"THE CONCEPT OF AL-WASATIYYAH
AND
THE PLACE OF ISLAMICMODERATION IN IT"

Introduction

The term *al-Wasaṭiyyah* is used in the context of the Qur'ānic expression "*ummatan wasaṭan*", which refers to the Islamic Community or Nation having the attributes of justice, excellence and balance in order to serve as Allah's trustworthy "witnesses over mankind" ("*shuhadā' 'alā al-nās*") in this world and in the Hereafter (Q. 2: 143). It can also be translated as "Justly Balanced Quality" or "Justly Balanced Nature" of Islam and the Islamic community. The more popular translation of the term, however, is "moderation."

The terms *Wasaṭiyyah* as well as "moderation" have become increasingly popular in Muslim public discourse, nowadays, as several Muslim national leaders grapple with the religio-political challenges posed by the emergent currents of religious extremism, radicalism and violence in their societies. But the primary focus on the dimension of religious "moderation", tolerance and inter-religious harmony by the national leaders and Muslim NGOs, in this troubled world of ours, in the name of *Wasaṭiyyah* can lead to the unintended consequence of Muslims and non-Muslims mistaking the part for the whole. Without a sound and proper explanation based on authoritative and scholarly sources, more confusion may also ensue as to what is really meant by "Justly Balanced Quality", "moderation" and *Wasaṭiyyah*.

Islam and Muslims have become the primary targets of demonisation, islamophobia, and ethnic prejudice in the West after 9/11 and "WAR ON TERROR". Muslims are perceived as violent-prone and the Qurʾān is seen as the source of violence and militancy worldwide. Muslim immigrants in Western The world has entered into an "Era of Turbulence and Turmoil". countries are viewed as a threat to Western stability and those in Europe are seen as scheming towards "Eurabia". The new phenomenon of "Arab Awakening" or "Revolution" raises doubts about the role of Islam vis-à-vis secularism and democracy in the new regimes. New labels have been manufactured by Western media and academia to frame Islam and Muslims according to Western perspectives or interests: "Political Islam" "Spiritual Islam", "Transnational Islam", "Moderate Islam", "Liberal Islam" and "Progressive Islam", "Feminist Islam", "Secular Islam", "Feminist Islam", etc. Incidentally, the term "American Islam" (*al-Islam al-Amriki*) was used by Sayyid Qutb in one of his 1950s writings.

Thus searching and identifying "the moderate" voice within the Muslim community have become problematic for most people because of the lack of objectivity and consensus on what constitutes "moderation" in a world order post 9/11. The dominant mainstream media and powerful political and economic interests define the boundaries of "Us" and "Them", or "We" and "Others".

It may be useful to recollect that the mission of Islamisation in IIUM, which is her *raison d'etre* and intellectual niche, is divided into two major interrelated categories: 1.**ACADEMIC**, namely Islamisation of Human Knowledge (I.O.H.K.)and2. **NON-ACADEMIC**,namely Islamisation of the Self (I.O.S) (or Human Character). Our efforts at educating or enlightening the public comes under the first category of the Islamisation of Human Knowledge, while our attempt to live in accordance with the teachings, principles, ethical values and norms of Islam comes under the second category: Islamisation of the Self. As for our endeavour to provide a scholarly exposition and objective explanation and/or correction regarding the concept of *Wasaṭiyyah*, it comes under both categories.

Why We Need to Understand the Concept of *Wasaṭiyyah* in the Current World Situation

The mission of Islam as a peaceful religion which advocates inter-religious tolerance is being distorted by non-Muslim states, media, NGOs and religious fundamentalists in the world. The phenomenon of religious extremism as well as religious liberalism, among some Muslim groups, has also tarnished the image of Islam among non-Muslims in the West and the East. In In this contect, the terms *Jihād* and *Sharīʿah* have assumed negative connotations not only to the Western media and governments, but also to the ears of the Muslim secularists and liberalists.

In Muslim societies, the concept of **wasatiyyah** has not been given the attention it deserves, partly because the traditional religious education given to the younger generation, for instance in the Malay world – and this may also be the case in many African and Asian countries – tends to focus on basic Islamic beliefs (*ilmu tauhid*), *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* matters, religious worship proper (*ilmu ibadat*) and good character (*ilmu akhlak*). For the older generation, the focus tends to be on the knowledge of personal Islamic spirituality (*ilmu tasawwuf*). As a result, the education regarding the concept of *Ummah Wasaṭ* – the Justly Balanced Community, the vital collective transnational force mandated by Allah (S.W.T.) to champion the tranformational mission of the Prophet, as well as the different civilizational role of the *Ummah*, and the sociology, politics, economics and culture of the *Ummah* has been somewhat neglected. So, although the concept of **wasaṭiyyah** is as old as the Qur'ān, it is not widely known, let alone understood, within the Muslim societies themselves.

Meanwhile the emergence of Muslim militant or sectarian (such as Shī`ah) groups, in the last three decades, in Sunni-dominant countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Southern Thailand, Mindanao which tend to ignore mainstream religious doctrines or viewpoints, or are bent upon bringing about socio-religious changes based upon their own visions of Islamic society, culture or state, has made it necessary for religious authorities and concerned Islamic scholars to promote the correct and balanced understanding of Islamic teachings. To make matters worse, a countervailing social force consisting of liberalized and secularised elites has also appeared in some Muslim countries to popularise their own startling and anti-orthodox views of Islam in the name of democracy, basic human rights, individual freedom, and freedom of expression, moderation and rationalism.

Today, as a result of the emergence of the trend of Islamic extremism and radicalism from the 70s through the 80s, and the post 9/11 wave of Western military invasions or interventions, with their bloody consequences in Palestine, Iraq, North Africa, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia and Mindanao, Muslim leaders and the OIC states decided to promote and highlight the message of inter-civilisational and inter-religious dialogue, inter-religious tolerance and non-violent solutions to international conflicts as well as peaceful approaches to socio-political change. Thus the term "moderation" began to be widely used by political leaders in Western as well as Muslim countries – albeit with their own understandings and interpretations – to underscore the new global quest for a non-violent world and the need to stem the tide of religious radicalism and militancy.

Western political and religious leaders, think-tanks and strategic thinkers and power elites in Washington and European capitals intellectuals began to urge that the silent majority of "Muslim Moderates" should be mobilised to speak up and present a counter-current against Muslim extremists or "terrorists". In Pakistan, a country beset by the centrifugal forces of deep political strife, intra-religious tensions and sectarian violence, coupled with political and military pressures from USA administration pursuing the "War on Terror" in this Muslim country, the then President, Gen. Parvez Musharraf, became the first Muslim political leader to trumpet the slogan of "**Enlightened Moderation**" (officially translated in Pakistan as "*al-Wasaṭiyyah al-Mustanīrah*" in Arabic) in his country and overseas. It was his fervent desire that the whole Muslim world, particularly the OIC countries, would speedily agree to adopt his slogan of "**Enlightened Moderation**" in the beginning of the 21st century as the new global Muslim "mantra" that would also be most agreeable to the USA and her European allies. Unfortunately, his fall from the powerful position of President brought an abrupt end to his national campaign. In Indonesia, a new organisation focusing on "Moslem [sic.] Moderates" was formed several years ago. In recent years several institutes or foundations on *wasaṭiyyah* have been established in the world today, the most well-known being in Kuwait, Jordan and Qatar.

It should be made clear, however, that religious or cultural "moderation" is one important dimension of Qurʾānic **wasaṭiyyah**, not the whole of it. Therefore we should be careful when we use the term **wasaṭiyyah**, not to confuse the part with the whole. Intellectual integrity and objective scholarship require that in the discourse on **wasaṭiyyah**, one should not forget to relate the qualities, attributes or values of "balance" or "moderation" to the basic qualities of Justice (**al-ʿAdl**)and Excellence/Best (**al-Khiyār**), as explained by the well–established classical commentators of the Qurʾān such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Rāzī, al-Qurtubī or Ibn Kathīr.

In light of the above factors and circumstances, there is a need for Muslim academics

a) To explain the true nature of Islam, the "*ummah wasat"* and *wasatiyyah* according to the Qurʾān and the Sunnah.

b) To correct the misconceptions or misinterpretations regarding Islamic concepts, beliefs, teachings, laws, values, institutions, etc. related to the concept of *wasatiyyah*.

c) To educate and enlighten the English-reading Muslim community regarding the Divine mandate and high honour given to the Muslim *Ummah* when Allah (S.W.T.) decided to make the new *Ummah* of Prophet Muḥammad (Ṣ.ʿA.W.) as *"ummatan wasatan"*, as part of the vital Muslim understanding of themselves as the chosen carriers of the great civilisational mission as Allah's "witnesses".

The Qurʾānic Meaning and Connotations of *al-Wasaṭiyyah*:

1.   JUSTICE (*al-ʿAdl*)

The term ***wasaṭiyyah*** *is* a verbal noun (*maṣdar*) from the word *wasaṭ* in the following *āyah* or verse of the Qurʾān:

$$\text{وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَٰكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِّتَكُونُوا۟ شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى ٱلنَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ ٱلرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا}$$

> "And thus we have made you a JUST COMMUNITY that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you." (Q. 2: 143)

According to Muhammad Asad, the "Middlemost Community" is "a community that keeps an equitable balance between extremes and is realistic in its appreciation of man's nature and possibilities, rejecting both licentiousness and exaggerated asceticism. In tune with its oft-repeated call to moderation in every aspect of life, the Qur'an exhorts the believers not to place too great an emphasis on the physical and material aspects of their lives, but postulates, at the same time, that man's urges and desires relating to this "life of the flesh" are God-willed and, therefore, legitimate…On further analysis, the expression "a community of the middle way" might be said to summarize, as it were, the Islamic attitude towards the problem of man's existence as such: a denial of the view that there is an inherent conflict between the spirit and the flesh, and a bold affirmation

of the natural, God-willed unity in this twofold aspect of human life. This balanced attitude, peculiar to Islam, flows directly from the concept of God's oneness and, hence, of the unity of purpose underlying all His creation." (Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 30)

From the above verse it is clear that the most important meaning of ***wasaṭiyyah*** which makes the *Ummah* suitable to become "witnesses over mankind" is **justice**; which includes justice to Allah (S.W.T.), justice to the religion of *Tauḥīd (affirmation of the absolute and uncompromising oneness of Allah, His Dominion, Lordship, Knowledge and Power over the whole of existence)*, justice to human beings and all creatures, justice to nature, and justice to oneself. Without this quality of comprehensive justice and fairness, the *Ummah* cannot be the witnesses against those peoples or human beings who have failed to fulfil the Divine Trusts placed upon their shoulders.

It is reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of Abū Sa`īd al-Khuḍarī that the Prophet (Ṣ.'A.W.)interpreted the word "***wasaṭ***" in verse 143 of *Sūrah Al-Baqarah* (Q.2) to mean justice (***al-'adl***). Justice requires being in the middle-most position between two or more opposing sides, without inclining to or favouring any of the sides, and not swayed by emotions, biases or prejudice in making judgements, decisions or solving disputes. Hence the connotations of "balance", "equilibrium" or "moderation."

The noun "***al-wasṭ***" (literally, meaning the middle, the middlemost, the centre), according to the commentator, Abū Su`ūd, is "originally a name for something whereby the connection of all sides to it is of equal distance, such as the centre of a circle. Then the word is borrowed in order to describe the praiseworthy human qualities, by virtue of those qualities being in the middle of blameworthy qualities which surround it in the modes of excessiveness (***ifrāṭ***) and laxity (***tafrīṭ***)." (Al-Qaraḍāwī, al-***Khaṣā'iṣ al-`Āmmah li- al-Islām***,1977)

One of the wise sayings of the Arabs is "***Khairu al-umūr al-wasaṭ***" (The best of affairs is the middle position). Therefore when it was said that the Quraish tribe is "***awsaṭ al-'Arab***" in terms of genealogy and locality, it means that it was the best tribe, just as when it was said that the Prophet (Ṣ.'A.W.) was "***wasaṭan fi qawmihi***" it means that the Prophet (Ṣ.'A.W.) the noblest among his people genealogically. (al-Qaraḍāwī, 1977)

Hence the word "***awsaṭuhum***" in verse 28 of *Surah al-Qalam* (Q.68) has been interpreted by the Qur'an commentators to mean "the most just of them" (***a'daluhum***). This interpretation is confirmed

by al-Imām al-Rāzī in his *Tafsīr* in which he says, "The most just place for deciding something is to be in the middle, because its judgement with regard to all its sides is the same and is equal." (al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*)

The absolute commitment of this "Just Community" is to uphold and preserve the pristine purity of the religion of *Tauḥīd*, and execute the commandments and Plan of Allah (S.W.T.), accompanied by a God-fearing mindset (*taqwā*), thereby becoming the most suitable witnesses over mankind regarding the integrity and purity of Allah's religion, Truth versus Falsehood, Good versus Evil, and the practice of true Balance and Moderation in this world and in the Hereafter. Therefore when we discuss the topic of **wasaṭiyyah** or Islamic moderation, or justly balanced nature of Islam, we should not lose sight of the obligation upon Muslims to become religious, moral and civilisational witnesses over mankind, with the attributes of justice and moral excellence as the core attributes.

At this juncture it is useful to highlight some Qur'anic principles regarding (1) **Justice**:

Believers are commanded by Allah (S.W.T.) to uphold justice even if it is against self-interest:

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ كُونُوا۟ قَوَّٰمِينَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ ٱلْوَٰلِدَيْنِ وَٱلْأَقْرَبِينَ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَٱللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا۟ ٱلْهَوَىٰٓ أَن تَعْدِلُوا۟ وَإِن تَلْوُۥٓا۟ أَوْ تُعْرِضُوا۟ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ۞

"O you, who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever acquainted with what you do."(Q. 4:135) (Source: http://quran.com/4)

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِٱلْعَدْلِ وَٱلْإِحْسَٰنِ وَإِيتَآئِ ذِى ٱلْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ ٱلْفَحْشَآءِ وَٱلْمُنكَرِ وَٱلْبَغْىِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ۞

"Indeed, Allah commands justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded." (Source: http://quran.com/16)

(2) Excellence, best and goodness (*al-khairiyyah*)

The Muslim community is entrusted by Allah (S.W.T.) to represent all that is good (*al-khair*), enjoin the right (*al-ma'rūf*) and prohibit the bad/wrong/evil (*al-munkar*)

كُنتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ ۗ وَلَوْ ءَامَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَٰبِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُم ۚ مِّنْهُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَٰسِقُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

"You are the BEST COMMUNITY brought fourth [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient."(Q. 3: 110)

وَلْتَكُن مِّنكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

"And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful." (Q.3:104)

It may be useful to know that many works have already been written in many languages by Muslim scholars on this subject of " enjoining what is good/right and prohibiting what is bad/evil," because it is a very important tenet of Islam.

(3) Balanced (*al-Tawassut*, *al-Tawāzun, al-IÑtidÉl*)

Balance or moderation in personal conduct and behavior:

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ ﴿١٨﴾

"And do not turn your cheek [in contempt] toward people and do not walk through the earth exultantly. Indeed, Allah does not like everyone self-deluded and boastful" (Q. 31: 18)

وَٱقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَٱغْضُضْ مِن صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنكَرَ ٱلْأَصْوَٰتِ لَصَوْتُ ٱلْحَمِيرِ ﴿١٩﴾

"And be moderate in your pace and lower your voice; indeed, the most disagreeable of sounds is the voice of donkeys."(Q. 31: 19)

Balance between other-worldly goals and this-worldly responsibility:

وَٱبْتَغِ فِيمَآ ءَاتَىٰكَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلدَّارَ ٱلْأَخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِن كَمَآ أَحْسَنَ ٱللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ ٱلْفَسَادَ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

"But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters." (Q. 28: 77)

Peaceful relationship with others and religious tolerance are the norm to be observed by the Muslim community:

لَّا يَنْهَىٰكُمُ ٱللَّهُ عَنِ ٱلَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَٰتِلُوكُمْ فِى ٱلدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُم مِّن دِيَٰرِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوٓا۟ إِلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٨﴾

"Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly." (Q. 60: 8)

An exception to peaceful relationship is provided for in the following verse:

إِنَّمَا يَنْهَىٰكُمُ ٱللَّهُ عَنِ ٱلَّذِينَ قَٰتَلُوكُمْ فِى ٱلدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُم مِّن دِيَٰرِكُمْ وَظَٰهَرُوا۟ عَلَىٰٓ إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَن تَوَلَّوْهُمْ ۚ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلظَّٰلِمُونَ ﴿٩﴾

"Allah only forbids you from making allies with them those who fight you because of your religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion. And whoever makes allies of them, and then it is those who are the wrongdoers." (Q. 60: 9)

Balance in economic consumption is indicated in the following verses:

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تُحَرِّمُوا۟ طَيِّبَـٰتِ مَآ أَحَلَّ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوٓا۟ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُعْتَدِينَ ۝

"O you who have believed, do not prohibit the good things which Allah has made lawful to you and do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors." (Q. 5: 87)

وَكُلُوا۟ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ ٱللَّهُ حَلَـٰلًا طَيِّبًا وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَنتُم بِهِۦ مُؤْمِنُونَ ۝

"And eat of what Allah has provided for you [which is] lawful and good. And fear Allah, in whom you are believers". (Q. 5: 88)

Balance and moderation is required in the propagation of Islam:

ٱدْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِٱلْحِكْمَةِ وَٱلْمَوْعِظَةِ ٱلْحَسَنَةِ وَجَـٰدِلْهُم بِٱلَّتِى هِىَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِۦ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِٱلْمُهْتَدِينَ ۝

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided." (Q. 16: 125)

It should be pointed out that it is this aspect of *wasaṭiyyah*, i.e. the quality of "balance" or "moderation" which, understandably, receives the most attention today. As a consequence the qualities of "justice" and "goodness" or "excellence" as fundamental criteria of WITNESSING OVER MANKIND are being neglected, sidelined or forgotten. "Balance" or "moderation", must not be misunderstood as justification for indulgence (*tasāhul*), carelessness or an excuse to be negligent in performance of religious obligations. It is the duty of objective and qualified Muslim scholars to make the necessary corrections or clarifications.

Other connotations of *al-wasaṭiyyah*:

(4)   Straightness (*al-istiqāmah*)

"The Straight Way or the Straight Path is also the middle position as compared to the crooked, winding or wrong paths surrounding it. For this reason the Muslim is taught to ask God Most Gracious to guide him or her to the Straight Path seventeen times a day while reciting *Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah* ("The Opening") during the five daily prayers." The Muslims and the Islamic *Ummah* on the Straight Path implies the avoidance of the excessiveness or the negligence of earlier religious communities, throughout human history, which have earned the wrath of Allah (S.W.T.) or which strayed away from the right path. (al-Qaraḍāwī, 1977)

(5)   Strength *(al-quwwah)*

"Being in the middle is a point of strength as well, just as strength is represented by the youths who occupy the intermediate position between the weakness of childhood and the weakness of old age. Likewise the sun at noon time is at the hottest position when compared to the beginning and the end of the day!". (al-Qaraḍāwī, 1977)

(6)   *Wasatiyyah* as opposed to religious or moral extremism:

Extremism (*al-ghuluww*) in religion is strictly prohibited by the Prophet (S.ʿA.W.):

It should be made clear to Muslims and non-Muslims that the Prophet (Ṣ.ʿA.W.) did not prohibit the good things (*al-ṭayyibāt*)in this world for human consumption and physical wellbeing, but those good things were never a part of his primary concern as he preferred to live a life of simplicity, frugality, humility and moral restraint. In one of his famous supplications, the Prophet (Ṣ.ʿA.W.) showed his holistic and comprehensive vision of life, and proper attitude towards his religion (*al-dīn*), the world (*al-dunyā*), the Hereafter (*al-ākhirah*), life (*al-ḥayāh*) and death (*al-mawt*):

"O Allah, improve for me my religion which safeguards all my affairs; and improve for me my worldly existence for in it is my livelihood; and improve for me my Hereafter for to it is my return; and make this life an increase for me in all that is good; and make death as a relief for me from all that is bad."

The Prophet (Ṣ.ʿA.W.) used to urge his Companions to strike the proper balance between their religiosity and their worldly affairs, and between the legitimate pleasure of the body and the felicity of the spirit. Whenever he came to know that some of them were showing excessiveness in one direction, he would, with his wisdom, put them back on the evenly balanced path. Once he saw a Companion who was preoccupied with prayer, fasting and nightly vigils at the expense of his physical wellbeing, his wife and community. He said to him:

"Verily, your body has a right on you, and your wife has a right on you, and your visitors and guests have a right on you. Therefore give to each one that has a right upon you his/her right."

However, when he witnessed some of the Companions enthusiastically waiting and desiring to get a share of the booty brought back by Abū ʿUbaidah from al-Baḥrain, he seized the opportunity to warn them of the "temptation of this world" (*fitnat al-dunyā*) and its deceptions and illusions (*al-ghurūr*), saying:

"Rejoice (for a while) and become weary (after that). By Allah, it is not poverty that I am afraid for you: I am afraid that material wealth (al-dunyā) would be spread over you abundantly as it spread over those before you. Then you will be competing with one another for it as they had competed for it, and then it will destroy you as it had destroyed them." (Sahih al-Bukhari: Volume 1, Book 2, Number 38)

الدين أحد إلا غلبه فسددوا وقاربوا وأبشروا واستعينوا بالغدوة والروحة وشيء من الدلجة

Narrated Abu Hurairah:

The Prophet said, "Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extremists, but try to be near to perfection and

receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded; and gain strength by worshipping in the mornings, the nights." (See Fath al-Bari, p.102, Vol. 1).

فحين اشتدت أم المؤمنين عائشة رضي الله عنها على اليهود الذين دخلوا على النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم سابين له بصيغة التسليم فقالوا: السام عليك بدل السلام عليك، قال لها وهو فطن لما قالوه: يا عائشة إن الله رفيق يحب الرفق ويعطي على الرفق ما لا يعطي على العنف وما لا يعطي على ما سواه.

'A'isha, the wife of Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him), reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: 'A'isha, verily Allah is kind and He loves kindness and confers upon kindness which he does not confer upon severity and does not confer upon anything else besides it (kindness). (Sahih Muslim, Book 32, Number 6273)

Graphic representation of the concept:

From a comprehensive understanding of the concept of *wasaṭiyyah* as constitutive of the core qualities of JUSTICE, EXCELLENCE and BALANCE, it is possible to present the comprehensive and holistic meaning of the Qur'ānic concept in the following illustration, on the next page. It is my humble attempt to simplify the intellectual discourse on the concept and to convey its holistic and inter-related nature.
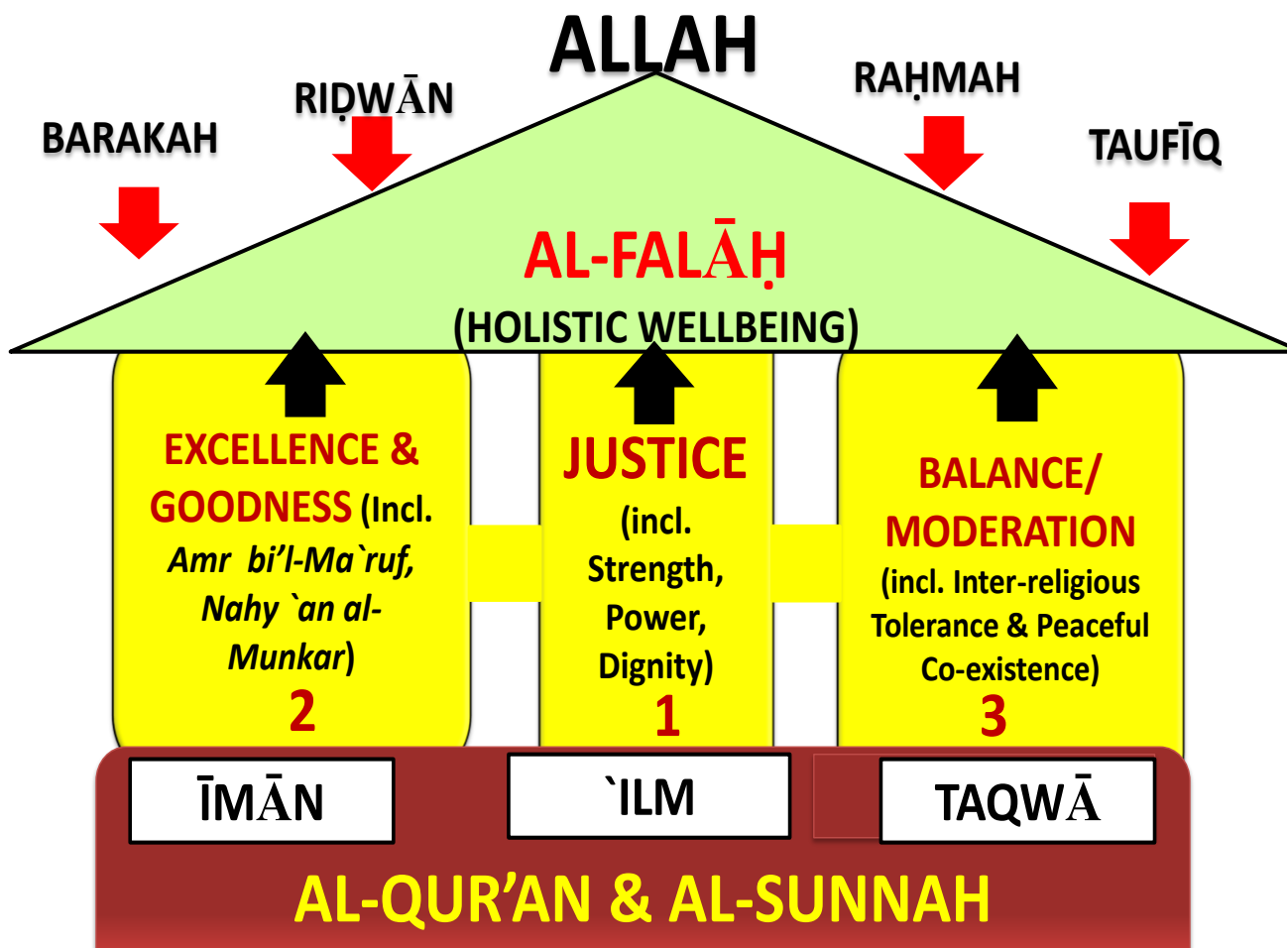
THE STRUCTURE OF AL-WASATIYYAH

Understanding the holistic structure of **al-Wasaṭiyyah** and the organic unity of the qualities of JUSTICE, EXCELLENCE and BALANCE or MODERATION is important for Muslims to strive for COMPREHENSIVE CIVILISATIONAL GOODNESS AND EXCELLENCE as a Divinely prescribed condition to carry the great status and title of "*WITNESSES UNTO MANKIND*" (*shuhadā' `ala al-nās*).

In understanding and explaining the important concept of **wasatiyyah**, we should be careful not to emphasise one quality while neglecting other qualities, because those 3 qualities of JUSTICE, EXCELLENCE and BALANCE are in fact organically intertwined and inter-related. We are not doing justice to the Divine principle of **wasatiyyah** if we choose to highlight only one aspect of its holistic meaning, namely "moderation" or "tolerance" to the detriment of other qualities, although the issue of moderation is highly relevant to the present global threats from religious extremism,

xenophobia, exaggerated human freedom, ideological dogmatism, capitalistic consumerism or ethnic fundamentalism, in the West and in the East, or in the North and in the South.

It is important to bear in mind that the meaning of the term "MODERATION" varies from people to people, government to government, or from community to community. What Islam considers proper, appropriate or religiously correct behavior or action of its adherents may be perceived by others as "IMMODERATE" or "FANATICAL" or "EXTREME". Consider the quotation below:

Who gets to decide what a "moderate Muslim" is? In this extended piece, Iain Buchanan argues that as the West demands Muslims fit themselves into its definition of the moderate Muslim, it ignores that it has itself failed to abide by its own standards. The way to initiate true dialogue between moderates, he says, is for the West to take steps to address its own failures.
"This is a tiresome time for Muslims. Especially in the West. Collectively, they are seen as wild, narrow-minded, and uninvolved; a relic society still stuck in the middle Ages. They are the world's biggest trouble makers, a demographic time-bomb in the heart of Europe. So Muslims have a great deal to account for, a great deal to live down. Of course, there are many Westerners who are happy to accommodate Muslims in the world they both share—even cheek by jowl in the same city or state. But there is a quid pro quo. To be accepted by civilised society, Muslims must declare their peaceful intentions, their integratedness, and their moderation. "Moderate Muslims", as it were, must wear on their arms the badge of a yellow crescent….And so, at the very least, if Muslims accept a Western-defined "moderation" for themselves, perhaps they should examine more carefully the credentials of their definers."(Iain Buchanan, "Whose Moderate Muslims?", www.mole.my/node 11746. Accessed 9 January 2013.)

In explaining or elaborating the concept of **Wasatiyyah** we should not forget the issue of fulfilling the role of being A) "witnesses unto mankind" and B) "enjoining all that is good/ right and prohibiting all that is bad /wrong" which are made obligatory upon the Muslim community, being Divinely designated as "The Just and Best Community brought forth for mankind." To fulfill this key "civilisational witnessing" and leadership mission, the Muslim community has to also strive for comprehensive excellence in religious and worldly sciences, in the spirit of absolute and uncompromising monotheism (*Tauhīd)*, fulfilling the Divine Trust (*Amānah)*, performance of comprehensive worship of Allah (`*Ibādah*), vicegerency *(Khilāfah*) and desiring to spread the mercy of Allah (S.W.T.) to all the worlds (*Rahmatan li al-`alamīn).*

It should be remembered that the Prophet (S.ʿA.W.) had warned that dire consequences would befall Muslim communities who fail to fulfil or neglect the obligation of "enjoining all that is good/right and prohibiting all that is bad/evil".

Although Muslim societies have not given due attention to the concept of *wasatiyyah in its holistic meaning*, many leading Muslim scholars, reformist thinkers and Islamic intellectual organisations have attempted to highlight its importance since the period of colonialism until today. Therefore Islamic institutions of higher learning should not lose sight of the primary religious obligation of educating the *Ummah* to become possessors of comprehensive excellence − materially, spiritually, morally, intellectually, scientifically, professionally, culturally − as an essential requirement of carrying the Divine mandate as WITNESSES, in this world and in the Hereafter, regarding the injustices and immorality of mankind.

Towards achieving that ultimate goal, it may be useful for Muslim religious scholars and aspiring young Muslim leaders committed to pursuing the ideals of *wasaṭiyyah* to consider the eight recommendations given by al-Qaraḍāwī in his work on the Islamic Renaissance (2002). The eight recommendations are:

1. Facilitation (*al-taisīr*) in the giving of formal legal opinion (*al-fatwā*), and emphasizing glad tidings (*al-tabshīr*) in Islamic propagation (*al-daʿwah*) efforts.

2. Combining the principles of the Pious Ancestors (*al-salafiyyah*) and the requirements for renewal (*al-tajdīd*), or combining authenticity (*al-aṣālah*) with contemporary requirements (*al-muʿāṣarah*).

3. Balancing between the permanent principles (*al-thawābit*) of Islamic law and the changing conditions (*mutaghayyirāt*) of the time.

4. The coupling (*al-muzāwajah*) of religious duty (*al-wājib*) with the social reality (*al-wāqiʿ*) (or understanding of the social reality).

5. Engaging in dialogue (*al-ḥiwār*) and coexistence (*al-taʿāyush*) with other people, and practicing tolerance (*al-tasāmuḥ*) with those who differ.

6. Adopting the principles of consultation (***al-shūrā***), justice (***al-'adālah***), freedom of peoples (***ḥurriyat al-shu'ūb***) and human rights (***ḥuqūq al-insān***).

7. Being just and fair (***inṣāf***) to women, liberating them from the oppression of customs inherited from eras of backwardness, and from the oppression of foreign customs coming from the civilization of disintegration.

8. Presenting Islam as a balanced, integrated civilizational mission (***risālah ḥaḍāriyyah***), for the revival, liberation and unification of the ***Ummah***.

(Al-Qaraḍāwī. ***al-Ṣaḥwah al-Islāmiyyah min al-Murāhaqah ilā al-Rushd,*** 2002: 146 – 147**)**

I have also listed below thirty important milestones that Muslims should consider towards realising the goals of comprehensive *Wasaṭiyyah.* They are taken from al-Qaraḍāwī's latest book on the subject, *Fiqh al-Wasaṭiyyah al-Islāmiyyah wa al-Tajdīd "Ma`ālim wa Manārāt"*(Understanding of Islamic *Wasaṭiyyah* and Renewal : Landmarks and Lighthouses), 2010: 207-241.

1. Possessing profound knowledge, comprehensive and balanced understanding of Islam.
2. Having faith in the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (Ṣ.'A.W.)as the highest source of Islamic legislation and life direction.
3. Basing one's creed on the basis of sound faith in *al-Tauḥīd*(uncompromising affirmation of the absolute oneness of Allah (S.W.T.), His sovereignty, authority, knowledge and power).

4. Nearness to Allah (S.W.T.) solely in accordance with the Divinely prescribed norms of worship.

5. Purification of the soul with the virtues of good conduct.

6. Propagation of Islam and Commanding that which is good/right and prohibiting that which is bad/wrong/evil.

7. Strengthening social and humanistic values.

8. Respect for reason in addition to Divine revelation.

9. Renewal of religious commitment and the practice of *Ijtihād*(responsible and authoritative independent reasoning and analysis of new issues) by those who are qualified.

10. Propagating the necessity for New Jurisprudence.

11. Treating women with justice, fairness and respect.

12. Caring for the institution of the family and reinforcing it.

13. Formation of the virtuous and mutually caring society.

14. Having faith in the existence of the Islamic *Ummah*, its unity and loyalty to it.

15. Establishment of the just state that carries the responsibility of Islamic propagation.

16. Restraining from the act of accusing other Muslims of being unbelievers or evil-doers.

17. Strengthening the economy of the *Ummah* and establishing it on Islamic foundations.

18. Faith in the necessity of religious plurality and cultural diversities, knowing one another across ethnic barriers, and mutual tolerance among peoples.

19. Constructing the civilization of knowledge and faith.

20. Positively developing the arts and using them in the service of spreading the mission of Islam.

21. Cultivatingthe earth, actualizing integrated development and caringforthe environment.

22. Peace with the people who love peace, and striving against those who commit transgression.

23. Painstaking concern with Muslim minorities in the world.

24. Proper attention to the rights of religious minorities in our Islamic societies.

25. Adopting the approach of making things easy in giving authoritative legal opinions, and giving of glad tidings in the propagation of Islam.

26. Proper attention to the tradition of gradualism, and with due regard to all the conventions or ways of Allah SWT in nature and in society.

27. Proper balancing between things which are firmly established and things which are subject to change.

28. Putting the religious obligations in accordance with their Divinely prescribed hierarchy.

29. The necessity of comprehensive reform and change.

30. Making good use of, or benefitting from, our rich heritage of sciences, arts and literatures.

With regard to subject of Islamic moderation which is one of the dimensions of *wasatiyyah*, it is instructive to study the phenomenon as an aspect of the Malay culture in Muslim Southeast Asia.

An important international survey was conducted to find out what the one billion Muslims really think about the West in 2009 (www.gallup.com/press/104209/Who-Speaks-Islam-What-Billion-Muslims-Really-Think. Accessed 26 April 2011). What the survey does not reveal, however, is that the Muslim communities in Southeast Asia or in the Malay-Indonesian world are, relatively speaking, among the most tolerant and accommodative Muslim communities in the world, despite the Western media's tendency to sensationalise or exaggerate news about the incidents of Muslim violence or militant attacks. This is the view of several Western scholars and social scientists who have studied the peoples and cultures of this part of the world. If there are exceptions, as in the case of the Moros in Mindanao, in southern Phillipines, the Patani Malays of southern Thailand, or the Achehnese Indonesians in Indonesia, these are due to the long bitter history of injustice or oppression by the central government, or aggressive Christian evangelisation in Muslim dominant areas, or the infiltration by external militant elements who do not represent the wishes and aspirations of the masses or the elites.

In the Malay-Indonesian world, the Muslims have for a very long time been living together with non-Muslim minorities of various ethnic groups. They have learned to coexist harmoniously with the "others". They have also accepted the democratic political system adapted to local conditions, in which Islam is allowed – as in the case of Malaysia and, to a certain extent, in Indonesia – to play an important cultural and political role within the framework of the national constitution and national ideologies. In the Malay-Indonesian world, the Muslims have for a very long time been living together with non-Muslim minorities of various ethnic groups. They have learned to coexist harmoniously with the "others". They have also accepted the democratic political system adapted to local conditions, in which Islam is allowed – as in the case of Malaysia and, to a certain extent, in Indonesia – to play an important cultural and political role within the framework of the national constitution and national ideologies.

It should be pointed out that the idea and practice of sharing political power between Muslims and non-Muslims is the hallmark of the Muslim community of Malaysia and Indonesia, while this would be seen as a novelty or impossibility in several Middle Eastern countries. In the case of the secular

republic of Singapore, the minority Muslim community has also learned to adjust to the secularizing policies of the state, and while the religious leaders do not agree with some of the perceptions and prescriptions of the government from time to time, they have always lived and will continue to live in peace with their non-Muslim fellow citizens.

However, since 9/11 Southeast Asian countries have witnessed the emergence of Muslim radicalism and militancy in Indonesia, Southern Thailand and the Philippines. To assist the Muslim leaders and organizations in countering the militant or extremist tendencies among the youth or religious groups, we believe it is useful for them to consider undertaking what al-Qaradawi has described as the seven necessary changes that Islamic movements and activists should undergo. They are as follows:

1. <u>Changing from Form and Outer Appearance to Reality and Substance</u> (Al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, *al-ØaÍwah al-IslÉmiyyah*, pp. 10-52.)

The substance of Islam is not about "growing the beard and lengthening it; shortening of the robe; carrying the *miswÉk* (teeth-cleaning stick); joining one's foot with other's foot in prayer; placing the hands on the chest or above the navel; eating while seated not while standing; forbidding all kinds of songs or music; making the wearing of the *niqÉb* (face cover) obligatory for women, etc." The substance of Islam as an *ÑaqÊdah* is *TawÍÊd*, that of *ÑibÉdah* is sincerity, that of *muÑÉmalah* (transaction) is truthfulness, that of *khuluq* (character) is mercy, that of *tashrÊÑ* (legislation) is justice, that of *Ñamal* (work) is perfection, that of *adab* (ethics) is spiritual consciousness, that of *ÑalÉqah* (human bonds) is brotherhood, and that of civilization is balance.

The understanding of essence of faith as a deep-seated spiritual consciousness, the concern of *taqwÉ* with the purification of the heart and cleansing it of the spiritual diseases and the internalization of Qur'Énic morality (*al-khuluq al-qur'ÉnÊ*) in its comprehensive scope need to engage the attention of Muslims. In following the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (Ø.ÑA.W) through obeying and loving him, care should be given to his principles of tolerance and gentleness in dealing with people, making things easy rather than difficult, and following a gradualist educational approach in efforts to bring about social change. Muslims should not forget that the Prophet (Ø.ÑA.W) said that his mission was to bring to perfection the virtues of good conduct and that the heaviest thing to be placed on the balance (for the weighing or evaluation of deeds) on the Day of Resurrection is good character.(Al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, *al-ØaÍwah al-IslÉmiyyah*, pp. 10-52.)

2. <u>From Talking and Bickering to Giving and Doing</u>

Muslims have to overcome several negative habits such as: looking for the mistakes of others, instead of self-criticism and welcoming constructive criticism from others; preoccupation with useless polemics or idle talk on non-vital issues; and saying or advocating things which are not supported or followed by appropriate actions. The deeds that are required cover both the affairs of the world and the Hereafter. In carrying out those good deeds, Muslims must resist the temptation of despair because the results of those well-intentional efforts may not be realized within a short period. They should not be engrossed in utopian idealism or be discouraged by the *ÍadÊths* regarding the gloomy signs of the Last Day, because the Prophet (Ø.ÑA.W) has said that;If the time of the Last Day has come, while one of you has in his hand a seedling and he still has the opportunity to plant it in the soil before the final hour, then let him plant it.(×*adÊth* narrated by Anas b. MÉlik and reported in the *Musnad* of Ahmad (Vol. 4, p. 41) and in the *SaÍÊÍ* of al-BukhÉrÊ (in *Adab al-Mufrad*, p. 486).

Muslims also do not have to wait until the Rightly Guided Leader (*al-MahdÊ*) or the Renewer (*al-Mujaddid*) appears to be engaged in all forms of constructive and reformative actions. Similarly one does not need the excuse of waiting for the actualization of the Islamic state to be actively involved in several badly needed social, economic, educational and political reform activities. The believers are commanded by AllÉh (S.W.T) to be involved in socially beneficial work (*fiÑl al-khayr*).(See Q. *Al-×ajj* 22: 77-78.)

3. <u>From Sentimental (*ÑÉÏifiyyah*) and Clamourous Attittude (*ghawghÉiyyah*) to Rational and Scientific Attitude</u>

It is true that being sentimental or emotional is a common trait of being human, but this trait should not be allowed to dominate over the intellect or reason. AllÉh (S.W.T) demands His servants and vicegerents always to be just in dealing with fellow creatures and not to be influenced by the destructive emotion of base desires:

O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to AllÉh, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) the rich or the poor, for AllÉh can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your

hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily AllÉh is well-acquaited with all that you do.(Q. *Al-NisÉ'* 4: 135)

Even in dealing with the enemies, the believer is commanded to uphold the principle of justice:

> O you who believe! Stand out firmly for AllÉh, as witnesses to justice, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just, that is next to piety. And fear AllÉh, for AllÉh is well-acquainted with all that you do (Q. *Al-MÉ'idah* 5: 8)

The tendency to indulge in emotional rhetorics and behaviour has unfortunately been part of Islamic renewal movements in the early phase as well in some groups in the contemporary period. This emotional phenomenon takes the form of over-glorification of certain individuals; excessiveness in love or hatred; drowning in the world of fanciful dreams; impatient to achieve results before they are due; depending on good intentions without due regard for the correctness of the means; making decisions or doing things hastily and without adequate preparation; incorrect way of trusting in AllÉh (S.W.T) resulting in fatalistic behaviour pattern; not heeding the conventions of AllÉh (S.W.T) in the universe and in society whereby the prerequisites for obtaining the required changes or Divine assistance have to be fulfilled; inclination to exaggerate or to belittle – both of which are wrong – in describing or evaluating challenges or problems at hand; adoption of the style of demagoguery to gain popularity with the masses; superficiality in the understanding of issues and ways of solving problems, such as the naive assumption that our problems are mainly caused by external conspiracies thus avoiding the duty of self introspection or self criticism which is enjoined by the Qur'Én(See Q. *Ól ÑimrÉn* 3: 165.) and falling into the trap of "political determinism" (*al-jabariyyah al-siyÉsiyyah*). Without denying that Muslims have to be aware of the external challenges and obstacles placed by external forces hostile to Islam, al-QarÉÌÉwÊ maintains that it is more important to focus on internal and self-originating impediments than to concentrate on the obstacles placed in our path as part of external plots against us. (Al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, *al-ØaÍwah al-IslÉmiyyah*, p. 105.)

In this regard Muslims need to change from the emotional thinking and behaviour syndrome to; the realistic, neutral, objective and rational attitude" (*al-nazÑah al-ÑaqlÉniyyah al-mawÌÉ'iyyah al-ÍiyÉdiyyah al-wÉqiÑiyyah*) in assessing matters, evaluating works, interpretation of events,

interpretation of history, perceiving of supporters and adversaries, defining of positions to be taken and in decision making. (p. 106.)

The scientific spirit and thinking based on knowledge (*al-tafkÊr al-ÑilmÊ*) should dominate the Muslims' relationship, standpoints and affairs of life so that; we look at things, personalities, deeds, issues and standpoints with a scientific view, and we produce our tactical and strategic reports on the economy, politics, education, etc. with a scientific outlook and spirit – away from the lack of sound preparation (*irtijaliyyah*), subjectivism (*dhÉtiyyah*), exitable mindset (*infiÑÉliyyah*), sentimentality (*ÑÉÏifiyyah*), clamourous inclination (*ghawghÉ'iyyah*), arbitrariness (*taÍakkumiyyah*), and the attitude of trying to look for justifications for improper actions (*tabrÊriyyah*). These negative traits predominate our environment today and colour our dispositions and demeanour to a large extent. Whoever among the decision makers managed to free himself from following personal desires or the desires of his group or party, would find that his greatest concern was to follow what would fulfil the desires of the masses, not what would fulfil their true interests, secure their future in their small homeland, big homeland and biggest homeland.(., p. 106.)

Among the characteristics of the scientific spirit which should be cultivated,(See al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, *al-×all al-IslÉmÊ: FarÊÌah wa ÖarÊrah,* pp. 252-253.)
the most important are:

Viewing objectively (*al-naÐrah al-mawÌËÑiyyah*) opinions, things and statements, regardless who the personalities may be, as stated by ÑAlÎ b. Abi ÙÉlib, "You will not know the truth by (looking at the) men. Know the truth first then you will know who really possesses it." (Al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, *al-ØaÍwah al-IslÉmiyyah*, p. 107.)

    a.   Respect for specializations (*iÍtirÉm al-ikhtiÎÉÎÉt*). Each branch of knowledge has its own experts, therefore the one who gives his legal opinion on everything cannot be regarded as truly knowledgeable.

    b.   The ability to undertake self criticism (*naqd al-dhÉt*), to admit mistakes and benefit from them; to evaluate the experiences of the past justly, without trying to justify mistakes or indulge in glorification.

    c.   Employing the latest and best techniques in trying to achieve objectives, even if it means benefitting from one's enemies, in the spirit of the well-known saying, "Wisdom is the lost property of the believer, wherever he finds it, he is most deserving to it than others."

d. Subjecting everything other than the incontestible intellectual and religious matters to critical inquiry and examination, irrespective of whether the results are in accordance with one's interest or not.

e. Refraining from being hasty in coming up with rulings and decisions, except after having conducted a careful study based on reliable investigation or statistics, and after a constructive dialogue (with relevant parties) that would reveal the defects or negative aspects of the particular issues.

f. Appreciating other perspectives, beside one's own, and respecting differing views of others in matters which are open to a variety of opinions, either in *fiqh* or other disciplines, as long as each viewpoint has its own evidence and argument and as long as the issue has not been established by a conclusive authoritative text. It is the established principle among our *ÑulamÉ'* that "there is no contestation in non-*ijtihÉdÊ* issues." They are open to constructive dialogue and impartial academic verification.

g. Upholding "the scientific mentality" especially in the 21st century C.E. through the use of appropriate quantitative, statistical or survey methods of analysis, the working out of strategic planning for the future as demonstrated by Prophet Joseph (on whom be peace) ih his futuristic economic policies and Prophet MuÍammad (Ø.ÑA.W) in deciding that some Companions migrate to Abbysinia, the use of experimental methods in solving technological problems, and the giving of due regard to AllÉh's conventions vis-á-vis individual transformation and social change or winning over one's adversaries. (Ibid., pp. 107-115)

4. <u>Change from Preoccupation with the Subsidiary and Periphery to the Primary and Fundamental.</u>

If action and concrete contribution, rather than talking and disputing, have to be part of the new agenda of Muslim reawakening, it may be asked "What field of action – from the intellectual (*al-Ñamal al-fikrÊ*), the educational (*al-Ñamal al-tarbawÊ*), the movemenent-oriented (*al-Ñamal al-ÍarakÊ*) and the social (*al-Ñamal al-ijtimÉÑÊ*) – should be given prior attention, since all the above-mentioned areas of action are part and parcel of the work that Muslims have to be involved in?" To al-QarÉÌÉwÊ prior attention has to be given to "the field of thinking and culture (*maidÉn al-fikr wa al-thaqÉfah*) and the field of "education and character development" (*al-tarbiyah wa al-takwÊn*).He opines:Correcting erroneous concepts and wrong ideas has to be given top priority because the actions and behaviour of people are, in most cases, the result of what has been well established in

their inner selves in terms of ideas and conceptions. If these are correct then their actions and behaviour would be correct; if they are crooked then the latter would also be crooked. Once we have corrected the conceptions and ideas, then our next action will be to educate the people based on the coorrected ideas so that the conscience, volition and thought will unite to produce the upright behaviour. (Ibid., p.116.)

The preoccupation with subsidiary, optional and minor matters of religion runs the risk of contravening the Qur'Énic and Prophetic methods, sidelining the bigger and more urgent matters, and being mired in endless disputes because those matters are not based on categorical or indisputable evidences. (For more detailed discussion on religious priorities, see al-QarÉÌÉwÊ's book, *FÊ Fiqh al-AwlawiyyÉt*.)

Some of the mistakes of some religious people include overstressing in their lectures and instructions the importance of supererogatory religious rituals as though they are obligatory for the general masses, a mistake that has been addressed by al-GhazÉlÊ in his *IÍyÉ' ÑUlËm al-DÊn*. Another mistake is to emphasize differences over petty issues instead of concentrating on what has been agreed upon by the majority of authoritative scholars. The "promoters of differences of opinion" (*al-khilÉfiyyËn*) on secondary or minor issues are criticized by al-QarÉÌÉwÊ for assuming that their opinions are always correct, their inclination to be engaged in disputations and divisive polemics, their negative presumption about others and their sense of amazement or conceit for their special qualities (*iÑjÉb bi-al-nafs*). This last trait is one of the self destructive qualities (*al-muhlikÉt*) which make them blind to their shortcomings. They can see the speck in other people's eyes but cannot see the pieces of wood in their own eyes. They should be reminded of the Prophet's sayings, "Three self-destructive diseases are: niggardliness which is obeyed, vain desires which are being followed and a man's conceit with his view." (×adÊth reported by al-ÙabrÉnÊ in *al-AwsaÏ* on the authority of Ibn ÑUmar, and evaluated by al-AlbÉnÊ in *ØaÍÊÍ al-JÉmiÑ al-ØaghÊr* as being in the category of "good" (Íasan). See al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, *al-ØaÍwah al-IslÉmiyyah*, p. 132.) It should be pointed out that serious differences may be allowed if they are grounded on issues of ultimate objectives or methodological principles regarding fundamental religious beliefs or doctrines and the like. Even then one should not lose sight of any points of agreement or commonalities on both sides of the arguments upon which dialogues or mutual tolerance could be established.

5. Change from Bigotry (*al-taÑaÎÎub*) and Exclusivism (*al-inqhilÉq*) to Forbearance (*al-tasÉmuÍ*) and Inclusivism (*al-inÏilÉq*).

Ibn Taymiyyah explains that an absolutist fanatical attitude towards a group, regardless if the group is right or wrong, is a *JÉhiliyyah* characteristic which is condemned by the Prophet (Ø.ÑA.W).("He is not one of us who calls to group fanaticism, or fights in the name of group fanaticism or dies in the name of group fanaticism (ÑaÎabiyyah). ×adÊth reported b AbË DÉ'Ëd, but the *isnÉd* is weak.) This is different from the act of helping the victims of injustice or preventing the unjust person from committing injustice – an act that is encouraged in Islam. Therefore the fanaticism that is blameworthy (*al-taÑaÎÎub al-madhmËm*) or bigotry is the kind of blind fanaticism towards one's beliefs, or school of thought or one's ideas and opinions, or one's community or group, to the point that one does not accept any dialogue with those holding different views and shut all doors of peaceful interaction or communication. Believing strongly in or holding fast to one's religious teachings or beliefs, however, is not bigotry or objectionable fanaticism bacause believers are required to remain firm on the straight path, to place complete trust in AllÉh (S.W.T), to cling fast to the religion of AllÉh (S.W.T) and to have the highest degree of *taqwÉ* of AllÉh (S.W.T). (See Q. *Al-ZukhrËf* 43: 43; Q. *Al-Naml* 27: 79; Q. *Ól ÑImrÉn* 3: 102-103.) The detestable fanatic or bigot does not listen except to his/her words and does not have faith in any one other than his or her group and it is the exclusivist group which thinks for him or her, and decides with whom he or she should be friendly with or hate.

"The texts of our great religion," says al-QarÉÌÉwÊ "prescribe… religious tolerance," and the history of Islam is fall of evidences of Islamic tolerance, a fact that has been well documented, according to al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, by well-known Western scholars, namely Thomas Arnold (*The Preaching of Islam*), Gustave LeBon (*La civilisation des Arabes*) and Adam Metz (*Islamic Civilization in the Fourth Century of the Hegira*). One of the contemporray manifestations of the Islamic ethos of religious tolerance is the acceptance of invitation to Islam-Christian dialogue participated by al-QarÉÌÉwÊ and other Muslim scholars of repute. He has made it clear on several occasions and in his books that Muslims have to live in peace and harmony with the non-Muslim citizens and communities, engage in peaceful dialogue and communicate the teachings of Islam wisely and in the best possible manner, forever refraining from any form of coercion. (See *S. Al-NaÍl* 16: 125; *S. Al-ÑankabËt* 29: 46; *S. Al-ShËrÉ* 42: 15.) Grounded in the faith that all human beings, as AllÉh's creatures, are endowed with dignity by AllÉh (S.W.T), Muslims have to observe the fundamental principles laid down by AllÉh (S.W.T) in the following verses:

As for such [of the disbelievers] who do not fight against you on account of [your]
faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, AllÉh does not forbid you to

show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity, for, verily, AllÉh loves those who act equitably. AllÉh only forbids you to turn in friendship towards those who fight against you because of your faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid (others) in driving you forth. And as for those among you who turn towards them in friendship, it is they who are truly wrongdoers!"

(Q. *Al-Mumtahanah* 60:8-9)

Al-QarÉÌÉwÊ reveals that "some of the stern zealots or fanatics among Muslims" had objected to him referring, at times to, "Our Coptic brothers in Egypt" on the grounds that brotherhood only refers to a common religious fraternity. He explained to them that it was true that religious brotherhood had a premier position in Islam, but that did not rule out the existence of brotherhoods based on a common homeland (*al-ukhuwwah al-waÏaniyyah*) or a common community (*al-ukhuwwah al-qawmiyyah*). The Qur'Én acknowledges this category of brotherhood when it refers to Noah (on whom be peace) as a "brother" of his disbelieving people and to ShuÑayb (on whom be peace) as a "brother" of the disbelieving people of Madyan. (Q. *Al-ShuÑarÉ* 26: 105-106; Q. *HËd* 11: 84.)

Ideological tolerance (*al-tasÉmuÍ al-fikrÊ*) is another aspect of Muslim tolerance which needs to be cultivated in order to overcome the problem of bigotry or exclusivism. This tolerance, especially among Islamic groups or movements, requires the attitude of looking at what is being said, rather than who says it; the readiness to admit one's own mistakes or weaknesses; welcoming constructive criticism from within or from outside of one's group, self-introspection in order to correct possible mistakes or review previous decisions; willingness to withdraw from a particular position for the sake of achieving unity or consensus, and showing sincere appreciation of the good or the positive in other people's ideas or actions. (Al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, *al-ØaÍwah al-IslÉmiyyah,* pp. 226-240.)

6. Change from Violence and Rancour to Gentleness and Compassion

Bearing in mind that the methodology of Islamic propagation (*al-daÑwah al-IslÉmiyyah*) is based on gentleness (*al-rifq*), "Verily AllÉh is gentle; He loves gentleness in all affairs." ×adith reported by Muslim on the authority of ÑÓishah. (See *ØaÍíh Muslim, Íadith* number 2593. See al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, *al-ØaÍwah al-IslÉmiyyah,* p. 279.) tenderness (*al-lÊn*), graciousness (*al-riqqah*), compassion (*al-raÍmah*), dialogue in

the best possible manner with "the other", and that Islam is a religion of compassion (*dÊn al-raÍmah*), Muslims who use violence in promoting the cause of Islam are in fact violating the teachings of Islam and do great disservice to it. Unfortunately groups which espouse the use of violence in the name of Islam have appeared in Muslim countries and one of the reasons for the emergence of this phenomenon – dubbed as "Neo-KhawÉrij" by al-QarÉÌÉwÊ – is traceable to their faulty and defective understanding of *jihÉd* (*khalal fÊ fiqh al-jihÉd*), changing wrongdoings by force (*fiqh taghyÊr al-munkar bi-al-quwwah*), fighting or revolting against the rulers (*fiqh al-khurËj ÑalÉ al-ÍukkÉm*) and accusing others of disbelief (*fiqh al-takfir*).

Faults in the understanding of *jihÉd*. Those who espouse the violent approach are mistaken in assuming that it is obligatory to fight the disbelievers even though they are at peace with the Muslims. In this regard they are guilty of transgressing the limits imposed by AllÉh (S.W.T), as stated in the Qur'Én, "… And fight in AllÉh's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit agression, for verily AllÉh does not love aggressors." (Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 190). This verse, contrary to the claim of some of the militants, is not abrogated and the categorical statement that "verily AllÉh does not love aggressors" is a permanent principle in Islam. (This is affirmed by Ibn Taymiyyah in his "*QÉÑidah fÊ QitÉl al-KuffÉr*" (The Principle in Fighting the Disbelievers). Al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, *al-ØaÍwah al-IslÉmiyyah,* p. 299.)

It is true, however, that the Muslim *Ummah* was given permission by AllÉh (S.W.T) to fight (*qitÉl*) those who aggressed against the Muslims, or transgressed against their holy places or against the weak or oppressed servants of AllÉh (S.W.T) as indicated by the following verses:

Permission [to fight] is given to those who have been fought against in as much as they have been wronged and AllÉh is indeed able to give victory: those who have been driven from their homes unjustly only because they said, 'Our Sustainer is AllÉh', for if AllÉh had not repelled some people by means of others, [all] monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosque – in which AllÉh's name is abundantly extolled – would surely have been destroyed. Verily AllÉh will help those who help His (cause). Truly, AllÉh is Most Powerful, Exalted in Might. (This constitutes the earliest Qur'Énic reference to Muslims' fighting for a sacred cause.)

And fight in AllÉh's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression – for, verily AllÉh does not love aggressors.(As explained by MuÍammad Asad, this verse and the rest that follows, "lay down unequivocally that only self-defence (in the widest sense of the word) makes war permissible for Muslims…. The defensive character of a fight "in God's cause" – that is, in the cause of the ethical principles ordained by God – is, moreover, self-evident in the reference to "those who wage war against you". *The Message of the*

Qur'Én, p. 41.   And slay them wherever you may come upon them, and drive them away from wherever they drove you away – for oppression (*al-fitnah*) is worse than slaughter. (The injuction to kill the aggressors "wherever you may come upon them" is valid – according al-RÉzÊ (*al-TafsÊr al-KabÊr*) – "within the context of hostilities *already in progress*." The translation of *al-fitnah* as "oppression" , in this "oppression", in this context, is justified, says MuÍammad Asad, because the aggressors have brought about an "affliction which may cause man to go astray and to lose his faith in spiritual values (cf. *LisÉn al-ÑArab*)". MuÍammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'Én,* 41.)

a.   But fight them not at the Sacred Mosque unless they (first) fight you there. But if they fight against you, slay them. Such is the reward for the disbelievers. But if they cease [fighthing], behold AllÉh is much forgiving, a dispenser of grace. Hence, fight against them until there is no more oppression and all worship is devoted to AllÉh alone(Lit., "and religion belongs to AllÉh alone", means, according to MuÍammad Asad, until AllÉh (S.W.T) "can be worshipped without fear of persecution,), but if they cease [fighting] them all hostility shall cease, save against those who [wilfully] do wrong.

<div align="right">(Q. Al-Baqarah 2: 190-193)</div>

b. …Thus if they withdraw from you, and fight not against you, and offer you peace, then AllÉh does not allow you to harm them.

<div align="center">É</div><div align="right">(Q. Al-NisÉ' 4: 90)</div>

c. …If they withdraw not from you, nor offer you peace, nor restrain their hands, take hold of them and kill them wherever you find them: for it is against these that We have clearly empowered you [to make war].

<div align="right">(Q. Al-NisÉ' 4: 91)</div>

d. Would you, perchance, fail to fight against people who have broken their solemn pledges, and have done all that they could to drive the Messenger away, and have been first to attack you. What! Do you fear them? It is AllÉh

alone of whom you ought to stand in awe, if you are [truly] believers!

<div align="right">(Q. Al-Tawbah 9: 13)</div>

e.   And how could you refuse to fight in the cause of AllÉh and of the utterly helpless men and women and children who are crying, 'O our Sustainer! Lead us forth [to freedom] out of this

land whose people are oppressors…

(Q. *Al-NisÉ'* 4: 75)

It should be reiterated that fighting can never be used as a means of coercing people to embrace Islam, because faith has to be acquired through the exercise of free personal choice, otherwise it is rejected. (See Q. *YËnus* 10: 99; Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 256; Q. *HËd* 11: 28.)

Moreover it is in accordance with the wisdom of AllÉh (S.W.T) that a plurality of religions exists, for AllÉh (S.W.T) – while desirous that human beings submit to the religion of Islam after providing ample guidance for human beings to accept the religion of AllÉh (S.W.T) and believe in Prophet MuÍammad (Ø.ÑA.W) and the Qur'Én – leaves it to human beings to choose to come to the Truth on the strength of their own rational reflection, decision and free will.(See Q. *YËnus* 10: 99; Q. *HËd* 11: 118-119.) Some of the militants also make the erroneous claim that there is a verse in the Qur'Én which they call "the verse of the sword" (*Éyat al-saif*), which allegedly abrogates more than a hundred verses of the Qur'Én. Not only are they unable to agree on which verse is "the verse of the sword", nor are they right in assuming that an abrogation has occurred. The verses they refer too are mainly from *SËrah al-Tawbah* and a few verses from *SËrah al-AnfÉl*, but these verses have to be understood in the context of the legitimate causes which led to the fighting and wars between the disbelievers and the Muslims in Madinah. Even then the Muslims were asked to abide by the terms of treaties they entered into and to incline to peaceful resolution if the adversaries so desired.(Al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, *al-ØaÍwah al-IslÉmiyyah*, pp. 302-304.)

It is important for Muslims to understand the distinction between *qitÉl* (fighting) and *jihÉd* (striving), reminds al-QarÉdÉwÊ, since both words have been used as though they mean the same thing. The first point to bear in mind is according to the Qur'Én, every Muslim believer is that required to strive hard or struggle for the cause of AllÉh (S.W.T).

O you who believe! Bow down and prostrate yourselves, and worship your Sustainer
[alone], and do good, so that you might attain to felicity. And strive hard in AllÉh's
cause with all the striving that is due to Him (wa jÉhidË fÊ AllÉh haqqa jihÉdih)…

(Q. *Al-×ajj 22: 77-78*)

[Know the true] Believers are only those who have attained to faith in AllÉh and His Messenger [MuÍammad (Ø.ÑA.W)] and have left all doubts behind, and who strive hard (jÉhadË) in AllÉh's cause (fÊ sabÊl AllÉh) with their possessions and their lives (bi-amwÉalihim wa anfusihim): it is they, they who are true to their word (al-ÎÉdiqËn)!"

<div align="right">

(Q. Al-×ujurÉt 49: 15)

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The comprehensive scope of *jihÉd*, in the above contexts, encompasses the meaning of "striving hard against the lower self and evil desire" (*mujÉhadat al-nafs*), "striving hard against Satan" (*mujÉhadat al-shaiÏÉn*), "striving hard against iniquities or injustices and reprehensible actions" (*mujÉhadat al-maÐÉlim wa al-munkarÉt*) in society and "striving hard against the [Meccan] polytheists" (*mujÉhadat al-mushrikÊn*). These striving efforts involve the use of the intellect, the tongue, the pen, the body, wealth as well as weapons – if need be – according to the dictates of the particular circumstances.(It is common nowadays to hear Muslim leaders referring to the urgency of improving conomic conditions of the Muslim community as "economic *jihÉd*" or "*jihÉd* against poverty". Scholars and intellectuals also describe the importance of intellectual development of the *Ummah* as "intellectual or educational *jihÉd*." See, for example, MuÍammad Ali Haji Hashim, *Business Satu Cabang Jihad* (Business as a Branch of *JihÉd*), Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 2003.) Thus the verses of the Qur'Én which urged the early Muslims of Mecca to strive hard against the polytheists meant the *jihÉd* of patience and perseverence (*jihÉd al-Îabr*) in facing the torments of the Meccan disbelievers, because at that time Muslims were not permitted by AllÉh (S.W.T) to fight their opponents:

Obey not the disbelievers, but strive hard against them (wa jÉhidhum) by means of this [Qur'Én] with utmost striving (jihÉdan kabÊran).

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(Q. Al-FurqÉn 25: 52)

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The moral and spiritual *jihÉd* is also reflected in the following verses:

Hence, whoever strives hard does so only for his own good: for verily AllÉh does not stand in need of anything in all the worlds!

<div align="right">

(Q. Al-ÑAnkabËt 29: 6)

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But as for those who strive hard in Our cause, We shall most certainly guide them onto paths that lead unto Us, for behold, AllÉh is indeed with the doers of good.

(Q. Al-ÑAnkabËt 29: 69)

From several other verses refering to the importance of *jihÉd fÊ sabÊl AllÉh* and the relevant *Íadiths* supporting the same, there should not be any doubt that every Muslim is expected to be "one who strives hard" (*mujÉhid*), without necessarily becoming "a fighter" (*muqatil*) in the physical sense, unless there are legitimate reasons requiring physical fighting (*qitÉl*). A Muslim has to keep in mind that the Prophetic mission was to bring peace and compassion to the whole of mankind without resorting to force or coercion.(See Q. Al-AnbiyÉ' 21: 107; Q. Al-NaÍl 16: 89; Q. YËnus 10: 57; Q. Al-Tawbah 9: 33; Q. Al-FatÍ 48: 28; Q. Al-Tawbah 9: 128-129; Q. Ól ÑImrÉn 3: 20; Q. Al-NËr 24: 54.)

Referring to the controversy between the proponents of defensive (*difÉÑÊ*) military *jihÉd* (*al-jihÉd al-ÑaskarÊ*) and the proponents of offensive (*hujËmÊ*) military *jihÉd*, al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, who is apparently inclined to the first group gives the following reasons as to why there is no need to continue the debate. First, the Msulims of the world have not carried out the obligatory defensive *jihÉd* of liberating the Muslim land from the usurpurs and the aggressors, in several parts of the world in which Muslims have been persecuted and oppressed. How can we talk of offensive military *jihÉd*, says al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, when the Muslim *Ummah* has yet to embark upon the defensive military *jihÉd* which is its responsibility. Second, the offensive military *jihÉd* implies the removal of those forces which impose their dominion over the Muslims and prevent them from conveying the message of AllÉh (S.W.T) to other people. But today there is no force that prevents Muslims from disseminating the Islamic message in all languages through the electronic media and print media available in all parts of the world. Compared to what the Christian missionaries have been doing to spread the Gospel all over the world, the Muslim efforts leave much to be desired. Third, the Muslims are dependent upon others for their military strength. The powers that are supposed to be the targets of offensive military *jihÉd* of the Muslims are the ones that manufacture weapons of all kinds and sell them to the Muslims. If it were not for them, Muslims would be defenceless. So what is the sense of talking about offensive military *jihÉd*, asks al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, when we are utterly at the mercy of the powerful nations.(Al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, *AwlawiyyÉt al-×arakah al-IslÉmiyyah fÊ al-MarÍalah al-QÉdimah* (Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase) (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 4th ed., 1992), pp. 93-95.)

Faults in the Understanding of Changing Reprehensible Things (*TaghyÊr al-munkar*) by Force.

In trying to change reprehensible situations or wrongdoings in society by the use of force, since it is a moral and religious responsibility of Muslims to change any reprehensible (*munkar*) condition or act, first "by hand", then "by the tounge", and finally "by the heart" – but that is the sign of the weakest faith – militant Muslims tend to forget the conditions which eminent religious scholars have laid down regarding the ways by which the moral transformations are to take place. Based on what ImÉm al-GhazÉlÊ has discussed in his *IÍyÉ' UlËm al-DÊn*, the steps to be taken to bring about the change of reprehensible situations vary and are gradualistic in nature, the most severe being the use of coercion and warfare. This method is not permissible except for those who possess power stronger than the perpetrators of reprehensible acts. Nor is it permissible to bring about the change which results in a more reprehensible situation than the earlier situation or more or less the same as the previous *munkar*. The principle in Islamic jurisprudence is that a harmful situation cannot be eliminated by another harmful situation of the same kind or bigger than the earlier one.

The first condition is that the situation to be changed by the force of authority or power has to be truly reprehensible or clearly forbidden (*ÍarÉm*) and that there is no conflict of opinion among the Muslim leaders regarding its forbidden nature. The second condition is that the reprehensible situation has to be clearly seen or visible to the public; misdeeds done in the privacy of a private home or in complete secrecy do not warrant severely combative reactions. The third condition is that the change agent must have the capability and the material or non-material resources to eliminate the *munkar* with ease. When one does not have the power or resources to bring about the change, then one should use "the tongue" ("*bi-lisÉnih*") to address the problem. But those who have the legitimate authority (*sulÏÉn*) are duty-bound to carry out the responsibility of moral correction as is possible within the limits of such authority. (Al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, *al-ØaÍwah al-Islamiyyah,* pp. 310-313.)

If the *munkar* is committed by the government in power or the existing state which is backed by military and material power, what should individuals or groups do to bring about the necessary changes? Based on different local contexts, three major alternatives can be considered:(Ibid., p. 313.)

    A. The use of the armed forces in the country, especially in the "Third World" which protect the regimes and help to intimidate or silence the political opposition. Some of these governments employ not "the power of logic" (*quwwat al-manÏiq*) but "the logic of power" (*manÏiq al-quwwah*) to suppress the legitimate popular demands for freedom.

    B. The use of the People's Representative Assembly or the Parliament as practiced in true democratic systems, by which changes in society can be instituted by the decision of the

majority, in which case no prime minister or president has the power to deny the right of the majority.

C. The mobilisation or employment of "People Power" which represents the collective conscience or desire of the people for change. When this happens, nothing can stop it because it's force is like that of a huge tidal wave which sweeps the whole shore.

Whoever does not have either one of the above means as provided by the local circumstances must exercise patience, forbearance and steadfastness says al-QarÉÌÉwÊ until the legitimate means are available. In the meantime, efforts aimed at the desirable social and moral transformations could be carried out with all the peaceful and non-violent ways available until a powerful public opinion emerges which legitimizes the necessary elimination of the *munkar*.

It should be remembered, however, that the *ÑulamÉ*' have emphasized that, should there be any real fear that the change of a *munkar* by means of power would bring about a bigger *munkar* or become a cause for bloodshed or shedding of the blood of innocent people, civil strife or tumult, then it is a responsibility to refrain from taking radical measures, to bear patiently the unfavourable circumstances and adopt the principle of "choosing the lesser of two evils." This condition should not discourage the concerned Muslims from taking steps to educate and train a generation of front-line and committed believers to be entrusted with the responsibility of social change in the future. Such a generation will be needed to face a challenging situation poignantly potrayed in a *ÍadÊth* of the Prophet (Ø.ÑA.W) when AbË ThaÑlabah al-Khasni asked the Prophet (Ø.ÑA.W) regarding the verse "O you who believe! Take care of your ownselves [by doing righteous deeds and abstaining from evil deeds]. If you follow the right guidance [and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong], no hurt can come to you from those who are in error…" (Q. *Al-MÉ'idah* 5: 105). The Prophet (Ø.ÑA.W) replied,

Even so, be actively involved in enjoining what is right (*al-maÑrËf*) and prohibiting what is wrong (*al-munkar*) so that when you see greediness being widely followed, base desires being readily complied with, this world being preferred [to the Hereafter] and the conceitedness of every opinion-laden person with his/her opinion, then you must focus your attention on your own well-being, and leave the common people. There will come after you a period of time when the one who patiently perseveres in it will be like the one who is clasping smouldering ambers and the worker (of good deeds) in it will get the reward equivalent to fifty workers who work like you.(×adÊth reported by al-TirmidhÊ, Ibn MÉjah, Ibn JarÊr and Ibn AbÊ ×Étim. See footnote 1, al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, *al-ØaÍwah al-IslÉmiyyah*, p. 315.)

Considering that the malaise and the crises afflicting the *Ummah* are inherited from the long periods of civilizational decline, the age of Western colonialism and the years of secular governments and oppression, and, as such, are deep-rooted and extensive, effective social and moral transformation cannot be effected through superficial or fragmented efforts. The change involves ideas, concepts, values and standards; it embraces the domains of ethics and practices, cultures and traditions, institutions and legislations. Before all that can happen,it is necessary that human beings change what is in themselves through constant orientation, continuous education, and setting good examples. When human beings changed what is in themselves, they become worthy of being changed by AllÉh in accordance with the invariable convention (of AllÉh (S.W.T)): 'Verily AllÉh does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.

Al-QarÉÌÉwÊ reminds again regarding "the necessity of gentleness (*ÌarËrat al-rifq*)" in trying to overcome what is *munkar*, for the Prophet (Ø.ÑA.W) has enjoined Muslims to adopt gentleness as "AllÉh (S.W.T) loves that gentleness be applied in all affairs", and in accordance with the well-known saying, "Whoever enjoins what is right then let the enjoinment be done in the right manner (*Man amara bi-al-maÑrËf falyakun amruhu bi-maÑrËf*)".(Al-QarÉÌÉwÊ, *al-ØaÍwah al-IslÉmiyyah*, p. 317.)

7. Fault in understanding the issue of revolting against the rulers.

Al-QarÉÌÉwÊ says that he is the one of those Muslims who demand that rulers of Muslims implement the laws of AllÉh (S.W.T) in all aspects of life. They should not adopt the policy of accepting some of the Divine laws and deliberately leaving aside some others, for then they would be guilty of what AllÉh (S.W.T) says in *SËrah al-Baqarah*, 2: 85 ("Do you then believe in a part of the Book and reject the rest?"). He believes that the situation of the law in most of Muslim countries contradicts several injuctions of the *SharÊÑah*, be it in legislation, economy, politics, culture, etc. It is not right to keep silent over those contradictions. Nevertheless, it is the Muslims' duty, To strive for their reform (*iÎlÉÍ*) – as much as possible for us – by means of advice; propagation and guidance; enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, with gentleness and wisdom and arguing in the best possible way; offering legal alternatives which are sound and implementable in the contemporary situation to replace the existing prohibited elements; conscientization and education of the people, and mobilizing them to steer the rulers toward peaceful change (*al-taghyÊr al-silmÊ*), instead of civil strife and armed clashes (*al-muÎÉdamÉt al-musallaÍah*).

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