced households typically lack social skills (Aishatul et al., 2019). Children of divorced parents who lack such a role model frequently struggle with closeness and loyalty.

Divorce has effects that last well through adolescence and into adulthood for the children involved. As a result, the next generation inherits the couple's bad behaviours, beliefs, interpersonal skills and values, continuing the pattern or cycle for the following generations and so on. Most children start using physical violence when they are young, though they will eventually learn to use alternatives in the following years before primary school age (Aishatul et al., 2019). Humans appear to develop the ability to control their use of physical aggression throughout their preschool years. Those who do not appear to be more likely to engage in significant violent behaviours as adolescents and adults.

Effects on children's education. Children going through their parents' divorce process may be distressed emotionally. This can have a range of impacts, including changes in mood, sleep patterns, hunger, focus and academic performance (Aishatul et al., 2019). Children at school are also more likely to face social and academic risks. According

to the authors of a study, such children frequently exhibit symptoms of depression, withdrawal, grief, fear, fantasies of responsibility for the split and a potential reconciliation, anger, shame, lower academic performance, a sense of loss or rejection and disagreements about which parent to show devotion to (Aishatul et al., 2019).

It is claimed that the reason why children of divorced parents have poor academic performance is because parents and teachers frequently underestimate or fail to notice any issues that they may be having in school. Furthermore, this indicates that their academic challenges may be more of a factor in their behaviour than their intelligence. Other effects on children of divorced parents include separation anxiety, regression in behaviour, somatic complaints and so on.

Effects on children's future relationships. Children of divorced parents also have concerns, anxieties and problems with commitment and love that will limit their ability to form romantic connections in the future. Less marital commitment and more pro-divorce attitudes were expressed by those whose parents had divorced, suggesting that attitudes towards marriage and divorce are ideas that are partially formed even before young adults begin dating (Aishatul et al., 2019). If a woman chooses a man to try and fill in the desires, needs and wants that were not met by her father throughout her childhood or adolescence as a result of a divorce, this could transfer into her choosing the wrong suitor to help her start and raise a family. However, for men, this could result in their ignorance of the role or need for a father figure in raising children. Ultimately, a man is likely to start and later abandon his family, as he has witnessed his parents do to his own family, not realising the ramifications of the aforementioned actions, and eventually passing on such flawed and harmful behaviours to a new generation.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Divorce can be defined as the dissolution of a marriage contract with the one who has the authority, here being the husband, the wife is not the subject of marriage until after it has taken place, and it may dissolve through the word "divorce," which shows its explicit or implicit meaning. Various factors are found to be sources contributing to marital problems between a husband and wife. This study has found

that negligence of responsibility, infidelity, domestic violence, lack of understanding between spouses, financial problems and third-party interventions are among the major factors contributing to the problem of divorce among Muslim couples in Malaysia.

The results of this study show that the tendency to divorce is at a worrying level. It is expected that divorce rates will continue to increase if comprehensive and systematic measures are not taken. Therefore, this study emphasises that both men and women should indeed play their roles in order to reduce the high rates of divorce by being aware of the main causes of divorce. Perhaps every divorce happens due to a lack of understanding of the true concept and purposes of marriage and divorce in light of the objectives of Sharia.

Thus, both parties should understand the concept and purposes of marriage so the problem of divorce can be reduced and avoided. Muslim couples must also avoid the causes of divorce and work together to achieve affection and comfort in married life. Last but not least, this study recommends enhancing the role of the government in reducing the rate of divorce. Among the measures that the government may implement is to mitigate areas of work as one of the causes of marriage dissolution as well as financial difficulty.

Without individual awareness, social awareness cannot be attained and institutional reform cannot be carried out. Since lowering the divorce rate is challenging without first starting the process, everyone should first be aware of the difficulties associated with marriage and institutional growth.

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Physical Learning as the Preferred Learning Style among IIUM Malay Undergraduates¹

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Abstract: This study discusses physical learning as the preferred learning style from the perspective of Malay undergraduate students studying at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), based on their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study employed a qualitative research approach and implemented face-to-face semi-structured interviews for data collection. Open-ended questions were utilised to enable the participants to freely discuss their experiences. Using the purposive sampling technique, ten (10) IIUM undergraduates were selected, 6 females and 4 males, and all the participants were Malay students from Malaysia. The results of the study showed that the students prefer physical learning (face-to-face) more than online, as it allows for better focus and concentration, as well as effective communication. The study investigates the preferred learning mode among IIUM undergraduates. As they have experienced both physical and online learning, they choose their preferred method for a better learning experience. According to the results, students were more prone to physical learning than online learning; hence it is beneficial to assist and follow students' preferences

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to boost their enthusiasm and determination in learning. Additionally, the findings will allow the university to look deeper into students' preferences and develop a well-established teaching and learning method that fulfills the requirements and is in line with the aim of the Ministry of Education to produce qualified individuals for society and the nation.

Keywords: Concentration, Focus, Communication, Online learning, COVID-19, IIUM Undergraduates

Background of the Study

There is a global consensus that educated individuals obtain knowledge and develop the skills they need for the job market to escape poverty (United Nations, n.d.; Giovetti, 2022). Countries have their vision and mission regarding education to transform individuals for the betterment of society. For example, the ministries of education in India and the United States aim to provide easy access to quality education that benefits the individual, community, and the whole nation (Ministry of Education India, 2021; U.S Department of Education, 2018). Brazil, a developing country, has the initiative to boost enrollment in higher education by joining federal programs like the Open University of Brazil (UAB), enhancing the standard of higher education, and promoting distance learning alongside traditional classroom instruction (Heredia et al., 2019). In the case of Malaysia, the Ministry of Education seeks to provide a quality education that can uplift potential individuals for the nation (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2019). According to Grapragasem et al. (2014), Malaysia's educational system aims to create knowledgeable and skilled individuals capable of improving the country's economic standing and transforming it into a high-income country.

Before the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, physical learning was the most applied learning mode. In a typical physical learning setting, also known as face-to-face learning, students and instructors are physically present in the same learning environment (Darkwa & Antwi, 2021), and students concentrate and interact with each other. According to Tran (2016), the physical learning environment is synchronous. Students are present in class for learning purposes, and instructors teach, provide instructions for completing assignments, and consult

students who require additional assistance. Such physical interaction during learning is important for students to receive immediate feedback on the learning process (Kemp & Grieve, 2014; Tran, 2016). Instructors also observe students' responses to the course and provide appropriate learning techniques (Tran, 2016). Paul and Jefferson (2019) found that obtaining a degree through physical learning is more demanding in finding a job than online because the skills required for both are different, and skills received during physical learning appear to fulfil the requirement of any organisation.

After the global spread of the pandemic, educational institutions turned to online learning to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning in a safe environment. The Malaysian government, for instance, imposed a nationwide lockdown, resulting in the shutdown of all sectors, including the educational sector (Ramli et al., 2020).

Online learning is granting learners access to learning experiences through the utilisation of technology (Moore et al., 2010). It uses online platforms, such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams (Mustapha et al., 2021). These platforms became increasingly utilised globally for education purposes. However, the success of online education relies on specific resources, including high-speed internet, high-quality technological devices, and an appropriate learning environment (Bringula et al., 2021). Without having any of these elements, students encountered difficulties affecting the quality of their education. For example, Chung et al. (2020), Ismail et al. (2020), and Mustapha et al. (2021) stated that poor internet connection was the greatest challenge among students during online learning, which caused a delay in learning, especially in rural areas. Farooq et al. (2021) also found that students in rural areas were negatively affected during online learning because of poor Internet coverage. Family financial strains prevented students from purchasing internet data or other necessary study materials (Amir et al., 2020).

Moreover, online learning harmed students' communication with each other (Nassr et al., 2020; Wildman et al., 2021) and their interaction with learning material (Subedi et al., 2020). Some students came from families with limited financial capabilities; therefore, their parents could not afford to provide them with new or high-quality devices. In some households, siblings were required to share a single device (Zainol et

al., 2021). Studying in a distracting environment was another challenge. Students' understanding and concentration were affected by noise from family members and surroundings at home (Cabual & Cabual, 2022).

Suffering from headaches, migraines, and eyesight problems were common health problems during online learning (Subedi et al., 2020; Hashish et al., 2022). Sitting in front of the screen for a long time made students suffer from anxiety, sadness, stress, backache, and eye strain (Idris et al., 2021). Students who reported experiencing these drawbacks were reluctant to continue with online learning. Physical classes are preferred for more meaningful and effective learning experiences (Win and Wynn, 2015). This paper discusses the students' perspective that physical classes improve concentration and communication.

Physical Learning as the Preferred Learning Style

Virtual education was implemented during the critical time of the COVID-19 pandemic. It took place at home, which is a new learning environment with different circumstances. Even though the learning process was controlled by stakeholders in the education sector, the IIUM undergraduates viewed that the lack of focus and concentration and the declined communication between themselves and their instructors affected their learning experience and made them prefer physical learning. Figure 1 shows the two main themes discussed in the paper.

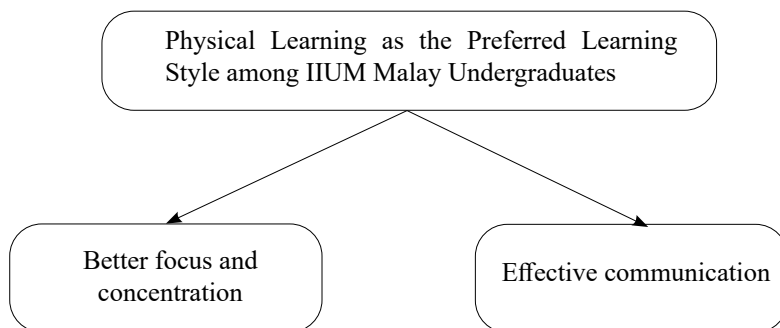


Figure 1 Research Themes

Concentration is the key to understanding learning material. However, concentration level varies according to the learning environment. (Keis et al., 2017) found that in-person learning stimulates students' attention, especially when learning difficult subjects. Physical learning is also known as a teacher-centered style, and students are more focused as the lecturer is their center of focus in receiving knowledge (Coman et al., 2020). There are fewer distractions in real classrooms than online (Kumari et al., 2021); consequently, students concentrate more and comprehend the course material more effectively (Tambunan et al., 2020). A study in Indonesia concluded that students had a better focus on understanding the course and applying what they had learned in class during physical learning (Amir et al., 2020). Due to face-to-face learning promoting focus and concentration, it is significant to implement effective teaching approaches to address the lack of focus when learning online (Fatonian et al., 2020).

Most of the participants in the present study expressed that they had higher concentration and focus during face-to-face learning. During the pandemic, the alternative learning environment was the household. Noise and household chores were common distractions causing a loss of concentration and motivation for online learning. For some students, it was embarrassing to open the microphone and talk to the lecturer to ask questions or interact with the other students because of the noise at their end.

For example, Min, a third-year student, could not cope with the distraction of online learning. She said,

I did not like learning online. I got distracted easily by a simple noise. In contrast, I have better concentration when I am in the classroom. The lecturer is in front of me, so I can interact and ask questions or further explanations.

Dam, another participant, also preferred going to physical classes to escape the distractions at home.

We had a baby at home. When the baby cried, I had to do something. My other siblings also needed my attention since my parents were busy. I did not have a good experience with online education because of the uncontrollable distractions

at home. For this reason, I prefer to have physical classes so I can be more focused.

Besides having better focus and concentration, students prefer physical classes for effective communication. Realising the distinction between the nature of communication during face-to-face and online education influences students' preferences and explains why they prefer physical learning (Miller, 2020). Physical learning provides a platform for direct communication and face-to-face interaction (Darkwa & Antwi, 2021). According to Kemp and Grieve (2014), a physical classroom setting creates social connectedness and a sense of community. Students in India did not favor online learning because the quality of instruction was inferior (Nambiar, 2020). A study showed that students preferred physical learning because it offered immediate engagement and feedback (Keis et al., 2017; Paul & Jefferson, 2019; Miller, 2020). Virtual learning lacks direct contact as students are geographically separated (Darkwa & Antwi, 2021). The lack of social communication prevented students from speaking with the course instructor; as a result, it did not generate the expected learning outcomes (Adnan and Anwar, 2020). A study showed that students preferred in-person education since they could communicate more freely in physical classes, especially in group discussions (Amir et al., 2020).

Effective communication is vital during the learning process, whether between learners or between learners and instructors. Good learning outcomes rely on communicating ideas, thoughts, knowledge, and information, regardless of whether the education is physical or virtual. All the participants in the present study expressed that communication in physical classrooms plays a significant role in improving their understanding of assignments and doing well in final exams. Khai, for example, physical classes helped him better understand the material assigned for final examinations because of the direct communication with his colleagues. In contrast, he pointed out that lack of immediate communication with the instructor during online learning had a negative effect on his Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). In this regard, he commented the following,

When we learn face-to-face, I study for the final exams with my colleagues, and I can discuss the points I do not understand. When I studied online, it was hard to understand

a course on my own as I faced the obstacle of having limited and indirect communication with either the instructors or colleagues. This really affected my CGPA.

During online learning, group-based projects continued to be implemented, but communication challenges affected the quality of the project output. The lack of immediate and face-to-face meetings was the most mentioned reason among the participants. When groupmates interact in person, they are more likely to develop good communication in delegating project tasks. In contrast, students lacked virtual communication skills; consequently, they could not express ideas, divide the tasks, or cooperate in finishing the project. Qurr, a fourth-year student, talked about her experience in this regard, saying,

When we have classroom classes, our groupmates meet on campus or in the library to discuss a project. We all communicate directly and clarify ambiguous points. After that, the discussion for minor points continues via WhatsApp. However, during the pandemic, we held discussions through Google Meet or Zoom Meeting. We faced the problem that not all groupmates could attend the virtual meeting because of technological or Internet connection problems. At the same time, some groupmates attended the meeting but without participating in the discussion. I can say that misunderstandings happened during that time.

Nat, a participant from the Department of Psychology, talked about her experience with physical and online learning in terms of group discussion.

Face-to-face discussions with my groupmates provide me with instant feedback on whether groupmates understand the assigned tasks. During online learning, I could not tell if everyone would do the work well. Some replied by saying 'okay', but in reality, they were not okay.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that IIUM undergraduates prefer physical learning. Concentration is a component of the learning process;

however, it is often lacking when it comes to online learning. Without physical presence and face-to-face communication with instructors and classmates, some students found it difficult to concentrate during lessons and were hesitant to interact. Moreover, there were potential interruptions at home that were beyond the student's control, like family noise and household chores. Students' privacy was also affected as family members were present at home most of the time during the lockdown because of the pandemic. These findings are consistent with Coman et al. (2020), who concluded that physical learning is teacher-centered. While lecturers serve as their primary point of attention, students become more attentive and focused on class. According to Win and Wynn (2015), in-person instruction provides more engaging and effective learning opportunities than online. Focus and concentration in classes improve students' grasp of the learning material and develop interpersonal skills.

It is worth mentioning that IIUM students' preference for physical learning can be explained in terms of their satisfaction with provided facilities. The learning environment (classrooms and lecture halls) of IIUM is comfortable, with air conditioning, good lighting, data show equipment, whiteboards, disks, and seats. Besides, the university has the vision of producing students with Islamic values who are able to lead their nations. Accordingly, it is common for IIUM students to speak highly of the valued character of their respected lecturers who offer knowledge and respect during class and consultation hours. All these learning privileges were lost during online education, and the students faced unexpected challenges.

Being in the same learning environment with other students has its own value, fostering a sense of community that is absent when studying online. In-person learning creates meaningful and effective social connections and relationships. This type is difficult to imitate in an online setting since most learners do not communicate with one another outside of the virtual classroom. Most of the participants had the point of view that physical learning makes social communication easier. These findings are consistent with the research of Amir et al. (2020) that easy communication makes students prone to physical learning. It is also consistent with Kemp and Grieve (2014) that students' preferences toward physical learning developed because of social connectedness and a sense of community.

To engage students in the learning process, IIUM educators design individual and group assignments to enhance students' understanding and skills. It is common to observe undergraduate students searching for supplementary learning materials and studying in groups. They meet in the main library, in the hostel, on campus, and in the cafeteria for lunch or dinner. Above all, they are recommended to contact instructors and visit their offices whenever they require learning support. During the virtual classes, the students experienced feelings of isolation and separation, which worsened when they existed in a different time zone. The absence of interaction and discussion between students demotivated them and reduced the quality of learning; consequently, they preferred physical learning.

Conclusion

The paper discussed why physical learning is a preferred learning mode from the point of view of ten Malay undergraduate students studying at IIUM. Generally, they were dissatisfied with learning experiences and outcomes. Similar to other universities, turning to online learning at IIUM happened in exceptional circumstances. There was a shift from an academic environment to home, where uncontrollable distractions and limited learning equipment. For IIUM Malay undergraduates, physical classes are preferred to provide better focus, concentration, and effective communication.

Limitations of the Study

The study involved several limitations. First, it presented a qualitative case study of Malay undergraduate students studying at the Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences. Therefore, future research is needed to explore the experiences of international students studying in different kulliyyah's to ensure the validity of the results. Second, the study presented the point of view of students, and it is necessary to investigate instructors' perspectives. Third, it is recommended to increase the sample of the study for making a generalisation.

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Imam Ahmed Raza Khan and the Revival of the Islamic Astronomy in India

Naseeb Ahmed Siddiqui¹

Abstract: Revisionist historians of medieval Islamic astronomy acknowledge the impact of the *Maragha* astronomical movement led by Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī. The advanced work conducted at the *Maragha observatory*, which benefited from earlier Muslim astronomers' critique of Greek astronomy, became a direct source for the 13th to 16th-century astronomers working in different parts of the Islamic world. However, after the Copernican revolution and its reception in the West, this 'new heliocentric astronomy' initiated debates in the Muslim lands due to the motion ascribed to the Earth. By the end of the 19th century, Muslims in Syria and Egypt started to accept heliocentric astronomy as a fact without proper investigation. Similarly, Muslim travelers from British India learned this new astronomy and propagated it without critical analysis. As a result, the Muslim community faced criticism for not upholding the legacy of their ancestors in the field of astronomy, as they did not contribute a critical analysis of Copernican astronomy. This article introduces Ahmed Raza Khan, as a mathematician, and astronomer from India, who played a pivotal role in revitalizing the Islamic astronomy of the past. Engaging in the discourse of new astronomy, he meticulously examined the works of renowned figures such as Copernicus, Isaac Newton, and Kepler, as well as the established principles of modern physics and astronomy. It is worth noting that Ahmed Raza Khan's perspectives differed in various aspects from those of his Islamic predecessors. This introduction of Ahmed Raza Khan and his contributions to astronomy aims to inspire critical research and shed light on the overstated assertions made by historians regarding the transfer of knowledge from the West to the East. Additionally, it sheds light on why Indian Muslims paid limited attention to colonial astronomy.

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Keywords: Ahmed Raza, Copernican astronomy, *Maragha* movement, Islamic astronomy, Geocentric model, heliocentric model.

Introduction

Islamic astronomy refers to the scientific study and exploration of celestial objects and phenomena conducted by Muslim scholars during the Islamic Golden Age, which spanned from the 8th to the 14th centuries. Especially, shortly after the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols in 1258 AD (all the years are in AD), in the northwest of Iran, an astronomical observatory now known as ‘*Maragha observatory*’ was founded in 1259. This was led by the famous mathematician and astronomer Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī under the patronage of Ilkhanid Hulagu. The major figures who worked include the architect of the observatory Mu’ayyad al-Dīn al-‘Urḍī (d. 1266), Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 1311), and Yaḥyā bin Abī al-Shukr al-Maghribī (d. 1283) (Saliba, 1983). In 1957, Edward Kennedy accidentally discovered the treatise *Nihāyah al-Sūl fī Taṣḥīḥ al-Uṣūl* by Ibn al-Shāṭir, a prominent astronomer from Damascus who lived until 1375 (Saliba, 1987). Prior to this, Kennedy had already discussed Ibn al-Shāṭir’s *al-Zij al-Jadīd* in 1956 (Kennedy, 1956), and Victor Roberts also contributed to the study of Ibn al-Shāṭir’s work in 1957 (Roberts, 1957). The recovery of the treatise shed light on various aspects of Ibn al-Shāṭir’s planetary model, and subsequent research by Kennedy, Roberts, Abbud, and others further expanded the understanding of his contributions to astronomy (Kennedy and Roberts, 1959; Abbud, 1962; Roberts, 1966). Swerdlow’s (1973) comment on Copernicus’ ambiguous understanding of his models suggests that there is a link with the work of Ibn al-Shāṭir, which Copernicus seems to use, and Roberts (1975) predicted this link as well. There were many theoretical and mathematical similarities between the Copernican and Ibn al-Shāṭir’s models. This led George Saliba to investigate, at length, the theoretical and observational work of Ibn al-Shāṭir (Saliba, 1987). By surveying the life of Guillaume Postel and Ignatius Nehemias, who used to travel both the East and West, especially Italy, Saliba noted that Copernicus might have been aware of the works of Muslim astronomers (Saliba, 2007; <http://www.columbia.edu/~gas1/project/visions/case1/sci.4.html#t32>). Besides the mathematical similarities, Copernicus used the same comet argument employed by al-Ṭūsī to discredit Ptolemy (Ragep, 2001). This argument persisted among Muslim astronomers,

as evident in the works of al-Khafīrī (Saliba, 1994). Such similarities were more than mere coincidences. George Saliba wrote 'Islamic Science and the Making of European Renaissance', discussing the recent advancements and discoveries in Islamic astronomy and its impact on Copernican astronomy (Saliba, 2007). Similarly, Kennedy's 'Studies in The Islamic Exact Sciences' (Kennedy, 1983) concludes that the theoretical, observational, and mathematical aspects of Western astronomy depended, in no small part, on the research of Muslim astronomers.

However, the controversy surrounding the Copernican model, which proposed the centrality of the sun and the motion of the Earth, challenged the long-held view in the Earth's static nature. The concept of a static Earth was not solely influenced by Greek astronomy but also by the interpretation of the Quran and Hadith within the Muslim community. As both sources seemed to align with the notion of a stationary Earth, it was challenging to deviate from this position. The religious interpretation of static Earth can be found in *tafsīr* (commentaries) of Quran, like *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* in verse 27 of the 27th chapter, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an ta'wīl ay al-Qur'ān (Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī)* in 41 of 41st chapter, *Tafsīr al-Gharīb al-Qur'ān* and *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* of Imam Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in verse 22 of the 2nd chapter. This underscores that Muslim exegetes were aware of the ongoing research in astronomy in their time. Some, like the author of *Tafsīr al-Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, Niẓām al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Nīsābūrī was a mathematician and astronomers. The same is true for Imam Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī. Al-Nīsābūrī had written a commentary on al-Ṭūsī's *Tahrīr al-Majisī* and his astronomical tables named *Kashf-i-ḥaqa'iq-i Zi-i Ilkhani* (Campion et al., 2007). Al-Nīsābūrī also studied under the famous astronomer Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, a student of al-Ṭūsī (Samsó, 2010). All the Muslim astronomers defended the static earth theory by trying to rule out errors from the geocentric model to the extent that they developed a new version of planetary motions. It would seem that there was an unspoken consensus where no one bothered to raise the issue of earth motion. There is only one explicit reference to this in Abū Sa'īd Sijzī's heliocentric Astrolabe discussed by al-Bīrūnī. However, al-Bīrūnī dismissed the possibility on mathematical grounds (Biruni, 1910). The upshot is that one can now appreciate why understanding the Earth's motion is vital.

During the late 19th century, George Saliba analyzed the reception of Copernican astronomy by Muslim and Christian scholars in Egypt and Syria. Muslim scholars sought to emphasize the novel aspects of Copernican astronomy by drawing connections to the works of al-Ghazālī and al-Izjī. Their intention was to present these new ideas within a religious framework, thereby facilitating their acceptance based on religious grounds (Saliba, 1987). The introduction of Copernican astronomy saw a fluid reception within religious circles. However, the focus of the debate was not on the theoretical or mathematical aspects of the new astronomy. Instead, the primary concern revolved around the religious interpretation of Earth's motion. This marked a significant departure from the reception of Greek sciences from Muslim intellectuals, as there was a lack of serious analysis of Copernican astronomy from the outset.

On the contrary, the reception of Copernican astronomy in British India was more complex. The British colonization oversaw a transfer of Western knowledge to India, especially astronomy, which saw the establishment of several observatories. Rajesh Kochhar described it as state-funded observatories in Madras and other places (Kochhar, 1991). However, the claim that India's awareness of Copernican astronomy began with the British is incorrect. It does not reflect the intellectual struggle by Indian Muslims during the late 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Historian Razaullah Ansari asserts that Copernican astronomy from the 18th to late 19th century was studied by at least nine Muslim scholars who wrote in Arabic and Persian. One such scholar is al-Ḥusaynī al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1790), who visited Europe during 1772/1773 and recorded the development in astronomy in his book *Risālah dar aḥwāl-i mulk-i farang wa Hindustan*. In this treatise, he detailed the ongoing work in astronomy, such as the work of Isaac Newton and the heliocentric theory. Similarly, Abū Ṭālib bin Ḥusayn of Lucknow completed a book named *Tahqīqat-i jadīdah dar 'ilm-I hay'at* as early as 1793. Along with this book, he wrote four books on modern astronomy in 1772, 1797, 1798, and 1807. Ansari identifies the last book as *Qanūn-i-Naṣīrī* or *Kitāb dar 'ilm-I hay'at* written in 1868. A Muslim mathematician and astronomer named Gulam Husayn Jaunpuri wrote *Anis al-Aḥbāb fī Bayān Masā'il Aṣṭurlab* in 1818, in which he discussed the problem of the Astrolabe and other developments in astronomy (Ansari, 2014). Raja Rattan Singh

also summarised and produced the work *Ḥadā'iq al-Nujūm* (Gardens of Astronomy), printed in 1841 (Ansari, 1998, 2002).

It is clear that while Muslim scholars openly embraced the technical astronomical knowledge from the West, it seems that they neglected to subject this information to critical analysis. The exaggerated accounts of Western progress promoted by colonial administrations convinced Muslim scholars of the validity of Western intellectual achievements. In contrast, the principles of legitimate knowledge transfer, which involve scrutiny, analysis, and improvement, were not adhered to. Interestingly, Muslim scholars scrutinized Greek astronomy in the past, and the West subsequently examined the fruits of their labor. However, when it came to the Copernican system, its merits and shortcomings were seemingly accepted without question. In this context, the role of Ahmed Raza Khan assumes great significance. This article will introduce his biography, essential works, and treatise on the critique of Copernican astronomy and modern science. It should be noted that a detailed analysis of Ahmed Raza Khan's astronomical work is not the primary focus of this article.

Ahmed Raza Khan: Life and Works

Ahmed Raza Khan, born in 1856 in Bareilly, Western United Province, arrived in the world just a year prior to the momentous revolt against the British. His lineage boasted a history of ancestral soldiers serving under the Mughal emperor. However, Riza Ali, Ahmed Raza Khan's grandfather, chose to depart from the path of a soldier and instead devoted himself to religious studies. Consequently, the family's focus shifted toward religious pursuits. Under the tutelage of his father, Maulana Naqi Ali Khan, Ahmed Raza Khan received his early education, and at the remarkably young age of 13 years and 10 months, he emerged as a scholar in his own right. Later on, the scholars of Makkah and Medinah entitled Ahmed Raza Khan as a *Mujaddid* (The Reviver) (Hallaq, 1984) of the 14th century Hijra (Sahab, 1997; Zafar ud-Din, 1938). Usha Sanyal studied his life and influence in British India in her seminal work (Sanyal, 2020,2005). As per the Imam Ahmed Raza Research Institute (<http://imamahmadraza.net/wfproducts.aspx?md=4>), 21 Ph.D. and six master dissertations have been completed on his various works.

Ahmed Raza Khan is said to have written over 1000 books (Sahab, 1997) on more than 50 branches of knowledge. Below is the approximate number of treatises for the different fields:

1. Taf̄s̄ir of the Quran (11)
2. 'Aqā'id (Belief) (54)
3. Ḥadīth and Principles of *Aḥādīth* (53)
4. Fiqh, Principles of Fiqh, Dictionary of Fiqh
5. *Farā'id* and Tajwīd (214)
6. Tasawwuf, *Wazīfas*, Morals (19)
7. Reviews of Books (40)
8. Language, Arabic Grammar, Dictionaries, History
9. Poetry and Special Benefits, Travelling (55)
10. Inspired Knowledge (Jafar) (11)
11. Logarithms (8)
12. Astronomy, Astrology (22)
13. Mathematics, Geometry (31)
14. Philosophy, Sciences, Logistics (7)
15. Algebra (4)

(<http://www.alahazrat.net/islam/writing-work-of-imam-ahmad-raza.php>)

Ahmed Raza Khan, a polymath with extensive knowledge, was among the many great Muslim scholars who possessed a deep understanding of both the religious and modern sciences of their era. This multidisciplinary background nurtured their curiosity and proficiency in diverse fields. However, the question of Earth's motion remained largely unexplored following the advent of Copernican astronomy. Most Muslim scholars endeavored to reconcile the new astronomical ideas with religious teachings, drawing inspiration from the Quran and Ḥadīth, as emphasized by George Saliba. However, the issue of Earth's motion in India was dramatically revived due to the bold and unexpected prediction made by American Professor Albert F. Porta on

October 18, 1919. Porta predicted a syzygy that was anticipated to occur on December 17, 1919, sparking widespread attention and discussion. The news of the prediction was narrated to Ahmed Raza Khan by his student Zafaruddin Bihari:

“On December 17, Mercury, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, and Neptune align in conjunction on the same side of the sun, with a separation of 26° between them. This rare alignment is expected to exert a significant gravitational pull on the sun, causing it to gradually shift its position. Notably, Uranus will be positioned directly opposite this planetary congregation, creating a unique configuration unseen in recorded human history. The combined electromagnetic forces generated by Uranus and the six planets are believed to create a phenomenon where a hole forms in the sun. Furthermore, a remarkable sunspot will become visible on December 17, observable even without the aid of telescopes. The appearance of such a sunspot visible to the naked eye is unprecedented and will have significant effects on atmospheric patterns around the Earth. These disturbances may lead to the occurrence of hurricanes, thunderstorms, heavy rainfall, and increased volcanic activity. After several weeks, the Earth will gradually return to its normal state, overcoming the disruptions caused by this celestial event.” (Raza, 1919; New York Times, December 14, 1919; Marlborough Express, December 3, 1919; The Pittsburgh Press, November 29, 1919; The Puke Times, December 5, 1919)

The prediction led Ahmed Raza Khan to investigate Copernican astronomy and especially the motion of Earth. He compiled four books, as listed below:

1. *Mu'īn-i-Mubin Bahar Daur-i-Shamas-o-Sukūn-i-Zamīn* (1919)
2. *Fauz-i-Mubin Dar Radd-i-Harkat-i-Zamīn* (1920)
3. *Al-Kalimah al-Mulhamah fī al-Hikmatī al-Muḥkamah li Wihā'yi al-Falsafati al-Mash'amah* (1920)
4. *Nuzūl-i-Āyāt-i-Furqān Basukūn-i-Zamīn-o-Āsman* (1921)

I do not intend to describe at length the arguments presented by Ahmed Raza Khan in these books. Rather, I wish to illustrate how he single-handedly revived the spirit of critique.

Mu‘īn-i-Mubin Bahar Daur-i- Shamas-o-Sukūn-i-Zamīn (A Fair Guide on the Revolving Sun and the Static Earth)

This is the first treatise on this matter specifically written to refute the predictions of Professor Albert. Initially, Ahmed Raza Khan published the refutation in a magazine which later on compiled into a short treatise. In this, Ahmed Raza Khan says, after analysing the arguments posed by Professor Albert:

“Professor has based his arguments on the sun-centered solar system in which other planets revolve around it. According to this system, those six planets will be mutually placed at 26 degrees, but this premise is nothing but false and against the Quran. Neither the sun is at the centre nor do planets go around it. On the contrary, the centre of the Earth is the centre of knowledge, and every planet with the sun goes around it. Allah Taala azzawajal says in Quran, “The sun and the moon are scheduled.”” (Raza, 2020, 1919, p. 3)

Ahmed Raza Khan started his premises based on the Quran and asserted that Professor Albert’s argument was based on Copernican planetary theory. He denied the planetary theory based on the sun and proposed that it is not the sun, but the Earth lies at the center of the planets. He then indulged in astronomical and mathematical debates by basing his calculations on the geocentric model, where the Earth is at the center of the solar system. Ahmed Raza Khan calculated the positions of the planets for 17th December, 1919, as given in Figure 1 and Figure 2. Ahmed Raza Khan claimed that the mutual position of planets would be 122°, which is significantly different from Professor Albert’s claim of 26°. Similarly, Ahmed Raza Khan knew that the law of gravitation was the underlying fabric of the heliocentric theory. So, he analysed the law of gravitation and says:

“Did all the planets agree to attack the sun? It is absolutely wrong. If the law of gravitation (*Jajebi ’yat*) is correct, then it must apply to all. If the combined power of these six planets can destroy the sun, then what stops them from destroying Saturn, which is smaller than the sun a thousand times over? Mars is smaller than Saturn, and Mercury is the smallest of all. These must be shattered into pieces. It is absurd to believe that the weaker will be spared in exchange for the stronger (the sun), who will lose the battle against the six planets. Gravitational law denies any conjunction of this type.” (Raza, 1919, p. 5)

Position			Planet	موقع			کواکب
Minute	Degree	Constellation		دقیقه	درج	علامت	
15	11	the lion	Neptune	۱۵	۱۱	برج اسد	نپتون
54	17	the lion	Jupiter	۵۴	۱۷	-	مشتری
39	11	The stem	Saturn	۳۹	۱۱	سنبلہ	زحل
10	9	Libra	Mars	۱۰	۹	میزان	مریخ
19	9	Scorpio	Venus	۱۹	۹	عقرب	زہرہ
30	3	Sagittarius	Mercury	۳۰	۳	قوس	عطارد
30	24	Sagittarius	Sun	۳۰	۲۴	-	شمس
26	28	Aquarius	Uranus	۲۶	۲۸	دلو	یورینس

Figure 1: Positions of Planets on December 17 1919, based on the Geocentric model (On the left is the English translation and on the right is the original table)

Position		Planet	موقع		کواکب
Minute	Degree		دقیقه	درج	
20	129	Jupiter	۲۰	۱۲۹	مشتری
53	129	Neptune	۵۳	۱۲۹	نپتون
42	142	Venus	۴۲	۱۴۲	زہرہ
50	153	Mercury	۵۰	۱۵۳	عطارد
17	154	Mars	۱۷	۱۵۴	مریخ
43	155	Saturn	۴۳	۱۵۵	زحل
57	330	Uranus	۵۷	۳۳۰	یورینس

Figure 2: Average Position of Planets on December 17, 1919, based on the Geocentric Model (On the left is the English translation, and on the right is the original table)

Professor Albert also predicted electric and weather catastrophes due to unexpected sunspots (*New York Times*, December 14, 1919). To counter such a claim, Ahmed Raza Khan offered several observational references proving that such sunspots were seen in the past and nothing happened. He quoted ‘Allāmah Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, who recorded a

black spot the size of the moon slightly above the center of the sun in his book *al-Tuhfah al-sahiyah fi al-hay'ah*. Bin Maja of Andalusia (Spain) recorded seeing two dots on the sun, and he understood them as Venus and Mercury. Hershell II saw a dot on the sun, and then Samet saw it on 29th July, 1807. Koski reported a dot on January 20, 1865, and provided the following drawing in Figure 3.



Figure 3: July 29, 1807, a spot seen by Samet (Raza, 1919, p. 12)

Professor Albert's position was discussed and supported by the leading astronomers in America, as per the *New York Times*. It is inconceivable to think that a single man challenged this position and maintained that the Earth is static and denied any catastrophe based on sunspots of any kind and size. Ahmed Raza Khan supported his position with astronomical and mathematical calculations. Also, one should remember that Ahmed Raza Khan was awarded the title of *Mujaddid* (The Reviver) and has a large following in British India. Publishing such a view was a risk to his credibility. He would have compromised his standing in the sub-continent if he had been wrong, and his followers would begin doubting his ability. In short, he has a lot to lose. Nevertheless, Ahmed Raza Khan not only published his views but also asked Muslims to pay no heed to those prophecies premised on what he believed were the false arguments of the Earth's motion and gravitation law. On December 17, the date of Professor Albert's prediction, no catastrophe occurred, which persuaded people to believe in the geocentric model. Such criticism created opportunities to revisit the notion of blind acceptance of modern science. This treatise has several

other arguments, but only a few are highlighted to contextualize Ahmed Raza Khan's encounter with the earth motion issue. It should also be noted that Ahmed Raza Khan published those arguments in a magazine that was later compiled into a short treatise. The arguments formulated in this response were then also transferred into the specifically written larger book on the subject, which is being introduced next.

***Fauz-i-Mubin Dar Radd-i-Harkat-i-Zamīn* (A Fair Success in Refuting the Motion of the Earth)**

Since Ahmed Raza Khan paved the way for the critique of Copernican astronomy through his direct encounter with Professor Albert's predictions, he advanced his critique further in the book *Fauz-i-Mubin Dar Radd-i-Harkat-i-Zamīn*. This book is a mathematical, astronomical, philosophical, and logical refutation of Copernican astronomy and a discussion of ancient philosophy. He states in the Preface of the book:

“This magazine, a historical epoch, was titled “*Fauz-e-Mubeen Dar Radd-e-Harkat-e-Zameen*” (The clear success in the falsification of the movement of the Earth), containing a foreword, four sections (chapters), and one concluding chapter. The foreword will include conceptions of modern astronomy which will be used in this book. The first chapter will contain a discussion on the repulsion force leading to the falsehood and absurdity of the motion of the Earth. There will be 12 proofs on this subject. In the Second Chapter, there will be arguments over the conception of attraction leading to 50 proofs of the falsehood of the motion of the Earth. The Third Chapter is comprised of 43 proofs on the absurdity of the motion of the Earth, By the Praise of Allah; thus, there are, in all, one hundred and five (105) proofs against the motion of the Earth, of which 15 have been discussed in the past in other books in which we have made corrections and alterations as required and out of these there are ninety (90), very clear & perfect. They are our own making, by the Grace of Allah. In Chapter Fourth, there is resistance to those doubts the modern astronomers tender in support of the correctness of the motion of the Earth. At the end of it, there are some proofs from the Heavenly Books in affirmation and support of the revolution of the sun and the stillness of the earth.” (Raza, 1920, 2005, p. 8-9)

Ahmed Raza Khan aims to falsify the motion of the Earth by resisting and corroborating through modern science. His argument revolves around the law of universal gravitation, which he criticized because in the absence of gravity, there is no second cause to support the celestial motion, and it becomes impossible to prove the motion of the Earth.

In The Forward, Ahmed Raza Khan examines the notions of repulsion, attraction, innate force, weight, heaviness, centrifugal force, centripetal force, tides due to attraction, pressure, weightlessness, and many fundamentals of modern science. He explains the notion and argument of modern science and its incoherence and falsehood. Ahmed Raza Khan engaged in the discussion of weight and heaviness because modern science started to use gravitation as a support for weight but ended up considering it the creator of weight. He quotes the statement of William Hershel that “on the stars, means between Mars and Jupiter a man can jump up to sixty feet without any trouble” (Raza, 2005, p. 27). Ahmed Raza Khan refutes this concept of weightlessness in point number 15 according to modern science; he says:

“This idea of weightlessness is totally and wholly the clear falsification that the body has no weight on its own and it gets existence due to attraction. This is evident by the numerous declarations on the parts of astronomy. (A) That the density of the gold on the planet Mercury is nearly two times that of the Earth. But being smaller, the attraction of it is $3/5^{\text{th}}$ of the attraction of the Earth. The weights go on decreasing on it in the same proportion. The thing which weighs a tonne on the surface of the Earth will weigh on Mercury only twenty seers. (B) On the surface of the sun, the weight of a thing measures twenty times that of the Earth. If it is a tonne here, it will weigh there 28 tons. It means a maund here is equal to a tonne there. And a tonne there will be a mound here. The resistance (falsification) of it is given in Chapter II, resistance No. 14. (C) The thing which is three thousand six hundred pounds on the surface of the Earth and the distance of it from its center is half of the diameter of the Earth. If a thing is put at a distance of half a diameter from the surface of the Earth, it will weigh only nine hundred pounds, and on the full distance of the diameter of the Earth above its surface, it will weigh four hundred pounds and of the distance of one and a half the diameter it will be 225 pounds and on the distance of

two diameters above the surface of the Earth it will weight only 144 pounds because the attraction goes on decreasing in proportion to the increase in the Square of the distance and so also the weight goes on lessening. It means at a distance equal to four and half a diameter, it will be only 36 pounds and at a distance of five and a half the diameter, it will be 25 pounds and at nine and a half, it will be 4 pounds, and at twenty-nine and a half, it will be only one pound. Thus, three thousand five hundred ninety-nine pounds of weight will vanish. And as per speculation, the weight of a thing at the Equator will be less and as much you move towards the Pole, it will go on increasing because the attraction at and near is less and that is more on and near the poles.” (Raza, 2005, p. 40)

Ahmed Raza Khan called it mere speculation of modern science and suggested the variation of weight as per the proportion of gravitation if it exists. He pointed out that in calculation and logic, modern science is inconsistent with the principle of gravitation as sometimes it considers distance and sometimes it does not. To explain, he offers a mathematical description in the first chapter, as shown in Figure 4.

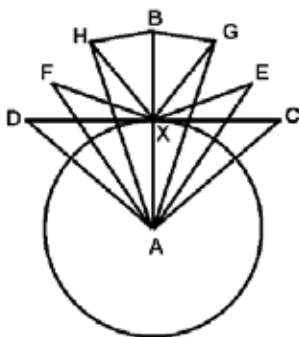


Figure 4: Describing the Earth’s Motion

“Draw Line AB from the center of the circle on point X on the circumference. Then, on both sides of the line XB, draw six equal lines in which CX, DX be the tangents, and EX, GX, HX & FX divide both the right angles equally. Then join all of them to point A. It will be clear that every line of them will be equal to its corresponding line. And AE will be greater than AC; AG is greater than AE & AB is greater

than AG. In the same way, AH is greater than AF and AB is greater than AH because in triangles AXC, AXE AXG, Line AX is common & XC, XE, XG are equal, and the angle on X has gone increasing as every first is a part of the other. Necessarily, the bases AC, AE, AG will, also, go on increasing. (Euclid's Theorem 1, figure 24). Now consider AB join GB. You will get isosceles triangle GXB in which both the angles at points GB will be equal. And it is clear that in triangle AGB, angle G. whose diagonal is AB is greater than angle XGB. Hence, AG being the diagonal of a small angle B. is smaller than AB. (Fig. 19). Necessarily, B is at a greater distance than all others. And as much you come towards the tangent, it will be nearer to the centre. All that now, the Earth was at point X, and because of the force of the repulsion, it was inclined to go away from the center. In that condition, it must move to XB because to this side, only the fartherness is a pure fartherness. And all others are relative ones as they are in a sense, distances and in another sense, they are nearness. Why did it acquire some other than the unmixed pure distance (or direction). It is due to the preference of its own liking. In that condition, whatever line it inclines to, for the other side, there is its alternative. Why it did not go to that side is a negative preference of it. And as a matter of fact, both of them are humbugs and falsehoods. The Earth is not an animate conscious thing that may have the choice of its own intention in any condition. When it moves to XB, the turn or the rotations will be impossible. If the force of attraction overcomes it, it will move nearer to A, and if both the forces are equal, it will remain on X. It will not move in the direction of any of them. Necessarily, it will not revolve." (Raza, 2005, p. 101)

As per the argument, the Earth should not move because the proportions of attraction and repulsion have equal capacity. Earth does not move along any other axes left or right to position X, which follows that logically Earth should not go anywhere. To support his position, Ahmed Raza Khan offers the following argument:

"The sun is the first, foremost & reliable witness to the falsehood of the theory of attraction. In its orbit, which they take for the orbit of the Earth, there is a point at an extreme distance from the centre of the Earth, and we call it the

Zenith, and there is another one at the maximum nearness, and we call it the depth. They are observed every year, the sun is at a maximum distance from the Earth i.e. at its Zenith on July 3 or so, and on January 3, it is nearest to the centre of the Earth. This difference is to the tune of 31 lakhs miles or more. In view of modern research, the average distance of the sun is nine crores twenty-nine pulled up (and merged in the sun) by the continuous attraction by the sun for the powerful, great, intensive, and extensive period of thousands of years. In view of modern astronomy, the sun is equal to the volume of 12 lakhs thirty-five thousand one hundred thirty Earth. Some are of the opinion that it is equal to 10 lakhs, and some have quoted it to be 14 lakhs. And as we calculated it on the measurements of modern astronomy on the basis of the original oval shape of the Earth, it is (i.e., the sun) equal to the volume of 13 lakhs 13 thousand two hundred sixty-five Earth. In such a condition, how can the Earth resist and stand against the sun, and how long would it revolve around it? It would have, at the very first day of its revolution, merged in it as it is in volume not even equal to one part of its 12 lakhs of parts. Can you imagine that there are 12 lakhs of people together pulling a man, and he is trying to go away from them, and he would not be pulled up by the 12 lakhs of the people? And he would be rotating around them. And it is absolutely and rationally falsehood that one thing is strong and then weak. It requires some cause or the other to defend it. When in the half of its rotation around the sun, the Earth was pulled by the sun towards it to the extent of thirty-one lakhs of miles, then in the half of the rotation of the Earth, who is that made it (i.e., the sun) so weak and the Earth ran away from it to the extent of thirty-one lakhs of miles? And as a matter of fact, the nearness of the Earth depends upon the strength of the force of the attraction of the sun (No. 101). As a matter of fact, having brought the Earth on its lowest girdles, it was a must for the force of the attraction of the sun to become more and more effective, and the Earth should have, step by step, to increase its nearness to the sun. And not that having the Earth come nearer to it, the force of attraction on the part of the sun should have weakened, and the Earth should escape from its claws, and it should go away to such a fartherness. As to joke, perhaps the sun is getting more and more ration from July to January, and consequently, its power gets on increasing And, in the months from January

to July, it remains without food and becomes weak. If there were two bodies equal to each other, then this would have been reasonable to think that in a certain half of the turn or the period of the rotation, one of them overcomes the other, and in the other half of the turn, the other one of them overcomes the first one. This would not be an offence that it is 12 lakh times bigger than the Earth, and it pulls it to the nearness and makes it at the nearest distance of more than 31 lakhs of miles and in the time of its very youth, it should become so weak and dull, and the whole turn of the revolution be divided in the proportion of 1:12 lakhs in the two half parts of it. On this, they tender this obsolete excuse that at the point of the depth, the strength of the force of repulsion increases and it frees the Earth from the claws of the sun and moves it away.” (Raza, 2005, p. 121-122)

The importance of this argument lies in the notion that the power of attraction is due to the sun. It must remain constant. It cannot be countered by merely applying the law of conservation of angular momentum because there must be something to vary the momentum. It can be asked, is attraction creating conservation of momentum or vice versa? (Jearl et al., 2013) Ahmed Raza Khan goes even deeper by criticizing both attraction and repulsion simultaneously. He also discussed the idea of the retrograde motion of Mars and why planets are taken below and above. In the arguments of Ahmed Raza Khan, the supposed hypothesis that the tide is generated due to the moon’s gravitational force is an area in astronomy that has attracted critique, including Ahmed Raza Khan. He comments:

“The seawater rises up to metres high, and sometimes it reaches 70 feet two times daily, and then afterwards it lowers down to its own former level. If we attribute this phenomenon on the part of the attraction of the moon, it is as if to say goodbye to the attraction of the Earth. If you put the moon at its nearest distance of 225719 mites and consider the attraction of the Earth from its centre the distance of its water from its centre will be 3956.5 miles. So as per the law of Newton, if the attraction of the Earth and moon were to be equal, the ratio of their attraction on the water would have been like this, the attraction of the moon the attraction of the Earth: $(3956.5)^2 : (225719)^2$ Consider the first as one, then the third - the 4th = the attraction of the moon. It

means $15653892.25/50949066961 = 0.0003072450$, but the attraction power of the moon is 0.15^{th} of that of the Earth. So, multiply it by 0.5, the product would be 0.000046. It means if the attraction of the moon on the water is 23, that of the Earth will be five lakhs. Or if the moon pulls it with one unit of power, the Earth will do the same with 21727 units of power. Then, how would it be possible for the water to raise itself a distance of a hair's height?" (Raza, 2005, p. 133)

The argument is valid and cannot be countered by barycenter assumption or by converting the formula of tide-generating force by the cube distance between them (John D., 2010). How can one determine whether the tide is going to behave as per the formula or whether the formula has been formulated without observational proof? Ahmed Raza Khan raises many interesting arguments. However, his arguments are not easy to be understood. For that reason, no extensive study has been made on such important works. It must be noted that, while surveying the listed treatise of Ahmed Raza Khan, it was found that he knows almost all the works which George Saliba and colleagues reported in their research on Arabic literature about astronomy and what Razaullah Ansari reported for the Indian sub-continent because Ahmed Raza Khan referred to them by name. He sometimes refers to Arabic, Persian, and Urdu works, and his intimate acquaintance with these works allowed him to perform a thorough critique. In the fourth chapter of *Fauz-i-Mubin*, after refuting modern science, Ahmed Raza Khan narrated the arguments posed by ancient and medieval scholars on Earth's motion, which he intended to falsify. He says:

"By the Praise of Allah, I have presented one hundred and five arguments, so forcible, against the motion of the Earth. There are still more such ones in the books of the predecessors like Mujasthi, Batlimous, works of Tusi and its commentary by Allamah Barjandi, Tazkirah-e-Tusi, the commentary by the learned Khizri and Shams-e-Bazigha of which Jaunpūrī boasts of Hadyah-e-Fazil Khairabadi and so on. They trusted these arguments. In our opinion, these are all false, as I will discuss." (Raza, 2005, p. 240)

On the one hand, Ahmed Raza Khan is attempting to debunk modern science and the Earth's motion, while on the other, he does not seem to agree with the philosophers and astronomers who argued for

the falsehood of the Earth's motion as well. Such a unique stand creates curiosity. He answers that curiosity by mentioning his book named *Al-Kalimah al-Mulhamah fī al-Hikmati al-Muḥkamah li Wihā'yi al-Falsafati al-Mash'amah*, which he wrote to refute ancient and medieval philosophy of science and astronomy.

***Al-Kalimah al-Mulhamah fī al-Hikmati al-Muḥkamah li Wihā'yi al-Falsafati al-Mash'amah* (The Revealed Words in the Strong Wisdom for the Weakness of Execrable Philosophy)**

The idea for this book was introduced in *Fauz-i-Mubin*. Imam Ahmed Raza planned to compose a book refuting ancient philosophy, especially astronomy. It is possible that he wrote both books simultaneously, as he already alluded in the Preface of *Fauz-i-Mubin* that he was going to address ancient arguments. He explains:

“This humble servant has written a detailed historical book on the refutation of modern philosophy named *Fauze Mubin* in which we have refuted the earth motion with 105 arguments... In its fourth chapter, we have discussed the argument of ancient philosophy in defence of the Earth's motion, and we have refuted them. It is evident in physics that motion will not occur until intended, and Earth, by nature, is not conscious (or without intention). Refutation of these contentions led to the refutation of ancient philosophy as well. We have written thirty places on their refutation which by the grace of Almighty, all the ancient philosophy, like the modern, does not seem to observe any value. Due to this, our discussion reached too far, and the fourth chapter too crossed the limit... Albarqat Mohiyuddin Jilani has suggested to Mustafa Raza Khan that those places (where Ahmed Raza critiqued ancient philosophy) should be transferred to a book on the refutation of ancient philosophy... so that one book belongs to the refutation of modern philosophy and one exclusively contains the refutation of ancient philosophy... It is obligatory for Muslim students to read both books thoroughly... so that they should not be misled by those philosophies.” (Raza, 1920, p. 4)

This reminds us of the Preface of Imam al-Ghazali's *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* wherein he mentioned his intention to write a book refuting the views of the philosophers concerning the world and God (Ghazzali and Marmura, 2000). Similarly, Ahmed Raza Khan intends to refute several philosophical doctrines related to Earth's motion and astronomy. It would be an interesting journey to explore his arguments; however, that is not our concern in this article. But it should not be without flavour, so here is the starting argument. He says:

“God is the ultimate cause whose action is not bound to selection... in his consciousness, human knows his will to select between two similar things... (I say - Ahmed Raza), It can be deduced that this preference of things does not apply to God, that, one out of two similar things, one becomes the preferred choice... And indeed, the motion of the planets proves the exclusive action of God without making preferences.” (Raza, 1920, p. 6)

In this simple argument, Ahmed Raza is trying to counter the notion that the power to select between two things depends on the will. It is the power of the will from which human beings prefer one choice over another. Ahmed Raza says such natural consequences of selection based on preferences are not unique to God. God is not bound to the process of preferring options before concluding (Popper and Bartley, 1993). God decides without preference as he is unlike others and has ultimate knowledge of what is best. As the motion of planets is without a will and they cannot thus decide their motion, then the matter is left to God, who decides on a celestial motion without preference. It answers the question of why the world is the way it is.

In this book, Ahmed Raza Khan raises one of the important issues related to the existence of real depth and the problem of distance. He believed that there must exist a real depth from where distances can be actualized. It seems that this point led Ahmed Raza Khan to write his rebuttal about the concept of the indivisibility of the atom, which was an issue. It was called the problem of ‘*Juz' alladhī lā yatajazza*’, that the bodies are composed of indivisible parts, but these parts are dimensionless. While discussing the issue of aboveness and belowness, where Islamic theologians stop at the *al-jawhar al-fard* (single atom), Ahmed Raza Khan asserts in *Al-Kalimah al-Mulhamah*:

“*Juz La Yatajazza* is not impossible. This issue of Kalam has been understood in an inferior sense; moreover, its impossibility is taken for granted...however near us, the idea of *Juz La Yatajazza* is not wrong, but the combination (the issue of contiguity) of the two parts is impossible...we will provide the proof of it from the Quran `and scattered them completely.

Aqul: ‘and scattered them completely with adversity.’ *Tamjiq* means total disintegration. We did not save any ‘scattering’ and disintegrated them all. Here, scattering is not expected for the existence, and hence the meaning is possible scattering that the extreme possibility has been disintegrated.” (Raza, 1920, p. 156, 159)

The scattering of something in its entirety means its existence is no more in reality. It follows that even the parts do not remain from such scattering. Thence, the problem of contiguity does not arise. For Ahmed Raza Khan, the issue of contiguity of *juz* is an imaginary and philosophical assertion without real existence. Through the Quranic verse, he argues that it is always possible to have the existence of a *jawhar* or *juz*, which cannot be imaginarily divided infinitely. It has to stop at some point; otherwise, it can be further divided, and this issue will lead to the eternity of distance, and that will follow the motion and then space and time. Such an attitude is against the eternity of the Islamic concept of God. Thence, Ahmed Raza Khan argues for a real object; the possibility of its imaginary division cannot be argued. However, does Ahmed Raza Khan mean that the atom cannot be split? No, certainly not, because in *Al-Kalimah al-Mulhamah*, he discussed in detail, and the only criteria which he supports are the splitting of the atom through power. It is the same thing he argues by the Quranic verse. Following these premises, Ahmed Raza Khan argues for a fixed and solid depth, which can be justified as being a real reference of bodies. The single real depth is the necessary attribute. Ahmed Raza Khan says its existence should become a reference point as an incidental phenomenon because it has been achieved apart from any outside considerations.

These three books summarise Ahmed Raza Khan’s critique of modern and ancient science on the topic of the Earth’s motion. He disagreed with the most influential philosophers and astronomers

in history, be they Muslim or otherwise. Ahmed Raza Khan made observations, “but my observation, undoubtedly, I have learned that between it and the real morning, there is a difference of more than 15 degrees” (Raza, 2006). He was passionate about the debate over the Earth's motion and employed all the tools available to him to arrive at his version of astronomy. There is a need to study his books on this topic to uncover the details of his version of astronomy. In this book, Ahmed Raza Khan discussed 31 topics which include the concept of space and time, atoms, distances, planetary motion, and vacuum, to name a few. It is a more interesting book than the *Fauz-i-Mubin*.

***Nuzūl-i-Āyāt-i-Furqān Basukūn-i-Zamīn-o-Āsman* (The Verses of the Quran on the Static Earth and Heavens)**

On January 23 1921, a fatwa (religious decree) was asked by Moulwi Haqim Ali to prove the Earth's motion from the Quran and Hadith based on the verse:

“Undoubtedly, Allah upholds the heavens and the earth lest they deviate. If they deviate, there will be none to hold them except Allah. Indeed, he is Allah, the clement, All-forgiving.”
(Surah Fāṭir, 35: 41)

The questioner narrates other verses accompanied by Hadiths to persuade Ahmed Raza to accept his point of view. Unfortunately, Ahmed Raza very pragmatically and emphatically presented his interpretation of the same verse and supported it with ḥadīth that both the Earth and heavens are stationary. The above verse contains the words ‘*yumsik*’ (uphold) and ‘*an tazūla*’ (lest they deviate), which are discussed from a linguistic point of view.

It is related in al-Nihayah Ibn al-Athīr under the ḥadīth of Jundab Jahni he said, “By God! my arrow went inside, if it has the power to move (*zayīla*) then it does move.” ‘*Zayīla*’ is the name of an animal that does not leave its place. ‘*Zawal*’ has been used as movement, and the Qur’ān has negated the movement of the heavens and Earth. Then *zawal* means to go and to change, so both diurnal and yearly motions will be null and void. Imam Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī states in *Nihāyah va Dernasīr*, “The meaning of ‘*Zawīl*’ is movement (flow) and not to

rest anywhere.” *Tāj al-‘Urūs* states that ‘*Qalqenshey qalqen*’ refers to something that does not shift. *Al-Mufradāt Imām Raghīb* states ‘*Qarfi makana yaqra qararan*’ refers to something that is in rest. So *zawal* is *qalq*, and the opposite of *qalq* is *qarar*, and *qarar* is *suqūn* (rest). The opposite of *qarar* is *zawal*, and the opposite of *suqūn* is vibration/shaking/quaking/fluctuating or movement. It is related in *Tāj al-‘Urūs* as – Allah Almighty has solved the problem of movement means Allah finished movement and its movement had gone (Raza, 1921, p. 7-8).

He further presents the commentary of Imam al-Rāzī on verse 22 of Chapter 2 of the Quran:

“Know that the mention of bed is related to static Earth. So, neither the Earth is rotating around its axis nor around the sun. It is only in the power of Allah to make Earth static as he says: Undoubtedly, Allah upholds the heavens and the Earth lest they deviate.” (Raza, 1921, p. 8)

Imam Ahmed Reza refers to the ḥadīth narrated by Sa‘īd bin Manṣūr, ‘Abd bi’ Ḥamīd, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Mājah through Hazrat Shaqīq ibn Salma and mentioned by Ibn Jarīr with authentic chains in his *Tafsīr-e-Jarīr* under this verse CH-35, V-41:

“We have been told a tradition by Ibne-bishar that they were told on the authority of Abu Va’eil. Abu Va’eil said one person came in the presence of hazrat Abdullah ibne Mas’ood (radiallahuanhu) then ibne ibne Mas’ood (radiallahuanhu) asked him, ‘To whom did you meet there?’ He said, ‘To Kaab.’ He asked: ‘What has Kaab explained to you?’ The person said, ‘Kaab said that heavens move on the shoulders of an angel.’ Hazrat ibne Mas’ood asked him, ‘Did you affirm or deny the Kaab?’ The person said, ‘Nothing (because it is an order for a Muslim to neither affirm nor deny any information of the people of the book, until you have proof from Quran).’ Hazrat Abdullah ibn Mas’ood (radiallahuanhu) said, ‘It was better for you to give your camel & Quzada’ and abstain from that journey; Kaab lied. Because Allah All mighty says: ‘Undoubtedly, Allah upholds the heavens and the Earth lest they deviate. If they deviate, there will be none to hold them except Allah.’” (Raza, 1921, p. 21)

Along with the descriptions of Earth's motion from the Quran and Hadith, Ahmed Raza Khan discussed the motion of other planets, like the sun and moon, which are explicitly mentioned in the Quran. By accumulating the proofs, he rejected the Earth's motion based on revealed doctrines.

Through the four treatises about Earth's motion, Ahmed Raza Khan debated Copernican astronomy using mathematics, logic, philosophy and modern physics to support his arguments. Even though he is not the first to critique Copernican astronomy, as Tycho Brahe had already introduced a planetary theory after Copernicus, which was observationally true (Blair, 1990), the uniqueness of Imam Ahmed Raza is that he not only argued based on observation of modern astronomy but also with the accepted axioms of physics like gravitational law and tide generation etc. Given that he also does not seem to agree with ancient philosophers on static Earth, he offered new arguments based on his vision of astronomy. By disagreeing with modern and ancient scholars, he developed a version of astronomy that would make for exciting research.

Conclusion

This research paper examines the prevailing notion that Muslim scholars, particularly in the field of astronomy, had lost their spirit of critical analysis. The literature suggests that since the 16th century, Muslim scholars made no significant contributions to the field and attempted to reconcile Copernican astronomy with Islamic teachings without thoroughly analyzing it. However, this perspective is incomplete. Ahmed Raza Khan, an Indian Muslim polymath with vast knowledge, engaged in a critical examination of Copernican astronomy. His analysis was prompted by an American professor's prediction of a catastrophic event on December 17 due to the conjunction of six planets. This prediction motivated Ahmed Raza Khan to refute the Copernican model through mathematical, logical, and philosophical arguments, challenging various assumptions of modern science and revisiting the arguments of ancient philosophers regarding the Earth's static nature. In the process, it appears that he developed his own version of the planetary theory, drawing inspiration from the Quran. Further research is needed to delve into his works. This historical context calls for a fresh perspective

on the transfer of knowledge from the West to the East, providing a solid basis for recognizing the undiscovered contributions of Muslims and challenging the notion of “Western science” as the sole authority, emphasizing that science is a universal pursuit.

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Book Review

Abdul Rahman Hj Abdullah. (2021). *The Polemic of Salafi-Wahabi: Untangling the Tangle (Polemik Salafi Wahabi: Merungkai Kekusutan)*. Kuala Lumpur: Rimbunan Islamik Media Sdn. Bhd.

by Makmor Tumin

Divergence and convergence in religion is a common trait. This happens in all religions and becomes apparent amongst the followers, such as in Christianity and Islam. In Islam, besides the division between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, within the Sunnis themselves there are dozens of denominations, most notably Ash'arism and Maturidism, as well as the group quite often addressed pejoratively as Wahabism, of which in this review will be addressed more appropriately as Najdi Dawah. This divide cuts across the Muslim world today, albeit in different manifestations, mostly in a negative light, and Malaysia obviously is not an exception.

In responding to such a saga, Abdul Rahman Hj Abdullah, a well-known senior historian, attempts to explain the root of such divergence, hoping that a potential convergence shall be reached. In his book, *The Polemic of Wahabi-Salafi: Untangling the Tangle*, he demonstrates how external factors, especially the development of religious notions of Islam in the Middle East has impacted the divergence, focusing on the divergence in Malaysia as his case study.

He divides the book into four chapters, saving the juiciest fruits of the discussion for the last chapter (Chapter Four). One's understanding of Islam would be much more crystal clear if one understands the divergence of the said religion, argued Abdul Rahman, who begins the discussion by narrating what he calls the phenomenon of disintegrated Muslim community.

In Chapter One, he explains the divergence of Islam by presenting two camps; the first associated under the umbrella of *Ahlul Sunnah wal Jamaah* which consists of the majority of Muslims who follow the Ash'arism and Maturidism Islam, while the second is the Nadji Dawah (Salafi Wahabi) mentioned earlier.

In the subsequent two chapters (Chapter Two and Three) he unravels further on the two camps and provides a list of key figures in both camps. The two classifications in these two chapters are very useful in the sense that it sheds light on the important figures, both international and local, of these groups.

We shall list down the name of the figures discussed in the book only for both the interest of clarity and unnecessary polemics. Among contemporary international scholars in support of the Najdi Dawah school include Prof. Dr. Muhammad Abu Zahra, Prof. Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaili and Prof. Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradhawi. In addition, local scholars highlighted with similar disposition include Abdulfatah Haron Ibrahim, Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin and Abdul Hadi Awang.

Meanwhile, in Chapter Three Abdul Rahman mentions those who are against the Najdi Dawah's stance, such as Muhammad Said Ramadhan al-Buti, Ali Jum'ah and Ahmad Mahmud Karimah, together with Sayyid Muhammad Alawi al-Maliki al-Hasani. As for local scholars, he listed Muhammad Uthman el-Muhammady, and interestingly, a rather young scholar, Zamihan Mat Zin al-Ghari.

In Chapter Four, the author's main ideas which form the backbone of the discussion are presented. In this chapter entitled 'Untangling the Controversy', Abdul Rahman throws in many points placing them under two subheadings: the first on the dangers of extremism, and second on the etiquette of expressing differences in views. The tendency towards extremism according to him, develops through two attitudes: the first is extreme support, whilst the other is extreme rejection. Such extremes create a huge division to the point that both parties declare infidelity (*takfir*) against each other.

The divide becomes more apparent as it becomes political. In such circumstance, a war may even take place. In the case of the Najdi Dawah followers, using the army to attack another Muslim is an example of how extremism becomes political, hence militant. For some religious

groups, they use particular terms to denote people's bearing or stance which consequently sparks animosity. There is a term in tauhid called *Mawani' al-Takfir* where Muslims are reprimanded for declaring *takfir* against another Muslim, and yet such an act is pervasive when the extremists get political. Such an act is forbidden as Allah SWT has made clear to believers not to claim themselves as holier than another. The said reminder appears in Verse 32 of Surah An-Najm that reads, "... *Fala tuzakku anfusakum ...*" which translates to "... So ascribe not purity to yourselves...".

The factors that contribute to extremism which the author pinned down are rather straightforward. First, the failure to distinguish between a doctrine and a method, and second, which is equally important, ignorance on the significance of text and context. The Najdi Dawah can be rationalised if one really understands the text and context of its emergence, where in its initial stage, Najdi Dawah was an attempt to respond to the deviated groups amongst extreme Sufists and the group of radical Shi'as. His point is, once we understand the text together with the context, our radicalism or extremism against any teaching which we deem astray and deviating would gradually subside.

In the second part of Chapter Four regarding the etiquette of expressing differences in views, the author begins by explaining three types of da'wah: oral da'wah such as in sermons, then through writings, and finally through one's character. It should be noted that a Muslim's role is to make da'wah, not to judge let alone declare *takfir* on others. The success of Islam, as noted by the author, is mainly through the third method of da'wah which is one's character, an aspect highly neglected by many Muslims today.

He highlighted the two differences in etiquette; the first is related to the allowable one, such as *Ikhtilaf Tanawwu'*. It is the second one that Muslims must be serious about not to get involved in, which is when it is related to theology. This one called *Ikhtilaf Tadhad* is when things get intense and political, potentially leading to clashes among the ummah (*iftiraq ul-ummah*).

Saving the best for last, he clarified on a vital point. The perennial problems of knowledge at the surface shows nothing but a heart full of hatred that intensify the problem, and this was also highlighted by Yusuf al-Qaradhawi. After all, those involved in the extremes are

knowledgeable. “If all of them call for their way of teaching, who then in Islam would call for Allah?”, remarked the Yamani Cleric, Habib Umar ibn Hafiz, the founder of the centre of Dar al-Mustafa.

The reviewer has three comments to make:

First, the book can best be summarized as follows; although serious readers may benefit a lot from the author’s thoughts, it is most likely that the explanations would enhance further the existing divergence as readers would only pinpoint arguments which suit their own established belief. This is partly because the split or divergence in the Muslim community i.e., the Sunnis and Najdi Dawah is already both entrenched and widely justified in terms of the belief among the followers as time passed. All religious followers naturally tend to adhere to the teachings of their teachers and preachers, whom in their view, understand their religious needs far better.

Secondly, the content of the book should emphasise to readers the importance of the two primary sources of reference for Muslims. The idea that conforms to these sources is what that should be considered as authentic. There is no other way of authenticating ideas until and unless the teacher/preacher goes directly back to the original sources which are the al-Quran and al-Hadith. Any idea that does not tally with these original sources are deemed as deviant.

The second paradigm is the idea of accumulative wisdom. While it is imperative to abide by the teachings outlined in the original sources, however, as the time and society change, a new thesis emerges, followed by an antithesis, and responded by a synthesis of the new teaching of Islam. It is very clear from the discussion of the book that the divide is only a matter of methodology; less on doctrine, either to follow the original sources or refer to accumulative wisdom for the virtue of prudence.

Thirdly, it is suggestive to say that a divergence rather than a convergence should be expected in religion. After all, sociologically speaking, this is about the relationship between the leader and their followers. It is difficult if not completely impossible to have a cosmopolitan or universal leader and followers, hence as a new society developed, one should expect a new way of belief, and Islam is not

an exception. In fact, in the al-Quran, Verse 36 of Surah al-Baqarah makes it clear that each one of us will be against one another, and it does not mean that when seers and sages come, they can promise unity and peace.

Not only is the book relevant for Malaysian and Southeast Asian Malay readers, but the content resonates with the prevalent situation in other parts of the Muslim world, and I believe, the problem of divergence exists in other religions too as the Bible also made a claim over the "*Holier than thou*" phenomenon.