

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE NEED FOR ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE**

Ideally, knowledge is perfect, permanent, neutral and universal, but in contemporary reality, it is not so if we consider the various bodies of knowledge, claims to knowledge and mythologies being imparted to people in both formal and non-formal educational systems. People awarded with degrees in certain fields constituted by myths and imperfect knowledge are regarded as knowledgeable but in reality they have been made to acquire irrelevant and faulty explanations of a given phenomenon. They have also been barred from seeking alternative explanations of the phenomenon especially if they are contented with what they have acquired. In this case, their education becomes "a perception altering drug", to borrow the words of Harris (1979), which prevents them from having a correct perception of phenomena.

We shall examine four(4) major reasons which constitute the need for Islamizing knowledge. Doing this at this stage will pave way for the definition of Islamization of knowledge and the statement of its goals.

#### **1. Mythologies and Degrees of Knowledge**

A critical analysis of what is being taught to students in institutions of learning, formally and informally, will lead to the identification of three categories of curriculum content: mythologies, imperfect or polluted knowledge and perfect or neutral knowledge. A scale is used to illustrate these.



Knowledge becomes imperfect or polluted due to human error and bias. For this reason, a body of knowledge suffering from imperfection needs to be Islamized. In Western democracy, for instance, sovereignty lies with people; in the Islamic political system, it lies with Allah so only He can determine what is lawful or unlawful. Certain aspects of Western democracy can be Islamic, but it cannot be entirely Islamic and so it is imperfect. James Madison (1751-1836) created the democratic principle of separation of power and checks and balances so that no single branch of government can dominate others but this principle, as observed by Baradat (1984:129), “encourages conflict within the government”.

McConnel (1977:514), after explaining the theories of personality formulated by Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, Alfred Adler and others, concludes that:

All these theories have contributed to our ability to understand and predict human experience, but none of them is complete in itself.

The only complete and reliable account of man’s personality comes from his maker, Allah, the Most High, so there is a need for Islamizing knowledge so that people cannot be misled by mythologies and imperfect knowledge.

When knowledge is perfect, it is also neutral and universal and it does not require Islamization whether it comes from or is imparted by Muslim or non-Muslim scholars.

## 2. Values

Immature learners, especially children and students attending secondary and tertiary institutions, tend to regard the contents of printed textbooks and the views of experts on certain issues

as being neutral or value-free. Unfortunately, some advanced learners pursuing undergraduate or postgraduate courses as well as lecturers with shallow minds also exhibit the same behaviour. To such people, knowledge being taught in our institutions is neutral and does not require Islamization. To some of them, Islamization of knowledge is an intellectual luxury and extravagance of resources and effort.

As for the well-learned people, knowledge is not value-free; its contents and philosophy reflect certain values or interests, so it needs to be reshaped to suit a particular worldview. Some of the expressions of such people are stated below to buttress this point.

Kausar (1996:481) quoted a statement made by Vigdis Finnbogadottir, the President of Iceland at a conference for Beijing Preparation organized by the Council of Europe, as follows:

The gender perspective should be integrated in the curricula. Stereotypes must be eliminated in school-books and teachers trained to raise their awareness of this question, so as to ensure that girls and boys make informed career choices which are not based on gender-based traditions.

These words indicate a need for changing the curriculum and the contents of textbooks as well as the need for retraining teachers with a view to removing gender-based traditions from the system.

Junaid (1972), the Wazirin Sokoto of Northern Nigeria, at a convocation ceremony at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, also pointed out that knowledge is not value-free. He stated that:

Knowledge is certainly universal and timeless but it has a cultural stamp. It also has a purpose and a commitment to a particular worldview. It therefore cannot be neutral.

Knowledge arrived at through scientific inquiries is also not value-free because scientists are not always objective. Miller (1998:54) writes that:

Scientists, however, are human beings who have conscious and unconscious values, biases, and beliefs that can influence how they design and interpret data and the reliability they attach to various scientific hypotheses and theories.

Since knowledge is not value-free, Muslim Scholars need to strip all values that are alien to the Islamic worldview off the body of polluted knowledge. This forms part of the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking.

### **3. Difference in Paradigms**

The third reason showing the need for Islamizing knowledge is the fact that knowledge is discovered, classified, taught and utilized in accordance with a particular paradigm. There are many of such paradigms; a Western paradigm of Social Sciences, for instance, must reflect Western values while a Socialist paradigm must endeavour to achieve Socialist values.

Ali (1989) explains that a paradigm or a grand theory is a conceptual framework within which the work of theory construction is made and it governs the nature of hypotheses formulation and testing. Concepts, values, theories, perspectives and worldviews constitute a paradigm. Ali (1989:51) further explains that:

We can say that individualism, liberty of the individual, and the industrial capitalism are the principal components of the grand theory of Western society; and collectivism, historical materialism, and the theory of transition from capitalism to socialism are the principal components of the Soviet society.

One could therefore understand that the compartmentalisation of knowledge into various disciplines, the focus of the disciplines, their methodologies and the epistemologies on which they are based, all differ with respect to paradigms. Muslims need to arrange and channel their educational system in accordance with an Islamic paradigm. This explains why Islamization of knowledge should go beyond recasting or remoulding disciplines which have been developed within the Western, socialist or any other paradigm that is alien to the Islamic worldview.

In conducting researches people also adopt a particular paradigm that suits them. Bailey (1994:26) explains that a research paradigm is "a mental window through which the observer views the world". Thus, two different researchers investigating the same phenomenon in line with two different paradigms may produce different accounts of the same phenomenon.

#### **4. New Developments**

New developments in various fields of knowledge and their products which earlier Muslim scholars and jurists did not witness in their life times also demonstrate the need for modern scholars to embark upon the Islamization projects. Examples of these products are the issues of cloning in the biological

sciences and transactions involving derivative assets like futures in developed capital markets.

New concepts that are rapidly gaining acceptance in Muslim nations are also emerging. Examples of these concepts are sustainable development, women empowerment and child abuse. Concepts like these need to be tamed through the Islamization of knowledge undertaking to prevent Muslims from accepting ideas that are alien to their faith.

If Muslim scholars fail to explain new phenomena in line with the teachings of Islam, the generality of Muslims will not know the permissibility or otherwise of the phenomena. Secondly, inferiority complex will be entrenched in their minds when they are made to believe that Islam has no provision or explanation for the new phenomena.

Based upon the four reasons underlying the need for the Islamization of knowledge undertaking it could therefore be concluded that the undertaking is a necessity not an intellectual luxury. Similarly, it is not an elitist affair as some people term it. There are genuine reasons for it and, being an intellectual affair, it requires the attention of Muslim intellectuals more than that of the generality of people. However, the benefits to be reaped from the Islamization of knowledge undertaking go to all and sundry.