

## **Knowledge, Research and Information Technology in the Light of Islam**

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### **Abstract**

*Islam is a dynamic religion and Information Technology (IT) is a modern tool to solve many problems in the real world. This paper pinpoints areas where Information Technology can be used for Islam under the guidance of Qurān and Sunnah. Some areas where computer has already been in use are discussed here. How can we, the religious people benefit from Information Technology and other such modern inventions? What boundaries and limitations should we observe while using computer and other electronic inventions according to shariah. We shall focus the benefits that we can draw from the use of Information Technology in the field of Islam and what service can we render to Islam and its preaching by utilizing such things. Apart from this, we will also discuss the negative use of Information Technology in the light of the teachings of Islam in this regard. We shall focus how can we combat the misuse and take negativities out of it so that we can maximize the benefits of Information Technology and can make it a source of our success not only in this world but in the world hereafter. We are sure if used properly, this apparently worldly invention and machine can become a great source of earning ultimate success on the Day of Judgment. But for this we have to observe certain limitations and the current article is an effort to cover all or as many aspects as possible. Computer is not something we can let go off or ignore because it has very far-reaching in impacts—on human life in modern times. So, we must address its uses and abuses in the light of Islam and must devise some rules and regulations for its better use.*

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## **Introduction**

Despite the fact that it has far off impacts on human life many people are still reluctant to use it and consider it as something forbidden in Islam. We need to address the issue very seriously and maximize its positive use so that it becomes source of success not only in this world but in the world hereafter as well.

We can utilize it in order to address the universal challenges being faced by Islam and can broaden the arena of preaching and inviting people to Islam<sup>1</sup>. By using it we can also present a very good picture of Islam which is very much in line with the modern day needs and requirements. Utilization of modern day technology is not at all in contradiction with Islam. It is well in line with it and exactly in accordance to the orders of Allah. Because all the inventions and discoveries made by human beings are based on the intellect created by Allah and bestowed to human beings by Allah alone. So, we can say that they are depiction and manifestation of His presence and the His being the supreme power in this universe.

So, after every invention and discovery, one's faith in Allah should increase because all the inventions and discoveries are possible only because of the mind bestowed by Him. This is an order of Allah to utilize human mind and not to let it go wasted. But at the very same time this mind and intellect must be used in line with the permitted limits by Allah and should not be used in violation of His orders and instructions. Herein lies the difference between a believer and a non- believer. A believer finds it a source of increase in his belief in Allah while the same inventions and discoveries take non-believers further away from path of God and from accepting His presence.<sup>2</sup>

We must also understand that inventions and discoveries do not have any religion. They are neutral things in their essence and nature. Their use and misuse makes what is called religious teachings and instructions. A religion can permit and deny or prohibit certain uses or behavior being promoted as a result of usage of such inventions and discoveries. The way they are used or misused fall under the domain of religion as far as inventions and discoveries are concerned. Positive usages of modern inventions and discoveries are not only permitted in Islam but in fact is order of Islamic Sharia' because they help us further to explore the universe created by Allah. It is a sorry state that Muslim Ummath is only content with minimal utilization of such inventions and discoveries rather than inventing and discovering things. They once were leaders of the field of science but they are blind followers now. Muslims were the pioneers of sciences based on which the world has made such an enormous progress.<sup>3</sup>

After this long preemptive now I turn to the original topic of uses of computers.-At the very outset we divide uses of Information Technology/ computers in three different categories.

### **Use of computers through CDs and other devices**

Computer is a very useful machine in today's world.<sup>4</sup> It has revolutionized world of commerce, health, education, travelling and almost all walks of life. But the fact is that despite the entire efficacy computer only remains a machine which does not have

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thinking faculty or ability. It is deprived of human like thinking ability. It works only as per the commands installed in it. If it is asked to perform a task outside the input commands it will fail no matter how simple the task and matter may be. The computer operates at such a high speed with such accuracy that it seems as if it is an intellectual achievement of the computer itself. Whereas, the fact remains that it is an achievement of human brain and intellect and not that of computer. Every function of computer depends on the mind, intellect and skill of the person who inserts different commands and gives input to the computers. So the more the input is accurate the more the answers and output will be accurate. In short everything depends upon human beings who are operating the computer.

Similarly, when we compose something on computer and it gives the writing a very beautiful shape and style, it does not mean that computers have pens which can write. It rather means that all the writing tools are pre planned and installed in advance in the computers which upon certain commands starts writing and composing what we want it to do. When we press certain buttons computer combines them in the order we want it to do. They buttons have already certain programs installed against them and they act upon human commands and instructions only. From the above discussion few things can be proven and extracted which are given below.

1. Computer is only a memory based machine which performs everything in a very mechanical style like two plus two is equal to four. It has got no further capacity to creatively work for us.<sup>5</sup> Only mechanical functions can be done through computers. Thinking and intellectual work cannot be expected from computers. In other words we can also say that computer is nothing more than a super calculator. It performs tasks with super speed and acts like calculators. This is why the Arabic word for computer is *Hasoob* which means super calculator. The tasks performed by calculators can be performed by computer with super speed and much more accuracy. The interesting thing is that there are two basic input figures in computers and they are 0 and 1. The other figures from 2 to 9 are also different variation and derivations of these two. So, basically in its essence computers have very limited resources to function with but the output is amazing one.

2. Secondly, every performance and output of a computer is a product of human mind and intellect. Computer depends upon the skills and abilities of the operating agency and persons for its performance. It cannot do anything by itself. This reliance on human beings for its performance is in itself a proof of glory of Allah for having bestowed human beings with such super mind and intellect. If the operator performs well, the computer will perform well also but if the operator mismanages the computer then the output will also be disastrous one. If one uses computers for positive activities the outcome will also be positive but if one uses it for negative engagements the outcome will surely be negative. Some people might use computer for the cause of Islam and yet others may use it against Islam. So in this scenario everything depends upon how one uses or misuses a computer. Computer in itself is not more than a machine which needs an operator in order to give some output.

3. Thirdly, computers can work just like tape recorders. Just like we can listen what is inside a cassette by playing it in a tape recorder, we can also listen to the recorded materials which are there inside a CD or other recording mechanisms and gadgets by playing them on a computer. Just like a tape recorder will be silent, in case

if no cassette is played on it, computers will also be silent if nothing is commanded to produce sound. So, it is clear that computer cannot produce sounds from within but it needs things from outside in order to give some output. In order to have some sound out of it we need both proper software as well as hardware installed in a computer. Now whatever we listen from a computer is a result of the input we have inserted in a computer.

From the perspective of the current article few aspects of Information Technology / computers are as given below.

4. It can be used as a tool of writing and composing. This aspect of computer enables it to save and design hundreds of thousands of pages in a very little space and time. It can be used as a speedy and an instant tool of communication and transferring of knowledge and information. So, it can be used for the purpose of preaching and presenting Islam to a large number of populations with minimum energy exhausted. Printing material in all its varieties is possible only because of the composing and designing we do on computers. Publications of books, journals, researches and periodicals are made possible through the use of computers. Publication and printing of Holy Quran, traditions of the holy prophet PBUH and other religious books is not only permitted and Halal but are encouraged so that maximum number of them are made available to large number of people with very good quality and attraction.

5. Use of CD ROM.

Just as has been earlier stated earlier that usage of computers depends upon the operators and not the computer itself so, proper use of CDs is also a research based aspect of computer. In a single CD we can gather great quantity of information and material covering very little space and this CD is very much tangible with great ease. It is a safe mode of gathering and transferring of knowledge. It is very safe to state that we Muslims are lagging far behind in this aspect of computer as well. The quality of CDs and the material stored in them by the secular and advance people is far better than those prepared by the Muslims in the current world. We need to work out this aspect and prepare high quality programs and save them in CDs of better quality and distribute them among people.<sup>6</sup>

6. Saving of manuscripts

Whenever there is a mention of research and creating knowledge there is mention of manuscripts also. Previously, manuscripts were very hard to save and they took lot of energy and care from people. But now through the use of scanner attached with computers this task has become far easier. Now people can easily scan original manuscripts and save them in computers. The scanned copies of manuscripts can be saved in computers in different formats. These manuscripts can be saved in picture form as well as text form and edition and deletion from them is also possible now. We can very easily modify the original manuscripts now and can save thousands of pages in original form as well. It takes very little effort and space now to save them. This is a great achievement and progress in the field of Information Technology towards knowledge and research. If we save manuscripts in picture form then they provide us with an original source which cannot be modified and changed. This task is far easier and cheaper as compared to the previous method of micro filming of manuscripts.<sup>7</sup>

7. Video is another contribution of Information Technology towards knowledge and research. Through this we can save hours and hours of activities and conferences and knowledge sharing activities by utilizing minimum efforts. Through video conferencing we can directly share knowledge and experiences with the world. Previously, it was hard to have some authentic proof of many events taking place in the world but they are common now. There has been debates on legal status of videos for long time but now people have realized that there is no good reason to ignore videos because they provide us with very authentic and more realistic picture of an even and the experience it makes possible is immensely important and invaluable in fact. If these videos are not anti-Islam then they are permitted to make and watch.

Islam is a dynamic religion. Its rules are always compatible to all natural phenomena of life.<sup>8</sup> However for a Muslim the guide line for good and bad is always derived from the basics of Islam. Information Technology is just a tool which can be used in almost every aspect of life but surely some of its uses are good and some are bad. Its good uses will be those which are for performing good things and its bad uses will be those which are for performing bad things. On the other side Islam does not impose such things that are not possible for human being but there might be difference of easy and difficult. When the life was simple, the problems were also simple and were solvable even with simple tools, e.g., no calculator was needed at that time. With the passage of time things have become more and more difficult. On the other hand with the development of science tools for solving the problems were getting also more and more developed. So, the natural choice is to solve difficult problems with advanced tools. In this way acting upon Islamic rules will be no longer difficult otherwise if we take the problem set of today and solve it with the old tools may produce a lot of difficulty and one may consider Islam difficult for them. Among those modern tools Information Technology / computer has lot of applications in Islam too. These may be summarized as follows:

1. Educational uses:<sup>9</sup>
2. Uses in calculation
3. Composing of the books and documents
4. For understanding of different systems
5. For record keeping
6. In accountancy
7. As a search engine
8. For communication/ video conferencing
9. For distance learning
10. For design, analysis and planning
11. For management

1. Educational uses:

Information Technology has a lot of application in education. In this category there may two types of uses:

- a) Teaching
- b) Learning

For teaching purposes Information Technology may be used in the following ways:

- i) It can be used to prepare transparencies, multimedia or documentaries for teaching Quraan, Hadith, Fiqh or any Islamic subject, which makes the process of teaching easier and more organized.<sup>10</sup> The class time may be used more optimally. Graphics and useful picture may make the teaching more useful. While teaching Quraan, subject index is readily available on different software, which can be used for teaching. For Ahadith also different software is available and can be used to find not only a hadith whether depending on word used in Hadith or the subject for which Hadith is needed. Fiqh can be taught using different search engines and by having access to many books available in its database.
- ii) A specialist may teach many students at a time using the internal network system
- iii) This may be even more comprehensive if internet is involved
- iv) Lectures may be delivered on power point type software, which can be then made available to students on CDs or Flash drive etc.

For learning purpose Information Technology may be used in the following ways:

- i) Electronic books can be used which are more easy to use and are more comprehensive.<sup>11</sup> Using the Click facility, one can make a lot of data, graphics and pictures available to the student in no time while reading an electronic book. These electronic books may be Islamic books as well. It is very encouraging that even in Urdu such books are now available. These are in lesser number right now but the number may be increased if religious institutes are tuned in this direction. In Arabic language, however, this number is quite reasonable for Islamic books.
  - ii) Dictionaries and Encyclopedias are easily available on CDs in different languages and in different fields.<sup>12</sup> This may be used to get data related to Islamic Fiqh or in understanding Quran and Hadith.
  - iii) Internet may be used in learning, which makes a lot of information available to the students in no time mostly free of cost. If not free it may be at some nominal charges. Thanks to HEC for making electronic libraries in different fields. It is suggested that such libraries may be made available for Islamic subjects as well if are not yet available.
  - iv) One can learn Tajweed on computer or mobile by listening Makharij of Huroof and the way they are involved in speaking. A class can be taught by a computer afterward the test may be taken by Qari. This may accelerate the learning process in Tajweed.<sup>13</sup>
- i) Documentary for teaching inheritance

Teaching inheritance is considered quite difficult in religious schools

A documentary has also been prepared to teach inheritance-using PowerPoint.

- ii) Documentary for teaching Tasawwuf

This documentary has been prepared to teach Tasawwuf because its concepts are found in a much distorted format for a common man. This documentary clears its basic concept and shows that it is but natural and so simple to understand and has no mysteries involved.

Uses in Calculation:

In Islam one has to calculate many things for example:

- 1) Prayer timings
- 2) Qibla direction
- 3) Shares in inheritance
- 4) Zakat
- 5) Shares in Islamic banking
- 6) Budget of religious institutes
- 7) Moon sighting calculations
- 8) Periods calculation of women

For this purpose Computer programs may be developed:

Computer programs for the following purposes, which may be displayed at the time of presentation:

#### 1. Perpetual Prayer Timing Schedule and Qibla Indicator

This software can calculate perpetual prayer schedule for any place in the world by giving input of Latitude, Longitude and Standard longitude to it. A data of more than 40000 places of the world is available to the software by itself. This software prepares schedule even for the place where on some days the timings are no longer normal. Qibla for that place is also indicated on them both in degree format and shadow time format. Shadow time is that at which Qibla of certain place is indicated in simpler format, e.g., zero degree or 180 degree etc.

#### 2. Moon sighting

This software guides the observer about the direction in which he should look for moon sighting. It gives the duration after sunset the crescent will be available on horizon. It indicates the places where absorbability of crescent will be comparatively better. It guides the Qadhi to argue those who claim that they have sighted moon.

#### 3. Inheritance calculation

This software can solve the difficult inheritance problems in just two minutes time. This is user-friendly software and is interactive in the sense that it asks till one give useful information to it and then outputs the result on screen and may be printed as well. This software is now being used in many Darul Fatawa of Pakistan and in foreign countries. It can solve problems according to any fiqh. The creator of this software says that Islamic Inheritance Law –Calculations Simplified Preface Verses from the Holy Quran and the Hadith cited above amply demonstrate importance of gaining knowledge about the Law of inheritance. It has been said that a scholar without this knowledge is like a head without face. Another statement attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) says, "learn the laws of inheritance and teach them to the people for they are one-half of useful knowledge" No room has been left for any deliberations or thinking; one has to act straightaway. The subject is not optional but it is compulsory. It has to be learnt and acted upon lest loss in both the worlds is suffered. Crux of another hadith is that people spent their whole life in submission to

Allah Almighty but in the end harm their heirs by unfair distribution of their inheritance. Such people shall be sent straight to the Hell. May Allah Almighty save us from this sacrilege. Amen. Muslim Laws of Inheritance have been made difficult by restricting their learning only to the terms and techniques used by our elders; totally ignoring their spirit. Our elders had in their own times very candidly explained these laws with the help of use of eloquent terminology. Now with change of environments it is no longer necessary to use the same terminology because understanding of mathematics and the mental faculties of students has deteriorated. Today students lack an urge to learn and their spirit to serve the religion has also waned. Things have to be made easy for a quick grasp. Number of practitioners from the religious seminaries is reducing rapidly and those from the conventional schools and colleges are not interested to learn them. Students consider it be the domain of the intelligent only. Teachers complain about lack of interest and caliber of students to learn it. Both in their own stride are right. Not only the students lack capacity and caliber but the methods teachers are constrained to use make it difficult and it can be understood by the wise only. Keeping these constraints in mind there is a need to be simplistic in approach. Rather than untying the complicated mathematical equations, it is best to explain them simply; using the terminology in vogue today. By the grace of Allah Almighty and prayers of the scholars, I have tried to include the full spectrum of the law in this small book. All the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence shall find it adequate to handle the problems of inheritance. In this short treatise which has been drafted under the supervision of local religious scholars' conscious effort has been made to keep it easy to be taught to the students. It should obviate the need to consult voluminous books. I hope that my effort shall help to enliven the subject of Islamic Inheritance. In another book of mine "Fahm e Mirath Muda'lat" I have explained the basic structure of the art with the help of authentic Quranic interpretations, books of Hadith and logic of all the schools of Sunni jurisprudence. We have also computerized the table of contents. A computer literate can easily solve the most complicated of the hereditary problem in a couple of minutes in conformity with his/her fiqa (school of jurisprudence). I pray to Allah Almighty to accept my effort and make it a source for renaissance of this useful knowledge. I also pray for those who helped me in the venture. May Allah Almighty reward them for their cooperation and sincere participation and bless their sincerity. Amen. Names of have been withheld purposely as some of them had desired it. Basic purpose of this book was to make calculation of the law simple and easy. So rather than following the old mathematical notations, I have introduced application of LCM (least common multiple). Application of LCM over rides the old mathematical formulae i.e. ufq e tamasil, tadhkirah and tabyeen and can solve the most intricate problems without a recourse to any one of the old notations. I see it as a blessing of Allah Almighty which should be applied with gratitude. Without it understanding of succession problems will remain difficult and cumbersome. Veracity of this method is proved by the fact that those who took years to understand the old notations can learn this method in two to three hours. Those proficient with old techniques may not like to learn it. Primarily this method is for the beginners. To test its efficacy, two students of equal intelligence be imparted knowledge of both the methods and then tested as to who learnt it quicker. This being so I do not find any logical reason not to learn it. My request to those used to teaching the old techniques is that they may lean it to for the

sake of their students and benefit them. Surely they shall be rewarded by Allah Almighty<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. Periods calculation for women

Tuhur Mutahallil is a term, which is used for a woman whose periods turn abnormal because of some medical reason. Then the solution of knowing the start and end of her period on which her prayers, fasting and Haj is based, is highly mathematical. Very few Muftis can then answer in such a situation. So a special program has been developed for this purpose, which answers in such a case in a very user-friendly format.<sup>15</sup>

#### 5. For composing the books and documents:

Probably it is the most common use of Information Technology in almost every field so it is used for Islamic books.

#### 6. For understanding of different systems:

The computer can be used for this purpose because it can visualize the things before they are made available. Mosques architecture can now be very easily explainable to religious people to see what they want to get beforehand.

#### 7. In record keeping:

Record keeping has changed a lot and is now mostly based on computers. Special software is written for libraries and daily business routines. These things are now to be introduced in different formats in religious schools and disciplines. Even Fatawas that were written in big registers and then published are now recorded in files on computers, which can then be very easily printed. The cut/paste facility has reduced a lot of effort of Muftis and referencing is also mostly now becoming dependent on computers.

8. In accountancy and audit: There was no requirement of audit in early time for religious institutes because people trusted them blindly but because of this evil genius people used this faith for their self-wishes and committed a lot of misconduct. It is therefore not only requirement of people sponsoring these institutes but also of people responsible in these institutes to keep their record neat and clean. For this purpose computer can be used which makes this phenomenon not only possible but also simple and reasonable.

#### 9. As a search engine:

One can develop search engine for any database on computer. Simillar search engines are available for Quraan, Hadith and Fiqh and other Islamic subjects. By this one can find the information of his interest in very short time. The subject index can also be organized in bringing verses of Quraan and Hadith to a file .The authenticity of hadith can be very easily determined from the database of narrators. Similarly for a special

situation in problems of Fiqh one may consult the opinions of many Fuqaha in very little time so one may be in better position to not only understand the problem but also to give opinion on this if one knows basics of Fiqh. Very beautiful software is now available in Arabic/ English language. However, a lot of work is to be done to develop such software in Urdu as well.<sup>16</sup>

#### 10. For Communication/Video Conference:

Computers and mobiles can be used for communication. One can share his work with others and can benefit from them. Internet is its good example. Internal network systems can be organized for some special purpose. In nowadays busy life style it becomes very difficult for people of different disciplines on some issues of common interest. For this purpose one can use the chatting facility of the Internet and may arrange some videoconference on this matter. This is now even more required because of the Law and Order situation in our countries where traveling and gathering is becoming more and more risky day by day. Many Muftis can share a discussion on problems of fiqh even on world level if such facility is used.<sup>17</sup>

#### 11. For distance learning:

World is becoming global village so distance is now not a big problem in learning. Internet facility can be used for distance learning. A Sheikh in Jamia Azhar or Deoband can now educate people in the whole world. One can use the available chat room facility or may arrange for them some special procedure. There are so many ideas in this context but cannot be covered in a short paper like this.<sup>18</sup>

#### 12. In design, analysis and planning:

Computer can be and is used for all these three purposes in different fields of life. People are benefiting from it. Why not can this be used for Islamic institutes and disciplines? One can design a Madrassa and can analyze its activities and can plan for its betterment. Better haj facility may be provided using these three tools. One can design a Zakat collection system and using analysis can plane for its foolproof system.

#### 13. In management:

Management is an art but can be improved using science and computer as its tool. All Muhtamimeen, Zakat collectors and distributors, President mosque committee etc are managers as well. Using the Information Technology they can enhance their management skill and can solve many problems they face in managing the things.

#### 14. Islam 360

The current age is a digital age and Information Technology integration has revolutionized everyday life. Same goes true for Islam and dispensation of Islamic Knowledge.

The app Islam 360 has proven its worth in creating awareness among general masses. It caters to Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, Tajweed, Tafsir and other related topics. It is important to bring to the fore the worth of this app.

## CONCLUSION:

Information Technology is a blessing if it is used for good and can be a curse if it is used for bad purpose. If bad people have turned it curse a for human being by using it for bad purposes why not we can make it blessing by using it for good things. This can only be done by running our own computer (brain) for good purposes, which is only possible if it is under control of pious Muslims, which can be, achieved only by Tazkia and is known as Tareeqat or Tasawwuf.

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