

AHAS LECTURE SERIES

Topic: AbdulHamid A. AbuSulayman's
Contributions to Islamization of
Knowledge



Thursday

21st October 2021

11.00 am - 1.00 pm



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**Topic: Dr AbdulHamid
AbuSulayman's Contributions
to Islamization of Knowledge
[IOK]**

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Works of Dr. AbdulHamid

- 1. Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Workplan, 1982**
 - 2. Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan, 1989**
 - 3. Crisis in the Muslim Mind, 1993**
 - 4. Towards an Islamic Theory of International Relations – New Directions for Methodology and Thought, 1993 [Theory and practice]**
- Dr AbdulHamid was a thinker so he thought and left behind some thought.
 - May Allah grant him excellent reward
 - I benefited from his thought and action, it helped me to understand IOK in its proper perspective

DR. ABDULHAMID'S BACKGROUND

- He was born in Saudi Arabia, grew up in Makkah. He observed Islamic Ummah suffered from severe setbacks.
- He learnt about heroes of Islam, ups and downs. I think Allah swt had planned something for him so he realized the urgency of the crisis and developed a sense of determination and decided that things must change.
- He started questioning himself about the reasons for the decline and fall.
- He was looking for reasons using reason fully.
- He was unwilling to accept anything less than change and development.
- He never thought in terms of acceptance, imitation and borrowing. He was never satisfied with lamentation, emotional outburst of anger or even sentiments.

DR. ABDULHAMID'S BACKGROUND Cont.

- **Based on his studies and experiences he sought finally answers and solutions. He realized the only way out. for Muslims is to study everything seriously, have in depth understanding, critical and comparative analysis**
- **He invested all his abilities, learning and resources to accomplish the task of the development of Ummah.**
- **He developed a habit of thinking, thinking critically and comparatively and thinking differently from others. Finally, he understood that Allah swt showed him the true path of development. So, he accepted the path of Islamization of Knowledge.**
- **Consequently, Allah swt brought him to our beloved University.**
- **He confessed that he made the problems of Ummah as his own personal problems.**

Background of IOK

- Around the mid of 1960's AbdulHamid moved to America for his higher studies and came into contact with the leaders and workers of Islamic movements from middle east and Indian subcontinent. He met with Dr Ismail Faruqi and completed his PhD under his supervision. His view of Islam helped him to think for the creation of Islamic thought for the well being of people and revival of Islamic civilization.
- It was during this period of 1970s that Muslim Students Association [MSA] of America and Canada was formed along with AMSS.
- In 1977 a conference was held in Europe in which more than 30 leaders of Islamic movements and other Islamic scholars participated. They all unanimously agreed that the real problem of the Ummah is intellectual – a crisis of thought. This was the reason that the IIIT was established which concentrated on the intellectual issues of the Ummah and when Dr. AbdulHamid was assigned the responsibility to upgrade the booklet first published in 1982 on Islamization of Knowledge, he highlighted the issue of Islamic thought and its methodology as the main issues of IOK.

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS

IOK: Analysis of Ummah's Phenomena

- **Dr. Abdul Hamid realized that Ummah's attachment to its Din, the worldview and the way of life had tremendously declined.**
- **Ummah lost the sense of development and great heights of success.**
- **The scholars distracted themselves from the original sources of Islam – the Quran and Sunnah.**
- **This caused the intellectual crisis and deficiency.**
- **A systematic, comprehensive and sophisticated campaign was launched against Ummah by the MOVEMENTS of Renaissance and Enlightenment.**

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Analysis of Ummah's Phenomena Conti.

- The process of transforming Islamic mind and ethos stopped. Islam was isolated from everyday life. A big gap was created between the Ummah and the main sources.
- How to transform Muslim mind, thinking process, and Islamic vision was the greatest challenge for the Ummah.
- Answer was through the process of education.
- What kind of education? This question raised the intellectual challenge of knowledge, education, methodology, thought and frame of reference.
- This raised some other questions: What is good or suitable for the growth and development of the Ummah in the light of the Quran and Sunnah?

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

Analysis of Ummah's Phenomena Conti.

- **How to regenerate its thought process which can guide Muslims on the path of liberation, intellectual freedom and development?**
- **The Ummah must be capable to distinguish between right course of action and wrong.**
- **Dr. Abdul Hamid realized that this requires high level of thinking and scholarship.**
- **On the way to address the issue of intellectual thought process the biggest obstacles were the process of education and dissemination of knowledge both in religious and modern educational institutions.**
- **All this realization led to the issue of epistemology and IOK.**

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

Focus of IOK

- After the publication of the second edition, in 1989, with some modification and additions the focus of IOK was directed from production of textbooks to the development of Islamic thought and its methodology. Since then, the focus is on both Islamic thought and textbooks.

Conditions of IOK

- In the first edition under Work Plan **the Mastery of the Modern Discipline** was identified as one of the necessary steps followed by the **Mastery of the Islamic Legacy**. But in the second edition the Mastery of the Legacy was emphasized as the first step followed by the Mastery of Contemporary knowledge. This point was further elaborated in Chapter 6 under sub-heading 'Indispensable Clarification' and again **Mastery of modern sciences** was included as the first step.

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Its Conditions Conti.

- **It was suggested that the Mastery of the Modern Sciences must be the stage One so that Muslim scholars of modern sciences must be able to have command over modern sciences. They must be capable to benefit from the useful aspects of common human heritage, to assimilate those disciplines, and to represent them in their proper perspective. So that they should serve Islamic ideology, Islamic vision, and Islamic ideals in the present age.**
- **To achieve this goal, the Muslim scholars must, of necessity, have command over the fundamentals of Islam as embodied in the Quran and the Sunnah and understood and applied universally throughout the ages.**

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Its Conditions Cont.

- They must have an adequate understanding of the various Islamic texts so that they can relate to his/her special field. Dr. AbdulHamid during his tenure in IIUM observed this condition when he appointed the academic staff.
- It was also argued that he/she must be fully conversant with the Islamic legacy, a point which was further elaborated by Professor Kamal Hassan under Relevantisation of Islamic sciences. Muslim scholars must be able to shift what is correct, useful, precious, and has emanated from genuine Islamic spirit and ideals.

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Its Scope

- From the very beginning it was made clear that all Branches of Knowledge require Islamization. The fact is that in the first edition itself it was repeatedly said that all disciplines, the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences must be reconceived and rebuilt, given a new Islamic base and assigned new purposes consistent with *tawhidic* framework of unity of knowledge.
- It was again repeated that every discipline must be recast so as to embody the principles of Islam in its methodology, in its strategy, in what it regards as its data, its problems, its objectives, its aspirations.
- Giving an example of science and technology Dr. Abdul Hamid explains that Islamization means providing guidance, correct direction, correct objectives, and correct philosophy in the best interest of humanity. It does not necessarily mean being different in the material or professional particulars.

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

Use of Phrase Islamic Revealed Knowledge

- For Dr. AbdulHamid integration of two educational systems into one was the very first step of Islamic philosophy of education. The second stage was the stage of Islamization of modern knowledge and Relevantization of Islamic sciences.
- This was the reason that Dr. AbdulHamid always used the phrase Islamization of knowledge and changed the name of CFK, Center for Fundamental Knowledge. A new name was given to it: the Dept of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage. His emphasis on the use of the phrase the Islamic revealed knowledge is very meaningful. Later on, when our kulliyyah was formed once again he used the same phrase and the name the Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences was approved.
- According to Dr. AbdulHamid the Islamic revealed knowledge always occupied the highest place in the history of scholarship. It emphasizes the need for empirical data and powerful rational arguments.

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Creation of New Knowledge

- **There are some misunderstandings about IOK. Some people think IOK just stands for consumption of existing knowledge. It does not emphasize the need of creation of new knowledge. But the fact is that the need of creation of new knowledge was always emphasized. This was made vibrant by Dr. AbdulHamid in the new edition. It is said: This edition affirms that IOK is a continuing process and that its major goals are achieved through the accumulation and development of ideas in the various fields of knowledge.**

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: From 1982 to 1989

- **We can see the role and contribution of Dr. Abdul Hamid to IOK from the beginning of this movement. It is said clearly in the second edition that the publication of Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Workplan, 1982 was the result of the papers and speeches delivered at various conferences by Dr. Ismail Raji al Faruqi and Dr. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman.**
- **It is also recorded in the second edition that it is reedited by Dr. AbuSulayman, the first four parts of the original English edition remain basically unchanged, however, some important modifications and additional concepts and ideas have been presented. The new edition offers greater understanding of the intellectual issues facing the Ummah and the Muslim scholars – not in the field of education but foremost in thought and methodology.**

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Since 1989

- **The ultimate ambition of IOK movement is to provide a new but an intellectual basis and framework to knowledge and education inspired by and imbued with the worldview of Islam.**
- **It was Dr AbdulHamid AbuSulayman who emphasized and made it clear that the main concerns of this particular movement of our time have been the development of epistemology, methodology, Islamic thought, production of new knowledge, educational growth, development of textbooks, and development of human beings and societies – the cultural and civilizational development.**
- **It is wrong to say that IOK movement focuses mainly on the academic exercise and stands, according to some, for the preparation of new textbooks from Islamic perspective alone. All Islamic universities in truth and reality are expected that they would generate new knowledge, new theories, new models.**
- **This was the reason that Dr. AbdulHamid time and again proclaimed IOK is neither a reform movement nor it stands merely for rational academic concern. He did his best in second edition of 1989 to put the case of IOK in its proper comprehensive intellectual perspective following the spirit of first edition:**

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Reform of Education

- **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.[8]**

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Islamic Thought

- **As being one of the most important aspects of IOK the issue of the development of Islamic thought was again and again emphasized. Dr. Abdul Hamid contended the root cause of the decline of the Muslim Ummah lies in the decline of Islamic thought.**
- **He argued the stagnant nature of Islamic thought and its methodology caused overall decline of the Ummah. The Islamic thought in general is imitative and repetitive, theoretical and conceptual, badly lacks the quality of empirical and rational understanding. Hence, it has lost its dynamic role of guidance and leadership.**
- **He genuinely stated that the Ummah achieved unparalleled development in the past because of the development of Islamic thought which generated energy, commitment, dedication and desire among the members of the Ummah for civilizational development.**

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Islamic Methodology

- **Consequently, the Ummah played the role of leadership of mankind. The dynamism in Islamic thought was generated on the basis of a proper reading of the fundamental texts of Islam--the Qur'an and the Sunnah in time space context based on observation and experience of social realities.**
- **“Europe armed with dynamic ideas and efficient methods based on the empirical and rational approach, confronted the static and rigid Muslim frame of mind which rested on textual deduction within the limits of the early Muslim model. The Muslim's thinking had lost touch with reality, and they were incapable of regeneration and reorientation in the light of new developments and demands.”**
56.

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Islamic Methodology Cont.

- He explained the issue of time space in detail in his book on International Relations, 1987, and maintained that the change of time and space requires the change of the structure of social institutions. If the Islamic thought does not respond to the required structural changes, it would lose its dynamism. “Any reform that ignores this fact or suggests otherwise does not show a real awareness of the influence of the Quran on Muslims.” 85
- He identified some of the shortcomings of the traditional methodology and commented the classical as well as contemporary scholars and thinkers for the most part overlooked the concept of space-time principle and its relations to the structure and application of Muslim methodology. 87 In addition, they also ignore the importance of empirical data and the employment of a rigorous rational and systematic approach. They need to take into consideration both text and reason. They are not empirical and experimental, and do not apply at a time both induction and deduction.
- Dr. Abdul Hamid asserted there is an urgent need to make the empirical, rational and systematic approach as an integral part of Islamic methodology.

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Islamic Methodology Conti.

- **Generally, in so-called religious studies, he said, the textual or content analysis is emphasized. No serious attention is paid for the systematic application of reason and sense perception. Consequently, scholars lose their attachment with the mainstream of society.**
- **In modern period Muslims in their studies in social and natural sciences do apply the rational and empirical tools but purely in modern methodological context. At present, the Muslim system of education still lacks originality and depends on imitation of an alien system of research and investigation. In the beginning after the revelation of the Quran the most of the works of scholars were in many ways logical and systematic as they were directly benefiting from the Quran and the Sunnah.**

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Islamic Methodology and Islamic Thought

- **No doubt, IOK movement was started with the realization of the problems in modern knowledge and education, but later on it was explained and extended by Dr. AbdulHamid to the context of the rise and fall of Islamic Ummah, Islamic methodology, Islamic thought, and civilization. In this way a kind of relationship between, knowledge, education, methodology, Islamic thought and development of the Ummah was created and established. Since then, Islamic thought and methodology have become the central themes of the movement of Islamization of Knowledge.**
- **Dr. AbdulHamid based on his studies and diagnosis of the Ummatic problems, claimed that in the past the methodology of Islamic thought was developed systematically and applied by the scholars for reading and interpretation of Islamic texts in time space context. This approach to methodology played a vital role in developing Islamic thought. In this methodology neither any reform was introduced nor it was further developed during preceding centuries which had, in fact, caused stagnation in Islamic thought and its methodology.**

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Islamic Methodology and Islamic Thought Conti.

- **The undeveloped nature of methodology resulted in the decline of the Ummah. Hence, was concluded by Dr. AbdulHamid that it is the methodology of Islamic thought which was basically responsible for the development of dynamic Islamic thought.**
- **The stagnant nature of methodology ultimately caused decline in Islamic thought and decline in Islamic thought caused the decline of the Ummah. With this analysis, it was claimed by Dr. AbdulHamid that if we wish to see the Ummah rise once again, we need to understand the proper relationship between *methodology*, *thought*, and *development*. Hence, he genuinely argued what do we need today is to bring necessary development in methodology which will guarantee the development of dynamic Islamic thought and thus, bring development in the Muslim world. It is, therefore, contended in the second revised edition that Islamization of Knowledge has to be seen in this context of development of methodology, Islamic thought and the Ummah.**

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Islamic Methodology and Islamic Thought Conti.

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ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Islamic Methodology and Islamic Thought Conti.

- **Dr. Abdul Hamid argued this goal of development of Ummah, as it is asserted earlier, cannot be achieved without developing Islamic thought in time-space context. Mere imitation of the past or modern secular models of development would further create confusion and chaos instead of guaranteeing development. The Islamic thought cannot be developed until and unless there is an assessment and a reformulation of traditional methodology of Islamic thought. This whole process of change, reformulation and development of methodology and of Islamic thought requires a change and reformulation in the process of education and dissemination of knowledge in the Muslim world.**

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Islamic Methodology and Islamic Thought Conti.

- **For this, Dr. AbdulHamid contended, we have to go through the process of change and development in the existing body of knowledge and education system. It will help to prepare the mind-set of the members of the Ummah. With a change in mind-set, it is expected, the scholars of the Ummah would be able to bring change in methodology as well. It will create dynamic Islamic thought. This change and development in methodology and Islamic thought would finally bring a change in knowledge, education and mind-set. All this, will have to be done in the light of the texts of Islam—the Qur'an and the Sunnah. *This whole process of change and development in knowledge, education, methodology and thought is now designated as Islamization of Knowledge.***

ABDULHAMID'S CONTRIBUTIONS Cont.

IOK: Civilizational Development

- So far as the main goal of IOK is concerned, it was rightly said that IOK is an expression of those intellectuals who are looking for an alternative framework for civilizational development. From this perspective, Islamization of Knowledge is perceived as a civilizational movement. It is a civilizational movement of rethinking, taking the Qur'an as the frame of reference. Since 1980s it became a “topic of general interest, a vital concern not just for Muslims but also for the rest of the world.” [Merryl Wyn Davies, 1991, 231] Islamization of knowledge “offers a means to think about the present and the future of Muslim reality in a different way.”[Merryl Wyn Davies, 1991, 233] According to her, “Knowledge does not occur in a vacuum, it is a civilizational artefact, a genetic code, and the genes of the living being that is a civilization”.
- Sarfaraz Niyozov and Nadeem Memon argued that, “Islamization is not a minor filtering or gate keeping conduit; it is a broad-based, diverse and evolving epistemological, ontological, and pedagogical strategy that aims to counteract not just Western and secular, but also any other non-Western, and in some cases, not-so-proper-Muslim encroaches into Muslim psyche and society.” [Sarfaraz Niyozov and Nadeem Memon, 2011, 14]

Conclusion

- Dr. AbdulHamid Ahmad AbuSulayman in his book, *International Relations: New Directions for Methodology and Thought*, 1987, had raised the most important issues of Islamic thought, its methodology and their stagnant nature. He had fairly established a link between decline of the Ummah and the stagnant nature of Islamic thought and its methodology. The same ideas have further been introduced and elaborated in the discourse on IOK. They are fundamental for a bright future of Ummah Hence, it was said:
 - For the Ummah, the “Islamization of Knowledge” is, at the moment, a matter of utmost priority. It aims at developing a methodology for Islamic ideology—purifying it of all the aberration, corruption, isolation, inertia and division from which it has suffered over the centuries. It aims at reinvigorating Islamic thought and its methodology by giving it access to the main fountainheads of the legacy of the Ummah. [Islamization, 1989, 85]
 - Its purpose is to achieve mastery of Islamic thought in various branches of human knowledge...in order to build a sound contemporary Islamic base for dynamic action in all spheres of life and civilization. [Islamization, 1989]

Conclusion Cont.

- Finally, being the real powerbase of the Ummah, the Islamization of Knowledge movement cannot be overlooked. It should occupy top priority in all the schemes of Ummah for its development:
 - The “Islamization of Knowledge” is of fundamental importance and occupies foremost priority in actualizing “Islamization” Therefore, the “Islamization of Knowledge” cannot be neglected nor can its priority be overlooked or buried beneath heavy pressures of political, economic, and military problems of the *Ummah*. [Islamization, 1989, 84]
- However, it does not mean that all other activities have to be suspended or overlooked.
 - The prime importance of the “Islamization of Knowledge”, the reformation of thought and methodology of the legacy and contemporary sciences does not imply suspension of all other activities. Rather, it means that we should give due attention to the provision of various spiritual and material resources for reformation in the intellectual sphere. This is important in order to coordinate and properly utilize various reformatory efforts, human sacrifices, and material expenditure. [Islamization, 1989, 86]

Conclusion Cont.

- Because;
 - In the absence of such reformation of thought and methodology, all of these are bound to be ineffective and insipid.
 - It is important to remember that, without reformation of thought and methodology and in the absence of genuine and clear vision, all efforts are bound to be ineffective and all sacrifices to be useless.... The time for sermonizing is gone. We must now set our priorities right and refuse to neglect the basic issues. [Islamization, 1989, 86]
- With all these clarifications, there is a need to understand the fact that:
 - ...it is important for Muslim intellectuals to realize that the economic, social, and political problems of the *Ummah*—very serious problems by any standard—are, in fact, just side effects of the real malaise of the *Ummah*. It is the cloudiness of vision, the weakness and deterioration of contemporary Islamic thought and its methodology, that underlies such present maladies as corruption, inefficient performance, inadequate education and weakness of the moral character of the *Ummah*. [Islamization, 1989, 89]=====