

## “THE MUSLIM *UMMAH* IN DIRE NEED FOR A NEW BREED OF LEADERS”

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It is generally fair to say that many right-thinking and religiously committed Islamic intellectuals, thinkers, scholars and professionals have been disillusioned with the state of the Muslim world 42 years since the advent of the 15<sup>th</sup> Islamic century in 1979. To them the miserable and shameful state of the Muslim world is due mainly to the failure of the nationalist and post-colonial Muslim socio-political leadership to overcome the appalling socio-political and economic crises and the senseless internal political divisions of the Muslim community.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Muslim world was rudely shakened by the illegal and inhumane U.S. invasion of Iraq and Aghanistan and the dominant hegemonic influence it imposed on many West Asian countries. Subsequently, the bloody and dehumanising civil-wars in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Egypt, and Yemen -- together with the structural paralysis of the O.I.C -- only serve to perpetuate turmoil, disillusionment, disgrace, chaos, and insane barbarities in the region, while the devastation of Syria, the dismal failure of the “Arab Spring”, the hypocrisy and double standards of affluent Arab regimes and the unending socio-political conflicts and economic crises in Muslim countries have turned the Muslim world into a pitiful and humiliating spectacle. If we add on to this deplorable phenomenon of Muslim disintegration and disgrace; the unending inter-ethnic and inter-sectarian violence; the rising tide of Islamophobia in the West, India and some regions of China, Russia and Southeast Asia, coupled with white supremacist trends and neo-Fascist xenophobic fervour to curb Muslim presence in Europe and to foil attempts by Muslim refugees to seek political refuge or asylum in European countries, the global Muslim *ummah* appears to have the worst of existential crises since the advent of the 15th century *Hijriyyah* 42 years ago.

If we add to the above pile of socio-political tragedies the scenario of embarrassing moral corruption and decadence affecting many Muslim nations, political leaders and elites around the world, amidst the destructive COVID-19 pandemic – not to speak of the never-ending social ills of the younger generation of urban Muslims,

many of whom are losing their moral compass in the nihilistic cyber culture – we are driven to the conclusion that the *ummah* is in dire need for a new breed of leaders political and national leaders to lead Muslim societies and nations out of the valley of despair and indignity to a better future as the *ummah* approaches the new 16<sup>th</sup> century *hijriyyah* by 2077. It is not too far-fetched to say that the post-colonial Muslim political and nationalist leadership has failed for various reasons which we shall not analyse here. Consequently it is time that reformist-minded (*tajdīdī-iṣlāhī*) and independent Muslim scholars and intellectuals who are committed to the cause of Islam in their respective countries should come up with credible futuristic plans which would be systematically, scientifically, collectively, and realistically designed.

As Muslim believers, our highest and ultimate sources of guidance, are the Glorious Qur'an and the Noble *Sunnah* of the Final Messenger of The Compassionate Creator-Master-Sustainer, Muḥammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah S.W.T. be upon him and family and his Companions). The Qur'an praises the Prophet (S.A.W.) as the exemplar *par excellence* of the loftiest moral character (*khuluq `aẓīm*) and urges all the Believers to follow and emulate his excellent character traits in their personal, inter-personal and societal conduct:

*Surely there was a good example (uswah ḥasanah) for you in the Messenger of Allah, for all those who look forward to Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah much. (Q.al-Ahzāb 33: 21)*

The Prophet's exemplary religio-political leadership and the new multi-religious city-state of *al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah* under his wise, ethical and just rule serve as the best examples of religious and political leadership, good governance and statecraft for political and national leaders to emulate. They need to rededicate their life-mission to the goals set by the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* as they are the highest and most authoritative references from where Muslims get divinely-revealed knowledge and truths about Allah S.W.T. and *Tāghūt* (false god), Reality and Illusion, Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*) and Falsehood (*al-Bāṭil*), Good (*al-Khair*) and Evil (*al-Sharr*), True Success (*al-Falāḥ*) and True Failure (*al-Khusrān*), and True Righteousness and Improvement (*al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Iṣlāḥ*) and True Corruption and Decadence (*al-Fasād*).

The Islamically-committed scholars and intelligentsia realise that contemporary and future Muslim nations and societies have to undergo a process of internal spiritual-moral reform and sociocultural transformation in order for them to play the

global leadership and witnessing roles (*shuhadā' `ala'n-nās*, “witnesses for mankind”) of *Ummah Wasaṭ* as intended by the Compassionate Master-Sustainer (Q. 2: 143). There is, obviously, an urgent need to produce the new breed of Islamic leaders who are sincerely committed to the implementation of the holistic and comprehensive Islamic way of life which Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) established in the multi-religious city-state of *al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah*, serving as the solid religious, intellectual and ethical foundations for the construction of a virtuous and *Tauḥīd*-oriented civilisation as the alternative to the materialistic, homocentric and *Tauḥīd*-denying civilisations around the world. Inspired by the Prophetic model of leadership, the new breed of leaders shall be characterised by high moral integrity, piety (*taqwā*) and deep spiritual and moral awareness (*iḥsān*) of Divine omnipresence and omniscience. Profoundly conscious of their responsibility and accountability to the Compassionate Master-Sustainer, their personalities are imbued with the prophetic values and norms of honesty, trustworthiness, humility, selflessness, and putting the interest and welfare of the people and the community above personal interests.

It is most unfortunate that the global Muslim community in the 20th Century C.E. and in the last two decades of the 21st Century (or the last 42 years of the 15th Century *Hijriyyah*) have failed in actualising the religious and moral responsibilities of “inviting people to goodness” (*al-da`wah ila'l-khair*) and “enjoining what is good and right, and prohibiting what is bad and wrong” (*al-amr bi'l-ma`rūf* and *al-nahy `an al-munkar*). However, as Muslims we should be optimistic, because at the level of individuals, families, organisations and institutions, there are reliable evidences to show that small groups of Muslims in several Muslim countries have attained praiseworthy success in upholding justice, goodness and balance.

We should understand that what Allah SWT considers as “The Way of the Believers (*sabīl al-Mu'minūn*, as in Q. *al-Nisā'* 4: 115) implies the zero-corruption way to true success, power, dignity and honour that many political leaders are striving for their communities or constituencies. It is the Way of the Believers, not the ways of worldly deception (*al-ghurūr*), of Disbelievers or of Hypocrites (*Munāfiqūn*) that should be followed by all Muslim leaders be they in public administration, law enforcement agencies, politics, economics, science and technology institutions, media or cultural activities. A prophetic leadership principle that Muslim leaders should never forget is they are obligated to seek answers or solutions to all their disputes, first, from the His

revealed Book and from the wisdom of the Final Messenger (S.A.W.). But if the two sources do not have the answers or solutions they are looking for – due to the novelty of the socio-political or cultural issues – then they are supposed to look for the answers from the knowledgeable scholars or experts in the disputed matters. If the scholars or experts are not able to provide the satisfactory solutions, then they are permitted to use their own reasoning (*ijtihad*, subject to certain religious conditions) to solve the problem, provided the solution is in harmony with the worldview of *Tauhid*, the principles, norms and values of Islam. The particular verse that should be remembered and studied by all Muslim leaders no matter what their fields of specialisation or spheres of societal leadership they are in, is the following:

**Believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those from among you who are invested with authority; and then if you were to dispute among yourselves about anything, then refer it to Allah and the Messenger if you indeed believe in Allah ,and the Last Day; that is better and more commendable in the end.** [emphasis added] (Q. *al-Nisā'* 4: 59)

Another principle of Islamic leadership which Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) taught, practised and institutionalised in Islamic civilisation is the inseparability of *Husnu'l-Khuluq* (good character or praiseworthy moral conduct) from faith in Islam, because in the worldview of *Tauhid*, good character is part and parcel of one of the four most important dimensions of the religion of Islam as revealed by Allah SWT directly to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) in the famous "*Hadith Jibri'*" (in *Shahih al-Bukhari*). This *Hadith* summarises the whole religion of Islam into a unity of 1) *Islām* (the five pillars), 2) *Imān* (the six pillars) 3) *Ihsān* (spiritual-moral excellence, benevolence and beauty, manifested in good character) and 4) Knowing the *Ashrāt* or *'Alāmāt al-Sā'ah* (Portents or Signs of the Last Hour or day of Judgement). The third principle covers matters of morality and ethics (*akhlāq*), arising from the profound awareness and conviction (*yaqīn*) that Allah SWT is continuously watching us outwardly and inwardly, while the fourth covers matters of eschatology. From this *hadith* we realise that morality, which deals with virtues and vices, ethical and unethical conduct, and good character, is an integral part of Islamic religion and is inextricably connected with the dimensions of faith, religious rituals and life after death.

Muslim political and national leaders need to be reminded that good moral character and good ethical behaviour are the **direct outcome** of being a Believer in Islam and follower of the prophetic model of leadership. This is made clear in no uncertain terms by the Prophet (S.A.W.) himself when he said, “***I have been sent only to bring to perfection the virtues of good character***” (al-Baiḥaqī). It is hoped that Muslim leaders or masses who are exposed to this profound truth in the Qur’an and the *Sunnah* as well as in the syllabus of leadership transformation programmes organised by Muslim organisations, the long-standing conceptual and behavioural disconnect between religion and ethics will be removed from the flawed mental frames of Muslim leaders or masses. Then the regeneration of the culture of good character and moral integrity as required by the prophetic paradigm of leadership should become one of the primary goals of the transformation of Muslim political culture and behaviour in the decades ahead.

In order to highlight the supreme importance of good character and ethical behaviour of Muslims in the religion, society and culture of Islam, we decide to provide below several relevant quotations. It is expected that no Muslim politician, cadre, follower or supporter will continue to behave or act immorally or unethically in the political arena or in national governance as long as they are Muslims. All the texts on *ḥadīth* are taken from the collection of Abu Amina Elias from the website [https://www.abuaminaelias.com/good-character-is-the-path-to-salvation/February 13, 2016](https://www.abuaminaelias.com/good-character-is-the-path-to-salvation/February_13_2016).

Allah praised the Prophet’s character and set him as the example for all Believers to follow. Allah said [intranslation]:

***Verily, you (O Muhammad) are upon great moral character. (Q. al-Qalam 68:4)***

Ibn Kathir comments on this verse, saying:

The meaning of this verse is that the Prophet would emulate the Quran in its commands, its prohibitions, and it became his temperament. His character became accustomed to it and he abandoned his visceral carnal nature. Whatever the Quran commanded he did, and whatever it prohibited he abstained. Along with this, Allah ingrained within him great character traits of modesty, generosity, courage,

forgiveness, forbearance, and every beautiful trait. (Source: Tafsīr ibn Kathīr 68:4)

The primary mission of the Prophet was to instil good character within the Believers in every aspect of their lives.

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

***Verily, I have only been sent to perfect righteous character.*** (Source: Musnad Aḥmad 8729), Grade: [Sahih](#)

Malik reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

***I have been sent to perfect good character.***  
(Source: al-Muwaṭṭa 1614), Grade: [Sahih](#)

Jabir ibn Abdullah reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

***Verily, Allah has sent me to perfect noble morals and complete good deeds.*** (Source: al-Mu'jam al-Awsat 7073), Grade: [Hasan](#)

....Since good character is so important, behaving in a morally upright manner is a religious obligation. The Prophet commanded Muslims to behave well in every circumstance and with every human being, not simply to those who are close to us.

Abu Dharr reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

***Behave with good character toward the people.***  
(Source: Sunan al-Tirmidhi1987) Grade: [Sahih](#)

An-Nawwas ibn Sam'an reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

***Righteousness is good character and sin is what waivers in your heart and you hate for people to find out about it.*** (Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2553), Grade: [Sahih](#)

[In another narration, The Prophet said:](#)

***The servant will not reach the reality of Godfearing piety (taqwa) until he leaves what wavers in his heart.***  
(Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 8), Grade: [Sahih](#)

Ibn Al-Qayyim writes:

***The religion itself is entirely good character, so whoever surpasses you in character has surpassed you in religion.*** (Source: [Madārij al-Sālikīn 2/294](#))

Ash-Shatibi writes:

***The Shariah in its entirety only creates noble morals.***(Source: [al-Muwāfaqāt 2/124](#))

Abdullah ibn Amr reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

***The best of you are those with the best character.***  
(al-Bukhari) Grade: [Mutafaqun Alayhi](#)

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

***The most complete of the Believers in faith are those with the most excellent character, and the best of you are the best in behaviour to their women.***  
(al-Tirmidhi) Grade: [Sahih](#)

In another narration, the Prophet said:

***The best of you in Islam are those with the best character, if they have understanding.***(Aḥmad)  
Grade: [Sahih](#)

And in another narration, the Prophet said:

***The most evil in my nation are the garrulous, the braggarts, and the pompous. The best of my nation are those with the best character.***  
(al-Bukhari: *al-Adab al-Mufrad*) Grade: [Sahih](#)

Aisha reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

**Verily, the Believers with the most complete faith are those with the most excellent character and who are most kind to their families.** (al-Tirmidhi) Grade: [Sahih](#)

Jabir ibn Samurah reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

**Verily, obscenity and immorality are not part of Islam. Verily, the best people in Islam are those with the best character.**

(Aḥmad) Grade: [Sahih](#)

Ibn Umar reported: A man said, “O Messenger of Allah, which of the Believers is best?” The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

**Those with the best character.**

(Ibn Mājah) Grade: [Hasan](#)

Abu Darda reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

**Nothing is heavier upon the scale of the Believer on the Day of Resurrection than his good character. Verily, Allah hates the shameless, obscene person.**

(al-Tirmidhi) Grade: [Sahih](#)

Aisha reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

**Verily, the Believer may reach through his good character the status of one who regularly fasts and prays at night.**

(Abī Dāwūd) Grade: [Sahih](#)

Usamah ibn Shareek reported: I witnessed the bedouins ask the Prophet, saying,

“O Messenger of Allah, what is the best thing a servant may be given?” The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

**Good character.**

(Ibn Mājah) Grade: [Sahih](#)

Abu Huraira reported: The Prophet was asked, “What enters most people into Paradise?” The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him said:



### ***Righteousness and good character.***

Sahl ibn Sa'd reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

***Verily, Allah is generous and He loves generosity and exalted character, and He detests vanity.*** (Source: Sunan al-Kubrā 19134), Grade: **Sahih**

For all of these reasons, the Prophet would supplicate for good character and he encouraged us to ask Allah for good character as well.

Aisha reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

***O Allah, you have made my form excellent, so make my character excellent.*** (Source: Musnad Aḥmad 23871), Grade: **Sahih**

Jabir ibn Abdullah reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

***O Allah, guide me to the best deeds and the best character, for no one guides to the best of them but you. Protect me from evil deeds and evil character, for no one protects from the evil of them but you.*** (Source: Sunan al-Nasā'ī 896), Grade: **Sahih**

<https://www.abuaminaelias.com/good-character-is-the-path-to-salvation/February 13, 2016.>)

The inculcation of the above Prophetic sayings regarding the supreme value of good character and behaviour should lead Muslim political or national leaders to give priority to, and be more concerned with, the elimination of unethical or immoral conduct in the Muslim society, governance and national development. The erstwhile disconnect between faith and good character in the mental frame of many Muslims shall no longer be tolerated in Muslim societies and governance transformed, at least at the conceptual level.

It is our conviction that under the current deplorable circumstances, the goal of moral-ethical transformation of Muslim-Malay political behaviour and culture including true and lasting solidarity and unification of the Muslim *ummah* can only be achieved if the national and political leadership is constituted of leaders possessing not just

professional competency or long experience in leadership position, but having high moral integrity, strong *īmān* and deep *taqwā* as the *conditio sine qua non* upon which other conditions can be added to meet the different needs of different circumstances.

We need to remember, first and foremost, that as individuals and as a Muslim community, we are living in an age which is characterised in the Qur'an by the term ***fasād*** (moral decadence, chaos, mischief, corruption, deceit, oppression and pollution) in the following verse:

***Corruption, oppression, mischief, deviation and pollution have appeared on the land and at sea because of men's deeds: and so He will let them taste [the evil of] some of their doings so that they might return [to the right path] (Q. al-Rūm 30: 41).***

There is also no doubt that Muslims are going through an age which is regarded by Islamic religious scholars as the “end of Times” (*ākhir al-zamān*) in which many kinds of afflictions and tribulations (*fitnah*) including political *fitnah* would occur. Without strong, sincere and unshakeable *īmān* (deep faith and conviction in Allah SWT as the One and Only God, Creator, Guide, Sustainer, Controller, and Sovereign of all that exists and in His teachings) reinforced with deep, well-entrenched and invigorated *taqwā* (profound consciousness and constant mindfulness of Allah SWT, accompanied by obedience to His commandments as well as fear of transgressing His prohibitions), many Muslim leaders and elites would easily succumb to the dominant unislamic trends in this so-called “post-truth” and “post-normal” times. It is useful to remember in this regard that Believers have been cautioned by the Qur'an that they should not assume that they would have an easy life in this world just because they are people who have true faith in Allah SWT. The Qur'an refers to the inevitability of being tried by Allah SWT in several places, but the following verses should suffice our purpose:

***We shall certainly test you by afflicting you with fear, hunger, loss of properties and lives and fruits. Give glad tidings, then, to those who remain patient, Those who when any affliction smites them, they say [with deep conviction]: “Verily, we belong to Allah, and it is to Him that we are destined to return.” Upon them will be the blessings and***

***mercy of their Lord, and it is they who are rightly guided***  
**[emphasis added] (Q. *al-Baqarah* 2:155)**

The current worldwide COVID-19 pandemic that forces whole nations to live under emergency conditions is another form of test for the Believers, because it puts many people in difficult economic, social and psychological circumstances. In facing these most challenging times in an age of global turbulence and moral decadence, Muslim societies, including Malaysia, need leaders to serve as role models of leading with courage, wisdom, genuine concern for people's welfare, moral integrity, humility, compassion, simplicity and transparency. It is with those moral-ethical leadership qualities that Divine blessings, assistance and protection would descend upon the community and help it to be resilient to face the trials and tribulations. Hence the importance and necessity for the Muslim community, not only in Malaysia but in all Muslim countries, to plan for the production of this new breed of leaders to lead the Muslim communities out of the whirlpool of political corruption and hypocrisy towards the oasis of justice, moral excellence and true wellbeing (*al-Falāḥ*) in this world and in the Hereafter as represented by the *Ummah Wasaṭ* vision of the Qur'an. These new leaders, we reiterate, should come from personalities who are selfless, sincere, competent, tolerant and humble leaders of high integrity with God-fearing character, possessing sound knowledge and wisdom regarding complexities of the contemporary world and exposure to multi-ethnic and multi-religious dialogues. This leadership factor is the driving force and the most crucial factor for the transformation of Muslim societies, cultures and politics in the future.

It is crucial, too, that these leaders possess transparent and ethically clean track record in whatever profession they were trained in or whatever public position they held at state or federal levels, and that their motives for political management and leadership have to be ethically-driven and proceed from hearts (*kalbu*, or *hati nurani* in Malay) which are filled with genuine concern, compassion, empathy and love for the welfare of the people as a whole. These leaders should truly be embodiments of the principles of "*bersih* (morally and spiritually), *cekap dan amanah*" (clean, efficient/competent and trustworthy) which became very popular in public administration of the 1983-1988 period. Last but not least, they have to provide good examples of leadership within the democratic political system, practice democratic and servant-leadership principles, and respect the results of democratic elections even if the results are not in favour of the Muslim communities.

In the Malaysian context, we envisage that the new breed of *ummatic* leadership in the Malaysian socio-political context will shoulder heavier responsibilities particularly for those Muslims aspiring to be national and political leaders. This is because we believe the future of the world and Malaysia would be far more challenging and far more spiritually and ethically demanding. Already we are witnessing many of the Minor Signs of the Last Hour as described and prophesied by Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) in many authentic *ḥadīths*. We have seen enough moral decay and chaos in Malaysian politics already because the people as a whole and the Muslim community and leaders have been operating in a political culture propped up by racial and communal leadership, and sustained by materialistic and pragmatic values.

Therefore, it is high time the Muslim intelligentsia and intellectuals in Malaysia demand that Muslim political leadership culture and values be spiritually and morally transformed so that the Muslim *ummah* could finally emancipate itself from the current toxic, demoralising and self-destructive political culture, not to speak of the more depressing trials to come in the future. This requires long-term construction of a new culture of justice, moral excellence, and balance between material and spiritual wellbeing – the main goals of *Ummah Wasaʿat* that Allah SWT has clearly ordained for the Muslim Community. In this connection, budding politicians with ambition to be top political leaders, youthful aspirants for political leadership, and those seriously contemplating to enter the world of politics and national leadership among Muslims – of whatever ethnic origin, from East Malaysia or West Malaysia – must seriously consider acquiring the praiseworthy qualities of the new breed of leaders because of the more challenging future scenarios and the anticipated worsening global conditions.

Bearing in mind the failures and mistakes of current leadership culture and system the new leaders must not to repeat the mistakes, follies and treacherous acts of the current generation. In fact, they must resolve to become the future moral saviours of the *ummah* who shall redeem the lost dignity and honour of the Malay-Muslim community. We list below some of the most important spiritual, moral, psychological and intellectual qualities for future transformational Muslim political leadership:

A). Possessing and practising the principles of justice (*`adl*), spiritual-moral values of goodness, benevolence and spiritual beauty (*khairiyyah, ihsān*), balance (*tawāzun, i`tidāl*), integrity (*amānah, istiqāmah, ṣidq*), humility (*tawāḍu'*), sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*), humility, selflessness, accountability (*mas'ūliyyah*) to Allah SWT, high integrity, possessing sound knowledge and wisdom regarding complexities of the contemporary world and exposure to multi-ethnic and multi-religious dialogues. Their highest objective in life is to seek the good pleasure of Allah SWT (*ibtighā'* and *ittibā` riḍwāni`Llāh*) in addition to the principle of obedience (*tā`ah*) to Allah SWT, to Prophet Muḥammad (S.A.W.) and to the suitably and properly appointed or elected authorities (*ulu'l-amr*).

B). Having professional knowledge and competency in different useful areas of specialisation, with relevant and appropriate skills that the time and changing circumstances call for, in addition to (i) having strong commitment to the *`Aqīdah, Sharī`ah* and *Akhlāq* of Islam, as well as to the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī`ah*, and (ii) having a good knowledge of the history of the nation and of the cultural, social, political, economic and religious development as well as the diversity of contemporary Malaysia;

C). Possessing the integrated personality and characteristics of *Mu`minūn* as highlighted in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, characterised by (i) good spiritual intelligence as the most important quotient, based on the values of *īmān, Taqwā, Ihsān* and *Maḥabbah*; together with (ii) good moral intelligence based on good character (*ḥusn al-khuluq*), including enjoining the *ma`rūf* and prohibiting the *munkar* together with other praiseworthy moral qualities (*ṣifāt maḥmūdah*); (iii) good emotional intelligence; (iv) good social intelligence with the values of love, empathy and compassion; (v) good creativity intelligence to face new challenging circumstances (vi) good adversity quotient to cope and manage crisis or emergency situations and (vii) good intellectual quotient to be able to absorb new knowledge and acquire or cope with new technologies;

D). Having strong Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwwah Islāmiyyah*) principles, values and *ummatic* consciousness which transcend ethnic, linguistic or geographical identities or interests. With regard to relationship with non-Muslim individuals or communities, the strong Islamic brotherhood bond does not and should not lead to the

weakening of peaceful and harmonious relations with them. In fact, prominent contemporary Islamic religious scholars around the world have been preaching and writing that, in light of the fact that the Qur'an enjoins peaceful and friendly relationship with fellow human beings of different religions under normal circumstances, and that non-Muslims are creatures of the same God and endowed with the same original primordial *fiṭrah*, Muslims should foster the brotherhood of common humanity (*ukhuwwah insāniyyah*) with their non-Muslim co-citizens in spite of the religious differences.

E).The ability to plan for cooperation or working together in peace and harmony with non-Muslims as neighbours, colleagues, co-citizens or foreigners, on the basis of respecting human dignity (*karāmah insāniyyah*) in spite of religious or ethnic differences; observance of the values of tolerance; respect for the rights of non-Muslims to believe in and practise their respective religions; acceptance of inter-religious and inter-cultural diversities; empathy, compassion and mercy – all of which are guided by the humanistic teachings of Islam (*insāniyyatu'l-Islām*), the compassion of Islam (*raḥmāniyyatu'l-Islām*) and the excellent examples (*uswah ḥasanah*) of inter-religious communication and humanistic relationship bequeathed by the Prophet (s.a.w.) as well as following the Prophetic mission and method of *Raḥmatan li'l-`Ālamīn*. It is very important that Muslim political leaders of Malaysia remember and take lessons from the following decree of Allah SWT:

***It may well be that Allah will implant love between you and those with whom you have had enmity. Allah is Most Powerful; and Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.***

***Allah does not forbid that you to be kind and just to those who did not fight against you on account of religion, nor drove you out of your homes. Surely Allah loves those who are equitable.***

***Allah only forbids you to be friends with those who have fought against you on account of religion and who have driven you out of your homes and have abetted in your expulsion. And any who make friends with them, they are the wrong-doers. (Q. al-Mumtaḥinah 60: 7-9)***

F). The knowledge and ability to spread the true message of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* in the spirit of upholding the principle of justice and fairness, the principle of "knowing one another" (*ta`āruf*), religious tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), respect for other people's rights, peaceful co-existence and spreading of compassion and mercy to all the worlds. Another important lesson from the Qur'an for Muslim leaders is that they should not follow or comply with the demands or pressures of the masses or of the followers if the demands and the pressures go against the tenets of justice, fairness and truth. They should realise that many popular demands or decisions of the grass-root leaders may conflict with Islamic religious principles or teachings. As good Islamic leaders they have to uphold justice and fairness even if their stand is disliked or rejected by the followers or grass-root leaders. They should be prepared to step down if they are pressured to compromise Islamic religious or ethical principles by the grass-root leaders or by their followers.

G). Readiness to strive and sacrifice time, money and energy for furthering the cause of Allah SWT (*fi sabīlil-Lāh*); as exemplified by the early adherents of Islam and the Companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.). The new breed of political and national leaders should also be ready to work collectively and unselfishly for the betterment of the nation and for the wellbeing of the people as a whole, and not just for their own religious, ethnic communities or parties. They need to learn how to balance their commitment to the commonly-shared national ideals and their commitment to the advancement of the *ummah*, to gain goodness and wellbeing in this world and in the Hereafter (*ḥasanah fi'd-dunyā* and *ḥasanah fi'l-ākhirah*).

H). Ability to establish and strengthen transnational network or collaboration as dictated by the principle of Islamic solidarity and brotherhood (*ukhuwwah Islāmiyyah*), without diminishing the spirit of patriotism and requirements of citizenship to Malaysia. In Southeast Asia, we would expect Muslim communities of Indonesia, Brunei and Singapore to be able to produce in the future Muslim NGOs or institutions which would be able to strengthen the social, educational, economic and political positions of the Muslim *ummah* in Malaysia. It is foreseeable that in the next two to three decades, the globalising Islamic religious solidarity and trans-national collaboration efforts will play greater and more impactful roles in strengthening regional and global Islamic religious unity, and accelerating the growth of new and innovative Islamic educational, cultural, economic and political institutions in Malaysia and in Southeast Asia. The

emerging Muslim culture and civilisation in Southeast Asia led and nurtured by the new breed of Muslim leaders in Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore, Thailand, Kampuchea and the Philippines in the next decade or more could well be the new model of peaceful multicultural and multireligious co-existence and cooperation within the context of a resurgent Asian continent.

This new breed of Islamic leaders can be produced, we believe, by adopting, following and going through what we would call the Theocentric Leadership Paradigm (TLP) based on the Prophetic model which we mentioned above. Nevertheless, in order to produce and sustain the new breed of leaders on a large and regular scale, it would be ideal if the appropriate educational infrastructure is available locally or internationally to serve as the breeding ground in which the seeds of *ummatic* future leadership could sprout.

With regard to the mechanism for the major transformation agenda of Muslim political or national leadership, namely a systematic and institutionalised spiritual education for the Muslim leaders and those aspiring to be managers or leaders of society, there are at least two important contributions of contemporary scholars that we can refer to for our benefit. The first is by Sa`īd Ḥawwā (1992), with the title *Tarbiyatuna al-Rūḥiyyah* and the second is by Dr. Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (1993), *al-Ḥayāh al-Rabbāniyyah wa'l-`Ilm*. In this book al-Qaraḍāwī gives an excellent explanation as to why this kind of education is much needed today:

From my real experience and field activities, either with the common people or with intellectuals, among the negligent people or those activists of a variety of Muslim NGOs, I draw the conclusion that they – without exception – are greatly in need of sincere education for the internalisation of true faith in all its dimensions (*Tarbiah Imani*).

It is this *tarbiah* which cleans their hearts from love of this *dunya* and love of *diri* (self); which leads them towards Allah SWT; *tarbiah* which liberates them from worshipping matter; base desires and bad thoughts so that they would only be worshipping Allah, until they are able at the end to clean thoughts from polytheistic tendencies, clean the hearts from hypocrisy, remove the tongues away from making false speeches, clean the eyes from treachery, distancing words from fun and frivolousness, clean acts of worship from *riyā`* (ostentation), clean human interactions from fraud, and distancing life from contradictions. In other words, they are in need of cleansing of the soul as a basis of all forms of gain. (Yusuf al-



Qaradawi, *Mensufikan Salafi dan Mensalafikan Sufi*. Yogyakarta: USWAH, 2008: 34)

Dr Yusuf al-Qaraḍāwī strongly urges the Muslim community to follow the example of spiritual-moral excellence of the earlier generation of Muslims based on the Prophetic model, in order to develop:

[A] *Rabbānī* (God-oriented) Generation, emulate their morality and practice the 77 branches of faith in their lives, such that they would reach the level of *Iḥsān* (spiritual-moral intelligence and beauty) in which they worship Allah SWT as though they see Him, but even if they cannot (in fact) see Him, they are conscious that Allah SWT actually sees them. (Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Mensufikan Salafi dan Mensalafikan Sufi*. Yogyakarta: USWAH, 2008:35)

Therefore, it is crucial that the spiritual *tarbiyah* programmes be aimed at producing Muslim leaders and elites with the attributes of true *Mu'minūn* and *Muttaqūn*. One of the remarkable characteristics of true Believers is that, under adverse or favourable circumstances, they will respond in the most appropriate way as Allah SWT and the Prophet (s.a.w.) expect of them. But when they reach a higher level of spiritual relationship with Allah SWT, He would extend Divine love to them and their wishes would be fulfilled by Allah SWT. In a well-known *ḥadīth qudsī*, we are informed that as a result of the Believer's advanced spiritual development, Allah SWT would love him/her and would comply with his/her wishes:

On the authority of Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), who said that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: “**Allah (Mighty and Sublime is He) said: Whosoever shows enmity to someone devoted to Me, I shall be at war with him. My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it. I do not hesitate about anything as much as I hesitate about [seizing] the soul of My faithful servant: he hates death and I hate hurting him.** (al-Bukhārī)

Among the general Islamic intellectual, spiritual and social ingredients of the Theocentric Leadership Paradigm based on the prophetic model are the following:

A). Understanding the worldview of the Qur'an to obtain the God-given *Furqān* (the Divine Criterion or Yardstick to distinguish Truth from Falsehood) and *Nūr* (Divine Light) by which Muslims would properly evaluate the present realities, challenges and crises, and practise Islam as a comprehensive and holistic Way of Life (*nizām al-ḥayāh*).

B). Understanding and imbibing the concept of *Ummah Wasaṭ* (The Community of Justice, Excellence and Balance) as the goal of the Muslim *ummah* in the world and in Malaysia, with the aim of attaining the ultimate goal of *al-Falāḥ* (true success and wellbeing in this world and in the Hereafter) and the *Riḍwāna'Lallāh* (goodly pleasure of Allah SWT) as the loftiest and highest human attainment.

C). Constant consciousness of *al-Ākhirah* (the Hereafter) as the Real Life (*laḥiya' l-ḥayawān*) and True End to be attained via *iṣlāhi* (reformational) and *falāḥī* (true wellbeing-oriented) acts in this present worldly life. Muslims need to be motivated by the consciousness of the lofty stations promised by Allah SWT for the God-fearing Believers and Leaders on the one hand and the terrible sufferings, punishments and ignominy of *al-Jahannam* (Hell) on the other hand. Let the yearning for Divine *Riḍwān* (Goodly Pleasure) be the highest, noblest and loftiest activity of the *qalb* (spiritual heart) of Muslim leaders and elites, day and night.

D). Constant vigilance to avoid the tricks, deceptions, traps or strategies of Satan, the pitfalls of *al-Khusrān* (real loss and misery in the Hereafter) and *Sakhaṭ* (displeasure) and *Ghaḍab* (wrath) of Allah SWT as one of the characteristics of the personality of *Mu'minūn-Muttaqūn*.

E). Good knowledge of the background of the existing social, economic, legal, political and cultural realities and contexts (*fiqh al-wāqi'*) and

understanding them and interpreting them from the worldview of the Qur'an.

F). Methods of overcoming the inner obstacles or diseases of the spiritual heart (*qalb*) by undertaking the personal duty of *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* (purification of the self) and *Taḥīr al-Qalb* (cleansing of the spiritual heart) as a regular spiritual *`amal* (practice).

G). Instilling strong sense of socio-economic justice social responsibilities in order to be actively engaged in local community development activities which should also include non-Muslim communities, to strengthen harmonious relationship with them and to promote the mission of spreading mercy and compassion to all communities in the spirit of "cooperation in righteousness and piety" (*ta`āwanū `ala al-birr wa al-taqwā*, in Q. *al-Mā'idah* 5: 2) and knowing one another in peaceful co-existence (as enjoined in Q. *al-Hujurat* 49: 13) as part of the permanent *ummatic*, political party's or organisational identities.

H). Instilling and motivating sincere intention to be involved in politics, governance or community development or party activities as an arena of *`ibādah*, *`Amal Ṣāliḥ* and Islamic *Da`wah*. We cannot overstress the great responsibility of leaders to practice *amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'n-nahy `an'il-munkar* as a religious and social duty, individually and collectively.

I). Development of *imān* and *taqwā* to the level of *Maḥabbah/Ḥubb Allāh* as the highest spiritual development of God-fearing believers (*Mu'minūn-Muttaqūn*), leaders and elites. The principle and value of *iḥsān* (beneficence, benevolence, spiritual-ethical excellence and beauty, treating or caring for people with kindness over and above the limits of justice or legal obligations) are highly regarded and most appreciated by Allah the Beneficent Sustainer (e.g. Q. *al-Nisā'* 4: 36; *al-Isrā'* 17: 23). He has declared that He loves the *Muḥsinūn* (e.g. Q. 2: 195; *Āl `Imrān* 3: 134, 148, *al-Mā'idah* 5: 13, 93) and commands all Muslims – leaders or followers -- to behave with *al-`adl* (justice) and *al-iḥsān* (Q. *al-Naḥl* 16: 90; cf. Q. *al-Hujurat* 49: 9;

*al-Nisā'* 4: 58). Thus *al-'adl* and *al-ihsān* have been identified by Islamic religious scholars as the two indispensable and primary characteristics of Islamic governmental, political, economic, social and legal systems and institutions. But it should be remembered by all Muslims that **the highest value in the hierarchy of Islamic spiritual-ethical values** to be inculcated in the personality of Believers, among political leaders as well as followers, is that of ***maḥabbah*** (love) of Allah SWT, ***maḥabbah*** of the Messenger of Allah SWT and ***maḥabbah*** of striving for the cause of Allah SWT. Hence the personality of true Believers is characterised as consisting, among others, of intense love of Allah (***ashaddu ḥubban li'Liāh***) above everything else (Q. *al-Baqarah* 2: 165; *al-Taubah* 9: 24, 20-23). As such, the complete true Believer is the sincere and humble servant of Allah S.W.T. who possesses the attributes of ***islām, imān, taqwā, ihsān*** and ***maḥabbah*** -- all integrated and justly-balanced in his/her personality and life.

J). Looking forward to getting Divine blessings, assistance and protection in material or immaterial forms as promised by Allah SWT. The firm commitment, consistency, perseverance and holding fast to conditions of *imān* and *taqwā* by leaders and elites are bound to lead them to a higher level of moral intelligence and spiritual intimacy with their Compassionate Master and Sustainer. They will find it easier to cope with or solve worldly social and political problems arising from negative attitudes, emotional pressures or mental distress such as depression, anxiety and fear which are reportedly to be on the rise exponentially in many so-called "developed" societies in recent years, and during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The need to sustain the condition of spiritual-ethical *istiqāmah* (constancy, determination and unflinching commitment) in order to be able to benefit continuously from the this-worldly blessings as well as the reward of entrance into *al-Jannah* (Paradise) with its everlasting bliss, felicity and true happiness cannot be over emphasised because Believers with those spiritual qualities are bound to be subjected to different forms of trials and tribulations in their lives and careers:

**Those who say "Allah is our Lord" and then remain steadfast, upon them descend angels (and say): "Do not fear**

***nor grieve, and receive good tidings of Paradise which you were promised. We are your companions in this world and in the Hereafter. There you shall have all that you desire and all what you will ask for. This is by way of hospitality from Him Who is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful. [emphasis added](Q. Fussilat 41:30-32)***

There are many enlightening commentaries of classical exegetes on the above verse. The commentary by Abul A`la Mawdudi, in his *Tafheem al-Qur`an* as is reproduced below:

....The context clearly shows that in the conflict between the truth and falsehood just as the worshipers of falsehood are accompanied by the devils and mischievous people, so are the believers accompanied by the angels. On the one hand, the companions of the worshipers of falsehood show their misdeeds seem fair to them and assure them that the tyrannical and dishonest acts that they are committing are the very means of their success and through them only will their leadership and dominance remain safe in the world. On the other hand, the angels come down to the worshipers of the truth and give them the message that is being mentioned in the following. (Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding the Qur`an* tr. Zafar Ishaq Ansari, The Islamic Foundation, Leister, UK, 2016).

By fulfilling the requirements and religious missions of true Believers by which they would attain holistic wellbeing (*al-Falāḥ*), the Believers become suitably qualified servants and vicegerents of Allah (S.W.T.), as well becoming suitable **Witnesses unto Mankind (as required by the goal of *Ummah Wasaḥ*)**, to earn the highest honour and great favour of the Compassionate Master, namely **His *riḍwān*** (goodly acceptance and pleasure) **in this *al-dunyā* and in the (future) *al-ākhirah***. As stated by the late Khurram Murad of the Islamic Foundation in Leicester, U.K.. “For the Believer, the most coveted goal of life is to seek the good pleasure of Allah and *Jannah* or Paradise.” (Khurram Murad, *In the Early Hours: Reflections on Spiritual and Self-Development*, 1999). Therefore, the well-known motto that Allah SWT teaches in the Qur`an, and which Muslims normally repeat in the opening supplication (*duā` iftitāḥ*) at the beginning of their daily prayers, namely: “***Inna ṣalātī wa nusukī wa maḥyāya wa mamātī li`Llāhi Rabbi`l-`Ālamīn. Lā sharīka lahu wa bidhālika umirtu wa ana [awwalu`l-muslimīn] mina`l-muslimīn*** [the bracketed phrase is the original in the

Qur'an meant for the Prophet (s.a.w.), but replaced in the prayer of every Muslim to represent him/her, not the Prophet (s.a.w.)] should become the sincere pledge of all true Believers and lovers (*Muhibbūn*) of Allah (S.W.T.) and His Final Messenger (s.a.w.):

***Say: 'Indeed my prayer, and all my acts of worship, and my living and my dying are for Allah (alone), the Sustainer of all the worlds. No one has a share of His divinity, and thus have I been commanded; and I shall be foremost among those who surrender themselves unto Him. (Q. al-An`ām 6: 162-163)***

With regard to the need to address the spiritual-moral development of would-be new politicians or leaders, it is crucial that suitably qualified and experienced experts in Islamic spiritual development and growth (*tarbiah rūḥiyyah*) be employed, contracted, recruited or trained from within the human resources of the political party or organisation itself. Their job is to conduct specially-tailored spiritual education programmes on a regular basis and to play the role of moral-spiritual educators, moulders and coaches of good character (*Murabbūn*). Some of the more senior and more spiritual developed leaders could also be assigned the responsibility of assisting the *Murabbūn* in their spiritual-moral transformational programmes.

The spiritual-moral bonding that would grow out of these spiritual-moral transformational programmes, between the spiritually developed leaders and followers should become stronger, purer and more lasting than the party membership bonding of conventional political parties. Those programmes could also be integrated with appropriate political education modules. It is the sincere and genuine spiritual bonding, brotherly love and relationship of "*Bunyān Marṣūṣ*" (firmly joined structure, in Q. *al-Ṣaff* 61: 4) that would earn the guidance, blessings, protection and assistance of Allah SWT when such Divine grace and bounties are needed in the noble political struggle of true Believers, as indicated in many verses of the Qur'an, including Q. *Muḥammad* 47: 7-8; *al-Nūr* 24: 55; *al-A`rāf* 7: 96, 128; *Āl `Imrān* 3: 125; *al-Zumar* 39: 61; *al-An`ām* 8: 29; *al-Ṭalāq* 65: 2-5; *al-Mā'idah* 5: 35; *Yūnus* 10: 63-65; *Fuṣṣilat* 41: 18.

Muslims who aspire to leadership roles in political parties or national government should be trained and motivated by experienced spiritual development experts and coaches, to undergo positively the process of inward transformation by several means. Both new leaders and followers also need to understand the phenomenon which the Qur'an describes as *Hizbu'sh-Shaiṭān* (lit. The Party of Satan), and *Hizbu'LIāh* (lit. The Party of Allah) in global or international ideological contexts. The following two verses contain references to the two opposing ideological or political communities or groups:

***Satan has taken hold of them, causing them to forget the remembrance of Allah. They are the Party of Satan. Surely Satan's Party is bound to lose. [emphasis added] (Q.al-Mujādilah 58: 19. See also Q. al-Mā'idah 5: 56).***

***You shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day befriending those who oppose Allah and His Messenger even though they be their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred. He has inscribed faith in their hearts and has strengthened them with a spirit from Him, and He shall make them enter Gardens beneath which rivers flow. Therein they shall abide. Allah is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him. They belong to Allah's Party. Verily Allah's Party shall prosper. [emphasis added] (Q. al-Mujādilah 58: 22)***

In the above two verses, the Qur'an uses the word *hizb* which means "a group, a band, a clique or a party" in the modern sense of a political party. As political parties are the creation of modern Western society and they did not exist in the time of Prophet Muḥammad (s.a.w.), the term "The Party of Satan" in the Qur'an should not be understood as the Qur'an's endorsement of political parties. It refers to a group of people, community or organisation which struggles to oppose, and determined to prevail over or defeat the community or group that is committed to spread the teachings of Islam. Allah SWT promises that such groups would be among the "miserable losers in the Hereafter" (*al-Khāsirūn*). Similarly, the term "The Party of Allah" does not mean that Allah SWT endorses or has a political party. It refers to the community, band of people or group of Believers who are sincerely dedicated to the advancement of the cause of Islam and struggles for the cause, or objectives that are endorsed by the religion of Islam. It is this group of people who are assured by Allah

SWT of being “people who are going to be truly successful, prosperous, happy and enjoying wellbeing in this world and in the next” (*al-Mufliḥūn*).

One of the spiritual and religious responsibilities of the special trainers as well as specially-trained senior Muslim political or national leaders is to guide, advise and protect the followers, the party, or government from becoming preys or victims of the traps and machinations of Satan with his array of delusions and deceptions (*ghurūr*), enticements (*waswasah*), footsteps (*khuṭuwāt*), seductions and illusions. Those political leaders who have reached higher levels of spiritual-moral development should be able to enlighten the followers, cadres and supporters to understand and be alert to the different types of unislamic environments and challenges such as: different forms of political corruption and hypocrisy, psycho-spiritual distress problems, negative social media, dangerous peer pressure, misleading traditions, obstructive cultures, false systems and subversive ideas, trends and institutions, as seen from the perspective of the worldview of *Tauḥīd*, in comparison with the prevailing secular ideologies, worldviews and systems. The Islamic spiritual trainers or “doctors” should, of course, be carefully selected not only by assessing their religious credentials, experience or track record. They should be spiritual experts who understand well the contemporary socio-political contexts and are able to relate the spiritual and ethical teachings of the Qur’an, the *Sunnah* and the classical savants (*ḥukamaʿ*) or great Sufis to the realities of Muslim society, culture and politics.

The expected outcome of the spiritual *tarbiyah* programmes is the spiritual-moral transformation (*tazkiyah*) of the spiritual heart (*qalb*) of the new breed of corruption-free Muslim political leaders of high moral integrity. The ability to resist the temptations of worldly pleasures and enjoyments (*matāʿ al-ḥayāt al-dunyā*) or the pressures of passion, base desires or the whisperings, devilish insinuations of Satan or the selfish inclinations of the ego via the negative and reprehensible emotions of envy, jealousy, ostentation or desire for human appreciation or praise (among what the Muslim spiritual doctors call *amrāḍ al-qalb*, diseases of the spiritual heart) – depends upon the spiritual-moral purity and health of the *qalb* at the centre of the human soul, personality and identity.

Allah SWT has made it crystal clear that human beings are easily tempted by a variety of materialistic pleasures, forgetting that the future pleasures that Allah SWT reserves for the God-fearing (*liʾlladhīnaʾttaqau*) are purer, lasting and elevating, such as “the good pleasure of Allah”. Muslim leaders who are among those God-fearing



servants – leaders who are driven by *Īmān*, *Ihsān*, *Taqwā* and *Maḥabbah* -- aim for the final goal of the good pleasure of Allah SWT and will not sacrifice lasting happiness in the Hereafter for the glittering deceptions of *Dunyā*, the tantalising promises of Satan. or the forthcoming delusions of mankind's Arch Enemy among the Major Signs of the Last Hour, the False Messiah al-Dajjal

Modern and contemporary history has revealed stories of many impressive national leaders and scandalous smart politicians who have been struck down, spiritually and morally, from their high pedestals and became objects of public derision, shame and rejection due to the influences of the destructive but delusionary forces described by the Qur'an. Hence, the necessity and urgency for Muslim political leaders, parties and organisations to institutionalise the spiritual education and training programmes or modules which are specially designed to promote good consciousness, awareness, and comprehension of the different challenges coming from external forces of evil including that of Satan, in addition to understanding the challenges from the inner forces of *nafs*, *hawā* and *shahwah*, and the well-established methods of overcoming such challenges.

It is necessary for all Muslim leaders and would-be leaders to internalise *Dhikru'Liāh* (remembrance of Allah SWT) so as to become part of their habit, personality and nature. To help them remember this obligation, let them ponder upon some of relevant verses of the Qur'an which follow and understand the implications for their personalities, professional carriers and behaviour:

***O you who believe, remember Allah much, and glorify Him morning and evening. [emphasis added] (Q. al-Ahzāb 33:41-42)***

***O you who believe, let not your possessions and your offspring make you negligent of remembrance of Allah. For whosoever does that, they will be the al-Khāsirūn (true losers, truly miserable in the Hereafter). [emphasis added] (Q. al-Munāfiqūn 63: 9)***

We would like to clarify at this juncture that the transformed Muslim political culture and behaviour that we are proposing in this chapter is to operate within the framework of parliamentary democracy (which accommodates the Islamic political

principles of mutual consultation, *shūrā*, independence of the judiciary and the freedom of the people to choose its leaders), or constitutional monarchy (in the case of Malaysia) which protects the special position of Islam as the religion of the federation, until and unless the Malaysian people decide to change it in the distant future.

The transformation agenda we are advocating is not to change the Muslim political system – God-forbid -- to an “Islamic theocracy” with infallible religious power concentrated in the hands of an infallible *Imām* who acts as the supreme representative of God on earth. The Roman Catholic Popes in medieval Europe held such awesome authoritarian power, while revolutionary Iran since 1979 introduced a theocratic and authoritarian system of government under Khomeini’s concept of *Wilayat-e-Faqih*. Our aim is to see the “soul” being brought back or revived, as it were, in Muslim politics by urging politically-minded elites, leaders, cadres, followers and supporters to revive, rejuvenate and reinvigorate the spiritual-moral principles and ethical values and norms of the Qur’an and the *Sunnah* in the arena of Malay political culture, systems and behaviours. It is a way of implementing the great religious obligation of “enjoining that which is good and right, and prohibiting that which is bad and wrong” that is required of those who have been endowed with authority and power to rule, as stated in the following verse of the Qur’an:

***(Allah will certainly help) those who, were We to bestow authority on them in the land, will establish Prayers, render Zakah, enjoin that which is good and right, and prohibit that which is bad and wrong. The end of all matters rests with Allah. [emphasis added] (Q. al-Ḥajj 22: 41).***

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that at the core of the spiritual *tarbiah* programme is the spiritual heart purification and cleansing regime, which is the Greater *Jihād* (*jihād al-nafs*). From the spiritual *tarbiah* programmes, participants will be taught and instilled with the knowledge of the worldview of *Tauḥīd*, leadership model of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and the spiritual, moral, intellectual, emotional and social attributes of the great Companions (may Allah SWT be pleased with them all) as distinguished from being mere Muslims, or worse still, the *Munāfiqun* (the Hypocrites). Instilled with the Qur’anic knowledge of the identity of true believers and “The Way of Believers”

(*sabīl al-mu'minīn*) and driven by the virtues of *iḥsan*, *taqwā* and *maḥabbah* of Allah SWT, the future Muslim leaders will realise that their political or ethnic identities must be subservient to and in harmony with the transcendent and supreme identity of *Mu'minūn*.

The spiritual *tarbiyah* curriculum will make it very clear that efforts of reconciliation between people (*islāḥ dhāt al-bain*), being more important than the rank of voluntary fasting, prayer and *ṣadaqah* (charity), are the primary religious responsibility of all believers and therefore the goals of reconciliation, reunification or solidarity among Muslims must be urgently addressed in the *ummatic* transformation agenda. The renewed consciousness that good moral conduct and ethical behaviour are the true purpose of Islamic religion and its necessary product has to be re-entrenched into the new political culture of the Muslim community so that Muslim politics and politicians of the future can no longer be manifesting, reflecting or behaving with unethical values, interests or behaviour which have brought shame, indignity, ridicule and contempt to the Muslim community.

Good governance and just administration, it should be explained, constitute important branches of Muslim *'ibādah*; they are new moral space and opportunity to be filled with sincere service and dedication to the welfare of the people and the nation, for the sake of gaining the good pleasure of Allah SWT. They are not the paths to moral decay and Hellfire, but the path of moral goodness, beneficence, benevolence, altruism and spiritual beauty (*iḥsān*) leading to true wellbeing and *al-Jannah*. (Incidentally, Dr M.A. Muqtedar Khan, an American Muslim scholar has written a good book that Muslim politicians should read and benefit from, entitled *Islam and Good Governance: A Political Philosophy of Ihsan*, 2019). Ethically-clean politics and *iḥsānī* governance would bring the Muslim societies and nations closer to the goal of the Just-Best-Balanced Community (*Ummah Wasaṭ*), which will be good not just for Muslims but for the non-Muslim communities as well, because they are not predicated upon ethnic, linguistic or cultural interests or criteria. The evil of intra-religious and intra-ethnic disunity shall be eliminated when Muslim leaders and elites – exposed to systematic and well organised internal spiritual education programmes -- understand fully the mistakes they have made, and how self-destructive the disunity sentiments are, however much they are being justified and legitimised.

With the new breed of sincere, selfless and God-fearing leadership at the helm of Muslim governments, political parties, organisations and institutions – amply equipped with the many new prerequisites of leadership needed to navigate the highly demanding future world politics -- the larger picture and the larger interest of the *ummah* as a whole shall be prioritised, while the narrow-minded ethnic-based unity sentiments (*`aṣabiyyah*) or chauvinistic attitude or militant behaviour shall have no place in the transformed Muslim socio-political culture and system. The new breed of leaders shall be champions of the *da`wah* paradigm of *Raḥmatan li'l-`Ālamīn* and shall be privileging the global ethic of Islamic compassion (*Raḥmāniyyat'ul-Islām*) and Islamic humanism (*Insāniyyat'ul-Islām*) to all communities in Malaysia based on the *wasatiyyah* principles of Justice, Goodness, Moral Excellence and Balance (the Golden Mean). The new breed of leaders know that power or authority is a Divine *amānah* (trust) from Allah SWT, not a favour, a privilege or an honour, and those vested with leadership position, power or authority carry upon their shoulders a grave responsibility for which they shall surely be called to account before Allah SWT on the Awesome Day of Judgement.

Therefore, it is most important that they should not forget the profound messages in the brief but powerful inaugural speeches of the second and the third Caliphs of the Prophet (S.A.W.), namely Sayyidina Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and Sayyidina `Umar al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with them both) which manifested their self-lessness, humility, sincerity, probity, integrity, their willingness to be corrected or criticised openly for any wrongdoing on their part and their paramount consciousness of their direct accountability to Allah SWT. They had those rare qualities because the Theocentric Leadership Paradigm under which they were trained at the hands of Allah's Beloved Messenger (S.A.W.) was a new alternative to the *Jāhiliyyah* paradigm of leadership. *al-Falāḥ* in the Hereafter and *Riḍwāna'Liāh* were their ultimate goals. Similarly, the early Muslim icons of moral integrity and ethical leadership were the products of the theocentric leadership paradigm. The tide of corruption and moral decay came after the paradigm was changed to hereditary leadership with the goal of worldly glorification and dynastic continuity.

The leaders of moral and ethical integrity of the past lived in and engaged the world as Allah's trustworthy vicegerents. They assisted the construction a great civilisation of knowledge *par excellence* (as analysed in the brilliant work of Franz Rosenthal (2007), *Knowledge Triumphant*), which benefitted and enlightened human civilisation for nearly a thousand years, but they – unlike the worldly-oriented Caliphs and monarchs who became corrupted political rulers of the Muslim empire -- were not seeking the magnificence of *al-Dunyā*, nor distracted or deluded by its glittering ornaments or dazzling embellishments. They craved only after the good pleasure of their Compassionate Master and Nourisher and were most spiritually and morally vigilant lest any of their thoughts, words or actions would displease their Compassionate Master and Nourisher.

The new breed of Islamic leaders has to emulate the Prophetic model and the models produced by what I would call the Theocentric Leadership Paradigm of the early generation to achieve the much-needed transformation in the Muslim *ummah* now and in the future. It is a formidable but not an impossible task. It can start with a group of Believers in different areas of specialisation working purely and sincerely for the sake of the pleasure of Allah SWT. Imbued with honesty, humility, dedication, selflessness and compassion, together with proper planning, cooperation, coordination and collective decision-making, this noble civilisational renewal (*ṭadjīd ḥaḍārī*) task can get off the ground in a few years with snow-balling effects, as long as those perennial spiritual principles and values remain untarnished by egoistic, individualistic, narcissistic, materialistic, ethnic, nationalistic or myopic considerations.

The new breed of leaders should be inspired and highly motivated by the lofty leadership principles contained not only in those inaugural Caliphate speeches, but also from the wise counsels on leadership and good governance given by Sayyidina `Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (may Allah be pleased with him) in speeches attributed to him as they are presented in the famous *Shī`ah* literary masterpiece, *Nahj al-Balāghah* (The Way of Eloquence). For those young and sincere Muslims who aspire for political or governmental leadership position in their future career, they have to instil deep in their hearts their sincere desire to be God-fearing and trustworthy when they hold leadership position, after knowing well the model of Prophetic leadership and what the Prophet (s.a.w.) had advised his beloved

Companion Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (may Allah be pleased with him), upon being approached by the latter enquiring if he could be considered for some kind of public office or authoritative position, in the following *ḥadīth*:

***O Abu Dharr, you are (physically) weak person, whereas it (leadership or authority) is a trust (amānah from God) , and on the Day of Judgement it will be a cause of humiliation and remorse, except for one who is able and competent to fulfil its obligations, and (properly) discharges the entrusted duties attendant upon it. (Muslim)***

They should learn how to give priority to ideas, plans, policies and strategies that would attract the blessings (*barakāt*), care (*ināyah*), assistance (*naṣr*, *ʿaun*, *taʿyīd*, *taufīq*), protection (*ḥimāyah*) and compassion (*raḥmah*) of the Compassionate Master and Nourisher of the Universe, not the praise or applause of secular humanistic forces or those with hypocritical hegemonic agenda in the world.

Working under new and more challenging scenarios in the future, our new breed of leaders has, no doubt, to be equipped with a high quotient in a variety of intelligences and skills, including emotional and adversity-coping quotients, but their personalities have to be nurtured and developed on the basis of the purified theocentric *qalb* under the Theocentric Leadership Paradigm in order to sustain the socio-political transformation momentum and acquire the necessary mindsets of constancy, consistency, resilience and integrity which are the constituents of the Qurʻanic virtue of *istiḳāmah*. This group of *ummatic* and selfless leaders shall be the future Islamic political stewards and custodians of the Muslim *ummah*, without an iota of infallibility. As humble and unassuming God-conscious leaders, their ultimate loyalty is to Allah SWT, and to them all political parties or organisations are non-infallible desacralised tools, not as means for self-promotion or ethnic glorification at all, but as new avenues for sincere service to the community, the people and the nation – in the name of *ʿubūdiyyah khālīṣah* (sincere servanthood) to Allah SWT as taught and practised by the His Final Messenger (S.A.W.).

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