

# “ISLAMISATION OF THE SELF AS AN IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL AGENDA IN THE CURRICULUM OF IIUM”

## 1. Introduction

Much has been written, discussed and debated on the subject of Islamisation of Human Knowledge ever since the discourse was started by its prominent proponents such as Professor Syed Naquib al-Attas, *al-Marḥūm* Professor Dr Ismail Raji al Faruqi, *al-Marḥūm* Professor AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, *al-Marḥūm* Shaikh Taha Jabir and others. It was clear to the perceptive Islamic scholars and intellectuals that Western imperialism, colonialism, secularism and secular modernity had negative and disastrous impacts on the culture and education of the Muslims. Many young Muslims came under the impact of secularized and Westernised knowledge and in the process lost their Islamic identity. This was the historical and sociological background of the emergence of the intellectual discourse and movement known popularly as “Islamisation of Knowledge”.

I personally prefer to call it “Islamisation or Islamicisation of Human Knowledge”, because the word “knowledge” translated into Arabic is *‘ilm*”. In the Qur’an “*‘ilm*” refers to true knowledge, God’s knowledge and knowledge revealed by God, all of which are pure, true, perfect and infallible. It would be absurd, if not blasphemous, to Islamise God’s knowledge or Divine revelation like the Qur’an and the other authentic Books of God. It is human knowledge which is acquired by his reason or experience that is not infallible, value free or always true. It is this intellectually or experientially acquired knowledge that needs correction, revision, refutation, or critique. It is therefore necessary to qualify the word “knowledge” to “human knowledge” because standing by itself the word “knowledge” would include God’s knowledge. Hence, we in IIUM prefer to use the phrase “Islamisation of Human Knowledge” instead of “Islamisation of Knowledge”. As a matter of fact, I popularized the use of the phrase “Islamisation of Human Knowledge” (IOHK) after I became the third rector of IIUM.

I also realized that in general, the contemporary literature and debate on “Islamisation of Knowledge” emphasized the importance of “islamising knowledge” without addressing the issue of the “knowledge producer”, the human agency responsible for developing, producing or disseminating knowledge. I felt that too much emphasis was given to “knowledge” and philosophy of knowledge *per se* or “science” and philosophy of science *per se* and too little attention was given to the knowledge producer, knowledge

constructor or the knowledge seeker or the scientist who is a human being with all kinds of problems in his/her thought, worldview, attitudes, biases and ethical behaviour and character. Thus in my definition and explanations on Islamisation of Human Knowledge in IIUM, IOHK consists of two dimensions, the academic and the non-academic as well as personal dimensions. The second dimension is called in IIUM “Islamisation of the Self” which will be elaborated shortly.

In the *IIUM Policies and Guidelines on Islamisation* produced by CENTRIS (Centre for Islamisation) in 2013 under the directorship of Associate Professor Dr. Hazizan Noon, I explain another preference of mine, i.e. that I prefer to use the term “Islamicisation” instead of “Islamisation”. My explanation is as follows:

The word “islamicisation” is derived from the adjective “Islamic” while the word “Islamisation” is derived from the verb “islamise”. To “islamise is to make something “Islamic” which means, among others, to be in accordance, in harmony or agreeable with the values and norms of Islam, even if it is the product or the practice of non-Muslim peoples, cultures, societies or civilisations. The verb to “islamise” originally implies “to convert to Islam”, hence “Islamisation” used to refer to the process of conversion to Islam. It is not surprising that many people [especially non-Muslims] perceive “Islamisation of human knowledge” as a process of converting human knowledge to Islam. While the phrase “Islamicisation of human knowledge” may be understood to be similar to “Islamisation of human knowledge”, it has the connotation of inclusivity from the adjective “Islamic” which has a variety of meanings, one of which is the readiness to recognize, to acknowledge, to adopt or to accept anything produced, practiced by or originating from non-Muslim traditions, cultures, societies, systems or institutions which is considered to be in harmony with or not opposed to the worldview, principles, values and norms of Islam.....It should be made clear that neither “Islamisation” nor “Islamicisation” implies the desire to convert non-Muslims to Islam or to impose the beliefs, worldview, systems, perspectives, values and norms of Islam upon non-Muslims. The terminology emphasizes the necessity of Muslims to live, work and act in accordance with the *`Aqidah* (creed), the *Sharī`ah* (Divine Way) and *Akhlāq* (ethics) of Islam, to achieve the goals of “*al-ḥasanah fī al-dunyā*” (wellbeing in this world) and “*al-ḥasanah fī al-ākhirah*” (wellbeing in the Hereafter). (*IIUM Policies and Guidelines on Islamisation*, pp. 12-13.)

## 2. Islamisation of the Self (IOS)

In the *IIUM Policies and Guidelines on Islamisation*, we define the IOS as follows:

5.5.1. Islamisation or Islamicisation of the self in IIUM entails a continuous process which focuses on the development and strengthening of *`ilm* (knowledge), *īmān* (faith), *yaqīn* (certitude), *taqwā* (God-fearing consciousness), *iḥsān* (beneficence and moral excellence) and *ḥusn al-khuluq* (good character) in the personality and life of a *Mu'min* (Believer).

5.5.2. The University is committed to the principle of Islamisation of the self because it is the basis of holistic human development in the worldview of Islam. In order to overcome what the Qur'an describes as "diseases of the heart" (*amrāḍ al-qalb*) and to fulfil the requisite spiritual and ethical attributes of true scholars, the Qur'an enjoins the process of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) as a basic religious obligation and the proper development of the personality of seekers of knowledge and scholars who are imbued with the virtues of humility, God-fearing consciousness, *iḥsān*, integrity and the principles of spiritual-moral excellence.

5.5.3. The process of Islamicisation, therefore, includes the implementation of *Jihād al-Nafs* (striving against the influence of base desires, spiritual and moral vices as well as temptations of worldly pleasures), *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* (process of purification of the spiritual heart and soul from a variety of spiritual and moral "diseases") and *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* (process of acquiring, refining and nurturing the qualities of good character of Believers as enjoined by the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (*ṣalla'llāhu `alaihi wa sallam*)).

I shall elaborate on the meanings and implications of the above three statements below.

### 3. Man as a spiritual and moral being.

From the worldview of the Qur'an we know that the human being is firstly and essentially a spiritual-moral being with a physical body. After Allah SWT creates and shapes the body, man's spiritual essence (the *Rūḥ*) which is of Divine origin is then immersed in the body to be part and parcel of the human self. The

*Rūḥ* will be released from the body at death to live on forever in the Hereafter in a different form. The Qur'an says:

*Recall when your Lord said to the angels: "I will indeed bring into being a human being out of dry ringing clay wrought from black mud. When I have completed shaping him and have breathed into him of My Spirit [min Rūhī] then fall you down before him in prostration (Q. al-Ḥijr 15: 28-29)*

Human beings' spiritual nature and essence is clearly revealed by Allah SWT in the well-known Qur'anic verse on what is known as the Primordial Covenant between Allah SWT and all human beings in their pre-existential state.

*And recall (O Prophet)when your Lord brought forth descendants from the loins of the sons of Adam, and made them witnesses against their ownelves asking them: 'Am I not your Lord?' They said: 'Yes, we do testify.' We did so lest you claim on the Day of Resurrection: 'We were unaware of this.' (Q. al-A`rāf 8: 172)*

To understand the meaning of the Primordial Covenant we need to read some of the commentary given by Abu'l A`la Mawdudi as follows:

This event, according to several traditions, took place at the time of the creation of Adam. Apart from the prostration of the angels before Adam and the proclamation that man would be God's vicegerent on earth, all the future progeny of Adam were gathered, and were endowed with both existence and consciousness in order to bear witness to God's lordship. The best interpretation of this event is found in a statement by, 'Ubayy b. Ka'b, who has probably given the substance of what he had heard from the Prophet (peace be on him):

God gathered all human beings, divided them into different groups, granted them human form and the faculty of speech, made them enter into a covenant, and then making them witnesses against themselves He asked them: 'Am I not your Lord?' They replied: 'Assuredly you are Our Lord.' Then God told them: 'I call upon the sky and the earth and your own progenitor, Adam, to be witness against you lest you should say on the Day of Judgement that you were ignorant of this. Know well that no one other than Me deserves to be worshipped and no one other than Me is

your Lord. So do not ascribe any partner to Me. I shall send to you My Messengers who will remind you of this covenant which you made with Me. I shall send down to you My Books.' In reply all said: 'We witness that You are Our Lord and our Deity. We have no lord or deity other than You.' (Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 5, p. 135 - Ed.)....

God caused all human beings whom He intended to create until the Last Day to come into existence. He endowed upon them life, consciousness and the faculty of speech, and brought home to them that there is no god or lord besides Him, and that Islam alone is the right way to serve Him. (*Towards Understanding the Qur'an* (2106, tr. Zafar Ishaq Ansari)

The Qur'an explains in another verse that man's natural disposition or constitution called *fiṭrah* is none other than his innate spiritual nature referred to in the verse on Primordial Covenant. It is a universal unchanging nature of the human constitution as indicated by the following verse:

*(O Prophet and his followers), set you your face singlemindedly to the true Faith [al-Dīn] and adhere to the true nature [Fiṭrah] on which Allah has created human beings. There is no altering of the mould fashioned by Allah. That is the True, Right Religion, although most people do not know (Q. al-Rūm 30: 30).*

In a famous hadith reported by Bukhari and Muslim, the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

“Every child is born in this natural disposition (*al-Fiṭrah*); it is only his parents that later turn him into a ‘Jew’, a ‘Christian’ or a ‘Magian’.”

In a *hadith* which has been reported by Imam Ahmad it has been related that one day the Prophet (peace be upon him) said during an address:

“My Lord says: I had created all My servants on true faith; then the satans came and led them astray from their faith, and made unlawful what I had made lawful for them, and commanded them to associate with Me those for whom I have sent down no authority.”

The *fiṭrah* as man's instinctive and natural disposition towards the recognition of and submission to God is the innate spiritual nature that was addressed in the Primordial Covenant, and it is Allah's intention that human

beings remain steadfast on the true and original nature created by God. The positive interpretation of *fiṭrah* as explained by Yasien Mohamad is that humans are born in a state of *Iman* and *Islam* and innately predisposed to know Allah SWT and to do right, but it also has the potential for evil which is an external agent of misguidance. In spite of the innate natural goodness of the *Fiṭrah* and the Spirit (*Rūḥ*) or Soul of man, human beings need Prophethood (*Nubuwwah*) and Divine Revelation (*Waḥy*) to complement the innate goodness in man and to guide him to the proper spiritual-moral development and perfection. (Yasien Mohamed (1998). *Human Nature in Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Hayathi, 71)

Human beings require the infallible knowledge, wisdom and guidance of *Waḥy* and *Nubuwwah* in order to carry out the purpose of being created by Allah SWT, namely to know and serve Allah SWT (*ʿUbūdiyyah*) and then to fulfil the function of vicegerency of Allah as His *Khalīfah* (Vicegerent) on earth. This sacred function is to be fulfilled by all human beings be they Muslims or non-Muslims. As a spiritual being man is equipped for carrying out the above duties by his Creator with a physical body that possesses several spiritual constituents two of which remain permanently pure and incorruptible, namely the *Rūḥ* and *Fiṭrah*, but the three other constituents, namely the *Nafs* (Soul, Self) *Qalb* (Spiritual Heart) and *ʿAql* (Intellect and Reason) are mutable and subject to change for the better or for worse. A full Islamic understanding of the complex nature of the human spiritual constituents and their inter-relationships can be read from al-Ghazali's *Book of Knowledge* and *Marvels of the Heart*, but an excellent Islamic model of the human soul has been developed recently by Dr. Abdullah Rothman, an expert in Islamic psychology. (Abdullah Rothman, "An Islamic model of the soul", <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm&ogbl#inbox?projector=1>. Accessed June 1, 2020).

It is important to know that the fluctuating human soul (*Nafs*) is described by the Qur'an as having the capability to be in basically one of three stages or states: 1) *al-Nafs al-Ammārah bi's-Sū'* [the soul that incites and commands the human personality to that which is bad/evil/reprehensible, to be rebellious]; 2) *al-Nafs al-Lawwāmah* [the blaming soul that reminds, cautions or warns the human personality to refrain or repent from bad/evil deeds]; 3) *al-Nafs al-Muṭma'innah* [the soul at peace, having achieved inner tranquility, success in subduing or controlling the lower self and desires or Satanic impulses, and focussing towards the good pleasure of Allah S.W.T.]. Man's inner self or personality has to struggle against what Imam al-Ghazali calls *al-Muhlikāt* or spiritually destructive elements, qualities, thought, ideas, emotions, behaviour,

character traits;] in order to acquire, internalise and practice several spiritual-ethical virtues called *al-Munjiyāt* or values and virtues which will save the human personality from spiritual corruption, degradation and ultimate destruction. The *Qalb*, which is the spiritual centre of the human being and where the intellectual faculty, the *ʿAql*, is located, has the potential to turn in either of two directions of *al-Munjiyat* or *al-Muhlikat* if it is influenced by the lower impulses of the *nafs* and become further misaligned with *fitrah* due to the influences of the *Dunya* and *Shaytan*. It can also acquire the positive characteristics of the *Munjiyat* with the remembrance of Allah and the *Akhirah*, resulting in alignment with the soul's state of *fitrah*. (Rothman, Abdullah., Coyle(2018).<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-018-0651-1>. Accessed June 10, 2020.)

The *qalb* as the Allah-gifted spiritual entity (al-Imām al-Ghazālī calls it “*laṭīfah rabbāniyyah rūḥāniyyah*” - a subtle spiritual entity of Divine origin) is of immense worldly and other-worldly value which we Muslims and fellow human beings need always to preserve, protect and purify from all kinds of corrupting elements, and remove all the “stains”, “veils” or “rusts” from our sins, our bad deeds and bad influence of the lower self (*al-Hawā*) and the *al-nafs al-ammārah bi's-sū'* that incites to disobedience against religious norms and rules, immoral acts and evil deeds.

It is important to note that Allah SWT mentions in several verses of the Qur'an that human hearts are susceptible to “*amrād*” (spiritual diseases), or moral ailments (see Q.*al-Baqarah* 2: 10; *al-Ma'idah* 5: 52; *al-Anfal* 8: 49; *al-Muddaththir* 74: 31) and similar verses which have been analysed in many Sufi works. The heart as a dynamic spiritual core of human personality can therefore be “healthy” (Q. *al-Shu'arā'* 26: 88-89); be “tested” (Q. *al-Hujurat* 49: 3); be “blind” (Q. *al-Hajj* 22: 46); be “hard”, (al-Ḥajj 22: 53); be “locked” or “full of rust” (Q *al-Muṭaffifin* 83: 14; *al-Baqarah* 2: 7); “follow the whispers” of Satan (Q. *al-An'am* 6: 113) or be “without understanding” ( *al-Anfal* 8: 24). The worst state of the heart is when it is “dead”.

I would like to reiterate here that the *Qalb* -- despite being prone either to spiritual diseases or to the highest states of spiritual purity and perfection -- is the only spiritual organ Allah SWT created in man which has several functions and faculties, including the spiritual, the emotional/affective, the intuitive, the

meditative, the imaginative, the rational/intellectual or the cognitive. We should note that the cognitive/intellection/reasoning faculty is an integral part of the *Qalb*, not an independent or separate entity from the *Qalb*. Knowing this unique nature of the *Qalb* would help Muslim educators, leaders and parents to give proper attention to the holistic growth, development and elevation of the *Qalb*.

(1).The first thing to know is that Allah SWT does not use the word *`Aql* (intellect, intelligence, reason) as a noun in the Qur'an, although it exists in the Arabic language. Rather The All-Knowing, The All-Wise Creator-Sustainer uses the verbs "*ya`qilūn*" (they understand, comprehend or they reason), "*na`qilu*" (we understand, we use our reason) and "*yafqahūn*" (they understand, comprehend) as actions and functions of the *qalb*. The following verse needs to be studied:

*A) Have they not travelled through the earth, and have hearts [qulūb] by which they could reason/gain wisdom or understanding [ya`qilūn], and ears by which they could hear? For indeed, it is not their eyes that have become blind but it is the hearts [qulūb] that are in their breasts that have become blind! (Q. al-Ḥajj 22: 46)*

The explanation given by Abdullah Yusuf Ali on the Qur'anic meaning of *qalb* is most enlightening:

The word for "heart" [*qalb*] in Arabic speech imports both the seat of intelligent faculties and understanding as well as the seat of affections and emotions. Those who reject Allah's Message may have their physical eyes and ears, but their hearts are blind and deaf. If their faculties of understanding were active, would they not see the Signs of Allah's Providence and Allah's Wrath in nature around them and in the cities and ruins if they travel intelligently? (Abdullah Yusuf Ali 1999: 964)

*B) And certainly many are the invisible beings and humans We have made for hell who have hearts [qulūb] with which they understand not [lā yafqahūna bihā] (or fail to grasp the truth), and eyes with which they fail to see [la yubṣirūna bihā], and ears with which they fail to hear [la yasma`ūna bihā]. They are like cattle - no, they are [even] more misguided: it is they, they who are the [truly] heedless [of warnings]! (Q. al-A`raf 7: 179).*



On the above verse, Abdullah Yusuf Ali says that “Though they have apparently all the faculties of reason and perception, they have so deadened them that those faculties do not work, and they go headlong into Hell. They are, as it were, made for Hell.” (Abdullah Yusuf Ali 1999: 459)

As a consequence of human beings’ intellectual arrogance, stubbornness and persistent rejection of the Truths that divine scriptures have revealed, their hearts became impervious to divine guidance and deserved to be “sealed” as Allah S.W.T. says: “their hearts were stamped so they do not understand/comprehend” (Q. *al-Taubah* 9: 87; Q. *al-Munāfiqūn* 63: 3) and “Allah stamped their hearts so they do not know (have knowledge)” (Q. *Taubah* 9: 93).

(2). This is the second important thing we need to know about the *qalb*: that all the cognitive, intellecting and reasoning functions as well as the affective, the intuitive and the imaginative are done by faculties of the same *Qalb*, not by a separate entity called *`aql*. That being the case, our discourses or programmes of self, organisational or leadership transformation which presumes a proper understanding of the Islamic conception of the *Qalb* within the human personality – a conception that is different from the Western, atheistic, agnostic, and secular humanistic conceptions – ought to take note of this fact so that we shall not continue to follow, uncritically, the secular Western perception of the dualism and dichotomy of heart/soul and mind/intellect, of an inherent conflict between reason and revelation, or between the heart and the mind. In the Islamic holistic and integrated understanding of the *Qalb*, the process of cleaning, purifying, polishing, protecting and nurturing it is so important and urgent because in doing so we are also strengthening, refining and sharpening the spiritual and *īmānī* qualities of the *`Aql* in the *Qalb*.

(3). The third important finding, i.e. that the rational and cognitive intelligence constitutes an organic and integral part of the *Qalb* is crucial for educated people to readily accept the Islamic notion of *īmān*-rooted nature of the intellect and reason known as *`Aql* in Arabic. This embeddedness of natural spiritual inclination to the Divine Creator-Sustainer, in the uncorrupted pristine nature of human reason having

innate faith in Him is like the *fiṭrah* and the *rūḥ*. It was designed and created by none other than the All-Knowing, All-Wise Creator HIMSELF. That is why in Islam and throughout the Islamic knowledge-triumphant civilisation there is no conflict between Intellect and Revelation, and intellect is always given the role of verifying or validating the truths and supremacy of divinely revealed knowledge. It is also the reason why Divine Revelation only takes care of providing fundamental knowledge and truths of *Tauḥīd*; of the realities of *ʿĀlam al-Ghaib* (the realm of Transcendence, and other forms of realities beyond the ken of human reason); the certainty of future realities of *Dār al-Ākhirah* and how to prepare for it in this temporal world; divine perennial wisdom; general guidelines for the life of true believers as contrasted with the ways of falsehood, *kufr*, and Satanic deceptions; fundamental principles of human, societal and civilisational development; immutable Laws; moral spiritual lessons with Prophetic precedents towards achieving spiritual-ethical excellence of *taqwā* (God-fearing consciousness, *iḥsān* (spiritual-moral excellence and beauty) and *ḥubbuʿLlāh* (love of Allah SWT) – all of which are beyond the ken of human reason. As for the details on how best to develop – in the context of dynamic and constantly changing socio-cultural and socio-politico-economic environments -- the nitty gritty of material, technological, institutional developments, etc., they are left to (the pristine divinely-inclined) intellect, logical thinking, collective or individual *ijtihād*: independent reasoning based on the Qurʿan and the Sunnah to solve problems or provide good answers or good solutions to new issues, new problems or emerging/anticipated problems not addressed by Divine Revelation or Prophetic wisdom.

Since the spiritual heart also occupies a central position in the worldview of many world religions or religious philosophies, and the worldview of the Qurʿan underscores the necessity of every Believer to carry out the personal responsibility of (a) cleaning or purifying the soul (*tazkiyatuʿn-nafs*) and (b) the key role to be played by the hearts of the Believers (*qulūb al-muʿminīn*) in the construction of virtuous societies and *khairiyyah-wasaṭiyyah* based cultures, societies and civilisations driven by the Prophetic mission of *Raḥmatan liʾl-ʿĀlamīn*, it is the important that we Muslims have a good understanding of the

“hearts of the Believers” (“*qulūb al-mu’minīn*” in the Qur’an) as opposed to the hearts of the hard-core materialists, the self-deluded hypocrites, the arrogant disbelievers, the defiant atheists, or the unrepentent sinners. The hearts of the Believers are hearts which get illuminated by the light (*nūr*) of Divine guidance, wisdom and intuition. Informed and nurtured by the knowledge and wisdom of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, these hearts inspire, motivate, strengthen and spur the Believers to greater heights of spiritual-ethical development and progress, against the tide and forces of disbelief, polytheism, corruption, anarchy, depravity, immorality, falsehood, nihilism, atheism, individualism, racism, and secularism.

The sound *īmān*-based reasoning faculty of this type of *Qalb* leads the Believers as the *Ulu’l-Albāb* (possessors of sound intellects) to explore as well the beneficial Signs of Allah S.W.T in the heavens and the Earth and in the human selves in order to harness the Allah-given resources for the purpose of developing and flourishing (*istikhlāf, imārah*) sound and virtuous human civilisational progress on Allah’s planet Earth. Thus, their scientific and technological explorations, investigations, research and usufruct of the Allah-given (not Nature-given) bounties are forever imbued with the spirit of *tawāḍuʿ* (humility) and *shukr* (gratitude) to the Benevolent Sustainer. Their scientific and technological activities are a form of *dhikru’LLāh* (remembrance of the Benevolent Sustainer). They have in their hearts the fear (*al-khauf* and *al-khashyah*) that any wrong doings or transgressions on their part would lead them to the ignominy (*khizy*), eternal suffering and punishment (*adhāb*) in Hell. (Q. *Āl-ʿImrān* 3: 190-194, and 15 other verses containing the words *Ulu’l-albāb*).

Realising the importance of spiritual-moral purification as a prerequisite for the academic dimension of Islamisation of Human Knowledge, we have decided to focus on the necessity of *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* as the most important component of Islamisation of the Self in IIUM’s education. We make the topic as a permanent feature in the regular Ibadah Camps held by all Kulliyahs in IIUM which involve the practice of collective *Qiyām al-Lail* (with *ṣalāt al-tahajjud* and collective voluntary fasting). The content of the lecture on *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* is as given below.

#### 4. Meaning of Tazkiah al-Nafs (purification of self)

*Tazkiyah* originally means “growth” (*al-namā’*), “blessing” (*al-barakah*) and “increase of goodness” (*ziyādah al-khair*). It may be defined as follows: “A necessary and fundamental process of cleansing-purifying and nurturing -- all at the same time -- to attain the desirable objectives in human society and human lives.” Islam requires that the human society be cleansed and purified of *Jāhiliyyah* and unIslamic elements in order to be Islamised, so that the original *fiṭrah* (the original spiritual nature) of human beings and the Islamic qualities would grow and develop to become virtuous individuals, virtuous societies and virtuous civilisations.

4.1. The word *nafs* refers to the self and soul of a human being which is the incorporeal essence of a living being. It is also used to refer to the nature of a person or personality. The *nafs* is a dynamic entity created by Allah SWT which is capable of being corrupt or being elevated and purified. The word *nafs* used in the phrase *tazkiyah al-nafs* usually refers verse 7 in *Surah al-Shams* (91) of the Qur’an,

*“wa nafs wa maa sawwaha, fa alhamuha fujuraha wa taqwaha, qad aflaha man zakkaha, wa qad khaba man dassaha,”* (7. Consider the human self, and how it is formed in accordance with what it is meant to be; 8. And how it is imbued with its moral failings as well as with its profound consciousness of Allah; 9. Truly successful is he purifies it; 10. And truly lost is he who corrupts it. )

4.2. Muhammad Asad explains the term *nafs* in the above verse as follows:

“The term *nafs* which has a very wide range of meanings...denotes here the human self or personality as a whole: that is, a being composed of a physical body and that inexplicable life-essence loosely described as “soul”. (*The Message of the Qur’an*, 2011: 1141)

In Islamic religious literature the term *tazkiyah al-nafs* is associated with *tathīr al-qalb* (purification of the spiritual heart), *tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (refinement of character).

4.3. The supreme necessity and importance of *tazkiyah* is indicated by it being as part of the four primary responsibilities of Allah's Messengers, namely to convey and recite (*tilāwah*) the verses of Divine revelation to human beings, to purify (*tazkiyah*) human beings of all unislamic elements, to teach (*ta`līm*) human beings the Book of Allah SWT and to teach (*ta`līm*) human beings Divine Wisdom (*al-Ḥikmah*) (Q 2: 151, 129, 3: 164, 62: 2).

4.4. Therefore *tazkiyah* as a general principal of human and societal purification or reform (*iṣlāḥ*) is one the most important educational objectives of the Qur'an and of Islam, but the spiritual purification of the self-soul-heart is the most fundamental religious obligation of the individual (*farḍ `ain*) of the individual, to get rid of what Allah SWT calls the diseases of the spiritual heart (*qalb*), such as *kufr*, *shirk*, *takabbur*, *riyā'*, *ṭam`*, *ḥasd*, *ḥiqd*, *`ujb*, *ḥubb al-māl*, *ḥubb al-jāh*, *ghurūr*, etc.

4.5. It is our hope that educational agenda of IOS in IIUM will lead to societal and civilisational reforms, which in Malaysian context involves the implementation of the *Maqāṣid al-Qur`ān* which includes the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī`ah*. The Islamic struggle to get rid of secularism, liberalism, hypocrisy, false and deviant teachings is part of *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* and that may be considered a collective religious obligation (*farḍ kifāyah*).

4.6. In Malaysian society today there is also the pandemic of political corruption and hypocrisy which are in dire need for eradication. Many of our leaders have failed partly because of following the lower self which is called *al-naḥs al-ammarah bi's-su'* and passion (*hawā*) as well as the whisperings (*waswasah*) of Satan. Therefore it is very crucial that those wanting to be societal, political or national leaders must ensure that they possess traits of good character (*akhlāq mahmūdah*) not *madhmūmah*. The responsibility of "enjoining that which is good and right, and prohibiting that which is bad or wrong" (*al-amr bi'l-ma`ruf wa'n-nahy `an al-munkar*) is to be undertaken by both leaders and non-leaders but the leaders bear a heavier accountability before Allah SWT. "*Kullu rā`in mas`ūlun `an ra`iyyatih*" (Every leader/shepherd is answerable to Allah SWT for the people/flock under him/her.)

4.7. Both leaders and non-leaders need to remember that Allah SWT wants all His servants to grow positively and develop well to reach spiritual purity of what He calls *qalb salīm* (a clean, sound and wholesome heart) to lead and develop society and human civilisation to gain *al-falāḥ* (true success, wellbeing, happiness) and prevent *al-khusrān* (true loss, misery and suffering) in this world and in the Hereafter.

4.8. The spiritual purification process of *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* which involves the activities of seeking forgiveness (*istighfār*), repentance (*taubah*) and remembrance of Allah (*dhikru'llāh*) is a continuous process and should be implemented on a daily basis as we go about carrying out our professional responsibilities, because they are part of our inward consciousness.

4.9. In our work as IIUM staff we need to undergo the process of *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* throughout our career in order to be good role models or *Murabbī* for our students. Some of us may be suffering from moral diseases associated with academic career and the academic obsession with the KPIs of the University which has caused a lot of displeasure among the academic staff.

4.10. We hope that the exposure to the spiritual-moral discipline of *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* in IIUM will make our academic staff better prepared to undertake the task of Islamisation of Human Knowledge, particularly after understanding the nature and function of our God-given *'Aql* which are different from the secularised and absolutized reason in modern civilisation. They will also understand from the Qur'an that the nature and functions of God-fearing scholars such as the True *'Ulama'* (Scholars with *Khashyatu'llāh*), Those Who Possess True Knowledge (*Alladhīna ūtu'l-`ilm*), and The Possessors of Sound Intellects (*Ulu'l-Albāb*) are not the same as those of secularised, agnostic or atheistic scholars and intellectuals in today's world. They will understand from *ayat* 143 of *Surah al-Baqarah* that the Islamic *ummah* has been designated by Allah SWT to be Witnesses (*Shuhadā'*) for the whole mankind with its Divinely prescribed status as *Ummah Wasaṭ* (Community of Justice, Excellence and Balance). After studying the vision and the seven mission statements of IIUM they will realise that the ultimate goal of the Islamic university is to restore and reconstruct the model of holistic, theocentric and virtuous civilisation for the betterment of human societies being dehumanised by a secular homocentric

and God-defiant civilisation, and that the Muslim academics' quest for sound and useful knowledge is an *`ibādah* (worship and service of Allah SWT).

## **5.The Meaning and Educational Implications of *IQRA' BI'SMI RABBIKA' LLADHI KHALAQ***

It is mentioned in IIUM Constitution that the university's philosophy is based on but not confined to the first five verses of *Surah al-'Alaq*, which begins with the Divine commandment to "READ IN THE NAME OF YOUR LORD". To many Muslim scholars this commandment is one of the fundamental rationale for the intellectual and educational mission of IOHK. It is clear that Allah the Creator of mankind Who gave the gift of *`Aql* to His noblest creatures as the means to acquire sound and useful knowledge, wants them to pursue knowledge and utilise it IN HIS NAME, i.e. for His sake and in compliance with His will. By making the five verses of *Surah al-'Alaq* (Q. 96) as the philosophical and spiritual basis of the university, the staff and students of I.I.U.M. are introduced to the Islamic principle that knowledge has to be sought, utilised and constructed within the frame of reference of faith, guidance and will of Allah (SWT) Who had created mankind in the first place and Who, out of His mercy, taught human beings what they did not know for the purpose of knowing, obeying, serving, and being grateful to Him. But verses number six and seven of the *Surah* remind our staff and students and all who read them that humans, in fact, tend to transgress the limits of their freedom imposed by God because they began to regard themselves as self-sufficient – by virtue of having the intelligence to reason and to be free to disregard God -- and could lead their lives without having to follow God's guidance or His path. They forget, as stated in verse 8, that they will all return to their Creator, Master, Sustainer and Judge on the Day of Resurrection and they will be made accountable to Him for all their misdeeds and misconduct as a result of divorcing their intellect from Divine Revelation and guidance and following their own desires, whims and fancies (Q. 96: 5-8). Those verses, read together with many other relevant verses of the Qur'an referring to the characteristics of scholars and people of knowledge, not only reinforce the spiritual essence of mankind, but also provide further scriptural justifications for the sacred mission of IOHK --- a mission to reconnect the human intellect with its Divine Creator and Master, for the divorce of the

human intellect from its Divine Origin and sacred functions is one of the major root causes of the multiple crises of modern contemporary civilisation.

## **6. The limitations of the secularised human intellect**

The narrowly skewed nature of secularised human knowledge of modern post-Enlightenment civilisation as being confined only to what could be perceived or conveyed by the senses or secularised science, namely the external, tangible and perceivable material realities, is indicated in the following verses (as translated by Muhammad Asad in his *The Message of the Qur'an*):

*[This is] God's promise. Never does God fail to fulfil His promise - but most people know [it] not: (30:7) they know but the outer surface [zāhiran] of this world's life, whereas of the ultimate things they are utterly unaware [ghāfilūn]. (30:8) Have they never learned to think for themselves? God has not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them without [an inner] truth and a term set [by Him]: and yet, behold, there are many people who stubbornly deny the truth that they are destined to meet their Sustainer! (Q. al-Rūm 30: 6 - 8).*

This appears, in our humble opinion, to be a severe divine critique, if not indictment, as well, of the dominant but flawed secularised way of thinking, as manifested in scientism or in rationalistic analysis of post-modern contemporary civilisation, even among Muslim elites and in mainstream Muslim institutions. The secular and dominant civilisation built upon secularised science, technology, social sciences and humanities, fundamentally negate Divine Revelation as a source of knowledge and marginalised the truths and wisdom presented by it.

## **7. Conclusion**

Therefore it is expected of knowledgeable Muslim scholars and intellectuals to present or counter-propose to the secularised non-Muslim or even Muslim elites the Islamic perspectives on true progress, true wellbeing, true safety and security, true sustainability, true success, true prosperity and true happiness which are all contained in the Qur'anic vision of *al-Falāḥ* (true and holistic wellbeing) as the final goal of human life. However, the Qur'an gives the advice that as far as engaging with non-Muslim intellectuals or scholars is concerned, it is better not to spend too much time trying to persuade those



hard-core, persistent, fanatical or irrational rejectors of Islamic perspectives. Those who are innocently ignorant about Islam or genuinely open to peaceful and respectful inter-religious dialogue would probably be more tolerant to understand, at least, if not appreciate the alternative paradigm of knowledge construction that the Qur'an offers. In this connection, we would like first to quote from Muhammad Asad's *The Message of the Qur'an* the following verses:

*Therefore, avoid those who turn away from all remembrance of Us and desire nothing but the life of this world. (29) That is to them the only thing worth knowing [alternatively: "That is their sum-total of knowledge", or "This is as far as their knowledge will take them"]. Indeed, your Sustainer is fully aware as to who has strayed from His Path, and He knows best those who follow His guidance. (30) Indeed, to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth: and so He will reward those who do evil in accordance with what they did, and will reward those who do good with ultimate good. (31) As for those who avoid the [truly] grave sins and shameful deeds even though they may sometimes stumble, know that your Sustainer is abounding in forgiveness...." (32) (Q. al-Najm 53: 29-32).*

Abdullah Yusuf Ali's commentary on verse 30 above is as follows:

Men with a materialist turn of mind, whose desires are bounded by...material things, will not go beyond those things. Their knowledge will be limited to the narrow circle in which their thoughts move. The spiritual world is beyond their ken. While persons with a spiritual outlook, even though they may fail again and again in attaining their full ideals, are on the right Path. They are willing to receive guidance and Allah's Grace will find them out and help them. (Abdullah Yusuf Ali 1999: 1640)

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