



Islamization: A Movement of Reformation of Islamic Understanding and Transformation of Acquired Human Knowledge (A Functional Approach)

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Abstract

Islamization is a reformation and transformation movement. Internally, it is a reformation of the Islamic understanding to conform to the spirit and essence of Islam. It works to change attitude and methodology in Islamic analyses: the dominance of dogmatism is replaced by pragmatism and empiricism; the focus is redirected from knowing to the understanding of Islam, from the form to the essence and eternal-universal values, from the texts of the Sharia to their inner meanings and purposes, and from the perfection of the ideal type to the perfection of the 'workable' type more suited to the imperfect real world. Rather than the ritualistic view, Islamization emphasizes more on the understanding and commitment to the *world view of Islam* which is founded on trust and reliance on the absolute authority of Allah. It is thus meant for restoration of life in its Islamic essence. This is commonly termed as 'political Islam' by the non Islamists. Externally, it is the transformation of acquired human knowledge to conform to Islamic values and norms. It is a call to build knowledge, institutions, and a world order based on common, eternal and universal values enshrined in Islam and all other revealed religions founded on the unity of the creator. In terms of task and focus, Islamization is different from Islamic studies or Islamic education, which is meant for development of Islamic sciences as academic disciplines of knowledge. Unlike the latter, Islamization is concerned with reformation and transformation of thoughts and understanding of all walks of life in conformity with the essence and norms of Islam. A pragmatic or functional approach using data from everyday life experiences is considered more desirable for Islamization to be effective and sustainable. The International Islamic University Chittagong, Bangladesh, is contemplating on introducing this approach to revitalise its Islamization of knowledge program.

Keywords: *Islamization, Islamization of knowledge, Transformation, Moderation, Ulema Approach, Functional Approach, Restoration of life, Political Islam, World view of Islam.*

Abstrak

Pengislaman adalah reformasi dan pergerakan transformasi. Secara dalaman ia adalah satu reformasi pemahaman Islam untuk mematuhi semangat dan intipati Islam. Ia berfungsi untuk mengubah sikap dalam kaedah analisis Islam: penguasaan dogmatik digantikan dengan pragmatisme dan empirisme; tumpuan diarahkan daripada mengetahui kepada memahami Islam, daripada bentuk kepada intipati dan nilai-nilai kekal sejagat, dari teks syariah kepada makna yang lebih mendalam dan bermakna, dan dari kesempurnaan yang sesuai untuk kesempurnaan yang dapat 'dilaksanakan' bersesuaian dengan dunia sebenar yang kurang sempurna. Selain daripada pandangan ritual, ia menekankan kepada pemahaman dan komitmen kepada pandangan dunia Islam yang berasaskan kepada kepercayaan dan kebergantungan kepada kuasa mutlak Allah. Ia adalah untuk pemulihan kehidupan berdasarkan Islam. Ini biasanya dipanggil sebagai 'politik Islam' oleh bukan Islam. Secara luaran ia adalah transformasi yang memperolehi pengetahuan manusia untuk mematuhi nilai-nilai dan norma-norma Islam. Ia adalah untuk membina pengetahuan, institusi dan perintah dunia berdasarkan nilai-nilai kekal dan sejagat yang

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termaktub dalam Islam dan semua agama wahyu yang lain berasaskan kepada perpaduan pencipta. Dari segi tugas dan fokus, pengislaman adalah berbeza daripada pengajian Islam atau pendidikan Islam yang bertujuan untuk pembangunan sains Islam sebagai disiplin akademik ilmu. Ia adalah berkaitan dengan reformasi

dan transformasi pemikiran dan kefahaman semua lapisan masyarakat selaras dengan intipati dan norma-norma Islam. Pendekatan pragmatik atau fungsi dengan menggunakan data daripada pengalaman harian dianggap lebih wajar untuk pengislaman berkesan dan mampan. Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Chittagong, Bangladesh, memperkenalkan pendekatan ini untuk memulihkan semula program pengetahuan keislaman.

Kata Kunci: *Pengislaman Ilmu, Transformasi, Pemulihan kehidupan, pandangan Dunia Islam.*

Introduction

Humanity is at the cross-roads of secular (atheistic) and sacred (religious) approaches to civilization. The crux of the problem is the clash between divine values and secular values i.e. between secular civilization and religious civilization. The secular order is primarily based on atheistic and materialistic humanism with morality and ethics playing subordinate role. The 'pursuit of self-interest' and 'self-centered wealth creation' (i.e. the 'bottom-line' principle of earning profit and material wealth) prevail. The acquired human knowledge therefore has been founded fundamentally on this goal and principle. It rejects the role of conscious pursuits of knowledge for achieving the higher goals of life as irrelevant. Having no care and respect for human values it thus transforms man into lower level animal. This human degradation is termed as the sickness of modern society. The solution to this problem has to be sought through spiritual development based on religious foundations. This has given birth to the faith-based intellectualism and activism with Islamization leading the way. It is the transformation of all acquired human knowledge to conform to the norms of Islamic values and eternal-universal values enshrined in all other religions founded on the unity of the creator. The focus is on the thesis that the 'City of God' is a better alternative for world peace and stability.

On the other hand, at the height of its success and glory the Muslim *Ummah* and its leaders unfortunately lost respect for the essence and values of Islam. This led to degeneration of the Islamic focus. Moral degradation, corruption, greed, lethargy, and lust for power gripped them; intellectual stagnation and social disintegration followed. The modernist Muslim reformers and scholars of the 19th century and the contemporary Muslim intellectuals like Fazlur Rahman, Al-Faruqi, Hakim, AbuSulaiman, and Manzoor agree that in interpreting Islam its eternal-universal values must override the juristic elements. They agree with Iqbal ⁽¹⁾ that dynamism of Islam does not lie in the wealth of juristic rules and regulations. Muzaffar (1997) stresses that the eternal and universal values are to be heard loud and clear in the reinterpretation of Islam. AbuSulaiman (1987) maintains that in their understanding of early Muslim history the classical jurists underestimated and neglected the elements

which relate to the real meaning of Islamic mission; they followed a peripheral understanding of Islam. This peripheral understanding and narrow focus of Islam by the classical jurists led to the rigidity and remoteness of their interpretation for contemporary world. Thus, there has been a general absence of intellectually cogent presentation of Islam and its world order as relevant to the world-life of today. Similar has been the case with other religions. The secular order, with its superior and popular appeal, therefore, has been able to push aside the religious orders. However, with its inherent weaknesses the secular cannot invalidate the sacred. Hence, there is a need for the movement of Islamization both internally and externally to reintroduce Islam in its pristine form, but in conformity with the style of the day.

What of Islamization

Internally, it is an extension and elaboration of the modern reform movement in an attempt to pull out Islam from the medieval morass in which it got entangled, and at the same time to avoid the intellectual trap of either simply *taqlid* (blind imitation) or simply *talfiq* (piecing together or grafting) and help produce modern Islamic sciences, institutions, and social system through a process of combined action of moderation and transformation. Externally, as mentioned earlier, it is the transformation of all acquired human knowledge to conform to the norms of Islamic values and the eternal-universal values enshrined in all other revealed religions founded on the unity of the creator. Islamization, in this respect, therefore, can be said to be a project of reform movement for promoting or transforming acquired human knowledge to conform to faith-based intellectualism and activism for establishing a civilization based on the morality of humanism and community-centric development for ensuring both material and spiritual success. In terms of contents, it may simply mean transforming any piece of knowledge and cultural practice to conform to the pristine Islamic values and norms. Since Islam is 'a way of life', ***Islamization, broadly speaking, is an appeal to understanding and development of Islamic knowledge and technology with the inputs taken from life experiences.*** It means restoration of life to its Islamic essence. Hence it is the Islamization of man's worldview and life style. Above all, rather than on the

ritualistic view it emphasizes more on the understanding, realization and commitment to the **worldview of Islam** which is founded on the trust and reliance on absolute authority of the Almighty Allah. It stands for: **‘Knowledge founded on divinity and sound in morality, excels in wisdom and efficiency’** (where, morality refers to actions and behaviours in real life). The non Islamists generally term this as ‘political Islam’. In terms of its task and focus, it is different from Islamic studies or Islamic education which is meant for development of Islamic sciences as academic disciplines of knowledge. It is concerned with the transformation and reformation of thoughts and understanding of all walks of life in conformity with the essence and norms of Islam.

Methodologically, it can be a ‘bottom up’ or ‘top down’ approach to Islamization process. ‘Top down’ or **traditional approach** regards Islam primarily as a bundle of ordained doctrines. It is, therefore, to be simply followed with least attention given for understanding of its essence and values. This can be described as dogmatic or *ulema approach* that *emphasizes* more on ritualistic commitments. Reflection of this can be found, for example, in the **Tabligh** and **Hefazat-e-Islam** movements in Bangladesh. The other is the ‘bottom up’ approach which emphasizes more on the *world view* of Islam or ‘political Islam’. The reflection of this can be found, for example, in the **Jamat-e-Islam**, **Nezam-e-Islam** movements in Bangladesh. It relies more on knowing Islam primarily with realization through functions of life. It is the pragmatic approach of learning by doing and realization. This can be described as **functional approach**. This functional-approach model is proposed as a more appropriate strategy for the Islamization process.

Founding Principles of the Movement

Islamization of knowledge movement is founded on the spirit and guidance of the following model of the truth:

1. The Hard Core of the Truth:

- a. Islam is a religion of nature - *din-al-fitra*; thereby this means everyone is born as a Muslim with Islamic nature (Quran 30:30).
- b. It is for the entire mankind and not for the Muslims alone. The Quran addresses mankind: *Ya iyyu hannas*, not *Ya iyyuhal Muslimun* (Quran 10:57).
- c. It is a mercy and divine guidance for the benefit of mankind (Quran 10:108; 7:82), to live in peace and harmony in a plural world society.

(We do remember that one meaning of Islam is *Peace*. Because, Islam’s social definition is: a commitment for establishing a world order in which people in the

society live in peace, harmony, in brotherhood and trust, and in prosperity.

Its Theological definition of course is: complete submission to the will of Allah)

d. It is the reaffirmation of the eternal- message which the prophets and founders of all past religions delivered (Azad⁽²⁾).

e. It is an eternal and living religion providing certain ideal trends according to which humanity is to advance perpetually (Hakim⁽³⁾).

2. Eternal-Universal Values

Emanating from this hard core are the eternal-universal values like goodness and truth, justice, kindness, equality of mankind and brotherhood, piety and righteousness, freedom of religion and belief etc. as guidance for establishing His willed society on earth.

The Functional-Approach Model of Islamization

Our primary objective is to rescue mankind from degradation and ruination at the hands of the secular thought and civilization, and replace the secular with the sacred. Islam wishes to achieve that through participation and cooperation of all religious *Millahs* (communities) and individuals based on the primordial and eternal truth (i.e. the unity of God / *tauhid*) underlying all revealed and established religions. Islamization is the intellectual and action based reform movement to restore Islam to its pristine form and vision and enable it to play its dynamic role of leadership in guiding humanity, now at the cross-roads, through the process of confirming and transforming all acquired knowledge to the norms and values of Islam. It is the call to all humans - come one come all - to join hands, under the Islamic philosophy of cooperation to build knowledge, institution, and a world order based on common eternal and universal values enshrined in all religions. It is to promote the ‘*tawhidic*’ world view of life founded on absolute authority of the creator. It works to change attitude and methodology in Islamic analyses : the dominance of dogmatism is replaced by pragmatism and empiricism; the focus is redirected from knowing to the understanding of Islam, particularly its world view founded on trust on absolute authority of the Almighty, from the form to the essence and eternal-universal values, from the texts of the Sharia to their inner meanings and purposes, and from the perfection of the ideal type to the perfection of the ‘workable’ type more suited to the imperfect real world. It is to transform acquired human knowledge to conform to these Islamic and universal values.

Objectives

To produce and improve knowledge and technology and improve Islamic orientation of our thoughts and actions through understanding of Islam with realization from our functions and operations in everyday life;

i. To develop and/ or add additional contents to remodel the conventional academic course contents at institutions of learning to fit to Islamic perspective.

ii. To modify the modes of teaching and presentation of conventional course contents highlighting their aspects of relevance and conformity and otherwise from Islamic perspectives (i.e. since the academic curricula is nationally controlled, as long as we have not been able to thoroughly revise our academic curricula and course contents the strategy of teaching of the present course contents should be in the manner of a critique from Islamic perspective).

Islamization Process in Academic Disciplines

Knowledge is not only knowing, but understanding with realization. It is education or enlightenment. For management of life knowledge, the following four things are essential: knowledge on the a) goals of life and b) goals of education, c) goals of the field of inquiry, and d) the managerial goals. Therefore knowledge and understanding of these four issues are fundamental for establishing any discipline of useful studies and application for the benefit and wellbeing of mankind.

Goals of Life

'Life is not like a bubble, it is purposeful'. 'Life is beautiful, but all that we need to know is how to make it so.' 'Man is known not by many of his possessions, but by few of his deeds'. Thus, the primary purpose of life is to serve humanity and thereby the creator. It is to contribute to the material and spiritual wellbeing of mankind. It is to contribute to the establishment of an environment in which people live in peace, harmony and brotherhood, in trust, and in progress. This is in fact the social definition of Islam, i.e. 'peace'.

Goals of Education

Education is not literacy or skill. It is enlightenment and wisdom. Literacy and skill help attainment of enlightenment. One can be literate but not educated. Similarly one can be educated but not literate in the formal sense of the term. According to Alfred North Whitehead (1932) the subject-matter for education is *life* in all its manifestations. That is why it is said that the purpose of universities is not to make skilful lawyers, or physicians, or engineers, but capable and cultivated human beings.

Goal of any Field of Studies is to Discover the Mystery of the Creation

Fields of studies (or fields of knowledge) are broadly categorized into Science and Humanities. Ordinarily science refers to physical science and Humanities refers to nonphysical aspects of life in the universe. But broadly speaking all branches of studies are sciences of some kind. The purpose of all sciences or all branches of knowledge is the discovery of the mystery of creation and its relation to the material and spiritual wellbeing of mankind. Physical science pursues to discover the secrets of the creation of the universe in terms of its physical features and spheres through experimentation and observations. The humanities (nonphysical science) looks for the discovery of the secrets of human nature and behavior at individual and social levels for the same purpose of attaining and enjoying the material and spiritual wellbeing. In fact the discoveries of the humanities are most important of all for peace, prosperity, and success of mankind. The focus is on the secrets of human nature and virtues like 'sharing and caring', 'live and let live', and 'free but fair', 'self interest but not selfishness', 'living in community', 'pleasure more in giving than in receiving', 'simple living and high thinking', the secrets of emotions and attitudes, etc. etc for establishing an environment of living in peace, harmony, brotherhood, trust and prosperity.

If we pursue scientific and technological discoveries from the perspective of the purpose of life and creation this may produce boon otherwise bane or curse. (Examples are innumerable - the production of atom bomb). Similarly, if studies in humanities – human nature and behavior, tradition, religion and other cultural practices – are pursued from the perspective of the purpose of life and creation these may produce boon otherwise bane. (Examples of religious intolerance due to lack of adequate religious knowledge, resulting in conflicts and loss of lives and properties).

Therefore, at all levels and for all branches of studies basic education in religion and worldview of religion is essential. Academic curricula are to be designed accordingly. For example, in case of economics discipline, the overall goal must be wellbeing of the society not only in material but also in spiritual term. The specific goals may be the 8-9 goals as stated in the following:

1. Poverty Eradication
2. Reduction in Unemployment / Full Employment
3. Economic Effectiveness / Efficiency
4. Economic Growth & Standard of Living

5. Price-Level Stability
6. Equitable Distribution
7. Economic Freedom
8. Balance of Trade
9. Economic Security

Some of these goals are (a) complementary and (b) some are in conflict.

For those in conflict there are tradeoffs - for achieving one goal, some other goal has to be sacrificed. This tradeoff is made keeping in mind that the ultimate goal of economics is to achieve wellbeing of mankind/society in spiritual and material terms.

Managerial Goals

Since managerial task is effective coordination and utilization of available resources for producing output for maximizing society's wellbeing, managerial task is essential in all aspects of life. For a humane economy managerial goals can be described as the realization of the meaning of life and meaning of success and achievements through attainment of the economic goals and aspirations of the society through the process of effective and successful enterprise management. Popularly stated managerial goal of maximization of profit and success of the enterprise itself is only narrow vision and a misplaced emphasis. The exalted concept of smart managerial approach: 'Do it, no matter how, but do it' similarly is only a wrong and misplaced emotional emphasis. In fact, managerial goals should be and must be the success and achievements of the enterprise within the framework of the achievements of economic goals resulting in the material and spiritual wellbeing of the society in which and for which it exists, survives and thrives.

It should be remembered that the fundamental objectives of all pursuits of science and knowledge are to discover the mystery and wisdom of creation by the Almighty. This must be constantly mentioned in introducing any subject or topic to the students. The students must be constantly reminded of this fact during the entire study period of the subject. On the other hand the **master key** for learning and understanding Islam is the conviction that 'as good of mankind is the purpose of Allah's creation, whatever is good for mankind must be Islamic'. Similarly the **master key** for Islamizing an academic discipline or subject will be: to introduce the subject by clearly stating its structure, status, objectives and purposes in relation to the fundamental objectives of the pursuits of science and knowledge and the *world views* of Islam. This should be effectively and conveniently done by applying the standard mechanics of asking *what (who), how (what methods), and why (for what*

purpose).

Accordingly, for the purpose of Islamization the subject matters or contents of the acquired human knowledge taught at the academic institutions should be first categorized in terms of the those:

- a. that are in serious conflict with the Islamic values and which need to be replaced;
- b. that need simple additions and modifications that can be taken care of by reorientation in the documentation and presentation / explanation; and
- c. that are value neutral and free from influence of the secular ideologies and institutions.

It will be interesting to note that the contents under item (a) are very few that require structural transformation. In most cases the contents fall under item (b) and (c) making it easier to Islamize. Under the circumstances we are to develop strategies for production of Islamic theories and technologies in various fields of knowledge by following moderation and transformation approaches. In some cases a simple modification or reorientation in presentation of the subject matters will go a long way to Islamization. For example, in case of the subject *accounting* it can be introduced by stating that it is basically an Islamic concept and knowledge in economics and management. Islam emphasizes on keeping written records on all financial transactions and agreements as a means of record of truth for analysis and decisions and as a protection against any fraud and confusion. The subject of *economics* can be introduced by stating that it is an Islamic concept, because in Islam efficient utilization of all human, and non human resources are made mandatory; wastage of any resource is made *Haram* (prohibited). The subject matter of economics, in fact, is efficient utilization of scarce resources. Similarly the subject of *microcredit* can be introduced by stating that the prophet of Islam, in effect promoted this concept when he arranged an axe for the person who came to him for begging help for survival of his family. On the other hand, in the case of *banking system* it needed a transformation or structural adjustment strategy by largely replacing the conventional interest-based banking system with the interest-free Islamic banking system. Similarly on the theories of creation of the universe and the beings, structural adjustment strategy is needed. Thus,

1. Most existing theories, principles, concepts, and tools of knowledge in physical and experimental sciences are largely free from unholy influences and are in least conflict with Islamic values and norms. Most of the tools and techniques in the field of technology development are free from conflict with

Islamic values and norms. Most of these can be taken with screening, moderations, and reorientation. These can be easily transformed into Islamic knowledge through necessary reorientation in presentation following a moderation approach of mending and improvising.

The few scientific theories and tools like for example theory of creation, genetically modified organism (GMO), etc. and other principles which are in conflict with Islamic norms and values are to be duly revised or dropped and replaced following the transformation approach of replacement.

2. On the other hand many theories, concepts, and tools in the fields of non-physical sciences and humanities are largely in conflict with Islamic norms and values. Many of these are required to be dropped and rebuilt following the transformation approach. But those with minor deviations or conflicts should be duly modified in terms of contents, orientation and presentation using the moderation approach.

However, most of all that is needed is to introduce the subject and the topic by stating clearly the objective and purposes in relation to the fundamental objectives of any quest science and knowledge. In that case it must be possible to state how the subject and/or the topic comes to the use and benefit or otherwise for mankind, and how it is a '*niamah*' (mercy/gift from Allah) or otherwise for serving the goals and purposes of the creation by the Almighty Allah.

3. The academic and research institutions accordingly should organize necessary research and training programs for the scholars and teachers to develop new theories, technologies, and methods along the lines of these two approaches of Islamization. Teachers should be trained to be able to develop and devise appropriate methods for successfully accommodating additional contents necessary for improvising the contents and reorienting the classroom presentation of the subject matters of the various disciplines to conform to the Islamic concepts, values and norms.

They should promote publications of more international journals on faith-based intellectualism and activism. Like, for example, the Centre for Research and Publication of the International Islamic University Chittagong in Bangladesh is planning to launch a journal of this kind under the name Journal of Excellence in Knowledge and Development with the motto: '*Knowledge founded on divinity and sound in morality, excels in wisdom and efficiency*'.

4. Since, apart from revealed, intellectual, and

experimental sources, environment is another great source of knowledge, the learning takes place not only in academic institutions, but importantly in both physical and institutional environments. Therefore environment must be also Islamized and neutralized from the influence of secular ideologies, institutions, and cultural practices.

Suggested Modification of Islamization Program at International Islamic University Chittagong

International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC) is one of the pioneering and premier private universities in Bangladesh. It was established in 1995 with the objective of offering world class academic programs to develop the human capital by producing morally sound high quality graduates for the local and international market. Its trademark is "**Combining quality with morality**". Towards this end it has been running an active program: Islamization of Knowledge, since 2002.. The program includes introduction of number of Islam based courses as university requirement courses, Islamic cultural program, establishment of Islamic library, Nuqaba training program, academic conferences and workshops, orientation program (academic and administrative), Islamization camp, dynamic leadership training program (DLTP), view exchange program with Nuqaba, faculties, and guardians, introduction of the culture of starting of offices and classes explicitly in the name and praise of Allah, etc. The program is pursued through a basically dogmatic approach. However, for revitalizing and reenergizing the Islamization program, the university is now contemplating to incorporate in it the functional approach, as suggested, through the following modes of operations:

Modes of operations:

1. Holding of scheduled (weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly) discussions, workshops, and seminars with groups of teachers, students and staff of the university on Islamization of knowledge through a functional approach, whereby the deeper understanding of the worldview of Islam with realization is attempted from the functions and operations in everyday life. Issues of discussion will be from every day experiences. From the discussions and synthesis of the issue we should be able to find a number of alternative solutions to the problem. Finally, the suggested best solution will be examined in terms of conformity with Islamic solutions and norms. This will enable us to understand Islam with realization from life experiences. This is a grassroots approach of learning by doing. It will ensure confirmation of the knowledge. It will motivate and encourage

reorientation of our thoughts and actions and modify our goals, modes of *Ibada*, plans of work, work-habits and life-style that conform to Islamic values.

2. Developing appropriate additional contents to be added to the subject-matters of the courses under different disciplines and devising method of teaching and classroom presentation of the traditional contents of those courses, highlighting and explaining their Islamic perspectives and implications.

3. Organizing students forums for holding scheduled problem-solving workshops and debates on issues taken from everyday life in the society, for TV and Radio broadcasting regularly under their scheduled program (s) '*Jibon Theke Shaather Shandhan*' (*Searching for truth and wisdom from everyday functions of life*). The objective is to discuss a problem and arrive at a solution and at the end to relate how the found solution is consistent with the Islamic norm. It is a problem-solving grassroots approach of learning the truth.

4. Regular (scheduled) participation of the teachers and students in electronic and print media forums to address and discuss our every day social and personal issues to arrive at what we think is the best solution to the problem addressed. The objective will be at the end to relate how this found solution is in conformity with the Islamic norm.

5. Publishing, from the Centre for Research and Publication, the online international journal: Journal of Excellence in Knowledge and Development (dedicated to faith-based intellectualism) with the motto :

'Knowledge founded on divinity and sound in morality, excels in wisdom and efficiency'.

It is believed that with the application of this **functional-approach model**, over the years, IIUC shall be able to workably and sustainably Islamize its family members themselves, the environment, and the various teaching subjects of knowledge, Inshallah. May Allah give IIUC the *Taufiq* to fully realize its goals, Ameen!

Notes

1. Quoted in Siddiqi , Mezheruddin (1993); P.6
2. " " " ; P.107
3. " " " ; P.81

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