METHODOLOGY

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CHAPTER 4

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The present study is a comparative study of the treatment of Information, Knowledge and Wisdom in the Bible and the Quran within the context of the emerging cybersociety. The title itself implies that this is a multi-disciplinary research involving data from different fields like Religion, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, Information Technology and Futurology. The study is a highly theoretical one with a qualitative approach. The different aspects involved in the study are:

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

2. Tracing out of a unifying element in the two religious scriptures.

3. Incorporating this unifying element in the modern information-based cybersociety and

4. Identifying the applicability of this unifying element in Information Science and Information Technology.

Thus the study can be included under exploratory research where the purpose is to generate a new idea, the idea being that of the unifying element discussed above. It just attempts to see what is there. The study is primarily based on the Bible and the Quran. The nature of the study suggests a naturalistic methodology to be undertaken where the researcher
does not select or operationally define the constructs to be studied. In one sense the study can be considered to be a historical one also. Here history can be considered to be a actuality, as written as a record, the two scriptures essentially dealing with these aspects of documentary and other primary evidence of history as actuality. History as written is presumably based on history as record and consists of various kinds of narratives or amounts of a portion of history as actuality. The present study is also a comparative study of two religious texts with regard to the factors information, knowledge and wisdom in the emerging cybersociety, letting aside all other religious aspects.

4.1 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”.

4.2 Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the present study:

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

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

3) 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.
4) 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.

4.3 Sources of Data

The two primary sources of data are the Bible and the Quran. The Bible includes both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The New Jerusalem Bible published in India by the Bombay Saint Paul Society, Bombay has been taken for the exhaustive study of the Biblical text. The Holy Quran- English Translation of the meanings and commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali printed and published by King Fahd – Holy Quran printing complex, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has been taken for doing the exhaustive survey of the Quranic text. Other literature including approved and authentic commentaries and interpretation of texts are also taken as sources of data. They include

Bible:


2) King James Version (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1769)

3) The `Bible Knowledge Commentary (Walvoord, John F and Zuck, Roy B).

Quran:

1) The Noble Qur’an. English Translation by Marmaduke Pikthall


The views of experienced persons and experts in the field and also related literature on the epistemological aspects of Bible, Quran and Cybersociety prove to be valuable sources of data for conducting the study. The literature on the Bible and the Quran reviewed in the previous chapter also proved to be very useful for the study. Though material on the epistemological aspects of cybersociety are only few, they proved to be helpful in knowing the latest developments.

4.4 Methods of Data Collection

The methods of data collection basically included exhaustive study of the Bible and the Quran, survey based on the views of the Biblical and Quranic experts and literature survey. A thorough exhaustive study of the Bible and the Quran has been made to search out the various sections dealing with different aspects of Information, Knowledge and Wisdom. A deeper survey of commentaries and translations of the Holy Scriptures were also conducted in order to obtain more explanation on them.

Structured interview of Biblical and Quranic experts were conducted on the problem under study. Six experts from the Kerala State, three each from Christianity and Islam have been interviewed. The interview mainly covered questions on two aspects: 1) The approaches of the Bible and the Quran towards information, knowledge and wisdom and 2) The relevance
of these approaches in the emerging cybersociety. Responses from these experts on the various aspects of the study and from different angles provide valuable data for the conduct of the study. The comments of Bible scholars on Bible and also on Quran as well as the comments of Quranic scholars on Quran and also on Bible will help to derive the unifying element and thereby reach generalizations.

The literature survey involves the analysis of documents and historical records. This included survey of related literature on both the Bible and the Quran in addition to cybersociety.

4.5 Methodology

As a first step in the analysis procedure, thorough analysis of the Bible and the Quran is conducted to find out the various chapters and sections dealing with information, knowledge and wisdom. As the next step, these ideas are categorised into ten different heads or themes. Based on these themes, the analysis is carried out.

The data analysis involves: a) count analysis, b) content analysis and c) analysis of experts’ views. The count analysis is conducted by taking the count of the ten themes on knowledge and wisdom in the Bible (OT and NT) and the Quran and their comparison--between Old Testament and New Testament and also between the Bible and the Quran. The word count of the terms Knowledge and Wisdom for the two texts is also taken and the analysis is conducted similarly.

The content analysis procedure involves a thorough analysis of these themes as dealt in the two texts, following which the basic approach
of the individual texts regarding each theme is arrived at. A comparison of these approaches in different categories is conducted to find out whether similarity or differences exist, if any, in all these aspects. The analysis of this data helps in searching out the basic approaches of the texts towards Information, Knowledge and Wisdom.

The next step in the content analysis involves the identification of the unifying element, if any, in both the scriptures, based on these approaches. Integration of this unifying element with the concerned aspect of Information Science, Information Technology and Cybersociety will help to find out the theoretical foundations of these ideas. The applicability of this unifying element in the emerging cybersociety is determined and this will prove the relevance of the approaches of the Bible and the Quran in the cybersociety.

The analysis of the views of the experts involves the analysis based on the structured interview of the experts. Their views supplement the Biblical and Quranic views arrived at by carrying out the content analysis of the two texts. This proves to be helpful in finding out the theoretical foundations of the areas under study.

4.6 Techniques of Research

The present study is not a theological one, but an interdisciplinary one. Therefore the techniques of research also involve those from different fields, or it uses a combined research technique. The study is a historical one; the data analysis involves content analysis of documents i.e. the Bible and the Quran and other commentaries and translations, in addition
to review of related literature. The content analysis is carried out by careful study of each and every sentence of the two texts, scanning from the very beginning to the end. The Old Testament and the New Testament are taken separately for the Bible to conduct the study. This will facilitate the comparison of the OT and the NT regarding their count as well as content.

Techniques in Futurology were also used to some extent in the study. The study reflects visions of the future, i.e., to what extent the Biblical and Quranic approaches towards information, knowledge and wisdom are relevant in the emerging cybersociety. Forecasting and insights and impressions of the researcher prove to be essential to undertake the analysis and to reach a conclusion.

The study also makes use of techniques in field research as a supportive measure. Personal interview of the experts in both the fields using structured interview schedule was found to be very useful. Analysis is also conducted on the theme count of the various themes on knowledge and wisdom discussed above and word count of the terms 'Knowledge' and 'Wisdom' in both the Bible (OT and NT) and the Quran. Hence it also makes use of bibliometric techniques, especially in conducting count analysis.

Thus a combined research technique has been made use of in the conduct of the study. Analysis of data is conducted making use of these techniques. The findings of the analysis are given in detail in the following chapter.
4.7 Methodological Problems

The study faces some methodological problems. No similar or parallel studies have been undertaken so far. The investigator has developed a methodology of her own. So also almost all the studies are oriented towards past rather than future. The present study is a future oriented one. So intuitive elements, projection and forecasting techniques have been employed to a limited extent in order to reach generalization. Imagination and vision about the future is reflected in the study. Moreover, cybersociety is an emerging concept and Information Communication Technologies (ICT) are not always continuous and may be influenced and shaped by unforeseen events and are therefore difficult to predict and control. All these factors suggest that no clear-cut methodology can be followed for the study.