

# **Problems of Autocracy and Corruption in Islamic Political Thought and History**

**By:**

**Dr. Abdul-Hamid Ahmad Abu Sulaiman**

**16/3/1429 (24/3/2008)**

**In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful**

## **A nation that invites unto prosperity:**

The Holy Qur'an offers many principles upon which social orders and organizations must be based for the guidance of mankind. It however, gives mankind a freedom to adopt manner of actualizing these orders and organizations in line with the demands of developments, changes of time and place, in the light of expansion of knowledge, human development and the changes, and the challenges that they bring about.

Recently, the attention of the Muslims scholars was drawn to one of the most prominent concepts, which is a vital social and political organ, and not a mere advisor to the political authority or seek a favor, a situation that led to its being disregarded and not reckoned with as fundamental in establishing a government. This organ is 'Shura' that embodies the principle of 'Mutual Consultation' and activates it in the Islamic political system.

Hence, we would like to call the attention to the importance of re-reading the Holy Qur'an, in order to discover other principles that are indispensable for building modern Islamic social system in an effective and sound form. Muslim scholars have not yet properly

grasped this issue till today. The reason for this, to a large extent, goes back to multi roles played by the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in his life as a messenger and conveyer of divine message who received revelations, and as a caller, teacher, a head of state and a builder of a society. The Muslims ought to have separated each of these roles from others after the death of the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). The Sufis and Shiites tried to ensure the continuation of these roles in their combined form, in forms of miracles and inspirations of their sheikhs and saints.

As for the role of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) as a caller and a teacher, it needs to be separated after his death, from the role of a head of government. For, heads of governments, their regimes and their parties and whatever political, social and economic programs and priorities they have, represent certain political, social and economic forces and interests. This separation is necessary so that general interests and sanctities of the Ummah would not be violated and religion would not be used to serve personal interests. If the function of Da'wah and education is not separated from that of executive political authorities, the result will undoubtedly be employment of religion politically to serve the interests of politicians, as the history of this Ummah has shown. This would inevitably lead to autocracy, and as a result, spread of corruption. For, humans are naturally beset by weakness since they are not infallible, unlike the prophets.

It is important to realize that autocracy and corruption go hand in hand. Usually, autocracy creeps into the Ummah's system of government through fake and misleading excuses. One of the factors that make it easy for the autocratic powers to legitimize their autocracy and terrorization of the Ummah, as far as decision making is concerned, is weak awareness on the part of the populace, in addition to their lack of experience and culture and absence of vigilant and watchful educational, media and constitutional organs. As a result, the society was plunged into a darkness from lack of awareness to political tyranny, and corrupt and corrupting personal interests. The resultant corruption led to consolidation of and additional legitimization of oppression and tyranny. The Ummah then becomes weaker, more culturally ignorant and weaker in its general awareness.

For, weak awareness leads to tyranny, then to corruption and more corruption. Hence, it is mandatory for nations, in the course of their civilizational development, to create necessary organs whose responsibility would include providing the people with awareness, preventing hegemonic practices on the part of the rulers and influential members of the societies and their supporters, who seek to turn the populace into a group of underage children, perpetually kept under control, and preventing a situation where a party to the conflict is also the judge. Without proper awareness, it is impossible to put an end to corrupt practices of the rulers. It is only through proper awareness, unity, and courage of members of the Ummah, that these

hegemonic and corrupt practices can be annihilated. It is then that the Ummah can attain its maximum potentialities in terms of performance, and the balance of powers and interests can be attained in the society.

In order to defeat the vicious duo of tyranny and corruption, and to create awareness among different strata of the Ummah, a particular attention must be paid to the family and the parents who nurture and bring up their children because of the important role the family plays in taking care of the child's sentiment. Educational and Da'wah institutes must be independent, and independent organs must be set up for this purpose and made to be directly controlled by the Ummah. Independent roles of these institutes in building the personality and sentiment of a Muslim individual must be consolidated, and what he is taught must be carefully selected. The role of family and parents must be fully activated in creating awareness for all the cadres of the Ummah and in ensuring their safety.

This is the practical way by which awareness can be actually and truly created for the citizen to enable him play his role in directing and controlling the role of those in position of authority, thereby enabling the religion and values to play their roles. With this, it would not be possible for the authorities to mislead the Ummah through their tyrannical, corrupt and corruptive actions. This is how the system, rights, interests and resources of the Ummah could be preserved against squandering; and these resources can be channeled towards meeting the needs of the Ummah, and its development and in

exploring its creative powers. The Ummah would become the guardian over the rulers and over their political programs and not vice versa.

It would be noticed that the relative static situation seen in people's way of life, after the death of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) - in addition to political isolationism imposed on the scholars and thinkers by the rulers and which has weakened the role and performance of the scholars and narrowed the scope of knowledge and scholarship and streamlined the scholars' role in creating awareness among members of the Ummah concerning their public life and how to build and develop their societies – has scientifically forced the scholars and intellectuals into literary adherence to Sunnah, which, according to life procedures, ruling and administration of political affairs of the Ummah, is generally time-based and location-based. Therefore, taking shield behind the Sunnah and behind its sacredness, in spite of new developments that had occurred after the prophetic era and in spite of all major changes that had taken place in the situation of the Ummah and the humanity in general, is a manifestation of this static situation.

As for the Qur'an, these scholars had given it little attention in terms of adhering to it and drawing inspirations from it – though it is distinguished by being the everlasting message in terms of its principles and dimensions that transcend all times and places. It is this very unique quality of the Qur'an that makes it easy for the Muslims to keep pace with the changes of time and places and that enables

them to make necessary revision in order to develop applied life procedures in such a way that will actualize the purpose of the message of Islam at all times and in all places – in line with the situations on the ground.

In the light of the above, we would like to call attention to two noble verses concerning the principle of Da'wah and religious education, in particular, and which convinced us that the issue of Da'wah and Islamic education and teaching should be left in the hand of a social and educational organ of substance. Right from the beginning, the Ummah should have established an independent organ that would enjoy all guarantees of real independence, and that would be on the same level with the constitutional organ, consultative political affairs organ, judicial establishment and any other organs that are crucial to social order.

Like other constitutional organs, the religious education establishment should be independent, playing its effective and constructive roles, among which are: carrying the family and the parents along in making Da'wah, awareness, education and religious and moral teaching a success; and in realizing the goals of the same and providing means and necessary tools for the same. Religious education establishment should be kept away from distortion or marginalization and from all kinds of exploitation such as changing the concept of religion, Da'wah and education into mere and empty slogans, holding of parties and birthdays, issuing of fatwa in support of those in authority and their political wars. The establishment

should be able to prevent the religion from being used by the politicians, the rulers and the people of vested interests to spread fear, silence people and hamper intellectual activities.

As for the two verses, which must be understood in Islamic sociopolitical life, they are Allah's statements:

◀◻◻👉↑📖      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      ↓  
👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤  
🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤  
🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤  
🏠👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤

*“Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good (Islâm), enjoining Al-Ma'rûf (i.e. Islâmic Monotheism and all that Islâm orders one to do) and forbidding Al-Munkar (polytheism and disbelief and all that Islâm has forbidden). And it is they who are the successful.”* (Al-‘Imran 3:104)

🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      ↓  
🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤  
🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤  
🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤  
🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤  
🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤  
🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤      🏠👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤

*“And it is not (proper) for the believers to go out to fight (Jihâd) all together. Of every troop of them, a party only should go forth, that they (who are left behind) may get instructions in (Islâmic) religion, and that they may warn their people when they return to them, so that they may beware (of evil).” (At-Tawbah 9:122)*

The word ‘Ummah’ here means a group of people or in modern language, an independent organization whose leadership should be appointed by the Muslim nation as an organization that would perform only its role and function without the influence of any political authority or interests. It performs its role with the trust and support of the Ummah, and under its aegis.

We would also like to call the attention to the fact that there are numerous other Qur’anic concepts besides the above that need attention, they shall be topics of further studies.

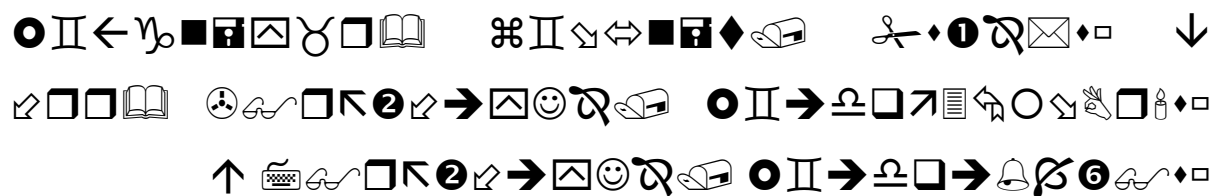
What we are concerned with here is to mention two other principles taught by the Holy Qur’an, apart from the ones mentioned above. These two principles are related to a very crucial social establishment, which is the family. They need more studies and be given proper attention so that they can be the foundation upon which family laws would be based and in the light of which the laws could be implemented. The current development, potentialities, needs and challenges must be taken into consideration. In the light of these principles, a review needs to be done on any application that does not



– due to situations, needs and challenges – actualize the Qur’anic teachings and their goals.

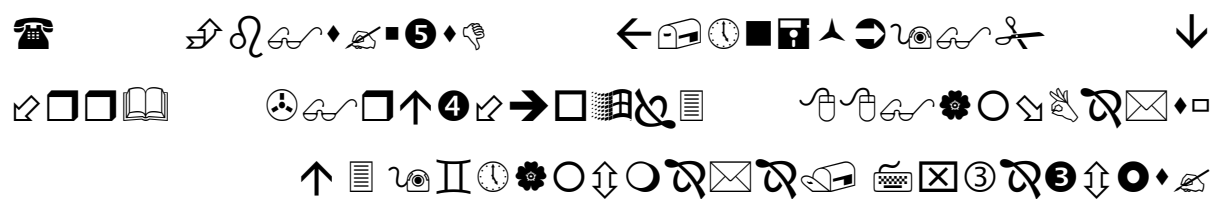
In order to actualize these principles and their goals – as far as upholding family relationships, its warmth, nature and distinctive characteristics are concerned - many of the prevailing arrangements and applications concerning the Muslim woman needs to be changed.

These two Qur’anic concepts are: ‘Retaining the woman on reasonable terms’ or ‘releasing her with kindness’, as clearly explained in the following verses:



*“Then when they are about to attain their term appointed, either take them back in a good manner or part with them in a good manner.”*

(At-Talaq 65:2)



*“The divorce is twice, after that, either you retain her on reasonable terms or release her with kindness.”* (Al-Baqarah 2:229)

Though some of the scholars from among the righteous predecessors had paid attention, to the multiple of roles played by the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in his prophetic life, especially the roles of delivering the message and governance,

yet the difference between the role of a message-conveying prophet and the role of a propagator and teacher was not properly acknowledged.

In view of the quickly successive situations, rigid traditions and oppressive interests and the sociopolitical order and what the first generation of the Ummah was afflicted with – after the death of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) – of the fall of caliphate, imposition of tribal sentiments on the system of government, imported cultures of nations that entered into the fold of Islam, rampancy of oppression and corruption on the part of the rulers and their cohorts and isolation of leaders of Al-Madinah school and its scholars and turning them into mere academics and a source of support for the government officials, formation of a group of men whose interests were linked with those of the corrupt and autocratic rulers, religious principles and goals became isolated from political life, on one side. On the other side, there was lack of fundamental change in the structural and economic nature of that period for a long time.

The combination of the above had contributed into the ruling elites achieving their goals of limiting intellectual capability of the scholars and thinkers and turning them into mere imitators. The intellectual activities of these scholars were reduced to superficial and personal and they were made to rely – as a result of their intellectual incapability and limited horizons, and under the influence of material interests and the pressures of the situations on the ground – upon

literary applications of the Shari'ah during the prophetic era and the Prophet's directions and teachings that addressed, as far as the applications are concerned, the situations that obtained during his time. Many of these scholars selectively adhered to the literal implications of the texts more than their adherence to the Qur'anic general principles, implications and goals that transcend all times and places, and development of applications of these concepts through reform, independent judgment and advanced and vibrant sociopolitical thought that suits the constant changes and their social challenges and effects. Equally, they failed to avail themselves of the prophetic wisdom inherent in these principles and goals as regards the situations of the Prophet's people and the time and local circumstances of his time.

This trend was recognized in Islamic thought as imitation phenomenon and closure of the door of Ijtihad (independent judgment). Since then, the Islamic religious thought – though there are some brave, creative and illuminating exceptions – had been essentially characterized with selectiveness and excessive pursuance of texts of Sunnah and heritage under the guise of upholding its sacredness in order to marginalize the role of the religion and the successful negative employment of the same to serve the political elites and their autocratic and corrupt practices.

Tyranny and corruptions are two sides of a coin; each nurtures the other. Therefore, this destructive and ominous cycle can never be broken in the live of human societies if the Ummah and its people –

with the efforts of brave and sincere scholars, thinkers, and reformers – do not reclaim their universal and civilizational visions, reform their methods of thinking, purify their culture, improve the way they educate their growing generation, reconstruct their systems and social and political organizations, and bring the governance back to the general order, which is under the control and guardianship of the Ummah.

Without initiatives from the scholars, educators and reformers, and without necessary orientation from them in order to rebuild a universal and civilizational vision and sound methodology of thinking, purify the culture, reform educational methodologies and guarantee the soundness of teaching curricula, there is no way by which the Ummah could progress, develop its skills or actualize the goal of life or become creative.

It is very important here to point out that the success attained during the caliphate of Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and the beginning of the caliphate of ‘Uthman (may Allah be pleased with all of them) – in spite of lack of separation of the role of Da’wah, teaching and education from that of governance – was the fact that these caliphates maintained the government arrangements and the same officials put in place during the time of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

However, after the death of many of these men and weakness or getting old of the majority of those who were left behind, changes started occurring in the situations of the people and their age after the

expansion of the Islamic state, the conquests and entrance of many nations into Islam; and changes, mistakes and excesses became inevitable phenomena in the people and their roles. The Prophet's apt application of the teachings of the Qur'an and his actualization of its goals are a proof for the mankind that the Qur'an and this religion are light and guidance to mankind and not a utopia.

After the death of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), mankind's application of Islam's vision, concepts and principles, and actualization of these principles should take into consideration, situations of each community and age. Every person, every nation and every time and every place would then abide by the religion in accordance with their capability; 'so for this let the competitors compete'.

It is clear from the above that it is not intended that the prophetic age should be continue and that the Prophet's arrangements and practices should literally continue after his death – except that which, those in position of authority and the scholars believe is suitable for achievement of religious and worldly benefits. If not, we would be forced to believe that the prophetic era and the Islamic message are a product of human creativity that had already taken its dimension and exhausted its purposes, and whose cultural value had become extinct with the change of time and evolution of potentialities, needs and challenges.

As a result of events and changes that surfaced and the limited environment, materially and culturally that had not been envisaged and properly prepared for, some negative effects appeared towards the end of the era of the caliphate. These effects were exemplified in the type of governance that succeeded the caliphate of the Prophet's righteously guided men and unfortunate political tussles that ended the said caliphate and the era of the companions and their reign.

With the establishment of the Umayyad state, and from then on – throughout the Islamic history, with very few exceptions, and in spite of the insistence of a generation of the scholars on the necessity of adherence to the literal adherence to the arrangements of the prophetic era – racial, tribal and nationalistic practices surfaced and took roots, and tyranny governance became the order of the day. The natural result of this was emergence of corruptions and injustices, which promptly became the rule; and whatever opposed that became an exception.

In our contemporary age, which is fundamentally different in many ways, from the situation of the humanity during those past centuries - especially with the growth of Western ideological invasion through satellite channels and internet and the intellectual, technological, economical and political influence and negative effect that this invasion has on the Ummah and its youth – This ensures the need to have a fundamental review of general contemporary Islamic thoughts, especially, the political aspects. For, this political aspect is born under the shade of those perversions and unpleasant practices and pressures.

The reviews should be comprehensive and include all that relates to civilizational vision of the Ummah, its past methodologies of life and all the heritage laws relating to these methodologies.

While making these reviews, the prophetic era, its role and its essence should be properly understood. The Qur'anic principles and their goals should be returned to, through an awareness that is religious, intellectual, social and structural, so that the Ummah's thinking and its laws and orders will keep pace with new human cultural evolutions and their potentialities and challenges. Through lively and illuminating exercise of independent judgment, the Islamic fundamentals could be defined, its goals could be clarified and its discourse could be reformed so that confusion could be avoided and fundamentals are not mixed with secondary matters, and the discourses, laws, and orders are not put in conditions, forms and expressions that are not suitable with the current reality of the Ummah and this age. By this, it would be possible for Islamic discourses, laws and orders to always achieve the goals of the Qur'anic guidance and aspirations of the human nature irrespective of the difference in times and places.

Therefore, it is very important to realize that religious, educational and evangelical establishments of the past Abrahamic faiths, which are the Church and the Synagogue, could have had greater influence on mankind and could have been more effective had it not been for their time-restrained and place-restrained nature, coupled with alterations, adulterations and superstitions that they had suffered.

Islam came to correct these anomalies so that the role of the religion in providing guidance for mankind could be restored, in line with the situation of humanity in its future and challenges that lie ahead of it.

Islam is a final divine message and a guardian over the previous divine messages. The preservation of the Holy Qur'an, which is the first and fundamental source of this religion, has been guaranteed by Allah. Equally, efforts by the scholars have preserved the Sunnah – with its chains of transmitters and texts – from the malady of distortions, superstitions and fallacies. All these factors make Islamic Da'wah, awareness, education, culture and information essentially independent, and make its separation from the ruling establishment a dire necessity. They are a crucial element in uprooting tyranny and corruption which have been – and still are – the characteristic of governance and ruling in many forms throughout the political history of Islam. It is then that it will be possible to revive the Ummah and reform its vision, thoughts and methodology of bringing up its children – far from any personal or negative influence from any group or any authority in the society.

The mosque should be the heart of the Da'wah establishment. Methodologies of Da'wah and teaching, and religious, social and information education should be an exclusive specialty of Da'wah, educational, ideological and media organ. The Ummah should appoint the leaderships of these organs and their administrators. In this way, no political authority or any special group in a state will have any influence or power over them; and there will not be any



control over these Da'wah, educational, social, and media establishments – especially the charity ones – neither over their missions and activities, except that of the Ummah and its eligible representatives selected for this purpose. It is then that it will be possible to have a pure vision and an upright socio-religious thinking and witness development and reform. It is also then that the Islamic socio-religious thought can contribute – along with the general media establishments – in scuttling the sources of tyranny and corruption. Then, the organs of government and the public life in Muslim countries will become upright, and the Ummah will become the controller and the source of legitimacy for the political authorities. The political office holders, their interests and their policies will then have no say in the affairs of Da'wah, religious education and general media; not the media created by people of personal agendas or by different sectors of the society, public or private.

The system of the Ummah has been turned upside down since the religious discourse has regarded the Muslim Ummah as a people 'who neither know nor understand', and the rulers and their political appointees who are holders of degrees and academic titles as the ones 'who know and understand'. The rulers, their supporters and their patrons are regarded as 'the rightly guided', 'the knowledgeable' and 'the trustees' over the Ummah. The scholars and the academic specialists in religious and social affairs are only treated as mere tools and means of consultation whose responsibility should not go beyond expressing their opinions and advice. They are not involved in the

political decision-making, which is the right of the Ummah and which it should be allowed to exercise in order to attain its cultural aspirations, protect its political and life interests. The Ummah is denied this right through confusion of issues and claiming that the majority is ignorant and unable to show good judgment.

This claim by the ruling elites and their supporters and the confusion of issues on the part of the some sincere individuals are, in reality, a false claim. This is because; the matter here is political and decision making, which is the right of the Ummah, the real owner of decision-making. It is not a matter of implementation. Therefore, general political decisions should be made by the Ummah through its Shura in which people of specialties avail the Ummah of their expertise as the situations may demand. The claim that the Ummah is ignorant and unable to show good judgment is only peddled in order to deprive it of its right to take its own decisions and to control its own affairs; and in order to promote and consolidate ignorance, deception and dictatorship, and by extension, to spread corruption and mischief among the Ummah. The ultimate goal is to make the ruling elites and their tools and apparatuses the only rightly-guided and knowledgeable trustee!!

If there is any ignorance or lack of adequate understanding on the part of the majority of the Ummah and if there is any need for more awareness concerning political matters, so that the people will know what they ought to know and abide by what they should abide by in order to achieve their spiritual and material goals and apply the

Islamic concepts and values on their practical life; the remedy for this inadequate knowledge lies in exerting more efforts in educating and keeping them informed, and setting up more and more Da'wah, educational, information and awareness programs. The solution is not in imposed trusteeship, deception, oppression and dictatorship in order for the rulers and other interest groups to consolidate their corruption and excessiveness.

It is worth mentioning here that men of the first generation did not know thousands of texts, explanatory notes or voluminous academic works. All that that they knew spontaneously and without pretensions and sophistries and by which they steered the ship of their society and its policies – after the death of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) – was the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's directives and arrangements directed by and in adherence to the concepts of Shura, justice, mercy, reform and construction, and application of all that. These principles are the mothers of Islamic principles and goals that should be known by every Muslim as a matter of necessity.

Anything that goes beyond this is just details used for meeting the needs and implementing decisions. We should remember a statement made by, 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab' concerning Allah's saying



*“And fruits and herbage.”* (‘Abasa 80:31)

Umar said to himself: “It does you know harm, O son of Al-Khattab, not to know the meaning of ‘herbage’.”

It can be inferred from here that political issues are different from academic issues and technicalities of fatwa, judicial rulings and implementation of policies and decisions; and all that needs professionalism and technical know-how. It is only matters of implementation that needs erudition and technical and academic specialization.

A clear illustration on this matter is the agricultural policy of a country. It is naturally important for political leadership and its populace to pay greater attention to the situation of the general agriculture of the country as well as its nature and potentialities, so that suitable policies can be made in accordance with this nature and potentialities.

It is clear that this is different from technical agricultural knowledge such as knowledge about a certain product and how to plant it, the time for harvest, kinds of fertilizers needed for its growth and any other necessary information to guide the farmers on how to grow produces which political, social and economic considerations that the country have decided to promote, produce and market.

This example is applicable to all the arenas of life in explaining that there is a difference between political and technical and technological aspects of every matter. Therefore, there should be no remonstrations against the Ummah or against its political representatives in taking

necessary general political decisions, under an excuse that the majority of the Ummah and the politicians are not technical and technological specialists in any of the human fields, including philosophy and Islamic jurisprudence.

Another observation: It is very pertinent that the confusion created on Islamic socio-political thought concerning the executive authority's relation with the religion, Da'wah and religious and cultural education should be discontinued. Is stopping the rulers, their interests and the interests of their supporters from having influence the religion, Da'wah, education, culture and media in the society positive or negative trend? Does that really amount to separating the religion and its values from the state and politics? Or it means preventing the rulers from tainting the religion, and its values and principles from being trampled upon, marginalized or exploited so that it could serve the interests of the political elites and other interest groups?

The importance of taking the religion away from the hands of the political power holders is a matter that many people have not yet really understood. The majority of the Ummah and the many educated elites are also confused about it. That is why it is very pertinent to realize that Da'wah and religious teaching and education must be kept away from the influence of the ruling elites and from their political programs. This should not be seen as separating the religion from the state or from the politics. It is rather its preservation from being exploited and negatively used as a tool for tyranny,

corruption and mischief. Therefore, such prevention is a service to the Ummah and preservation for the religion and its sanctity.

Simply put, the political executive power is not the state. It is rather one of the branches of the state. The Ummah and the people are the real foundation and most essential element in controlling the general politics and formation of the state. As such, it is they alone that have the right to confer legitimacy on the rulers.

Whoever understands the meaning of the state and the position of the rulers will definitely realize that keeping the hands of the rulers and their political interests off the religious affairs is a protection for the religion and the values from being negatively used in any form. It is not separating the religion from directing the affairs of the state or its political programs. Rather, it is a sort of strengthening the role of the religion, Da'wah and education in the Ummah's system of governance. That is by putting the affair of creating the necessary cadres of the Ummah and upbringing its children in the correct way, directly in the hands of the populace so that these cadres will be qualified to direct the affairs of their community and catering for its spiritual and material interests and building its political establishments upon a solid foundation derived from the guidance of their religion, values and goals, and far from influences of anybody's personal interests – especially the rulers and their supporters.

Hence, the matter here is about realizing the goals of the Holy Qur'an and realizing the lessons of history. It is about reconstruction and

reorganization in the light of the goals of Islam, experiences of the Ummah and understanding of the nature of man. That is by assigning powers of religious affairs, Da'wah and values and social and religious education and the general media to the Ummah through independent organs that derive their authority and legitimacy directly from the Ummah. By this, these organs will be able to sincerely produce cadres and provide them with necessary awareness and correct information that will enable them play their roles in the society and that will help them reform their general establishments – including that of governance, in accordance with their priorities, based upon noble religious principles, values and goals upon which they were nurtured, without any distortion, misapplication or marginalization.

Indeed, teaching of religion and morals through pure methodologies and sincerity and far from imperfections and hidden agendas, is the best way to serve Islam and its creeds and values in the society and the state, as well as the best way to serve the state's policies.

The review of Islamic modern political and social thought and reconstruction of its establishments including independent Da'wah, educational, cultural and media establishments is undoubtedly an important step towards building a sound Islamic political and social base. This is because; this education and this awareness are the only way and the only guarantee that can orientate the options of the citizens concerning legislations and political programs. It is also the only way that can enable them actualize the goals of this religion and

promote its values and morals in the society and ensure adherence to the same.

In short, keeping the religion away from the influence of the ruling elites in view of weaknesses, perversions, whims and inclinations to which they are susceptible to as humans – as we can now witness in many countries and throughout the political history of humanity, such as the case of Roman Catholicism and other ancient dictatorial civilizations – is an effort aimed at preserving the religion from being desecrated through outright abolition, marginalization, distortion or exploitation. There is no doubt that keeping the religion away from being influenced by the rulers will serve its purpose and sanctity and elevate its estimation in the society.

Doing that does not, in any way, mean separating the religion from the state or politics. It rather strengthens and consolidates both and their role in the society through sound redirecting of political programs, in accordance with the goals of the religion and the priorities of the Ummah and its general interests. All this would certainly occur through the impacts of awareness and religious education, and through an unbiased media that functions under specialized independent organs set up specifically for this purpose.

It is important to realize here that programs and arrangements that emanate from and that depends on the choice and conviction of the Ummah should be the only ones that have real political power. For, they are assured choices, policies and arrangements whose execution



is guaranteed and supported by the majority of the Ummah. This is in contrast to the programs and arrangements that emanate for personal interests of some individuals that do not represent the interests, convictions and choices of the Ummah.

In the light of the above, we need to recognize the difference between suppression of religious sanctity by using it for personal interests, and guidance of revelation and the light of guidance that religion symbolizes for the Ummah and its people and cadres where it represents principles, morals, Da'wah and education.

In order to protect the Ummah from misconception and perverted course, the Ummah and its thought should be kept far away from mix-up of roles and discourses, and as such, from mix-up of concepts.

An example of this is using the statement: 'Allah restrains by the ruler what He does not restrain by the Qur'an', in order to justify the rulers' overbearing domination over the people and their terrorization of them by confusing fundamental religious issues with crimes and excesses that the rulers in any nation commit against lives, honors, rights and properties of the people.

Beliefs, principles and manners are taught through Da'wah, conviction, and education 'with wisdom and beautiful admonition' and argument in the kindest manner. Allah addresses His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) thus, "*You are not sent but as a mercy to mankind.*" And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) himself said: "*Religion is good conduct.*"

Therefore, a study of Islamic religious texts, especially the prophetic Sunnah, will make one keen on adhering to methodical way of understanding them and realizing their goals. This is done by being methodically cautious concerning mistakes, errors, oversight and distortion that might affect texts not consecutively reported as far as their wordings and meanings are concerned. Among things that should be considered while studying these texts are situations of the time and place of the people to whom they were addressed in the first place. Not only that, a difference needs to be made between the roles that are exclusively the Prophet's, by virtue of his being a Messenger commissioned to convey a divine message that transcends all times and places; and by virtue of his being – at the same time – a caller on the way of Allah, teacher and educator of his people and model for them and generations that come after them and a head of government and a builder of a society and a state.

All this is a clear proof that this religion, with its principles and values, is capable of guiding mankind; and that it is capable of actualizing its principles, values and concepts in the life of man. It also shows the role of wisdom in manners of interpreting these values and principles according to the reality of time and place, thereby indicating the importance of considering time and place factor in understanding many prophetic actions and sayings. These actions and sayings are aimed at building a state and a civilized human society out of tribes that could virtually be described as primitive and that had never experienced any semblance of civilized society or state.

Through Islam and its teaching, the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) made out of that primitive society a nation in which the citizen (a Muslim) abides by the rights of citizenship (being a brother to the fellow Muslim) and in which no citizen is ‘wronged or handed over to the enemy’, and in which ‘Allah comes to the help of a slave who renders help to his brother’.

Without this methodological clarification in understanding the concepts, discourses and roles, it is impossible to avoid the rulers’ and their supporters’ deviations and excesses in misuse or exploitation of the sanctity of the religion to legitimize oppression, tyranny and corruption in their interests, thereby depriving the Ummah and humanity of the guidance of the revelation that seeks to steer the human nature towards attaining a life built upon foundations of truth, justice, brotherhood, mercy and peace for which it is created.

In short, this methodological vision and reform arrangements mean that the Ummah’s system will become an interpretation of its Islamic principles and goals. It will make it a lively Islamic Ummah in a civil Islamic state with a civil government and civil Islamic order.

The word ‘Islamic’ here means the religion and the value are the components of the Ummah’s thought and sentiment and the framework of its decisions and choices. This is the most important thing.

‘Civil’ means adherence of the Ummah, with all its sections, to the common social and human arrangements that achieve the goals and

values of the religion and do not contradict them, and upon which the generality of the Ummah agreed constitutionally.

Therefore, the Islamic Ummah is a nation marked out through its identity, procedures, principles, goals, choices and priorities of its Muslim citizens. Their nation is an Islamic Ummah, in that it is built upon excellent universal Islamic principles and goals that citizens – including the non-Muslims – cannot reject. This nation, with its law, is built upon a common system that caters for the interests of all the segments of the society – Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It protects their identities and caters for their priorities, choices and fundamental interests, making all the citizens united within the framework of a constitution that is civil in organization and Islamic and human in context.

It's being human means it represents fundamental human values, rights and morals that are commonly respected by all people – including Muslims – by their nature, fundamentals of their religions and their moral and social heritages.

The Islamic government that is built upon these foundations is “an Islamic government” and, at the same time, a civil government by the virtue of its dependence on the will of the people – regardless of their different groups, values and choices – led by the will of the Muslims, their values, choices and priorities that emanate from their Islamic identity, fundamentals of Islam and Islamic education that glorify the concept of justice, cooperation, kindness, brotherliness, mutual

consultation and peace. Adherence to these fundamentals guarantees repelling of the aggression of aggressors and protects the weak and the oppressed.

On this occasion, we need to differentiate between a secular democratic system and Islamic system of mutual consultation (Shura) so that the matters do not get confused and the vision does not get blurred.

The secular democratic system is the materialistic and secular Western system of governance, which is known as capitalism in economic term, liberalism in social term and democracy in political term.

The major factor that differentiates between the secular democratic system of governance and Islamic political system of Shura is a philosophical and fundamental difference. This difference must be reflected on aspects of some necessary procedures of each of the two systems – in spite of the outward similarity between them in some aspects such as indispensability of election (i.e. backing of the majority of the people) and separation of authorities and powers so that a balance can be made between legislative and executive arms; and there would be impartiality of the judiciary, so that personal interest will not become dominant and a party in a conflict will not be the judge.

The secular Western democratic system – which is a product of a nasty experience the West had had with religious superstitions and

ecclesiastics – is a system based upon materialistic mentality that regards human will as the first and last point of reference in determining the truth and what is correct. According to this mentality, any truth or reality is ultimately a personal affair of man. It is up to each individual to determine what truth is and what is correct; and no person has a right to determine the truth or dictate what truth is for another person.

But since it is impossible for any individual to live in isolation, and it becomes clear that one must inevitably live with others, then there is dire need for a kind of agreement among members of the society on a system that all must abide by. That is how the democratic system came to existence.

Democracy means agreement of the majority of the people on necessary regulations for the smooth running of the affair of the society, in accordance with personal convictions of most members of the society. This system is the criterion that all must abide by, for power resides with the majority. However, the system must also consider the fundamental rights of the minorities with an understanding that any injustice done to the fundamental rights and interests of the minorities could lead to rejection, disobedience and instability in the society. And there is a big loss in this for the entire society – both the majority and the minority.

In spite of the advancement and widespread adoption and application of democracy and decline of ancient traditions, there are still

substantial problems in this system, as we can clearly see. The concept of freedom has given birth to a problem that leads to social and moral anarchy. The moral values and principles have fallen because the animalistic individualism has become the real authority. Immediate personal lusts and desires have started showing their symptoms, and the societies involved have started paying the price of the negative impacts of this unrestrained freedom.

These negative effects are felt on human social relations and on the family and its responsibilities and its intimate human relationships. This uncurbed freedom also has its negative effects on psychological and spiritual health of the growing generations and future cadres of these nations. In these societies, the family is no longer a fortified, safe and trustworthy haven for bringing up the youths and meeting their spiritual, psychological, emotional and material needs. It is this situation that led these societies – since the middle of the last century – into a quick abyss of moral and social anarchy, as was the case with the past nations.

If the Islamic Shura system must be built upon the foundations of the real Qur'anic principles and goals, then the Muslims must embrace the option of 'decision of the majority'. This is the point of similarity between the system and the secular democratic system. But the Islamic system is different in that a Muslim regards the truth and the reality as an objective issue and that the overall universal vision is a matter that is beyond human logic and that this overall universal vision is essential in man's spiritual, moral, social, civilizational, and

cultural guidance so that he can have a gracious course of life that is necessary for his happiness and psychological stability.

Therefore, in order for the Muslim citizen to actualize his Islam and establish his society upon an Islamic vision and value, he should accept, be convinced with and adhere to the Islamic universal vision and its gracious spiritual, moral and civilizational principles and goals, in his decisions and choices.

On the issue of general vision and Islamic values and principles that a Muslim citizen should have, and on the issue of the philosophy of Islamic system, it is very important that the matter should be made clear and free of any equivocations or ecclesiastics. It should be clear that it is a matter of clear, authenticated, humanitarian principles and values that are easy and well-defined. These visions and principles have nothing to do with superstitions, eclectics or equivocations. Rather, they are products of divine revelation and were applied in the prophetic era in a human situation. Therefore, they are compatible with human nature and are easily applicable. They are logically convincing, the human soul and mind are comfortable with them and they satiate the sentiment.

As a result of this and their being an astounding proof, they provide a framework and pillars that firmly established the system upon a human base that is glorious, spiritual, moral and cultural. These principles are believed in, by whoever does so, upon clear knowledge – accepting the option of Islam after being convinced. As for those



who prefer to reject these foundations, and as a result, reject Islam – due to ignorance or prejudice – they are free to do so. But these rejecters have no right to make any change or alteration in the foundations and values.

In other words, everybody has the right to accept or reject Islam but nobody has the right to make any changes in the foundations, values or goals of Islam in order to arbitrarily lay claim to something he has no right to. On this basis, the system of governance in the Muslim Ummah – in the long run – adheres to this vision and its political decisions and procedures through the acceptance of the Ummah.

The Islamic system of governance is also ‘democratic’ in the sense that it adheres, in its decisions, to the opinion of the majority of the citizens. But this kind of democracy is ‘Islamic and *Shuratic*’ and not ‘secular and materialistic’. Therefore, the Muslims’ task in the procedures of their Islamic Shura political system is to engage in mutual consultation in the light of this vision, principles and concepts that help them in achieving their goals at all times and in all places, and as such, actualizing the common aims of members of the society, irrespective of their statuses, as the reality on the ground may demand.

In order to attain this communality, the system takes it upon itself to convince the majority within the limits of the vision, concepts and basic Islamic goals that emanate from members of the society’s common humanity, citizenship and brotherhood. The system also

adheres to the principles of brotherliness, justice, cooperation and mutual compassion, thereby catering for human dignity and fundamental human rights of the citizens regardless of their status, affiliation, race and religion. The system should not operate outside these principles or in disregard to them. Rather, its ultimate goal, in all its procedures, should be mutual consultation in order to attain these aims.

Under the shade of Shura system, it is not possible for any Muslim – as far as his belief, education and commitment are concerned – to intentionally and comfortably accept any injustice or aggression or to perpetrate the same against anybody, whether he is a Muslim or not, for his own benefit or for the benefit of somebody else even if he is the nearest person to him. Rather, if anybody wants to show favor or kindness to another person, he should do so from his own personal wealth and should never do injustice to another person – whatever the religion or affiliation of that person may be.

In the shade of civil and *Shuratic* Islamic political system, where the role of political parties and groups are limited to competition in presenting their political manifestos and priorities based on the Ummah's vision and priorities, it is very important to note that there is no place for ecclesiastic hegemony, tyranny of the affluent ones or double standard in distribution and circulation of power. This is because; the awareness of the members of the Ummah and lack of ecclesiastical ideology – which, directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly, claims monopoly of truth and reality and the exclusive

right to decision-making, under the guise of absolute truth, sacredness or right of guardianship – have made it necessarily impossible for establishment or survival of any autocratic authority under any guise. This makes the Ummah the exclusive source of power and decision-making.

In this Islamic system, the Ummah has civil governments; and the acceptance of such governments and their programs depends on the acceptance gained by the elected political parties that represent such governments and their programs and the extent to which the Ummah is convinced about them. As a result, there is no authority and no legitimacy – in whatever way or form – for anybody’s hegemony or monopoly.

Hence, the two systems, secular democracy and Islamic Shura – in other words, the secular materialistic democracy and the Islamic Shura democracy, since democracy means decision of the majority – have spectacularly profound philosophical disparities, though they may look similar in some aspects. These differences are due to deep fundamental philosophical dissimilarities between the two societies and civilizations. The two civilizations have opposing views on ‘might is right’ and ‘right is might’. These fundamental philosophical differences must reflect in political procedures, methodologies and organs and procedures of decision-making. If its organs and procedures do not represent its philosophy and goals, the Islamic Ummah will end up taking decisions it will not be able to implement or which it is not convinced with. The natural result of this is that the

Ummah will not be propelled by such decisions nor will they arouse the spirit of sacrifice and struggle in the souls of its children.

Therefore, decisions made by the Ummah should represent its philosophy and goals to avoid ending up submerged by formalities of ridiculous decisions and choices in almost everything. Unfortunately, it is observed that in most Arab and Islamic countries, the political decision-making establishments maintain strict adherence to the arrangements of secular democratic system and philosophy without understanding the nature of these arrangements and goals, and consequently, without being able to apply the useful aspects of these arrangements that can be helpful for Islamic vision, thought and civilization and that are compatible with its nature, philosophy and goals.

Perhaps, among the effects of the differences in the philosophy of Islamic Shura democracy and secular materialistic democracy is that the system of mutual consultation in Islamic system leads, in many cases, to the appearance of what we can call ‘parliamentary parties’ according to the arrangements of modern political systems. This situation results in the adherence of the deliberants in the Islamic system to conscientious convictions about the truth and what is in the people’s interest; and not to rigid and fixed party policies.

Adherence to the truth and to what is in the people’s interests could influence the positions of the members and the majorities in case of changing of convictions that result from deliberations. As a result,

this can contribute, in some cases to the stability of executive arm of government and its political continuity. This situation can make the ‘presidential systems’, in a form, more compatible with Islamic Shura system; but it is different from the system known among the political science students as ‘parliamentary system’.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Ummah to be conscious of its reality, its universal vision, the nature of its systems and its civilizational philosophy so that it can build its organs and create its constitutional procedures in effective way that is compatible with its nature and goals. This will acquaint the Ummah on how to benefit, through its brilliant civilizational interactions and dialogues, from experiences of other nations and other modern civilizations in areas such as scientific realities and effective essential social procedures. This would prevent the repetition of what has already being invented and enable the Ummah to know how to activate its social and civilizational and cultural plan with the least effort possible, thereby benefitting from every useful and constructive effort that humanity has achieved in its civilizational course. The Ummah would also be able – through its Islamic civilization and superb creativities – to contribute in providing direction to other human civilizational efforts.

Being that as it may, it is very important to affirm here that in this Islamic civil and Shura system, sanctity of the religion should be free from being tampered with by the rulers. Awareness, Da’wah, education, cultural and general media affairs should be free from the influence of governments and their executive arms for they should

only be directly in the hand of the Ummah and its representatives. As a result, it would not be possible for any political party or group to have religious hegemony over this Islamic civil system or to derive a special religious favor from it. These parties and groups would only have to engage in pure political competition in the service of the Ummah through active political programs built upon complex life considerations, though they emanate from specific philosophies and goals. This phenomenon allows diverse opinions, priorities and points of view while all of them abide by the Ummah's constitution and draw their legitimacy from the Ummah's acceptance of them and their programs and its satisfaction with their government.

In the light of the above, it becomes undoubtedly clear to us that the Ummah's system is an Islamic civil Shura system because its content depends on the will of the people. At the same time, the identity, values, and goals of the Muslims represent the foundation of its options and priorities which are defined in a common and constitutional way with other sections of the society including non-Muslims. It is a civil system in its arrangements because of its constitutional commonality that represents and caters for all groups and identities on the basis of principles and values clearly defined for all by the common civil constitution that emanate from the will of the people and their general gracious vision and values. This vision and these values are, in their essence, Islamic and humanitarian, accepted by the nature and the goals of the religions. Therefore, the will of the

people is the factor that controls government actions, system and performance and not the opposite.

We can now comfortably say that there is no contradiction between the civilian nature of the system and humanitarian nature of its goals and values on one hand, and the Islamic nature of the Ummah and loftiness of its goals and principles, on the other. Equally, there is no contradiction between civilian nature of the government and Islamic and humanitarian nature of the state.

Therefore, the result of the system of this Islamic civilian and humanitarian state is to ensure freedom of religion, soundness of aims, adherence to justice, and sound performance of Da'wah, awareness, educational and media establishments in the service of the Ummah. With this, the Ummah will be the guardian over the ruler and the government; and the ruler and the government would be the trustworthy executor and sincere preserver of the interests of the Ummah and the society, with all its groups that represent its options.

With the like of this system, the governments and organizations in Muslim countries would become real representatives of the people's will and choices; and not ignoble, autocratic, corrupt and fake governments that serve personal interests, nor corrupt, autocratic and ecclesiastic governments that represent the divine will as claimed by certificates and academic title holding employees whom the rulers use to impose their will on the Ummah and the people, in order to serve their personal and parochial interests. For, such governments are, at

the end of the day, tyrannical. They are also centers that aim at establishing and consolidating corruption and mischief and personal interests. That is why it is impossible – in view of their ignoble and secular hegemony or their ecclesiastical hegemony, whether barefaced or disguised – to create an avenue for diversity and rotation of power. We can see this in the situation of the secular ignoble regimes and the traditional ecclesiastical regimes that autocratically control the affairs of many unfortunate Muslim nations and squander their wealth.

It is equally important to realize that in this Islamic political system, there is no authority for governments and authorities that do not derive their legitimacy from the common will of the Ummah and the people with all their sections. Also, there is no hegemony for any government in this system and it is impossible for any government to survive or to rule without the people approving it and its sound programs.

In a situation when a government transgresses and deviates, it is illegal to use violence in political dispute in a Muslim society or state. For, when some companions asked the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) concerning the rulers who deviate from the right course, “Shall we not fight them?” He replied, “No, as long as they observe prayers.” However, this does not mean that the Ummah and the people have no right, when advice and criticism failed to bring any change, to put a limit to the transgression and



deviation of the rulers by removing the carpet from under their feet and resort to peaceful and civil public resistance.

Among the means of doing this, without undermining the security of the society, are expressing displeasure, demonstration, and practicing civil disobedience. This is in order to ensure that rulers respect the people's rights, to prevent aggressions and to bring about corrections and desired reforms. These measures should also be taken to strip government of its legitimacy. For, 'the best Jihad is a word of truth said in the presence of an unjust ruler', 'there is no obedience for a man if that will be lead to disobeying the Creator', 'a man should hear and obey in all that he likes and dislikes except if he is commanded to disobey Allah. If he is commanded to disobey Allah, then such command should not be heard or obeyed.' And 'obedience is only in what is lawful.'

With the above, it is clear that 'the Islamic Ummah' means, in the first degree, a vision, education, Da'wah and teaching. It is a state, a constitution and an Islamic civilian and humanitarian government. It is Islamic in content and identity, and a civilian in commonality and organization. On the basis of these arrangements, there is no place for making any separation between religion and vision, and education and Da'wah on one hand, and politics and giving direction to the authorities, and reorientation of social options and priorities, on the other.

It would be clear, from this angle, that Islamic Ummah is not a secular materialistic ‘democratic’ government or state in which religion is lacking. It is not an atheistic autocratic Marxist state or government that wages war on religion and seeks to annihilate it. It is also not a tyrannical, ignoble, corrupt ‘religious’ or ecclesiastic state or government in which religion is marginalized and used for personal interests, inordinate desires and frivolities of the rulers; and its role is restricted to celebrations, birthday anniversaries and funeral processions.

Rather, it is a nation that is Islamic, moral and principled in content and direction. At the same time, it is civilian and a *Shuratic* Islamic state that promotes cooperation upon righteousness and piety; and with its spirituality – through the Ummah’s awareness, choices and directives – elevates the religion and the values. It protects the vision, beliefs and human civilizational and cultural freedoms. It caters for the interests of the Ummah and the people. It protects the weak, brings prosperity to the land and establishes justice between all different sections of the society. All this cannot be achieved unless the ‘reformers’ wake up to the importance of organizations in fulfillment of promises and sound performance. If not, the reformers themselves will easily fall into the same trap and end up, along with their allies, into perpetrating rule of tyranny, corruption and hegemony like those before them – as it is evident in the history of past nations.

Therefore, the reformers and thinkers should build their intellectual reform thoughts – not on mere noble and goals or mere sweet promises and hopes or the majority of people’s support for them as a result of what they suffer of tyranny, injustice and corruption at the hand of the existing regimes. Rather, they should build their thoughts on noble goals and sincere promises that are backed by complete and effective organizations that would make it easy for the Ummah to take decisions and oversee the implementation of those decisions; and that would make it easy for the people to oversee the governments’ performance and make them accountable to avoid autocratic perpetrations. Such organizations should also prevent powers from being concentrated in the hand of a single individual or a number of individuals to behave and rule without any supervisor or reckoner – after the ground has already been prepared for that in form of as mutilation of education and hoodwinking people through educational and media means controlled by the rulers and their followers who carry out their orders and their only concern is to perpetuate their rule and corruption.

In order for the Ummah to avoid revolving around imaginary and empty reform circles of an unfathomable abyss of illusionary dreams of glory, honor, development and construction, and the mirage of obliterating autocracy, corruption, poverty and injustice; the reformers, the thinkers and the educators should implant in the conscience of the Ummah and the majority of the people the necessity of looking at actions and not at words and rating the performance

with the results and not with mere claims; and that they should avoid falling for sweet words that are not backed by effective organizations. The fake rulers, the corrupt ones and the people of vested interests always resort to these deceptive means and employ them to hoodwink nations and peoples.

If we look at the historical records of the political and cultural elites of autocratic regimes, irrespective of their being religious or not, we would find that they share a common characteristic of making excessively sweet speeches and promises. For, all the ruling elites of different nations make sweet speeches and false promises about their imaginary reform efforts, establishment of just and prosperous society and eradication of corruption. They also make false statements about development plans, reform of educational and health facilities, providing economic surplus, eradication of all causes of poverty and disease, resuscitation of commerce and industry and all good things that you could think of that people aspire to have.

A group of politicians would go and another would come, one government would fall and another would rise, one state would disappear and another would resurface; and the promises and sweet talks and hoodwinking that has no backing of any effective constitutional establishment would remain without anything achieved and without any tangible impact on the ground. So, the situation of these societies goes from bad to worse because of absence of effective organs.

As long as we do not know what allows or prompts these regimes and ruling elites, in spite of their religious or secular outlooks, to end up perpetrating tyranny and its consequential corruption and sabotage and confront and find remedy for the same, we will never be able to put an end to these abysses and these spiral circles that descend with the Ummah as a result of the tyranny and corruption, whatever the appellations or faces such regimes adopt.

Among the most important reasons for this unfortunate satanic phenomenon are: people's lack of awareness, lack of education and lack of knowledge about means of controlling governments' activities.

As it is known, this phenomenon cannot be limited or uprooted except without the establishment of complete and effective constitutional organs that regulate actions and performance, define the limitations of the authorities and promulgate rules and regulations that define powers, scopes and methods of performance, and that supervise. It is then that it would become impossible for corruption to spread within the system, it would be impossible for the power to be concentrated in the hand of one individual or a group of individuals, where the opposing party in a lawsuit is also a judge. Not only that, it would be impossible for certain desires, inclinations, lusts and personal interests to dictate policies; and excesses would not be able to go unchecked.

The point of beginning in the remedy of these diseases is to make the Ummah aware of the importance of organs in legislation, execution, check and balance, control, education and media. For, at the end of the day, it is the Ummah – with its awareness and its religious, civilian, social and political reform organizations – that can guarantee sound performance. It is the Ummah that can activate these organs that contribute their roles in creating a popular base and in activating this base and giving direction to its course. In turn, this base would guarantee sound performance and not hesitate to reveal any inefficiency or excesses and punish the deviants and the negligent ones.

In the light of this, the awareness of the Ummah and its different organs – public and private, official and non-official – is the starting point that can make people an organized, coherent and united entity, without the knowledge of which nothing happens and with the satisfaction and conviction of which no decision can be taken. The people should not be allowed to become – in spite of their living in one state – mere individuals, suffering in isolation, weakness and dismembering where each individual – as a result of ignorance and blindfolding and stultification – is disconnected from others and non-cooperative with those who are around him. For, he is ignorant of what is happening in the dark and behind the scene due to media misleading and obfuscation.

Therefore, the Ummah's awareness is the starting point and the shielding fortress that can protect the Ummah and its interests and

that would not allow the people of personal interests, with their organizational skills, to exploit members of the Ummah and to deceive them as a result of their lack of general and private organs, their organizational weakness or their weak authority, scope, power and independence.

We are affirming here what we have said before that the only way to achieve the Islamic reform project depends on the awareness of Islamic reformers and thinkers and their programs that are backed by soundness of vision, goals and principles that aims at empowering the Ummah to build a just society. That is by setting up organs that have power to confer and withdraw eligibility and that can block the way against autocratic and corrupt practices.

There remains an issue here that needs a scientific study from the thinkers, educationists and reformers so that they could issue a report regarding it, in a way that will be suitable for each people and each Muslim country, according to its social and political situation, and that could serve in achieving its Islamic spiritual and civilizational goals and guide its political and legislative decisions.

The issue is: Determining the age at which each citizen is eligible to participate in political and legislative decision-making and selection of leaderships, especially through election and nomination. The commotion which the Western democratic systems are characterized with and which the people of vested interests use to create bad and corrupt leaderships should be done away with. The people of vested

interests use these corrupt leaderships to subvert the will of the people, as we can see in the situation of the Western countries today.

One of the means of this commotion and subversion of the people's will is regarding payment of tax as the fundamental qualification for suffrage. This puts the political decision in the hands of these corrupt politicians and the people of vested interests through a numerical majority in many of these countries. Some of those given the right to vote under this system are adolescents and young children who understand nothing of the affairs of life and the society beyond their explosive passions and lusts. They are incapable of understanding diverse social and spiritual dimensions of their practices and their long-term effects on the society. As a result, they easily become tools at the hands of the merchants of ignominy and people of personal interests to spread animalistic obscenities, the result of which is social disintegration and deterioration of values and morals in the society.

If this situation is accepted in the animalistic and materialistic society in which the majority runs after narrow, local and personal material interests, it can never be accepted in the spiritual and moral Islamic society.

As a result of this, the Islamic civilizational and humanitarian system necessitates that a minimum age is determined for eligibility to vote and participation in general political decision-making upon the foundation of individual awareness about the necessity of achieving general interests through legal means. While doing this, all aspects of



Islamic social and moral life must be taken into consideration. Family and childhood morality and protection of women's and children's rights must be ensured. At the same time, corruption and excesses that spread immoralities, tear down the family, weakens ties and undermine the foundations of the society should be prevented.

In order to avoid lack of awareness, domination of lusts, deviation of the media and ascendancy of narrow material interests, given the contemporary life and necessity of creating cadres for the society, it is important to note the fact that most young people remain in school, are not yet found in job markets and are not able to get married and fully realize their social and moral responsibilities and the importance of protecting members of the family and the society until they are over the age of twenty-one. Therefore, it would be regarded an unwarranted measure to further bring down the age of suffrage, after it has already been brought down from twenty-one to eighteen, as many people are loudly advocating today. This would not serve the interests of the society as much as it would serve the interests of those who want to exploit these adolescents' naivety and lack of experience to corrupt them and use them to spread immoralities and destructive trades in selecting bad, inexperienced and ineligible leaderships without these youths knowing that.

The nature of the Muslim society and the nature of its goals necessitate that the youth be nurtured morally and materially until he becomes matured enough to understand his social responsibilities and the nature of his constructive and noble social, political, civilizational

and moral set-up. In my view, this kind of understanding cannot be attained in most of the modern societies by youths who are not yet in their twenties. This spurs a suggestion that generally, the age of twenty-five could be regarded as the minimum suitable age for suffrage, given the nature of Islamic civilizational set-up and its goals. This is as long as it is not proved scientifically – in the light of Islamic regulation and its goals – that a particular young person of this age is not eligible.

This is considering the fact that at age twenty-five, if a person is not yet married, he or she must have, at least, entered the job market, and understood the humanitarian, social and political dimensions, responsibilities and demands of Islamic life. And he or she must have realized what is likely to be the consequences of a person's actions on the society.

While determining the minimum suffrage age in Islamic political system, care must be taken not to imitate the political systems of materialistic civilizational setups. For, the nature of those setups and the nature of their responsibilities and concerns are different from the nature of Islamic setup and the nature of its responsibilities and concerns. That is why the issue of determining suffrage age in an Islamic society should be seriously studied, researched and evaluated to ensure that the decision taken will guarantee a mature and informed participation in the process of Islamic social and political decision-making, in a way that serves the Ummah, the community, the family and the individual, internally and externally from the

viewpoint of justice, mutual compassion and solidarity among members of the Ummah in particular and mankind in general. It should be done in a way in which the rights of the weak or any human being – whoever or she may be – are respected. It should also not allow for unruly imitation or uncivilized measures to mislead the Ummah and destroy its foundations, and moral and social cohesion of the society.

There are pertinent questions here: Where does the Ummah start this reform project? Where do Islamic reformers start the effective reawakening, reform, construction and cultural reorientation project? How can we put an end to the inseparable but vicious duo of autocracy and corruption in Ummah's thought and history?

The answers to these questions, the degeneration of their intellectual structure and deformity of their psychological and sentimental formation – should be by firstly, commencement of action on the part of the thinkers and educationists to show the Islamic universal civilizational vision and reconstruction of this vision in the imagination and conscience of its peoples. This vision should be derived from the Holy Qur'an and from what the Qur'an has explained of the nature of man, the responsibility thrust upon him as the successor on the earth, the soul that is breathed into his animalistic clay, the means that Allah endowed him with such as reason and knowledge, the trust of will and choice which he is obliged to bear and energies and potentialities for building and construction with which he is blessed, so that he can make the best

out of his self and his distinguished nature until Allah will inherit the earth and all that on it.

The Qur'anic vision is actually a description and embodiment of the essence of man. It makes him understand the reality of his nature and the meaning of his powers and energies. It makes him recognize the purpose of his existence and the nature of his role in the gift of this life.

This Qur'anic vision is not a constraint or a burden that goes against human nature or universal nature. Rather, the Islamic vision for man, universe and life is about actualization of human self, giving direction to life and bringing happiness in this world and the hereafter.

It is by reforming ways of thinking and methodologies of education and by purifying the culture that the Islamic vision can be regained, and cleaned from the deformation that has afflicted it.

This beginning – of firmly implanting foundations of the vision, awareness and ideological, intellectual, scientific, educational reform of the organs, with the support of members of the Ummah and contributions, donations, trust funds and budget allocations – is the task of thinkers and educationists. It is also the task of all reformers who must support the movement for ideological, intellectual and educational reform. This reform must be brought to the people, starting from the family, headed by fathers and mothers, who are, in their keenness on the welfare of their children, are like the cornerstone in reform and change initiative. It should then be carried

to the school and the teacher, to Imams and to the media and all other communication outlets so that the message will reach the entire Ummah, irrespective of their classes, groups and affiliations. A strong and solid base must be established in order to propel the wheel of comprehensive and complete reform in all spheres of intellectual, social, economical, political and cultural life.

This is because; if the people recognize aspects of distortion and neglect and they realize means of reform, attaining and implementing these means; and all this is supported by visions of fathers, mothers, teachers and media and, by extension, opinions and sentiments of all sections of the Ummah, the change, the reform and redirection of the course will certainly be achieved. For, Allah does not change the situation of a people until they change what is with them; and if a person grows upon a trait, it becomes his permanent mark; and the people would always have leaders who are like them.

Without the efforts of thinkers, educationists, reformers, fathers and mothers, the Ummah and its people will never find their way and they will never be able to redirect their efforts in building their needed cadres. For, relying on formal or informal autocratic and corrupt regimes to achieve reform and change these tyrannical and corrupt systems is always futile. This is because; in every system, the organizations naturally strive to resist change and maintain the status quo. Whatever change this organizations make is only in order to consolidate the system and not to change it. Therefore, fathers, mothers, thinkers, educationists and reformers are the only group that

can ignite the engine of change in the society, redirect the course of the Ummah, reconstruct its vision and its methods of thinking and educating its children, and as a result, reconstruct its organs and the kind of life it lives, internally and then externally – all that is a peaceful way. This is in order to enable the Ummah attain its goals, rekindle its will, develop its skills and reclaim its excellent and constructive civilizational role.

The project should start by reforming the vision and the thought, liberating the sentiment and purifying the culture; and the forward march should commence with sound vision and thought, purified culture and energized sentiment. It is then that the life can become fruitful and the goals of the Ummah such as actualization of brotherhood, equality, cooperation, justice, inviting to all that is good, peace, provision of means of prosperity and mutual cooperation in construction, creativity and culture can be achieved.

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of all the worlds.