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Islamic Thought from Voices of Resurgent Islam to the Reformist Voices of Islam: An Analysis of New Trends and Themes in the Muslim World

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Abstract

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In recent decades there has been the emergence of a few new trends such as modern Islam, progressive Islam, liberal Islam, civilizational Islam, moderate Islam, and the Voices of the Reformist Islam. All these trends have been presented as the trends of Islamic thought. The themes of these trends seem to be different from the themes of Islamic thought. It appears that the premises of these new trends seem to be different from the Islamic thought. It is assumed that the Islamic thought is generally based on the Islamic worldview and the Quran and Sunnah. The aim of this paper is to investigate and examine the views of those scholars who advocate the Voices of Reformist Islam for the betterment of Muslims of the world with those of the Voices of Resurgent of Islam. This paper will focus only on reformist Islam and follow the method of content analysis and examine the trend of reformist Islam. It will help readers to determine the nature of Islamic thought and those of new trends in so-called Islamic thought.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

After the publication of the *Challenge of Islam* in 1978, by Islamic Council of Europe, edited by Altaf Gauhar, and the *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, edited by John L. Esposito, published in 1983 there seems to be a variety of trends within the parameters of Islamic Thought. We see the publication of *Reformist Voices of Islam* edited by T. Shireen Hunter, in 2009 by Routledge Press. Following this trend, many books on reformist 'Islam' have come out. A debate initiated by Ismail Raji al-Faruqi for Islamization of Knowledge [IOK], 1982 seems to be no more attractive. In place of this, another title, *Rethinking Reform in Higher Education: From Islamization to Integration of Knowledge* (2010) has come out by Ziauddin Sardar & Jeremy Henzell-Thomas. Tariq Ramadan joined the debate with his *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation* (2009). The wave of revival of Islam is now being checked and replaced by the slogan of reform of Islam or reformist voices of Islam. The movement of revival of Islam which was launched by Said Nursi, Muhammad Asad, Muhammad Iqbal, Rashid Rida, Syed Qutb, Hassan al Banna, Ali Shariyati, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, Hasan Turabi, Imam Khomeini, Muhammad Nasir, Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, Yousuf al Qardawi, Ismail Faruqi, Khurshid Ahmad, Syed Muhammad Naqib al- Attas, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Mohd Kamal Hassan is now being put back by 'reformist Islam'. It seems that *The Challenge of Islam* and *Islam and Secularism* (1976) have lost their credibility and relevance. No one asks "What Islam can give to humanity today" as raised by Mohd Qutb in the past. Instead of treating Islam and modernity as distinct and separate identities, a good number of scholars, both Western and Muslim, now support their interconnected relations and make attempts to reconcile Islam with modernity. In addition, they look at the interconnections between these broad and complex subjects. This treatment is considered useful and people are encouraged to rethink the relationship between modernity and Islam, and emphasis is on rethinking Islam. This article based on the content analysis, plans to investigate the stands of reformist voices of Islam from a critical and analytical point of view. The aim of this paper is to evaluate the thoughts of Muslim reformists of our time and see whether they come under the purview of Islamic thought and how it serves the Muslim Ummah and humanity.

2.0 CONTENTION

The proponents of the voices of reformist Islam argue the following:

1. In recent decades, the trends of Islamic fundamentalism, revolutionary Islam, and jihadist movements have overshadowed more ‘moderate’ and ‘reformist’ voices and movements within ‘Islam’.
2. They suggest, the ‘moderate Islam’ and ‘reformist Islam’ both are relevant, hence, should be considered as part of Islamic thought. The books introducing Liberal Islam, Progressive Islam, Modern Islam, Civilizational Islam, Moderate Islam, Militant Islam, Radical Islam, and Enlighten Islam are also measured as the ‘voices’ of Islam and part of Islamic thought.

The books entitled, *Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century* (2004) and *Contemporary Islamic Thoughts* (2012) illustrate the point under discussion. These books present reformist voices of Islam and claim the development of Islamic thought. The current proponents of reformist voices of Islam consider themselves as ‘Muslim Reformists.’ These ‘Muslims reformists’ distinguish their trend from those of Rashid Rida, Muhammad Abduh, Jamal Uddin Afghani, and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan who were also considered in the past as Muslim Reformers. It is claimed that the current generation of ‘Muslim reformist’ thinkers and their activists and intellectual traditions are fully supported by the empire of publication industry in the West and elsewhere. The Muslim reformist discourse has diverted the attention of people from the debate of revival and resurgent of Islam to new themes of Muslim reformist discourse. The most important theme “that runs through all current reformist thinking is how to reconcile Islam, or more generally religion and spirituality, with modernity, and how to offer an Islamic and indigenous version of modernity that could simultaneously satisfy Muslim’s material and spiritual needs (Hunter, 2009: 27). Earlier under Islamic revival movements the emphasis was on Islam as the worldview and the way of life, need for the implementation of the Shariah, establishment of the Islamic state in time space context. There are no more issues of Islamic thought. There is no emphasis in ‘Islamic reformist thought’ on the need of change in accordance with Islamic worldview, Islamization of knowledge, society, culture, implementation of the Shariah, Islamic system of government, need for God-conscious, knowledgeable, morally,

and spiritually elevated political and intellectual leadership, the dictum of amar bil maruf wa nahi anil munkar etc. All these issues and themes raised by Islamic revivalist scholars have been exchanged by ‘reformist voices of Islam’. Now, it is claimed, one can observe some other themes which are treated as significant “which echoes earlier reformist discourse” as well. It is claimed that it will “strengthen Islam by reforming the accumulated understanding of it, to promote constructive, but equal, dialogue with other religions and cultures, and to maintain and restore Islam’s image and prestige” (Hunter, 2009: 27). They assert it would confirm Islamic version of modernity.

There is another change in the reformist voices of Islam. Once again Islam is being presented as religion, hence, more and more emphasis is now on interfaith dialogues, religious and cultural pluralism, and peaceful co-existence etc. No one raises the question of the Truth and Reality of life and the world. All metaphysical issues are discussed and decided based on speculative and conjectural methods. It seems under the influence of relativism and liberalism there is no more discussion on the True, Authentic and Universal Knowledge [TAUK] generally known as Islamic Revealed Knowledge. It is considered as religious knowledge, therefore, separated from the domains of all other branches of knowledge and confined to religious sciences. No more debate and discussion are observed on the need of Islamic dawah and change based on Islamic perspective. Even the phrase Islamization of Knowledge has been replaced by the Integration of knowledge. Naturally one can ask: Is this the evolution in Islamic thought or the devolution of it?

3.0 THE PROBLEM

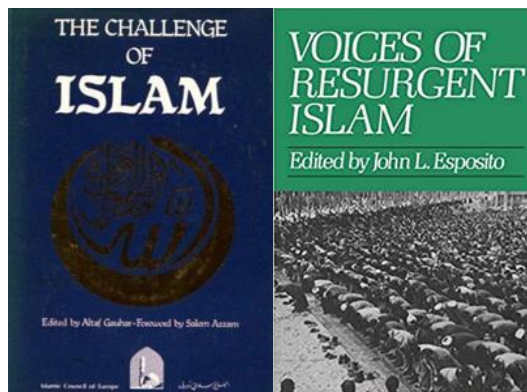
Those who advocate the ‘reformist voices’ argue that from the methodological point of view, “there are similarities among Muslim reformist thinkers in the sense that all favour a rationalist and contextualist approach, albeit to varying degrees, over the reading of major Islamic sources (Hunter, 2009: 27). In other words, they contend that the Islamic revivalist thinkers are unaware of the importance of rationalist and contextualist approach. Hence, according to reformist scholars, emphasis is on ‘rethinking’ Islam and the Trouble with Islam Today (2003). These sorts of works have been translated in Arabic, Urdu, and other languages. It is claimed, “reformist discourse...is mainly concerned with practical

issues...and less with the development of ...theoretical foundation for reform” (Hunter, 2009: 27). Despite the claim for practical issues, elimination of poverty, illiteracy, poor health facilities, undemocratic setup, dictatorial regimes, legitimacy or illegitimacy of governments and rampant uneven development in the Muslim world are not major issues in Muslim reformist thought.

With a change of emphasis, many scholars have written on ‘Islamic reformist thought’. Their articles and books are highly acclaimed. Their treatment is considered rational, analytical, and contextualist. Whereas the Islamic revivalist discourse is presented as idealist, fundamentalist, radical, extremist, and source of terrorism and jihadist voices. Hence, Muslims are asked to learn many things from the reformist voices of Islam and keep away from fundamentalist Islam. See the below titles which show the remarkable movement from Islamic revival to Reformist Voices:

Scenario 1970 to 1980

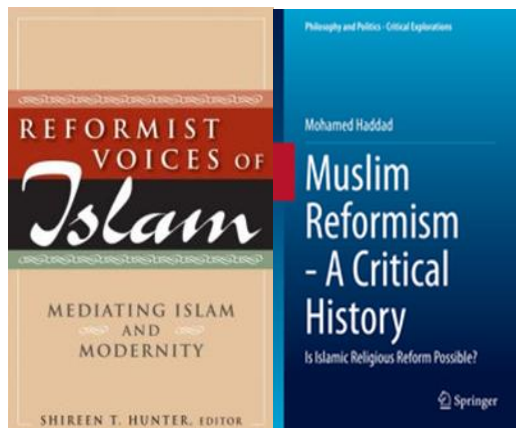
Islam and Secularism 1976; The Challenge of Islam; 1978; What Islam can give to Humanity? 1978; Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan 1982; Voices of Resurgent Islam 1983.



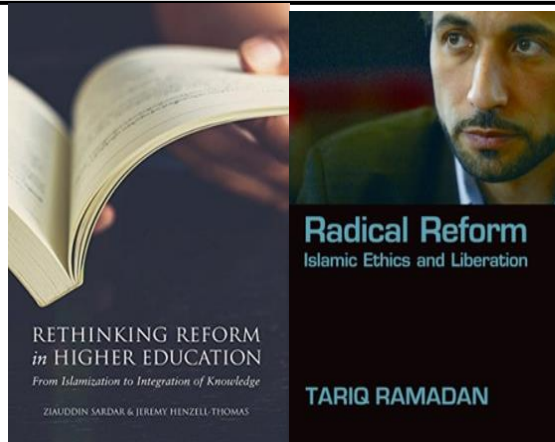
Change of Perspective- 2000-2005



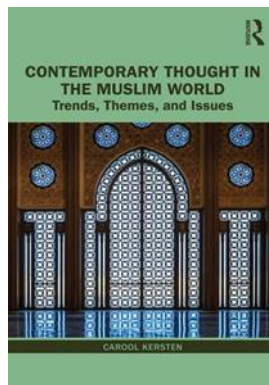
Scenario 2009 to 2020



The books covering the history of reformist Islam and dealing with a possibility of Islamic modernisation.



The Rise of Islamic Reformist Thought and Its Challenges to Traditional Islam



3.1 The Debate of Voices of Reformist Islam

The debate of voices of reformist Islam has started within last four decades. Some of the authors and editors have covered the views of Muslim reformist scholars of a long period. But they confuse themselves unconsciously with the issues of Islamic thought with those of Muslim reformist thought. Every trend of thought based on modern worldview or liberal worldview is included in the purview of Islamic thought. They fail to explain what Islamic thought is and what is the basis, sources, and worldview of it? They are termed as the Islamic reformists and their

thought as the ‘Islamic thought’ creating confusion about Islamic thought as such. Most of the Muslim reformists focus on intellectual changes in Muslim thought from 19th century to till date with reference to the challenges of modernity and modern world but they call it ‘Islamic thought’. Their point of reference is modern age and modernity not the reading of the normative sources of Islam in time space context. We need to determine the nature and scope of Islamic thought.

3.2 Nature of Islamic Thought

This article argues that Islamic thought originates from the reading of the Quran and Sunnah in time space context in line with the worldview of Islam, its way of life, code of conduct and values, morals, and rulings. Islam is viewed as the worldview, the way of life and scheme of society which has its own vision and mission of life and society, criteria of analysis and examination, view of development and scientific and technological advancement and economic growth. Islam is considered as the source of energy and activism which stands for culture, civilization, and comprehensive sustainable development. Islam encourages cognition, rational and scientific approaches for achieving desired goal of development. It has its own terms of reference, framework of analysis and symbols of measurement. This framework guides the whole process of observation, critical assessment, comparative studies, creative thinking and thought. At the root of Islamic thought is the wish to transform societies especially Muslim based on the worldview of Islam and the way of life. The scheme of Islamic thought is to implement the universal values, sound moral code and legal rulings of Islam.

All these dimensions are genuinely guided and governed by a comprehensive term the Shariah. The Shariah transforms all the processes of thinking and understanding in the context of changing circumstances. Its focus is on the transformation of all aspects of life, society, government, and state based on utmost intellectual exertion – ijtihad and promotes sustainable development of culture and civilization. All these characteristics are an integral part of the framework of the evolution of Islamic thought in time space context. There is no place for any influence of modernism, humanism, liberalism, pragmatism, individualism, rationalism, empiricism, scientism, relativism, realism, and utilitarianism upon the minds of proponents of Islamic thought. Contrary to this, Muslim

reformists demonstrate not only the influences but work within the framework of above-mentioned isms. Their intellectual changes intend to mediate Islam and modernity.

3.3 The Intellectual Development of Muslim Reformist

Their views are divided generally into following three categories:

1. Muslim reformists' views of the primary Islamic texts
2. Muslim reformists' approaches in understanding and evaluating the prevalent Islamic intellectual modes and their connections to the living condition
3. Defining the terms of examination of the Western challenges in line with modernity

It is argued that these three categories shape the Muslim reformist thinking.

In the light of the above, some analysts have discussed the main forces that are associated with major Muslim reformist intellectual developments and the motivations of the intellectuals. It is stressed one of the main goals of the reformist thought "is to assess not only the impact of the late nineteenth-century intellectual impulses on the evolution of twentieth-century Islamic intellectual currents, but also trends of rupture and continuity in the modern versus traditional Islamic modes of thinking" (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 29). They further argue that there is an impact of the 19th century Muslim reformist thought on the minds of 20th century Muslim reformists. They discuss the views of scholars of 19th and 20th century as they start with that period. But they analyse the views of many scholars from the time of Ibne Taymiyyah to the period of Muhammad Ali of Egypt and Sultan Mahmud 11 of Turkey [19th century] and the scholars of Tanzimat. Their focus is not only on Muslim reformist thought but they also include in this category the Islamic revivalists who go against the traditional scholars. They do not make any comparison between Muslim reformists and Islamic revivalists. They do not provide a clear definition of traditional scholars and a clear definition of Muslim reformist thought. Basheer Nafi, for example, used the phrase 'Islamic reform movement' [Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 50]. Taha Jabir al-Wani also used the same phrase 'Islamic reform movement'. However, upon closer inspection, it becomes

clear that the use of ‘Islamic reform movement’ or ‘Islamic reformist thought’ is a misleading phrase and conveys wrong meanings. Scholars have used these kinds of phrases and terms but without proper clarification. We need a clear explanation of the meaning of reform, renewal, tajdid, islah, change etc.

They mix up Islamic thought with that of Muslim reformist thought. We need to know what the idea of Muslim reform is and what traditional scholarship is. Instead of using the term traditional scholarship they prefer to use the term ‘traditional Islam’. Along with Muslim reformists, Sayyid Hossein Nasr also used the term ‘traditional Islam’. They do not refer to it and show the difference in between their view of traditional Islam and that of Nasr. Traditional Islam for Muslim reformists means taqlidi but not for Nasr. For Nasr traditional Islam is original and pure Islam. Due to lack of clarity Muslim reformists some time use the term Islamic reformist thought and sometime Islamic thought. They also use the term Islamic intellectual tradition and revivalist intellectual tradition simultaneously and confuse readers. If they are referring to Islamic thought instead of Muslim reformist then they should provide the framework of Islamic or revivalist thought.

Muslim reformist argue they like to discuss the challenges the traditional scholarship is facing but focus on Islamic thought instead of traditional scholarship. A good number of orientalist also used this kind of confusing terminologies. Many scholars of our time, Muslims, and others, discussing Islam and Muslims used different terms to denote Islamic thought. They are, in fact, unable to understand due to their preconceived ideas the phenomena of Islam, the Muslim world and the Islamic thought. They demonstrate, in truth, their ignorance of the phenomena of Islam, the Muslim world and Islamic thought. The phenomena of Islam mean for them the living conditions of Muslims. There is a big gap in between Islamic teachings and the practice of Muslims in contemporary times. In most of the cases a good number of Muslims, individually and collectively do not practice Islamic teachings. This has caused much harm to them.

4.0 The Nature of Muslim Reofrmist Thought in Contemporary Times

It is argued the concept of reform encompasses “all the religious experiences expressed through writing and confronted with modernity...Reform is intended...in the sense of a hermeneutic situation and a universal paradigm” (See for example, Mohamed Haddad, Muslim Reformism – A Critical History, 2020). The problems of Muslim reformist intellectuals are conceptual and methodological. They do not have their own Islamic framework of analysis and examination. Consequently, they demonstrate both conceptual and methodological complexities as they work within liberal and modern framework of analysis and understanding. Hence, on one side, they follow the modern Western criteria of analysis and on the other fail to differentiate between terminologies developed by the modern Western scholars. They are unable to show the difference between Muslim reformist thought and Islamic thought.

The Islamic thought is thus developed by those Islamic scholars who have been motivated by the teachings of Islam, its worldview, way of life, code of conduct and the Shariah. They are not the one who responds to modernity nor think and articulate under the influence of it. They are fully aware of the philosophical foundation of modernity and its implications to life and society. They study modernity based on the original writings of philosophers who conceptualize the concept and framework of modernity. At the same time, they also study the original sources of Islam, the Quran and Sunnah taking note of time space context.

Quite contrary to the above, the Muslim reformist school has been projected “as a collective body of ideas and beliefs rather than as individual thinkers” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 29). This claim seems to be a distortion of reality. Muslim reform is presented with this assumption that they need to reform Islam instead of Muslim thinking. The truth is that their reform is directed not towards Muslim thought, traditional or modern but Islam as such. The above mention article is the best illustration of this problem. They are mainly motivated by the so-called socio-political conditions of Muslim societies and put blame for this on Islam. They adopt “an approach that is believed to be conducive to constructing a more meaningful view of history” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 29] Much of Muslim reformist thought is the result of the sense of overwhelming crisis not the study of the normative sources of Islam (Farouki & Nafi: 29). They have

been motivated by the decline of Muslims and they want to achieve development. For this purpose, they suggest the adaptation of models of the modern West.

As a result of above reasons many scholars in the tradition of Muslim reformist thought who study Islam and the Muslim world are also unable to understand what were or are the issues of Islamic thought. Under contemporary issues in Islamic thought, they include as major trends and themes, the Muslim encounter with modernity, and the reaction this encounter has spawned. Special attention is paid to traditionalism, Salafism, and intellectual reformism. They highlight more and more on ‘doctrinal, legal, and cultural positions’ (Cornell, 2007: xiv) of Muslims instead of real themes of Islam such as Islam as din, the way of life, need for Islamic revealed knowledge and the legitimate leadership and government. Islam is treated as religion with the assumption that it is imposing more complex problems everywhere in the world. The issues and themes identified by the Muslim reformists are not the major issues of Islam or Islamic thought. For example, when they refer to the “primacy of the original Islamic texts” which they used frequently failed to understand what the meaning of it is. See for example the following statement:

Reassertion of the primacy of the Quran and Sunnah was not only meant to circumvent the middle traditions and eclipse their influences, but also to confront the entrenched madhhabi and sectarian divisions as well as the social nexus of interest and power associated with them” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 44]

This article will show their failure to understand the issues of Islamic thought. The proponents of Islamic thought never focus on madhhabi and sectarian divisions among Muslims. Their concern was to present Islam as the worldview and the way of life. Hence, produce the works which help people to understand Islam as it is. For example, Muhammad Asad’s work, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, Muhammad Hameedullah’s work, *Introduction to Islam*, Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi, *The Rise and Fall of Muslim and its Impact on Humanity*, Khurshid Ahmad, *Islam: its meaning and message and Family Life in Islam*, Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding of Islam and Islam as the Way of Life*. All these works followed the worldview of Islam as their basis. It appears that in the approach of Muslim reformists they have been influenced by the framework of liberal Islam, hence, focus on Muslims

conditions. Whereas, it seems the Islamic revivalists go to the framework of the Quran and Sunnah and in the light of which they look at both the Muslim conditions and the conditions of the people of the modern world. They found both communities have problems in in general. Hence, they suggested the need of the Islamic worldview and the way of life as the best option for solution to the common problems of people. Islamic revivalists created a movement and Muslim reformists a school of thought. What is the difference between a ‘movement’ and a ‘school’ of thought and consequently, what are the issues and themes of reform and tajdid [revival] are not explained clearly by Muslim reformists. They even do not realize the difference between reform of Abduh and Jamal Uddin Afghani of 19th century and recent voices of reform of 21st century. The later one is fully under the influence of liberal framework. Abduh and Jamal Uddin Afghani wanted to bring reform in the minds and conditions of Muslims whereas the target of current so-called Muslim reformism is on the reform of Islam. Without consciousness they used the terms and language of the modern West or Christianity such as the use of the term’s creed, theology, orthodox Islam, traditional Islam etc. We do not find this kind of vocabulary in the discourse of Islamic revivalists and Islamic thought.

We see in Islamic revivalist thought the emphasis is on the questions such as: What is Islamic thought? What is Islamic discourse? What are its premises? What are the goals of Islamic discourse and what is its practicality? What are the differences between Islamic thought and other currents of thought such as reformist, modernist, secularist, progressive, liberalist etc.? What is Muslim reformist thought and what is reform? What is Islamic reformist thought? Does it make any difference between Muslim and Islamic? What is the spirit of the Quran and Sunnah? What kind of directives we get from the Quran and Sunnah? What is the reality in which we live? Do we need to change it or adopt our self to it? What are the real challenges? Are they external or internal? Whatever it is, what the nature of external or internal challenges is? Are they by nature intellectual or political or the challenge of leadership, intellectual and political or both? What kind of leadership we need?

There are some more questions which have been raised in Islamic thought. See for example the type of questions such as: Are there any obstacles on the way to meet those challenges? What is the nature of obstacles? Do we need reform of Islamic thought as suggested by some scholars or

development of it in accordance to our time and needs? What do we mean by the development of Islamic thought? Is it related to Islam and Muslims alone? Is it an agenda of a religion – Islam? Or it is related to humanity, its welfare and wellbeing of people through the development of culture and civilization? Are the concerns of Islamic thought the concern of humanity? Why did we fail to relate Islam and Islamic thought to humanity? Are not we under the trap of orientalist strategy and framework who disconnected Islam and Islamic thought from humanity? What is Islamization of Knowledge [IOK]? Is it a strategy for reform of Islamic thought or development of Islamic thought or both? Is the development of Islamic thought and IOK different issues or two sides of same coin? How the goals of IOK and development of Islamic thought are achieved? What is the methodology of it? All these questions are the questions of Islamic thought which have not been raised and answered by the Muslim reformist school of thought.

Most of Muslim scholars in Muslim reformist tradition are unable to understand what the criteria of analysis and examination are. As they are not trained how to analyze anything based on Islamic criteria of analysis. They have received education and training in modern Western educational institutions or in traditional religious educational institutions. They have received the influence of everything of modern Western educational institutions of higher learning except the influence of Islamic scholarship and learning.

What are the criteria of analysis in modern Western thought? Do the Quran, Hadith and Islam approve those criteria of analysis? If not then do they [the Quran, Hadith, and Islam] provide any criteria of their own? Is there any difference between the criteria of the Quran, Hadith and Islam and the modern Western thought? What criterion Muslim reformists in general follow – the modern Western or the criterion of the Quran, Hadith, and Islam? The answers to all these questions need to articulated and provided by the Islamic thought.

Is the criterion provided by the Quran, Hadith, and Islam, if there is any, the criteria of religion or scientific understanding? Is it based on truth and reality of life and the world as well as True, Authentic and Universal Knowledge generally called as Islamic revealed knowledge or speculation and conjectural views? Is the criterion of the modern West being the criteria of reason, pure reason, practical reason or experience or

observation or empiricism? Does the criterion of the modern Western thought work independent or based on True, Authentic and Universal Knowledge [TAUK] and is unaware of truth and reality of life and the world? The modern world is unable to realize that the faculties of reason and sense perception need suitable and relevant data to perform the job of cognition, analysis and understanding as they are by nature in need of guidance. Without suitable data they are unable to see the truth of life and the world as they have been constituted by their Creator in this way. Human faculties from the very first moment require the knowledge and guidance – true, authentic, and universal for their meaningful application.

Without above mentioned prerequisites, our faculties fail to have true, authentic, correct realistic, comprehensive, and universal comprehension of anything especially the aspects related to metaphysics which constitutes the first principles of cognition.

5.0 ISSUES IN MUSLIM REFORMIST THOUGHT

Muslim reformists argue that they address new challenges and issues the Ummah is facing. They highlight some of them such as the issues of Muslim identity, the place and role of women, the nature of nation state, the concept of tradition and renewal, the relationship between reason and revelation [text], Islam and the West, the nature of relations between the ulama [scholars] and the temporal authority, etc (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 28). Another category of issues identified by Muslim reformist school of thought include tasawwuf, Ashari theology, adherence to juristic schools, God's attributes, wilaya – sainthood, tariqa, reconciliation between Asharism and salafi theology, Sufism, kasb, doctrine of wahdat al-wujud, necessities of religious reform, communal harmony, madhhabi division, revival of hadith scholarship, Abdul Wahab, as a strict interpreter of Ibn Taymiyyah, Saudi Wahhabi movement etc. They conclude these are some of the important issues which, they think, are dominant in reformist intellectual circles in 20th and 21st centuries (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 28).

There are some other issues which are highlighted by Muslim reformists time to time under external issues such as: Western imperialism, Western superiority, rising power of modern Europe, military restructuring, realization of the need for socio-political, economic reorganization.

Finally, they argue the need for “remoulding of Islamic societies in a modern European cast” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 36). The consequences of 19th and early 20th century’s reform led to the process of nationalization, modernization, and secularization (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 36). The process of “modernization was undertaken by the state itself” (Farouki and Basheer M. Nafi, 2004: 37) purely on Western lines. One of the major results of modernization was the emergence of state control over land and society (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 37). This included “monopolization of violence by the state, in the form of modern armies, police force and security systems, as well as a hierarchically accountable, impersonal administration, and the imposition of central rule over” people (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 37). Today, state controls people without any challenge. It is advocated that all this reform process helped states to replace the traditional educational and legal systems. There emerged the modern Western educational and legal system. The process of modernization finally resulted in the form of “a profound and largely irreversible impact on the fabric of society, state-society relations and social and cultural systems” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 37).

Muslim reformists wanted to achieve a kind of accommodation of the new condition into the Muslim society, and at the same time they think they can preserve the Islamic identity of society but it resulted in destruction of Islamic impact on society. Another issue related to Muslim reformist thought is the notion of man’s responsibility (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 41). “The essence of man’s responsibility is reason” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 41). However, Muslim reformist did not consider it as independent. For them there is no contradiction between reason and revelation. However, they saw reason as supreme at the level of scholarship for the purpose of societal development. This position of Muslim reformists brings them to the level of modernists. Modernity and modernist give highest place to reason (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 42). Reason is not under the guidance of Islamic revealed knowledge rather it judges the validity of it. They give a call for ijtiḥād and consider it as a basic principle of Islamic methodology but it was taken in a different sense. They took it in the sense of the application of reason or rational understanding of anything (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 43). The Muslim reformist’s call for ijtiḥād became a symbol of the superiority of reason and rationality (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 43). They thought the issue of ijtiḥād is not “a mere reflection of theological and juristic preoccupation; it was not an idealist intellectual exercise, but

rather an undertaking embedded in a specific socio-political context” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 43). They did not explain in detail Islamic economics and Islamic political system. They argue, “Every single major idea of the reformists had socio-political implications” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 43). Muslim reformist thought means the thought which is the result of the application of rational faculty. In other words, traditionalists, for them are those who do not apply rational faculty fully. Instead of using term Muslim traditionalist, the Muslims reformists used the term ‘traditional Islam’ which is misleading as said earlier. Most reform movements in the Muslim world did not address the root issues. They have been preoccupied with responding to the outward manifestations of the crisis and its direct effects on people’s daily life (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 43).

We can say they did not focus on fundamental principles and claims of Islam such as the need of True, Authentic and Universal Worldview for understanding life and the world but on subsidiary issues.

Due to this, the reform movements of 19th and early 20th centuries failed to identify the root causes of the crisis. They were not able to do necessary research; they did not apply in their analysis the Quranic criteria. Consequently, it resulted in their failure to treat the crisis. Most of them focus their energies to understand how to maintain the Ummah’s identity instead of and rather than to know the mission of the Ummah and how the Ummah should be prepared to fulfil its mission? They focused on reform of law due to the changing reality. They emphasise more on the difference between *nass* and the *fiqh* (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 42). While the first unchangeable and unalterable, the second subject to change, adjustment, and modification (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 42). They did not argue that all Muslim societies must be regulated and governed by the Shariah. They did not discuss for the need of the implementation of the Shariah in time space context by a legitimate government and leadership. They generally mixed up the Islamic law with the Shariah.

6.0 Features of Muslim Reformist Thought

It is asserted the Muslim reformist thought denotes an ideology. They are considered non-radicals. “A reformist is by definition non-radical” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 51), they did not plan to seek “a total change of the existing order” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 51), but, “paved the

way for the assimilation of modernity” and thought that this process will not affect Islam (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 51). Modernity for them is unthinkable, Islam needs rethinking but not modernity. The reality is that the Muslim, “reformist thought is by definition the product of a crisis situation” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 44), and, the “sense of self-decline and inability to repel Western” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 44), challenges, military, economic and cultural. It was not motivated by the vision and mission of Islam. The goal of Muslim reformists was “the positive projection of the West” which was employed as a weapon in the ongoing conflict with the traditionalist circles” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 44). In this way they thought the reformist ideology can “revive the meaningfulness of religious beliefs” and would be able “to maintain the relevance of Islamic faith to the radically changing times” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 40), without challenging modernity and its framework of life and society. Some analysts think they adopted “a twofold mission: containing the Western challenge by creating a synthesis between modern values and systems and what they perceived as eternal Islamic values and systems; and questioning the credibility, even the Islamicity, of the dominant traditional modes of religion by questioning their timelessness and their reality at the same time” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 40). Many consider that the Muslim reformist project is an Islamic project as they employ some of the tools and idioms in their discourse which are approved in Islamic thought. Some scholars think that the reformist thought is based on four principles:

1. Tawhid
2. Return to the Quran and Sunnah
3. Assertion of the role of reason
4. The call for renewed ijtehad

But the truth is that they do not return to the Quran and Sunnah but rather largely preferred, “viewed and interpreted the principal Islamic texts, understood reason and sought ijtehad, through the prism of modernity” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 44). Some scholars think that “the Muslim reformist of the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century were concerned with the socio-political consequences of modernization and the overwhelming Western challenge to Islamdom” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 44). They also see some contradictions in Muslim reformist thought but did not clearly identify them. According to some analysts the Muslim

reformists did not compromise with missionary and foreign education they saw it as “incapable of rescuing the Muslim mind and society” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 44). Their alternative vision, however, was not based on the Islamic worldview and way of life. They practically accepted the modern system of education. They adopted modern syllabus and curriculum and modern methods of learning (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 44-45). Their concern was to seek and “emphasise the relatedness between the great values of Islam and the modern West, in the sphere of law as well as in the wider realm of social morality” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 45). Muslim reformists were interested to grasp elements of Western strength and re-introduce them to the Muslim milieu (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 45). Without a critical insight based on Islamic worldview the Muslim reformists appreciate “Western scientific achievements not only as a major source of power, but also as an important means for arriving at a better understanding of religion and for generating the process of social and moral reconstruction” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 46). They thought “that would free Muslims from the shackles of traditions” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 46). They fail to develop a more profound, critical view of the West and modernity especially their metaphysical foundation. This conclusion was drawn by other analysts as well. “It has often been said that the Islamic reformist movement failed to achieve its goals or to leave a lasting imprint on the political and cultural order of modern Islamic societies” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 50). Without doubt, the Muslim reformists ignore the importance to articulate and advance a coherence vision and mission of Islam relevant to modern society. Their interest is to search for coexistence with modernity. “Their largely apologetic comprehension of Western modernity, and the fragility of their eclectic system of thought, made them unable to chart a successful course amid the testing times of the colonial and post-colonial periods” (Farouki & Nafi, 2004: 51). Equally important is the limitation of their aspirations, together with lack of commitment to Islamic perspective. Muslim reformists due to the overwhelming superiority complex of the so-called development in the Western world are unable to formulate an independent position based on Islamic worldview.

7.0 The Criteria of Contemporary Islamic Thought

The most important issue in contemporary Islamic thought is the issue of criterion. We must develop our own framework of critical thinking, scientific and creative thinking, and criteria of examination,

analysis, comparison, and articulation. In fact, we find this criterion in the writings of the Islamic revivalist thinkers and writers such as Ali Shariati, Muhammad Asad, Muhammad Iqbal, Mawlana Mawdudi, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas etc. The basic requirement for them is the requirement of the Truth and Reality of life and the world which they draw from True, Authentic and Universal Knowledge [TAUK]. There is no possibility of knowing truth and reality of the metaphysical world without TAUK. Based on TAUK we observe and perceive the truth and reality of life and the world. We find based on TAUK that the basis of life and the world is ethical, spiritual, moral, legal, and consequential. It is TAUK that elaborates that through ethical approach alone that we understand the spiritual dimension of life and the world. It clearly says Allah SWT, is the Creator Who, beyond any doubt, manifested the truth and reality of life and the world and prescribed the most suitable way of life – Islam that combines all aspects of life in one single unity. Islam as the way of life presents a comprehensive and holistic scheme of life that creates moderation and harmony for development and sustenance, – being as relevant, truthful, and realistic. The clear understanding of Islam as the worldview and the way of life becomes the fundamental prerequisite for cognition of the realities around us. The needed framework would be based on the correct and comprehensive view of man and Islam, the aim of life, vision, mission of life and society. This will be achieved based on TAUK. According to it, as well as truth and reality of life and the world, the development of individual, family, society, government, state, culture, and civilization are articulated and built up. There is no other option for humanity other than this. Hence, we realize that we are bound ethically to derive fundamental universal principles of life and society from TAUK which shows us the true path of development following the Shariah and the code of morals and legal rulings which have been granted to us through TAUK. It emphasises the need of ethical, spiritual, and moral foundation for life that guarantees material, technological advancement, and economic development along with political stability. The evidences and principles that are drawn from the TAUK have empirical validity. The resultant framework become integrally attached to the ethical, spiritual, moral, legal, and consequential foundation of life guaranteeing success in this world and in the next world.

8.0 CONCLUSION

The new trends of so-called Islamic thought, especially the voices of reformist Islam present Islam continuously as religion and treat it and compare it with other world religions. All the new trends such as liberal Islam, progressive Islam, modern Islam, and voices of reformist Islam are thoughtful of the Islamic thought of revivalists. For them revivalists have misinterpreted Islam to achieve their rigid and authoritarian goals using religion of Islam for their political agendas. They are interested in politicised Islam rather than to liberate Islam from the totalizing vision of fundamentalism and radicalism. We find many writers, writing on Political Islam and Islamism. They are branded as radical proponents of political Islam who support 'jihadi' approach and encourage violence. For them, the Islamic revivalists, are the source of radicalism and terrorism among Muslims. It is claimed as one can see in many accounts and writings. The Islamic thought which does not give any importance to modernity is not taken as worthy of application. Against this, Omaid Safi claims that the Islamic modernism is defined as those discourses of Islamic thought and practice in which modernity itself is seen as a viable category to be engaged and drawn upon within (Cornell, 2007: xvii). This can be said about the voices of reformist Islam as demonstrated in this paper. He further asserts and conforms that the advocates of Islamic modernism are not simply modern Muslims, but they are the Muslims who see something 'if not all' of modernity as a constitutive element of their own worldview and practice (Cornell, 2007: xvii). The position of reformist Islam is as of Islamic modernism.

The phrase Islamic thought, in truth, represent the Islamic worldview and raises all those issues which are very fundamental to life of people and society such as the need for true, authentic, and universal worldview and true, authentic, and universal knowledge about it because a true worldview represents the Truth and Reality of life and the world. According to the Islamic worldview, life, in truth and reality, is the combination of various dimensions. In voices of reformist Islam many important dimensions are ignored and undermined such as the need for spiritual foundation and moral excellence for individuals and society. The truth and reality of hell and heaven, the reward and punishment, life after death etc. are not taken seriously. In the discourse of Islamic thought the importance of justice and equality to others are reminded and those who deny them are cautioned

about the reality of the next world and the reward and punishment. All these truths and realities of life and the world are not taken as truths and realities in all the new trends of so-called Islamic thought. The study and analyse everything within the framework of liberalism and modernity. This is the central theme of voices of reformist Islam.

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