

Muslim Epistemology in Contemporary age:
A case study of International Institute of Islamic
Thought (IIIT) on Islamization of Knowledge

Research Thesis

For

M.PHIL ISLAMIC THOUGHT & CIVILIZATION

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SUBMITTED BY

Rubina Irshad

ID: 100286-009

SUPERVISOR NAME

DR. Muhammad Amin

DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT & CIVILIZATION

UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT & TECHNOLOGY

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11119-21488
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 HOUSE NO 496 NASHEMAN E IQBAL
 COOPERATIVE HOUSING SOCIETY, LAHORE,
 DISTRICT: Lahore
 03365215746

Abstract

Epistemology or theory of knowledge has a close relationship with human thought and action at individual level as well as at society. Islamic Epistemology has been given due importance in the Quran and Hadith. Its nature, sources, characteristics and limits have been described by the Islamic scholars and determined within the light of Islamic principles. Epistemology has flourished within the Islamic paradigm in the early days of Islam but lost its glory and identity due to the Muslim's decline especially in education. The influence of the European colonial rule and Western educational system brought modernity and secularism in all fields of life. Different Muslim scholars and institutions have made efforts regarding the development of an educational system in their own paradigm; some of them succeeded to some extent while some failed because the roots of the problem have never been tackled and social sciences were never taught from Islamic perspective. Thus the notion of "Islamization of Knowledge" was first started by an eminent scholar Ismail Raji al-Faruqi who gave it a practical form in the establishment of IIIT (International Institute of Islamic Thought). The purpose of IIIT is to Islamize knowledge, to revive and reform Islamic thought and to rebuild a competent, efficient and productive Ummah. However Al-Faruqi's project focused entirely on the humanities which should be broadened to include all kinds of knowledge starting from the lower grades at school level up to the higher level University education. To develop an educational system on the Islamic world view, a deeply perceptive and well planned step by step process needs to be elaborated. This goal can be achieved only if all the Muslim leaders, scholars and intellectuals cooperate and collaborate with the IIIT using all their material and intellectual resources for a successful venture.

This is dedicated to my Parents

Who made me what I am

Acknowledgement

All the praises are for Allah Almighty who created man and taught him what he knew not. Hence, my special and foremost thanks to Allah (S.W.T), the most beneficent, who continuously helped me at every stage of completion towards my goal.

I express my profound love and regards to my parents who helped me spiritually as well as financially. They were a great support to me and the source of inspiration at every stage. I would not have been able to initiate my work without their prayers and support.

Moreover, my husband boosted my moral towards my aim and objective. And he has also been helpful in collecting the related material despite of his tight and busy schedule.

And my respectable and worthy teachers were of immense importance. They played a significant role through guiding me at every step from the initializing till the completion of this task.

The last but not the least, the library staff was also very keen and determined by providing the relevant material.

In the end, I would like to thank all the people who have contributed positively in this achievement.

List of Abbreviations

AAR	American Academy of Religion
AJISS	American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences
AMSE	Association of Muslim Social Scientists and Engineers
AMSS	Association of Muslim Social Scientists
IIIT	International Institute of Islamic Thought
ISNA	Islamic Society of North America
MBM	MajlisBelia Malaysia
MSA	Muslim Students Association of the U.S and Canada
NAIT	North American Islamic Trust
TFI	The Fairfax Institute
UMNO	United Malays National Organization
WAMY	World Assembly of Muslim Youth

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Introduction

Epistemology is the fundamental part of any world view. It deals with the nature, principles, sources, and limits of knowledge. In Stanford Encyclopedia epistemology is defined as

“Epistemology is the study of knowledge and justified beliefs. As the study of knowledge, epistemology is concerned with the following questions: What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge? What are its sources? What is its structure, and what are its limits?”¹

In Islam, it is the parameter which specifies the limits of knowledge i.e. what should be known and what kind of knowledge is prohibited? What is possible to know but should not be acquired. These are the questions that an Islamic theory of knowledge deals with, which is an outcome of the Islamic world view. In the light of the Islamic world view Muslims made splendid progress in every field of knowledge, religious as well as secular consist of natural and social sciences and technology. However, after about a thousand year or so, Muslims' lethargy led them away from their world view. The lack of a proper system of education and *trabiyah*, internal conflicts and other elements feeble the Muslim world and they became captives of the Western nations physically as well as mentally.² The western and secular world view dominated every one and everywhere. It is quite clear that Islamic and Western world views are opposite to each other in their fundamentals as well as approaches to knowledge. The implementation of the Western educational system in the Muslim world by the colonial powers created many problems because it clashed with the Muslims cultural and civilizational identity. In this regard Salisu Shehu says.

“This is the factor which is responsible for the intellectual sterility and cultural misorientation that characterize Muslims who have been educated in the secular system. They are usually unproductive because the education they received is not relevant to their value system and ideological orientation. For a person to be productive he has to be educated in the context of his value system and ideology. Education will be useless if it does not represent the belief and values of the community in which it is operated. The consequence

¹ *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. “Epistemology.”

² Muhammad Amin, “Muslim Epistemology: An Analytical Appraisal of Islamization of Knowledge,” *Al-Adwa* 23, no. 31(2009): 2

of this situation is a growing disenchantment with the secular approach to knowledge which has predominance in the Muslim world.”³

Thus Islamization of knowledge is an effort to rebuild and reconstruct knowledge in order to combine the structure of Islamic beliefs and world view. ‘The whole thrust of the Islamization of knowledge movement is to reconstruct contemporary Islamic thought for the revitalization of Islamic civilization.’⁴ The notion of “Islamization of Knowledge” was first mentioned by a Malaysian scholar Naquib al-Attas in his book “Islam and Secularism.” Later on, in a more comprehensive way, it was also put forward by Ismail Raji al-Faruqi in 1982 who gave it a practical form by establishing an institute which yielded ideas and publications that started to analyze each academic discipline from the point of view of the Islamization of knowledge. So that Muslim Ummah can successfully start the reformation of its thought and restructure its abilities.

For a clear and certain understanding of the Islamic concept of knowledge as well as the efforts made for Islamic resurgence have been discussed in this research and elaborated in three comprehensive chapters.

Chapter#1:

In chapter 1, the theory of knowledge has been discussed briefly. The ideological foundations of knowledge in the Quran and Hadith, its sources, classification, and characteristics are discussed. The translation of the Quranic verses has been used of the translator Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Dr. Muhammad Mohsin Khan. In Part 2 of the chapter 1, the theories of classical and contemporary scholars are explained. Further in part 3, the factors involved in the decline of the Muslim Ummah are defined. Prevalent educational system and the efforts that were made to reconcile the two opposing educational systems are also illustrated here briefly.

³ Salisu Shehu, *Islamization of Knowledge: Conceptual Background, Visions and Tasks* (Nigeria Office: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1998), 14.

⁴ Muhamamd Mumtaz Ali, “Reconstruction of Islamic Thought and Civilization: The Case of Islamization of knowledge.” *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 16, no. 1 (1999): 94.

Chapter#2:

In chapter 2, the establishment of IIIT (The International Institute of Islamic Thought), its founder's biography and contributions, the objectives, methodologies, mission, and challenges facing IIIT are examined and explained.

Chapter#3:

In the last chapter, assessment of the views has been done on which the IIIT is based upon. Different opinions of various scholars are given along with their appreciation and critique about Ismail Raji al-Frauqi's work plan and IIIT's Islamization of knowledge programs have been illustrated.

And at the end, a conclusion has been drawn based on the findings along with the recommendations and justifications for the opinion.

CHAPTER 1

What is Epistemology?

Epistemology or theory of knowledge is the central core of any world view.

“Epistemology seeks to define knowledge, to distinguish its principal varieties, to identify its sources and to establish its limits. It is ‘What can we know, and how do we know.’”¹

Here are some dictionary definitions for Epistemology.

“The theory of knowledge, especially with regards to its methods, validity and scope. Epistemology is the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion.”²

In “Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought”, the definition of Epistemology is given in these words.

“The philosophical theory of knowledge, which seeks to define it, distinguishes its principles varieties, identify its sources, and establish its limits.”³

According to the “Encyclopedia Britannica”, Epistemology is to study the nature of knowledge and its validity and scope. Epistemologists deal with the degrees of certainty and uncertainty i.e. probability. Thus they examine various differences between being aware of

¹ Ziauddin Sardar, “Rediscovering the Epistemology of Islam,” in *Islamic Futures: The Shape of Ideas to Come* (Malaysia: Peland Publications, 1998), 85

² *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, s.v. “Epistemology.”

³ *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Epistemology.”

something with certainty and believing in something without being sure. Their main concern is with human knowledge.⁴

According to the Cambridge Encyclopedia, it is the branch of philosophy in which the theory of knowledge, its sources, limitations, different kinds and reliability are discussed.⁵

Epistemology is a philosophy which focuses on all the areas of human knowledge i.e. its nature, extent and origin. It is a complex word which has a reasonable and proper meaning. “Episteme” is a Greek word which means knowledge and “logy” means the study of knowledge. “Epistemologists usually discuss three main questions:

- 1- What is Knowledge?
- 2- What can we know?
- 3- How can Knowledge be acquired?”⁶

We can say that epistemology is a theory of knowledge which examines the nature, origin, limitations, validity and scope of human knowledge.⁷

Muslim epistemology deals with the Islamic theory of knowledge or the Islamic concept of knowledge. It deals with knowledge from different aspects i.e. its nature, its sources, objectives and scope, which knowledge is useful and should be focused upon and gained and which one is useless and should not be acquired. Thus it deals with what is possible to achieve and what is impossible to know as well as how can knowledge be obtained?⁸

Defining Knowledge:

Knowledge is the antonym of *Jhal* or “ignorance”. It has a connection with *ilm* on the one hand and on the other with some other terms like *shu’ur*, *ma’rifa*, *hikma*, *fiqh*, but the most proper word is *marifa*. *Ilm* and *ma’rifa* both have a correlation.⁹

Here are some dictionary definitions of knowledge:

“Understanding of, or information about, a subject which has been obtained by experience or study, and which is either in a person’s mind or is possessed by people generally.”¹⁰

⁴ *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Epistemology.”

⁵ *The Cambridge Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Epistemology”

⁶ Andrew Brook and Robert J. Stainton, *Knowledge and Mind: A Philosophical Introduction* (London: The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2001), 1.

⁷ Hafiz Abdullah Farooqi, “Iqbal’s Theory of Knowledge,” *Iqbal Review* 16, no.1 (1975):21.

⁸ Muhammad Amin, “Muslim Epistemology: An Analytical Appraisal of Islamization of Knowledge,” *Al-Adwa* 23, no. 31(2009): 1.

⁹ *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. “Ilm.”

“A result or product of knowing; information or understanding acquired through experience; practical ability or skill.”¹¹

In Arabic language, the terms *al-ilm*, *al-shu'ur*, and *al-marifa* are used for knowledge. All these terms have their primary meanings too.¹²

“Ilm designates knowledge, the “science or study” of a field such as the Quran, Prophetic traditions (hadith), grammar, dialectical theology (kalam) and astronomy. It also denotes the knowledge of God in particular.”¹³

In Encyclopedia of Islam, it is stated that Knowledge means “*ilm*” in Islam even though there are some other words like *marifa* and *sho'oor* which are also used for the same concept. Yet, *Ilm* is a broader term as far as its meaning is concerned while the other terms are narrower in meaning as they denote the activities of reflection and perception. Therefore the term “*ilm*” is more thorough and inclusive.¹⁴

An eminent scholar Naqib al-Attas defines knowledge in these words.

“Knowledge is to know the cause of the existence of a thing.”¹⁵

The Qur'an mentions the following terms to illustrate knowledge:

“*ilm*, *ma'arifat*, *hikmat*, *basirat*, *ra'ay,dhann*, *yaqeen*, *tadhkirat*, *shu'ur*, *lubb*, *nabau*, *burhan*, *dirayat*, *haqq*, and *tasawwur*. The term '*ilm* is used in the Qur'an to refer to knowing.”¹⁶

Ilm is an Arabic word which is usually translated as learning and knowledge in Islamic theory of knowledge. Thus it refers both to the learning process and to the information which is gained through learning.¹⁷

Talking about an English equivalent of Knowledge Rosenthal says:

¹⁰ *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*, s.v. 2nd ed., “Knowledge.”

¹¹ The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language, s.v. “Knowledge.”

¹² *Urdu Daira Marifaye Islamia*, s.v. “Ilm.”

¹³ *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim world*, s.v. “Knowledge.”

¹⁴ *The encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. “Ilm.”

¹⁵ Syed Muhammad al-Naqib al- Attas, *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, ed. Syed Muhammad al-Naqib al-Attas (Jeddah: King Abdul Aziz University, 1979), 2

¹⁶ Training workshop on the Islamic Input in the Medical Curriculum held at the Faculty of Medicine UNISSULA on 21st December 2008. “Fundamentals of Knowledge, Usul Al Ilm.” Medical Education Resources, <http://omarkasule-05.tripod.com/id47.html>

¹⁷ *The Oxford encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, s.v. “Ilm.”

“Knowledge cannot express all the factual and emotional contents of “Ilm”. Because “Ilm” is a concept that has a commanding influence in Islam and Muslim civilization with its distinctive form and its complexity. Indeed, no other concept that can determine Muslim civilization in all its aspects the way “ilm” can.”¹⁸

Some Scholarly definitions on Knowledge:

Scholars usually avoid giving an absolute and comprehensive definition of knowledge. However if the definitions of the scholars are to be compiled they turn out to be countless. The reason for such an abundance of definitions is the difference of opinion among scholars. At some places the clash of opinion is due to the religious point of view, while at others philosophy, logic and mysticism is the cause. Some definitions of scholars are quoted below for whom

“Knowledge is the process of knowing, obtaining, finding, cognition, clarification, decision, assertion, imagination or mental verification. And for some scholars knowledge is belief, remembrance, motion or result of an intuition.”¹⁹

Franz Rosenthal quoted different definitions in his book “Knowledge Triumphant.”

1. “Knowledge is that through which one knows.
2. Knowledge is that through which the essence knows.
3. Knowledge stands for the object known.
4. Knowledge is cognition.
5. Knowledge is cognition of the object known as it is (*ala ma huwa bih*).
6. Knowledge is the perception of a thing as it is, or, “of a thing in its reality (*bi-haqiqatih*).
7. Knowledge is the finding (*wijdan*) of things in their realities.
8. Knowledge is the clear understanding (*tabayyun*) of the object known as it is (*ala ma huwa bih*).
9. Knowledge is to be defined as an attribute that necessitates discernment (*tamyiz*) that does not leave open the possibility of the opposite in matters concerned with (abstract) concepts.
10. Knowledge is the delineation (*irtisam*) of the form of the object known in the knower.
11. Knowledge is the arrival (*husul*) of the form of a thing in the intellect.
12. Knowledge is the trust (*thiqah*) that the object known is as it is (*ala ma huwa bih*).
13. Knowledge is a vision (*ru'yah*) of the heart that is looked at.

¹⁸ Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill,2007), 1-2.

¹⁹ Ibid., 62-85.

14. Knowledge is the motion of the heart.
 15. Knowledge is that which the soul desires.”²⁰

2. Ideological Foundations of Muslim Epistemology: Quran and Sunnah

In this section the importance of Knowledge in Quran and hadith would be illustrated, furthermore its sources, classification and characteristics described by the scholars within the light of Quran guidance.

Importance of Knowledge in the Quran:

The Holy Quran gives a lot of regard to knowledge. It is quite obvious that the Quran lays a straight path for a human being to follow and gives him a complete code of life. The Quran clearly states that man was never left without guidance since the first man Adam was sent on the earth but was accompanied by divine instructions and directions. The first teaching class started soon after the creation of Adam when he was taught “all the names”.²¹ And due to this revealed knowledge, man has higher esteem and superiority over angels and above the rest of Allah’s creation. It is only because of this knowledge that man is deemed worthy of commanding respect and honor.

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ
 إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ²².

“And He (Allah) taught Adam all the names (of everything), then He showed them to the angels and said, Tell me the names of these if you are truthful.”

The knowledge of any object begins with its name and the name of the object reflects its characteristics. The first blessing Allah showered upon Adam was the knowledge of things. The man was given a higher rank over other creations as the knowledge of human beings was given directly by Allah Himself not through any hierarchy or chains. The importance of knowledge is also highlighted by the first revelation to the last Prophet (S.A.W) as its first word meant “read” and its importance is further stressed through the “pen”.

²⁰Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill,2007): 62-85.

²¹ Syed Wahid Akhtar, “The Islamic Concept of Knowledge,” *Al-Tawhid* 12, no.3 (1994-95):102.

²² Qur’an: 28:31

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ. اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ. الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ. عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ.²³

“Read! In the name of your Lord who has created (all that exists).He has created man from a clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not.”

Knowledge acquisition is given much importance in the Holy Quran. Prophet (S.A.W.W) was asked to seek from Allah increase in his Knowledge. The Quran tells him to;

قُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا²⁴.

“Say, O My Lord! Increase me in Knowledge.”

The Quran makes a clear distinction between those who know and those who do not know.

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ²⁵.

Say! “Are those who know equal to those who know not?”

For those who possess knowledge, the Quran says:

يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ²⁶ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ²⁶.

“Allah will exalt in degree those of you who believe, and those who have been granted knowledge. And Allah is Well-Acquainted with what you do.”

Allah warns those who speak about something without having certain knowledge.

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ²⁷ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا²⁷.

“And follow not that of which you have no knowledge. Verily! The hearing and the sight, and the heart, all those will be questioned (by Allah).”

Laying stress upon the importance of Knowledge and the status of the scholars, Allah addresses the scholars to be beholder to his Oneness as He says.

²³Qur’an., 96: 1-5

²⁴Ibid., 20: 114

²⁵Ibid, 39: 9

²⁶Ibid., 58: 11

²⁷Quran., 17:36

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

“Allah bears witness that *La ilaha illa Huwa* (none has the right to be worshipped but He), and the angels, and those having knowledge (also give this witness); (He always) maintains His creation in Justice. *La ilaha illa Huwa* (none has the right to be worshipped but He), the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.”²⁸

Those who fear Allah are praised by Him.

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ ۗ²⁹

“It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah.”

وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ فَتُخْبِتَ لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۗ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَادٍ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ³⁰

“And that those who have been given knowledge may know that it (this Qur’an) is the truth from your Lord, so that they may believe therein, and their hearts may submit to it with humility.”

According to the Quran, knowledge is considered both as a gift of divine revelation as well as a creative work of human spirit.³¹ The Quran stresses upon going into the depth of Allah’s creation and to keenly observe His Knowledge. Man is asked to do *tadabur* (deliberation) and *tafakur* (thinking). Allah did not create things just to view in general but to go into their depths and take maximum advantages from them. The Quran gives the rules of inductive method are to seek inferences or general laws from particular instances. Through Divine revelation, these concepts are learned. Some scientific concepts from the Holy Quran of great importance in relation to scientific Knowledge are mentioned below. For example:

- i. The concept of the expanding universe.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ³²

²⁸ Ibid, 3:18

²⁹ Ibid., 35:28

³⁰ Ibid., 22:54

³¹ Absar Ahmad, “Reflections on Qur’anic Epistemology,” *Iqbal Review*, 25, no.3 (1984):16.

³² Qur’an, 35:1.

“All the praises and thanks are to Allah, the (only) Originator of the heavens and the earth.”

- ii. The concept of a created but evolving Universe.

فَقَضَيْنَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَىٰ فِي كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا ۗ وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ
الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَحِفْظًا ۗ ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ³³.

“Then He completed and finished from their creation (as) seven Heavens into two days and He made in each Heaven its affair. And we adorned the nearest (lowest) with lamps (stars) to be an adornment as well as to guard. Such is the decree of Him the All-Mighty, the All-knower.”

- iii. The concept of the organic development in general.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَيْفَ يُبْدِئُ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ ۗ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ³⁴.

“See they not how Allah originates the creation, and then repeats it. Verily, that is easy for Allah.”

- iv. Evolution of Plant life.

وَأَيَّةٌ لَهُمُ الْأَرْضُ الْمَيْتَةُ أَحْيَيْنَاهَا وَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهَا حَبًّا فَمِنْهُ يَأْكُلُونَ ۖ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا
جَنَّةً مِّنْ نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ وَفَجَّرْنَا فِيهَا مِنَ الْعُيُونِ لِيَأْكُلُوا مِن ثَمَرِهِ وَمَا عَمِلَتْهُ
أَيْدِيهِمْ ۗ أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ³⁵.

“And a sign for them is a dead land. We give it life, and we bring forth from it grains, so that they eat therefore. And we have made therein gardens of date-palm and grapes, and we have caused springs of water to gush forth therein. So that they may eat of the fruit therefore - and their hands made it not. Will they not, then, give thanks.”

- v. The principle of pairs amongst all living and non living objects.

وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ³⁶.

“And of everything We have created pairs, that you may remember (the grace of Allah).”

³³ Ibid, 14:12

³⁴ Ibid, 29:19

³⁵ Ibid, 36:33

³⁶ Quran, 51:49

- vi. The concept of planet revolving in their orbits.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ³⁷

“And He it is Who has created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon, each in an orbit floating.”

- vii. Continuous movement of the sun towards its goal.

وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَهَا³⁸ ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ .

“And the sun runs on its fixed course for a term (appointed). That is the decree of the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing.”

- viii. The principle of pairs in terms of male and female among plants, animals, human beings and everything else.

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ وَمِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ³⁹ .

“Glory be to Him Who has created all the pairs of that which the earth produces, as well as of their own (human) kind (male and female), and of that which they know not.”

- ix. The concept of space travel with its difficulties and possibilities.

يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ إِنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ أَنْ تَنْفُذُوا مِنْ أَقْطَارِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
فَانفُذُوا⁴⁰ لَا تَنْفُذُونَ إِلَّا بِسُلْطَانٍ .

“O the assembly of jinn and men! If you have power to pass beyond the zones of the heaven and the earth, then pass beyond (them)! But you will never be able to pass them, except with authority (from Allah).”

- x. Animal life’s existence on other planets and its expected connection with the animal life on the earth.

³⁷Ibid, 31:33

³⁸Ibid, 36:38

³⁹Ibid, 36:36

⁴⁰Quran.,55:33

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَثَّ فِيهِمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَهُوَ عَلَى جَمْعِهِمْ إِذَا يَشَاءُ قَدِيرٌ⁴¹.

“And among His ayat (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, etc) is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and whatever moving (living) creatures He has dispersed in them both. And He is All-potent over their assembling whenever He wills.”

xi. The idea of evolution in relation to man.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَلٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ⁴².

“And indeed, We created man from dried (sounding) clay of altered mud.”

In view of the above elaboration, it can be said that knowledge is of great importance as proved by the Quranic verses. The Holy Quran is the main source of the universal and fundamental knowledge, which enables humanity to have a long and narrow view of the universe as well as journey into the spiritual fields of human experience.⁴³

Importance of Knowledge in Hadith:

The importance of knowledge is emphasized upon both in the verses of the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad’s Ahadith. There are many sayings of the Prophet (S.A.W) which lay emphasis upon the importance of knowledge and stimulate Muslims to get knowledge from any corner of the world.

In the virtue of acquiring knowledge, Prophet (S.A.W) said:

من سلك طريقا يلتمس فيه علما سهل الله له طريقا الى الجنة⁴⁴

“If any one treks a path seeking knowledge thereby, Allah will make easy his passage to paradise.”

Allah guards the person who is in search of knowledge for His sake.

⁴¹ Ibid.,42:29

⁴² Ibid.,15:26

⁴³ A.J.Halepota, “Islamic conception of Knowledge,” *Islamic studies* 14, no.1 (1975): 1

⁴⁴ Abu Eisa Mohammad Ibn Eisa at-Tirmidhi, *Jame At-Tirmidhi*, hadith no:2646

من خرج في طلب فهو في سبيل الله حتى يرجع⁴⁵

“If any one goes out seeking knowledge then he is on Allah’s path till he returns.”

The Prophet (S.A.W) stated that Ulama are his heirs.

ان العلماء ورثة الانبياء، ان الانبياء لم يورثوا دينار ولا درهما، انما
ورثوا العلم، فمن اخذ به فقد اخذ بحظ وافر⁴⁶

“The scholars are the heirs of the Prophet (S.A.W) and the Prophet do not leave dinar or dirham in legacy. They only leave knowledge. So, he who takes it indeed collects an abundant good fortune.”

When Allah wants to do good to a person, He confers him the understanding of Islamic life style.

من يرده الله به خير ا يفقه في الدين⁴⁷

“When Allah wants well to a person, He makes him understanding of (Islamic) life style.”

Prophet (S.A.W) says about the person who wants to be like the one, who possess knowledge and *Al-hikmah*.

لا حسد الا في اثنين : رجل آتاه الله مالا فسلط على هلكته في الحق و رجال
آتاه الله الحكمة فهو يقف بها ويعلمها.⁴⁸

“There is no envy but in two cases. (The first is) a man, whom Allah has given wealth and he spends it righteously; (the second is) the one whom Allah has been given wisdom (the Holy Quran) and he acts according to it and teaches it to others.”

In a hadith, the Prophet (S.A.W) puts the highest emphasize on the importance and superiority of the person who learns and then conveys it to others.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 2647

⁴⁶ Ibid. 2682

⁴⁷ Muhammad bin Ismail bin al-Mughera al- Bukhari, Sahih Bukhari, hadith no:571

⁴⁸ Ibid., 73

مثل ما بعثنى الله به من الهدى والعلم كمثل الغيث الكثير اصاب ارضا، فكان منها نقيية قبلت الماء فانبت الكلا والعشب الكثير وكانت منها اجادب امسكت الماء فنفع الله بها الناس فشربوها وسقوا وزرعوا، واصاب منها طائفة اخرى انما هي قيعان لا تمسك ماء ولا تنبت كلا، فذلك مثل من فقه فالدین الله ونفعه ما بعثنى الله به فعلم وعلم، ومثل من لم يرفع بذلك راسا ولم يقبل هدى الله الذى ارسلت به.⁴⁹

“The example of guidance and knowledge with which Allah sent me is like abundant rain falling on the earth, some of which was fertile soil that absorbed rain water and brought forth vegetation and grass in abundance. (And) another portion of it was hard and held the rain and Allah caused the people to benefit with it and they utilized it for drinking, making their animals drink from it and for irrigating the land for cultivation. (And) a portion of it was barren which could neither hold the water nor bring forth vegetation. The first in the example of the person who understands Allah’s religion and makes use of it Which Allah has revealed through me (the Prophet, S.A.W) and learns and then teaches it to others. The last example is of a person who does not care for it and does not take Allah’s guidance revealed through me (the Prophet S.A.W) (he is like the barren land).”

Sources of Knowledge:

Different thinkers, having different backgrounds and assumptions, emphasized on different sources of knowledge like sense perception, intuition, revelation, authority, existence etc. According to Ibn Khaldun, knowledge is of three types.

- i. Knowledge by inference (*ilm al-yaqin*)
- ii. Knowledge by perception (*ain al-yaqin*)
- iii. Knowledge by personal experience of intuition (*haqq al-yaqin*).⁵⁰

Iqbal is of the view that in the Quran, “*Anfus*” which is the plural of *nafs* meaning self, and “*afaq*” which means horizons, both are considered as the sources of knowledge. He writes.

⁴⁹ Muhammad bin Ismail bin al-Mughera al-Bukhari, Sahih Bukhari, hadith no:79

⁵⁰ S. M. Hossain, “A Plea for A Modern Islamic University: Resolution of the Dichotomy,” in Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education, ed. Syed Muhammad al-Naquib al-Attas, (Jeddah: King Abdul Aziz University, 1979), 94-95.