

A BRIEF STUDY OF SOCIO-POLITICAL THOUGHT OF SAYYID QUTB ON THE REFORMATION OF MUSLIM SOCIETY

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Introduction

The twentieth century Muslim world has witnessed several scholars and intellectuals whose writings made great impact on the succeeding generations of Muslims especially the Muslim youth. Their writings have moulded and shaped a new and comprehensive Islamic vision, that responded to the ideas and doctrines that emerged as a result of the process of secularisation and modernisation of the Muslims. It is believed that only a few Muslim thinkers have directly contributed to the reformulation of contemporary Islamic thought. Sayyid Qutb being an activist, a political analyst, a Qur`anic exegete, a journalist, a poet, a socio-political thinker and a world-reknown Islamic revivalist of the twentieth century, influenced deeply the contemporary Islamic movements. His thought has undoubtedly drawn the attention of several people, for he boldly and uncompromisingly asserted his viewpoints regardless of their consequences.

Since Qutb's contribution especially to the field of political thought has captured the imagination and commitment of young Muslims all over the world and transformed them into committed workers and agents of change in the cause of Islam, it is appropriate to evaluate and analyse his socio-political views on modern issues. It is also relevant to evaluate his theory of Islamic society. In addition, his definition and concept of the Islamic society has earned him the wrath of the ruling classes because their

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ideals and systems contravened his definition. It seems that he had doubts about allowing Muslims learning about Islam from non-Islamic sources. It is, therefore, imperative to study his opinion on Muslims seeking knowledge of Islam from Western scholars.

Being an important Islamic revivalist of the twentieth century, Qutb deserves an honoured place in the history of Islamic revivalism, which demands an impartial analysis of various dimensions of his Islamic thought. Though Qutb joined the Islamic movement *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* (The Muslim Brotherhood) relatively late, he had completely devoted his life to Islamic revival that he was honoured with martyrdom.

Egyptian Society in the Analysis of Qutb

Sayyid Qutb observed the inner social aspects and other dimensions of Egypt, which surfaced at the end of the first half of the twentieth century. He observed the fragility of socialists and politicians who were responsible for creating antagonism and disorder among the masses. The society in which he lived accorded special respect to social class. In fact, the Egyptians continued their days with confidence on this distinction. The Egyptian view of life became different and the spirit of the masses had gone astray and was ruined. It annihilated the genuine emotions of man. This implies that the common people did not have an opportunity to distinguish the right from the wrong due to indifferent thinking of the society made of mainly the destitute. It devastated human conscience. There was a lack of genuine, mutual give and take understanding. During this time, Egypt experienced drought and famine causing the death of thousands of poor people. The wealth and the lands were monopolised by the upper classes, which resulted in economic crisis.¹

Qutb divides the Egyptian society into two classes. First, the Capitalist class who lived in luxury and did not do any fruitful work. This group lived at the expense of the labours who constituted the vast

1. Sayyid Qutb, *Ma'rakat al-Islam Wa al-Ra'smaliyah, Dar al-Shurâq*: Beirut, 1980, pp. 11-12, 16-17, 22-23.

majority of people. This dominant group had no link with religion or the nation. It joined hands with the West and was causing great discomfort to the ummah. It comprised mainly of feudal lords. The wealthy occupied key posts in government, political life and the military. This class also owned half of the cultivable lands in the country. It is said that more than one third of the national income was devoured by these people, in spite of the fact that their number did not exceed a couple of thousands.²

According to Qutb, the second class comprised of the majority poor, the downtrodden, and the labour class. It consisted of workers, peasants, feudal slaves, the unemployed and others. The overwhelming majority of them come from the rural areas in search of work. Neither mercy nor benevolence was shown to this group and their efforts were being exploited and utilised by the feudal lords.³ Qutb struggled to eliminate such an ill-fated society from Egypt through his writings and reform endeavours. For this purpose, he called on the people to fight against colonialism and feudalism. He also urged them to be aware of the emerging new trends, so that they might save themselves from the destructive ideologies and tactics of their proponents. He wept after seeing the society and explored the possibilities to salvage it from destruction.⁴ His concern for his fellow brethren shaped his socio-political thought.

Socio-Political Thought

As a socio-political thinker, Sayyid Qutb was concerned with political ideologies which diverted the attention of the people from having belief in God and Hereafter. Having analysed the implications of various ideologies he presented his views on them to create an awareness among the people of Egypt in particular and the Muslim world in general. A brief discussion is made hereunder on few issues in order to evaluate his socio-political thought.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

Marxism and Socialism

According to Qutb, the Marxist doctrine cannot survive except by coercion and in an atmosphere of intimidation and suppression although the clique of the Communist party dominates over the administrative machinery, and the state monopolises all sources of gain and livelihood.⁵ For Qutb, there are two basic ideologies challenging Islam namely Communism, on the one hand, and Capitalism on the other. Because of usury, monopoly, exploitation, and lack of justice, Qutb refused to view Capitalism or the Capitalist system as the model for Muslims. Moreover, Capitalism has been tied closely with Nationalism where states like England, France, Italy, and Germany, in the name of national interest asserted the right to exploit others, invaded and occupied other countries in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

On the other hand, though Socialism and Islam converge on many essential points such as in advocating guarantees of a minimum standard of life, work, housing, and social justice, the Islamic economic system which is based on *Tawāād* is diametrically opposed to Socialism. In this regard Qutb says:

Marxism is completely ignorant of the human soul, its nature and history, not to mention Marxism's ignorance of the nature of existence and the interpretation of life and the universe. It ascribes all human incentives to the feeding of material human wants and to the struggle for material gain. It describes all historical events as due solely to change in the means of production. It abrogates the most important human values and distinguishes man's history from that of animals, and denigrates man's most significant function, man being the primordial positive element on earth in the making of history. Marxism depicts the future as void of human legacies, assuming that human beings will be

5. Ibid.

philanthropic angels, each individual producing his utmost but receiving only according to his needs.⁶

Hence, Qutb asserts that the clash between Marxism and Islam is inevitable. Many reasons can be attributed to this clash. All socio-economic, political and other systems of Islam are established on the belief in God, whereas Marxism denies God. Dialectical materialism dominates Marxism whereas a unique unity between material and spiritual aspects of life based on the laws of the Creator dictates Islam. Ultimately, the conflict presented in economic terms (Capitalist, Communist, or Socialist) is, for Qutb, the conflict between spiritualism and materialism.

Qutb added that Marxism is the most advanced level of mechanical and intellectual materialism, and though the two camps, the Capitalist and the Socialist, disagree and wage wars for their own benefit, their difference is a matter of degree, of organisation, and of method. Due to their materialistic idea on life Qutb predicted the final victory of Marxism over Capitalism when the economy of the West reach its natural stagnation. This is so because Communism is nothing but a progressive idea when compared to Capitalism; it is progressive because it provides some basic material needs for people living under it and speaks to the governing authorities and the exploiting class. However, Qutb believed that the outcome of both is unjust because in Capitalism individuals and their ambitions rule over the community, and in Communism the state rules over the individuals.

Capitalism and Communism

Sayyid Qutb considers the ideologies of Communism and Capitalism as the worst enemies of mankind.⁷ Surprisingly enough, some authors argue that he was in favour of Communism while others say that he was somewhat liberal towards it. But this is a totally misconstrued and incorrect

6. Ibid.

7. Sayyid Qutb, *Dirasat Islamiyyah*, Dar al-Shuruq, 1967, pp. 34, 42-43, 51 and 85-91. See also his book *Khahsa'is al-Tasawwur al-Islami, Mu'wassasat al-Risalah*: Beirut, 1965, pg. 25.

conclusion, rather it is a deliberate attempt to tarnish his reputation. In fact, Qutb contends that Capitalism is one of the enemies of mankind, because it gradually exploited the people through various stages and means.⁸

Qutb criticised the ideology of Communism due to its treatment of the people as robots. He also attacked it for not providing freedom and liberty to the subjects to exercise their free will of choosing any way of life or religion. He believed that people of the twentieth century has knocked on the door of all ideologies and eventually realised the deficiencies and shortcomings in them. A time would come when all those who knocked on these doors would certainly turn back and realise the need for a total change. At this juncture they would find peace and harmony only in Islam. He also reflected on several socio-political and economic issues.

The ideology of Communism for Qutb has narrow limits. Whoever thinks deeply about the total welfare of a human being besides food and drink will not support the system. This ideology prospers only in a degenerate society or in a society which has become cowed down as a result of some form of prolonged dictatorship. Generally, it should not get the approval of a man who thinks twice about its origin and functions, because it believes in temporal aspects alone. For Qutb, it is a materialistic doctrine injected into the minds of the poor. It reflects deep ignorance on the human spirit, and the higher concerns. Its arguments are based on the material needs of society but not on a comprehensive system that includes the well-being of both this world and the life hereafter. It has no spiritual source in it. The minds of the founders of this school were devoid of knowledge of the spirit. The conclusion of Qutb on this research is genuine. He analysed the inner concepts and other dimensions of life. He was thorough and exhaustive in his study.⁹

Sayyid Qutb further says that Communism attempts to abolish individualism, because, individualism has profound influence in playing

8. Sayyid Qutb, *Nahwa Mujtama' Islami*, Jordon, 1969, pp. 22, 29, 36, 63 and 67.

9. Ibid.

a role in the intellectual formation of an individual. Not only this, it denies also the existence of God, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient and the Omnipresent. Further, Qutb mentions that the Marxist doctrine was nothing more than an incomprehensible scientific fallacy. As for the police state that was established in Russia under its auspices, it harks back to the days of the Tsars. It can be imposed on backward nations for only a limited period of time, because people who are aware of their identity and historical background cannot tolerate it for long.¹⁰

The emergence of a collective system was nothing but the reaction of the individual Capitalistic system. The expected fruits and results were fundamentally and basically misappropriated. Qutb believed that this collective system of life had been deduced from personal encroachment of the Capitalistic system. The practical consequence of this ideology was that the basic needs of human beings were seen to be identical with those of animals, namely food and drink, clothing, shelter and sex. It also deprived people of their spiritual needs, which differentiate human beings from animals.

Qutb strongly believed that Communism was the natural extension and evolution of the Western materialistic concept of life. The ideological goal had been expressed in terms of dialectical materialism based on material aspects of this world and the existence of material contradictions, which caused world evolution and revolution. This dogma promulgates a purely economic interpretation of history ascribing all developments in human life to the means of production. It has nothing but captivated the hearts of the poor and downtrodden, solving some of the temporal problems of life alone like provision for food, drink and work for all. Whoever possessed bread, freedom of speech and reasoning did not agree with this system even in the West. This way of life could not be disseminated in some countries, which strongly believed in and were committed to social justice. For example, Denmark and the United States are good examples, which have no confidence in this system of life.¹¹

10. Ibid.

11. Sayyid Qutb, *Al-Mustaqbal li Hadha al-Din*, IIFSO: Kuwait, 1975, pp. 55-69.

According to Qutb, the Capitalistic system, also called the democratic system, stood behind in the early period, played its role in favour of feudalism that promoted the dignity of Europeans and curbed their freedom. It weakened and threatened the existence of human beings in all walks of life. Its profession of freedom for the individual and enterprise has been eroded in practice. It exacted a high price for economic progress in exhausting the treasures of the world. It performed its greater role in monopoly and usury, which were responsible for all kinds of cyclical economic crises, depression, stagnation of commerce, recession and neo-colonialism. Certainly, the system of Capitalism is an offensive system. It exploits society at every level. In the Capitalistic society, the entire wealth is controlled by a handful of feudal lords with the result that a part of society is denied possession of anything and, consequently, they become serfs or bonded labourers to the feudal lords. Monopoly of wealth and property leads to economic depression and inflation, which were responsible for starvation, hunger, famine, drought and unrest.¹²

Nationalism

Nationalism, for instance, transformed Europe from a feudal system into a nation-state system. In this sense, it is interpreted by some scholars that it has had positive effects on Europe, which used nationalism to free itself from the control of the church. But Qutb's argument is correct in respect of the Muslim nations which followed nationalism. Muslims, who are of different ethnic groups, Arabs, Turks, Persians, Kurds, Berbers, and so forth, could have been one state. Because of the division of the Muslim world by colonising powers and then the rise of nationalism and its acceptance of this division, Muslims were split into many nation-states.

Qutb viewed this step as a deterioration that has weakened and left Muslims powerless. Not only do Muslims live in different states, but also many times these states have fought each other for the sake of their ethnic and national differences. Most Arab and Turkish leaders and heads of state

12. Mahdi Fadlallah, *Maa Sayyid Qutb fi Fikrihi al-Siyasi wa al-Dini*, Beirut: 1979, pg. 65.

have attempted to relegate Islam to a secondary role and to encourage nationalistic feelings, which ultimately opposed Islamic teachings. These leaders might have served the countries concerned as instruments to free their land. From an Islamic point of view, whether they advocate linguistic nationalism, racial nationalism, cultural nationalism, or a combination of all these, these leaders cannot be commended because nationalism prefers the duty to land and its people over any other duty, even to God.¹³

Some scholars have observed that Qutb rejected nationalism, ethnocentrism and even biased patriotism which paved the way for egoism, chauvinism and parochialism. Since Islam is a universal religion and a way of life, it is not restricted by geographical boundaries, as such he felt that if nationalistic feelings and ethnic sentiments exist, they will certainly put an end to this universal thinking of Islam. That is why Qutb considered such notions irrelevant, even antagonistic to Islamic unity. For him, nationalism confines the thinking of the people within the borders and interests of the nation, thus generating national pride and national self-aggrandisement and loyalty at the expense of Islamic *ummatic* solidarity.

The fact is that Qutb never supported man made ideologies, which deny the existence of God. These ideologies, according to him, lacked spiritual and moral dimensions. They passed through a process of metamorphosis and spiritual corruption. This can be noted from their failure to solve problems on the humanitarian ground.

Sayyid Qutb and the West

In the middle of the twentieth century the younger generation of Egyptians started changing their direction from Capitalism to Communism, because they at least found in the latter food, even though they did not find any spiritual elements in it. The system of Capitalistic economy

13. Sayyid Qutb, *Islam the Religion of the Future*, IIFSO: Kuwait, 1975

had lost its vitality in the West. They moulded their missions and sciences especially in the field of economics under the influence of Socialism, as Mawdudi had rightly predicted, that the West would not hesitate to follow the East in their day-to-day life.

Sayyid Qutb argued that the West has always projected itself as the champion of freedom movements and the saviour of freedom. But in practice, it disregards its doctrine and deceives the people. Innumerable examples can be cited in this context as far as the Arab-Muslim problems are concerned. According to him, the Arab world has every right to criticize the West for the denial of its freedom.

The West projected itself as the champion of freedom and the enemy of slavery intellectually and politically. But France, despite its pronouncement of defending freedom by advocating and sponsoring world liberation movements, regarded the teachings of Arabic language and Islam as a crime in the Arab-Islamic countries and detained the old, the children and the women of liberation movements in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.¹⁴

Sayyid Qutb stated that Britain, which claimed to be the torchbearer of religious tolerance, prohibited the spread of Islam in South Sudan and disallowed the existence of any Muslim communities. It hurled bodies of wounded Egyptian commandos, who were committed to liberate the Suez Canal from foreign domination, to rapacious dogs which ate their flesh. Such were the hostility and antagonism they had towards Muslims of Egypt in those days.¹⁵

Sayyid Qutb added that the United States, the so-called saviour of democracy and freedom, permitted its white-skinned citizens to lynch the Negro in public. During the Palestine war, when the problems of Egyptians were presented to the Security Council for discussion, it stood

14. Sayyid Qutb, *Naḥwa Mujtama' Islami*, op. cit., pp. 22, 24.

15. Sayyid Qutb, *Al-Salam al-Ālami wa al-Islam*, Mu'wassasat al-Risalah: Beirut, 1967, pg. 158.

behind Israel and blocked Egypt's case from getting a fair hearing.¹⁶ These are some of the historical facts mentioned by Sayyid Qutb in order to expose the cruelties of the Western capitalistic economic system that had exploited the economies of the non-Western world for its own vested interest.

As mentioned earlier, Qutb condemned the ideology of Socialism and declared it to be very dangerous and harmful for humanity. According to him, it would never provide benefits to mankind. He further asserts that democracy in the West had become sterile to such an extent that it was borrowing from the systems of the Eastern countries especially in the economic spheres. Instead of solving the problems of the people, it created confusion and led to crises in all spheres. Though it aimed at providing employment, shelter, health security and other possible incentives to individuals, it could not satisfy the basic needs of the people. Some of the programmes enforced by it, though they resemble some of the fundamental values of Islamic teaching, can never be accepted as a complete and comprehensive code of life, because of their very denial of the existence of God. In the final analysis, it sought asylum in the Western materialistic economy, which later tried to dominate the systems in all walks of life.¹⁷

Mawdudi declared that Islam could not reconcile with any other ideologies that have been founded and moulded on Western philosophical norms in order to serve national and vested interests. He not only admonished the people but also cautioned the West for its cruel injection of such doctrines to the East under the guise of modernism, economic progress, liberalism, rationality and intellectualism. Qutb also held the same view.

Sayyid Qutb was critical of those Muslim nations which used some of the elements of Socialism to achieve their goals without realising the consequences. Some Arab countries also adopted this approach and

16. *Ibid.*,

17. *Ibid.*

derived inspirations from it, as Qutb points out. Some others mixed this with Islam and derived a new philosophy of life, namely 'Islamic Socialism' which threatened the Arab world in the seventies, eighties, and early twentieth century. This trend shows the depth ignorance on the part of those rulers in respect to both Islamic and Western ideologies.

According to Qutb, all ideologies and movements that originated from the so-called Western philosophy of eighteenth century Enlightenment had lost their vitality.¹⁸ In short, all man made theories have proven to be a total failure. The concept of social justice, though much talked about, has been absolutely violated and neglected for centuries. People are forced to dance to the tune of their political masters.

Sayyid Qutb asserts that European ideas and theories cannot become a foundation of any Islamic thought, nor can these ideas be helpful in the task of reviving the religion, not simply because they are from the West but because of the philosophical and ideological differences between secularism and Islam.¹⁹ Hence, he contended that the Islamic worldview directly derives guidance from the Qur'an and the Sunnah and said that people should create such an environment, according to their capability.²⁰

Sayyid Qutb further argued that 'our manner of deriving guidance from the Qur'an should be such that we should not at all touch the matters which are already decided on the level of intellect and consciousness, nor should we turn to those remnants of civilization from the Qur'an. Then realising that the content and the form have among themselves a deep relationship, we should not try to present the realities of the Islamic worldview in this borrowed form of the philosophy, particularly when the content is the Islamic concept.'²¹ In other words, for him, presenting such a structure of philosophy which is not at all compatible with Islam

18. Mahdi Fadlallah, *Maa Sayyid*, pg. 84.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Sayyid Qutb, *The Characteristics of the Islamic Concept*, Hindustan Publication: Delhi, 1984, pg. 17.

21. *Ibid.*, pg. 16

and its nature is an injustice to Islam, because the content cannot remain unaffected by the form. He also argued that sometimes the very shape is distorted and great differences may emerge between its original version and the subsequent explanations. Qutb then presented his profound reflections:

We want to invite your attention to one more aspect, that is: it is not our objective to point out any particular 'modification' in the Islamic thought, on which we spend our entire energy, and it may become the viewpoint of our efforts in presenting the Islamic worldview and its principles and elementary rules. But our purpose is that we should explain the realities of the Islamic worldview itself, and with full natural balance and proportion as has been maintained by the Qur'an, we should try to highlight its every aspect, for if we devote ourselves to deal with only one particular modification or defect and try to counter it within the sphere of these realities, then this method will be very dangerous, and the result will be that by countering the old modification we would be introducing a new modification and deviation, after all. We will find many examples of this danger in the books and articles written in defence of Islam to counter the orientalist and the new and old apostles, raising objections against Islam. Out of these some books are those, which were written, in a particular atmosphere, for a particular deviation and for a particular time.²²

Having expressed his views on various political ideologies, Qutb concluded that the glitter of this materialistic culture should not blind our sight to the tangible misery which mankind suffers under its sway. He reiterates that those who fired rockets and orbiting satellites should not divert our attention. Finally, Qutb declared that the role of the white man's civilization has come to an end whether it was Russian, American, English, French, Swedish or anyone else. It has come to an end by virtue of

22. Ibid., pp. 19-20

the hideous schizophrenia in European history and in all doctrines and systems prevailing in the West.²³

While expressing his views on the then existing political scenario of the world, Qutb divided the world into three blocs, namely the Western Bloc, the Eastern Bloc and the Neutral Bloc. Both Western and Eastern blocs, he argued, have been competing with each other to dominate the whole world, whereas the third bloc was forced to remain insignificant in all respects. The proclamation of parochial and chauvinistic nationalism on the basis of ethnocentrism, like Arab nationalism, in practice did not fit into the agenda of the big powers. Some nations did not find a slot in the third bloc and they were compelled to associate themselves eventually with either of the two main blocs to save themselves from the inequities of these blocs.²⁴

As far as the school of Neutralism is concerned, it is an ideology, which is not ostensible and has no distinguishing marks because it is not based on nature. It represents artificiality in its dealings as felt by Qutb. This bloc represents what is called the neutral pocket or the pocket of Afro-Asia that is an incoherent artificial bloc. It has no particular ideology that would unite the people. It has no unique history nor is there a common goal. It is despised, especially on the international scene. Its members like India and Pakistan, though champions of this school, always involve themselves in war, particularly due to their disputes over Kashmir.²⁵ In such a neutralist association of non-aligned nations, there is no room for peace. Therefore, it is also faced with failure in its aspiration for a strong international identity.

Sayyid Qutb calls on Muslims of different nations to unite as a third force namely, 'the Muslim Bloc.' According to him this bloc could be established and identified under the banner of Islam. He believed that

23. Sayyid Qutb, *Al-Mustaqbal li Hadha al-Din*, pp. 55-64.

24. Sayyid Qutb *Ma'alim Fi al-Tariq*, IIFSO: Kuwait, 1978, pg. 4.

25. Sayyid Qutb *Al-Islam wa al-Mushkilat al-Hadarah*, Mu'wassasat al-Risalah: Beirut, 1968, pp. 95-99. See also *Al-Salam al-'Alami wa al-Islam*, pg. 170. Also see *Nahwa Mujtama' Islami*, , pp. 83, 85.

this Muslim bloc would certainly provide all necessities and needs which are essential for mankind with a rational approach that can give good shape to life. This bloc would believe in real social justice, freedom and all kinds of benefits and facilities for every individual. He says that it would maintain a balance between the two opposing structures - Communism and Capitalism.²⁶

This Muslim bloc would call people to peace and harmony and give them the opportunity of success and victory. This bloc would believe in only one doctrine and it would have only one history. This Muslim bloc would stand above all kinds of racial, ethnic, lingual and national prides. It would establish on this earth social justice, puts an end to economic exploitation and promotes universal brotherhood and fraternity, liberates human beings from old and neo-colonial enslavement and treats them all as equal and expose to the world the purpose and objective of life. It would neither deprive itself from material prosperity nor would it ignore the life in Hereafter.²⁷

Sayyid Qutb treated the Muslim Brotherhood movement as the *Hizb* (Party) of Allah, established to eliminate and annihilate sectarianism among people. According to him, it provided certain guidance for individual income to wipe out extravagance and luxury, which might pave the way for arrogance and superciliousness. It also aimed at liberating peasants from serfdom and economic exploitation so as to raise their standard of living. It improved the character of the people. It guaranteed universal social security of every individual and fought colonialism and viciousness wherever they were.²⁸

26. Sayyid Qutb, *Nahrwa Mujtama' Islami*, pp. 5, 36, 42. See also *Ma'rakat al-Ra'smaliyyah wa al-Islam*, pp. 25, 27, 30, 34, 35.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

Qutb on Muslims' Education

Sayyid Qutb regretted the present state of the Muslims, who overlooked truthful statements on the characteristics of Jews and Christians, enshrined in the Qur'an, and sent their children to acquire the knowledge of Islam from them and to understand and accept the Islamic heritage from their interpretation. Qutb was totally against the system of education, which is given under the patronage, or supervision of the Jews, Christians and Communists and which brainwashes young Muslims. To quote his words:

It behooves us today to hear the voice of warning as with unprecedented stupidity we seek the opinion of the Orientalists (of Jews, Christians and Communists) in the matter of religion. We learn our history from them, trusting their statements about our heritage, hearing what they interpolate of doubts in their studies of our Qur'an, the Hadith of our Prophet, and the lives of our pioneers. We send them delegations of our students to learn from them the teachings of Islam. They graduate from their universities and return to us infected in intellect and conscience.²⁹

For his transparency in sharing his views and thoughts as mentioned above, Qutb was historically misunderstood and even portrayed as an extremist, a fundamentalist and a militant generating hatred against the Jews in particular and Zionists and Communists in general. Some Muslim historians also wrote that Qutb was harsh and imbalance in attacking the Jews and in blaming them for every negative event in the Muslim world. According to these historians and writers, Muslims themselves are responsible for the disastrous growth of elements and factors in the Muslim world. They argued that Qutb's mind was influenced by the circumstances in which he lived. It was even suggested that Qutb's long-term jail sentence had made him to react antagonistically against the West and western-minded Muslims. Some even concluded that the

29. Yvonne Haddad, "The Qur'anic Justification for an Islamic Revolution: The View of Sayyid Qutb", *Middle East Journal*, Volume 37, No. 1, Winter 1983, pg. 25

discussions in *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* reflect his frustration and difficult time in prison.

However, regardless of the above views, before any judgments can be made on Qutb, it is essential to look at many facts and historical incidents on which the scholars in the past had no information but which have been unveiled by a few researchers recently. Furthermore, it cannot be ignored that the obliteration of the caliphate, the establishment of Israel on the land of Palestine, continuous imperial and colonial support for monarchy and dynastic rule in the Muslim world, recognition of Israel by the United Nations and several other historical events are the key factors that convinced Qutb that the international forces were working against Islam and Muslim unity.

Therefore, Qutb is of the opinion that Muslim children should not obtain education on Islam from Jews, Christians or Orientalists. Qutb quoted Samuel Zwemer to prove that the so-called modern education as advanced by missionaries in missionary schools was part of the conspiracy to divorce Islam from the Muslims:

Our mission is to have Muslims leave Islam and make them subservient to our teachings, our influence and our ideas.... Every one who graduates from these schools abandons Islam in actuality if not in name. He becomes an aid to our policy without knowing or he becomes trusting of us... We are accepted unequivocally.³⁰

Qutb's Concept of Society

Sayyid Qutb's concept of society was well received by the supporters of Islamic movements in spite of some severe criticism by some quarters. Even today most of the leaders and workers of the Islamic movement look upon his theory of society and his critique of Western political ideologies

30. Ibid., pg. 25.

as important and relevant. Since he was exposed to the West and also spent most of his life in Cairo, especially the latter part, he got an opportunity to observe various ideologies, philosophies, and ways of life adopted by different nations in general, and Muslims in particular.

History shows that Egypt was one of the Arab countries that presented a marvellous civilization to the world. Many of the countries of the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa appreciated and unquestioningly adopted this civilization. The "fragrance" of Egyptian civilization reached even the hearts of Europe and America. That is why 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad said that Europe is indebted to the Arab culture because of its borrowing of numerous things from the Arab civilization.³¹ He further says that the Arab contribution is really remarkable as far as civilization is concerned. The famous city of Cairo that projected a new civilization to the world became the target of the conspiracy due to its vast learning and being the seat of Arab and Islamic intellectualism in the twentieth century. Due to the conspiracy of external forces, Egypt went through a period of social, economic, educational, intellectual and spiritual crises. Some of the people had fallen prey to this conspiracy and started adopting different ways of life that did not fit into Islam. Their eyes were blinded by secular influences. Furthermore, it is stated that people were so obsessed with imitating the secular way of life that they were less enthusiastic in their religious commitment and assimilated with the Western ways.

In such an atmosphere, Qutb was one of those few scholars who were against the new Western life style. He devoted his entire life not only to understanding the differences between Islam and other systems but also in identifying and explaining the fallacies and deficiencies in Western ideologies. He admonished the people for adhering to these man-made systems. And finally, he distinguished the contemporary society into two compartments, namely Islamic society and *Jahiliyyah* society, by which he meant civilised society and "backward" society respectively. He compares the two societies as follows.

31. 'Abbas Mahmud 'Aqqad, Arab Contribution to Western Civilization, n.d., pg. 25.

Sayyid Qutb strongly believed that Islamic society is the society that recognises the laws of God, the *Shari'ah* as the law of the land. Islamic society asserts the Unity of God and its sincere observance both in words and deeds. It does not accept any sovereignty of man and only accepts the absolute, comprehensive and indivisible sovereignty of Allah. It grants to every individual the freedom of will. It does not confine people only to so-called religious duties such as prayer, fast and pilgrimage but it prescribes the *Shari'ah* of the Lord as a complete code of life for humanity. It also covers the needs of day-to-day life. The people surrender themselves to the Will of Allah, the Exalted and the Glorious, and follow the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, and the footprints of the Divinely-Guided Caliphs.³²

On the other hand, the *Jahiliyyah* society is the society that is antithetical to Islam as a complete and comprehensive way of life. Islam neither goes along with it nor does it agree with its doctrines and character. The *Jahiliyyah* society obstructs the implementation of the divine code as a source of economic, judicial, moral, and social life. It collaborates with groups, nations or people who have deviated from the fundamental principles of Islam. It represents new versions of idol worship and finds new tenets to support the worship of icons. Certainly, these idols may take various forms. Different new names and concepts as well as philosophies emerge everyday from these icons, which assume the status of new gods. They are responsible for new postulates, which attract sections of *Jahiliyyah* to them. This *Jahiliyyah* is always perilous in as much as it directs human beings to go beyond the limit. It attempts to establish its own organisation for the future.

The world of today is living in an acute state of *Jahiliyyah* that dishonours the appearance and existence of Islam. Everything around us demonstrates evidence of this. Doctrines, customs, traditions, cultures, and arts indicate trends of *Jahiliyyah*. Qutb believed that all contemporary societies together with Communist and Capitalist societies and the societies that are formed on the distortions and fabrications of the last

32. Sayyid Qutb, *Mā'alim fi al-Tariq*, pp. 85-88.

authentic revelation, the Qur'an, embody something of *Jahiliyyah* because they give priority to materialism with their various manifested forms which are the adversaries of human spiritualism.³³ The *Jahiliyyah* society encourages the worship of man by man and the domination of one power over other powers for the sake of power or to clash among powers or ideologies for their own sake, particularly for material ends.³⁴

Secondly, Qutb illustrates this by taking the example of the Communist society, which also joins hands with the *Jahiliyyah* society because the Marxists deny the existence of God. They say that materialism or nature is the original universe and existence. The history of human activity has been interpreted completely through economic dealings and means of production. They were vocal in establishing a new structure based on absolute surrender to the will of the party. They confine life only to the satisfaction of essential human needs such as food, clothing, and shelter, in a system, which views human beings as animals at least to some extent. Though literally it tries to solve some of the problems, it ignores the essential character of spiritual life, which is indispensable to mankind. It makes people more fanatical about worldly pleasures, and due to its display of material lust, people are intoxicated and made to neglect everything else. It interdicts the will of the people according to its ability. In this way, it sterilises the human brain and conceals the truth.³⁵

Sayyid Qutb discussed several aspects of the predominant Christian and Jewish societies. The Christians not only consider their priests as divine but they also glorify and virtually worship them. They even give them the authority to make and enforce laws made by them. The Jewish Rabbis and the Christian priests are attempting to keep away people from the truth. They are being treated as lords and in the name of religion, they swallow assets of their disciples. The Jews and Christians nominate rabbis and priests as their intercessors in order to seek pardon from God.

33. Ibid.,

34. Ibid., pg. 89.

35. Ibid.

That is why Qutb did not approve of such societies and also categorised them under the rubric of *Jahiliyyah* society. He quoted some evidence from the Qur'an to strengthen and authenticate his view.³⁶

Apart from these two groups, there are other societies which are the descendants of *Jahiliyyah*, because the structure and legislation that govern them have no link with a religion that connects them with the divine law of Allah and Islam. *Jahiliyyah*, then, for him, comprises a few elements: [a] it believes in gods other than Allah; [b] it constructs an elaborate system of devotional acts to propitiate these deities, and [c] the laws and regulations in *Jahiliyyah* societies are derived from sources other than God and His Shari'ah. They worship everything other than Allah and attribute innumerable traits to their deities. They consider these gods as supreme powers and they are not ready to return to the original source, that is Allah, the supreme power.³⁷

Lastly, Qutb illustrated on the societies that live in countries which are ruled by non-Muslims. According to him, they also come under the *Jahiliyyah* category in spite of their belief in the Unity of God, they slip away from the divinity of Islam.³⁸ That is why Qutb criticised this sort of society, which is being exploited by environmental factors and through false interpretation and explanation of the government by using the weapon of power. He grouped such societies under *Jahiliyyah* society. They deviate from the Islamic code of life under the pressure of national legislation and judiciary, in spite of the commandment of the divine power not to fear anyone or anything except Allah.³⁹ Instead of turning their hearts towards Allah, they direct themselves towards their governmental systems, which try to ruin them. Qutb quotes the following Qur'anic verses to throw light on his conclusions:

36. Ibid., pg. 90

37. Ibid., pg. 89

38. Ibid., pg. 91

39. Ibid.,

Those whom ye worship besides Him are but names, which you have named, ye and your fathers; Allah hath revealed no sanction for them. The decision rests with Allah only, who hath commanded you that Ye worship none save Him. This is the Right religion, but most men know not.

(Yusuf 12: 40)

And We prescribed for them therein: The life for the life and the eye for the eye, and the nose for the nose, and the ear for the ear, and the tooth for the tooth and for wounds retaliation. But who so forget it (in the way of charity) it shall be expiation for him. Who so Judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed such are wrong doers.

(al-Maidah 5 : 45)

Implementation of the *Shari'ah*

Regarding Qutb's determination to implement *Shari'ah* 'Abd al-Āakām 'Ābidán narrates that the night when the revolution on 23 June exploded, several soldiers visited Qutb's house in 'Ulwan. He was taken along with some officers to Cairo and was consulted on the practical aspects and proceedings of the revolution. Qutb accompanied by the army officers reached the army camp. He was the only civilian present with the leaders of the revolutionary council. They consulted him on all matters. He extended his full cooperation to the armed revolution and published various articles exhorting people to extend their undivided support to the revolution.⁴⁰ He even took part in the voting process on decisions taken by them and did not withdraw from the revolutionary group until six months after the revolution. Later, it seemed that he developed an uncompromising difference with the armed forces.⁴¹

40. Mahdi Fadlallah, *Maa Sayyid Qutb*, pg. 91.

41. See, *Majallat al-Shihab*, No: 9, 1972, pg. 9.

President Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir advocated Socialism and Nationalism and opposed Islamic movements. It is quite obvious that Qutb did not compromise on these issues with Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir. The difference emerged after the success of the revolution, especially when the leaders were forming the government with the support of the leaders of various political parties, nationalists and secularists. Qutb insisted that Islam should be the basis of the constitution in the real sense, and not for the namesake. He fiercely opposed the inclusion of nationalistic and socialistic elements in the formation of the government. Thus, he categorically asserted his stand against the revolutionary leaders' plan of including socialists and nationalists in the newly formed cabinet after their victory.

This firm stance of Qutb on the formation of the government clearly reveals his sincere commitment to Islam. It was possible for him to accept the advice of the leaders of the revolution if he was insincere, opportunistic and egoistic. But he did not accept anything from them for the sake of friendship. He stood by his ideals and principles. To uphold justice to the nation, he was willing to forego all worldly pleasures and comforts promised to him. He did not have any vested interest and was firm in his belief and commitment. He maintained his stand on implementing the Shariah after the formation of a government consisting of individuals committed to reforms and the Islamic way of life.

Predecessors and Contemporaries of Qutb

Having analysed his multi dimensional concerns, it is necessary to note the contributions of few who stood by the reform and the revival of an Islamic society. Many predecessors of Qutb particularly Islamic reformers sowed the seeds for the establishment of an Islamic society in their respective countries. They devoted all their efforts and life to bringing a constructive reform. Their main aim was to bring about an Islamic resurgence all over the world. Qutb was not only captivated by the ideas of such remarkable personalities but they made great impact on his vision and ideas.

Foremost among them was Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897) who not only called the Muslims to return to Islamic dynamism but also

appealed for Muslim unity under the framework of an Islamic league. For the cause of Pan-Islamic unity he travelled extensively to meet the leaders of the Muslim community to fight British colonialism.⁴² He strongly argued that no reforms would take place in any Muslim society under a hostile regime. Therefore, he appealed to the Muslim community to stand united to fight against the colonial rulers. Following him Muhammed 'Abduh (died in 1905) too urged all Muslims to unite under an Islamic league. He appealed to the people to support firmly Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid who represented the goal of the unity of Muslims. He also called upon the people of Egypt to fight Britain. He brought many educational and legal reforms.⁴³

Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935) through the publication of *al-Manar* struggled hard to achieve the dreams of his teacher 'Abduh. He also called upon people to come under the banner of Islam.⁴⁴ He called for social and political reforms. He presented his views on the theory of *Khilafah*, showed the importance of the implementation of the Shariah, and categorically condemned the corrupted Muslim political leaders as well as the so called corrupted 'ulama' of his times.

Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) expressed his opinions on almost each and every contemporary political structure and ideology. Among them Communism, Socialism and Capitalism could be cited. He bitterly criticised the external exploitative policies of Russia, America, Britain, France and Italy particularly their divide-and-rule policy, which affected the entire world. He argued that they exploited humanity. He further said that there would be no benefit from nationalism and such narrow patriotic visions if applied in the restricted sense. He called on all Muslim states to coordinate as one cell and to form a League of Islamic Nations.⁴⁵

42. 'Abdul Rahman al-Rafi'i, *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani Ba'ith Nahdat al-Sharq*, al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1961, pg. 48.

43. Muhammad 'Abduh, *Al-Islam Din al-'Ilm wa al-Madaniyyah*, Dar al-Hilal: Cairo, pp. 84-85, 103

44. Shakib Arsalan Ahmad Sharbasi, *Ra'id al-'Awrubbah wa al-Islam*, Cairo, 1973, pg. 30

45. Hasan al-Banna, *Majmu'at al-Rasa'i, Mu'wassasat al-Risalah*: Beirut, pp. 11-12, 14-15, 25

Muhammad Iqbal too believed that Nationalism, Capitalism and Communism were branches of the materialistic philosophy. He felt that this materialism was dangerous not only to the Muslim *ummah* but also to humanity. He cried for the unification of all Muslim countries under an Islamic league.⁴⁶

Like Iqbal, Mawdudi was also deeply concerned about the wide acceptance of different ideologies. As a staunch revivalist of the twentieth century, he launched a campaign against man made ideologies. He warned the Muslim community of the perils of such theories and called upon Muslims to consolidate their efforts under the umbrella of one *Ummah*.⁴⁷ He propounded a one-*Ummah* theory, calling all Muslim countries to keep up their Islamic identity and preserve divine guidance free from materialistic and nationalistic prejudices.

Thus, it can be seen that such ideas of the Muslim reformers and thinkers of the first half of the twentieth century, as stated above, were instrumental in the formation of Sayyid Qutb's political thought. Nevertheless, the main sources of his inspiration for the development of his thought, his active revivalism and eventually his martyrdom were the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet as is evident from his Qur'anic exegesis, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (In the Shades of the Qur'an).

It is widely argued that the political thought of Sayyid Qutb is almost identical with the thought and vision of Hasan al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and also close to the Islamic political thought of Sayyid Abu'l A'la al-Mawdudi and his Islamic movement, *Jamaat-e-Islami*. Many other scholars on Qutb also support this view. For instance, Yusuf al-'Azam mentioned that when Qutb's *al-'Adalah al-Ijtima'iyah fi al-Islam* (Social Justice in Islam) was published, Hasan al-Banna read it, commented on it, and holding the book in his hand, proclaimed in public that "this is our thought and it is probable that the

46. Abul' Hassan 'Ali Al-Nadwi, *Al-Sira' Bayn al-Fikrat al-Islamiyyah wa al-Fikrat al-Gharbiyyah*, Kuwait: 1968, pp. 95-96 and 114.

47. Abu'l A'la al-Mawdudi, *Nazariyyat al-Hukm fi al-Islam*, pp. 72-75

author of the book is one of us.”⁴⁸ As for Mawdudi’s influence on Qutb’s thought, he himself openly acknowledged this. In one of his trials in the military court, Qutb declared that he borrowed many ideas from Abu’l A’la al-Mawdudi.⁴⁹ He replied to the prosecutors that he had benefited from Mawdudi’s writings and others during his study of Islam.

Westerners and Easterners acknowledge Qutb’s influence on contemporary Islamic revivalist movements. He has been considered one of the most distinguished contemporary thinkers, and numerous titles have been bestowed on him. He has been described as “the ideologue of the Ikhwan,”⁵⁰ “the most noted advocate of the interpretation of Islam as revolution,”⁵¹ “an eminent leader of the Brethren,”⁵² “one of Islam’s new crusaders, a great author and scholar,”⁵³ “matchless writer,”⁵⁴ “the only thinker who enjoys purity in intellectual methodology and straightforwardness in action,”⁵⁵ “one of the greatest thinkers of contemporary Islamic thought,”⁵⁶ “the most famous personality in the Muslim world in the second half of the twentieth century,”⁵⁷ “the revolutionary of contem-

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48. Yusuf al-‘Azam, *Al-Shahid Sayyid Qutb Hayatuh wa Madrasatuh wa Atharuh*, 1st edit., Dar al-Qalam, Beirut, 1980, pg. 155
 49. Salah ‘Abd al-Fattā al-Khalidā, *Sayyid Qutb min al-Mā’l_d ila al-Istishh_d*, 1st edit., Dar al-Qalam, Beirut, 1991, pg. 435
 50. Asaf Husayn, *Islamic Movements in Egypt, Pakistan and Iran*, Mansell Publishing Limited, Great Britain, 1983, pg. 9
 51. Yvonne Haddad, op. cit.
 52. Anwar al-Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, Harper: New York, 1978, pg. 66
 53. Abul’l Hassan ‘Ali Al-Nadwi, *Mudhakkirat Sa’ih fi al-Sharq al-‘Arabiyy*, 2nd edit. Mu’wassasat al-Risalah: Beirut, 1975, pg. 66
 54. S. Badrul Hasan, *Sayyid Qutb Shahid*, International Pakistani Publishers: Lahore, 1980, pg. 17
 55. Muhammad Tawfiq al-Barakat, *Sayyid Qutb: Khulasat Hayatihi Minhajuhu fi al-Harakah wa al-Naqd al-Muwajjah ilayhi*, Dar al-Nadwah: Beirut, 1972, pg. 3
 56. ‘Abbas Mahmud ‘Abd Allah, *Miftah Kunuz fi Zilal al-Qur’an*, *Maktabat al-Aqsa*: Amman, 1972, pp. 3-4
 57. Sylvia Haim, “Sayyid Qutb”, *Asian and African Studies*, 16, 1982, pg. 147

porary Islamic thought,"⁵⁸ and as "le Grand inspireur de ce nouveau souffle,"⁵⁹ (the great inspiration for a new revival).

Sayyid Qutb produced a comprehensive analysis on the implications of various political ideologies and philosophies of contemporary society which the Islamic movements considered as extremely harmful to all communities of the world including the Islamic *Ummah*. As pointed out by Hasan al-Banna, the goals of man made ideologies would eventually corrupt the spiritual life of humanity. As a consequence, human beings would only live in turbulence and constant discord.

Sayyid Qutb also reached the same conclusion in respect of the contemporary ideologies. He pointed out the fallacies and shortcomings as well as pros and cons of these ideologies. In his writings he quoted many references and provided well-reasoned arguments which are acceptable to any intellectual groups of the contemporary age. His convincing methodology with reference to divine revelation is remarkable.

Like Hasan al-Banna, Qutb also showed great concern towards the poor, downtrodden and destitute sections of Egyptian society in particular. He also showed great interest in enhancing the quality of life and provided practical solutions. He blamed the feudal lords for the exploitation of the Egyptian poor. It would be appropriate and pertinent, therefore, to describe the society in which he lived.

Conclusion

In the foregoing pages, we have explored the views of Qutb on some of the dominant Western political ideologies and Islamic concepts including his ideas on the distinction between Islamic Society and *Jahiliyyah*

58. Muhammad Qutb, *Sayyid Qutb al-Shahid al A'zal*, 2nd edition, al-Mukhtar al-Islami: Cairo, 1972, pg. 23

59. Oliver Carre, *Le Combat-pour-Dieu et l'Etat Islamique chez Sayyid Qutb, l'inspireur du Radicalisme Actuel* (The Struggle for God and the Islamic State for Sayyid Qutb, the Instigator of Contemporary Islamic Radicalism, *Revue Francaise de Science Politique*, 33, August, 1983, pg. 681

Society. Qutb was not the first Islamic thinker who have made a critical assessment of Western ideologies and contemporary Western civilization. There were many other Muslim scholars before him who tried to awaken the Muslim society from the dangers of alien ideologies which contradict Islamic principles.⁶⁰ Some of the views of a few scholars are presented and analysed very briefly herein under so that the readers can understand the future role of the Islamic movements.

Muhammad 'Abduh noted that Western civilization is the social refinement of a culture based on materialism, force, trade, luxury and affluence. He further said that Islam offers the real understanding to life. According to him Islamic society is the one which suits human nature. It does not neglect temporal or spiritual needs and pre-requisites like justice, equality, peace, unity, mutual co-ordination, magnanimity, benevolence, affection and forbearance. He said that mankind would never recognise the meaning of fortune and prosperity unless they concentrate on this system of life. Allah has created this universe and kept it constantly dynamic, and governs the entire system. All verses of the Qur'an justify the flow of this system. As far as the Western civilization is concerned it neglects the system of divine guidance. The Western system invainly seeks peace and tranquillity only in *Jahiliyyah*. Islam came to refine people who lived in various ways and under different names according to their desires, whims and fancies. Referring to the Muslims of his own time, Muhammad 'Abduh points out that they were adopting superstitious trends as their way of life. At present, they do not possess anything except the mere name of Islam.⁶¹

'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi criticised the Western materialistic way of life which according to him lacks the high fundamentals and noble principles which are necessary to preserve the moral integrity of

60. Altaf Gauhar, *The Challenge of Islam*, Islamic Council of Europe: London, 1978, pg. 120. See also: Malcom H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida*, University of California: Los Angeles, 1976, pp. 5-16.

61. *Al-Islam 'Abduh*, pp. 56-57, 72, 92, 97, 138, 147 and 153-154. See also: 'Abduh's *Risalat al-Tawhid*, p. 149.

mankind.⁶² Iqbal also observed that the western civilization, in spite of its lofty pronouncements, is the evolution of conflict, and is based on alcohol, immorality, and gambling. Materialistic and industrial civilizations will not last long without new materials and end products. This civilization exploits human beings through the domination of man over man. But Islam is a greater way to success. It is the only system capable of providing a peaceful and just order for the whole humanity. It preserves the dignity of individuals and solves the problems of the people on the basis of equality.⁶³

Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali al-Nadwi (d. 1999) distinguished the structure of life into two kinds which include *Jahiliyyah* life and Islamic life. Nadwi said that the *Jahiliyyah* system of life is a materialistic system that gives priority to material production and considers its interest based on character. It does not believe in a special life. It does not believe in a political life without force. It does not believe in a social life without racism and nationalism. It is established on the basis of subjection of man to man. It believes in the affairs of pagan nations and worship of infidels. People adhere to worshipping their lust, idols, graves, sculptures, rabbis, monks, kings, and leaders. They also offer sacrifices to objects like statues and idols. The world of today has taken its shelter particularly in Europe because the present civilization creates an impression that it is the only perfect one. It is a civilization of entertainment, profligacy, decadent character, social disintegration, economic exploitation, spiritual hunger, and threat of war with the destruction of peace.⁶⁴

The Islamic system of life is a system that gives a healthy civilization, because it implements the Shariah of Allah. Besides regulating moral and all other spiritual aspects of human beings, it endeavours to establish

62. Abul' Hassan 'Ali Al-Nadwi, *Madha Khasira al-'Alam Bi Inhitat al-Muslimin*, 8th edit., Dar al-Qalam: Kuwait, 1970, pg. 204.

63. Muhammad Iqbal, *Tajdid al-fikr al-Dini fi al-Islam*, Translated by 'Abbas Mahmud from The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, pp. 113-114.

64. Abul' Hassan 'Ali Al-Nadwi, *Ibid*, pp. 32-34, 128-129, 144-145.

peace and harmony for the entire humanity on the basis of justice and truth.⁶⁵

Sayyid Qutb read the works of the above scholars. Certainly their works have influenced him. There are a lot of evidence that he was influenced by Nadwi's book entitled *Madha Khasira al-'Àlam bi-Inhital al-Muslimin* (What the World has Lost in the Decline of Muslims) which was published in 1950. It is believed that Nadwi was in contact with Qutb who praised the book, especially the section that dealt with contemporary problems and how to solve them. It is important to note at this juncture that Nadwi was the first to use the term *jahiliyyah* and *jahiliyyah* society.

It is true that before 1951 the term *jahiliyyah* was never used in the works of Qutb, such as *al-Taswir al-Fanni fi al-Qur'an al-Karim*, *al-'Adalah al-Ijtima'iyah fi al-Islam* and *Mushahid al-Qiyamah fi al-Qur'an*. The term *jahiliyyah* is found in books published 1951 onwards. It is used in *al-Islam wa Mushkilat al-Hadarah*, *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* and *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*. Thus, it is possible to conclude that Qutb borrowed the term from Nadwi. Mawdudi had also often used the term *jahiliyyah* which he referred to as all those concepts, ideologies and systems that contradict Islamic principles and values.

In conclusion, it can be noted that Qutb's socio-political thought as presented and analysed above reveals on the one hand his clear perception of Islam and the Islamic way of life and on the other his concrete understanding of the Western ideologies. Having highlighted the fallacies and deficiencies of the modern and contemporary political ideologies, Qutb was convinced of the fact that in Islam alone contemporary society can find peace and prosperity both materially and spiritually.

65. Abul'l Hassan 'Ali Al-Nadwi, *Al-Sira' Bayn al-Fikrat al-Islamiyyah wa al-Fikrat al-Gharbiyyah*, Kuwait: 1968, op. cit. pp. 204