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# ISLĀMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE: EXTINCTION OR EVOLUTION?

**Professor Dr. G. Hussein Rassool**

Professor of Islāmic Psychology and Editor-In-Chief
International Open University (IOU), The Gambia

The concept of the Islāmization of knowledge was first proposed by the Malaysian polymath and scholar Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and the Palestinian academic and philosopher Ismail Al-Faruqi. The 'Islāmization of knowledge' movement has also been supported by many Islāmic academics, philosophers, and scholars including the International Institute of Islāmic Thought "whose main interest is in carrying out evidence-based research in advancing education in Muslim societies and the dissemination of this research through publication and translation, teaching, policy recommendations, and strategic engagements" (iiit).

Al-Faruqi (1982) defined the Islāmization of knowledge as integrating "the new knowledge into the corpus of the Islāmic legacy by eliminating, amending, re-interpreting, and adapting its components as the worldview of Islām and its values dictate." That is, redefining the subject matter of social sciences and humanities from an Islāmic perspective.

The use of the concept of Islāmization of knowledge is inherently controversial as Orientalists may perceive it as originating from a political or theological context. It has been argued that "'Islāmization of knowledge' is not a simple 'external and mechanical procedure', but the adjustment of certain forms of knowledge to the contents of Islāmic science, or the struggle to fortify the position of Islāmic science within the context of contemporary knowledge, including its various perspectives and points of view" (Dzilo, 2012). The process of the Islāmization of knowledge does not entail rejecting and refuting research evidence based on the Western scientific paradigm, but it involves the contextualization of Islāmic sciences within that knowledge framework.

The necessity for the Islāmization of knowledge lies in the need for knowledge to be based on divine revelation and the Islāmic intellectual tradition. According to Ismail Al-Faruqi, the "malaise of the Ummah" (Faruqi, 1082) (Muslim nation) was "secularized, Westernized, and de-Islāmized by internal and external agents of their enemies" (iiit, 1989). At the core of this malaise is the decline of scholarly Islāmic traditions and the dualistic system of education embraced by the Muslim world. Accordingly, "The educational system is the breeding ground of the disease. Schools and colleges generate and perpetuate that self-estrangement from Islām, its legacy, and its style. The educational system is the laboratory where Muslim youth are kneaded and cut, where their consciousness is moulded into a caricature of the West" (iiit, 1989). Fundamentally, Western secular societies, with their individualistic values, want Muslims to follow them in creed, culture, and character.

Allāh ﷻ said in the Qur'ān:

And never will the Jews or the Christians approve of you until you follow their religion *(*Sūrah Al Baqarah, 2:120).

So, as Muslims, are we already in the lizard's hole? Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri, ﵁ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: *"They will follow the ways of those who came before them, handspan by handspan, cubit by cubit until even if they entered a lizard's hole, they will follow them."*

*We said: "O Messenger of Allāh, (do you mean) the Jews and Christians?" He said: "Who else?" (Al-Bukhāri, 3456 and Muslim, 2669).*

According to Al Faruqi (1982), "All modern disciplines, the humanities, the social sciences, and natural sciences must be reconceived and rebuilt, given a new Islāmic base and assigned new purpose consistent with Islām". All of us need to reflect on whether our current curriculum in the non-Islāmic fields of knowledge is based on Islāmic values and practices. If we do not provide this discourse, then we are failing our students and the Ummah as a whole. Our aim is "Making authentic Islāmic knowledge readily available to the world through the internet solely for the sake of seeking the pleasure of Allāh ﷻ. This is a noble life goal and a mission well worth sacrificing all of one's energies and means for" (iou.edu.gm). However, this knowledge-based needs to be developed and implemented based on the '*Tawheed*' paradigm. This is a challenge for all of us.

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