INTRODUCTION

Arifa K “A comparative study of the treatment of information, knowledge and wisdom in the bible and the quran within the context of the emerging cybersociety” Thesis. Department of Library and Information Science, University of Calicut, 2003
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INTRODUCTION

Information Technology, spreading throughout the globe in a lightning speed, has revolutionized each and every sphere of human activity. The emergence of a new electronic communication system characterized by its global reach, its integration of all communication media and its practical interactivity is changing and will change forever our culture, creating a new era of 'cybersocieties'. In fact, the twenty first century is being characterized by the emerging cybersociety.

Coming through the ages, we see that the primitive age was dominated by muscle power of man alone while in the agrarian society the muscle power of both men and animals were in command. Mechanical power was in the forefront in the industrial society whereas the post-industrial society was dominated by scientific and technological knowledge. The present Information Technology (IT) age is basically dominated by information. We are looking into the cyber age in which the most important resources are knowledge and wisdom. The cybersociety is basically a networked or interconnected knowledge and wisdom based society.

The cybersociety, which marks the culmination of IT revolution, can be taken to be the new social formations and the new community brought about by Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). It is the future society characterized by the computer network structures providing a sense of mobility--the ability to share thoughts and information instantaneously across
vast distances and the mobility of status, class, social role and character
(Jones, 1998).

Even though cybersociety is marked by the information technology revolution, the very idea of IT is still vague, confusing or even contradictory. As such one may find it difficult to identify the theoretical basis of IT. The wide level social application of IT made recently all over the world aggravates the problem of defining or identifying the very concept of IT. This in turn demands for a study of the theoretical foundations of IT. Moreover, cybersociety being an emerging concept, its full implications and characteristics are yet to be known. There exists an urgent need to study about the theoretical and methodological foundations of the cybersociety.

Even in the emerging cybersociety, the value and importance of religions have increased in a tremendous way unlike the feudal society or industrial society. A world in which science and religion form an integrated part of a common understanding of our world will be better balanced, wiser and more civilized (Prince Charles, 1993). The Bible and the Quran are the basic scriptures of the two dominant religions of the world, namely Christianity and Islam. These scriptures have a greater role and influence in the emerging cybersociety. These two holy texts by and large deal with information, knowledge and wisdom and the essence of these are essentially meant for the advancement of the humanity.

It is a fact that both the Bible and the Quran have stimulated several a scientist in making original contributions and innovations. Various studies have been conducted highlighting these aspects. However, in spite of the fact that these holy scriptures encourage the developments in science and
technology, due to a lack of proper understanding of the very foundations of Christianity and Islam, some religious quarters held the view that Christianity and Islam are against the growth of science and technology.

The Bible and the Quran have their own approaches towards information, knowledge and wisdom. The very approach of Christianity and Islam being holistic and being founded on knowledge and wisdom, they could easily be accommodated in the highly networked or interconnected, holistic and knowledge based society, namely cybersociety. According to Guidaini (1998), our vision has overlooked the most important kind of capital in its fourth form, which is the 'wisdom capital' for the community of the future. Any treasury does not dispense wisdom capital. It is the product of the wisdom tradition—this tradition is handed down from age to age. It is stored in texts like the Bible and the Quran.

Modern Information Science is primarily concerned with the techniques or methods and theoretical foundations in handling Information and knowledge with the help of Information Communication Technology (ICT). Informatics/Information Science is considered a fundamental science, the theoretical aspects of which are connected with the semiotic study of sign system and properties of information and applied aspects—coupled with the need to exploit the new Information Technology (Giliarevski, 1996).

The recent advances in Information Science is very much dependant on the recent advancement in science and technology, especially computer and communication technology. IT has been made use of much efficiently and effectively in storage, dissemination, transmission and retrieval of information and also in information networks, without which international
communication of information could not have been possible. Thus IT has played a very important role in the multidimensional growth of Information Science.

Information Technology has its impact on the librarians and information scientists as well. Modern IT is providing a basis for library without walls. In this age and time, information will and can be retrieved from one’s desktop with just a PC and a modem. The librarian’s and information scientists’ role should be to respond to that challenge, to bring the world of information to one’s fingertips by being a participant in this ‘wired’ environment through ‘virtual libraries’ or ‘digital libraries’.

But in spite of its developments, Information Science still lacks a thorough theoretical foundation. Being very much dependant on IT, it has been very often taken to be as Computer Science or Communication Science. Theories that explain empirical laws in a scientific and rational manner are very essential for the development of any discipline. Information Science, as a discipline lacks this aspect and very often its status as a scientific discipline is being questioned (Satyanarayana, 1996).

In this context, a very detailed study of the Bible and the Quran, especially with regard to the treatment of information, knowledge and wisdom will provide a theoretical basis for the emerging cybersociety and hence information technology also. Information Science, very much dependent on IT, the same logic above could equally be applied in tracing out the Biblical and Quranic foundations of modern Information Science. So the present work is a major attempt in finding out the theoretical foundations of Cybersociety and Information Science by studying the treatment of
information, knowledge and wisdom in both the Bible and the Quran. An attempt is also being made to make a comparison between the Bible and the Quran in this regard and find their relevance in the emerging cybersociety.

The investigator has adequate background in Information Science and IT, besides the Bible and the Quran that helps to pursue he present study. It is also realized that in spite of the emergence of Information Science as a big science from the status of little science, it still lacks the basic theoretical foundations. (Price, 1986)

1.1 Need and significance of the study

We understand that the holy scriptures like the Bible, the Quran, the Vedas and others have been the storehouses of knowledge and wisdom that emerged through the centuries. However, the society till today has not grown mature enough to make use of the knowledge and wisdom imbibed in these old scriptures.

It is expected that the emerging cybersociety will be mature enough to make use of the knowledge and wisdom coordinated and compiled in the holy scriptures like the Bible and the Quran. Cybersociety is a society of interconnections and communications, the base of which is knowledge and wisdom. As such, the Bible and the Quran can prove to be effective sources of knowledge and wisdom for the emerging cybersociety. The present study is an attempt to explore the knowledge and wisdom hidden in the Bible and the Quran in the context of the cybersociety. Such a study, in effect may
provide the very theoretical foundations of both Information technology and the cybersociety.

Information Science and Information Technology have no relevance or meaning without information or knowledge as the very theoretical foundations of these rely on information and knowledge. Both the Bible and the Quran deal with information and knowledge in depth and a deeper study on the approaches of the Bible and the Quran towards information and knowledge can provide a sound theoretical foundation for Information Science and Information Technology.

The study is an attempt to trace out the epistemological and cognitive foundations of the Bible and the Quran. Recent studies on the theoretical foundations of information reveal that information and knowledge are essentially cognitive phenomena and any fundamental theory of information should be based on the cognitive considerations (Godert, 1996). Therefore, the study will prove to be a major contribution towards a fundamental theory of information and thereby lay a base for numerous disciplines since information and knowledge are themselves basically dealt in many disciplines including computer science and biological and neurosciences.

Even though several studies have been conducted by theologians, philosophers and religious groups, historians, sociologists, linguistic experts and literary critics on the various aspects of the Bible and the Quran, no major attempt has been made so far in studying them purely from the angle of modern information science in the context of emerging cybersociety.
especially with regard to their treatment of information, knowledge and wisdom that are considered to be the basis of both Information Science and Cybersociety.

The value of spirituality has been discussed with much concern in this world of hitech information. The study has special significance in understanding both the Bible and the Quran and thereby Christianity and Islam in the context of the emerging cybersociety. The present state of the decline of values is the result that human beings have gone long distance away from understanding the intellectual content and the gist of these scriptures. A thorough study of the Bible and the Quran shows that wisdom and knowledge are very largely dealt within them and the essence of these has been meant for the uplift of humanity. The study is an attempt to dig out these intellectual aspects and to show that they are still very relevant in the modern cybersociety, or in other terms, the modern cybersociety can survive only if they keep up with these intellectual aspects of the two scriptures.

The world today has been experiencing several problems leading to unnecessary controversy or religious clashes that may ultimately lead to hostility and rivalry between people or communities or nations. The reason behind this is to a very large extent, the misunderstanding or misinterpretation of both the Bible and the Quran instead of realizing the values these scriptures uphold.

What is urgently needed at present is a peaceful coexistence of various religions. It is hoped that a proper and balanced study of both the Bible and the Quran in the context of emerging cybersociety will lead to greater understanding and cooperation among the members of a particular
religion and also among religions. The present study is expected to make some basic contributions in this regard.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The study is entitled “A Comparative Study of the Treatment of Information, Knowledge and Wisdom in the Bible and the Quran within the context of the Emerging Cybersociety”.

1.3 Definition of the Key Terms

The key terms used in the statement of the problem and their definitions are given below:

(a) Study – Study is to examine or investigate carefully and in detail (Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of English Language, 1996)

(b) Treatment – The Hutchinson Encyclopaedic Dictionary (1994) defines treatment as the process or manner of behaving towards or dealing with a person or thing. In the present study treatment denotes to what extent the Bible and the Quran deals with information, knowledge and wisdom. In other words, the Biblical and Quranic approach towards information, knowledge and wisdom.

(c) Information – Information is defined as the communication or reception of knowledge or intelligence; something obtained or received through informing; the process by which the form of an object of knowledge impressed up on the apprehending mind so as to bring about the status of
knowing. (Webster’s Third International Dictionary of English Language, 1978).

(d) Knowledge – Webster’s New World Thesaurus (1971) defines Knowledge as learning, wisdom, information, experience or just simply know how

(e) Wisdom – Wisdom has been defined by Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (1992) as

1. (a) experience and knowledge (shown in making decisions and judgements); quality of being wise

   (b) good judgement, advisability, commonsense

2. Wise thoughts, sayings etc.

In the present study, Information, Knowledge and Wisdom taken as a whole refers to everything related to these concepts including the philosophical ideas like reasoning, learning, intelligence, creation of the universe, acquisition of knowledge and science and technology as dealt in the Bible and the Quran.

(f) Cybersociety – In the present study, Cybersociety refers to the knowledge and wisdom based future society and the new social formations brought about by the highly networked and interconnected Computer Mediated Communication with the ability to share thoughts and information instantaneously across vast distances.
1.4 Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the present study:

(i) To study the Bible and the Quran with regard to their treatment or approach towards information, knowledge and wisdom.

(ii) To make a comparison between the Bible and the Quran with regard to their treatment of information, knowledge and wisdom.

(iii) To examine the validity of the treatment of information, knowledge and wisdom dealt in the Bible and the Quran within the context of the emerging cybersociety.

(iv) To examine the practical importance of the approaches of the Bible and the Quran towards information, knowledge and wisdom in solving the basic developmental problems of the humanity.

1.5 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are being formulated for the study:

1. The basic treatment of information, knowledge and wisdom in the Bible and the Quran remains the same.

2. The approaches in the Bible and the Quran with regard to information, knowledge and wisdom encourage the growth, development and application of information technology in the modern age.

3. The present study will provide a theoretical foundation for Information Science, Information Technology and Cybersociety.
1.6 Limitations

The study is not a theological one but purely a scholarly one within the framework of modern Information Science and Information Technology. It emphasizes on the academic and intellectual value of both the Bible and the Quran in the context of the emerging cybersociety. This can be considered to be a pioneering work in this field.

By taking into account the constraints of time and resources at the disposal of the investigator, the study is conducted mainly within the geographical boundaries of Kerala, especially with regard to the views of the experts.
REFERENCES


