



IIIT Students' Magazine



Magazine No.5 (November 2025)

Integrating Hearts, Minds, and Actions: Inspiring Visit to Sri Lanka

From the Wings of Gabriel to the Wings of Jet

Youths' Revolution in Bangladesh: Fleeing of a Dictator to India

Islamization of Self: The Way Forward

Bridging Knowledge across Cultures: My Experience at the Cambridge Gulf Research Meeting 2025

Bridging Continents, Building Leaders

Faith, Followership and Leadership:

REFLECTION FROM PROF. DATO' DR. FAUZAN



Snapshots of Programs

Fifth Edition, 2025
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Editorial Message | Leadership as an Amanah of the Heart

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

As we present the fifth edition of the IIIT Students' Magazine, we are reminded that every edition is more than a collection of articles, it is a mirror of our shared journey of tazkiyah (purification), ta'lim (learning), and islah (reform). This year's theme, "Leadership as an Amanah of the Heart," calls us to look inward before we look outward, to recognize that leadership begins not from position, but from purification; not from ambition, but from alignment with purpose.

Leadership, in the Qur'anic and Prophetic sense, is never an exercise of authority but a trust (amanah). The Prophet ﷺ described every human as a shepherd responsible for their flock, a reminder that influence begins with the self, extends to family, and radiates into society. In our time of complexity and uncertainty, such leadership demands qalb saleem (a sound heart), anchored in sincerity (ikhlas), consultation (shura), and service (khidmah).

Across campuses, communities, and continents, we are witnessing a new generation of Muslim youth awakening to this responsibility. They are rediscovering leadership as 'ibadah, an act of worship, and knowledge as a bridge between intellect and action. Whether through social finance projects in Colombo, student mentorship at IIUM, or creative writing from our contributors across the globe, the spirit of this magazine affirms that faith and reason are not opposing forces but complementary lights guiding the same path.

IIIT's mission of Integration of Knowledge (IoK) continues to inspire this synthesis, bringing revelation and reason, scholarship and service, under one vision. Our challenge as Muslim intellectuals is to ensure that learning leads to transformation, and that thought becomes action. The strength of an Ummah lies not in its numbers, but in its capacity to translate knowledge into compassion, and ideals into impact.

As you turn these pages, you will encounter reflections from diverse voices, students, scholars, educators, and dreamers, all contributing to the global conversation on ethical and purposeful leadership. Each piece is a thread in our shared tapestry of renewal, reminding us that to lead is first to listen, to serve, and to reform oneself.

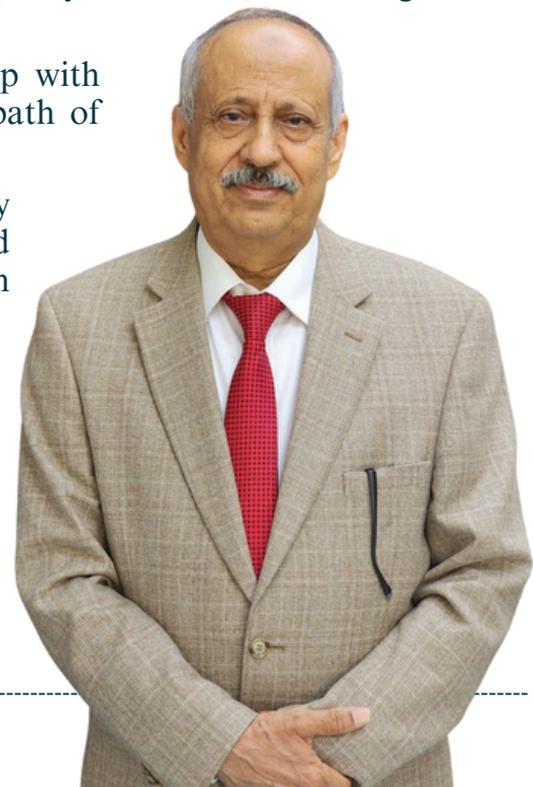
May this edition rekindle our resolve to embody leadership with humility, to unite intellect with integrity, and to walk the path of knowledge with the light of the Qur'an in our hearts.

May Allah bless our readers, writers, and mentors, and may every effort, every word, and every act become a step toward islah al-nafs and ihsan fi al-'amal, self-reform and excellence in action.

Warm regards,



Prof Dawood A.Y. Al-Hidabi
Chief Editor and Team Leader



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Integrating Hearts, Minds, and Actions: Inspiring Visit to Sri Lanka (3–9 October 2025)



Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm.

Alḥamdulillāh, my recent visit to Sri Lanka was a truly eye-opening experience. Although I had previously interacted with many Sri Lankans, witnessing the country and its people firsthand provided me with a much deeper understanding. Meeting and engaging directly with business leaders, academics, women, students, community figures, and representatives from NGOs and parliament enriched my appreciation of the nation's social fabric. I discovered a society vibrant with faith, intellect, and a desire for renewal.

Over six days, I was privileged to represent the **International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT)** during an official visit to Sri Lanka, undertaken primarily to participate in the **4th Global Association of Islamic Schools (GAIS) Conference 2025** in Colombo. Beyond the conference itself, the visit expanded into a series of complementary academic and community engagements, including workshops, consultations, and institutional meetings organized by the **Mishkath Research Institute (MRI)**, the **Manarath Ladies Forum**, and the **China Fort Knowledge Forum**. Collectively, these activities aimed to strengthen the collaboration between IIIT–IIUM and Sri Lankan institutions, promoting an educational vision rooted in Tawḥīd, Tazkiyah, and Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah, thereby aligning local educational discourse with the broader global Islamic renewal in learning and leadership.

A Living Sīrah: Learning from the Prophet's Example

I was invited by **Dr. Arafath Kareem** to attend and present a paper on the Sīrah at the **National Sīrah Convention** in Beruwela. My presentation, "*Rewriting the Sīrah: Understanding the Life of the Prophet (peace be upon him) through Reflection and Contemporary Application*," urged participants to view the Sīrah as a living model for modern life, especially vital in a minority context such as Sri Lanka, where Muslims comprise about 10 percent of the population.

More than 1,000 people attended the convention, which also featured the launch of Dr. Kareem's Tamil book, "*அல்குர்ஆனிய வாழ்வவச் சுமந்த இவைத்தூதர் (The Prophet Who Carried the Qur'ānic Life)*." The book thematically explores Qur'ānic verses related to the Prophet's life in four dimensions. I was honored to deliver the keynote address and witness the enthusiasm of the audience, men and women, scholars, and youth eager to reconnect with the Prophet's message as a guide for character, leadership, and community service.

"The Sīrah must live in our behavior, our classrooms, and our leadership," I reminded them. "It is not history to be remembered but a mission to be lived."

Women, Families, and the Spirit of Tazkiyah

During my visit, I was deeply impressed by Sri Lanka's dynamic Muslim women — educated, active, and spiritually motivated. The **Manarath Ladies Forum** organized a workshop titled "**8S Tazkiyah for Marital Counselling**," attended by approximately 160 participants. We

discussed how self-purification (Tazkiyah al-Nafs) can transform family life. I introduced my **8S Framework**, which centers on Sincerity, Self-Purification, Patience, Gratitude, Consultation, Tranquility, Truthfulness, and Service.

Through group reflections and case studies, the participants learned that emotional harmony begins with spiritual discipline. Their eagerness to apply Qur'anic ethics to marriage and parenting truly moved me. As I often observe worldwide, men tend to hide their struggles, but the women of Beruwela showed remarkable courage and commitment to self-development.

In a separate management meeting, we discussed long-term initiatives: creating a **Manarath Waqf**, launching a value-based kindergarten, and internal schools establishing a network of teacher-educators and businesswomen. The conversation reflected a growing realization that social reform begins at home and expands through collective effort.

Strengthening Educational and Intellectual Ties

I also met **Br. Zaneer**, IIIT's representative in Sri Lanka, along with alumni Dr. Arafath Kareem and Br. Bishrul Rifath. We reviewed IIIT's achievements, especially the translation of **52 IIIT publications into Tamil** and the ongoing scholarships for Sri Lankan students. I emphasized that sustaining these efforts requires continuous intellectual mentorship and networking. Translation spreads ideas, and collaboration nurtures continuity.

A particularly touching moment was my visit to **Jamiah Naleemiah**, Sri Lanka's premier Islamic higher learning institute, founded in 1973. Touring its classrooms and meeting students reminded me that sincerity (ikhlās) and discipline (inḍibāt) remain the foundations of scholarship. We concluded the visit with a du'ā at the tomb of the late founder, Al-Haj M. A. Naleem – a moment linking the past's legacy with the present's aspirations.

Dialogue with Scholars: The Mishkath Research Institute Roundtable

On **October 5**, I joined a wide-ranging discussion at the **Mishkath Research Institute (MRI)** in Colombo, attended by directors, researchers, and youth volunteers. The dialogue focuses on contextual Islamic scholarship and institutional growth. I commended MRI's vision and urged a three-fold approach.

1. Develop a **contextual Fiqh al-Aqalliyyāt** for Muslim minorities.
2. It promotes **unity and teamwork** among scholars and educators.
3. Invest in **human capacity** – for when we develop insān, society will follow.

I also encouraged the MRI to expand research clusters, launch a peer-reviewed journal, and create think tanks that connect Islamic knowledge with national policy. The MRI team's sincerity and professionalism convinced me that Sri Lanka possesses the intellectual energy needed for a genuine Islamic renaissance and sustainable societal development.

Training for Transformation: The TOT on Tazkiyah Counselling

At the MRI, we conducted a **Training of Trainers (TOT)** session for 30 counselors, psychologists, and educators on implementing the **8S Tazkiyah Model**. The program combined theory with practice through interactive exercises, real-life case studies, and self-assessment tools. Participants appreciated how Qur'anic psychology could be translated into modern counselling techniques. Many expressed that this approach helped them rediscover the spiritual essence of their professional service.

Designing the Future: The Islamic Social Finance Conference Series (2026–2030)

One of the most strategic meetings during my stay was the planning session for the **Islamic Social Finance Conference Series**, a five-year roadmap (2026–2030) under the MRI's leadership. Together, we outlined the following thematic focuses:

- 2026 – **Zakat**: Revitalizing Zakat for Socio-Economic Impact
- 2027 – **Waqf**: Modernizing Waqf for Sustainable Development
- 2028 – **Sadaqah & Philanthropy**: Strengthening Social Solidarity
- 2029 – **Islamic Microfinance**: Empowering the Poor through Ethical Finance
- 2030 – **Integrated Islamic Social Finance**: Toward a Unified National Policy

I stressed that zakat must evolve from a sporadic act of charity into a structured system of economic justice. We agreed to work toward establishing a **National Zakat Institution (NZI)** and a **Research Cluster on Islamic Social Finance**. This initiative, insha' Allah, will shape Sri Lanka's contribution to the global discourse on ethical financing.

Global Engagement: GAIS 2025 Conference

Another highlight was my participation in the **4th Global Association of Islamic Schools (GAIS)** Conference in Colombo, themed "*Tajdīd – Inspiration to Impact.*" My presentation, "*Developing a Maqāṣid-Based Framework for Curriculum Evaluation and Development,*" introduced the **Al-Hidabi Model**, which translates the five higher objectives of Islam faith, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth into measurable educational outcomes.

The session attracted more than **350 delegates from 40 countries**, sparking rich discussions on aligning curriculum design with moral and spiritual goals. Many educators expressed interest in piloting the framework in collaboration with the IIUM and MRI. I left the conference confident that the global Islamic education movement is entering a new phase of integration and renewal.

During the conference, I also had a fruitful meeting with **Dr. Anwer Kara from Markfield College, UK**, where we explored potential collaborations between **IIIT, IIUM, Sri Lanka, and Markfield College** to strengthen academic and research linkages in Islamic education.

Tracing the Roots of Islam in Sri Lanka

During the visit, I also had the opportunity to visit **one of the earliest mosques built in Sri Lanka over a thousand years ago**, established by **Arab traders from Yemen and Morocco** who first brought Islam to the island. Standing in that sacred space, I felt a profound connection between the past and present – a living testimony to centuries of faith, trade, and cultural harmony that shaped the identity of Sri Lankan Muslims.

Later, I revisited these historical narratives through **Lorna Devaraja's** remarkable book, "*The Muslims of Sri Lanka: One Thousand Years of Ethnic Harmony.*" Her research reaffirmed my firsthand observations that the Muslim community in Sri Lanka has long served as a bridge between civilizations, embodying coexistence, entrepreneurship, and a commitment to justice and compassion. This continuity of faith and cultural integration remains one of Sri Lanka's greatest strengths and a model for Muslim minorities worldwide.

Reflections on Leadership and Hope

Beyond formal sessions, I met members of the business community, youth organizations and women’s associations. I was deeply impressed by their humility, generosity, and commitment to Islamic values. These are people who invest their wealth and time for the sake of Allah, supporting schools, charities, and local development. They embody the prophetic principle that true leadership is a service.

Discussions with NGOs and research centers reaffirm that social change begins with human development. When individuals cultivate knowledge, ethics and sincerity, collective reform follows naturally. The enthusiasm of Sri Lankan youth – especially students and teachers – convinced me that the seeds of renewal have already been sown.

Conclusion: Knowledge of Action

My visit to Sri Lanka has left me with profound optimism. In every sector, education, research, economics, and community work, I found passion tempered by humility and a deep yearning for growth. The dedication of Sri Lankan Muslims to their faith and national progress is commendable. For IIIT students and readers worldwide, the Sri Lankan experience demonstrates what it means to transform ideas into actions. This shows that sincere Maqāsid-based scholarship can empower individuals, reform institutions, and uplift entire societies.

“If we reform the hearts and train the minds,” I often say, “Allah will reform the world through us.”

May Allah bless our brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka and grant success to all who strive to build a future in which knowledge and faith walk hand in hand.

Allāhu A‘lam.

Written by:

Prof. Dr. Dawood A.Y Al-Hidabi

IIIT Scholarship Coordinator & Advisor

Professor from Kulliyah of Education



FAITH, FOLLOWERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP

Reflections from

Prof. Dato' Dr. Mohamad Fauzan Bin Noordin

Deputy Rector, IIUM Gombak
(Student Development & Community Engagement)

By: Azha Nazeer



The new semester is about to begin at the International Islamic University Malaysia. The afternoon in the Rector building carries a quiet energy. Staff are at their desks and are finalising schedules, and the corridors echo with the steady rhythm of preparations. Inside the meeting room, Prof. Dr. Fauzan, Deputy Dean at IIUM, sits surrounded by files, notes and presentations, calmly attending to meetings while greeting the staff who come in with updates. Between the flow of meetings and paperwork, he reflects on a topic that has shaped his years in academia, leadership.

Earlier in August, Prof. Dr. Fauzan played an integral role in the IIIT - IIUM Leadership Conference, a major event that brought together students, academics, and community leaders from different nationalities to reflect on the principles of Islamic leadership in contemporary contexts. Present at both the opening and closing sessions, he observed how the conference served as more than a platform for dialogue; it became a space for nurturing future leaders grounded in iman, taqwa, and impact. "These gatherings remind us of our shared amanah," he reflected. "They are not only about speeches and workshops, but about preparing the next generation to carry the torch of leadership with sincerity and trust." For him, the energy and engagement of the participants reflected the spirit of Ummatic unity, leadership that transcends nationality and is rooted in moral consciousness, consultation, and faith.

"Leadership without iman becomes mechanical, only about control, power, and management."

"Every semester reminds us of our duty," he begins. "When new students arrive and activities restart, it is not just about classes or programmes. It is about preparing people who will lead, in their families, in their professions, and in their societies." His voice is measured, deliberate, and anchored in the conviction that leadership in Islam is not about position, but about responsibility and service.

He explains that in Islam, leadership is not separated from faith. "Iman is the core of the individual," he says. "Leadership without iman becomes mechanical, only about control, power, and management. But leadership in Islam is about responsibility before Allah. When iman is strong, decisions are just, intentions are sincere, and service becomes an act of worship."

For Prof. Dr. Fauzan, the foundation of leadership is moral consciousness. Without that, even knowledge and skill can be misused. "Iman gives a leader direction. It keeps him grounded," he continues. "Knowledge without iman will not produce leadership that benefits humanity. But when knowledge is guided by faith, it produces people who act responsibly."

He pauses for a moment before continuing. "This is why universities today must not forget their original role. Throughout history, the madrasah and centres of knowledge like Bayt al Hikmah in Baghdad were not just places for learning. They were places where leadership was cultivated. Today, universities are the same. They are the new centres to nurture and prepare future leadership."

For him, the challenge in modern education is not a lack of information, but a lack of integration between learning and values. "The Prophet's leadership was based on knowledge and trust," he says. "He led by example. He was just, merciful, and truthful. That is the model for us."

Prof. Dr. Fauzan then touches on a principle he often mentions when speaking to students, Qiyadah wa Jundiyyah, or leadership and followership. He explains that these two concepts are inseparable. "In Islam, we do not only talk about leadership. We also talk about followership. A leader without good followers cannot succeed, and followers without trust in their leaders cannot progress."

"Respect and trust must be mutual – earn it and give it."

To illustrate this, he refers to an example from early Islamic history. "During the time of the Prophet, leadership was with him, and the followership was with Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali," he explains. "Under Abu Bakr, followership was with Umar, Uthman, and Ali. During Umar's time, Uthman and Ali followed. But by the time of Ali's leadership, the quality of followership had declined." He leans back and adds, "Leadership quality depends on the quality of followership. Respect must be mutual. Earn it and give it. Trust must be reciprocal. Earn it and give it. That is Madani leadership."

He recalls the hadith that summarises this balance perfectly: "Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock" (Sahih al Bukhari 893; Sahih Muslim 1829). "It means everyone is a leader in some capacity," he explains. "The father in his family, the teacher in his class, the student among his peers. Each has a responsibility. Leadership is not about status, but about how you fulfil your trust."

As the conversation continues, his tone grows more reflective. "All our students are leaders," he says. "They are leaders in their families, in their associations, and among their friends. The smallest unit of leadership begins in the family. If you cannot lead responsibly there, you cannot lead a larger group. These roles are part of life, and both require sincerity."

When asked what message he would give to students beginning their journey, he responds immediately with the verse, "Iqra bismi rabbika alladhi khalaq – read in the name of your Lord who created." He explains, "This is the foundation. Leadership must begin with the Quran. You must be Quran based. Without the Quran, you may have knowledge, but you lack guidance. The Quran teaches us justice, consultation, patience, and compassion. These are the qualities of a good leader."

He stresses that the Quran is not only to be read, but lived. "It is not just a book," he says. "It is a manual for life and leadership. When a person leads with Quranic guidance, his vision becomes clear, his priorities correct, and his decisions balanced."

Drawing from his own experience, Prof. Dr. Fauzan shares that his understanding of leadership grew through learning circles and community engagement. "You get Quran and Hadith through halaqah and usrah," he says. "Through these networks, NGOs, community

gatherings, associations, and interaction with scholars, you grow your knowledge and strengthen your relationships. That is how leadership develops, that is how my leadership was developed over the years. It cannot grow in isolation. It grows through companionship with people who remind you of your purpose and keep you accountable."

While many people describe Prof. Dr. Fauzan as calm, his colleagues often note his active and engaging approach to leadership. He attends meetings, joins discussions, and ensures that decisions are made with clarity and fairness. His approach combines decisiveness with collaboration. "Leadership requires balance," he says. "Between authority and humility, between vision and practicality. You have to think collectively, act responsibly, and remember your purpose."

He often refers to the Madani model of leadership, one that is rooted in example and consultation. "A leader should not be distant," he says. "He must be close to the people he works with, listen to them, understand their challenges, and guide them sincerely."

When asked what model of leadership he most admires, he answers simply, the Prophetic model. "The Prophet led with justice, mercy, and trust," he says. "He was not only a leader but also a teacher, a listener, and a servant of the people." He quotes another hadith, "The best of your leaders are those whom you love and who love you, who pray for you and you pray for them" (Sahih Muslim 1855). "This is compassionate leadership," he explains. "It is built on mutual care and dua, not fear or hierarchy. Leadership must be human. It must involve empathy, understanding, and prayer."

As the day in his office progresses, he continues to move between tasks, signing papers, greeting staff, and responding to queries, all while maintaining focus and composure. His leadership seems to flow naturally between action and reflection. Towards the end of the conversation, he sums up his philosophy in one sentence: "Leadership is an amanah." He looks thoughtful for a moment before elaborating. "It is a trust that begins with the self, then extends to family, community, and the Ummah. It is not ownership. It is accountability."

He explains that a leader's greatness is not measured by position but by influence and sincerity. "A leader's success lies not in how much authority he has, but in how he uplifts others," he says. Then, almost as a conclusion, he offers one dynamic takeaway: "Our Leadership practices must be based on the best principle, the principle derived from the best human and leader the world seen, Our Nabi, Prophet Muhammed (SAW), who is Uswatun Hasanah, the best of examples."

Outside, the call of the Dhuhr adhan begins to echo across the IUM campus. The staff pause their work, and the quiet hum of activity gives way to a moment of reflection. Prof. Dr. Fauzan gathers his notes neatly, stands, and is prepared to leave for the Dhuhr Salah. With the same calm composure that marks his leadership, he prepares to leave his office, heading toward the masjid for salah, where every conversation, every task, and every reminder finds its true meaning in worship.



Prof. Dato' Dr. Fauzan giving a speech at the closing day of the Leadership programme

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DAY 2



DAY 3



DAY 4



DAY 5



DAY 6



DAY 7



DAY 8



Islam for Critical Thinkers

2-3 August 2025



Train the Trainer

9-11 August 2025





Media in Islam:

Reporting Responsibility for the Benefit of the Ummah



Dr. Aida Mokhtar

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Media are ubiquitous globally. They are powerful as they can shape the audience's perception of reality. This is demonstrated through the long-term and heavy viewing of television through Cultivation Theory, posited by George Gerbner, or imitating other people's behaviour depicted through the media as espoused by Albert Bandura through Social Learning Theory. The media in Islam has a value-laden role as it disseminates Islamic values in the hope that audiences will adopt them in their daily life. For media to successfully provide good lessons for audiences, the appropriateness of its content is essential, and this is the responsibility of journalists, media regulators, and audiences, with the input from academics.

The akhlaq of believers can be fashioned by the media; thus, Islamic ideals, such saying the truth, practising what you preach, not ridiculing others, preserving modesty, being compassionate, and empathetic, should be adopted when writing and gatekeeping media content for Muslim audiences. Muslim journalists must be aware of these values and embrace them as there are negative implications of inappropriate content on audiences. There is no universal code of ethics for journalists, but in Malaysia, there is an updated Malaysian Code of Ethics for Journalists issued by the Information Department of Malaysia in 2024, which outlines eight ethics that reflect Islamic values:

1. Journalists are responsible for being the voice of a diverse society and serving as agents of facilitating dialogue.
2. Journalists should be transparent and have integrity while carrying out their duties.
3. Journalists are encouraged to consistently strive for fairness in delivering information.
4. Reporting should not be influenced by any personal interests.
5. Journalists need to respect the privacy and confidentiality of sources.
6. Journalists need to understand the laws, acts, and policies related to the scope of their duties.
7. Journalists need to prioritize continuous improvement of journalistic skills.

It can be said that the Islamic values for journalists to use as a guide in their professional role and the Malaysian Code of Ethics reflect the tawhidic vision of knowledge as postulated by Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr. Osman Bakar in his 2012 ICR Journal article, "*Tawhidic* vision of knowledge upholds the categorical position that all true human knowledge ought to be ultimately related to the unity of God, since all things are ontologically related to their Divine Origin" (see: <https://doi.org/10.52282/icr.v3i3.531>).

Such profoundness found when producing media content imbued with Islamic values -

brings us to the noble role of Muslim journalists who are entrusted professionals as they carry the amanah of educating and reminding Muslims of Islam through the reporting of news that is embedded with values. News stories are not only produced to report but also to provide us with a didactic dimension through the secondary messages that go beyond the literal information that is found in media reporting.

Muslim journalists must go beyond mere journalism and be ethical in their conduct, as they ought to realize that their purpose in life is to revere Allah SWT. The Quran mentions, "I have not created the jinn and humankind except that they worship Me" (51:56), putting the act of pleasing Allah SWT first and foremost. The aim of a Muslim goes beyond the dunya as it is to attain eternal goodness in the Hereafter, as our life on earth is temporary and a test for all Muslims, as evident by another Quranic verse, "It is He who created death and life to test which of you are best in deeds" (67: 2).

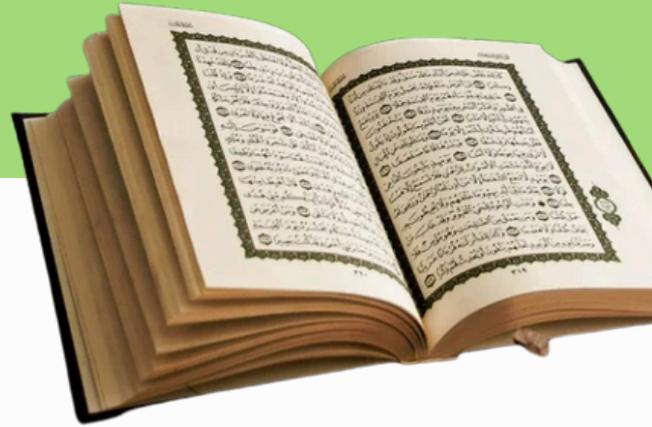
Media in Islam must develop further than the Western ideation of the Four Theories of the Press put forth by Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm in 1956 which describes the press as having roles that are Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet Communist. There is an urgent need for a fifth theory of the press that considers the Tawhidic Epistemological perspective by highlighting Islamic values, by inviting people to the right path (da'wah), and by providing news that would be of benefit to society. Despite the evolution of the media landscape, the advent of artificial intelligence and social media is encouraging journalists to step away from reporting news through traditional media, which is attributed with predominantly one-way communication, to ensuring engagement between journalists and audiences in a context characterized by the information explosion and multiple distractions.

There is no denying the power of social media during the Arab Spring in 2010 and 2011, with social media empowering youths to voice their dissatisfaction with the governments in countries of the Arab world and North Africa with the help of Facebook and Twitter. According to Khaled Hroub, Professor of Middle Eastern Studies & Arab Media Studies, Northwestern University, Qatar, it was the integration of social media and television broadcasting networks that conveyed news of the Arab Spring as activists akin to citizen journalists recorded scenes of the protests and sent the footages to Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya and other media for audiences to witness (see: <https://www.iemed.org/publication/social-media-and-politics-and-the-arab-spring-moment/>). According to him, there were several causes of the Arab Spring uprisings that were historical and intensely rooted in the complex failures of the post-colonial Arab state that had amassed for years, and social media helped mobilise the protests, making it a collectively powerful platform.

The Qatari originated first news organization in the Arab world, Al Jazeera, is somewhat a relief for Muslims as it conveys news against the backdrop of Western media narratives that we are often exposed to as it prides itself in conveying independent news in the Arab world and in a Muslim cultural context since 1996 as it is defined by the slogan, "The Opinion and the Other Opinion" depicting the multifaceted reporting style that it prides in by bringing regional and international news stories to audiences.

Muslim journalists are not only producers and conveyers of news, but they must also reflect upon their bigger responsibility as believers of Allah SWT to please Him first and foremost as they carry out their amanah by imbuing Islamic values through their reporting to the Ummah.

Islamization of Self: The Way Forward



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Allah *Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala* (SWT hereafter) is the sovereign Lord of all universes, as affirmed in the Qur'an, "The creation and the command belong to Him alone. Blessed is Allah—Lord of all worlds" (7:54). Human beings represent one of His most intricate and remarkable creations, consisting of both body and spirit. The corporeal aspect of humans originates from physical matter, specifically clay, as elucidated in Surah Al-Hijr, "And indeed, We created humankind from an extract of clay" (23:12). The physical body exists within the domain of creation (*'alam-e-khalq*), which is temporal and finite. In contrast, the human -

spirit is derived from the realm of Command (*'alam-e-'amr*), which is eternal. The Qur'an articulates this fact in Surah Al-Isra, "Say: The Spirit is by command of my Lord" (17:85). Furthermore, Surah Al-Baqarah recounts a dialogue between Allah and the angels regarding the creation of humanity, "When your Lord said to the angels, 'I am going to place a successive authority on earth,' they asked, 'Will You place therein someone who will spread corruption and shed blood, while we glorify Your praises and proclaim Your holiness?' Allah responded, 'I know what you do not know'" (2:30). (See figure 1)

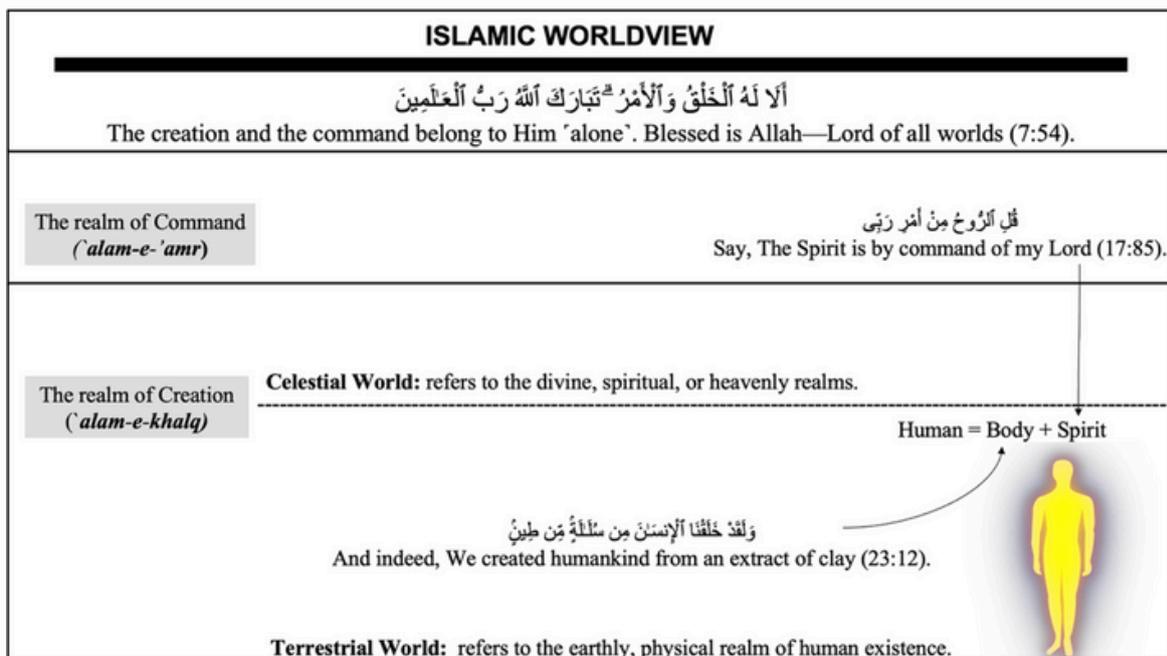


Figure 1: Islamic Worldview

Human beings have been endowed with the highest status among all creatures (*ashraful makhluqat*), a distinction granted because they uniquely possess a spirit that originates from Allah Himself, “So, when I have formed him and breathed into him of My Spirit, fall down unto him in prostration” (15:29). Consequently, humans alone possess the capacity to seek and attain the pleasure of their Creator. The superiority of humanity over other creatures lies primarily in its ability to pursue knowledge of the Divine (*ma'rifatullah*). Since the human composition includes a material body and a spiritual essence, it has corresponding physical and spiritual needs. While animals, birds, and other beings are endowed with innate knowledge necessary for survival, humans are born devoid of such instinctual knowledge and acquire it through experience, “And Allah brought you out of the wombs of your mothers while you knew nothing, and gave you hearing, sight, and intellect so perhaps you would be thankful” (16:78). Physical knowledge, pertaining to material necessities, is learned through senses from the environment, whereas spiritual knowledge is imparted exclusively by Allah through His messengers.

Knowledge itself can be categorized into two forms. The first pertains to intellectual and cognitive understanding, which enables the brain to identify bodily needs and seek appropriate means to fulfil them. Allah (SWT), as the Sustainer (*Rabbul 'Alamin*), has provided resources for humans to satisfy material needs through the earth, “He is the One Who created everything in the earth for you. Then He turned towards the heaven, forming it into seven heavens. And He has ‘perfect’ knowledge of all things” (2:29). This form of knowledge is universally accessible to everyone regardless of an individual’s faith or moral character. For example, hunger prompts the search for food, and illness incites the pursuit of cure. Advances in biomedical sciences reflect this cognitive capacity. However, this initial type of knowledge is more accurately described as information or skill rather than true knowledge (*'ilm*). It consists of empirical facts, such as the chemical composition of water (H₂O) or the combustibility of fire, that is acquired through observation and experience.

Conversely, true knowledge, involves self-awareness - understanding one’s origin, purpose, and Creator. Hence, authentic -

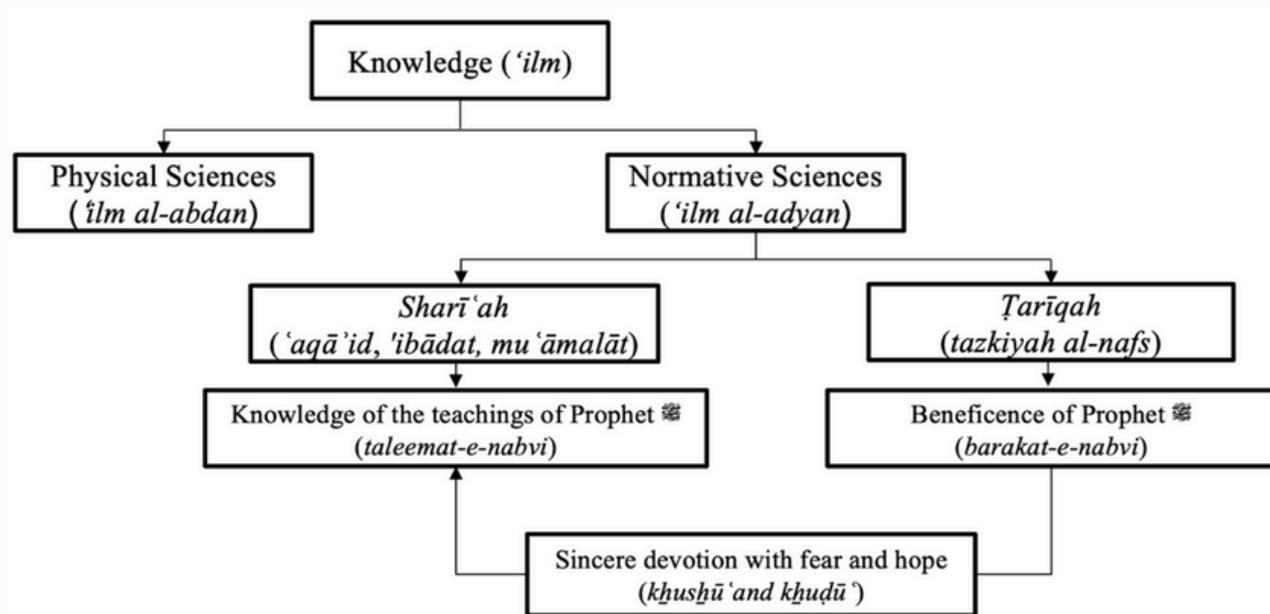
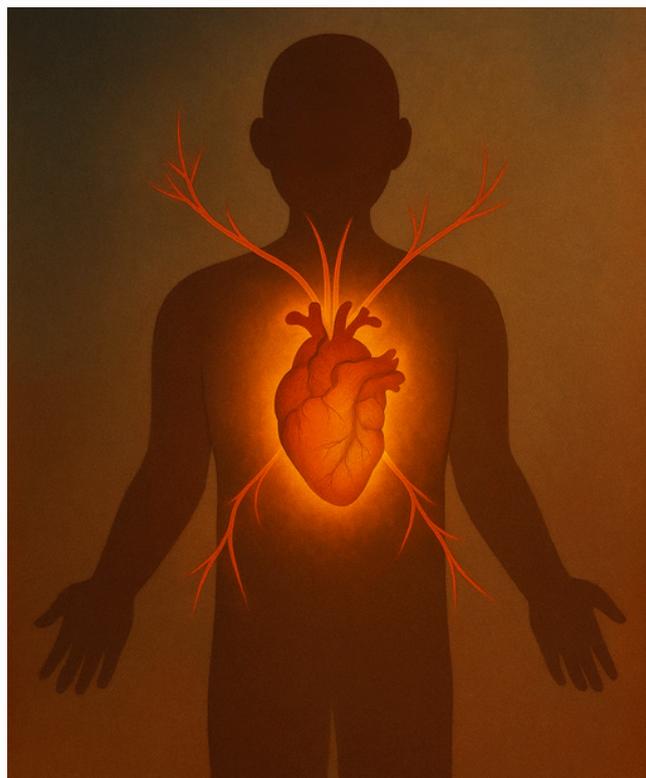


Figure 2: Types of Knowledge

knowledge is that which is transmitted through the Prophets, who receive it directly from Allah (SWT). The Prophets possess the unique quality of having no human teachers. As stated in the Qur'ān, *"This is certainly a revelation from the Lord of all worlds, which the trustworthy spirit (Gabriel) brought down into your heart (O Prophet)—so that you may be one of the warners—in a clear Arabic tongue"* (26:192-195). A person equipped with abundant worldly information but lacking self-knowledge is akin to a newspaper that contains global news yet it is unaware of its own identity or beneficiary. (See figure 2)

The distinctive knowledge (*`ilm*) that elevates humans above other creatures resides in the heart (*qalb*), which is the locus of spiritual insight. The Qur'ān was revealed to Prophet Muhammad's heart, peace be upon him (PBUH), *"Say, 'Whoever is an enemy of Gabriel should know that he revealed this (Qur'ān) to your heart by Allah's Will, confirming what came before it—a guide and good news for the believers'"* (2:97). This knowledge emanates solely from Allah (SWT) and His messengers and cannot be obtained elsewhere. While scholars, jurists, and teachers transmit this knowledge, they do not originate it. Thus, Allah (SWT) fulfilled humans' spiritual needs through the guidance of Prophets. Given that only humans have the capacity to seek Divine pleasure, the office of prophethood is exclusive to them. Allah (SWT) describes the role of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as, *"Since We have sent you a messenger from among yourselves—reciting to you Our revelations, purifying you, teaching you the Book and wisdom, and teaching you what you never knew"* (2:151). Notably, purification of the self-precedes the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom, this is analogous to the need for a clean glass before drinking water, for a dirty glass will make the water impure.



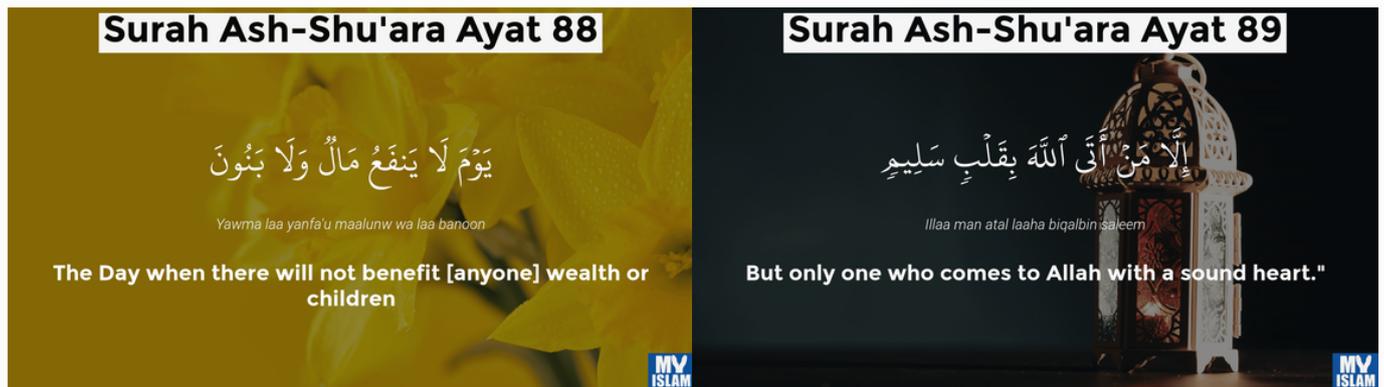
As the human heart is the seedbed of divine knowledge, it is illuminated by belief in Allah (SWT), His messengers, angels, the afterlife, and resurrection. This illumination transforms human behaviour, aligning it with divine commandments and leading to a life beneficial to society. Thus, humans attain their noble status not through mere accumulation of information but through the enlightenment of true knowledge imparted to the heart. In the absence of this spiritual knowledge, humans resemble two-legged animals, posing significant risks to the society and humanity at large. As Allah (SWT) states in the Qur'ān, *"And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts with which they do not understand, eyes with which they do not see, and ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless"* (7:179). Additionally Allah (SWT) tells us humans cannot comprehend the true nature of things when their hearts are devoid of divine light, *"Have they not travelled throughout the land so their hearts may reason, and their ears*

may listen? Indeed, it is not the eyes that are blind, but it is the hearts in the chests that grow blind” (22:46). While those who carry divine light in their hearts are not truly dead, even if they pass away. Allah (SWT) instructs us not to consider them dead, “Do not say that those who are martyred in the path of Allah are dead. Rather, they are alive, though you do not perceive it” (Qur’an 2:154). Similarly, in another verse, Allah (SWT) reminds us, “Never think of those who are martyred in Allah’s cause as dead. They are alive, receiving provision from their Lord” (Qur’an 3:169).

Without the illumination of true knowledge bestowed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), a society cannot cultivate proficient ethical professionals in any field. While knowledge is a form of wealth, its true value emerges only upon understanding its nature. A foundational step toward genuine knowledge is self-knowledge, which ultimately leads to knowledge of the Divine (*ma'rifatullah*). As the renowned saying attributed to Hazrat Ali (RA) asserts, “Whoever knows himself knows his Lord”. Whereas a corrupted heart leads to -

misguided thoughts and actions. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) warned, “Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body; if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt—and that is the heart” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol 1, Book 2, Hadith 50).

In conclusion, it is essential to comprehend the true nature of knowledge (i.e., Sharī’ah and Ṭarīqah) that is divinely bestowed through the Prophets and that great jurist and saints preserved and transmitted. The subsequent imperative is to accept and implement this knowledge in practice with letter and spirit. Because on the Day of Judgment, salvation from the Hellfire will be granted exclusively to those who possess a pure heart (*Qalb-e-Saleem*). Allah (SWT) says in Qur’an, “The Day when neither wealth nor children will be of any benefit. Only those who come before Allah with a pure heart will be saved” (26:88-89). This understanding also addresses the question of whether knowledge should be Islamized or not? Rather than attempting to Islamize knowledge, it is crucial to internalize and live by the authentic knowledge granted by Allah (SWT).



Bridging Continents, Building Leaders



Br. Zaid Ali Umar Farook
*3rd year Medical Student at
University of Aberdeen*

As I embarked on my long trip ahead of me from Aberdeen, Scotland to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia I could not help but feel uncertain regarding what awaits me, what would the training involve? What would the environment be like? What kind of people would I meet? I had little to no experience with programmes like this especially considering this leadership programme was to take place in a completely unfamiliar environment to me. I felt a mix of feelings, excited to travel to a new environment yet uncertain of what to expect. Nevertheless, I left with a mission to gain clarity and benefit.

Upon arriving at the International Islamic University of Malaysia, I was taken aback by the sheer beauty of it. The campus was quite literally in the middle of a jungle environment surrounded by vibrant green forests and an abundance of mountains. The campus was unlike anything I had ever seen, with a grand mosque at the heart of it, the campus contained anything and everything a student could need, whether that was the vast range of food stalls and restaurants to the many sports facilities. Not to mention the fact that each group of blocks had their own designated musallas, convenience stores, cafeterias, and laundry services within proximity. It was clear whoever built the campus wanted to give students everything they needed to thrive, and they succeeded in achieving this.

The next day, I woke up to the sound of the adhan at Fajr, which was a privilege coming -

from a non-Muslim country, something which I had forgotten the beauty of. I left my room to pray and made my way the nearest musalla (which was right next to my accommodation). As I went to pray Salat al-Fajr in congregation, I noticed this was not an ordinary musalla; if anything, it was a small mosque and was built solely for this purpose. I was used to small rooms being used as musallas for students, thus the university continued to amaze me. Hearing the adhan and praying in congregation reminded me of why I came here, in my purpose to improve my skills and develop myself as a leader for our ummah.

Later in the day I attended the introduction and met the rest of the participants. I was relieved to see people my age who came from different backgrounds and countries, yet despite our differences, our unity in faith made it feel like I knew them already, and we quickly got along. It was an incredible feeling. After getting to know more of the participants, I was thoroughly impressed with how much they had already done for their communities and their commitment, dedication, and determination to do more filled me with a sense of motivation to push myself further in my mission and aims. It was truly inspiring. At this point, any concerns I had had faded completely, and I was eager for what awaited me.

The programme consisted of many workshops where a speaker would deliver a talk, covering all sorts of topics with a centred focus on leadership and developing the qualities and attributes fundamental for a leader. I found the workshops extremely beneficial and engaging. I often found myself reflecting and being amazed at how relevant and important the topics covered were, whether that was from

purifying the heart to the role of AI in leadership. The workshops were also often interactive and involved group-based activities, something which I really enjoyed and often looked forward to throughout the programme, as it allowed us to have thought-provoking conversations as well as improve our communication and teamwork skills. The days were packed from 6 am to 10 pm and were filled to the brim with these enlightening workshops as well as food and lots of refreshments. The programme also made time for short Tadhkirah sessions in our musallas after Fajr salah. This was a good opportunity for participants to take the lead and deliver a short reminder; each day was a new topic related to leadership, and a different participant was given the chance to do it each day. It set quite a nice tone for the rest of the day by giving time in the early morning for some reflection and dhikr. It also allowed participants to get out of their comfort zone for some and practice delivering a short reminder in a safe environment.

The Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Mosque (IIUM central mosque) was stunning and reminded me of those great domed mosques you find in Turkey, yet the differentiating factor was the fact that a mosque of this magnitude and beauty was built specifically for the university and at the heart of the campus. Furthermore, I was impressed to see the university's influence, with prominent Islamic scholars and speakers like Dr Haitham al-Haddad visiting to deliver khutbahs at the central mosque. I even had the pleasure of attending a Jumuah congregational prayer led by Dr Omar Suleiman during my time at the greatly beneficial training. The proximity of the central mosque to where the workshops took place was also an added convenience, and so I often found myself praying Jamah salah there and even spending breaks there and relaxing in its comforting environment.

We were also given a day midway through the programme to explore Kuala Lumpur in small groups with tasks to complete, which gave us all an opportunity to explore more local landmarks such as the famous Petronas Twin Towers and the River of Life. This day out, midway through the programme, gave us a refreshing opportunity to explore more of KL and try some more local food, and after this day, I felt I could comfortably say that I had visited Malaysia. This was one of the highlights of the trip as it allowed us time to connect more with the other participants while also exploring what Malaysia had to offer. The rest of the week continued in the same fashion as the first half with fruitful and engaging workshops.

Overall, if I had to describe my experience, I would say it was overwhelmingly positive. It was a training filled to the brim with beneficial knowledge. I met so many incredible people from all over the world who inspire me to work harder, and I made friendships and memories that will stay with me for the rest of my life. Moreover, I found myself leaving the programme with a renewed sense of motivation and clarity to strive and push myself further so I can have a lasting impact on those around me. I would say the training succeeded in developing young leaders by building foundations and providing beneficial knowledge. This was evident through the insightful and engaging workshops and nurturing environment, which allowed us to thrive. I am also grateful to the speakers and those behind the scenes, such as the organisers and coordinators, who worked so hard to make the programme engaging and fruitful for us. Although I may have been unsure before going, I can confidently say it was worth it, and I am extremely glad I had the opportunity to attend the programme. In conclusion, to anyone interested in growing themselves as a leader, I would strongly recommend attending the Leading with Impact programme as it was truly an unforgettable experience.



From the Wings of Gabriel to the Wings of Jet:

ISLAM FOR CRITICAL THINKERS



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Master student, Department of Fiqh and Usul Al-Fiqh, IIUM.

The Islam for Critical Thinkers program, run by the iLead Institute, was a two-day event that explored Islam's rich tradition of knowledge. It took place at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) Gombak Campus in Kuala Lumpur on 2–3 August 2025. The retreat focused on bringing Imaan, reason, and purpose together in a balanced way. Respected teachers, including Dr. Riza Mohammed, Shaykh Nuruddeen Lemu, Hafiz Naveed Idris, and Sister Salatu Sule, led the course. It was designed for people who wanted to connect classical Islamic teachings with modern techniques for solving modern problems. Since the topic is broad and complex, I will try to explain it simply and divide this program into three main questions it seeks to answer. At first, what is Islam for Critical Thinkers? Second, how can we build critical thinking? Third, on what theoretical foundation or principles should the critique be based? It is followed by important questions asked during the programme and the view of Author as a concluding remark.

1- What is Islam for Critical Thinkers?

When I first encountered the name of the program Islam for Critical Thinkers, I was immediately intrigued. The phrase itself prompted me to ask: What does this truly mean? The idea of connecting Islam with critical thinking was appealing, and this curiosity motivated me to join the program to gain a deeper understanding. Upon attending,

participants were provided with a workbook titled 'Islam for Critical Thinkers', published by the iLead Institute. I found the workbook both attractive and engaging. The phrase Islam for critical thinkers leads to a consequential question: can Islam - built upon divine revelation - be subject to criticism? Is it permissible, or even beneficial, to engage in critical thought within the framework of Imaan, which is described as the acceptance of revealed truth in the Quran, devoid of doubt? These questions carry both curiosity and hesitation. To some, "critical thinking" may sound like doubting or undermining religious truths based on different reasons premised on the material experience.

Yet, I opened to page 11, Unit 7: Critical thinking in Islam requires maintaining a balance between Imaan and rational reasoning. While the essential tenets of Islam rest on Imaan, human interpretations should be examined with both intellectual rigor and spiritual reflection. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself demonstrated openness to questioning in worldly affairs, as seen in significant events such as the Battle of Badr and his appointment of Mu'adh ibn Jabal as the governor of Yemen. Early Islamic scholarship valued critical inquiry, but over time, this tradition was often overshadowed by the blind following without much intellectual rigour focusing on contemporary issues of each decade or century. It is not to deny the specific development that happened in the religious sciences throughout the centuries, but the point that it did not translate into the general public domain. To bring it back, Muslims need to develop the skills to critically analyse the authoritative works, check the -

reliability of sources, understand their context, and use knowledge for the benefit of society. As the Qur'an teaches, believers should seek "beneficial knowledge" — knowledge that strengthens the mind and also serves humanity.

2- How can we build critical thinking?

What I have learned is that in order to develop critical thinking, we must first reshape our mindset and the way we approach issues. The way we think plays a key role in building a capable and critical mind. To achieve this, we must begin with independent thinking — a point also highlighted in Chapter 12 of iLead booklet. A strong mindset accepts challenges and sees them as opportunities for growth and learning. By contrast, a fixed mindset views abilities as unchangeable, leading to avoidance of effort and fear of failure becomes the pivot, providing an excuse to be in the long-held comfort zone. A growth mindset, however, sees struggle and difficulty as a path to self-improvement — a perspective that aligns with Islamic values such as *ihsān* (excellence), *ṭalab al-ilm* (the pursuit of knowledge), and *jihād al-nafs* (striving against the ego). Critical thinking thrives within a growth mindset, as Islam encourages questioning, *tadabbur* (deep reflection), and perseverance in the pursuit of truth. Such a mindset empowers Muslims to face life's complexities with confidence, turning challenges into opportunities for intellectual and spiritual growth. A powerful example is the story of Prophet Ibrahim (AS). While his people worshipped idols, he began to question and reflect differently, guided by independent thought and a critical mindset. His willingness to challenge inherited beliefs and to seek truth beyond tradition demonstrates how a growth mindset, firmly grounded in *Imaan*, can lead to profound spiritual insight and transformation. By using *'aql* (reason), self-awareness, and wisdom, he was able to raise critical questions, confront falsehood, and ultimately provided solutions rooted in divine guidance.



3- What Are the Principles of a Purposeful Critical Thinker in Islam?

Critical thinking in Islam is based on three main foundations: *Usul al-Fiqh* (methods and principles used to derive Islamic legal rulings from their primary sources), *Qawa'id Fiqhiyyah* (general legal principles, like "harm must be removed"), and *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* (the higher goals of Islamic law, such as protecting *Imaan*, life, and intellect), which together help Muslims make decisions with clear methods, principles, and purposes. Islamic law developed into four main Sunni schools of thought — Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali — each established by a great scholar who created a systematic way to interpret rulings, balancing textual evidence with reason, and this diversity shows the richness of Islamic thought while allowing *Shari'ah* to be applied in different cultural and historical contexts. To apply this knowledge in everyday life, five key principles, known as AAFQM-TREES, are recommended: *Aql* (T – Trusting Reason), *Adab al-Ikhtilaf* (R – Respecting Dissent), *Fard al-Kifayah* (E – Emphasising Social Obligations), *Qawa'id Fiqhiyyah* (E – Embracing Maxims), and *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* (S – Setting Priorities). These principles encourage caring for social responsibility, using universal rules, trusting reason alongside *imaan*, and focusing on the higher objectives of *Shari'ah*. By following them, critical thinking in Islam becomes purposeful, balanced, and safeguarded from unnecessary arguments or extreme rigidity.



Important Questions Raised in the Programme

The programme highlights that critical thinking is not only about asking questions, but also about learning how to assess, apply and communicate solutions responsibly. One important issue raised is the growing use of AI for fiqh questions. While AI can widen access to information, it also risks reducing Islamic sciences to mere “retrievable data.” If religion is seen only as information, its spiritual depth and its transformative connection with Imaan, ethics, and guidance are lost. The danger is that young Muslims may begin to see Islam as a set of “ready-made answers,” rather than as a path of moral growth and spiritual experience. In this way, religion risks being reduced from a “source of divine guidance” to a “database.” This leads to a key question: Is Islamic knowledge only information, or is it a truth that connects the mind, heart, and soul to the transcendent? Another example discussed in the programme is the role of women in the family. In many societies where women work outside the home, they are still expected to carry the full burden of household duties. Yet Islamic teachings show that neither Allah nor the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ ever required women to cook or clean for their husbands. Critical reflection helps us to separate cultural traditions from genuine Islamic guidance. The Qur’an itself is clear: men are described as qawwam (protectors and maintainers), while women are described as salihat, qanitat, and hafizat (righteous, devoutly obedient, and protective). In other words, the Qur’an provides a broad and -

balanced view of both men and women. So why, then, are so many of our youth still caught up in these questions?

Today, many young Muslims ask questions or raise critiques that do not match the goals of *Shari’ah*. Even though their intentions are good, their ideas often lack practical value for Muslim societies and cause difficulties for institutions. The problem is not that young people think critically, but that communities and institutions have failed to respond to modern issues effectively. This failure creates confusion, frustration, and even identity crises among youth. Hence, Islamic critical thinking is not about weakening Imaan - it is about encouraging thoughtful and reasoned inquiry within the framework of *Shari’ah* which can cultivate constructive changes. For it to bring positive change, it must come from within Muslim societies themselves, with both problems and solutions growing from inside. It also requires pure intentions (niyyah), knowledge of history, practical application, and strong communication skills. Only with a renewed focus on Islamic education—especially on the maqasid al-shari’ah - can Muslims apply their Imaan wisely, unite in constructive ways, and deal meaningfully with today’s challenges.



Insight from the author

The first challenge is to define what “Islam for Critical Thinkers” really means. In many countries, even using this phrase is seen as controversial or unacceptable. From what I -

read in the programme materials and heard in the lectures, there is still no clear definition of Islamic critical thinking, or how it can connect traditionalist, reformist, and modernist views. Traditionalists usually reject critical approaches, reformists accept criticism but only towards society (not Islam itself), and modernists try to rethink Islam through new philosophies. The main challenge is linking these views, especially since most Muslims are still traditionalist and resistant to change. History shows this difficulty. Reformers such as Sayyid Jamal al-Din Afghan and Ibn Ashur tried to reform Islamic education based on the *maqasid al-shari'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law), but they faced strong resistance. This proves that it is not enough to have critical ideas—you also need the skills to explain them clearly, persuade others, and turn them into real change. Many Muslim critical thinkers failed because they could not do this.

As a young faqih, I see that the current state of Muslim societies raises serious questions. In many scholarly circles — especially in traditional Islamic countries — Islam is presented as very rigid, absolute, and overly sacred. This has made young people see Islam as inflexible, which limits open discussion and social development. A major issue is the lack of progress in many Muslim countries over centuries. Internal conflicts, social divisions, and disunity have slowed growth. Problems with women's rights, financial management, and governance remain unresolved in many regions. It is important to note that Islam itself is not the problem. The issue comes from extreme interpretations that stop people from applying Islam in daily life. A key cause is the lack of deep knowledge about Islam — especially about the *maqasid al-shari'ah*. If we asked students who study Islam only on the surface, most would not understand this concept. Without it, true reform is unlikely, and the gap between theory and practice leaves space for outside ideologies — like Marxism, Darwin's theory of Evolution, or Feminism — to influence Muslim societies. This does not mean Islam is weak, but that its principles are not well understood or applied in modern times. Therefore, the need of time is to embed critical thinking not only as a theoretical subject but also a tool each student or even society at large must apply to solve the modern issues. In this way it's entirely possible to connect the wings of Gabriel to the wings of Jet in near future.



More Than Just Training: *An Awakening of Life Through "Mentoring of Life"*



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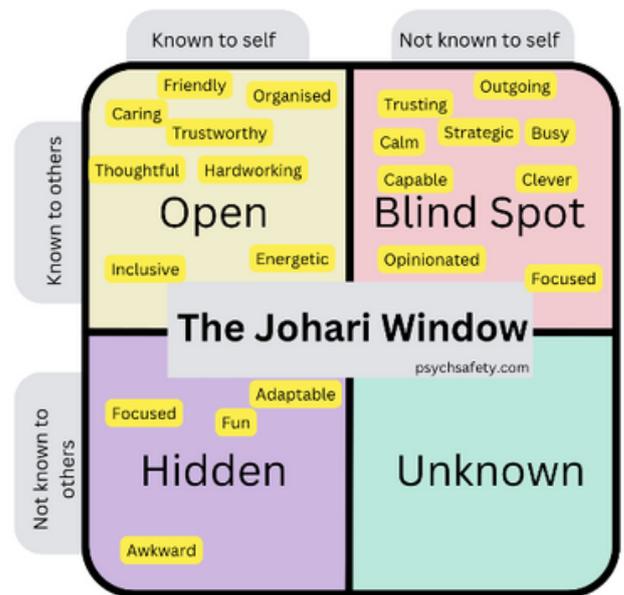
The hum of activity, the exchange of ideas, the structured learning – these are the hallmarks of any training program. Yet, my recent experience with "Mentoring of Life" transcended these conventional boundaries. It wasn't just another workshop; it was a profound awakening, a journey that reshaped my perspective on life and my role within it. As Muhammad Ali once said, "Don't count the days; make the days count." This training was a living testament to that wisdom, imbuing every moment with meaning and purpose.

Over three full days of training, I became increasingly aware of the distinction between a coach and a mentor. A coach focuses on short-term performance and specific goals, using a structured, time-bound approach; a mentor's impact runs much deeper. As I experienced it, mentoring is about long-term development and personal growth. It's an informal, relationship-driven process rooted in sharing experiences and wisdom — a connection that can genuinely last a lifetime. "Mentoring of Life" embodied this ideal, serving not just as a training program but as a wise guide on life's journey and a catalyst for self-discovery and transformation.

The training delved into the fascinating realm of Carl Jung's archetypes, introducing concepts like the "Hero," the "Mentor," and the "Explorer." This framework provided a powerful lens through which to examine my own evolving identity. Over the three days, I -

found myself not only recognizing these archetypes within my experiences but also actively exploring new facets of myself.

In addition to exploring inner archetypes, the training introduced practical tools for interpersonal insight — most notably the Johari Window — linking inner identity to how others perceive us.



In addition to exploring inner archetypes, the training introduced practical tools for interpersonal insight — most notably the Johari Window — linking inner identity to how others perceive us.

The mentor demonstrated multiple roles, creating a unique learning environment. He was a storyteller, weaving narratives that resonated deeply and offered unexpected insights; and as a coach, he skillfully used questioning to guide us toward our own realizations, empowering us to find our -

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answers. For example, a simple practice we used — S: Stop, B: Breathe, L: Listen — became a concrete habit that shifted how we respond in conversations, turning advice into real listening.



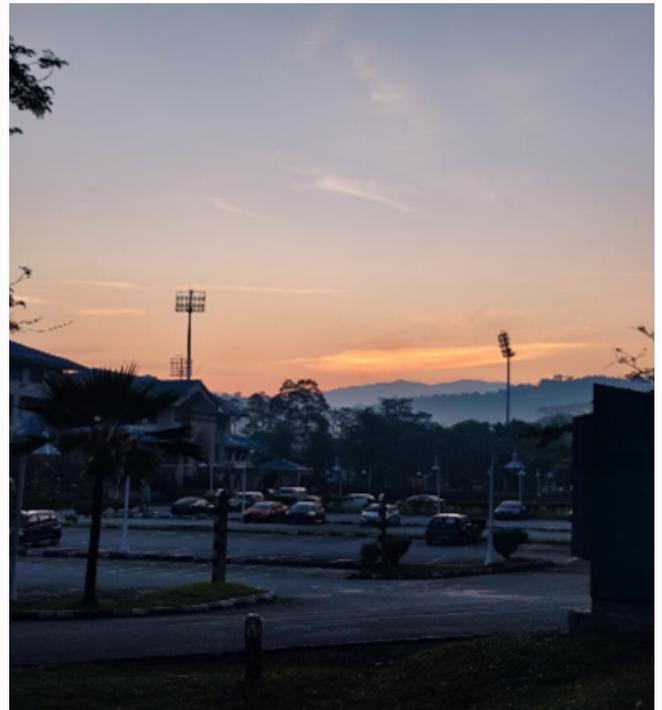
I particularly recall moments where the mentor, through a perfectly timed question or a relatable anecdote, shifted my entire perspective on a long-standing challenge. This was not about being told what to do; it was about being guided to discover the path forward for myself. This resonates deeply with Steven Spielberg's observation: "The delicate balance of mentoring is not creating them in your own image but giving them the opportunity to create themselves."

The "Mentoring of Life" program presented a uniquely profound dimension. Drawing on the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) — who taught through patience, example and compassion — the training showed how true mentorship is deeply intertwined with patience, exemplary conduct, wisdom and mercy.

I came to appreciate how mentors can guide us, much like the Prophet (peace be upon him) guided his followers, to distinguish between short-term setbacks and long-term victories. The emphasis on leading by personal example rather than mere words was a powerful -

takeaway, highlighting that authentic guidance stems from lived values. This part of the training underscored that the "awakening" experienced is not merely personal or professional, but can also be a spiritual one, reinforcing life's core 'akhlaq and purpose.

"Mentoring of Life" was far more than a training program; it was a transformative experience that sparked a profound awakening of life. It equipped me not just with knowledge, but with a renewed sense of self-awareness, a deeper appreciation for authentic guidance, and a clearer vision of my values. As the training concluded, I felt a powerful impetus to apply these learnings. The skills in communication, relationship-building, and self-reflection I gained are now integrated into my daily life, influencing my work, my relationships, and my overall sense of purpose.



This journey has truly made my days count — just as Muhammad Ali urged, "Don't count the days; make the days count."

Leadership as an Amanah:

REFLECTIONS FROM THE LEADING WITH IMPACT PROGRAM



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The Prophet ﷺ said: “Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you will be asked about his flock.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim). Leadership in Islam is not a privilege or a matter of personal choice; it is an Amanah, a sacred trust and responsibility. As vicegerents (khulafa) of Allah on earth, Muslims are called to embody values of justice, humility, and integrity in every sphere of influence. Leadership, therefore, is not about status or authority but about accountability before Allah and service to humanity.

In a world that often reduces leadership to power or prestige, it is inspiring to see initiatives that bring back the Qur’anic spirit of taqwa-centered leadership. One such initiative was the Leading with Impact program, jointly organized by the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) and ILEAD (UK).

This intensive program brought together participants from 22 nationalities and trainers from over 10 countries, reflecting the diversity of the global Muslim ummah. Over the span of eight days, we attended nearly 40 lectures and workshops, all deeply rooted in Qur’anic principles and designed to nurture holistic, God conscious (muttaqeen) leaders. The foundation of the training was the Al-Hidabi Leadership Model, a framework that integrates revelation-guided principles with contemporary leadership practices to cultivate leaders who lead with sincerity, wisdom, and impact.



First Day Leadership With Impact Programme

The program covered a wide spectrum of themes, encompassing spiritual, intellectual, and practical aspects. Sessions explored leadership through the Beautiful Names of Allah, spiritual maturity, hikmah in leadership, living with purpose, and bond-building. We reflected on diseases of the heart and their remedies, the role of resilience, humility, chastity, and self-control, and the significance of integrity and emotional maturity in effective leadership. Contemporary sessions, such as artificial intelligence, leadership, project management, and fundraising, highlighted the balance between timeless values and modern challenges.

One of the most enriching aspects was the project management coaching, where we collaborated with the NAMA Foundation on community-based projects. This hands-on opportunity helped us apply the principles of leadership in real-world contexts, encouraging us to think about practical solutions for our societies.

Equally valuable was the experience of being among like-minded peers, fellow learners, and

seekers of knowledge from across the globe. Despite coming from diverse cultures and professions, we were united by a common goal: to contribute meaningfully to the ummah and to strive for the ultimate success, Paradise. The camaraderie, exchange of ideas, and mutual encouragement made the journey even more transformative.

Personally, I found myself leaving the program with a heightened sense of purpose, responsibility, and self-awareness. I feel spiritually and intellectually more awake, clearer about my mission in life, and better equipped with practical skills such as teamwork, communication, and conflict resolution. The program nurtured resilience, humility, sincerity, and above all, a reminder that leadership is ultimately about serving others for the sake of Allah.



Another key emphasis from the speakers was the importance of continuous learning, especially through the Qur'an, Hadith, Seerah, and the works of classical scholars such as Imam al-Ghazali, Ibn al-Qayyim, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, and many more. Alongside this, many speakers also recommended a range of modern and classical works that can further enrich leadership, spirituality, and self-development.

For those who could not attend the program, I share this list so you may benefit and continue the journey of self-improvement. For those who did attend, it can serve as a reminder and encouragement to revisit what was recommended. These books, combined with our sacred texts, provide a roadmap for developing oneself as a leader:

The Courage to Be Disliked — Ichiro Kishimi & Fumitake Koga

Courage Is Calling: Fortune Favors the Brave — Ryan Holiday

Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives Our Success — Adam Grant

Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals — Oliver Burkeman

50 Spiritual Classics: Timeless Wisdom from 50 Great Books of Inner Discovery, Enlightenment and Purpose — Tom Butler-Bowdon

The Alchemy of Happiness (Kimiya-yi-Sa'adat) — Abu Hamid al-Ghazali

The Autobiography of Malcolm X — As told to Alex Haley

The Road to Mecca — Muhammad Asad

The Way of the Sufi — Idries Shah

Living Islam with Purpose — Dr Umar Faruq Abd-Allah

The Intelligent Heart, The Pure Heart: An Insight into the Heart Based on the Qur'an, Sunnah and Modern Science — Dr Gohar Mushtaq

The Five Most Important Questions You Will Ever Ask About Your Organization —
Peter F. Drucker

In the same spirit, I also wish to share some of my personal favorite quotes from the trainers. For those who could not attend the program, these sayings offer a small glimpse into the wisdom that was shared. For those who did attend, they serve as a recap or reminder of the timeless lessons we heard; sometimes, reminders are as important as first learnings:

"If you fear Allah, Allah becomes your teacher."
-Prof. Dr. Radwan Jamal Yousef Elatrash-

"You are a soul carrying a body, and not the other way around."
-Br Hafeez Naveed Idrees-

"An effective leader understands when to apply firm justice and when to apply merciful leniency — both serving a higher purpose."
-Prof. Dr. Radwan Jamal Yousef Elatrash-

"Drops fill an ocean and empty a bucket."
-Shaykh Nurudeen Lemu-

"Believing men and women are mutual protectors of one another."
-Prof. Dr. Nurul Fadzlin Hasbullah-

"Time is your life. If you waste it, you are wasting your life."
-Dr. Riza Mohammed-

"You are not your emotions. Separate yourself from them."
-Sr. Salatu E. Sule-

"Proactive supervision, accountability, attention to detail, respectful communication, emotional maturity, and ethical judgment are pillars of true leadership."
-Prof. Dawood A.Y. Al-Hidabi

"The servants of the Most Merciful walk upon the earth in humility."
-Prof. Nooh Abu Bakar-

"Hikmah begins with knowledge and ends with actions that bring benefit."
-Prof. Dr. Dawood A.Y. Al-Hidabi -

"Unity is not uniformity."
-Shaykh Nurudeen Lemu-

"Empathy is sympathy plus action."
-Dr. Wan Mazwati Wan Yusoff-

"Two steps to Jannah: step on your nafs, then step into Jannah."
-Br. Muhammad Javed-

"Īmān leads to 'amal. 'Amal must be done with istiḳāmah. Finally, with ikhlās, we will be held accountable."
-Dr. M.J.M. Arafath Careem-

"When intention is corrupted, the ākhirah is lost."
-Br. Muhammad Javed-

Leadership is an amanah, and programs like Leading with Impact remind us that to carry this trust requires constant self-reflection, knowledge, and sincere action. May Allah guide us to be leaders who serve with humility, wisdom, and integrity, and may He accept this effort from all those who contributed to it. Ameen.



Last Day Leadership With Impact

BRIDGING KNOWLEDGE ACROSS CULTURES:

My Experience at The Cambridge Gulf Research Meeting 2025



Br. A. K. Bishrul Rifath

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Institute of Islamic Banking
& Finance (IiBF)*

The University of Cambridge, founded in 1209, is one of the oldest and most prestigious learning centers in the world. Comprising 33 autonomous colleges, including Emmanuel College, where John Harvard, founder of Harvard University, once studied; Trinity College, the alma mater of Sir Isaac Newton; and King's College and Christ's College, Cambridge remains a living monument to centuries of intellectual discovery and academic excellence. Its cobblestone paths, majestic courtyards, and historic libraries embody the continuity of knowledge across generations and inspire scholars from every corner of the world.

Having spent three years in the United Kingdom (2022–2024) during my higher studies at the School of Business, University of Dundee, Scotland, I had always dreamed of visiting Oxford and Cambridge, the twin pillars of English academia. However, despite living so close, I never had the opportunity to visit. This year, that long-cherished dream finally came true when I attended the 15th Gulf Research Meeting (GRM 2025) at the University of Cambridge in July. The moment I stepped into the city's serene environment, with its elegant architecture, calm riverbanks, and air of quiet reflection, I felt as though I had travelled back to the thirteenth century. The ancient buildings, cobbled streets, and soft sound of bicycle wheels along narrow lanes gave me a sense of stepping into living history.

That evening, I wandered through the city with my friend Abdul Hakeem, who is currently pursuing a PhD at Cambridge University. We studied together at IIUM in 2019, and meeting again in such a historic setting felt profoundly significant. Together, we explored peaceful lanes and visited the stunning Cambridge Central Mosque, a masterpiece of modern Islamic architecture built by Turkey and inaugurated by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The mosque's combination of sustainability and spirituality reminds me that faith and knowledge can coexist peacefully.

The Gulf Research Meeting: A Platform for Scholarship

Established in 2010 by the Gulf Research Center (GRC), the Gulf Research Meeting offers an academic platform for researchers and policymakers to discuss political, economic, and social changes in the Gulf region. Held annually within Cambridge's historic colleges, the GRM has become a symbol of dialogue between the Gulf and the wider world.

Opening Ceremony: A Dialogue of Conscience

The official opening ceremony was held on July 22, 2025, at the West Road Concert Hall. The event commenced with remarks from Dr. Christian Koch, Director of Research at the GRC, followed by a keynote speech from His Highness Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Foreign Affairs. A distinguished panel discussion moderated by Dr. Koch included H.E. Dr. Majed Al-Ansari, Advisor to the Prime Minister and Spokesperson for Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; H.E. Luigi Di Maio, the European -

Union's Special Representative for the Gulf; H.E. Dr. Abdelaziz Aluwaisheq, Assistant Secretary-General of the GCC; and Dr. Comfort Ero, President of the International Crisis Group.

A particularly poignant moment occurred when Dr. Majed Al-Ansari engaged in a passionate exchange with Luigi Di Maio regarding the ongoing tragedy in Gaza. Dr. Al-Ansari questioned why the global community and even the United Nations responded differently to the situation in Gaza than to that in Ukraine. His challenge cut through the diplomatic politeness of the session, reminding everyone that scholarship and policy must remain grounded in justice and moral truth.

Workshop 1: Fintech and the GCC's Vision 2030

Over the course of the next two days (23–24 July), I took part in Workshop 1: “GCC 2030 and Beyond – National Visions, Fintech, and the Future of Finance,” led by Prof. Ahmet Faruk Aysan, Associate Dean for Research at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, and Mr. Konstantinos Tsanis, Head of Global Digital Transformation Advisory at the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

The workshop explored how AI, blockchain, and digital currencies can support economic diversification and enhance financial inclusion in the GCC. Experts and professionals have discussed strategies to incorporate fintech into the Vision 2030 framework, strengthen the regulatory environment, and promote sustainable finance.

As a PhD researcher at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), I was honoured to discuss my doctoral topic: “Developing an Islamic Microfinance Framework in Achieving Financial Inclusion in Sri Lanka.” Presenting at such an esteemed academic forum was both humbling and -

transformative. The insightful comments I received from professors and fellow researchers helped refine my framework and highlighted how Islamic microfinance could benefit from digital tools to reach underserved communities.



Other highlights included papers such as “The Rise of Digital Financial Hubs in the Gulf” by June Park (NUS), “Consumer Protection in Crowdfunding” by Habib Ahmed (Durham University), and “Green Finance Meets Fintech: A GCC Perspective” by Mehmet Sahiner (University of Dundee). The concluding paper, co-authored by Aysan, examines the impact of fintech on Islamic finance and capital markets in Qatar using network analysis.

The sessions went beyond theory, combining policy insights and ethical reflections. The dialogue and discussion on fintech's role in Islamic finance, in particular, resonated with me as it reflected the IIIT philosophy of harmonizing innovation with moral responsibility.

Cambridge Reflections: Heritage and Hope

Walking through the courtyards of Cambridge, I was struck by the elegance with which the West preserves its educational heritage. We often criticize the West through the lens of its worldview; however, we must also recognize its strong commitment to safeguarding and celebrating knowledge. This reflection led me to think of Al-Azhar -

University, an institution older than Cambridge that once illuminated the Muslim world and continues to do so. Although its moral and religious influence remains significant, its global academic presence has gradually diminished. This experience reminded me that Muslim societies must endeavor to revive their intellectual heritage with the same vision, care, and pride that Cambridge so beautifully embodies.

The university environment exudes tranquility and peace. Every corner, from Trinity College's courtyards, where Sir Isaac Newton once studied, to the chapel of King's College overlooking the gentle flow of the River Cam, embodies the spirit of a timeless inquiry. Watching boats drift softly along the river, known locally as punting, against the backdrop of King's College's Gothic towers, I felt the harmony between nature and intellect that characterizes Cambridge. Emmanuel College, where John Harvard studied before founding Harvard University, stands as a testament to how knowledge traverses civilizations, linking the East and West in unseen ways.



King's College Dinner: A Night of Fellowship

The farewell dinner at King's College marked the perfect end to the four-day program. The evening started with a group photograph in the courtyard before the participants gathered in the grand dining hall, with its high arches and candlelit tables creating an atmosphere rich in scholarly tradition. Conversations about research, faith, and the future of higher

education flowed seamlessly. Dining in such a historic hall, surrounded by scholars from diverse backgrounds, reminded me of how shared knowledge can build bridges across cultures.

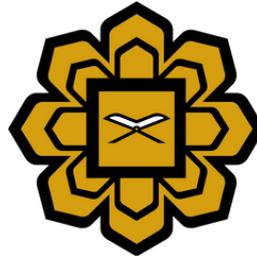


A Journey of Renewal

Attending the Gulf Research Meeting 2025 was more than just an academic event; it was a journey of intellectual and academic rejuvenation. It fulfilled a dream I had held since my student days in the United Kingdom, to walk along Cambridge's ancient paths not as a tourist but as a participant in the pursuit of knowledge. Representing the Institute of Islamic Banking and Finance (IIBF) and the IIIT Student Community at IIUM at this global forum strengthened my belief that learning must ultimately serve humanity, justice, and ethical objectives.



The meeting's emphasis on connecting scholarship, policy, and values reflected the IIIT's vision of integrating revelation and reasoning. As I left Cambridge, I took with me not only research notes and friendships but also a renewed sense of mission to safeguard our heritage of learning and ensure that knowledge remains a guiding light for the world.



Get to Know **IIIT:** **Objectives** and its **Focus** at **IIUM**

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) is a globally recognized academic organization dedicated to the revival and promotion of Islamic scholarship. Founded in 1981, IIIT aims to advance education, research, and intellectual discourse rooted in Islamic values and principles. The institute focuses on integrating Islamic thought with contemporary knowledge, offering support to scholars and students through research opportunities, publications, and scholarships. By fostering a deeper understanding of Islam in the modern world, IIIT plays a vital role in the development of Islamic education and intellectual growth across diverse fields. The institute offers scholarships to Muslim youth male and female across the globe.

Organizational Structure of the IIIT Students' Office



Prof. Dr. Dawood Abdulmalek Yahya Al-Hidabi
IIIT Scholarship Coordinator & Advisor



Br. Bishrul Rifath
IIIT Program & Assistant
to IIIT Advisor



Br. Arafat Amran
IIIT Students
Financial Officer



**Br. Boudoukha
Rached Lamraoui**
IIIT Programs Officer



**Sr. Norrohani
Binti Azizi**
Personal Assistant



Sr. Azha Nazeer
IIIT Alumni &
Magazine Officer

Vision

Thriving societies in which individuals have the opportunity to pursue and realize their fullest potential through transformative learning, social development, and personal growth.

Mission

To conduct and disseminate educational research to empower Muslim Societies with data-driven recommendations for transformative education policy and practice.

The primary objectives are:

Islamization of Knowledge

IIT aims to integrate Islamic principles and values with contemporary knowledge in various fields such as social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. This objective seeks to develop a knowledge framework that is rooted in Islamic epistemology.

Promoting Islamic Scholarship

The institute supports the development of Islamic scholarship by publishing research, organizing seminars and conferences, and collaborating with universities and academic institutions globally.

Reform of Islamic Thought

IIT is committed to the reform of Islamic thought, ensuring that Islamic teachings are interpreted and applied in ways that are relevant to contemporary issues.

Education and Curriculum Development

The institute focuses on developing educational curricula that are aligned with Islamic values and promoting educational reforms that integrate Islamic teachings.

Research and Publications

IIT invests heavily in research and publication efforts, producing books, journals, and papers that address key issues in the Muslim world from an Islamic perspective.

IIIT's Focus at IIUM:

At the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), IIIT's focus includes:

Collaboration on Academic Programs

IIIT collaborates with IIUM in developing academic programs and curricula that integrate Islamic perspectives with modern disciplines, particularly in social sciences, humanities, and Law.

Research Support

IIIT provides support for research projects at IIUM that align with its objectives, particularly those focusing on the Islamization of Knowledge and the reform of Islamic thought.

Student and Faculty Development

The institute often conducts workshops, seminars, and training programs aimed at enhancing the intellectual and academic capabilities of IIUM students and faculty members. This include weekly training programs for IIIT sponsored students to revitalize their knowledge.

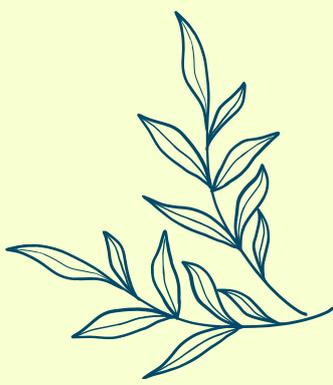
Promotion of Islamic Values

IIIT works closely with IIUM to promote Islamic values and ethics in education, research, and community engagement.

Publication and Dissemination of Knowledge

Through its publishing efforts, IIIT collaborates with IIUM to disseminate knowledge that reflects Islamic scholarship and thought, contributing to the university's academic environment.

To deepen collaboration with the IIUM community, it has introduced this magazine to provide a platform where intellectual and academic issues can be discussed through various writings by different authors, contributing to the advancement of knowledge and excellence.



Pictorial



Prof. Dawood met with the President of Religious Affairs of Türkiye, Prof. Dr. Ali Erbaş.



A visit from Nigeria Lecturer.



A visit from Assoc. Prof. Mastora from Psychology.



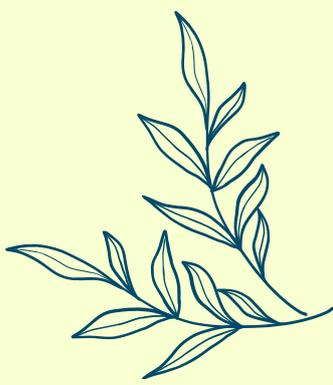
A visit by the head of the Curriculum and Instruction Department, Dr Ikram and Dr. Abdul Shakur, KOED, IIUM.



Visit by student from Indonesia in the area of Psychology in higher education.



Meeting at NAMA to discuss the course of the professional master of Islamic Educational Leadership.



Pictorial



Prof Dawood during his presentation at the conference in Sri Lanka.



A keynote speech in the annual camp of Huffaz Leadership program at iium and officiating the camp.



Visit by lecturer from Arabic Department, IIUM



Orientation for Trainers on Development and Training of Modules based on the Al-Hidabi Leadership Model.



ITQAN board of Director meeting, ITQAN office.



Prof Dawood at NAMA Summit, Indonesia.

IIIT

Leadership and Team Building

The International Institute of Islamic Thought upholds teamwork rooted in Islamic teachings, emphasizing collaboration and mutual support. Believing that true leaders inspire and nurture others. It fosters a leadership culture where leaders motivate and empower future leaders, ensuring a legacy of guidance and shared purpose.

يد الله مع الجماعة
"The hand of Allah is with the group"
(Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 2166)



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