

The Role of Muslim Youth in Contemporary Times: A Few Reflections

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mumtaz Ali

*Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion, Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, Kulliyah of
Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia*

ABSTRACT

Nowadays many Muslim youths do not understand the real and truthful position of Islam. They consider it as a religion. Hence, they fail to realize their true and realistic role as Muslims. This paper argues that Allah Almighty has declared Islam and the Qur'ān as the worldview and the way of Life. The aim of this paper is to highlight both the true picture of Islam, and the universal role of Muslim youths. It has adopted the method of content analysis to establish its claim and has presented the general view of Islam, as understood by scholars and authors in contemporary English writings, and analysed their position. It has directed the Muslim youth to properly study Islam based on authentic sources and play a dynamic and truthful role to help mankind follow the path of peace, prosperity, and harmony based on the true, authentic, and universal worldview.

Keywords: *Muslim youth, Islamic Revealed Knowledge, peace, prosperity, and harmony.*

*Author's email: mumtazali@iiu.edu.my



Introduction

In the contemporary world, the Muslim youth should play a greater and dynamic role to guide and lead the crisis ridden world. The Muslim youth possesses the True, Authentic, and Universal Knowledge [TAUK] generally known as Islamic Revealed Knowledge [IRK]. Based on TAUK they understand what worldview is true, authentic, and universal. Islam, being the True, Authentic, and Universal Worldview [TAUW] and most suitable way of life, can guide and lead mankind.

The youth as such in the world have become victims of modern ideologies of liberalism and individualism, various theories of knowledge, and development etc. All these are based on a false worldview. Due to the rising tide of crime and corruption, consumption of alcohol coupled with violent and terror-ridden movies, increasing cases of rapes and women harassment, the youth have lost the true vision and purpose of life and society. They have been accepting most of the trends and modes of thinking and living of the modern world. They are joining without any consciousness and critical examination of the world of consumerism and becoming workaholics. The Muslim youths themselves are also suffering from some internal challenges. This prerequisites the need to solve internal problems. The topmost problem of the Muslim youth is the problem of the true, authentic, and correct perception of Islam.

Challenge of the Perception of Islam and Muslim Youths

What is Islam all about? If Islam means submission and peace, then why do we see Islamophobia around the world? Why are people against Islam and Muslims? Why do we see prejudice, negative sentiments, and hostility toward Islam and Muslims? Why is Islam understood as a religion and Muslims as a community which belongs to a religious, cultural, and ethnic group. Why they are verbally and physically attacked, threatened, and harassed as well as their properties being destroyed? Why do people around the world observe a kind of fear, prejudice, and hatred of Muslim individuals? Why do we see provocation, hostility, and intolerance by means of threatening, harassment, abuse, incitement and intimidation of Muslims and non-Muslims? Why do most of the experts of religious studies and other scholars who study societies consider Islam as a religion? Why do they include and present it as the youngest religion among the living religions of the world?

There is hardly any exception to these views about Islam and Muslims. Millions of Muslims, both masses and scholars themselves, consider Islam as a religion and they

do not hesitate to claim that this is the religion of Muslims. I, myself, have heard scholars and 'ulema saying Islam is 'our religion' many times, as well as using the phrase in their speeches. In this way we ourselves have contributed towards Islamophobia. We Muslims generally misrepresent Islam. What is the truth of Islam? Is it true that Islam is presented in the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* as a religion and meant for Muslims alone? Is it really a religion for Muslims alone? Due to the current political situation in the Muslim world, it is taken as the source of violence and terrorism. Writers, authors and journalists frequently use phrases such as Islamic terrorism, Islamic terrorists, Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic fundamentalists, Islamic extremism, Islamic extremists and many more in their writings and reports etc. We find several books entitled, Militant Islam, Fundamentalist Islam, Extremist Islam, Radical Islam etc. What is the truth and reality about Islam?¹

Challenge of Radicalism

Does Islam encourage terrorism, militancy, violence, extremism, and radicalism? Why are people looking at Islam and Muslims negatively? What is responsible for Islamophobia and the waves of hate? Did Muslims present the true picture of Islam in theory and through their practice before humanity? For me, Islam was generally presented as a religion and collectively its teachings were not put in practice holistically by committed Muslim leaders and scholars on a large scale. Majority of people including Muslims do not know that in truth Islam is a worldview and the way of life, source of culture, civilization, and development. It stands for dialogue and engagement for cultural and civilizational development. There are some Muslims who have demonstrated radical and extremist tendencies due to their lack of clear perception of Islam and improper education. Deteriorating economies, high cost of living, lack of fair opportunities and improper educational facilities, dominant mode of injustice, current suppressive, undemocratic, and dictatorial political conditions of their countries coupled with the interferences by so-called super and major powers in their internal affairs have contributed towards the demonstration of their anger in the form of terror and violence. As for the worldview and way of life of Islam, they stand against all sorts of blind faith, dogmas, myths, doctrines, superstitions, desires, fancies, imaginations, assumptions, distortions, presuppositions, biases, prejudices, reactions, hasty decisions, speculation, conjecture, illusions, enmity, and hate, etc. Islam encourages knowledge-based approaches supported by historical and empirical evidence. Islam as the scheme of life and society deals with the issues of life, society,

and the world. It hopes that through engagement and dialogue people can guarantee the well-being of humanity. Muslim leaders and scholars bitterly failed to do so. Consequently, Muslim masses developed extremist tendencies and sectarian trends. This was coupled with the existing dominant modern system of education in which there is no emphasis on the truthful and realistic objectives of life and society. The most fundamental truthful and realistic aspects of life, spiritual and moral, have been neglected. There were many reminders for the reform of education, but they were neglected by the corrupt and selfish leadership both political and intellectual. Dictatorial regimes and unaccountable governments in the Muslim world supported by major and superpowers are mainly responsible for all sorts of terrorism, militancy, violence, extremism, and radicalism.

In our time every nation and community and various religious groups and people of different paradigms and ideologies are looking for Development – political, technological, and economic. All nations, communities and individuals aspire for the quality of life and society. Hence, many ideologies and isms were developed. They thought they could raise the quality of life with the help of scientific and technological developments. The quality of life and society has been the central goal of nations. The United Nations Organization has identified 17 Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]. For this purpose, governments offer schemes and develop strategies and implement the plans of actions. All the governments are expected to enforce them. All this is done for development and comfort of people. The Muslim nations and the Islamic ‘Ummah are not behind in this race and aspirations. The UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and many more countries are the best examples of developmental models. The modern West and Europe are considered as the exemplary successful stories of great scientific and technological achievements. In this background, the majority of scholars argue in terms of mediation with modern models of development; some others think critically and raise some fundamental questions. Are people really achieving quality of life? Is this quality of life available for all? Are we really moving in a positive way in the proper direction of development? Do we have any set destiny of development? In the beginning of the 21st century we found the Economist, a Hong Kong based magazine, raised the above questions when it published a cover story. In that cover story the author commented that no doubt in the 21st century we would be moving fast with unprecedented speed but without any well-thought of direction and destiny. In this background, some conscious members of civil society around the

world are under pressure to rethink everything. They feel bound to evaluate the progress of human thought, models of development, and theories of knowledge independently and see how much evolution of thought has taken place in the right direction in our contemporary world especially in the discourse on the safety and development of humanity. Here comes the role of Islam. Despite the backwardness of Muslims, some scholars have come forward and argued Islam cannot remain silent. If we look from the Quranic perspective into the contemporary scenario of the world, we realize that the claim of quality of life and development is subject to examination. It seems hard to accept the claim of quality of life especially in the presence of slum areas in the world, increase in crime rates, unprecedented number of rape cases of innocent girls and women around the world, high rate of financial corruption and scandals of millions of dollars by the richest people of the world, production and sale of weapons in the presence of poverty. Anyone can check the statistics available online about these crimes. Most enlightened thinkers and philosophers have cautioned the world that the entire planet is ready to commit suicide any time.

Challenge of Presentation of Islam

At this juncture, Islam needs to be presented in its own proper perspective and its role should also be explained authentically. All those who portray Islam negatively do not serve any purpose of humanity but rather go against the wellbeing of the entire community of people. It cannot and should not be the silent observer. It definitely would like to participate and create a debate of consciousness about the future of humanity. For this, Islam, being a movement of inclusive approach to life and society, considers engagement and dialogues the best possible avenues. Dialogue and engagement are taken as the priority needs of people of our time. Muslims are commanded by Allah Almighty, in the *Qur'ān* in chapter 16, Al-Nahal,

“[O Prophet] Invite people to the way of your Lord with *wisdom* and goodly exhortation, and *reason* with them in the best manner possible” [16: 125].

In response to this duty of invitation, Islam encourages its followers to present it in its true and realistic perspective. The purpose of this invitation to the way of your Lord is to engage people for a meaningful dialogue and discourse for guaranteeing quality of life and society in this world. In other words, it opens the channels and introduces schemes of engagement and education. Mutual understanding of people and engagement are considered by Islam the milestones for development. Islam asks its followers to initiate the process of engagement and discussion. This duty is taken

as one of the ways to educate people for their betterment. The invitation to the path of your Lord must be adopted as an educational process so that we can understand one another in the best possible way using wisdom and reason. This process of education is considered as the best possible way to lead humanity to the Path of Safety.²

Islam

At the very outset we need to clarify what Islam is? How can it be understood by both Muslims and the rest of the world? The learned people agree the sources of Islam are the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings be upon him*). So, to know and appreciate the true meaning and nature of Islam and the engagement of Islam with people of different shades of views we need to look into the main sources of Islam: How the *Qur'ān* presented Islam to us? We all are logically under the obligation to study Islam in the same manner as it was presented to us by the last Prophet (*peace and blessings be upon him*) of Islam. For me it is presented to us as the worldview, the way of life, source of culture, values, morals, laws and civilization for which it uses different phrases with the same meaning such as the *Ṣirāt-e-Mustaqeem* – the Path of Safety – the Path of your Lord. All these refer to the Path of Development – the development of individual, family, society and the world at large. From this point of view one of the main goals of Islam is the development of life of people. Here we need to know: what is the Islamic worldview? And what is its relevance to the contemporary world? And how does it plan to achieve a high quality of life? Before I proceed, I would like to explain what a worldview is.

The Meaning of Worldview

In a simple way worldview means our views about the world and all other things related to it. We are part of the world so, what is our view about ourselves and the world? It involves our origin and departure. It also involves our view about the creator of the world. In short, our views about life, society, culture, civilization, government, science and technology, economic growth and political development, national and international relations all are included in worldview. Nothing is outside of the worldview. According to the contemporary literature worldview connotes as follows:

A worldview is the fundamental cognitive orientation of an individual or society encompassing the whole of the individual's or society's knowledge and point of view. A worldview can include natural philosophy; fundamental, existential, and normative postulates; or themes, values,

emotions, and ethics.³

It is also explained as follows:

Our worldview connects us with the DNA of meaning. We each have a grid through which we view the world and our place in it. This view shapes our understanding of truth, beauty and reality and who we are in an accumulation of our exposure to life's input.⁴

In short, it is maintained that one can use the term worldview as the meaning of a basic set of beliefs that guide action. (Guba, 1990). Others have called them paradigms (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Mertens, 1998); epistemologies and ontologies (Crotty, 1998). Some others see it as a general orientation about the world. It is contended that these worldviews are shaped by the *beliefs* and *ideological perspectives* of peoples – philosophers, thinkers and scientist philosophers. The types of *beliefs* held by individuals lead to embracing different approaches. Scholars have identified different worldviews: the religious worldviews, the positivist or scientific worldview, the post-positivist worldview, the Social Constructivist Worldview, and pragmatist worldview.

All meanings to a worldview are either attributed or constructed or interpreted by *human beings* once they engage with the physical world. They see people with life, society and the world and *they interpret* them. All human beings engage with their world and make sense of it based on *their* philosophical, ideological, religious, historical and social perspectives—*they conclude* [in truth speculate] we, humans, are all born into a world of *meaning bestowed upon us by our culture, our own experiences and background knowledge*. Hence, it is contended the worldview reflects an intellectual perspective *conceived by humans* on the world or universe; it is a perception of the world, a particular philosophy of life; a concept of society and the world *held by an individual or a group of peoples*.

Working Definition of Worldview

Several definitions are provided by people. A philosophical definition as provided by contemporary scholars refers to: Worldview is the set of beliefs based on some assumptions about the fundamental aspects of Reality that ground and influence all who perceive, think, intend to know, and do accordingly.

It is also asserted that the worldviews in general are explained in the light of the following elements, mainly the beliefs about certain aspects of Reality based on:

- **epistemology**: beliefs about the nature and sources of knowledge.

- **metaphysics**: beliefs about the ultimate nature of Reality.
- **cosmology**: beliefs about the origins and nature of the universe, life, and especially Man.
- **teleology**: beliefs about the meaning and purpose of the universe, its inanimate elements, and its inhabitants.
- **theology**: beliefs about the existence and nature of God.
- **anthropology**: beliefs about the nature and purpose of Man in general and oneself.
- **axiology**: beliefs about the nature of value, what is good and bad, what is right and wrong.
- **Ontology**: beliefs about the nature of our existence ⁵

The Need for True, Authentic, and Universal Worldview [TAUK]

Before the elaboration of working definitions in earlier two paragraphs I have italicised a few words and phrases: *beliefs, beliefs and ideological perspectives, human being, they interpret, they conclude, meaning bestowed upon us by our culture, our own experiences and background knowledge, humans, conceived by humans and held by an individual or a group of peoples* look at them. All these include human perceptions about the worldview. In other words, all belief systems, ideologies and perspectives about the worldview have been cooked by the human mind. My humble submission, at the first, is that the interpretations provided by human beings do not constitute the universal aspect of their worldviews as all these human beings belong to different historical periods. There can be several worldviews but not all of them can be true. There is only one world; therefore, there should be only one true worldview. The second biggest challenge before humanity is not only to know the real meaning of a worldview but to know the true, authentic and universal worldview. We think we know a lot about many things. For example, we know about the Law of gravity. Newton who discovered this Law of gravity was asked to discover this law, but we want to know who created this law in space. Newton said I do not know about it. I never thought about its creator. Discovery of existing things and the understanding of their internal mechanisms are possible for human beings. But if anyone asks the question who created that mechanism in the existing physical world our answer would be we do not know. We can, no doubt, speculate any answer but we cannot answer with 100% certainty. Whatever we do not know is unseen beyond our perception and understanding. It means the entire universe has two dimensions,

physical and non-physical. We can understand the physical but unseen metaphysical world of existence is beyond our capacity and perception. We feel hesitation to accept this truth and reality. We think if we accept this reality of ours, it means we undermine our own capacity of human faculty of reason and sense-perception.

Worldview does not deal with the physical dimension of our life and the world but, in fact, at the very outset, it deals with the unseen and unobservable dimensions of life, society and the world such as their origin and purpose, the truth and reality of the entire universe. The question here is: Is the physical existence of our life and the world the only reality as assumed in the modern world. Can anyone authentically and genuinely deny the existence of the unseen world? Can the truth of the unseen world be conceived by human beings independently? Can human faculties be capable to perform this function independent of the Giver of life and the world? Our answers must be based on knowledge- true, authentic and universal not based on imaginations, speculation, conjecture and assumptions.

In this regard our submission is that the truth and reality of the unseen dimensions of life and the world cannot be understood by human faculties. This understanding of the position of human faculties is not the result of human cognitive exercise or the result of philosophical exercise. It is based on True, Authentic and Universal Knowledge [TAUK] generally known as Islamic revealed knowledge which was granted to humanity by Allah Almighty through the process of revelation. We find TAUUK informs us about the realm of the unseen world and claims that it is beyond human capacity and perception, but it does not undermine the human faculties in any way. Contrary to this, in the modern world it is claimed that the truth and reality of the unseen dimensions of our existence can be explained with the help of rational arguments supported by empirical evidence. In fact, in the modern world all unseen and unobservable dimensions of life, society and the world, in truth and reality, have been studied and explained based on speculation and conjecture. All human faculties so far as the unseen domain of life, society and the world are concerned end up with philosophical speculation and metaphysical conjecture. But this reality was neither observed nor realized although we were informed beyond any doubt by the granted knowledge. This reality of faculties is explained in the Quran which makes it clear that the Creator of the entire universe, Allah Almighty, genuinely explains in plain words the position of human faculties so far as the metaphysical dimensions are concerned. The Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings be upon him*) was asked:

Tell [O Prophet to the people of the world]: “The realm of the Unseen belongs to Allah” [10: 20] “which is beyond the reach of human perception [2: 3].

Allah Almighty, the Creator of the entire universe declares that there are certain unseen realities and argues that those are the truths of the Universe:

There are some people who claim that they know and accept those unseen truths which are mentioned in this book but in reality, they deceive themselves about those unseen realities and truths [2: 8- 9].

...Allah said: ‘Did I not say to you that I knew everything about the heavens and the earth which are beyond your range of knowledge, and I know all that you disclose and all that you hide?’ [2: 33].

The Prophet (*peace and blessings be upon him*) made it very clear to people:

I do not say to you that I possess Allah’s treasures, nor that I have access to the realm beyond the ken of perception, nor do I claim to be an angel [11: 31].

Allah Almighty claims:

Say [O Prophet to people of the world]: “None in the heavens and on the earth has knowledge of the Unseen save Allah. They do not know when they will be raised to life [27: 65].

...They have no definite knowledge of it, but merely follow conjecture; and they surely slew him not [4: 157].

However, it does not mean that people cannot understand the truth and reality of the unseen world. They are made capable of understanding the unseen world. However, it is explained that the human faculties do not work independently. They require data from the body of true, authentic and universal knowledge [TAUK] generally known as the Islamic Revealed Knowledge.

Surely your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth...then established Himself on the Throne governing all affairs of the Universe [10: 3] To Him is your return. This is Allah’s promise that will certainly come true. Surely it is He Who brings about the creation of all and He will repeat it so that He may justly reward those who understand [believe] and do righteous deeds, and those who fail to understand [disbelieve] may have a draught of boiling water and suffer a painful chastisement for their denying the Truth [10: 4].

The Role of Muslim Youth in Contemporary Times: A Few Reflections

Indeed, all that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah. And most certainly Allah's promise will be fulfilled though most people are not aware of it. [55] He it is Who gives life and causes death, and to Him shall you all be returned [10: 55-56].

Mankind! Now there has come to you an exhortation from your Lord, a healing for the ailments of the hearts, and a guidance and mercy for those who understand [believe] [10: 57].

Verily whoever dwells in the heavens, or the earth belongs to Allah. Those who invoke others instead of Allah, associating them with Him in His Authority [Dominion], only follow conjectures and are merely guessing [10: 66].

Glory be to Him. He is self-sufficient! His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth.... Do you ascribe to Allah something of which you have no knowledge? [10: 68]. Tell them, O Prophet: Indeed, those who invent lies against Allah will never prosper [10: 69].

They may enjoy the life of this world, but in the end, they must return to Allah, and then He shall cause them to taste severe chastisement for their denial of truth [disbelief] [10: 70].

And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth...that He may test you, who of you is better in conduct [11: 7].

Those who merely seek the present world and its adornment, we fully recompense them for their work in this world, and they are made to suffer no discrimination in it concerning what is their due. They are the ones who shall have nothing in the Hereafter except Fire. [There they shall come to know] that their deeds in the world have come to naught, and that whatever they have done is absolutely useless [11: 15-16].

...So, [O Prophet] be in no doubt about it for this indeed is the Truth from your Lord although most people do not understand and accept [the Truth] believe ... [11:17].

But in the modern world the existence of such a body of knowledge is denied. Instead of knowing based on research, examination, analysis, critical approach, and applying comparative methods they just blindly ignore the truth and reality of the existence of TAUH. Hence, thinkers and philosophers depend on their faculties and assume they can know the truth and reality of the unseen dimensions of life, society and the world.

All these so-called intellectual efforts, in truth and reality, end up with philosophical speculation and metaphysical conjecture and do not genuinely guarantee the truth and reality of life, society and the world rationally and empirically. The truth and reality declared by the thinkers and philosophers especially in the modern world are not able to stand up to the criteria of verification and test by using empirical tools, historical facts, comparative and critical skills and standards. Their fallacy may be observed in the attitude of modern man who is a victim of greed, lust for power and money. A basic and logical question in any given worldview lies with its claim for its truthfulness and reality. One has the right to raise a prominent question: Are all the dominant worldviews true and realistic?

Need for Rethinking the Scientific and Speculative Worldviews

All branches of knowledge, physical and metaphysical, and all sciences, natural or social, claim that they all are dealing with life, society, and the world. They also claim that they know their truth and reality. Hence, they refer to Socrates who asked a basic ethical question: how to make life a good life? This question of Socrates was no doubt a genuine question. It was not only a question of good life in terms of conduct but rather the question of our view, vision and mission of life and society in terms of their truthfulness and reality. This question in fact involves the question of the true process and true model of development in line with the truth and reality of life and society i.e., in line with the true and authentic worldview. Hence, this question should not be considered as an ethical question alone but an epistemological question as it deals with true or false knowledge about the worldview. Hence, it should be taken as the First question to know the truth and reality of life and the world. Unfortunately, the other aspect of the question that deals with truth and reality of life and the world was not only neglected but ultimately denied. Hence, based on our assessment and critical examination of the current phenomena of humanity and claims of ethics we see it genuine to raise a few more important and relevant ethical questions: what is life? What is its origin and end? What is the purpose of life? Who gives life and who takes life? What will happen to us after life? Does it really end after death or get a new life? In short, what is the truth and reality of life in a comprehensive and holistic manner? All these questions were not taken seriously in both ethics and epistemology. In most of the cases these questions were left either to the religious experts or theological professionals. If ethics is a rational exercise which determines what behaviour is rationally good and what is rationally bad, then it needs to answer the above-

mentioned questions as well to determine their right or wrong. In other words, we need to know logically and rationally what are the true, correct, realistic and authentic answers related to worldview. Can anyone answer the above questions based on speculation and conjecture? Can answers given based on conjecture and speculation be considered as logically and rationally sound, realistic, authentic and true? Here comes the role of Islam and knowledge granted to humanity for guidance. Islam has a different position on the issue of the unseen and unobservable domains of life, society and the world. Hence, at the very outset before explaining the ethical and epistemological issues the *Qur'ān* elaborates the worldview.

Based on an analysis and examination of the views of scholars on worldviews one can argue there are only two approaches to understand or construct the worldviews: Speculative or Conjectural; and Knowledge-based Universal Worldview.

Speculative or Conjectural Worldviews

This is called the Philosophical Worldview. In this category there is sub-division. All existing and dominant worldviews as mentioned earlier are included. They differ from one another in some respects but all of them are the result of speculation and conjecture. They all are humanistic, hence, logically the creation of some historical periods. None of them deserve to be considered as universal, comprehensive, holistic, moderate and applicable in all time space contexts. Despite the claim that the scientific worldview is authentic as comprehensive worldview and distinguished from the more focused non- comprehensive worldviews, the speculative and conjectural fact remains.

Knowledge-based Universal Worldview

For understanding the worldview, the *Qur'ān* makes a few claims:

The first claim of the *Qur'ān* is that whatever Islam speaks of Islam or anything of this world it speaks and elaborates everything based on knowledge – true, authentic and universal knowledge [TAUK] generally known as Islamic revealed knowledge.⁶

Secondly, it is contended that no one can have true cognition; comprehensive observation and realistic experience of the state of reality of anything or any part of it, even an idea without the foundation of knowledge.

People simply know the outward aspect of the worldly life but are utterly heedless of the Hereafter [30: 7].

Allah indeed showed His Messenger the true vision, one fully in accord

with reality... [48:27].

...Nay, they do not perceive the reality of the matter [23: 56].

Third, the discourse of worldview is not only based on knowledge, but it is supported by empirical evidence, historical events along with comparative and critical approaches in addition to powerful rational arguments resulting in creativity.

Knowledge-based worldview is not constructed by any human being but was explained and interpreted by several human beings who appeared in different parts of the world and in different periods of history throughout the history of mankind. If we study the *Qur'ān*, we find that Allah Almighty presents Himself as the Creator of the entire universe and repeatedly said for the guidance of humanity He sent selected Messengers (*peace and blessings be upon him*) with knowledge and guidance. He also reminded mankind through them about the truth and reality of life and the world. It is repeatedly said in the *Qur'ān* that as being the Creator of this world He knows what the truth and reality of life is, society and the world. He mentions again and again about the arrival of the Messengers (*peace and blessings be upon him*) and the revelation of the books, the Hereafter, the reward and punishment. The *Qur'ān* is presented as the last BOOK which contains in it TAUUK and wisdom. All the Messengers (*peace and blessings be upon him*) go along with unanimity and conform to each other. They all argued that their worldview is based on knowledge - a special kind of knowledge TAUUK which was granted to them by the Creator of the entire universe. It is asserted all over again that for the understanding of the worldview people need to start thinking process for the sake of understanding based on TAUUK.⁷ It is also repeated that no one can have true cognition, comprehensive and holistic observation and realistic experience of the state of reality of anything or any idea without the foundation of knowledge.

People simply know the outward aspect of the worldly life but are utterly heedless of the Hereafter [30: 7].

Allah indeed showed His Messenger the true vision, one fully in accord with reality... [48:27].

...Nay, they do not perceive the reality of the matter [23: 56].

Hence, it is explained in the *Qur'ān* in the formulation, explanation and interpretation of the worldview there is no place for blind faith, dogmas, myths, doctrines, doubt, superstitions, desires, fancies, imaginations, assumptions, distortions, presuppositions, biases, prejudices, reactions, hasty decisions, speculation, conjecture,

illusions, enmity and hate, etc. It is also made clear the elaboration of the worldview should not only be based on knowledge, but it should be supported by empirical evidence, historical data of events, comparative and critical analysis and finally with powerful rational arguments. The denial of true and authentic worldview is considered as the denial of truth and reality. Hence, the *Qur'ān* repeatedly inspires and motivates its readers for observation, historical consciousness and reflective reasoning. It reminds that based on an untrue and unrealistic worldview neither the structure of good life can be established nor the development of it be guaranteed. For real and true development free from crisis, chaos, crimes, corruption, injustice, poverty, production of weapons of mass destruction, wars, refugees, lack of educational and health facilities to the millions of people around the world, we need a true, authentic and universal worldview. It is a true and authentic worldview which can only give a proper direction to the development of technology and put a full stop on the race of technological development.

The Challenge

The thinkers and scholars of today who understand the authenticity and truthfulness of the worldview need to create a discourse which can explain the *need* for fresh thinking *for a true, authentic and universal worldview*. They must demolish the poor speculative and conjectural foundation of the intellectual and ideological positions of the dominant worldviews. They need to point out the weaknesses of unscientific, irrational, illogical, untrue and unrealistic premises of the existing worldviews. To establish the necessity of a true, authentic and universal worldview they need to articulate afresh based on **TAUK** supported critical, comparative and creative approaches.

The crux of our argument is there is a need for change and development in our thought through the change of worldview and mode of thinking and understanding. The main and focussed-oriented characteristic and contribution of a true worldview is its intellectual and ideological contribution. It is our intellectual force and ideological stand that can create energy and commitment among scholars and workers who devote their lives for the well-being of humanity. There is a need for a new orientation to the ethos of life and society without which there is no genuine hope for a better future as we are surrounded by wars, weapons, crisis and chaos. All this is caused due to the rise of a false worldview. Only a comprehensive and holistic change based on true, authentic and universal worldview in thought and behaviour,

theory and practice, attitude and action, approach and etiquette, view of culture and civilization and rule of conduct, the way of looking at the things and the way of doing them can guarantee a just and flourishing world. An Intellectual Scientific Revolution is needed for change of worldview which involves change in both intellectual and behavioural dimensions of life and society. An Intellectual Scientific Revolution may be guaranteed based on **TAUK** and true worldview. We as the members of civil society must be capable of using creatively the knowledge, sense-perception, historical consciousness, and reason that constitute our intellectual capacities:

And certainly, We have created for Hell many of *jinn* and people; they have hearts with which they fail to understand; and they have eyes with which they fail to see; and they have ears with which they fail to hear. They are like cattle – indeed, even more astray. Such are utterly heedless [7: 179].

In addition, at the very outset we need to refresh our understanding of the true, authentic and universal worldview. According to this worldview life is physical, ethical, spiritual, moral, legal and consequential which requires society, culture and civilization. Hence, as the worldview the goal of Islam is to guarantee the 'best of this world' by elaborating all these components of life. No doubt, initially, life seems to be physical with material needs and necessities. But a more profound and comprehensive approach to life based on **TAUK** seems to be ethical. As said earlier life cannot be developed, elevated and promoted without the strong foundation of truth and reality of it and society and the world. To be realistic and truthful, life must be understood as being based on ethical, spiritual and moral foundation. The foundation of the current and dominant worldview being based on modern philosophical thought has rejected the spiritual and moral dimensions of life. The dominant worldview is represented by various ideological positions, trends and schools of thought. It, in general, for the development of life and society does not recognize the need of **TAUK** and also the guidance granted by the Creator, Allah Almighty. The worldviews which are working today in the modern world are based on liberalism, relativism, existentialism, positivism, logical positivism, scientism, empiricism, rationalism, atheism, feminism, capitalism, pragmatism, relativism, existentialism etc. These trends being based on speculative and conjectural worldview are causing various problems to humanity such as the problems of hegemony, political and technological domination in addition to racialism, materialism, atheism, Islamophobia and sexual anarchy accepting the LGBTQ. All these philosophical

positions are the result of a particular epistemology, ontology, axiology, and methodology of knowledge in which the fundamental place is granted to human reason, sense-perception and experience without any recourse to TAUK. The dominant educational system is used to inculcate the spirit of liberalism and positivism which leads to liberation of man from truth and reality of life, society and the world. Hence, a big majority of people are going behind false aims and objectives of life tarnishing the true nature of humanity.

The Subjective Approach

The current literature in the modern world on Islam and Islamic worldview does not represent the true position of it. It is subjectively portrayed based on biases. Hence, it is taken as a religion and its domination. Look at the following titles:

Radical Islam; Militant Islam; Islamic fundamentalism and extremism; Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe; Islamic Movements of Europe: Public Religion and Islamophobia in the Modern World; Islamic Movement: Struggles for Power and Governance; Conceptualizing Islamic Movements and Muslim Youth in the West: Towards a New Education Strategy and many more books that speak about Islam but do not reflect the true and realistic position of Islam and Islamic worldview. In the modern world partially, some Muslims are also responsible for this corrupted view of Islam. Consequently, several stereotypes' images of Islam have been portrayed. They generally see Islam as a mean for Conversion to Islam, a particular brand of Islamic activism that challenge Western society, Islamic religious political movements, a struggle for power and governance, Islam as a religion and social order that seeks to achieve power, state and governance, as a response to diverse socio-economic and political conditions aggravated by rapid urbanization and globalization, grounded in a religious-based hostility to the Western world, responses to modernization and globalization, reactionary movement, source of fundamentalism, radicalism, and extremism and now a source of terrorism and violence. [All underline phrases are borrowed from the available literature on Islam which is produced in the modern world] The truth is that Islam never encourages its followers for a reactionary and responsive approach to the contemporary condition of life and society. It demands a profound reading of the context and the *Qur'ān*, *Sunnah*, and the biography of the Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings be upon him*) in time space context.

The Truth and Reality of the Islamic Worldview

The whole issue of Islam is the issue of Islamic worldview, Islamic way of life, its

vision and mission, more importantly the issue of correct perception of both Islam and the Islamic worldview which demands knowledge-based intellectual exertion accompanied by scientific evidence, historical data, comparative and critical approaches and creativity. The dissemination of this true and realistic worldview is possible through proper education that is the right kind of education with a right curriculum, syllabus, and other educational activities, formal and informal. How to resolve the educational issue is the second biggest challenge before Muslims and humanity?

During the last century some concepts and terminologies were developed and frequently used to represent Islam and Islamic worldview. They are now misused. We need to develop a few terms, concepts, models suitable for presenting Islam and its worldview relevant for our time and context. We find for this purpose sufficient knowledge and guidance in the *Qur'ān*. One cannot always look at the negative aspects of modern societies and ideologies. We need to objectively appreciate the positive dimensions of the modern world with the spirit of *Rahmatul lil Alameen* [mercy to mankind]. We must be reflective, scientific, and rational in our intellectual pursuits. The philosophical developments in the modern world during the modern period introduced a revolution in terms of independent thinking and analytical approach. We need to appreciate this spirit of independent thinking which is, in reality, the continuation of one of the features of Islamic thinking. We stand today for change and revolution and argue for the continuity of the same revolutionary spirit. It must nurture through education the tradition of critical and analytical but independent thinking and to continue the process of revolution based on new data, fresh insights, and profound reflections. The revolution that brought about a change in traditional worldview, purpose of life and mode of living needs to be nurtured. Today, the spirit of revolution elucidates the need for an alternative worldview. We need to continue this tradition of change and revolution in worldview based on analysis, examination along with critical and creative thinking following new points of view and even new perspectives.

We need to examine currently held worldviews, purpose of life, the scheme of society in the light of statistics, engaging ourselves in a useful dialogue, a cultural and civilizational dialogue. We need to argue that humanity is in need of another revolution. Modernity, post-modernity and secular paradigm seem no longer capable of arresting the waves of traditionalism, religiosity, trends of Hindutva, supremacy of

The Role of Muslim Youth in Contemporary Times: A Few Reflections

Hindu mentality, racial discrimination, greed and permissive and excessive sexual orientation. There is a need to continue the same process of change and revolution in thought and attitude through the process of critical examination and creative thinking to replace irrational and unscientific concepts, if we have any with us, aiming to guarantee the elimination of poverty, crimes, weapons and wars.

We simply cannot claim that the Islamic worldview is the true worldview. We need to establish its truth through action and living examples. No doubt, people need a true and realistic worldview, but the existing conditions of Muslims and their societies do not reflect the truthfulness of Islamic worldview. Islam stands to instruct people in the Book and in wisdom by purifying their lives [2: 129]. The lives of Muslim in general are far away from Islamic teachings of justice and fair play. As we know the role of the Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings be upon him*) was to recite to people the Signs of Allah Almighty, purify the lives, instruct them in the Book and in Wisdom” [2: 151]. The goal of Islam and Islamic worldview is to bring people out of every kind of darkness into light. Islamic worldview must prove that it is capable of taking people out of miserable conditions. For this, they need to create new ideas of success in this world guaranteeing the best of this world. It must be carefully explained that it is the modern worldview which has brought out people from the light into all sorts of darkness [2: 257]. The Islamic worldview has a clear message of well-being of people. Muslims must prove through the intellectual creative insights based on the Light which has come from Allah Almighty. A Clear Book that shows to people the truth which is necessary for their own well-being. We need to argue that Islamic worldview leads people to the paths leading to their safety. Through our efforts and struggle we must bring people out from darkness to Light and direct them on to the Straight Path of development [5: 15].

We have clear instructions from Allah Almighty. All the instructions given by Allah Almighty explain the positive role of Muslims which is to bring people out of all kinds of hardships and difficulties. Look at the following statements of the *Qur’ān* which require our attention:

Do not fear them, but fear only Me so that I may complete My favour upon you; perhaps you will be guided to the right way just as when We sent a Messenger among you, of yourselves, who recites to you Our signs, purifies your lives, instructs you in the Book and in Wisdom, and instructs you on what you knew not [2: 150-151].

This is a Book which We have revealed to you that you may bring forth mankind from every kind of darkness into light, and direct them, with the leave of their Lord, to the Way of the Mighty, the Innately Praiseworthy, Allah to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth [14: 1].

But the problem is that most people do not understand the constructive role of Islam and its world. We must be extra cautious about our roles. Muslims must struggle for the betterment of people. It is true as said Allah Almighty: "...they have hearts with which they fail to understand, and they have eyes with which they fail to see; and they have ears with which they fail to hear. They are like cattle – indeed, even mere astray. Such are utterly heedless" [7: 179]. Despite the above statement of affairs, we are reminded to fulfil our role:

We indeed sent Musa [Moses] with Our Signs, saying: "Lead your people out of all kinds of darkness into light, and admonish them by narrating to them anecdotes from the Days of Allah." Verily in it there are great signs for everyone who is patient and gives thanks to Allah. [14: 5]

He it is Who has sent to the gentiles a Messenger from among themselves, one who rehearses to them His Signs, purifies their lives, and imparts to them the Book and the Wisdom although before that they were in utter error [62: 2].

O people of understanding who have attained to faith. Allah has sent down to you an Exhortation, a Messenger who rehearses to you Allah's *ayaths* [signs] that clearly expound the Guidance so that He may bring out those that believe and act righteously from every kind of darkness into light. He will admit whosoever believes in Allah and acts righteously to Gardens beneath which rivers flow [65: 10-11].

This is a proclamation for all mankind that they may be warned by it, and that they may know that their God is none but the One True God, and that men of understanding may take heed. [14: 48-52].

It rests with Allah alone to show you the Right Way, even when there are many crooked ways [16: 9].

We did not create in sport the heavens and the earth and all that lies between the two. Had it been Our will to find a pastime, we would have found one near at hand; if at all We were inclined to do so [21: 16-17].

Did you imagine that We created you without any purpose, and that you will not be brought back to Us [23: 115].

We did not create this heaven and earth and all that lies between them in vain. That is the fancy of those who denied the Truth. So, woe from the Fire to all who deny the Truth. Shall We then treat alike those that understand [believe] and act righteously and those that create mischief on earth? Or treat alike the God-fearing and the wicked? This is the Blessed Book that We have revealed to you [O Muhammad], that people with understanding may reflect over its *ayaths* [signs] and those with understanding derive a lesson. [38: 27-29].

Nay, We hurl the Truth at falsehood so that the Truth crushes falsehood, and lo! it vanishes. Woe to you for what you utter! [21: 18]

Had there been any gods in the heavens and the earth apart from Allah, the order of both the heavens and the earth would have gone to ruins. Glory be to Allah, the Lord of the Throne, Who is far above their false descriptions of Him [21: 22].

Accept the command of your Lord before there comes a Day from Allah that cannot be averted. On that Day there shall be no shelter for you, and none may change your predicament [42: 47].

Did they not journey in the land that they may behold the end of those who had gone before them. They were more numerous and greater in strength and left behind more splendid traces in the land. Yet their attainments did not avail them. When their Messengers came to them with Clear Signs, they arrogantly exulted in whatever knowledge they had. [40: 83-84].

Whoever does good does to his own benefit; and whoever does evil, will suffer its evil consequence. Your Lord does not wrong to His peoples [41: 46].

A clear perception of the Islamic world view will generate new energy and a sense of commitment and sacrifice. To bring people out of all kinds of darkness and relieve them from difficulties we need to develop a practical and attractive Plan of Action. Without action our mere intellectual efforts may not guarantee success and achievement. All this will help us to attract people to the Path of *Ṣirāt-e-Mustaqeem*.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 international license.

References & Notes

¹ See, Stephen Vertigans, *Militant Islam*, Routledge, London & New York, 2009; Faisal Devji, *The Terrorist in Search of Humanity*, Hurst Publishers, UK, 2008; Galina Yemelianova, Edited, *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union*, Routledge, London 2010; P. J. Stewart, *Unfolding Islam*, Granet Publishing Limited, UK, 2008; Ron Greaves, *Islam Today*, Continuum International Publishing Group, New York

² See *Ideological Wisdom in Islam*, M R Khan, Discovery Publishing House, New Delhi 2011; *Islam Explained*, Tahar Ben Jelloun, The New Press, New York 2002; *Fundamentals of Islam*, M. Mukarram Ahmad, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 2006

³ Brainly.ph - for students. by students. (n.d.). <https://brainly.ph/> accessed on 21st June 2024

⁴ Bruce Bruinsma. (2018, May 1). *What is a worldview? why is it important?* <https://www.brucebruinsma.com/bruces-blog/2018/1/30/is-a-worldview-important-ydcdf#:~:text=Our%20worldview%20connects%20us%20with,our%20exposure%20to%20life's%20input.> accessed on 21st June 2024

⁵ What is a worldview? (n.d.). <https://web.engr.oregonstate.edu/~funkk/Personal/worldview.html>

⁶ See also Al-Quran 2: 38-39; 2: 145; 20: 123; 7: 52; 4: 166; 53: 35; 35: 14

⁷ See also Al-Quran 2: 38-39; 2: 145; 20: 123; 7: 52; 4: 166; 53: 35; 35: 14