THEORETICAL ASPECTS

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CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL ASPECTS

2.1 Information, Knowledge and Wisdom
2.1.1 Information
2.1.2 Knowledge
2.1.3 Wisdom
2.2 Epistemology
2.2.1 Ways of acquiring Knowledge
2.2.1.1 Empiricism
2.2.1.2 Rationalism
2.2.1.3 Intellect and intuition
2.2.1.4 Revelation
2.2.1.5 Experience
2.2.1.6 Deductive method
2.2.1.7 Inductive method
2.2.2 The Genetic approach to knowledge
2.3 Information Science
2.4 Information Technology
2.5 Cybersociety
2.6 The Bible and the Quran
2.6.1 The Bible
2.6.1.1 The Books of The Old Testament
2.6.1.2 The Books of The New Testament
2.6.2 Epistemological foundations of the Bible
2.6.3 The Quran
2.6.4 Epistemological foundations of the Quran
2.6.5 The Hadith
2.7 The Bible, the Quran and the Cybersociety
THEORETICAL ASPECTS

The study is basically an attempt to find out the treatment of information, knowledge and wisdom in the Bible and the Quran within the context of the emerging Cybersociety and thereby search out the theoretical foundations of Cybersociety, Information Technology and Information Science on the basis of the approaches of the Bible and the Quran towards information, knowledge and wisdom. It is a fact that in spite of the IT revolution throughout the globe and emergence of a cybersociety, the very foundations of Information Technology is still unknown. The concept of cybersociety, in its emerging stage, also lacks a sound theoretical foundation. The case of Information Science is also not different. This chapter covers the theoretical aspects of information, knowledge and wisdom and also Information Science, Information Technology and Cybersociety besides the epistemological foundations of the Bible and the Quran.

2.1. INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

2.1.1 Information

Information is being considered as the most important resource and power of today’s society. Within the complex organization of present day society, various types of professionals have dedicated their studies to the subject of information, particularly the specialists in the field.
A dictionary (Brockhaus' Konversations lexikon) definition in Latin for information gives information as teaching, learning, reference data. Weiner (1948), a mathematician and accepted founder of cybernetics assume information as a new phenomenon, not matter, nor energy. A physicist, Jungclaussen (1988) defines Information as a body of signs to which a definite meaning may be imparted by somebody articulating it, and to which an interpreter may also impart a meaning. The cybernetician Kempe (1986) defines information as the ability of signs to produce images. Shrieder (1988) defines information as transformed knowledge, its form representing this piece of knowledge.

information. Buckland (1991) makes a distinction between information as a thing and information as knowledge and information as process. Finally, Stonier (1990) attributes economic development to information and distinguishes between structured, kinetics and intelligent information.

Information Science defines “Information” in a general way as every news (communication) that is of interest to the receiver. Information is that part of knowledge that is offered to participants because they need specifically that part of knowledge.

2.1.2 Knowledge

The notion of knowledge is intuitively no less clear that that of information. Yet it has come to us from across the centuries. It was through the shifts from oral culture where knowledge is memorized to scribal culture where knowledge is handwritten, to printed culture where knowledge is organized in books, to the new computer culture where knowledge is digitalized.

Knowledge is the most human phenomenon -- it is related to man. Soviet Encyclopaedic Dictionary (1980) defines knowledge as the result of reality cognition verified by practice and its correct reflection in human reasoning. Clark (2001) defines knowledge as the matrix of impressions within which an individual situates newly acquired information. The conventional assumptions about knowledge that information theory proceeds upon are:

(a) There is a reality, outside the human mind.
(b) Humans cannot directly capture the things in the real world, but sense and measure them, and construct an internalized model of them.

(c) Acts of sensing and measurement are enabled by, and constrained by, the human perpetual apparatus, comprising fairly well understood anatomical components, increasingly well understood physiological processes and mental processes which are still poorly understood.

(d) Knowledge is intrinsic or implicit within individual humans.

(e) Some people use the term ‘knowledge’ to refer to data that has been captured by human, reexpressed or stored (in a medium) and intended to be later recaptured by other humans.

The basic questions related to knowledge are -- what is knowledge? How is it created? How does man gain knowledge? What are the different ways for acquiring knowledge? The questions on knowledge, its logic, origins and basis have been dealt with in a separate branch of philosophy called ‘epistemology’. Theoretical aspects of epistemology have been discussed later in this chapter.

Klix (1984), known for his works in conceptual thinking explains that human knowledge consists of concepts and links between them. This knowledge can be exchanged by means of language. Semenyuk (1988) writes regarding the emergence of scientific knowledge that at the first stage, each scientist solves the question of peculiar coding of cognition results, received in the course of studying a phenomena (for himself). At the next
stage the researcher sets the task of transforming the piece of knowledge obtained into a form enabling it to be perceived by other scientists and in general, by other people. Shreider (1988) asserts that knowledge is local; it is peculiar to a certain person at a definite point of time. He distinguishes the two faces of human knowledge personal knowledge and social knowledge (i.e., information). Kiel (1994) observes that knowledge cannot be separated from individual or cultural subjectivity. Jaenecke (1994) subdivides knowledge into core, peripheral and pseudo knowledge.

Another topic of concern has been the interaction of information and knowledge. Although there has been disagreement on the relationship between knowledge and information i.e., whether information is a kind of knowledge or not, information and knowledge can at least be considered as the different stages of the same continuous process. Farradane (1979) defines information as the written or spoken surrogate of knowledge. Machlup (1983) presents a multisided discussion on the relationship between information and knowledge as follows: A close and firm link between information and knowledge has always existed, and most dictionaries define information as a certain kind of knowledge. Some have the word information denote 'a transfer of knowledge' or a 'piece of knowledge'. Distinctions between information and knowledge have been proposed chiefly on three scores:

(1) Information is a piecemeal, fragmented, particular whereas knowledge is structured, coherent and often universal.

(2) Information is timely, transitory, perhaps even ephemeral whereas knowledge is of enduring significance.
(3) Information is a flow of messages, whereas knowledge is a stock, largely resulting from the flow, in the sense that the 'input of information may affect the stock of knowledge by adding to it, restructuring it, or changing it any way.

Further considerations in this regard are needed in the context of the process of communication between human minds.

Informatics/Information Science basically deals with the interaction between information and knowledge. According to Shreider, who proposed Informatics, there lies an abyss over which a bridge is to be built by Informatics – at one side of the abyss is the spiritual world consisting of the content of man’s consciousness with his peculiar knowledge, here and today and on the other side lies the world of social information that can be stored and processed by computer – everywhere and always. In the first world there is only knowledge processing and in the other there is only information processing. Any act of communication in the society, even a simple talk, proceeds so that knowledge is transformed into information and information into knowledge. Man is always included in this and without him no transformation is possible.

The interaction of information \((\text{IN})\) and knowledge \((\text{W})\) may be expressed by means of the formulae:

\[ \text{IN} = \text{fr} \ (\text{W}) \] — Information is a function of represented knowledge and

\[ \text{W} = \text{fi} \ (\text{IN}) \] — Knowledge is a function of interpreted information
In abstract terms, representation (articulation) proceeds as a transfer from the sphere of the brain (knowledge location) to the sphere outside the brain; and interpretation involves a transfer from the sphere outside the brain (information domain) to the sphere of the brain.

2.1.3 Wisdom

A further concept of relevance is “wisdom”. This is, however, on an entirely different plane from both information and knowledge, because it has to do with judgement exercised by applying decision criteria to knowledge combined with new information. In the words of Sternberg (2001), to define wisdom is a task that requires more wisdom than any of us can have. Thus, we cannot quite comprehend the nature of wisdom because of our own lack of it.

American Heritage Dictionary (1985) defines wisdom in the following ways:

(1) Understanding of what is true, right or lasting insight.
(2) Common sense: good judgment.
(3) The sum of the scholarly learning through the ages; knowledge; wise teachings of the ancient sages.
(4) A wise outlook; plan or course of action.

Another Hebrew definition for wisdom is knowledge and ability to make the right choices at the opportune time. The prerequisite for it is the ‘Fear of the Lord’. Wisdom has also been defined as the quality of being wise, knowledge, and the capacity to make use of it; knowledge of the
best ends and the best means, discernment and judgement. In the words of Coleridge, commonsense is an uncommon degree is what the world calls 'wisdom'.

The concept of wisdom can be understood from three dimensions- cognitive dimension, reflective dimension and affective dimension. From the cognitive dimension, wisdom is the ability to perceive reality as it is, i.e., to comprehend (or deeper) meaning of phenomena and events. From the reflective dimension, wisdom can be taken to be the self-awareness and the ability to look at phenomena and events from different perspectives. From the affective dimension, it is the sympathy and compassion for others.

Regarding the relation between knowledge and wisdom, Paley says, “In strictness of language, there is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom always supposing action and action directed by it”. According to Cowper, “Knowledge and wisdom far from being one have of times no connection. Knowledge dwells in heads replete with thoughts of other man; Wisdom in minds attentive to their own. Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass, the mere material with which wisdom builds, till smoothed and squared, and fitted to its place, does but encumber whom it seems to enrich. Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much; wisdom is humble that he knows no more”. (Zimmerman, 2001)

Whewell, differentiating wisdom from prudence, which is a synonym for wisdom, says, “we can conceive prudence as the virtue by which we select right means for given ends, while wisdom implies the selection of right ends as wells as right means”. Hence wisdom implies the
union of high mental and moral excellence. Knowledge is a more comprehensive term and signifies the simple apprehension of facts or relations.

It can be seen on the verification of the theoretical aspects of information, knowledge and wisdom that man is the most important factor in these concepts. Without man, no information, knowledge nor wisdom exists. This fact is to be borne in mind throughout the present study undertaken. In the words of T.S Eliot,

Where there is wisdom, we have lost in knowledge
Where there is knowledge, we have lost in information.

2. EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology or theory of knowledge is the branch of philosophy, which examines questions about the nature of knowledge, and how we get it (Grayling, 1945). It attempts to answer the questions, ‘what is knowledge? and what are the best and more secure ways of acquiring knowledge?’ These questions are interconnected and attempts have been made to answer them in different ways. Two principal schools of thought in the history of epistemology, namely, ‘rationalist’ and ‘empirical’ holds that the chief route to knowledge are the exercise of reason and perception respectively. The model for rationalists is mathematics and logic where necessary truths are arrived at by rational inference. The model for empiricists is any of the natural sciences where observation and experiment are chief methods of inquiry. Epistemology is thus an aid in the search for
knowledge and to understand the nature of knowledge. It discusses philosophically truth, false hood, validity of knowledge, limits of knowledge and nature of knowledge, knower and knowee etc.

2.2.1 Ways of acquiring knowledge

Knowledge consists of truth, facts, principles, theories, beliefs or other objects acquired by mankind from generation to generation and from civilization to civilization. The man in ancient times acquired knowledge by chance, or with trial and error method. It was with the method of reasoning that man increased his opportunities to acquire knowledge.

2.2.1.1 Empiricism: Five Senses as a Source

We use eyes, ears, tongue, nose and hands to acquire little bits of knowledge. What we see, hear, touch, smell and taste—that is, our concrete experience—constitute the realm of knowledge. The view that knowledge comes through the senses is known as empiricism. Emphasis is placed upon man’s power of perception, or observation, or upon what mind receives from the environment.

2.2.1.2 Rationalism: Reason as a way of acquiring knowledge

The thinkers who emphasize reasoning or thought as the central factor in the acquisition of knowledge are known as rationalists. Rationalism is the view that we know what we have thought out, that knowledge is obtained by the method of comparing ideas with ideas. The rationalist, in emphasizing man’s power of thought and what the mind contributes to it, is likely to assert that the sense, by themselves cannot give
us coherent and universally valid judgements. The highest kind of knowledge consists in the universally valid judgments that are consistent with one another.

2.2.1.3 Intellect and Intuition

Intellect and Intuition are two faculties of acquiring knowledge. Intellect is the faculty of thinking and acquiring knowledge, especially of a higher order. Here, higher order is that pertaining to empirical sphere. The sense organs are equipment directed towards the external world. They take in sensations or sense data and furnish them to the concerned faculty of mind. The mind analyses and synthesizes these data and this is the intellectual type of knowledge. Intellectual knowledge is empirical. Intuition, on the other hand, is judgement without reasoning. It does not mean judgement based on irrational ground. On the contrary, it actually means a synoptic judgement where there are no logical or rational methods involved. The judgement arrived at is neither due to induction nor deduction.

Intuition as immediate awareness without logical or rational inference would mean that it is above logical inference or it surpasses the empirical limits. But to surpass the empirical, one must pass through empirical. Hence intuition is not the negation of the empirical, but the effulgence of the trans-empirical. Intuition is the immediate cognition of the essences of a thing and is a quick insight. It is always thought of as higher wisdom and its place is above intelligence – Intuition is the extension of perception beyond sense. Intuitional experience is a state of mysticism.
Mysticism is the intuitive experience of Divine Reality (Ultimate Truth) (Damodaran, 1993).

For Henri Bergson, the French philosopher, intuition and intelligence are pointed in opposite directions. Intuition, which is instinct that has become self-conscious, can lead us to the very inwardness of life. We discover the world, by intuition, which is inward and immediate, rather than by intellect, which is external and describes the living in terms of the static and the dead. Intuition, according to mystics, may enable us to gain a vision of reality, to receive the inspirations of an immanent God, or to experience a unity with God.

2.2.1.4 Revelation

Revelation as a means of acquiring knowledge is different from those discussed above. Reason, thought or contemplation cannot acquire it. Revelation cannot be achieved by human efforts. It is the disclosing of Divine knowledge to man, and thus it is accomplished by only those who God chooses Himself (Haq, 1991). Both Christianity and Islam are based on revelations. Christians think that God reveal Himself in Jesus Christ. For Muslims, the holy Quran is the revelation of God to Prophet Mohammed in which His message to man is contained. The acute psychological difference between prophetic and mystic types of knowledge is that the mystic does not want to return from the repose of his unitary experience, and even when he returns, it does not mean much for the mankind at large. The Prophet’s return is creative. For the prophet, it is the awakening, within him to completely transform the human world.
Another related discipline in Philosophy is Metaphysics, which is concerned with the theories of the nature of reality. It deals with questions like why does earth exist? How did it come into being? etc. Idealism, another realm of theory of knowledge is concerned primarily with the search for truth.

2.2.1.5 Experience

Banking upon personal experience or on that of others in seeking answers to vexed problems is the most primitive, and yet most familiar, useful and fundamental method to obtain knowledge. Deriving knowledge from personal experiences is important, but a person may make errors when observing or when reporting what he has seen or done.

2.2.1.6 Deductive Method

Aristotle developed syllogism—a method of reasoning which provides a means of testing validity of particular conclusion or idea by proceeding from general to the specific or from known to the unknown. Syllogistic reasoning established a logical relationship between a major premise based on a self-evident truth or previously established fact or relationships; a minor premise concerning a given case to which the truth, fact or relationship invariably applies, and a conclusion.

2.2.1.7 Inductive Method

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) vehemently criticized the medieval practice of deductive conclusions from self-evidence or authoritative premises. He maintained that man should not enslave himself to other men’s
thoughts. Rather he advised the investigator to observe phenomena closely, to experiment, to tabulate all the facts, to study these facts in order to reach minor generalizations, and then to proceed from minor generalizations to establish general conclusions (on the basis of direct observations).

Charles Darwin integrated the most important aspects of the inductive and deductive methods in his works. This sweet marriage of the best in the inductive and deductive methods of acquiring knowledge gave birth to the Scientific Method of research. Scientific method is thus a synthesis of reason (deduction) and observation (induction). While using the scientific method man shuttles back and forth between deduction and induction and is engaged in reflecting thinking.

2.2.2 The Genetic Approach to Knowledge

Modern psychology and logic have suggested that knowledge is not something that comes in neat packages, which can be traced to separate sources. Knowledge is a growth in which a living organism, with certain specific interests and drives, is in constant contact and interaction with a changing environment. This relation between the organism and its environment is sometimes described in terms of “stimulus and response”. Out of this relationship awareness arises. The organism becomes aware of various specific things, relations, and events, and as a consequence acquaintance language, meaning and thinking emerge.

George Patrick in his book “Introduction to Philosophy” writes: The conditions of knowledge are “a self with certain innate interest, an environment with which the self enters into relations, an intelligent that
can fund, capitalize, and organize this experience and deal effectively with new and complicated situations. Knowledge is funded experience, but in the funding process mental powers and activities are the significant things—memory, thought, conceptual analysis, reflection, selective organization, creative synthesis. Knowledge is, therefore, not something which drifts in from a ready-made world in the form of impression, not is the distilled product of certain a priori universal principles of thought, but is a product of the interaction of the self and the environment, in which the remarkable powers of the self are the most significant factors”. (Khanna, 1997)

2.3. INFORMATION SCIENCE

The very foundations of Information Science lie upon information and knowledge. Information Science is concerned with the science and practice of the provision of information. To this end, it includes the study of information from its generation to its exploitation, and of its transmission in a variety of forms through a variety of channels.

It was in the context of computers, mathematical information theory, operations research and other qualitative approach to behavioral and social phenomena that the term information science appeared in America in 1959. (Prasad, 1996). Subsequently the Russian term ‘Informatics’ was put forth in 1962 by Kharkevich, as a discipline of scientific Information. With the popularisation of these two terms, there were other terms to identify and designate the domain of Information Science as follows: informatology, informetrics, informatistics, informatics, information technology, information
systems engineering, documental informatics, documentary informatics, cybernetics etc.

Information Science has been taken to be a variety of activities like a group of technique, an applied discipline, a soft science, a synthetic discipline, an intellectual discipline, a basic area of enquiry and so on. Many Information specialists, librarians and investigators have been trying to define Information Science but no agreeable definition has been arrived so far. A single agreed upon universal definition for Information Science is yet to be arrived. Taylor (1963) defined Information Science as the study and technology of processing information for optimum accessibility and use. Foskett (1978) has defined Information Science as "the discipline that is emerging from cross-fertilization of ideas involving the ancient art of librarianship, new art of computing, art of new media of communication ... transfer of organized thought".

ASIS in 1975, defined Information Science – Information science is concerned with the generation, collection, organization, interpretation, storage, retrieval, dissemination, transfer and use of information with particular emphasis on the application of modern technologies in these areas. As a discipline it seeks to create and structure a body of scientific, technological and systems knowledge related to the transfer of information. It has both pure science (theoretical) components, which enquire into the subject without regard to the application and applied science component, which develops services and products. Wilson (1981) defined Information Science as "the set of practices and related disciplinary studies which is concerned with the generation, transmission, organization,
storage, retrieval and use of information together with studies of the area of information.

An analysis of the different definitions for Information Science show that there exists no consensus among the practitioners of Information Science about its conceptual framework. Thus the foundations of Information Science is still very weak and shaking, the fundamental reason being the lack of common or shared approach and understanding of the use of the terminology. However, the definitions are mainly from three perspectives namely communication perspective, semantic perspective and cognitive perspective. The present study takes into consideration mainly the cognitive perspective of Information Science – Information, Knowledge and Wisdom can be taken to be cognitive concepts.

An early attempt to lay the theoretical foundations to Information Science was made by Shannon and Weaver (1949). A paper ‘Shannon’s Information Theory’ is universally known as a classic and the importance of its concept in laying theoretical foundations of Information Science was instantly recognized. Though it was expected that Shannon’s magical formula would unlock countless information secrets and give a quantitative measure for laying out a scientific theoretical foundation for practically every major field lacking one, unfortunately, the extension was generally an intellectual exercise and ‘information theory’ matured into a ‘mathematical specialty quite distinct from what is now Information Science’. Despite the inadequacies associated with Shannon’s theory, a large number of information specialists believed that any truly theoretical framework for Information Science must include a basic quantitative measure along
Shannon's lines and that perhaps the development of such a measure should be given priority.

Fairthrone (1969) while discussing about what must be the first step towards a theory of Information Science states that any discipline must first define its own scope i.e., what matters it will study explicitly. Yovits (1969) points out that Information Science must have a number of different applications, which utilize the same general principles. Hillman (1969) has emphasized the need for standardization of the terminology. Kochen (1969) in his paper entitled “stability in the growth of knowledge” proposes that the heart of Information Science should be what he calls “epistodynamics”. It is concerned with “lawful regulations governing the acquisition of information and its transformation into knowledge, the assimilation of knowledge into understanding the fusion of understanding into wisdom”. Vickery (1973) in a paper entitled ‘The nature of Information Science’ examines Information Science to see if it shows any sign of becoming a science and emphatically declares it does.

However, some of the writers have been somewhat pessimistic regarding the development of solid foundations for Information Science. For example, Vagianos (1972) declares that there are no foundations for ‘Information Science’ and very little hope of there being any in the foreseeable future. The relation between “Information” and Information Science is considered as a complete, global, complex entity, with a holistic dimension.

The Institute of Information Scientists (UK) in 1976 developed a set of criteria for Information Science, which may be modified from time to
time to reflect the widening scope of the subject. These criteria are (1) Knowledge and its communication, which involved creation and growth of Knowledge, Nature, properties and characteristics of Knowledge, and Information flows. (2) Sources of information (3) Theory of information storage and retrieval. (4) Systems for information storage and retrieval (5) Dissemination of information (6) Management of information (7) Technology and its applications.

The first criteria i.e., creation growth, nature and properties of knowledge are of relevance to the present problem under study.

The International Federation for Information and Documentation, especially its technical committee on the Theoretical Foundations of Information (FID/RI) had conducted several studies on the theoretical aspects of modern Information Science. In this context, the two theories formulated by Mathew (1985) deserve special attention. The two theories are 1) The theory of Information/Knowledge Consumption-Production Correlation and 2) The Stage Theory of Information/Knowledge growth. Soman (2002) has conducted a study on the two theories in the specific context of Physical Sciences. These theories provide a purely materialistic interpretation for the theory of knowledge and hence it was considered as a basic Marxian approach towards knowledge, especially by the then Soviet Marxian theoreticians.

Four areas can be identified in Information Science (Vickery & Vickery, 1987). They are:
(1) The particular problems of the communication of Information in Science and Technology better called ‘Science Information’.

(2) The use of technology, particularly computers and telecommunications in information handling – ‘Information Technology’.

(3) The application of scientific method to practical information problems- ‘Information Systems Study’ and

(4) The scientific study of the communication of information in society – “Information Science” in the sense of an academic discipline.

Scientific information has now been modernized in transition to the new Information Technology. So also the development of the modern systems of collection, processing, storage, retrieval, dissemination and use of information occur under the influence of the newest achievements in the field of Information Technology. Thus Information Science is by and large dependent on the developments of Information Technology.

Human mind – human being himself is of much relevance in Information Science. As the social information processes are in fact mediated by psychological processes, the findings of Cognitive Psychology are intensely relevant to Information Science. This idea has been discussed in detail in next chapter in the section dealing with Epistemological/Cognitive foundations of Information Science.

2.4. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The society is currently experiencing a revolutionary change or transformation on a global scale. We live in a world that has become digital.
The complex rapid changes in the processes of information handling, transmission, storage and retrieval of information have paved the way for the new era of Information Technology revolution. Today, success in just about any field has become impossible without Information Technology. In farming, manufacture, education, policing, medicine, entertainment, banking or whatever, Information Technology is apparently set to change everything that human beings do in advanced societies.

Information Technology is an amalgum of electronics, computing and communication technology. These three technologies are converging and becoming closely related. Computers are becoming integral parts of communication system and many computer applications depend on computers communicating with each other. As the technology develop, the distinction between these systems have become more blurred. The terms Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) in use today indicate this fact.

The developments in microelectronics along with computer technology including computer software and hardware are setting the pace for Information Technology revolution. The race is still on between Japan and the US in building supercomputers - the fifth generation computers that exhibit ‘artificial intelligence’. The new revolution in telecommunication and microelectronics has made possible the ‘intelligent network’.

A giant leap in microelectronics was the development of the integrated circuit, the microprocessor in 1971 in Silicon Valley. An acceleration in microelectronics technology in integration (0.18 micron chips) in DRAM capacity (1, 024 megabits), and microprocessor speed (500+mega
hertz as compared to 150 in 1993) has been forecast for the year 2002. This, combined with dramatic developments in parallel processing using multiple microprocessors is relentlessly increasing computing capacity. The design of Apple I and later Apple II, the first commercially successful microcomputer, led for the age of diffusion of microcomputers, later called personal computers (PC). Bill Gates and Paul Allen adapted BASIC for operating Altar machine in 1976. Having realized its potential, they went on to found Microsoft. Since then they have been dominating the operating system software and in software itself for the exponentially growing microcomputer market as a whole.

To advances in microelectronics and software, one has to add major leaps in networking capabilities. Since mid 1980s, microcomputers cannot be conceived of in isolation: they perform in networks, with increasing mobility, on the basis of portable computers. This extraordinary versatility and the capacity to add memory and processing capacity by sharing computing power in an electronic network, decisively shifted the computer age in 1990s from centralized data storage and processing to networked, interactive computer power-sharing. Not only the whole technological system changed, but its social and organizational interaction as well.

Telecommunications have been revolutionized also by the combination of “node” technologies (electronic switches and routers) and new linkages (transmission technology). The progress in integrated circuit technologies had made possible the digital switch, increasing speed, power and flexibility while saving space, energy and labor vis-à-vis analog devices.
Major advances in opto electronics (fibre optics and laser transmission) and digital packet transmission technology dramatically broadened the capacity of transmission lines. The Integrated Broadband Networks (IBN) envisioned in 1990s could surpass. Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN). While the carrying capacity of ISDN on copper wire was estimated at 144,000 bits, the 1990’s Integrated Broadband Network on optic fibres, if and when they can be realized, though at a high price, could carry a quadrillion bits. This optoelectronics - based transmission capacity together with advanced switching and routing architectures such as the Asynchronous Transmission Mode (ATM) and Transmission Connection Protocol/Inter Connection Protocol (TCP/IP) are the basis of the so-called 1990’s Information Superhighway (Castells, 1998).

It was in 1969 that the US Defense Departments Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) set up a new, revolutionary electronic communication network that grew to become the current Internet. The Internet is a global information highway, which has evolved into one of technology’s greatest democracies permitting the passage of all kinds of information with full freedom. It is a platform for sharing and providing information, and through this channel, millions of scholars, scientists, businessmen, librarians, journalists, artists and software developers are woven into a ‘global village’.

In short, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have been the drivers of present day Knowledge Societies. They are providing newer and faster ways of delivering and accessing information, innovative ways for real-time communication and new ways to do business
and create livelihood opportunities. ICT offers vast potentials including Internet, e-mail, e-commerce, groupware, bulletin boards, newsgroups, video-conferencing and many more, with its far-reaching impacts.

2.5. CYBERSOCIETY

Information Technology is the single biggest shaper of contemporary society, and it will no doubt abide as a powerful catalyst of change in the future. All the developments in Information Technology and their impact on the society have given way to the new concept of 'Cybersociety'. Cybersociety is an emerging concept – it is taken to be the society of the future. The succession of transformations in the societies through the history of mankind since late 1950's were identified by terms like post capitalist society (1958), industrial society (1961), global village (Mc Luhm, 1964), the post-industrial society (Bell, 1971), super-industrial society (Toffler, 1971), information society (Toffler, 1980) and many more. These concepts in crude or unrefined form have laid the foundations for the new idea of cybersociety. Authors like Jones (1998), Rheingold (1998) Gibson(1985), Connery (1997), Stevale (1997), Castells (1998) and many others have put forward newer ideas to denote the contemporary societies as well as the societies of the future. These new concepts include cybersociety, virtual communities, network societies, cyberspace etc. Cybersociety is the future society dominated by highly digital communication and networking. In his work, 'In the Kingdom of Mao Bell', Neil Stephen says, “our concept of cyberspace, cyberculture and cyber everything is, more than we care to realize, a European idea, rooted in Deuteronomy, Socrates, Galileo, Jefferson,
Edison, Jobs, Wozniak, Glasnost, Perestroika and the United Federation of Planets.

The many-to-many electronic communication modes represented by Computer Mediated Communication have been used in different ways and for different purpose, reinforcing the pre-existing social patterns. Beyond the performance of professional tasks, the uses of CMC reach the whole realm of social activities. Besides Internet, which is the backbone of global CMC, teleshopping, telebanking, e-mail, e-commerce, tele-education or virtual university have all become parts of the formation of 'virtual communities', which is generally understood as self defined electronic network of interactive communication organized around a shared interest or purpose. Thus dominant functions and processes in the cybersociety are increasingly organized around networks. These networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power and culture.

Jones, (1998), who has given the term 'cybersociety', uses this term to indicate the new forms of community brought about by the Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and the social formations. This notion depends on the ability to share thoughts and information instantaneously across vast distances in the new environment. Cybersocieties rely on the forms of Computer Mediated Communication allowed by current computer network structures. Through communication services like America Online, MCI Mail, the Internet, Usenet and numerous other mail, messaging and Bulletin Board Services (BBSs) electronically distributed, and most
instantaneous, written communication has for many people supplanted the postal service, telephone, even fax machine. There are over 2 million Internet host computers and it is estimated that some three million people use the Usenet news service accessible via Internet.

Howard Rheingold (1998), who is the author of virtual community, gives virtual community as a group of people who may or may not meet one another face to face, and who exchange word and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks. When these exchanges began to involve interwoven friendships and rivalries and give rise to the real-life marriages, births and deaths that bond people in any other kind of community, they begin to affect these peoples' lives in the real world. Like any other community, a virtual community is also a collection of people who adhere to a certain (loose) social contract and who share certain (eclectic) interests. It usually has a geographically local focus and often has a connection to a much wider domain.

Mark Poster (1995), in his book “The Second Media Age” says that we are currently experiencing a profound paradigm shift in the field of communication. He notes that with the incipient introduction of Information Super Highway and integration of satellite technology with television, computers and telephone, an alternative to broadcast model, with its severe technical constraints, will very likely enable a system of multiple producers/distributors/customers, an entirely new configuration of communication relations in which the boundaries between those terms collapse.
We understand cybersociety as a computer mediated community of the future, characterized by high-level digital communication and networking i.e., Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). Whatever developments the society acquires, there are certain basic elements or qualities that an ideal community should possess. The common elements of an ideal community are supposed to be:

1) One standard: Principle-centered goodness where people seek to live in righteousness, to live by principles with respect for law and order. People willingly adhere to natural laws and correct principles, knowing that lasting solutions to the very real social problems we face will be based on the principles of a shared vision and synergistic approach. It is characterized by honesty and trustworthiness.

2) One heart: Vision and direction – People in this community place great value on being of one heart – on true obedience, not conformity. Members acknowledge their inter dependency. They use the key to success – connections – to build infrastructure in every area of the society.

3) One mind: purpose, mission, and unity, not conformity: oneness, not sameness – people value differences, even see them as strengths. They seek first to understand, sincerely, without an intent to manipulate others for personal gain or to close a sale.

4) Economic equality: no poor among them – The principle is that healthy, wealthy communities help sick, poor communities.
However this is not going to be the case of the cybersociety. Several literatures on what is the fate of a future community indicates that global village/ cybersociety has not yet arrived, and even the prospects for greater economic and political unity seem diminished and overshadowed by the most intractable conflicts of the post cold-war era – those involving cultural meanings far beyond strictly economic or political concerns. Guidaini (1998) asserts that in this time of expanding diversity, we cannot have strong communities without wisdom capital and the values its sustains. Wisdom capital is the available store of thought collected over thousands of years that call us to live in ways that sustain well being for others. Across cultures and epochs, literature calls for justice, honesty, tolerance, compression, generosity, self-discipline and courage. Uninformed by the wisdom tradition, data, information, knowledge, intellect, expertise strategies, and even family or social groups can be organized to exploit, degrade or violate. Wisdom capital is the community common ground – it is the measure against which the goals of individuals and the community are tested. It guides us towards what we should do and what we should be.

A masterly survey, which reviewed the changes in American life from 1960’s to 1990’s, reveals that although much has improved, one area has worsened– personal responsibility. Rise in crime, drop in income given to charity, decrease in community service, increase in cheating – all suggest that we are less connected to ideals.

Fragmentation in inner cities and anomie in the suburbs – both show the need to recover the wisdom tradition and its beneficial effects. The critical work for those who will lead the communities of the future will be to
rediscover the high principles of the wisdom tradition expressed across the faiths and absorbed into constitutions, and to learn them as way both to confirm what we have in common across time and geography and to honour the diversity present in our work force and communities.

In the words of Theodore Groat (1995), what has happened is that the immediacy and intimacy of electronic communication have exposed people world wide to the personal lives of strangers and strange lifestyles. The invidious and hierarchical bifurcations of societies and nations into "them" and "us" is the great social trauma, that on a world wide basis seems to divide as much as to unite. Within our own society, modernization and greater affluence increasingly make it possible for people to live in "lifestyle enclaves" with others just like themselves (Bellah etal, 1985). But the postmodern communications revolution makes it possible for people to live within "cultural enclaves" as well. In relational communities united by the electronic media, members interact on the basis of self-defined cultural interests. With post modernity, images become superficial, Fragmentation and discontinuity become part of our everyday lives.

Ironically, the modernism that was to bring the world greater unity and tolerance seem to be changing simultaneously along two lines. First, the pastiche of images communicated by electronic media have helped create a post modern culture increasingly characterized by cynicism and meaninglessness, shallowness, superficiality, diversity, and weakened sense of history (Griswold, 1994). At the same time, however, the intrusions of postmodern culture are being met and resisted by counter-movements in the form of cultural enclaves, lifestyle cultures and so.
The preliminary investigation of the cybersociety reveals that in spite of high emphasis given to computer and communication network, the threats of alienation and anomie and thereby decline of values and ideals arise. The first element of an ideal community relies on adhering to natural laws and correct principles – the community characterized by honesty and trustworthiness. Such an ideal community can be made a reality by the revival of spiritual feelings only. This can be achieved through holy texts like the Bible and the Quran. The relevance of these holy scriptures and the values they sustain in the emerging cybersociety is quite evident.

2.6. THE BIBLE AND THE QURAN

Christianity and Islam being the two dominant religions of the world, the Bible and the Quran are being followed as the sacred texts of a large mass. So also, the Bible and the Quran has the significance of being a message, an operative force and a personified force for the whole population. The Bible and the Quran are considered as the words of God. All over the world, devout Christians revere the Bible in the same way devout Muslims revere the Quran, because the two scriptures are perceived as material transcriptions of divine revelation. The sacredness of Bible derives from the fact that it was written under divine inspiration. The Quranic revelation was made by Archangel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad.

2.6.1 The Bible

The Bible is the Holy text of the Christians. It is a collection of many small booklets and letters (see Appendix I). The Bible has been divided into two main parts. The larger part is called “the Old Testament”
which is an account of the events occurred before Jesus Christ. The Old Testament has been written and compiled before the birth of Jesus. The second and the smaller part of the Bible is “The New Testament”. It is a record of the life and teaching of Jesus and his disciples.

The Old Testament was created, selected, canonized and edited before the Birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus was born among Jews and Christianity arose as a Jewish sect. The Old Testament is the complete Bible of Jews, and it was the Bible of Jesus and his disciples also. But after the expiry of Jesus some other writings were added to the Jewish Bible. The new addition was called the ‘New Testament’ and since then the ‘Old Bible’ has been known as the ‘Old Testament’.

The Old Testament (OT) is a collection of thirty-nine small books (excluding apocryphal books) which have been written by different authors on different occasions. The first five books of OT, known as the ‘Pentateuch’ is commonly called ‘Books of Moses’. These were brought first together about 400 BC. OT was first written in Hebrew or Aramaic. Afterwards it was translated to Greek. The original Hebrew Bible consisted of thirty-nine books, but Greek version included some more books, known as ‘Apocrypha’.

The Old Testament is a historical statement, though not accurate, of the people of Israel. Before it became a collection of books, it was a folk tradition that relied entirely upon human memory, originally the only means of passing on ideas. This tradition was sung. They sang for the most diverse reasons to which we find the accompanying songs in the Bible – eating songs, harvest songs, songs connected with work, wedding songs and
mourning songs. There are also Maxims and Proverbs (Books of Proverbs, Proverbs and Maxims of the Historic Books), words of blessing and curse, and the laws decreed to man by the Prophets on reception of their Divine mandate. These words were either passed down from family to family or channeled through the sanctuaries in the form of an account of the history of God’s chosen people (Buaille, 1996).

After Jewish people settled in Canaan at the end of 13th century BC, writing was used to preserve and hand down the tradition. There was not however complete accuracy, even in what the men seems to demand the greatest durability, i.e., the laws. Among these, the laws that are supposed to have been written by God’s own hand, the Ten Commandments were transmitted in the Old Testament in two versions, Exodus (20.1-21) and Deuteronomy (5.1-30). There is also a concern to keep at large written record of contracts, letters, lists of personalities, lists of offerings and plunder. In this way, archives were created which provided documentation for the later editing of definitive works resulting in the books we have today.

It is believed that the words of the Bible have been inspired by the Holy Ghost. God Himself put his word in the mouth of a Prophet or on Apostle, or He inspired the idea in his mind. What the Prophet spoke, he spoke as God’s mouthpiece; he prefaced what he has to say by the formula “Thus says the Lord”. The Prophet was a man with a message from God, and at first the message was a word of mouth.
2.6.1.1 The Books of the Old Testament

The Torah or Pentateuch: Torah is the Semitic name. The Greek expression, which in English gives us ‘Pentateuch’, designates a work in five parts; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These were to form the five primary elements of the collection of thirty-nine volumes that makes up the Old Testament. This group of texts deals with the origins of world up to the entry of Jewish people into Canaan, the land promised to them after their exile in Egypt, more precisely until the death of Moses. The narration of these facts serves however as a general framework for a description of the provisions made for the religious and social life of the Jewish people, hence the name Law or Torah.

The Historical books: In these books we enter into the history of the Jewish people, from the time they came to the Promised Land (13th Century BC) to the deportation to Babylon in the sixth century BC. Here stress is laid upon the event of the fulfillment of Divine word. The Book of Judges is centered on the defense of the chosen people against surrounding enemies and on the support given to them by God. The Book of Samuel and the two Books of Kings are above all biographical collections concerning Samuel, Saul, David and Solomon. Chronicles I and II, the Book of Ezra and the Book of Nehemiah have a single author, called ‘the Chronicler’. Writing in the fourth century BC. The books of Tobit, Judith and Esther are classed among the Historical Books. The Books of Maccabees are of quite different order. They provide a version of events that look place in the second century BC.

49
The Prophetic books: Under this heading we find the preaching of various prophets who in the Old Testament have been classed separately from the first great prophets such as Moses, Samuel, Elias and Elisha, whose teachings are referred to in other books. The prophetic books cover the period from the Eighth to the second century BC. In the eighth century BC, there were the books of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. The first of these is famous for his condemnation of social injustice, the second for his religious corruption which leads him to bodily suffering, like God suffering for the degradation of His people but still granting them His love. In the seventh century BC, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Nahum and Habakkuk distinguished themselves by their preaching. The period of exile in Babylon at the beginning of sixth century BC gave birth to intense prophetic activity. The Book of Obadiah deals with the misery of a conquered Jerusalem. The Book of Jonah is also included in the prophetic books.

The Books of Poetry and Wisdom: These form collections of unquestionable literary unity. Foremost among them are the Psalms, the greatest monument to Hebrew poetry. A large number were composed by David and the others by priests and Levites. Their themes are praises, supplications and meditations and they served a liturgical function. The book of Job, the book of wisdom and piety par excellence, probably dates from 400-500 BC. The song of the songs, allegorical chants mostly about Divine love, the Book of Proverbs, collection of the words of Solomon and other wise man of the court, and Ecclesiastes or Koheleth, where earthly happiness and wisdom are debated are all included in the books of poetry and wisdom.
The Old Testament therefore is a collection of works with highly disparate contents written over at least seven centuries, using extremely varied sources before being amalgamated inside a single work. The books of the Bible (both Old Testament and New Testament) in their order of arrangement in the Scripture have been given in Appendix I.

2.6.1.2 The Books of the New Testament

The New Testament is the second part of the Bible. It was created after the expiry of Jesus. The period of its creation is 5-130 CE approximately, which may be called the second age of Christian faith. In this age Christianity ceased to be merely a Jewish sect and transformed itself into an independent religion. The twenty-seven books, which make up the New Testament, were written by perhaps as many as twelve different authors over a period of some fifty years. Although the books differ in content, a constant theme runs through all of them and joins them into a unity-God’s love for man revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. The following are the books of the New Testament:

The Gospels: The New Testament consists of the Gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John, which depict the life, teachings, deeds, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Of the four canonical books that record the ‘good news’ (evangelium, gospel) brought by Jesus Christ, the first three are so alike that they are called ‘synoptic’ (at one glance). The fourth gospel i.e, the Gospel of John has some features peculiar that mark it off sharply from the Synoptics. The Gospel looks back on the earthly life of Jesus in the light of
deepened understanding. The great emphasis laid on 'knowledge' has given its vocabulary the sort of tinge to be found in later Gnostic literature.

Acts of Apostles: The Gospels are followed by the Acts of the Apostles, which traces the spread of the gospel for some thirteen years from Jerusalem to Rome, the capital of the empire. The letters of Paul were all written to meet, specific needs faced by early Christians. The only identification of the author suggested by church writers is Luke. Acts begins with Jerusalem where the faith takes firm root and the first community grows in grace and numbers. The faith spreads with Paul and Peter as apostles and finally reaches Rome, where Luke stops.

The Letters of Paul: The fourteen letters that follows, are the letters written by Paul to various churches during his missionary journey. They include letters to Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon and the Hebrews.

Letters to all Christians: There are seven letters in the New Testament that are not Pauline and are grouped together. Three of these letters are attributed to John, two to Peter and other two to James and Jude. Most of them are addressed to the whole Christian Church and not to particular communities or individuals.

The Revelation to John: The Greek title of this book is 'Apocalypse of John'. Any writing under the title Apocalypse claims to include a revelation of hidden things, imparted by God, and particularly a revelation of events hidden in the future.
2.6.2 Epistemological foundations of the Bible

A preliminary survey of the Bible and literature related to it showed that Information, Knowledge and Wisdom are dealt with the text at many occasions. In the New Testament John claims, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made (John 1.1-3). Here, relating God with word stresses the significance of ‘word’ as the source of all knowledge. A few quotations from the Bible related to knowledge and wisdom are given below (The World Scripture: A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts, 1993).

Does not wisdom call,
Does not understanding raise her voice?
On the heights beside the way,
In the path she takes her stand
Beside the gates in front of the town
At the entrance of the portals she cries aloud.
“To you, Omen, I call,
And my cry is to the sons of man.
O simple ones, learn prudence.
O foolish men, pay attention
Hear for I will speak noble things
And from my lips will come what is right
For my mouth will utter truth
Wickedness is an admonition to my lips.
All the words of my mouth are righteous;
There is nothing twisted or crooked in them
They are all straight to him who understands
And right to those who find knowledge
Take my instruction instead of silver,
And knowledge rather than choice gold;
For wisdom is better than jewels
And all that you may desire cannot compare
With her

(Proverbs 8.1-11)

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God who give to all
men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him”.

(James 1.5)

"The fear of Lord is the beginning of wisdom”.

(Proverbs 9.10)

"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines
that he knows something, he does not yet know, as he ought to know. But if
one loves God, one is known by him”. (1.Corinthians, 8.1-3)

2.6.3 The Quran

The Quran for the Muslim, is the revelation of God in which
His messages to man is contained. It is the Word of God revealed to Prophet
Mohammed through the archangel Gabriel. The Prophet was therefore the
instrument chosen by God for the revelation of His Word, of His Book of
which both the spirit and the letter, the content and the form, is Divine. Not
only the content and meaning comes from God but also the container and form which are thus an integral aspect of the revelation (Hossein Nasr, 1966).

Quran was first revealed to the Prophet when he was spending some time as he often did, in a cave in the mountain of Hira, near Mecca. Suddenly the consciousness of the human receptacle was rent asunder by Archangel Gabriel, whose function in Islam is in many ways like that of the Holy Ghost in Christianity. He told the Prophet “Recite!” and with that word the descent of the Divine message began. To the command of Gabriel to ‘recite’, the Prophet answered by announcing that he did not have the ability to do so, being unlettered. But the Divine message had itself given him the power to ‘recite’ the Book of God and henceforth he became the human recipient of this message, which made known to the mankind. The revelation took place over a period of more than twenty years of the Prophet life, beginning with the first verses of Sura 96, and then resuming after a three year break for a long period of twenty years upto the death of the Prophet in 632 AD. The following was the first Revelation (Sura 96, Verses 1 to 5).

“Read: in the name of thy Lord, who created,
Who created man from a clot of congealed blood,
Read! Thy Lord is most Bounteous,
Who taught by the pen,
Who taught man what he knew not”.

Whatever revelation has been received, it was committed to memory by Prophet and the Believers and they were accustomed to reciting the revealed text from memory. Whenever a fragment of Quran was revealed, the Prophet called one of his literate companions and dictated it to
him, indicating at the same time, the exact position of the new fragment in the fabric of what had already been received. Not long after Prophet's death (632 AD) his successor AbuBakr, the first Caliph of Islam, asked Mohammed's former head scribe Zaid Ibn Thabit, to make a copy, which he did. On Omar's initiative (the future second Caliph) Zaid consulted all the information he could assemble at Madinah, and the witness of Hafizun (who knew the whole of Quran by heart) and copies of the Book written on various materials to produce an extremely faithful copy of the Holy Quran. Caliph Omar, AbuBakr's successor in AD 634, subsequently made a single volume (mushaf) that he preserved. The third Caliph of Islam, Uthman entrusted a commission of experts in order to check the authenticity of the document produced under AbuBakr. The critical analysis of the authenticity of the text was carried out very rigorously whose result was a text containing an order of suras (chapters) that reflects the order followed by the Prophet in his complete recital of the Quran during the month of Ramadhan, the month in which Quran was first revealed.

The Quran consists of 114 suras or chapters arranged in decreasing order of length of which there are exceptions also. The chronological sequence of revelation is not followed, however in majority of cases, this sequence is known. The suras consists of Ayats (sentences), the total number in the whole text is 6666. A large number of descriptions are mentioned at several points in the text, sometimes giving rise to repetitions. Very frequently a passage will add details to a description that appears elsewhere in a complete form. Many subjects are dealt within the Quran, scattered throughout the book without any particular classification. The text is neither in poetic form nor that of a prose, but has a unique form of its own.
2.6.4 Epistemological foundations of the Quran

It is of great significance that the first word of Quran to be revealed was ‘recite’ for the supreme symbol of revelation in Islam is a book. It is also notable that one of the themes of this first revelation was the praise of the pen as a means of human knowledge. Similar mention of knowledge and wisdom occurs in several verses scattered throughout the text. A few of them taken from “The World Scripture: A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts” which is a project of the International Religious Foundation is given below: It includes Hadiths (sayings of Prophet Mohammed) also.

“(God) gives wisdom to whom He will, and he to whom wisdom is given has truly received abundant good. But none remember except men of understanding” (Quran 2:269)

“The search for knowledge is an obligation laid on every Muslim” (Hadith: Ibn Majah and Baihaqi)

...And say (O Muhammed); “My Lord, increase me in knowledge” (Quran 20:114)

“There is no greater wealth than wisdom; no greater poverty than ignorance; no greater heritage than culture” (Hadith: NahjulBalaga. Saying:52).

2.6.5 The Hadith

The second of the two main sources for an understanding of Islam, after the holy Quran are the Hadith. The collections of the recorded
words, actions and sanctions of the Prophet Muhammed, which make up the ‘Sunna’ are normally referred to as Hadith. As the holy Quran is the word of Allah it must be strictly followed; in the same way the teachings contained in the Prophet’s ‘Sunna’ must be observed by all who profess to be Muslims. Thus the Sunna in the form of Hadith, is complementary to the holy book itself: it helps to explain and clarify the holy Quran and to present practical applications of its teachings. Without a study of Hadith a Muslim’s knowledge of his faith remains incomplete.

There are a number of authentic hadiths giving the importance of knowledge and wisdom, acquisition of knowledge and many other aspects of knowledge and wisdom. However, considering the vastness of the Hadiths, the present study is limited to Quran for the study of the different aspects of information, knowledge and wisdom.

2.7. THE BIBLE, THE QURAN AND THE CYBERSOCIETY

The background study about the Bible and the Quran reveals that both the scriptures deals extensively on Information, Knowledge and Wisdom- in some cases explicitly and in other cases implicitly. The study of cybersociety reveals that the society is basically centered around or moved by knowledge and wisdom. Therefore cybersociety should be designated as knowledge and information based society, giving emphasis to wisdom, human and spiritual values.