

The Nature and Practices of Social Justice in the View of Sayyid Qutb

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ABSTRAK

Kertas ini membincangkan konsep keadilan sosial sepertimana dipelopori oleh Sayyid Qutb, seorang pemikir terkenal Mesir pada tahun 1960-an. Kegagalan sistem politik dan ekonomi, selain campur tangan orang-orang Inggeris terhadap sistem politik dan sosial masyarakat Mesir telah menambahkan lagi kekusutan apabila mereka mula merasai ketidakpuasan hati terhadap masalah semasa yang melanda negara. Pemahaman Sayyid Qutb tentang keadilan sosial ialah mencakupi semua elemen; aspek kerohanian dan material dan tidak hanya terhad kepada keadilan ekonomi semata-mata. Bersama beberapa orang tokoh sarjana Mesir seperti Najib Mahfuz, Muhammad al-Ghazali dan Imad al-Din Abd al-Hamid, Sayyid Qutb telah mengketengahkan cadangan penyelesaian dalam bentuk tulisan seperti buku, dan artikel-artikel jurnal. Analisis adalah dibuat terhadap buku-buku tulisan beliau seperti al-Adalah al-Ijtima'iyah fil Islam, Ma'rakat al-Islam wal Ra'samaliyyah dan juga artikel beliau, al-Fikr al-Jadid bagi melihat kepentingan idea-idea tersebut dalam mengutarakan penyelesaian sosial secara praktikal dan realistik, sesuai dengan roh Islam dan situasi semasa umat manusia.

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the nature of social justice as enunciated by Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian prominent scholar in the 1960s. Failure of the political system, economic disparity, coupled with the British interference in many aspects of Egyptian socio-political life led to the so called 'Egyptian disillusionment' with the existing problems facing their country. Qutb's notion of social justice is all embracing; spiritual and material life, and is not merely limited to economic justice. Together with other Egyptian intellectuals like Najib Mahfuz, Muhammad al-Ghazali, and Imad al-Din Abd al-Hamid, Sayyid Qutb managed to propose some alternative solutions in the form of writings including that of books and journal articles. Some major issues discussed in Sayyid Qutb's works: 'al-Adalah al-Ijtima'iyah fil Islam, Ma'rakat al-Islam wal Ra'samaliyyah and his article al-Fikr al-Jadid, will then be analyzed as to see their importance in articulating some social solutions in a practical and realistic manner, in true accord both with the spirit of Islam and the contemporary human situation.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

graduation, he became a teacher and inspector for the Ministry of Education, to which he devoted himself for nearly eighteen years until he resigned on 18 October 1952 (Hamudah, 1990).

Qutb's writings can be divided into literature, education, and socio-economic and religio-political thought. His works on literature were written mainly in the 1930s to 1940s, and include his early major works, *Muhimmat al-Shair fi'l-Hayah* (Significance of the Poet in Life) (1932) and several others such as *al-Shati' al-Majhul* (The Unknown Beach) (1934), and *al-Taswir al-Fanni fi'l-Qur'an* (Artistic Imagery in the Qur'an) (1945). Qutb's works on education include *al-Qisas al-Dini* (Religious Stories), and *al-Jadid fi'l-Lughat al-'Arabiyya* (A Novelty in Arabic Language).

Qutb's writings on socio-economic and religio-political topics began after World War II, and his first Islamic work, *al-'Adalah al-Ijtima'iyah fi'l-Islam* (Social Justice in Islam), was published in 1948. This was followed by *Ma'rakat al-Islam wa'l-Ra'smaliyya* (Islam's Battle with Capitalism) and *al-Salam al-'Alami wa'l-Islam* (Islam and Universal Peace) in 1951. These works focus mainly on Islam as the solution to the problems facing society such as social injustice, corruption and feudalism. During his period in prison between 1954 and 1964, Qutb was able to complete the writing of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (In the Shade of the Qur'an) together with other Islamic books: *Hadha al-Din* (This Religion of Islam) (1955), *al-Mustaqbal li Hadha al-Din* (The Future Belongs to This Religion) (1956) and *Khasa'is al-Ta-awwur al-Islami wa Muqawwamatuh* (The Characteristics and Components of the Islamic Concept) (1960).

Among all his scholarly works, *Fi Zilal al-Quran* became the most widely circulated. In 1964, his most controversial work *Ma'alim fi'l-Tariq* was published. This book became one of the most important factors that led to Qutb's execution two years later, because its content was said to have exhorted people to act against the current government of Egypt. *Ma'alim fi'l-Tariq*, which was used by the regime as the main item of evidence in his 1966 trial for conspiracy to overthrow the regime. On 29 August 1966, Qutb was executed along with two other members of the Ikhwan, 'Abd al-Fattah Isma'il and Muhammad Yusuf Hawwash. Their execution sent the Ikhwan underground for several years (Abu Rabi', 1984).

Qutb's commitment to Islam and social justice emerged as a result of several factors; the Quran itself, and the surrounding environment that shaping his socio-political thought towards Islam. The Qur'an seems to be the single factor that led to Qutb's change of direction from literary works to the study of Islam as a way of life. Besides, the social and political situation in Egypt during the 1940s, especially after World War II, had also contributed towards his religious realism. The country slipped into a period of increasing violence, and anarchy

Much has been said on the social issues related to the nature of justice in human society. Some writers for instance, even went further by highlighting discussions on rights and role of women in society, and how their social positions are treated negatively and to some extents are projected in the literature as a thoroughly sentimental person, rarely pious and more often tempting others to sin.

This paper therefore sheds some lights on the nature of social justice as enunciated by Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian prominent scholar in the 1960s. Failure of the political system, economic disparity, coupled with the British interference in many aspects of Egyptian socio-political life led to the so called 'Egyptian disillusionment' with the existing problems facing their country. Together with other Egyptian intellectuals like Najib Mahfuz, Muhammad al-Ghazali, and Imad al-Din Abd al-Hamid, Sayyid Qutb managed to propose some alternative solutions in the form of writings including that of books and journal articles. Some major issues discussed in Sayyid Qutb's works: '*al-Adalah al-Ijtima'iyah fil Islam, Ma'rakat al-Islam wal Ra'samaliyyah* and his article *al-Fikr al-Jadid*, will then be analyzed as to see their importance in articulating some social solutions in a practical and realistic manner, in true accord both with the spirit of Islam and the contemporary human situation.

SAYYID QUTB'S COMMITMENT TO ISLAM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Sayyid Qutb Ibrahim Husain Shadhili was born in a village called Musha in the Asyut District of Egypt in October 1906 (al-Khalidi, 1994). Qutb attended the state elementary school (*madrassa*) instead of the traditional Islamic school (*kuttab*) at the age of six. Qutb's years at the *madrassa* witnessed his excellence in reading and writing. At a very early age, he mastered important aspects of traditional Arab Muslim culture, such as the knowledge of Arabic, syntax and morphology, which enabled him to be in the ranks of the literati (*udaba'*) in the 1930s and 1940s (Musallam, 1990). At this time also he showed his commitment by memorizing some parts of the Quran. By the age of ten, he had committed the whole Quran to memory (hafiz) by himself (Hamudah, 1990).

In 1921, Qutb entered Kulliyat al-Mu'allimin, a preparatory and secondary school in Cairo. Three years later, he joined a two-year course, *al-Fusul al-Tamhidiyya li'l-kulliyat al-Dar al-'Ulum*, (the Preparatory High School of Dar al-'Ulum) before being admitted into Dar al-'Ulum's Teachers College 1872 whose function specifically to train students as teachers of Arabic for the state primary and secondary schools and to become the first secular institute for higher learning. Qutb successfully completed his studies in 1933 and obtained a BA degree in Arabic Literature and the Diploma Certificate of Education. Upon

democracy in their programs. Qutb also called them to focus more on social programs, to correct the unequal distribution of wealth and promote social justice to benefit all Egyptians (al-Khalidi: 1994).

Although Qutb's articles written in 1945 advocated social, economic and political reform, none advocated "Islamic" solutions. It was in October 1947, after his long study of the Qur'an coupled with a consciousness of the national crisis, did he establish, with some friends, a weekly journal, *al-Fikr al-Jadid* (New Thought). The journal offered Islamic solutions to the social problems facing the country. In addition, it attempted to bring people's attention to Islam instead of following capitalist and communist groups, who were active in spreading their reformative programs for the Egyptians. Qutb wrote in the journal that the time had come to look to Islam to solve the current problems in a practical and realistic manner, in true harmony with both an Islamic spirit and the contemporary human situation (Musallam, 1983, al-Khalidi, 1994). The journal, however, did not describe in detail the Islamic method of achieving justice in human social and economic welfare, such as the obligation to pay *zakat* etc. Rather, it focused more on a just distribution of wealth in Egypt, relations between landowners and workers, and between employers and employees in regard to wages and working hours (Musallam, 1983). This lack of any comprehensive Islamic solution was perhaps due to the short period of its appearance: it was published for only six months (October 1947 to May 1948) before being closed down owing to martial law being declared prior to the Palestine war. Despite its short life, the journal successfully achieved its goals. The reform programmes advocated by the journal opened the minds of the Egyptians to the need to stand up to the privileged elite in their society and demand social justice in the distribution of wealth, individual ownership and so on. As Heyworth-Dunne writes:

The journal promised to be one of the most interesting experiments of modern times, as it offered some real contributions by suggesting methods which could be employed for the solution of some of the acute social problems facing the Egyptian today. The editors also made it their duty to show up the real situation amongst the poor, both in the towns and in the country. He (Qutb) and his agents collected a number of detailed reports on the living conditions of their compatriots and published these with photographs (Dunne, 1950).

Qutb's reform programs did not end with the demise of *al-Fikr al-Jadid* in 1948. On the contrary, he continued his activities by calling the people to return to Islam for a solution to their current social and political problems. The appearance of his later books such as *al-Adalah al-Ijtima'iyah fi'l-Islam* (1949), and *Ma'rakat al-Islam wa'l-Ra'smaliyyah* (1951) are a clear indication

that came to an end only with the overthrow of the monarchy and the liberal nationalist regime by the Free Officers in July 1952. As Vatikiotis notes, 'the old political groups had lost their hegemony after the last war partly because they had lost their control over the organized-and not so organized-masses of city folk, the youth in schools and universities, the increasing numbers of industrial workers, but most important the soldiers' (Vatikiotis, 1969).

The continuing breakdown of law and order between 1945 and 1952 can also be seen in the frequent assassinations and attempted assassinations of political figures that took place during this period. Victims included Prime Minister Ahmad Mahir (1945), the Chief of Cairo Police, Salim Zaki (1948), Prime Minister Nuqrashi (1948), and the Supreme Guide of the Jamaat Ikhwan al-Muslimun, Hasan al-Banna in 1949 (Vatikiotis, 1969). Thus the decade preceding the July 1952 military revolt was dominated by a sense of anger, grief, and despair at the established political institutions and their failure to solve the country's pressing problems. More obviously, these years witnessed Qutb's disillusionment with the prevailing political system of the country. The British political interference also deteriorated the situation rather than solving the problems. This could be seen for instance, in the appointment of Mustafa Nahhas as the Prime Minister in 1942 (al-Khalidi, 1994). The British Ambassador, with British tanks and troops surrounding the palace, forced King Farouq to form a new government under Mustafa Nahhas. This led to frustration among Wafdists, who realized that such an appointment and formation of the government were based on British interests. As Vatikiotis writes:

Nahhas had come to power only because Britain had threatened the monarch with the use of armed force. Britain on her part had simply considered that at that critical moment of her wartime position a Wafdist government in Egypt was the most consonant with, and convenient to, her interest. There was no indication that the British government considered the *Wafd* the best hope of a government as such for Egypt (Vatikiotis, 1969).

Following this event, Qutb, like some of the other Wafdists, distanced himself from the party and took an independent path believing that the new government and those associating with Nahhas were people with no concern for the Egyptian nation. 'There arise feelings (among them) that Britain is a country that cannot be defeated and the poverty (facing the Egyptian masses) is an endemic disease. They are no longer thinking about reformative programs for leading the new generation (to a better life)' (al-Khalidi, 1994). Qutb later searched for an independent literary path. Many of his articles had demanded social and political reforms in the country. In 1945, for example, he wrote an article in *al-Risalah* magazine, in which he criticized the leaders of the existing political parties, whom he considered more inclined to demagoguery than to

the same way that they co-operated with other creatures of God. Qutb's point here was that a clear understanding of the Islamic theory of the universe, which views humankind as a harmonious unity and part of the larger harmony of the whole universe, would enable people to see clearly their role in life. "When we perceive this comprehensiveness in the nature of the Islamic view of the universe, life and humankind, we perceive also the basic outlines of social justice in Islam" (Qutb, 1952). Justice in Islam requires absolute justice (*al-ʿadl al-mutlaq*), regardless of differences in color, sex, race and belief. It united all humankind into one faith in God. This means that solidarity, love, co-operation, and mutual understanding among human beings on the basis of faith in God was what Islam sought to achieve through its teachings.

Islamic justice in human social affairs also meant justice and equality in rights and punishment. Therefore, the individual, the group, the party, the nation are governed by one law with one goal, that the activity of the individual and the activity of the group may proceed freely and all can work together without conflict, directing their lives to God, the Creator of life. There is no favoring of one party at the expense of another, no favoring of the individual at the expense of the community, for each has rights and each has duties in accordance with the nature of justice and equality prescribed in Islam (Qutb, 1952).

At this point, it can be said that social justice in Islam is not merely limited to economics but includes all aspects of human life, based on faith in God. This is, of course, in accordance with the nature of Islam as "a religion of unity between worship and social relations, belief (*ʿaqidah*) and behaviour (*suluk*), spiritual and material things, economic and spiritual values, this world and the afterlife, and earth and heaven" (Qutb, 1952).

It seems here that Qutb's early experience of searching for spiritual fulfillment and the meaning of life greatly influenced the content of *al-ʿAdalah*. It compelled him to see that the question of the universe, life and humankind was vital, since it required human beings to have a clear vision about their lives and the purpose of their existence in this world. His strong emphasis on this question was evidence of his new commitment to an Islamic way of life. Qutb, however, did not give a detailed explanation of what he meant behind his calling Muslims to examining the above Islamic theory (the universe, life and humankind). Did he mean to call his fellow Muslims to observe the concept of God that includes an understanding of God's attributes such *uluhiyyah*, *rububiyyah* and *hakimiyyah* and their relation to the realization of social justice? This remained unanswered by Qutb throughout *al-ʿAdalah* discussion. Perhaps his priority at this stage was to call people to return to their Islamic roots instead of following blindly capitalism and communism that were widespread in the society propagating its ideologies.

In regard to the foundations of social justice, Qutb outlined three general

of this new phase in Qutb's intellectual career. Apart from Qutb's general Islamic solutions to the problems of the country, the books exposed to the Egyptians the real enemies who had contributed to its social, economic and cultural deterioration. They included the imperialists such as the British and the French governments, whom Qutb regarded earlier as playing a crucial role in Egyptian socio-political scenarios.

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ISLAM

Qutb's call for an Islamic social system was clearly manifest in his first book on an Islamic topic, *al-ʿAdalah al-Ijtimaʿiyyah fi'l-Islam*, published in 1949. The book dealt extensively with the social, economic, cultural and educational conditions and policies of Egypt, especially during World War II and the post-war period.

Al-ʿAdalah was a reflection of both the current social and political problems facing Egyptian society and Qutb's personal experience of living in such conditions. Despite the many views and ideas expressed by contemporary scholars and writers, especially communist ideology, to cure the social ills, Qutb chose a different path, taking from the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet practical examples to deal with the current situation in Egypt. The verses of the Qur'an were used by Qutb to support his ideas, thus making the Qur'an his major source.

In the opening remarks of *al-ʿAdalah*, Qutb called all Muslims, and the Egyptians in particular, to return to what he viewed as the stored-up resources of Islam to seek the solution to their current social problems and to reject foreign ideologies derived from Western capitalism and communism. These foreign ideologies could not solve the problems of the Muslims since their principles were in contradiction to the Islamic principles of life, which combined the material and spiritual aspects of life based on Qur'anic teachings. Western capitalism and the communism, on the other hand, had divorced religion from the worldly affairs of individuals' lives. As a result, religion remained in ideal isolation, with no jurisdiction over life, no connection with its affairs, and no remedy for its social, political and economic problems (Qutb, 1952).

Turning to the Islamic concept of justice in general and social justice in particular, Qutb held the opinion that one must first examine the Islamic theory of universe, life and humankind to gain a clear understanding of the nature of social justice in Islam. "For social justice is only a branch of that great science to which all Islamic studies must refer" (Qutb, 1952). Therefore, humans, as part of God's creation, whose lives constituted part of the lives of other creations in this universe, must co-operate with their fellow humans in their communities in

the ruler in Islam is not obeyed for his own sake, but only because he submits to the authority of God (Qutb, 1952).

Qutb, however, did not discuss what should be done about a bad ruler who did not apply the *shariah* laws but still held on to power by forcing other people to obey him. Did this mean that rebellion against such a ruler to replace him with someone else was necessary and permissible? Who should be responsible for removing such a bad ruler? Was it the task of all Muslims or certain *shura* members who had originally appointed him? These questions remain untouched by Qutb.

In his treatment of economic policy in Islam, Qutb wrote that it aimed to ensure the welfare of both individuals and the Muslim community. Here, he described in detailed elaboration on the concept of individual ownership of property. This was permitted in Islam with some restrictions on how the owners increased and used their property. In this context Qutb's point was that the individual acted for the property. Therefore, the property in the widest sense was a right which could belong only to the community, which in turn received it as a trust from Allah, who was the only true owner of everything (Qutb, 1952). The lawful work of any kind was the only permissible method of acquiring property whilst usury, robbery, monopoly, theft and all other the crimes that underlie contemporary means of exploitation were prohibited. In this sense, obligation of *zakat* was the best example to solve social problems and finally bring social justice to human society: 'such assistance from the *zakat* is the ultimate social benefit, and constitutes a guarantee for the man who is without resources...the needy must be helped in order to avoid destitution, in order to relieve him of the weight of necessity and the pressure of need, and then to set him free for a nobler form of life (Qutb, 1952).

It is important to note that Qutb's notion of economics was more closely related to the management of property in Islam, which could lead to the practical realization of social justice. Thus any details of the Islamic economy and its significance would not be given in *al-Adalah*, since the nature of the topic itself, with which the book dealt, did not permit any further explanation. Moreover as mentioned earlier, Qutb's goal in writing *al-Adalah* was to expose the real situation in Egyptian society, which he viewed as a betrayal of Islamic principles. It is no surprise, therefore, to see that his notion of economics in *al-Adalah* had received comments and criticism from some non-Muslim and Muslim writers. Smith, for instance, disappointed at the lack of realistic construction of an economic system in *al-Adalah*, criticized Qutb for his limited discussion on usury (*riba*), which dealt only with personal transactions between individuals and made no mention of industrial loans (Fayyad, 1977). At this point, it is important to note that a detailed discussion of the Islamic economy would not have been appropriate in the context of *al-Adalah* or the circumstances which

principles that became the basis for its successful application: freedom of conscience, human equality and social solidarity. He argued that the means of realizing social justice and maintaining its basis in society rested upon the implementation of *shariah* law and its spiritual guidance in the human conscience. As he stated:

The basic principles are co-operation, mutual understanding and harmony within the bounds of the program of God and His laws. If someone deviates from these principles, he must be brought back to them by any means, because it is more appropriate to follow the rule of God in the universe than to follow the individuals and group's desires (Qutb, 1952).

To this point, the establishment of a strong governmental system of Islam was necessary. Besides considering its establishment as an indication of Muslims' faith in Allah, Qutb saw that only through the strong and recognized system of government, would the application of *shariah* law be effective. This form of government was unique in the sense that it was neither derived from other political systems and ideologies known to the world today nor did it depend on them. Thus, if it had similarities found with other systems, this, according to him, was more likely to be coincidental, since Islam had chosen its own characteristic path and concentrated its attention on all the problems of human nature. Qutb criticized some Muslim writers who referred only to the similarities of the Islamic political system with those of other political systems. In this sense, he criticized writers such as Dr. Haikal, who, instead of accepting the uniqueness and independence of the Islamic political system, still regarded the Islamic world as the Islamic empire. According to Qutb, the discussion of Islam and its government covered not only to the number of provinces that were united under the central capital. There were other principles with which Islam was very much concerned, such as the attitude of the capital towards the provinces and the relationship between the two (Qutb, 1952).

The principles of Islamic government, according to Qutb, rested on justice on the part of the rulers, obedience on the part of the governed, and consultation (*shura*) between the ruler and the governed. Justice on the part of the ruler meant absolute impartiality in dealing with people under him, irrespective of their rank, colour, race, religious belief, or sex, so that all citizens could enjoy life in a just society (Qutb, 1952).

Obedience on the part of the governed was, however, conditional. It meant that the ruler was to be obeyed so long as he obeyed God and His messenger and manifested such obedience in practice. No obedience was due to a ruler who did not apply the *shariah* law in governing the whole Muslim community, even though he (the ruler) asserted that he was a devout Muslim. This is because

were negative where both of which he regarded as the real obstacles to attaining justice in human social affairs. This was paramount in his later book *Ma'rakat al-Islam wal Ra'smaliyyah* where he devoted most of the discussion describing what capitalism is. As well as discussing the misdistribution of property and wealth, unequal opportunities, bureaucratic corruption and the consequent poor productivity, the book contains Qutb's attack against those oppressors and exploiters (*Tughat wa mustaghilun*) and religious scholars (*shuyukh*) who supported exploitation and oppression in the name of religion. In his view, these so-called professional men of religion not only associated themselves with the dictatorial authorities of Egypt, but, at the same time, accused the reform groups and Islamic groups in particular, of being proponents of communism, which was a danger to public security (Qutb, 1993). Qutb's point of departure was to purify Islam from those whom he considered the traitors of religion, since their idea of religion was more closely connected to their own survival and personal interest.

In the chapter entitled "The Herald's Cry" Qutb attacked the parliamentary system of Egypt for serving the interests of foreign powers and neglecting the needs of the ordinary people. He saw that justice on the part of the rulers no longer existed in Egypt. Moreover, the association of religious scholars with the corrupt government only worsened the situation. He believed that exposing those who participated in corruption would at least open the mind of the people to their enemies, who had long exploited the wealth of the country in the name of religion, democracy and equality. These ideas had become masks which hid the real contradictions in Egypt. Qutb clearly stated his aims in writing the work: "The deterioration in social conditions from which the people of Egypt suffer cannot continue indefinitely... This is a fact that should be known by all" (Qutb, 1993).

At the end of the book Qutb called on the people to end this intolerable state of affairs and put their trust in Islam to solve the current problems facing their country. Here he clarified the ambiguity that people perceive in Islamic rule:

Islam does not mean a retreat from civilization into the primitive rule of the desert Arabs. Neither does it mean that the *shariah* will be limited to medieval rules, or that power will be in the hands of *shaykhs* and dervishes, or that the government will be despotic, or that textual sources of the religion will be obscure. If Islam rules, it will not, as many feared, confine the woman to the harem, nor will it be fanatical in its treatment of minorities (Qutb, 1993).

Despite his awareness of the appeal of communism in the country, Qutb was more concerned about the direct threat of capitalism and imperialism which had spread not only in Egypt but also throughout the Muslim world.

led Qutb to write the book. Qutb admitted the lack of a comprehensive review of Islamic economics:

For social justice in Islam is a greater thing than mere economic theory, as we have already seen, and it seemed necessary first to discover the general teaching of Islam on social justice and discuss the nature, the foundations, and the methods of this justice in the broadest sense before turning to the matter of money itself (Qutb, 1952).

At another instance, Mousalli's view described Qutb's economic policy as clearly socialist, for "he allows private enterprise but permits the state to control the economy when necessary or to dispossess its citizens when they are unreasonable" (Mousalli, 1992). In this context, Mousalli might be right to consider Qutb a proponent of socialist ideology, but in the overall discussion of *al-Adalah*, Qutb insisted that only Islam could provide solutions to the current problems of the *Ummah* and neither Marxism nor Capitalism was suitable since they lacked the necessary spiritual guidance to bring social justice into being. Qutb ended the discussion by stressing that Islam in its general principles of government and economic policy was always ready to meet the changing needs of all the societies that took it and its *shariah* as their legal basis. The Islamic spirit had always been able to adapt to different circumstances. Therefore, the goal for each Muslim, he maintained, should be to preach the renewal of Islamic life, "a life governed by the spirit and the law of Islam which alone can produce the form of Islam which we need today" (Qutb, 1952).

To conclude, social justice enunciated by Qutb in *al-Adalah* contains the theoretical principles and foundations of Qutb's Islamic thought before he joined the Ikhwan in 1952. The significance of the book lies in the fact that it was the first Islamic work written by Qutb to propose a third option to what seemed an inevitable choice between capitalism and communism. In his view, the justice offered by Islam in all aspects of human life was superior to that offered by capitalism and communism, because it combined spiritual values and human social relations. The spiritual values, derived from a strong belief in God coupled with the enforcement of *shari'ah* laws, were an effective means of realizing social justice in human society. It is not surprising, therefore, to see many Qur'anic verses cited to support his search for the answer to the current situation in Egypt. In this context, Abu Rabi' is right when he considers *al-Adalah* "a radical departure from" Qutb's early work in literary, Qur'anic and social criticism. More important at this stage is that Qutb emerges as a social critic with a radical Islamic agenda" (Abu Rabi', 1996).

EXISTING CHALLENGES

Qutb's attitude towards the existing Egyptian authorities and British imperialism

failure of the existing Arab regimes to solve their social, economic and political problems. The great importance of Qutb's thought as manifested through his writings is well attested by the republication of his works and their translation into many languages, the worldwide interest in his Quranic commentary, *'Fi Zilal*, and the appearance of numerous books and articles concerned with his life and thought.

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CONCLUSION

Though Qutb's idea seems to be theoretical in nature, it provides an overall insight on how Muslim should start with in their journey searching for their own fundamental resources to solve their existing problem facing their country. Neither communism nor capitalism can provide prescription for their own disease. Between 1948 and 1952, Qutb's Islamic thought was very much apparent in his books; *al-Adalah*, and *Ma'rakat* whose contents focused on Islamic solutions and became a radical departure from his early literary writings published in the middle of the 1940s.

The emergence of the social justice theme in Qutb's thought can only be understood with the context of the prevailing conditions in Egypt. Qutb believed that Islam is a social and political force in the Muslim world. It is not merely a spiritual belief or a defunct system of morality but a concrete basis for human society, and superior to communism and capitalism. Qutb's agitation for Islamic social and political reforms in this period reflected his attempt to present Islam as a system superior to any other known in human history. His interest in the justice of Islam as a means of solving the current problems developed only after his realization that the available ideologies, capitalism and communism in particular, could not successfully provide an effective means of establishing social justice in human society. These chronological stages of Qutb's intellectual development and his continuous efforts in finding solutions to the current problems enabled him to discover "what really needed to be done" to his own society.

Social justice in Qutb's view is all embracing in the sense that it includes justice in all aspects of human life, spiritual and material, and is not merely limited to economic justice. Human beings have to be just towards themselves, their families and their communities. This must begin with the purification of human hearts from the worship of anything but God alone. Only from such a group of people, whose beliefs are completely free of servitude to anyone but God, can a new community whose social, political and economic affairs based on the *shariah* of God be established. For justice, co-operation and integration between human beings constitute part of the existing justice and unity in the rest of God's creations in this universe.

An analysis of Qutb's treatment of social and political issues and his effort to call Muslims back to the *manhaj* of God revealed that he was of the conviction that an Islamic community could be established again if people would fulfill exactly the demands of the Qur'an. The only thing to do was to call people to refresh their mind and to live their lives in accordance with the Qur'anic teachings. Qutb's Islamic writings have gradually become an integral part of Islamic resurgence which draws much of its strength from the unmitigated

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