

## **CHAPTER II**

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The greatest task confronting the Ummah in the fifteenth *Hijri* century is to solve the problem of education. There can be no hope of a genuine revival of the Ummah unless the educational system is revamped and its faults are corrected. Indeed, the system needs to be formed anew. The present dualism in Muslim education, its bifurcation into an Islamic and a secular system, must be removed and abolished once and for all. The two systems must be united and integrated, and the emergent system must be infused with the spirit of Islam and must function as an integral part of its ideological program. It should not be allowed to remain an imitation of the West; nor should it be left to find its own way; nor should it be tolerated that it serves merely the economic and pragmatic needs of the student for professional training, personal advancement, or material gain. The educational system must be endowed with a mission, and that mission must be none other than that of imparting Islamic vision and cultivating the will to realize it on the largest scale.

Such a task, looked upon narrowly, is indeed difficult to perform and may be costly in comparison with what is currently being allocated for education. But the Ummah spends a far lesser percentage of its gross national product and of its annual budget on education than do most other nations in the world today. Those nations know how to develop and to safeguard their educational systems; and they, therefore, realize the benefits obtained by spending money wisely on these systems. Even in those affluent Muslim countries where the budgets for education are significant, the major expenditure is on buildings and administration rather than on research and proper educative activities. The Ummah must spend far more on education than it presently does in order to attract the best minds and to help them achieve what is expected of them, as well as to maintain the dignity Allah (SWT) has bestowed upon them as “men of knowledge” or “seekers” of it.

#### A. Integrating the Two Educational Systems

To establish a unified educational system in which Islam is the

motivating and guiding power, the Islamic educational system, which consists of elementary and secondary schools (*ma'āhid 'ilmīyah* or *dīnīyah*) as well as colleges (*kulliyāt*) and universities (*jāmi'āt*), must be united with the secular system of public schools and universities. The union should bring to the new unified system the advantages of both, namely, the financial resources of the state and the commitment to the vision of Islam. Unifying the two systems should create the opportunity to eliminate their major shortcomings; namely, the inadequacy of archaic textbooks, the inexperience of many teachers in the traditional system, and the mimicry of the secular West in methods and ideals in the public system.

The advantages may be gathered by the new system if the respective governments agree to appropriate for it the necessary funds without exercising stifling control. Steps must be taken to make the new educational system financially secure, if not wholly independent, by promoting endowments (*waqf*—continuous self-supporting charity) the income of which would fund the total system or at least part of it. Such endowments are precisely the *awqāf* that the Shari'ah recognized and protected for the welfare of the Ummah. In the past, it was the *waqf* of each school (*madrasah*) that made it autonomous and thus enabled its teachers and students to seek knowledge for the sake of Allah (SWT) alone, which is the necessary condition for any successful search for the truth. And it was the *waqf* institution that gave the *madrasah* the first legal or corporate personality in history. It was the *waqf*-based *madrasah* that constituted the model emulated by the first universities of the West when they were founded eight centuries ago.

Because of the explosion of knowledge, as well as the student population, education may be too expensive today to be funded by endowments alone. A yearly portion of public funds may well be necessary. The state, however, must develop the wisdom necessary to negotiate the amount of the subsidy with the educators and trust them to make the best possible use of it. If state universities in the West can do this, it is unjustifiably presumptuous to claim that Muslims acting under Qur'anic injunctions are incapable of the same. There can be neither a good nor promising future in an Ummah that does not respect its learned sons and daughters, nor exerts itself to transmit to them the cultural and spiritual legacy of their ancestors, nor enables its youth to add to and enrich their tradition. It is a sign of tyranny when the state does not trust its educators to do their job without policing the educational establishments. And it is a sure sign of decadence when political rulers tell educators what to teach and how to run the academic function.

## **B. Instilling the Islamic Vision**

The union of the two education systems is expected to do more than

bring means to the Islamic system and autonomy to the secular. It is expected to bring Islamic knowledge to the secular system and modern knowledge to the Islamic system. It is criminally negligent to entrust Muslim youths at the elementary and secondary education levels to missionaries or non-Muslim educators; this must be stopped. Every Muslim youth is entitled to receive full instruction in the religion, ethics, law, history, and culture of Islam. The Ummah or any section of it, as well as its leaders, are legally responsible and, in the justice of Allah (SWT), criminally indictable if they fail to give instruction in Islam, including its conceptions and objectives, to every Muslim child.

The same is, at the least, as crucial in the case of adult education. The child's spirit is protected by his parents or guardian, who will see to it that he commits no act odious to Islam nor violates any provision of the Shari'ah. The adult, on the other hand, is free. He is the target of anti-Islamic propaganda in and outside the university. In the college classroom and through assigned reading projects, he is constantly presented with alien ideologies in the name of science and modernism. Anti-Islamic ideas and options for conduct are claimed to constitute scientific truth, to be based upon objective fact. Islam was presented to the Muslim student, in his tender years, with the voice of parental authority. His mind was not mature enough to understand or to appreciate "objective" claims. His attachment to the Islamic position, therefore, was born out of sentiment, not out of reasoned conviction. Evidently, his commitment to Islam cannot withstand the onslaught of "scientific", "objective", or "modern" truth. This is why, in the absence of any counter-presentation of Islamic understanding—a presentation made with the same force of objectivity, the same scientific orientation, and the same appeal of modernity—the Muslim college student succumbs to the secular claim and converts to it. So begins the process of de-Islamization in Muslim universities. After four years of such alienating influence within the university and an equal, if not superior, influence stemming from the mass media, his peers, and society, the Islamic consciousness of the Muslim youth is ravaged. No wonder that he becomes a cultural freak, a cynic who is at home neither in Islam nor in the West, ready to be swayed by anyone who caters to his whims of the moment.

### **1. Mandatory Study of Islamic Civilization**

An important aspect of the possible antidote to this de-Islamization on the university level is a mandatory four-year study of Islamic civilization. Every student in the university must undertake this course of study regardless of his or her area of specialization. The fact that they are citizens, members

of the Ummah, imposes upon them the need to acquire a viable amount of knowledge of the Ummah's legacy, an adequate command of the Ummah's spirit, and familiarity with its civilization. It is not possible to be civil without such knowledge. Even if students belong to a non-Muslim minority, it should not absolve them from fulfilling this basic requirement. Since they or their parents have opted to become citizens of the Islamic state, they must acquire the necessary familiarity with the civilization in which they are living and with the spirit and hope that move this civilization and its compatriots.

No person may be left without such acculturation, which is basic for "socialization" or integration into Muslim society. Only such study can immunize students against invading ideologies by enabling them to meet argument with argument and objective evidence with objective evidence. Only such study can prepare them for genuine participation in the cultural life and progress of the Ummah, for only through it will they learn the essence of Islamic civilization, the logic of Islam, and the direction in which the Ummah is heading or is hoping to head. Only through it will they learn how to distinguish their Ummah and, hence, themselves from the others and to feel proud of this distinction, anxious to maintain it, and to pull the others to identify with it.

The study of civilization is the only way to foster in the person a clear sense of identity. No one may be said to be self-conscious who is ignorant of ancestors; nor the spirit that animated them; nor their achievements in the arts, sciences, politics and economy, social organization or esthetic experience. Neither is one self-conscious who is unmoved by the travails, tragedies, glories, and victories of his ancestors or who is uninspired by their hopes. The consciousness of self-identity is not achieved except when such knowledge of one's background is contrasted with knowledge of other peoples, groups and civilizations. To know oneself is to know how one is different from others, not only in material needs or utilitarian realities but, also, in the view of the world, in moral judgment, and in spiritual hope. This is all the domain of Islam, of the culture and civilization that Islam built and sustained through the generations. It is achievable only through the study of Islam and its civilization and through the comparative study of other religions and civilizations.

Today, to be "modern" is to be civilizationally conscious, i.e., to be conscious of the nature of one's civilizational heritage, of the essence that produced its various manifestations, of its distinction from other streams of civilizational history and of its pull and direction for the future. Without such knowledge, one cannot be the master of one's own fate; and, certainly, one cannot survive in this world. Unlike the past, the civilizational forces contending in this century can reach and overtake anyone without invasion or military occupation of his land. They can subvert his mind, convert him

to their world view, neutralize and contain him as a puppet whether he is aware of it or not. Certainly, these forces are contending with one another to dominate the world. And it is the decision of Muslims today whether Islam will be the victor tomorrow, whether Muslims will be makers of history or merely its objects. Indeed, the civilizational battle now in progress in the world scene will not leave anyone unscathed. Every human is bound to be transformed by one contender or another, unless he himself prevails over the contending civilization and is, therefore, a transformer of others.

It is unbecoming of Muslims to argue that Islamic civilization will remain alive as long as it is taught in the departments or institutes of Islamic studies in the universities and colleges of the Shari'ah. Indeed, it is indicative of their decadence that Muslims have instituted "departments of Islamic studies" in their universities. These are always copies of departments of Oriental studies in Western universities, where the study of Islam is the specialization of the few whom society needs for administering its relations with the Muslim world. On the other hand, although the need for specialists in the Shari'ah to end the disputes among Muslims will always require the high training the colleges of the Shari'ah provide, knowledge of the Shari'ah must be made available to all members of the Ummah. Everybody must have a viable mastery of the sciences of the Shari'ah since it constitutes the norm (*minhāj*) or method of Islamic existence.

The knowledge of Islam and of its civilization is not meant for the few. The vision of Islam is not meant for, nor needed by, the specialist alone. It is for all humans and is designed to elevate all those who possess it to a higher level of existence. Islam abhors the division of humans into cleric and lay; it insists that all men are to know, teach and observe the truth. Indeed, the Prophet (ṢAAS) said: "It is obligatory for each Muslim, male or female, to seek knowledge." The vision of Islam is needed to defend the whole people against alien ideologies invading their consciousness. Unless everybody is immunized against the disease, the Ummah will become the victim. Moreover, Islam is the comprehensive religion the vision of which is relevant to every human activity and to every endeavor — whether physical, social, economic, political, cultural or spiritual. It is not an other-worldly religion like Christianity and Buddhism, content to deal with "divine" affairs and to leave the rest to Caesar. Islam is relevant to everything said or done in any shop or factory, office or home, theater or field, university classroom or laboratory. An Islamic vision cultivated in only one department or faculty would be a truncated vision of Islam. It must be the guiding, determining, first principle of every discipline, of every pursuit and of every human action.

What is needed, therefore, is an educational system in which the curriculum of every department is based upon Islamic values, principles and objectives. Furthermore, a four-year course on the principles of Islam as

the essence of Islamic thought and civilization must be introduced as part of the “basic” or “core” program for all students, regardless of their field of specialization or profession. This course will be designed to give the Muslim student the values and first principles of Islam as the essence of Islamic civilization, as well as the historical achievements of Islamic civilization as manifestations of the first principles of Islam. The course will include discussions of how Islamic civilization compares and contrasts with other civilizations in essence and manifestations. It also will give the Muslim student knowledge of how Islamic civilization is the only viable option in dealing with the fundamental problems of Muslims and non-Muslims in the contemporary world.

## **2. The Islamization of Modern Knowledge**

It would be a great step forward if Muslim universities and colleges were to institute requisite courses in Islamic civilization as part of their basic studies program for all students. This will provide the students with deeper faith in their own religion and legacy and give them the confidence in themselves to enable them to face and surmount their present difficulties as well as to forge ahead toward the goal assigned to them by Allah (SWT). But this is not enough.

In order to forge ahead toward this Islamic goal and, thus, to make the word of Allah (SWT) supreme everywhere, knowledge of the world is absolutely indispensable. This knowledge is the goal of the disciplines. Before Muslims went into decline and slumber, they had developed the disciplines and had established and clarified the relevance of Islam and its comprehensive world view and values to each discipline. They successfully integrated the disciplines into the main corpus of Islamic knowledge. They contributed greatly in all fields and they utilized the new knowledge efficiently to their advantage. Today, non-Muslims are the undisputed masters of all the disciplines. In the universities of the Muslim world, non-Muslim books, achievements, world-view, problems and ideals are currently being taught to Muslim youths. Today, Muslim youth are being Westernized by Muslim teachers in Muslim universities.

This situation must be changed immediately. There can be no doubt that Muslim academicians must master all the modern disciplines in order to understand them completely and to achieve an absolute command of all that they have to offer. This is the first prerequisite. Then, they must integrate the new knowledge into the corpus of the Islamic legacy by eliminating, amending, reinterpreting, and adapting its components as the world-view of Islam and its values dictate. The exact relevance of Islam to the philosophy

and the method and objectives of each discipline needs to be determined. A new way in which the reformed discipline can serve the ideals of Islam must be determined and a new trail must be blazed. Finally, by their example as pioneers, Muslim academicians must teach successive generations of Muslims and non-Muslims how to follow in their footsteps, to push the frontiers of human knowledge ever further, to discover new layers of the patterns of Allah (SWT) in creation, and to establish new paths for realizing His will and commandments in history.

The task of Islamizing knowledge (in concrete terms, to Islamize the disciplines or, better, to produce university-level textbooks recasting some twenty disciplines in accordance with Islamic visions) is among the most difficult to realize. As far as we can tell, no Muslim has yet contemplated the contradiction of Western knowledge with the vision of Islam. It is our present generation that first discovered this conflict as we live it in our own intellectual lives. But the spiritual torture this conflict has inflicted upon us caused us to wake up in panic, fully aware of the rape of the Islamic soul taking place before our very eyes in the Muslim universities. That is why we are alerting the Muslim world to the evil and seeking for the first time in history to elaborate a plan to arrest it, to combat its effects, and to relaunch Islamic education on its proper track, leading to its predestined goal, with the grace of Allah (SWT).

It is most regrettable that the Muslim world is still devoid of a center where thinking and planning on such high level takes place. What is needed is a university that acts as headquarters for Islamic thought, where the disciplines undergo Islamization and the process is tested in the classrooms and seminar rooms of the undergraduate and graduate programs of study. Until the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) was established, not one educational institution in the Muslim world had planned to tackle the issue of the Islamization of knowledge, to produce Islamic textbooks for college use in the disciplines or to provide the tools of research necessary for writing those textbooks. And, yet, everywhere in the Muslim world, one hears of the need to Islamize education, its men, and its institutions and to prepare alternate curricula and textbooks. On the official level, where the power to make decisions lies, one finds little more than lip service, which addresses men's emotions without having any essence or relation to practical execution and application in the classrooms.

The Islamization of knowledge is the noblest of all tasks, the most important cause animating and driving its adherents. The least argument in its favor is that Muslims have no other choice but to lend their souls to determination by a cause if they want to stop being the objects of history and to become its makers. And, yet, Islam is not another "ism" on a par with these movements nor does it present its claim as its own, as a dogma

personally; experienced and subjectively appropriated; that can only be adopted or dropped arbitrarily. The assertion of Islam is rational, necessary, and critical—one that addresses the mind and the intellect. It has universal validity, an ought-assertion, and title to the acknowledgment and acquiescence of mankind. As a rational claim, it can be met only with counter-argument, which the Islamic adherent should welcome and to which he should respond with Islamic evidence and authentication. No part of the Islamic assertion, no relevance of Islam to any discipline, may be accepted without convincing evidence. This is possible only when the Islamic vision has made its claim and has established it upon the basis of the most exacting scholarship, when it has substantiated it for the most fastidious conscience and can be rejected or resisted only out of irrationality or malice.

This is then the great task facing Muslim intellectuals and leaders: to recast the whole legacy of human knowledge from the viewpoint of Islam. The vision of Islam would not be a vision indeed unless it represented a special content; namely, life, reality, and the world. The content is the object of study of the various disciplines. To recast knowledge in the mold of Islam relates to the Islamic vision. It is necessary to Islamize knowledge, i.e., to redefine and re-order the data, to rethink the reasoning and relate the data, to reevaluate the conclusions, to re-project the goals and to do so in such a way as to make the disciplines enrich the vision and serve the cause of Islam. To this end, the methodological categories of Islam—namely: the unity of truth, the unity of knowledge, the unity of humanity, the unity of life and purposeful character of creation, and the subservience of creation to Man and of Man to Allah (SWT)—must replace the Western categories and determine the perception and ordering of reality. So, too, should the values of Islam replace the Western values and direct the learning activity in every field. The Islamic values concern:

- (a) the usefulness of knowledge for man's felicity;
- (b) the blossoming of his faculties;
- (c) the remolding of creation so as to crystalize the Divine patterns and values of Islam;
- (d) the building of culture and civilization;
- (e) the building of human milestones in knowledge and wisdom, heroism and virtue, piety and righteousness.