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## From Social Justice to Islamic Revivalism: An Interrogation of Sayyid Qutb's Discourse

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# From Social Justice to Islamic Revivalism: An Interrogation of Sayyid Qutb's Discourse

Dr. Ibrahim Olatunde Uthman

**Abstract-** <sup>1</sup>While Sayyid Qutb is an acclaimed Islamist and leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, that he has not been fully understood is confirmed by the persistent view that he laid the foundation for the prevailing 'Islamic terror and Islamist fundamentalism' all over the globe. Though there is a panoply of works that have attempted to explain and clarify this misunderstanding of Qutb's Islamic revivalism and reformism through a study of his writings and works yet the argument that his Islamic revivalism added to his zeal for rejecting modernity, leading to 'Islamic terror and Islamist fundamentalism' leaves some questions such as how did he move from a pure social justice crusader to an Islamist, why did he hate America, does his work provide inspiration for Islamic militancy, fundamentalism and terrorism etc and did his childhood upbringing, education, works and Islamic revivalism give insight into the so-called phenomenon of 'Islamic terrorism still begging for answers. This paper is premised on the argument that Qutb, as a true African, despite his critical analysis and condemnation of the West and in fact all Muslim societies which he terms *Jahili* Societies was totally opposed to all acts of terrorism as well as irrational and extreme interpretation of Islamic fundamentals as revealed in his revivalist and reformist works, especially *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, which are still inspiring Muslims, especially his views on the rights of Muslim women and their place in modern society.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The role of Sayyid Qutb (1324–1386/1906–1966) in Islamic activism, particularly his leadership of the re-organization of the Muslims Brotherhood after it was outlawed by the government of Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir and his mentorship of the 1952 Egyptian military coup during which he provided the intellectual inspiration for

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<sup>1</sup> The original version of this paper was presented at the First Biennial Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan International conference, June 6-9 2011.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance, Badmas 'Lanre Yusuf, *Sayyid Qutb: A Study of his Tafsir* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2009); Thameem Ushama, *Sayyid Qutb: Between Reform and Revolution* (Malaysia: IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia, 2009; Roxanne L. Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (Ed. and Intro.), *Princeton Readings In Islamic Thought: Text and Contexts from Al-Banna to Bin Laden* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009); Noor Muhammad Usmani, "Fi Zilal al-Qur'an: A Methodological Study," an Unpublished M.A. Thesis, International Islamic University, Malaysia, 1995; Rashid Rashid, "Studies on the Political Dimensions of Sayyid Qutb's Interpretation of the Qur'an," an Unpublished M.A. Thesis, the University of Sydney,

to his Islamist,<sup>3</sup> intellectual,<sup>4</sup> revolutionary,<sup>5</sup> ideological<sup>6</sup> and political leadership as well as his total rejection of the West and all un-Islamic systems.<sup>7</sup> It is this stance that made many scholars to believe that he abandoned his initial reformism and embraced radicalism. I quote Yvonne Y. Haddad who writes that "Reform was no longer sufficient... Only a radical transformation...the categorical destruction of the old system, can guarantee the flourishing of God's system..."<sup>8</sup>

I argue here that despite the above Haddad and others' description of him as a revolutionary because of his total rejection of the West and un-Islamic systems,<sup>9</sup> Qutb as a true African was totally opposed to all acts of terrorism. Therefore this paper will make a critical analysis and review of some of Qutb's works and Islamic thoughts, to answer the questions on why he hated America and the West, whether his works and Islamic activism provided inspiration for 'Islamic militancy, fundamentalism and terrorism' and if his biography truly gave insight into the so-called phenomenon of 'Islamic terrorism.' The answers to these and other similar questions will reveal the true Qutb, an African Islamic revivalist, feminist and social crusader.

## II. THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS AND ECONOMIC MILIEU AND BACKGROUND OF SAYYID QUTB

With the establishment of al-Azhar University during the Fatimid dynasty in the tenth century, Egypt has always played leading intellectual, literary, political

1993 and Agbetola A., "The Religious Thought of Sayyid Qutb," an Unpublished M. Phil Thesis, University of Ibadan, 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Anwar al-Sadat, *In Search of Identity* (New York: Harper, 1978), 66.

<sup>4</sup> Abu al-Hasan 'Ali al-Nadwi, *Mudhakkirat Sa'ih fi al-Sharqi al-'Arabi*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 1975), 66.

<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Qutb, *Sayyid Qutb al-Shahid al-'A'zal*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Cairo: al-Mukhtar al-Islami, 1972), 23.

<sup>6</sup> Asaf Husayn, *Islamic Movements in Egypt, Pakistan and Iran* (Great Britain: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1983), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Yvonne Haddad, "The Qur'anic Justification for an Islamic Revolution: The view of Sayyid Qutb," *Middle Eastern Journal*, winter, 1983, vol. 37: 17.

<sup>8</sup> John Esposito, *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, Oxford, 1983, p. 78

<sup>9</sup> Yvonne Haddad, "The Qur'anic Justification for an Islamic Revolution: The view of Sayyid Qutb," *Middle Eastern Journal*, winter, 1983, vol. 37: 17.

and religious role in the African, Muslim and world affairs. So in the 20th century, it was destined to witness again serious political and religious developments and changes that were to reverberate throughout the world till today. From 1250 to 1789, Egypt was under foreign rule, first the Mamluk and then the Ottoman Turkey. It was again invaded by Napoleon in 1789 and it remained under the French until they were driven out by a combination of British and Turkish forces in 1805. Muhammad 'Ali ruled Egypt, first as a governor of the Ottoman Caliphate and later as the imperial representative of the French and British on whom his Khedive family depended in running the administration and government of Egypt.<sup>10</sup>

The above western imperialism led to a lot of resentment among the Egyptian people. For instance in 1881 the Egyptian army under the leadership of Ahmad 'Urabi, an officer, organized a popular revolution during the reign of Tawfiq. The revolution was almost successful but the British army interfered and defeated the forces of 'Urabi, ending the revolution though it was supported by the people. Though Britain promised France that its occupation of the country was temporary, Egypt became a colony of Britain from 1882, leading to the gradual agitation of the people for independence which culminated in independence talks and the holding of parliamentary elections in 1923.<sup>11</sup>

Subsequent to the above colonization of Egypt, two dynamic trends started to emerge in Egyptian national life. Secularism and its attendant nationalism began to spread among the young, promising future leaders of the country with most of the political ideologues that were destined to lead the country such as Sa'ad Zaghlul, Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid and 'Abdul 'Aziz Fahmi graduating from the British modern and secular universities. This was the first trend, which culminated in the establishment of nationalist political parties such as the Nationalist Political Party by Mustapha Kamil, the National liberation Party by 'Abd al-Khaliq Tharwah and Muhammad Farid and the Arab Socialist Party. The second trend was the consequence of secularization of Egypt, leading to the immersion of the country into western, materialistic and un-Islamic way of life that reflected in the non observance of Islamic festivals as hitherto done, even during the occupation of Egypt by Napoleon army. Egyptian women were also discouraged from observing the Islamic dress code with Huda Sha'rawi, the leader of the secular feminist movement, championing this cause. As a consequence, Egyptians lost confidence in both their national

leadership and its political structure.<sup>12</sup> There began to spread an anti western and anti secular Islamic spirit among the Muslims. This Islamic trend was ignited by Sheikh Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897) who came to Egypt during the reign of the last Ottoman Caliph, Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II and taught at al-Azhar University in Cairo. He championed pan-Islamism and appealed to the people to rise in support of the Ottoman Caliphate headed by Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II.<sup>13</sup>

Sheikh Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905), who was al-Afghani's famous disciple later became the grand mufti of the country and he implemented his teacher's Islamic legal and educational reforms. Following these reforms, he awakened the Muslims to the materialistic, sensate and decadent aspects of Western civilization as well as the superstitious, backward and un-Islamic nature of the prevalent Muslim civilization. The reforms he implemented were therefore targeted at eradicating both aspects of *Jahiliyyah* in the two civilizations and returning Muslims to the path of divine guidance, Islamic system and dynamism.<sup>14</sup> His reforms are still having impact in Egypt today and must have influenced the establishment of political parties with religious tendencies such as *al-Ummah* (the Muslim community) and *al-Islah* (the Reform) Party. Zaghlul above who was one of the three leading students of Sheikh 'Abduh also founded an elite party called the *Wafd* Party. The other two disciples are Muhammad Rashid Rida, whose Islamic activism and writing influenced greatly the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sheikh Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) in Egypt and Qasim Amin whose books on the emancipation of Muslim women contributed in no small measure to the emergence of Islamic feminism in Egypt as championed by Zaynab al-Ghazzali.<sup>15</sup> Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935) Carried the banner of the above reforms from from 'Abduh and his *al-Manar* (The Light of Islam) championed religious and political activism. He condemned the existing political structure in the Muslim world and the corrupt Muslim intellectual and political leadership. He struggled to achieve the dreams of both al-Afghani and 'Abduh in reviving the caliphate and the implementation of the Islamic Law.<sup>16</sup>

The above efforts culminated in the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood by Sheikh Hasan al-Banna in 1928 in the Egyptian town of Isma'iliyyah. Al-Banna who received his revivalist ideas from Rida, also struggled for the formation of a

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> 'Abd al-Rahman al-Rafi'i, *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani Ba'th Nahdat al-Sharq* (N.P.: al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1961), 48.

<sup>14</sup> Muhammad 'Abduh *al-Islam Din al-'Ilm wa al-Madaniyyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, N.D.), 56-72, 84-97, 138-147 and 150-155.

<sup>15</sup> Salah 'Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb al-shahid al-Hayy 2<sup>nd</sup>* edition (Amman: Maktabat al-Aqsa, 1985), 18-34.

<sup>16</sup> Malcom H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1976), 5-16.

<sup>10</sup> Thameem Ushama, "A Political History of Islamic Resurgence in Egypt" in *IKIM Journal of Islam and International Affairs*, Malaysia (2004) vol. 1, no. 3, 85-105.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Adebajji. Akintoye, *Emergent African States: Topics in 20th Century African History*, (London: Longman, 1976), 228-235.

Commonwealth or League of Islamic Countries following his attack of the imperialist designs of the West and the Super Powers. He explained that the support of the ruling Khedive for the Caliphate in Turkey when the First World War broke out and his subsequent removal and replacement by Britain compelled Egypt to act against the Caliphate and became an ally of Britain. Thus Egypt was used as a base for the British forces and this facilitated the colonization of Palestine and Syria by the British. He therefore called for total war against these foreign powers through the unification of all Islamic countries.<sup>17</sup>

Sayyid Qutb was born in 20<sup>th</sup> century Egypt during the above prevailing socio-political and religious milieu. He would later join the Hasan al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood, the organization that has stood at the heart of Islamic activism throughout the world till today and lead its re-organization and revival for which he is today labeled the father or grandfather of the 'Islamic militancy, extremism, terrorism and fundamentalism'. It is therefore important to now examine the childhood, education and career of Qutb and how he found the Muslim Brothers and his Islamic activism in 20<sup>th</sup> century history, perhaps this may give insight into his vision of Islam and terrorism, why he hated America and whether his vision, activism, ideas and writings were capable of nurturing terrorism.<sup>18</sup>

### III. A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF SAYYID QUTB, HIS EDUCATION AND CAREER

Sayyid Qutb Ibrahim Husayn al-Shadhill was born in the village of Moshe in the Asyut district in Upper Egypt on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September or October 1906.<sup>19</sup> He was born into a religious, intellectual and politically enlightened family. Qutb's father, Ibrahim was well known for his legendary piety, political activism, love and generous treatment of his servants as well as general hospitality.<sup>20</sup> Qutb's mother was also a pious daughter of a wealthy, pious and well educated father who graduated from the famous al-Azhar University. By virtue of her family's university education, she encouraged her children to pursue university education. She loved listening to the recitation of the Qur'an and on account of her love for it; Qutb's father made its recitation a constant feature of his house. She was also generous and gave out charity regularly to the poor for the sake of God.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Hasan al-Banna, *Majmu'at al-Rasai'il* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, N.D.), 10-25.

<sup>18</sup> Ushama, "A Political History, 85-105.

<sup>19</sup> Ushama, *Sayyid Qutb*, 26.

<sup>20</sup> Salah 'Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb min al-milad ila al-Istishhad* (Damascus: Dar al-Qalam, 1991), 19-29 and Sayyid Qutb, *Tiflun min al-Qaryah* (Jeddah: al-Dar al-Su'udiyah lin-Nashr, N.D.), 21, 37, 75-79, 120, 145-147, and 192-196.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 21 and Sayyid Qutb, *Al-Taswir al-Fanni fil-Qur'an* (Cairo: al-Dar al-Shuruq, N.D.), 5.

Qutb's mother, the second of two wives had five children for his father. The eldest was three years older than Qutb and was named Nafisah Qutb. Qutb was the second child in the family and the next child to him was Aminah Qutb who was a literary scholar, author and Islamist like Qutb and his remaining siblings.<sup>22</sup> She was followed by Muhammad Qutb who was thirteen years younger than Qutb. The last of Qutb's siblings was Hamidah Qutb who completed her studies in Cairo after their family moved to join Qutb in Cairo. She also took after Qutb in her literary and *da'wah* activities. After the arrest of Qutb in 1954, she served as a conduit of passing his instructions and directives for the Muslim brotherhood to Zaynab al-Ghazzali with whom she was later imprisoned in 1965.<sup>23</sup>

However, the most relevant aspect of Qutb's childhood to this study was his education which started at the village school when he was six years old. The educational curriculum followed two streams, one was that of government owned schools under the Ministry of education and the other was that of autonomous Qur'anic schools with parents paying subscriptions to pay the teachers. The students who followed the second stream were known as *Kutab* while their schools were called the *Katatib*.<sup>24</sup> Qutb was admitted into the first stream because of its academic standard. In his second year, it was decided that the teaching of the Qur'an would be removed from the curriculum and this annoyed many parents and they were compelled to send their children to the *Katatib*. Qutb was one of those affected by this development but he hated so much the unhygienic and unclean surroundings of the Qur'anic school that after his first day in the school, he went back to the state school, conveyed his dissatisfaction to the Head teacher and begged him to convince his father to allow him remain in the school. Contrary to the claim of Esposito above,<sup>25</sup> Qutb hated the unhygienic and unclean surroundings of

his first day in the school, went back to the state school.

The above point is important here because Qutb's abandoning of the Qur'anic school from the first day, he was admitted there, is a clear indication that he never received any Islamist, extremist not to mention terrorist training from the Qur'anic school or the *madrasah*. As a matter of fact, after his father gave his permission to withdraw from the local school, Qutb resolved to personally enhance his own memorization of the Qur'an.<sup>26</sup>

After his graduation from the primary school in 1918, he wanted to continue his education in Cairo but was compelled to remain in his village for another two

<sup>22</sup> Qutb, *Tiflun*, 202- 207.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb al-shahid*, 80-84.

<sup>25</sup> John Esposito, *Voices of Resurgent Islam*.

<sup>26</sup> Qutb, *Tiflun min*, 22-44.



years because of the above 1919 popular revolution led by Zaghlul of the *Wafd* Party against the British government which disrupted the transportation system. Qutb describes his father's role in the revolution. Their house served as a centre for the villagers where political meetings and gatherings were held. Again, in his father's nationalist and political activism, could be located, Qutb's later social and political activism in life.

He finally left for Cairo in 1921.<sup>27</sup> When he eventually made it to Cairo, Qutb initially stayed with his uncle, a journalist, Ahmad Husayn Uthman who was a graduate of al-Azhar. Though there is no record of what Qutb was doing between 1921 and 1925 before he was admitted into the Teachers' College in Cairo, he must have been learning journalism from his uncle. His later literary inclinations, I believe must be located in this period. After the completion of his Teachers' certificate, Qutb enrolled into the pre-university course of *Dar al-'Ulum* (Centre for Arabic and Islamic Studies) in 1928 and degree programme of the tertiary section of *Dar al-'Ulum* that is affiliated to the Faculty of Arts and Literature of Cairo University in 1930 and graduated in 1933 at the age of twenty seven with B.A. in Literature and diploma in Education. This, he believed was useful for his future, no doubt, journalistic and educational activities.<sup>28</sup>

His journalistic activities started as a student when he started writing and publishing poems. After his graduation in 1933, Qutb worked briefly with *al-Ahram*, the famous government newspaper, and began freelancing for *al-Risalah* and al-Thaqafah, two Egyptian magazines before starting his career as a teacher with the Ministry of education and Culture. He taught for six years while he continued engaging in literary activities as a freelance. He later became an administrative officer, inspecting general education and culture in the department of inspection. He remained in the office for eight years until he was sent by the Ministry in 1948 to closely study, evaluate and analyze the American educational system. After returning from the US, he worked as a special advisor to the Ministry and delivered lectures at *Dar al-'Ulum* before he was finally redeployed there to teach.<sup>29</sup>

#### IV. HIS AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AND BEGINNING OF HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

As I have stated above, Qutb was certainly no Islamist not to mention being an 'Islamic terrorist or fundamentalist' while growing up. His upbringing and education made becoming either impossible. He grew up within the milieu of Arab upper class family system,

Egyptian nationalism and political awareness where his father was an activist and leading member of the Egyptian National Party and an executive committee member of his village branch of the party.<sup>30</sup> Qutb was also educated at the upper class elitist schools from primary to the university; he was not a product of the *madrasah* as he ran away from the Qur'anic school after his first day there. So when did he start to hate America and the West? When and how did he meet the Muslim brotherhood and 'Islamic terrorism?' The answers to these and other similar questions are what this section seeks to provide.

In 1948 as stated above, Qutb was sent to America ostentatiously to study, evaluate and analyze the American educational system. In reality, the journey was an ingenious way of curtailing his growing condemnation of the country's ruling class and his social crusade against the poor and deteriorating conditions of the masses in Egypt. His various articles in the literary journals, magazines and newspapers had become too critical and condemning of the political, social and economic conditions of the people. He used to be a strong and vocal member of the *Wafd* Party which was the ruling party since his adolescence while he was a pre-university student but was however compelled to resign from the party in 1942 and joined the *Sa'ad* Party. Finally he retired completely from politics in 1945 because of undemocratic and anti people's practices of political parties. In the same year, he wrote two of his fiery articles titled '*addilu Baramijakum* (Make just your programmes) and *Ayna Anta Ya Mustafa Kamil* (Where are you O Mustapha Kamil). The King, Faruq was not amused at all and in fact wanted the Prime Minister to put Qutb in detention straight away. However, his former membership of the ruling party and acquaintanceship of literary giants like 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad impressed the Prime Minister. So the Prime Minister arranged with the Ministry of Education to send him to America with the goal of transforming his vision, corrupting him with western culture and mobilizing him to the service of the Egyptian ruling class through western indoctrination and cultural decadence. In short, it was to enlist him into becoming an agent of the bourgeoisie government in Egypt.<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately this plan backfired as Qutb rather became more committed in his criticism as well as religious life. This turning point in Qutb's religious commitment started from the ship that took him by sea from Alexandria to America. His first experience of cultural and western decadence came when a young beautiful and charming girl knocked on the door of his room in the ship and entered, seeking his permission to be his guest throughout the night. He apologized for his

<sup>27</sup> Qutb, *Tiflun min*, 146-217.

<sup>28</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb al-shahid*, 88-89.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

<sup>30</sup> Qutb, *Tiflun min*, 37, 145-147, and 192-196.

<sup>31</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb al-shahid*, 126.

inability to accommodate her because his room had only one bed and she replied that "many single beds are meant for two persons." Qutb was compelled to shut the door on her face and heard her falling along the corridor and realized she was stark drunk. That was only the beginning of the attempt to seduce him by American ladies. According to him, he was chased by these ladies from one place to another and one city to another. A staff of the hotel solicited sex from him, a nurse tried to seduce him while he was hospitalized at George Washington hospital, a university student inundated him with claims of sex being a merely biological and not moral issue while an Arab boy inundated him with stories of sexual escapades with American girls.<sup>32</sup>

The climax of his experience of the decadence of the American and western way of life however came when he was hospitalized in San Francisco and was astonished at the jubilation of the hospital staff over the assassination of the founder and first General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1949. This was also the scenario at a departmental store where he saw American men and women jubilating over the above assassination. This singular incident had an everlasting impression on Qutb and his attention was directed to the comments of American newspapers on the assassination as well as books on Al-Banna and his Muslim Brotherhood. Mitchel quotes Qutb as saying that he read the book, *Religious and Political Trends in Modern Egypt* written by a British Intelligence officer while he was in America and the book also confirms to him, the threat of Hasan al-Banna and his Muslim brotherhood to the West in general.<sup>33</sup>

That Qutb was disgusted by his above experiences which he saw as proofs of the decadent styles of living in the west was made clear by him in his various articles and books, such as, *Hamaim fi New York* (Pigeons in New York) *al-Islam wa al-mushkilat al-Hadarah* (Islam and the Problems of Civilization), *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Milestones) and *Amrika allati ra'ytu'* (The America which I saw) which contained his depictions of the American dream. He portrays his attempts at overcoming the temptations he confronted in America and how he found solace and succor in Islam, the Qur'an and *da'wah* activities. The divine light, according to him, entered his heart and he found Islamism with new tastes, perspectives, dreams, aspirations and philosophy of life in America. In other words, by turning his back against American decadence, Qutb found Islam and ultimately the Muslim Brotherhood on American soil. Qutb diagnosed the American way of life and rejected what he observed and witnessed. It was his witness of a people's jubilation at

the death of their fellow human being that eventually drew him into the fold of the Muslim Brotherhood and so, we will now turn to his activism after his acquaintance with the Muslim Brotherhood on American soil and the rest of his life thereafter.

## V. QUTB'S DA'WAH ACTIVITIES AND ISLAMISM IN THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Following Qutb's discovery of the Muslim Brotherhood on American soil, he developed a new link with the Qur'an, turning away from his previous literary and artistic reading of the Holy book and ended up the rest of his life and in fact literary career thereafter, inspired by the Qur'an in his goal of reforming the Egyptian society. The first outcome of this Qur'anic outlook which I argue marked the beginning of his Islamic reform and *da'wah* activities in his writings was the publication of his book *al-'Adalah al-Ijtima'iyah fi al-Islam* (Social Justice in Islam), almost six months after his arrival in the US. While it has been argued that since the work was completed before he left for the US, the Islamic activism and bias of the book had nothing to do with the Muslim Brotherhood and his founder, Al-Banna,<sup>34</sup> I argue that though the book was written before his trip to America, it was quite easy for Qutb to have revised its dedication and one or two sections of the book since it was not published until many months after he had arrived there. That he did revise some parts of the book after he arrived in America is proven by Qutb's admission in one of his lectures at Cairo University that he was a heretic for almost eleven years of his life and was lost from the Islamic outlook until he wrote the book, *al-'Adalah al-Ijtima'iyah fi al-Islam*.<sup>35</sup> Since, it has been shown above that he found Islam in America, it stands to reason that it must have been in America, that he wrote what he referred to in the Cairo lecture as his Islamic direction in *al-'Adalah al-Ijtima'iyah fi al-Islam*. It is no doubt after his trip to the US that it could be truly argued as Nasru Rejwan has done that "the authenticity and deep knowledge of his Islamic outlook and his interpretation are not disputed even by those who would not agree with his conclusion."<sup>36</sup>

I therefore reiterate here that the book marks the beginning of Qutb's integration with the Muslim Brotherhood. A beginning demonstrated by the similarity between his reform vision and aspirations expressed in the book and those of the Brotherhood as well as his perceived dedication of the book to the youth of the Brotherhood. This perception was both that of the Brotherhood and the Egyptian government. Members of the Brotherhood who were in prison when the book was

<sup>32</sup> Salah 'Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi, *Amerika min al-Dakhil* 1<sup>st</sup> edition (Jeddah: Dar al-Manarah, 1985), 21-32.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Mitchel *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* quoted in Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb min al-milad*, 320.

<sup>34</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb al-shahid*, 133 and 315.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb min al-milad*, 234.

<sup>36</sup> Nasru Rejwan, *Nasserist Ideology* (New York: John Willey and Son, 1974), 42.

published understood that the dedication was referring to them and they began to distribute copies of the book while in prison. Even the other members of the Brotherhood outside the prison also distributed copies of the book and in fact, their General Guide once held a copy of the book in public and declared that the Islamic thought of the book is the thought of the Brotherhood and it was probable that its author was one with the Brotherhood.<sup>37</sup> This was also the perception of the government and the book was banned and withdrawn from the market and the government announced that it would remain banned until such a time when the author remove the dedication of the book to the youth of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>38</sup>

Contrary to the arguments of those who opine that the above perception was wrong based on the explanations given by Qutb and his younger brother, Muhammad, the book was dedicated to the youth of the Muslim Brotherhood. In his interview granted to al-Khalidi, Muhammad explains that Qutb only refers in the dedication of his book to the youth of the Muslim Brotherhood metaphorically and not literally because he intends the Muslim youth in general. This clarification by Muhammad is purportedly supported by Qutb's explanation in his alleged "Li-madha A'damuni" published in *al-Muslimun* (The Muslims) in Saudi Arabia in 1985, two decades after his execution. In this journal, Qutb is allegedly reported to have written that though the Muslim Brotherhood perceived that the dedication of his book referred to them, this was not true. However my assertion that the book was dedicated to the youth of the Muslim Brotherhood is confirmed by the fact that in the second edition of the book that appeared in 1954, after his involvement in the Muslim Brotherhood had become widely known, Qutb specifically and unambiguously dedicated the book to the youth of the brotherhood.

While there is disagreement on when he actually became an official member of the brotherhood, I argue that following his fraternization with it from the US and the dedication of his above book to it, Qutb, in order to fulfill his new Islamic thought, vision and mission, did not hesitate to join the brotherhood immediately he returned back to Egypt from America. On his return from the US in 1950, Qutb naturally turned to the Muslim Brotherhood and became one of his members as reflected in many incidents about him and the brotherhood. It was his membership that drew youth of the brotherhood to him in 1950 and they complained about their inability to carry on the activities of the brotherhood because of its 1949 proscription. Following his new Islamic commitment and disposition, he must have seen their move as the divine answer to his desire

and goal. Hence, He welcomed the youth around him and started to provide leadership for them. This is the first point in support of Qutb's immediate membership of the brotherhood after he returned from America.<sup>39</sup>

Secondly, when the brotherhood led an attack against the British army in the Suez Canal in late 1951 and the British forces retaliated by brutally killing or wounding its members and destroying their homes, the brotherhood became divided on the appropriate action. While some of them including Muhammad Tahir Munir, the president of the Suez branch of the brotherhood called for patience and perseverance on the part of the brotherhood, others including Muhammad al-Ghazali, a member of the Guidance Office called for immediate counter attack against the British forces and interestingly, these two leading figures of the brotherhood published their differing views in the newspaper, *al-misri*. At this critical period of the brotherhood's trial, it was Qutb who appealed to the General Guide of the brotherhood to issue a conclusive statement of the brotherhood because according to him, neither of the two leaders had the right to issue an official statement on behalf of the brotherhood. Immediately, the General Guide, responded two days after and praised Qutb for his views on the issue and added that perhaps no one knew the views of the brotherhood on the issue other than him. This is the clearest statement from the General Guide of the brotherhood on not only the membership of Qutb but also his active and deep involvement in the brotherhood as well as his knowledge of it.<sup>40</sup> What is therefore clear is that Qutb officially joined the brotherhood in 1951, the year he refers to as his date of birth because it was the date of his joining the brotherhood<sup>41</sup> though he had been a member since 1950.

Perhaps the biggest point in support of Qutb's immediate membership of the brotherhood after he returned from America was his involvement with the Muslim brotherhood in the 1952 revolution that toppled King Faruq and appointed Muhammad Najib, the leader of the coup as the first president of the Egyptian republic. Qutb was subsequently publicly praised by the leaders of the revolution for his role in the success of the revolution and he was invited to play a leading role in the government that followed. His involvement in the revolution, I argue could only be explained in the light of his membership and indeed leadership in the Muslim Brotherhood. This is because the role of the

<sup>37</sup> This observation of Hasan al-Banna was quoted and commented upon in Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb min al-milad*, 316.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb al-shahid*, 315.

<sup>39</sup> Al-Khalidi recorded the story of these youth around Qutb in his *Sayyid Qutb min al-milad*, 314 while denying that Qutb ever nursed the intention of establishing a new movement to replace the Muslim brotherhood but he did not accept that Qutb related with these youth around him as a member of the brotherhood.

<sup>40</sup> Both this observation of Qutb and the response of the General Guide of the brotherhood were quoted by Al-Khalidi in *ibid*, 328 yet he disagreed with the view that Qutb wrote as a member of the brotherhood.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb al-shahid*, 138.

brotherhood in the 1952 revolution has been traced back to the time of its founder and first General Guide, Hasan al-Banna when a military wing of the brotherhood called *al-Ikhwān al-Dubbat* (The Brotherhood Officers) was formed. One of the Brotherhood Officers was Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir, a senior Military Officer who was to play a leading role in the 1952 independent revolution and subsequently become the president of Egypt. Though he later broke away from the *al-Ikhwān al-Dubbat*, renamed *al-Dubbat al-ahrar* (The Free Officers) by forming the *Dubbat al-Jaysh* (The Army Officers) on the claim of security reasons, Abdul Nasir came back and renewed his relationship with the brotherhood and the *al-Dubbat al-ahrar*, before the execution of the 1952 revolution. Consequently the revolution took place with the collaboration of the brotherhood through Abdul Nasir. This collaboration afforded the military junta the opportunity to use the resources of the brotherhood and its *al-Dubbat al-ahrar* in conjunction with Qutb as its ideologue and intellectual leader.<sup>42</sup>

Shortly before the above 1952 revolution, Qutb broke away completely from the ruling elite by resigning from his position at the Ministry of Education because of his disgust at the authorities' rejection of his proposals for reforms in the educational system and their request that he should stop his political articles on national problems and issues. Qutb on many occasions, attempted to reform the Ministry of Education, establish a special professional department that would overhaul the entire educational system and its curricula but all his proposals were rejected.<sup>43</sup> He must have thus devoted his attention to providing leadership and guidance to the leaders of the revolution. As a result of his contribution to the success of the revolutionary coup by the military junta that toppled the King, Qutb was regarded as the father of the revolution and was likened to the famous Mirabeau who contributed to the success of the French revolution. As mark of respect, many honours were bestowed on Qutb and he was even offered the position of the Minister of education which he turned down. He also declined the offer of the position of the Director General of Broadcasting and Information. He like the brotherhood was not interested in political positions but rather in the Islamic reform of the country. This objective was clearly mentioned by Qutb in a talk he delivered at a public event organized by the revolutionary Military junta in August 1952.<sup>44</sup>

However 'Abd al-Nasir later in a meeting he held with the General Guide, denied that there was any agreement or collaboration with the brotherhood and the revolution to carry out Islamic reforms. He rejected all the peace gestures of the brotherhood thereafter and the gaps between them started widening gradually.

Then Muhammad Najib, the leader of the coup and president did not last in his office and was replaced by 'Abd al-Nasir and he decided to form a liberation organization in 1953 ostentatiously to carry out Islamic reforms. Upon his insistence, Qutb who was by then a member of the brotherhood's Guidance office and the Director of *da'wah*, and was representing the group in various local and international conferences,<sup>45</sup> was compelled to accept the position of the General Secretary of the Liberation Organization in order to mobilize the people and consolidate the achievements of the revolution through Islamic reforms.

Following the refusal of the leadership of the brotherhood to merge it with the newly formed Liberation Organization of 'Abd al-Nasir, there was a conspiracy to ferment trouble that would lead to the forceful removal of Hasan Hidaybi, the General Guide and the appointment of a new General Guide and formation of a new Guidance office loyal to Abd al-Nasir. The government loyalists and conspirators broke into the house of the General Guide and sought to make him resign from his position under duress. They then proceeded to the brotherhood's headquarters on 27 November 1953 and declared the dissolution of the Guidance Office and the formation of a new one headed by Sayyid Sabiq, a great Islamic scholar and leading member of the brotherhood. Qutb was among the delegation from all branches of the brotherhood that came on 29 November, 1953 to pledge their continuous support to the incumbent General Guide, Hasan Hidaybi. He gave a powerful speech, in which he called on all the representatives to recognize the threat of the conspiracy of 'Abd al-Nasir and his intention to destroy the Islamic movement in Egypt and therefore urged them to renew and reaffirm their pledge and trust in Hasan al-Hidaybi.<sup>46</sup>

Having become convinced of 'Abd al-Nasir's ploy to use the Liberation organization to undermine the Muslim brotherhood and his own beliefs in the Islamic thoughts and reforms of the brotherhood, Qutb resigned and dissociated himself from the organization after all his efforts to reconcile the president and the brotherhood failed. The moment Qutb resigned from the Liberation Organization, 'Abd al-Nasir who was ruling with abominable martial powers turned against him and the Muslim Brotherhood. He implicated them in a purported attempt to assassinate him. Qutb and the members of the Muslim Brotherhood fell out of favour with the military junta and were arrested and detained in prison. Qutb was imprisoned along with other members of the brotherhood in 1954 for three months.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, after their release from prison, Qutb in collaboration with Zaynab al-Ghazzali al-Jubayli, a front burner and pace setter in both the Muslim

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 294-298.

<sup>43</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb al-shahid*, 98 and 125.

<sup>44</sup> Al-Khalidi *Sayyid Qutb min al- milad*, 294-304.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb al-shahid*, 144.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb al-shahid*, 144.

<sup>47</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb min al- milad*, 337.



Brotherhood and Islamic feminist struggles pioneered the attempts at the re-organization of the brotherhood after it was banned in 1954 by the government of 'Abd al-Nasir.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps it is this insistence by Qutb and the young elements of the brotherhood to revive its activities that 'informs' their labeling as 'Islamic terrorists, fundamentalists and extremists' since John Esposito, a contemporary and influential scholar of Islam has branded them as "neo-fundamentalists, extremists or fanatics."<sup>49</sup> The insistence of Qutb and the youth to initiate the revival and re-organization of the brotherhood soon provided an excuse for 'Abd al-Nasir to re-arrest Qutb and accused him of planning to assassinate him and overthrow his government, for which he was sentenced to fifteen years with hard labour. Out of this, he spent ten years in prison and was only released on the appeal made by the then Iraqi President, "Abd al-Salam 'Arif in May 1964.<sup>50</sup>

Qutb continued to lead the re-organization of the brotherhood both inside and outside the prison. In prison, he conducted meetings and trainings with the fellow Muslim Brothers imprisoned with him while providing intellectual, moral and spiritual guidance for those outside. On his release, in 1964, he assumed the full leadership of the re-organization till he was again re-arrested in August 1965.<sup>51</sup> 'Abd al-Nasir succeeded in penetrating the brotherhood through 'Ali Ashmawi, a member of the youth Council of Five responsible for the re-organization and a retired Accountant in the Egyptian Public Service. He became an agent, spy and protégé of the government and his statement was used to convict Qutb and many other leaders and members of the brotherhood of treason and felony against the state. The government confiscated their property, tortured and persecuted them and against all international and human right norms sentenced many of them to death including Qutb in 1966.<sup>52</sup>

I will now examine the most serious allegations against Qutb which portrayed him as a champion of terrorism, extremism, militancy or fundamentalism.

## VI. A CRITICAL REVIEW OF MAJOR ALLEGATIONS AGAINST SAYYID QUTB

One of the most serious allegations against Qutb is that he as the leader of the re-organization of the Muslim brotherhood, supported by its youth, conceived, planned and conducted an armed revolt against the government. This allegation, for which Qutb was arrested, convicted and sentenced to fifteen years

imprisonment in 1954 only to be finally hung in 1966 was not fully investigated and neither was Qutb's trial guided by universal democratic and human rights norms. He was tried by special military courts headed by judges who were army officers and characterized by legal and technical anomalies, irregularities and discrepancies. For instance, at the time the brotherhood's prosecution was closed in 1954, the court was told that the government was dropping its charges against Qutb on humanitarian grounds because he was diagnosed of a pectoral ailment and tuberculosis. However this was a ploy used to postpone his prosecution because of the presence of the representative of the International Human Rights. After the departure of the representative, he was brought back to court to face his legal prosecution and then sentenced.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, Qutb and his fellow Muslim Brothers were tried under a retroactive law in 1966 during which the government banned members of the public and the press. Even the lawyer sent by the Amnesty International as an observer in the court proceedings was as well prohibited from attending the proceedings. One of the unfortunate results of these legal irregularities was the death sentence also handed down on Farid 'Abd al-Khalid and Munir Dallah along with Qutb in 1966. Though the two were among the leaders of the brotherhood, they were not involved in its re-organization and in fact, rejected the idea when they were invited to lead it before Qutb was appointed. They vehemently opposed the re-organization because they considered it hazardous and dangerous. They went further to complain to the General Guide and called for the abolition of the idea.<sup>54</sup> In short, the government itself orchestrated the conspiracy that entrapped Qutb and the Muslim brothers. For this reason, the government prohibited the members of the public, the press and all the lawyers who came forward to volunteer their services in the defence of the accused from attending the court proceedings.

Another allegation against Qutb was that he was extremely harsh in his condemnation of the West and the entire Muslim societies as *jahili* societies. Rather than rejecting everything in the West and the Muslim societies as *jahili*, Qutb welcomed and praised the good aspects of the two. He was praiseful of many Western disciplines such as English and other languages, psychology and education contrary to the view of Islamic scholars who opposed the teaching of foreign languages in Islamic institutions. As a result of his love for foreign languages, he was disillusioned by the absence of foreign languages in the curriculum of his alma mater, *Dar al-'Ulum*.<sup>55</sup> He believes that this is one

<sup>48</sup> Zaynab al-Ghazzali, *Ayyam min Hayati* (Days from my Life) (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1986), 30-33.

<sup>49</sup> See his John L. Esposito (ed.) *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

<sup>50</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb min al- milad*, 293-314.

<sup>51</sup> Aal-Ghazzali, *Ayyam min*, 33-40.

<sup>52</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb min al- milad*, 252-253 and 402-404.

<sup>53</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb min al- milad*, 350.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 379.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Khalidi, *Sayyid Qutb al-shahid al-Hayy*, 89.

of the areas where Muslim practices violate the tenets of Islam, especially on the stifling of freedom.

Qutb also rejects western and American leaders because of their opposition to the struggles for the rights of the Egyptian people. In his book on the clash between Islam and capitalism, Qutb dissected the Egyptian society and became disgusted by the secular and western imperialist use of their stooges in government to plunder and devour his country's resources. This he said had devastated and impoverished the people while the upper classes monopolized the national income, consuming more than one third though their number was insignificant. As a result, he calls on the masses to rise and fight western imperialism and feudalism reflected in capitalism and communism, socialism and Marxism as these secular ideologies could never avail the people materially and spiritually.<sup>56</sup>

In order for the rights of the masses to be guaranteed in practical terms, all they would require, according to him, is education. He however believes in an all inclusive and holistic education as he called for the integration of Islamic emphasis and Islamic philosophy of education in the national curriculum.<sup>57</sup> He was totally against the prevalent un-Islamic educational system, which he argues was under the tutelage of the Zionist Jews, Christians and Communists and concluded that this was dangerous to the Muslim *Ummah*.<sup>58</sup> Consequently, the mindset of Muslim intellectuals became infected by a Zionist orchestrated conspiracy that makes a Muslim graduate from the so-called secular schools "abandons Islam in actuality if not in name."<sup>59</sup> As a result of this dominant Zionist brainwashing of Muslim intellectuals, Qutb called for a revolutionary, ideological and total rejection of the Zionist Western and un-Islamic educational systems.<sup>60</sup>

In his description of both the western and Muslim societies as *jahili*, Qutb brings a new Islamic dimension to the already diverse and differing definitions of society.<sup>61</sup> He does not view the society as merely "the totality of social relationships among men,"<sup>62</sup> a civilized social way of life or organized community of people. By this definition, society is based on civilized organization

and not just population.<sup>63</sup> Qutb conceives the Islamic society as not just a civilized community of organized Muslims characterized by its Islamic public practice and way of life through ritual worship and social norms of Islam. To Qutb, the Islamic society must be characterized, in addition to the above, by the implementation of the Islamic law by its political leadership. On this premise, he charges the Muslim rulers who rule by what has not been revealed by Allah as unbelievers and expels them from the fold of the believers.<sup>64</sup> He argues further that the implementation of the Islamic law by both Muslim political leader and their people is the most important norm or standard of the Islamic society. In other words, this norm must constitute the "specific guides to conduct which apply either to everyday activities or to situations that not occur often."<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, he insists on the obligation of enforcing this norm in Islamic societies in order to help humanity out of its socio-economic, political and spiritual logjams.<sup>66</sup> Expectedly, while commenting on the need to establish the Islamic society based on an Islamic government that promotes the Islamic norm of *al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar* (Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong), Qutb notes that this norm of collective checks and balances must be done standing on the sacredness of the truth, mutual counseling, patience and freedom of worship. He stresses that non-Muslims residing in the Islamic society are permitted to be judged by the law of their religions.<sup>67</sup> He therefore sees the Islamic society as "holistic, describing the whole humanity as a society and considers society as an organic entity."<sup>68</sup>

It is in the same vein that that Qutb charges only Muslims who propound the lawfulness of the prohibited and the prohibition of the lawful as guilty of unbelief, transgression and infidelity. So, mere weakness or inability of Muslims to observe Islamic rulings on the lawful or prohibited matters in Islam does not attract the charge of unbelief. In his Magnus opus, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, which is regarded as one of his most significant and highest achievements,<sup>69</sup> his greatest contribution to Islamic scholarship<sup>70</sup> and which has been translated into

<sup>63</sup> David L. Sills, *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan Company and the Free Press, 1972), vol. 13, 577.

<sup>64</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1992), vol. 2, 693 and 895-902 and vol. 3, 1052.

<sup>65</sup> L. Broom, et. al (eds.), *Essential of Sociology* (Illinois: F.E. Peacock Publishers Inc., Hasca, 1985), 36.

<sup>66</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Kuwait: International Islamic Federation of Students Organizations, 1978), 85.

<sup>67</sup> Qutb, *Fi Zilal*, vol. vol. 3, 3967-3968.

<sup>68</sup> D. Martindale, *The Scope of Social Theory* (Houston: Cap and Gown Press, 1984), vol. 2, 191.

<sup>69</sup> Ahmad Sallah al-Din Mousalli, "Contemporary Islamic Political Thought: Sayyid Qutb, Ph. D Dissertation, University Microfilm International Dissertation Service, 1988, 23.

<sup>70</sup> Davidson, "Contemporary Islamic Political Thought: Sayyid Qutb, *Encyclopedia and Dictionary*, n.p, n.d..

<sup>56</sup> Sayyid Qutb *Ma'rakat al-Islam wa al-Ra'smaliyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1980), 11-23.

<sup>57</sup> Sayyid Qutb *Al'Adalah al-Ijtima'iyyah fi al-Islam* (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1978), 249-250.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Nadwi, *Mudhakkirat Sa'ih*, 1-66 and Abu 'I Hasan 'Ali al-Nadwi, *al-Sira' bayn al-Fikrah al-Islamiyyah wa al-Fikray al-Garbiyyah* (Kuwait: N.P, 1968), 1-115.

<sup>59</sup> Haddad, "The Qur'anic Justification for an Islamic Revolution, 25.

<sup>60</sup> Qutb, *Sayyid Qutb al-Shahid*, 1- 23, Husayn, *Islamic Movements in Egypt*, 9 and al-Sadat, *In Search*, 65-67.

<sup>61</sup> J. Gould, et. al (eds.) *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (N.P. N.D.), 674.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 574 cited in Yusuf, *Sayyid Qutb*, 156-157.

many major languages such as English, Bahasa Malayu, French and Persian,<sup>71</sup> he upholds this view throughout his interpretation of verses that dwell on unbelief, transgression and infidelity. In his commentary on the prohibition of usury (Q2: 276) for instance, he explains that any Muslim who permits usurious transactions and rejects his unlawfulness is an unbeliever, transgressor and infidel because to reject a part of Islam is tantamount to rejecting it in its entirety.<sup>72</sup> The above view of Qutb on the *takfir* (Unbelief or infidelity of a Muslim) is in line with the views of classical scholars. Ibn Kathir writes that leaving the rule of Allah because of the belief that it is not obligatory makes a person an unbeliever.<sup>73</sup> This is the opinion of Ibn Mas'ud when he refers to Q5: 44 to substantiate that it is unlawful not to judge with what Allah has revealed and that it is unbelief which entails both big or small.<sup>74</sup>

Qutb also reflects upon the conditions of women in the Egyptian society where they were oppressed, maltreated and dominated upon. They generally lacked education, training and marital security and could be disposed off at the whims and caprices of their husbands. It was against this background that Qutb, like the Muslim Brotherhood addressed the feminist questions in Islam and demonstrates that Islam had granted Muslim women total freedom from oppression and domination.<sup>75</sup> In his commentary, Qutb explains the Islamic concept of marriage as well as the philosophy behind its principles of family formation, maintenance, sexuality polygamy and inheritance etc. He discusses how these principles address the rights and welfare of Muslim women. For instance, he argues that Islamic law on forming the family through the conduct of a public marriage between a man and a woman leads to a high degree of security for women and children as well as increased sense of responsibilities for men. Another aspect of Islamic marriage, polygamy is also discussed by Qutb while commenting on the verse of multiple marriages in Islam (Q3:4). The verse, according to him, not only limits the number of wives a man can marry to four, it also emphasizes the obligatory fulfillment of justice by a man in respect of the provision of his wives' economic, medical and sexual needs.<sup>76</sup>

He also employs a rational juristic understanding based on the traditional methodological approach in Qur'anic exegesis, *al-tafsir bi al-ma'thur* and delineates all legal rulings pertaining to the rights of

a widow to both inheritance and bequest in her marital residence for one year. By opposing the general notion of *naskh wa'l-mansukh* (theory of abrogation and the abrogated), he restores to Muslim women, their divine right to bequest. Therefore rather than rejecting absolutely the use of philosophy in the interpretation of the Qur'an, he only advocates making revelation the basis of Islamic outlook, exegesis and the application of reasoning and rationality.<sup>77</sup>

## VII. CONCLUSION

This paper has analyzed the Islamic personality and activism of a Muslim reformer who believes in, and holds tenaciously, to the Islamic teachings. He, therefore, does not fit into the same descriptive role of 'Islamic terrorists' with people like Osama Bin Laden. The Qutbian texts examined in this article constitutes part of his social, political Islamic struggles against the oppression of the Egyptian people in 20<sup>th</sup> century Egypt. Through his writings, this paper has recorded that Qutb, like the Muslim Brotherhood is first and foremost involved in improving the family, social and political conditions of Egyptians, including the conditions of Muslim women through their Islamism as today confirmed by the Egyptian struggle which has culminated over the years in a popular revolution that defeated tyranny as symbolized by the fall of Husni Mubarak's despotic government on February 11, 2011. This movement which has demonstrated that the use of force should not constitute a corner stone of the Islamic movement and a barrier to the western acceptance of its activism, and Islamic change, is today reverberating throughout the Muslim world today and arguably it is reflected in the recent developments all over the Arab World.

<sup>71</sup> M. A. Salahi (Trans), *In the Shade of the Qur'an* (London: MWH London Publishers, 1979), ix.

<sup>72</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal*, Vol.1, 328.

<sup>73</sup> Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Adhim* vol2. 67.

<sup>74</sup> Muhammad Ibn Jarir *al-Tabari, Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil al-Qur'an* (Egypt: Dar al-Ma'rif, n.d.), vol. 10, 357.

<sup>75</sup> W. S. Blackman, *The Fellahin of Upper Egypt* (London: Thomas Nelson Printers Limited, 1968), 34-36.

<sup>76</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal*, vol. 2, 579 and 633.

<sup>77</sup> Qutb *Al'Adalah al-Ijtima'iyah*, 24.