Methodology of Islamization of Human Knowledge: A Comparative Appraisal of Proposed Approaches

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Abstract

Islamization of Human Knowledge (IOHK) is an intellectual phenomenon which deals with the issues of knowledge. Initially a number of goals and objectives were set up, including the development of methodology to implement the program of IOHK. This paper attempts to analyse the development of the methodology of IOHK and existing issues highlighted by the pioneers of this project. The study found that experts have developed and presented various methods which need to apply in practical form to achieve main goals of IOHK. A comparative appraisal of various viewpoints will assist to perceive more effective and comprehensive methods in order to advance the project of IOHK.

Keywords: Islamization, human knowledge, methodology, Islamic thought.

Introduction

Islamization of Human Knowledge is an intellectual and methodological phenomenon which attempts to deal with knowledge and its issues, in terms of inquiry, reform and revitalization for the well being of mankind. This intellectual discourse tends to identify and articulate the relationship between revelation and the real existence[1]. IOHK in its present form of development refers to an Islamic cultural and intellectual activity which seeks to study and analyse human society in order to re-establish its bases for the well-being of mankind.

However, the beginning of the 18th century witnessed the decline of Muslims and the emergence of modern Western civilization. The spirit and voyage for knowledge reached a halt in the Muslim world. In the 20th century Muslims lagged behind mostly in all walks of life. They could not continue advancement in the area of knowledge and science. The primary cause of crisis in the Muslim world was identified, as a matter of fact, rigidity of thought and intellectual poverty which caused the contemporary crisis. In order to extend this intellectual discourse and to achieve its objectives effectively, the development of Islamic methodology has been assigned the prime importance and priority[2].

Definition of Methodology: Before we discuss the process and method of Islamization of Human Knowledge, it is appropriate to have a look at the meaning and the nature of methodology to grasp better understanding of this phenomenon. Methodology is a field of scientific analysis of various methods used in the study of natural and human phenomenon[3].

Needless to say, that a methodology as mentioned by Safi is a process which aims to filter a number of principles and systematic methods. These principles and methods ought to be followed by a researcher throughout his research. The determination of the soundness of scientific method is the task of methodology. The main purpose of methodology is to protect the researcher from mistake due to inconsistencies of personal bias during the research[4].

Accordingly, we can say that methodology is a subject of scientific analysis to justify and explain the rules and process, so that scientific methods can be articulated. As mentioned earlier that methodology is not necessarily bound to any specific scientific method but it could involve the study of grounding facts and figures which justify their use.

Scientific Method: Scientific method is not specific single method which could be identified or symbolised as scientific. Scientific method consists of a number of principles like every systematic method does. Definition of scientific method as mentioned in merriam-webster; principles and procedures for the systematic pursuit of knowledge involving the recognition and formulation of a problem, the collection of data through observation and experiment, and the formulation and testing of hypotheses[5].

Taking account of these principles enables the researcher to claim that the study or result as a part of knowledge is scientific. Yet scientific method is not confined to aforesaid criterion only, but using a very new method is also justifiable if it is sound.

Classical Muslim Methodology for Religious and Natural Sciences: It is very well known and established in history books that various methods including scientific have been practiced by Muslim scientists. Moreover different methods were practiced in accordance with the nature of subject matter. For instance

method of textual analysis was prevailed to study religious sciences in classical Muslim methodology. Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman asserts that:

Classical Muslim methodology [usul] refers to the basic textual sources and methods used in producing Muslim attitudes in different spheres of life,... These sources are the Qur'an, the *Sunnah*, *ijma*, and *ijtihad.*

Regarding natural sciences Greek methodology was dominant in this field, before the advent of Islam. It was based on logic and was more deductive than inductive. But Muslim used inductive logic and empirical observation. Al Hasan Ibn Haytham (965-1040) depended on experimentation, observation, and developed a logical structure for reaching conclusion even before Roger Bacon wrote about the empirical methodology.

From aforementioned references, it appears that Muslims scientists have used different methods according to the requirements of subject matter, field's nature and circumstances of their time and space. In the development of various sciences they used every possible way open to man. On one hand they used textual analysis and interpretation of sacred scriptures in religious sciences and observation and experimentation was applied for empirical and physical sciences on the other.

Development of Islamic Methodology

Methodology plays a pivotal role in the development of any ideology or civilization. Thus, inadequate methodology could be the main reason of the crisis of the Muslim civilization. In order to avoid such crisis Muslims, individually and collectively need to establish a sound methodology. The soundness of Islamic methodology depends on the understanding of social facts and realities according to the requirements of time and space[6]. In order to overcome the malaise of Islamic thought, two vital intellectual operations are stipulated. They are: i. Reform of the methodology of Islamic thought. ii. The Islamization of the social sciences, humanities, and other branches of knowledge.

At this juncture, it was argued that a plan based upon a comprehensive Islamic methodology should be adopted in order to achieve a real and solid reform in Islamic thought.

At the early stage, Ismail Raji Faruqi did not discuss techniques and scientific procedures to develop Islamic methodology rather he highlighted the universal principles in order to constitute epistemological foundation. And according to Louay Safi, the Work Plan discussed by Faruqi is complicated for practical implementation[7]. That is why there is a need of more comprehensive, scientific and practical methodology. He argues that filling the present gape, project of IOHK requires the critical engagement of both classical Muslim and modern Western methods. In order to re-establish the Islamic methodology, at least partially, as initiative, Muslim scholars should consider suitable aspects of both traditions - classical

Islamic and modern Western - relevant to our time. Full rejection of any tradition will not be fruitful.

To achieve this objective AbuSulayman emphasized the changing in existing educational and constitutional systems. He further argues that scholars need to advance the methodology and its scope in this modern era. The required methodology should be based on *tawhidic* paradigm and lead to attain Islamic objectives and values along modern needs.

Under the broader debate of Islamic methodology, scholars have also discussed the stance of Fazlur Rahman. There is a general impression about him as a critic of IOHK but, as a matter of fact, he simply has a different view from the main stream scholars of IOHK. As far as his position about the methodology of guiding human mind or in other word Islamization of self is concerned, apparently he refuses this phenomenon but one can observe his agreement for the need of a methodology to Islamize a man. Fazlur Rahman contradicts his own disagreement with the validity of method. In '*Islamization of Knowledge: A Response*' he implies that we cannot develop a method to guide human mind but later on in the next passages he suggests the need of re-examination of Muslim tradition and then Western tradition. For that reason, he emphasized the need to set a criterion originated from the Qur'an. This criterion, in other word, is actually an Islamic methodology.

Different Approaches of Scholars to the Method of IOHK":
Many scholars, in order to develop the methodology of IOHK, have presented different procedures and work plans in the light of Islamic principles. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, one of the pioneers of IOHK sees modern contemporary knowledge "as contents and interpretation" is founded on Western secular worldview, thus it caused de-Islamization (secularization) of the Muslim mind.

To Islamize the contemporary knowledge he prescribes two steps for the process of IOHK. First is de-westernization of contemporary knowledge by isolating its elements and key points from the body of contemporary knowledge which play a vital role to disseminate the Western culture and civilization. Second step is the infusion of Islamic elements and essential points related to human nature and purpose of life in line with Islamic perspective[8]. This is the only way he believes that "true knowledge" as an objective of IOHK can be achieved. Furthermore, he highlighted very important aspects of human ability to recognize the nature, spirit and attributes of Islam and profound knowledge of both Islamic and Western culture and civilization. After having these characteristics one can only stand for the process of IOHK.

Faruqi has described five principles which articulate the epistemological foundation of an Islamic methodology. Regarding the task of Islamization of knowledge, Faruqi's main focus was on integration of two educational systems, the Western secular and the Islamic traditional to establish a very

new system based on Islamic ideology. For that purpose he suggested the unification of both systems then enjoining the embryonic system with Islamic values and worldview.

In elaboration of process and framework Faruqi described the essential steps for the establishment of a model institute. That institute should be based on Islamic epistemological and methodological paradigm and play a pivotal role in the revitalization of Islamic civilization and its worldview. In this regard he suggested the following prerequisites;

The first very basic instruction is to combine Islamic educational system with the secular one to develop comprehensive and modern curricula which will be based on Islamic principles and excluding Western secular elements.

Achievement of first objective could bring forth the second one, where Faruqi insists that Muslim students should avoid learning from non Muslim and secular institute rather they should acquire education in Islamic institution where they can receive full instruction in religion, ethics, law, history, and culture of Islam.

To accomplish aforementioned objectives of IOHK, he emphasized on four years study plan of Islamic civilization. He showed serious concern for the study of Islamic civilization because he believed that self-identity could only be achieved by the comparative study of the knowledge of groups and civilizations[9].

Methodology for the Development of Islamic Thought

AbdulHamid AbuSulayman contributed his academic and intellectual skills to advance the project of IOHK. He expended Faruqi's Work Plan and represented in more dynamic and precise mode in order to highlight and understand the contemporary issues faced by the Muslims and to accomplish the objectives of IOHK.

In his edited version, under 'Stages of the Agenda', he articulated a number of essential steps to develop an Islamic thought and its methodology. For instance, the aim of institute for the Islamization of Knowledge will focus on the following issues;

First is the creation of understanding and awareness in the *Ummah* of the crisis of Islamic thought and its methodology.

Second task is to instil proper understanding of the nature of crisis in contemporary Islamic thought and its methodology.

Third issue is to identify the relation between the failure of Islamic thought and its methodology.

Fourth issue is to analyze the legacy of *Ummah* and its original goals to re-establish its methodology.

Fifth task is the establishment of comprehensive Islamic methodology to deal with contemporary sciences.

Sixth step is to enrich and develop the contemporary Islamic culture and methodology by equipping with Islamic principles as well as modern sciences and knowledge.

Seventh task is the production of textbooks in disciplines, and priorities of scientific research.

Eighth and last goal mentioned by him is the preparation of academic cadres[10].

He believed that the development of Islamic thought and its methodology is the only solution for Muslims to emerge from the crisis. AbuSulayman underscored three major equally important steps to resolve the Muslim's intellectual crisis, so that Muslim world can tackle the contemporary challenges beside the revival of Islamic civilization.

The first is to re-evaluation of the relation between reason and revelation rather than a general description of relation with each other. The second step is the reformulation of the meaning of *ijtihad* and the role of *faqih* to make intellectual reforms. According to him *ijtihad* should not be restricted to linguistic reasoning and *faqih* suppose to deal with not only legal issues. Yet he should be able to address economics, social and political issues as well, and this would be only possible if we assimilate the pragmatic mode of thinking. His third step affirmed the approach of Faruqi about the omission of dualism between religious and secular system of education which is created by the West and completely alien to the Muslim world.

Further improvement in work plan was marked by Taha Jabir al-Alwani. He opines that Islamization of Human knowledge simply does not refer to the grafting of relevant Qur'anic verses with science and specific disciplines, we intend to Islamize. He enunciates on the methodological rearrangement of the sciences and their principles. According to him the main concern of IOHK should be combined reading of two books i.e. *ayat al Qur'aniyyah* (revelation) and *ayat al kauniyyah* (creation). He asserts that Allah (s.w.t.) has commanded human to receive guidance from these two sources of knowledge to understand his position and responsibilities in the universe. The book of 'ayat al-Qur'aniyyah' (signs of Qur'an) carries complete theory as a guidance to implement in human life and the book of 'ayat al-kauniyyah' (signs of universe) convinces him that he can comprehend true knowledge if and only if he establishes the equilibrium of complementary understanding of both sources of knowledge. On the contrary when one of these two readings (revelation and creation) was ignored, mankind remained in a grave danger and unable to understand the reality of this universe and experienced a number of catastrophes, as the consequences of his ignorance.

Ibrahim A Ragab infers that analysis of the literature of IOHK, will entail two distinct aspects to understand the nature of the process. First approach he calls "engagement approach", and believes that modern social science scholarship can play a vital role by adopting this approach. Second approach he entitles "disengagement approach" and, according to him, this approach hardly appears to play any central role by social sciences scholarship for the process of IOHK. Though, both approaches share a common idea that process of Islamization necessitates the integration of Islamic based knowledge, and that established by the modern methods of social sciences[11].

Advocates of "engagement approach" believe in the integration of knowledge unlike the group of disengagement approach who completely rejects the integration of Islamic and western tradition of scholarship. They believe that engagement of social science based on examination of all kinds of hypotheses then critical analysis of result and its validity with empirical reality from Islamic view point would definitely be fruitful in the process of IOHK.

Proponents of disengagement approach assert that dearth in basic ideas and the structure of modern social science would not let it play any substantial role in this process. That is because this knowledge is based on materialistic and secular world view of Western civilization. To do so, they proposed the process of IOHK which starts from the scratch; with full disengagement; free from inconsistent modern scholarship.

According to Ragab modern social science has a lot to offer based on the work which has been carried out throughout previous centuries; for example, the research methods, analytical tools and theory building mechanics. Though, it is not free from errors; on one hand it subject to omissions as it bears complete absence of spiritual factors and denial of revelation as a source of knowledge, on the other hand, it also bears commissions in sense of wholehearted affirmation of materialistic values regardless considering the facts beyond it.

Thus, we have to follow the formula of 'complementing' when omission is detected by providing missing elements, and 'substituting' if commission of error is detected through elimination of irrelevant substances. The substituting will be accomplished by the replacement of inappropriate essence with suitable and in accordance to Islamic world view.

Omar Hassan considers, the process of IOHK is based on discipline reform. He asserts that reformation of the content of knowledge will not be productive because it is lively and change rapidly. IOHK process should focus on the renewal of ijtihad and rigorous research to enhance knowledge and to enable the attitude of using it wisely. This reform should be equipped with rational and intellectual efforts and, academically and methodologically it should be rigorous and capable to bring practical outcomes[12].

Islamization of Self: Development of Islamic methodology is essentially based on Islamization of self. Mohammad Naquib al Attas explicitly formulates the process of Islamization of self through Islamization of knowledge. The ultimate objective of Islamization of self is the liberation of man from any kind of negative influence which contradicts Islamic worldview. He argues that the recipient of knowledge i.e. human being, naturally is different regarding his faculties and senses that receive the knowledge and interpret it. Thus, knowledge or education can be corrupted after the interference of human and his explanation due to his miss-comprehension and absence of ability to understand its true meaning. In order to comprehend true knowledge, he enunciates, one should have the character of *adab* in order to recognize one's right and proper place in relation to one's various abilities; physical, intellectual and spiritual, in human life. *Adab* is the discipline of body, mind and soul which instil the sense of responsibility and self discipline to play his role in society. Therefore, if one is unable to develop the wisdom of *adab*, he cannot acquire the true knowledge[13].

Fazlur Rahman looks at this matter from another angle as he supported the idea that knowledge is neutral and not value loaded. The only job has to be done by Muslims, is to Islamize their minds and thoughts. Hence, the approach and reception of Muslim learners towards knowledge needs to be changed. He contends:

The question is: how to make man responsible? This is the basic problem that those of us, who entertain this subject, Islamization of Knowledge, have in mind. The feeling is that the modern world has been developed and structured upon knowledge which cannot be considered Islamic. Actually what we should be saying is that the modern world has misused knowledge; that there is nothing wrong with knowledge, but that has simply been misused[14].

For him, the major task of Islamization should be, to Islamize man and his mind, so he can execute his responsibilities in order to utilize the knowledge appropriately. According to him, if man in most cases has failed to act accordingly, it is due to the corruption of his mind and thought, despite of having rational faculties[15].

Rahman while advocates the idea of Islamizing man or human mind, it is worth to mention that he refuses the process or methodology of Islamizing man or his mind. In other words he could not realize the paramount significance of the process of IOHK as an initial step to change the mind. IOHK is the process to change or Islamize mind through Islamization of education or contemporary human knowledge. According to Hashim and Rossidy under the debate of Islamization of self, a general agreement can be observed between Rahman and al-Attas. Rahman, regardless his critique for the IOHK project, he emphasizes on the change of mind, in other words Islamization of mind or self. For that al-Attas' calls for the improvement or development of individual. However, al-Attas discusses the

process and framework of Islamizing self in detail unlike Rahman who advocates the idea of Islamizing man but does not ponder upon the process or methodology in order to achieve this objective.

Mohammad Kamal Hassan a key figure of IOHK sheds light upon the Islamization of self and considers it as an essential requirement to initiate IOHK process and to achieve its goals efficiently. He elaborates the effective role of *ulu-al-bab* to reform and develop a healthy society. Whereas pointing out the main features of *ulu-al-albab*, he enunciates, these features as requisite to spiritual ethics are very important for those who want to contribute their share to the process of IOHK. They should possess following qualities namely, "piety, humility, dislike to self-glorification or selfishness and etc. Thus, Islamization of self refers to the purification of soul which is considered integral part of the methodology of knowledge.

Proposed Framework Based on the Analysis of Present Study

From the writher's point of view, there are several essential elements regarding the methodology of IOHK, which can be helpful to achieve this goal along bridging many other gapes within the project. i. First and foremost, there is a dire need of practical rigorous efforts at institutional level in order to form an effective methodology at first level. ii. Based on initiative supposed to be taken at institutional level, next action requires experts to analyse existing methodologies and then try to deduce common elements from them, in order to establish more comprehensive and effective method. iii. To achieve this objective Muslim intelligentsia must sit and think together. These Muslim intellectuals should belong to different disciplines and branches of sciences, so that everyone can contribute his part. iv. Basic study of Shariah related to the Qur'an, *Sunnah*, *Fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*, should be made compulsory not only at university level but at school and college level also, according to the standard of education. v. Study of Islamic civilization, Islamic worldview and its comparison with the Western world view is recommended from the researcher's view point. Although, these courses are included in the curriculum of various Islamic Universities and have been taught in other institutes as well. But recommended studies should expend practically at vast level, including schools and colleges, so that students can have better understanding before they join university. vi. Based on available data and material, Muslim thinkers and writers should produce books on Islamic methodology, covering as more aspects as possible; for instance, methodology for natural sciences, social sciences and research methodology for Islamic sciences as well. Most of the books on research methodology are being used in the Muslim worlds, written by non-Muslim Western scholars. That is why there is a need of syllabus on research methodology based on Islamic worldview. vii. Courses and subjects on intellectual explanations like the relation between reason and revelation, physics and metaphysics and science and faith, should be added to the syllabus.

Conclusion

As concluding remarks we would like to highlight some significant issues regarding the methodology of IOHK; for instance, to what extent the objective of methodology has been achieved, which areas still require sought after scholarship to fill the existing gape in order to articulate exemplary methodology of IOHK?

It is very obvious that a verity of works have been done by the Muslim intellectuals, on the project of IOHK. They have contributed to this ideological program according to their skills and abilities out of sincerity and hardship. Yet the present situation of IOHK in general and its methodology in particular, depict existing flaws and shortcomings which need to be triumphed over and fill the existing gape.

This is high time to think critically whether this movement is advancing according to the required pace or still legging in infant stages as Louay Safi stated a couple of decades ago:

 I argue that the project of Islamization is still in its pre-methodological stage. This is due partially to the limitations of the original work plan, which does not take into account some important logistical and psychological factors.

The reason of drawback was the premature methodology which was lacking some essential elements. But during the last three decades various scholars have formulated and evaluated a number of methodologies, which varies according to the area of study and back ground of the scholar but most of them share a common goal and objective and that is the success of IOHK.

Last but not least I want to put forth a crucial point in order to flourish the project of IOHK and that is all kinds of support from the Muslim leaders and officials. It has been recommended that reformation of educational and constitutional systems should be based on Islamic ideals and goals. Thus, one of the major reasons of stagnation and declination of Ummah is the split between scholars and rulers. In order to attain necessary cooperation of government officials there should be an ideal understanding among Muslim scholars and government sectors.

The intellectual undertaking of Islamization of Human Knowledge at present level has been recognized as a most challenging task of any society. Those who are working for this mission and contributing their academic and intellectual efforts should be encouraged. As al Alwani gives them confidence by his supportive statement; 'that Muslim thinkers should understand that they may not see the output in near future or even for decades. The project of IOHK demands a revisit of the Islamic heritage along with a comparative analysis of modern Western knowledge and the development of Islamic thought. It requires systematic reorientation and restructuring of the entire field of human knowledge in accordance with a new set of

criteria based on the Islamic worldview so one may understand the truth of life and this universe[16].

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