

Qur'anic Emphasis on Knowledge and Civilization in Developing Moderate Muslims Personalities

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Abstract: A knowledgeable society is not merely a society promoting skills in commerce, economics and administration, but also in understanding God, His doctrines and rules in human life. Knowledge comprises Divine and Prophetic Wisdom as the ultimate guidance, followed by the knowledge from human experience and the intellect; supported by evidence from the human senses and wisdom. Besides, civilization contains characteristics of self-confidence, progressive spirit, and peaceful co-existence with others, as it aims at the betterment of the social conditions of the Muslim *ummah*. The glorification of the Islamic civilization of the past as perceived by some contemporary Muslims through rhetorical speeches is not enough without practical implication of the principles applied by Muslims predecessors; such as mastery of knowledge and cultural development as well as moral integrity. Therefore, civilization could be regarded as a complete and comprehensive portrayal of Islamic teachings with an emphasis on the development of economics and advancement among contemporary Muslims. This paper therefore, is an attempt to highlight the notion on Qur'anic

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emphasis on knowledge and civilization in developing moderate Muslims personalities by employing analytical approach on such issues.

Key words: Qur'anic, Knowledge, Civilization, Moderate and Development

Introduction

The notion of moderation has been seen as a response to the contemporary challenges of the Muslim *ummah* both in their spiritual and worldly life. After the fall of the Ottoman caliphate, Muslim societies had lost their leadership position in world affairs. They are frequently labelled as backward or underdeveloped. Such conditions were perceived to be caused by disunity and lack of political, cultural and social stability. To remedy the situation, Muslim scholars and socio-political leaders have made various attempts to revive Muslims mind, in order to regain the leadership position of the Muslim *ummah*. Many religious, political and social approaches have been applied to reawaken the Muslim mind; particularly in reminding them to correctly apply the concept of *wasatiyyah* (moderation). Moderation entails development, consistent with the tenets of Islam, and focused on enhancing the quality of life. In order to shape such balanced personality, mastery of knowledge as well as civilization are two essential qualities to be adhered. These two qualities are being frequently prescribed in the Qur'an. This paper, therefore, is to highlight the two principles, and their significance in developing moderate Muslim personalities; known as *ummatan wasata* as enshrined in Allah's revelation in surah al-Baqarah; 2:143.

Knowledge: A Conceptual Analysis

Knowledge¹ is expressed in the Qur'an as both, *ilm* and *ma'rifah*, i.e., science and knowledge. In their general usage, the two terms are synonymous and have overlapping connotations, such as: to know reality of certain things, state or fact of knowing, awareness or understanding gained through experience and / or study. However, in their technical implications there are some subtle differences between them; while the term *ma'rifah* indicates knowledge about remnants of certain things without knowing its essence. *Ilm*, on the other hand, contains knowledge of the substance as well as the remnants; therefore, conceptually *ilm* is wider than *ma'rifah*.² The other difference is that,

¹ Synonyms of the word *Ilm* include; knowledge, information, learning, erudition, lore, scholarship. Knowledge is the broadest. "Science is organized knowledge." Information often implies a collection of facts and data: "A man's judgment cannot be better than the information on which he has based it. Learning usually refers to knowledge gained by schooling and studying: "Learning ... must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence". *Erudition* implies profound, often specialized knowledge: "Some have criticized his poetry as elitist, unnecessarily impervious to readers who do not share his erudition". *Lore* is usually applied to knowledge gained through tradition or anecdote about a particular subject: "*Many American folktales concern the lore of frontier life*". Scholarship is the mastery of a particular area of learning reflected in a scholar's work.

See: *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, (2000). Fourth Edition, by Houghton Mifflin Company.

² Al-Raghib al-Asfahani, (n.d.), *al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an*: Bierut, Lebanon. Al-Asfahani further explains the term by giving certain examples as he says, "When somebody wants to say that someone knows

ma'rifah proceeds from ignorance to knowledge while this condition is not necessary with *ilm*. Hence, *ilm* is applicable to God while *ma'rifah* is not.¹

Subsequently, *ilm* has a much wider connotation than *ma'rifah* which falls short of expressing all the aspects of *ilm*. *Ma'rifah* might always denote information about something, while *ilm* is an all-embracing term covering theory, action and education. Though these subtle differences exist between these two terms, the general implication remains the same, which is a "group of issues and common principles about a certain branch of knowledge, such as sciences of theology, sciences of cosmology and medicine, etc". Both *ilm* and *ma'rifah* indicate the "state or fact of knowing, familiarity, awareness, or understanding gained through experience or study. It is the sum or range of

God, he should use the word *ma'rifah* instead of *ilm*, for instance instead of saying: *فلان يعلم الله* he should say, *فلان يعرف الله*.

¹ Tahawuni defines the term *ma'rifah* as "to comprehend certain thing with the use of senses, absolute knowledge whether it pertains to conception or confirmation, and lastly as comprehending the simple matter whether it pertains to the concept of essence (*tasawwur al-mahiyyah*) and to confirm its conditions. (al-Tahanawi, Muhammad Ali (1996). *Mawsu'at Kashaf Istilahat al-Funun wa al-Ulum*: Beirut, Maktabat Lebanon Nashirun, 1st ed.

Also, in his book *al-Tarif*, al-Jurjani defines the terms *ilm* and *ma'rifah* as "to comprehend something as it appears and to know something with the use of *al-ma'rifah* is proceeding from ignorance to awareness and knowledge." (al-Jurjani, Ali b. Muhammad b. Ali, *Kitab at-Ta'rifat*: Beirut, Dar al-Rayan li al-Turath.)

what has been perceived, discovered, or learned, or specific information about something.”¹

Scope of Knowledge and its Importance in the Qur'an:

In contrast with modern Western theories of knowledge that confine knowledge to either experimental or intuitive methods while denying revelation as a source of knowledge, Qur'anic method of knowledge has been inclusive and all encompassing. The Qur'an considers *aql* (intellect), *hawas* (senses) and *wahy* (revelation) as the main sources of human knowledge, as each of these three elements has its own criteria and field. *Ilm* or *ma'rifah* covers all kinds of knowledge regardless of its source and nature, i.e., from *aql* or revelation, or whether it is comprehensive or partial knowledge. The Qur'anic concept of knowledge is not restricted to certain aspects of the cosmos or human life; rather it covers the whole aspects of the cosmos. The coverage of Qur'an encompasses issues on cosmological or natural sciences, human sciences and religious knowledge as well as aspects of life. The theory of knowledge in the Islamic perspective is not just a theory of epistemology; rather, it covers a wide spectrum of fields of knowledge, such as knowledge of divinity, nature, math, logical and other parts of human knowledge. Theory of knowledge in Islam does not distinguish between 'holy and profane', and 'secular and religious'. It regards learning as a form of worship. Education, therefore, is a religious duty commanded by God and regarded by Him as fulfillment of His Will, of the purpose of creation.

¹ Al-Raghib al-Asfahani, p.290-291.

With regard to the source, aim and nature of knowledge, the Qur'an insists that knowledge is from God, to God and for God. Consequently, it is noticeably demonstrated in these verses that, 'science' and 'religion' are not meant to be fundamentally incompatible with each other, rather, complementary to each other. This might seem true, as the distinction between 'science' and 'religion' has no theological grounds in the Muslims' mind. The Qur'an does not recognize any contradiction between knowledge and religion, as knowledge and religion are inseparable entities.

The Qur'an sees knowledge as an essential tool of guiding mankind into the right path, to know the unity of God and His sovereignty, and to live properly in this universe. Allah says in the Qur'an:

Know, therefore, that there is no God but Allah, and ask forgiveness for thy fault, and for the men and women who believe: for Allah knows how ye move about and how ye dwell in your homes.¹

Knowledge should be acquired, stored and pursued without segregating it into profane and religious. Imam al-Ghazali affirms that Islam evaluates religious teachings in jeopardy if they are not substantiated with deep knowledge of the natural sciences:

"In fact the religious order can only be achieved through worldly order. The

¹ Muhammad; 47: 19.

religious order is done through the knowledge and devotion, and this cannot be achieved unless through the physical fitness, sustaining life, purchasing power which suffices people to fulfill the housing, dressing, food, and security. The religion cannot be put into order unless through fulfillment the security and the basic needs.”¹

There is no doubt over the necessity of *amal* (action) since it is overwhelmingly emphasized in the Qur'an. However, knowledge is placed before action; where knowledge comes before action. Allah s.w.t commanded his Prophet s.a.w. to know before pronouncing even the words of *tawhid* (maintaining the unity of God) or *iman* (faith).

In another verse of the Qur'an, it is affirmed that the possessors ²of knowledge will be placed in a higher position and rank above others.

O ye who believe! When ye are told to make room in the assemblies, (spread out and) make room: (ample) room will Allah provide for you. And when ye are told to rise up, rise up Allah will rise up, to (suitable) ranks (and degrees), those of you who believe and who

¹ Abu Hamid al-Ghazali. (1980). *Ihya Ulum al-Din*: Beirut, Dar al-Fikr, vol.1, p.17-19.

² Allah reveals the word “Iqra’”: as the first revealed word to His Prophet to show the importance of seeking knowledge prior to all other commandments. Refer to Surah al-‘Alaq; 96: 1.

have been granted (mystic) Knowledge. And Allah is well- acquainted with all ye do.¹

Besides, the Qur'an indicates that those who possess knowledge are being honored to those who do not:

Is one who worships devoutly during the hour of the night prostrating himself or standing (in adoration), who takes heed of the Hereafter, and who places his hope in the Mercy of his Lord - (like one who does not)? Say: "Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition."²

There are also numerous verses in which the Qur'an affirms that an individual or nation who do not respectively possess knowledge and scholars will live in illusion and sink in darkness.

But those who were blind in this world, will be blind in the hereafter, and most astray from the Path.³

The Qur'an as Ultimate Source of Knowledge

One of the most important central themes of the Qur'an is knowledge. Seventy percent of the Qur'anic verses draw attention to the importance of seeking knowledge. *Ilm* is not

¹ Al-Mujadalah; 58: 11.

² Al-Zumar; 39: 9.

³ Al-Isra; 17: 72.

only viewed as a rewarding building block in the Qur'an, but also as a highly valued noble ingredient of human life that has an everlasting result.¹ Numerous verses in the Qur'an call for quest of knowledge while praising those who possess knowledge by elevating them in a higher position above all. Allah says in the Qur'an:

Say: Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endued with understanding that remember Allah's Message".² And "... Allah will raise up to (suitable) ranks (and degrees) those of you who believe and who have been granted knowledge."³

While covering on knowledge and its pursuance, the Qur'an also discusses the tools of acquiring knowledge. Momentous attention is drawn towards the fundamental tools and procedures of knowledge acquisition.

It is interesting that Allah chooses to begin His revelation with something related to the tools and procedures of knowledge acquisition such as reading, pen, writing, teaching and knowledge storage. The first five verses of revelation to the Prophet s.a.w. contain learning techniques such as the ability to write and store information, writing and

¹ The Prophet said: "When the son of Adam dies, the recording of his deeds stop, except for three virtues. (they are): continuing charity, some useful knowledge, and the prayers of righteous child." (Imam Muslim, Sahih, vol.2, p.1255.

² Al-Zumar; 39: 9.

³ Al-Mujadalah; 58: 11.

reading, while the origin of knowledge was underlined.¹ It is a self-explaining fact that, although the level of sophistication of these tools in the process of learning may differ from one generation to another, these tools comprise commonly shared substantial rudiments of conveying knowledge and information to the human mind. Reading is a process of mental interpretation; written symbols is an essential factor in educational progress, and instrumental skill for procuring data from the environment to the human mind.

Physiological and psychological studies suggest that the process of reading is based on a succession of quick eye movements, known as fixations, across the written line, each of which lasts for about a quarter of a second. In each fixation more than one word is perceived and interpreted, so that a skilled reader may take in more than three words per fixation when reading easy material.²

¹ Allah says in the Qur'an: "Read! In the name of your Lord who created - Created the human from something which clings. Read! And your Lord is Most Bountiful - He who taught (the use of) the Pen, Taught the human that which he knew not." (96:1-5)

² See G. Hildreth, *Teaching Reading* (1958); I. A. Richards, *How to Read a Page* (1959); G. Cuomo, *Becoming a Better Reader* (1960); H. Diack, *Reading and the Psychology of Perception* (1960); J. S. Chall, *Learning to Read: The Great Debate* (1967); M. Cox, *The Challenge of Reading Failure* (1968); M. J. Adler and C. Van Doren, *How to Read a Book* (rev. ed. 1972); M. C. Robeck and J. A. R. Wilson, *Psychology of Reading* (1974).

Regardless of the various divergences among scholars on the nature of 'reading', it is interesting to note that Allah s.w.t has chosen the term 'read' to be the first word of His revelation to the human being. Perhaps for many reasons known to Allah s.w.t, one of them might be, to draw our attention to the importance of 'reading' as an imperative skill for knowledge input. Another vital educational instrument mentioned in these verses is *qalam*; i.e., pen. The function of 'pen' in the educational process is obvious, especially, in the knowledge output. Reading might help the person in the knowledge storage stage. However, reading is not the end of the learning process simply because as the human character is both reactive and proactive, people like to give feedback, responsively, through writing which is conceivably:

The greatest of human inventions, binding together people, citizens of distant epochs, who never knew one another. Books break the shackles of time, proof that humans can work magic.¹

'Teaching' as an act, process, or art of imparting knowledge and skill through effort and endeavor is impressively emphasized in these verses. As no human being is born a knowledgeable person, the Qur'an explicitly states that Allah is the One Who teaches and gives the ability of learning to mankind.

¹ Carl Sagan, (2000). *Cosmos*: New York, Cambridge University Press, p.123.

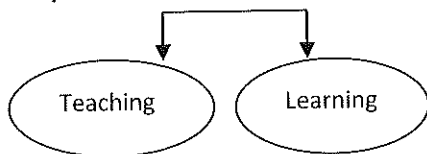
Finally, from these verses we might observe a clear indication of another crucial educational instrument which is the 'cognitive mind',¹ the internal mental processes such as memory, problem solving, and language, etc. In these verses the Prophet s.a.w was commanded to read, "Read in the name of your Lord" but there was nothing to read, neither written material nor other object in front of him. Besides this, it was well known that the Prophet s.a.w was *al-Ummi*; i.e., an unlettered person who cannot read or write. Here, it is understood that the Qur'an was signaling to the importance of mental capacity as a storage of learned information as well as to recall what has been stored.

The first Qur'anic verse (*Iqra* or Read) contains the main educational devices as follows:²

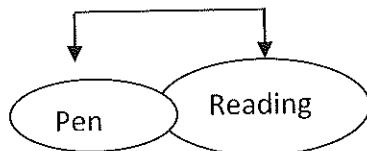
¹ Cognitive psychologists are interested in how people understand, diagnose, and solve problems, concerning themselves with the mental processes which mediate between stimulus and response. Cognitive theory contends that solutions to problems take the form of algorithms—rules that are not necessarily understood but promise a solution, or heuristics—rules that are understood but that do not always guarantee solutions. In other instances, solutions may be found through insight, a sudden awareness of relationships. A. J. Sanford, (1986) *Cognition and Cognitive Psychology*, H. L. Pick, P. Van den Broek, and D. C. Knill, ed., (1992). *Cognition: Conceptual and Methodological Issues*.

² Proclaim! (or read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created. Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful. He Who taught (the use of) the pen. Taught man that which he knew not. (al-Alaq; 96:1-5)

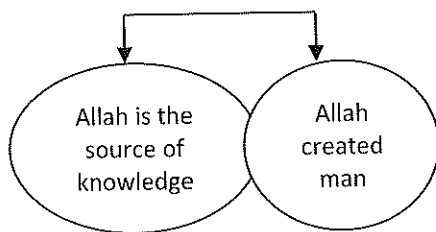
**1. Process of Learning
comprehension; input and output**



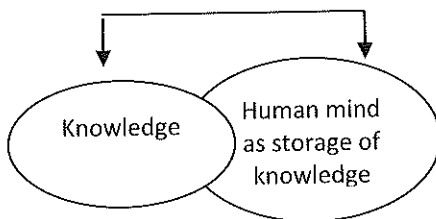
2. Tools of



**3. Source of knowledge and the nature of man
of learning and saving storage**



4. Fruits



Civilization: A Conceptual Analysis

Civilization derived from an Arabic word *hadara*, which literally means to be present, to be ready, to take part or to participate in a meeting, etc. In its adjective form *hadari* means 'civilized person', while its noun '*hadara*' means 'to be settled', 'sedentary in civilized region', as opposed to nomadic existence.¹

In order to characterize someone as '*hadari*' is through designating his or her presence in the current situation. Therefore, a civilized person is a person who is living in the present time; fully aware and conscious of what is taking place at that moment and place. Therefore, Islamic civilization denotes an advanced state of intellectual, cultural and material development in Muslim societies, marked by progress in the arts and sciences, based on the Islamic teachings and principles, where Muslims are aware of their affairs and able to manage them, according to their common interests. Hence, it is an approach that emphasizes development, consistent with the tenets of Islam and focused on enhancing the quality of life.² This condition is paralleled to the Qur'anic injunction enshrined in Surah Hud; 11: 61

And to Thamud [We sent] their brother Salih. He said, "O my people, worship Allah ; you have no deity other than Him. He has produced you from the earth and settled you in it, so ask forgiveness of Him and then repent to Him. Indeed, my Lord is near and responsive."

¹ Hans Wehr, (1974). Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, 3rd ed, Macdonald & Evans Ltd. London, U.K. p. 183.

² Ibid, p.3.

This type of culture and civilization are deeply rooted in the pure fundamental origins of the Islamic teachings for both social and scientific developments. *Hadarah* contains characteristics of self-confidence, progressive spirit, and peaceful co-existence with others, as it aims at the betterment of the social conditions of the Muslim *ummah*.

The best illustration of Muslims' portrayal of Islamic civilization is no doubt being upheld by those in Madinah during the time of Rasulullah s.a.w, this is due to the fact that Muslims therein implemented the Wills of Allah in collective manner; though by such implementation might be against their own wills and customs. Those people collective submission to adhere to Allah's prohibitions in drinking liquor¹ and burying their daughters alive² are among the vivid evidences on their high achievement of civilization.³

¹ See the Qur'an in Surah al-Ma'idah; 5: 90-91. Prior to their conversion to Islam, the Arabs were engrossed in drinking liquor till they were accustomed to do so. The verse on wine ultimate prohibition was only revealed after two stages of partial prohibitions; which could be sought in Surah al-Baqarah; 2: 219 and Surah an-Nisa'; 4: 43 respectively.

² It was also customary among Arabs to indulge in a crime of burying their daughters alive out of shame. Islam really abhors this custom as being recorded in Surah al-Takwir; 81: 8-9.

³ See the exposition written by Syed Naquib al-Attas in *Prolegomena to the Methaphysics of Islam*. In his writing, al-Attas tried to justify the resemblance of the term *Madinah* and *Tamaddun* from the derivation of the term *dana*.

He expressed that the Madinan society during Rasulullah's time successfully achieved the highest peak of civilization (*tamaddun*); the

Significance of Knowledge and Civilization in Developing Moderate Muslims Personalities

There is no doubt that mastery of knowledge, its correct application¹, and cultural development are crucial in order to develop excellent personalities; i.e., the moderate ones. In fact, Allah s.w.t. Himself regards those Muslims who manage to put all aspects in equilibrium as *ummatun wasat*; best translated as 'justly balanced/ well balanced nation.'² The preceding two therefore, are essential prerequisites to

synonym of *hadarah* due to their absolute obedience and submissiveness to implement all injunctions of Allah.

¹ Note that correct application of knowledge is crucial to ensure the development of balanced moderate personalities. Some previous civilizations had been destroyed due to the misuse of knowledge. Those civilizations, in fact, committed imbalance and chaos since the emphasis was merely on material gain while abandoning the spiritual fulfillment. For instance, Allah reveals in Surah al-Qasas; 28: 38, "Fir'aun said: "O chiefs! I not know that you have an *Ilah* (a god) other than me, so kindle for me (a fire), O Haman, to bake bricks out of clay, and set up for me a *Sarhan* (a lofty tower, or palace, etc.) in order that I may look at the Ilah of Musa; and verily, I think that Musa is one of the liars."

This verse portrays the misuse of knowledge occurred during Fir'aun's time. Though the people were knowledgeable and skillful in the field of architecture, yet the knowledge did not motivate them to become just and balanced. Nevertheless, the knowledge had been misused and corrupted.

² In Surah al-Baqarah; 2: 143, Allah vividly affirms upon Muslims as *ummatun wasat* through his sayings; 'Thus We have made you [true Muslims-real believers of Islamic Monotheism, true followers of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. and his Sunnah (legal ways), a Wasat (just) (and the best) nation, that you be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger be a witness over you...'

develop and boost such excellent Muslims personalities with the implication that:

Glorious heritage of Islamic civilization in all aspects must be used as reference and become the source of inspiration for society to prosper. The *ummah* must be a society that embraces knowledge, skills and expertise in order to build capacity. Islam makes it compulsory for Muslims to embrace knowledge in all fields. The misconception that there exists a difference between so-called secular knowledge and religious knowledge must be corrected. Islam demands the mastery of sciences and technology and the enhancement of skills and expertise. Many verses in the Qur'an, that touch on the need to master science and technology should be studied.¹

It is true that Muslims in the past were able to balance their civilization progress while preserving and strengthening their spiritual fulfillment. However, it is worthless to praise their action without applying their ideas and principles to practical life. In order to develop moderate Muslims personalities, there is a dire necessity to possess the mastery of knowledge and the development of the individuals and the nation; the implementation of a dynamic economic, trading and financial system; an integrated and balanced development that creates a knowledge and pious people who

¹ <http://www.islam.gov.my/portal/>

hold to noble values and are honest, trustworthy, and prepared to take on global challenges”.¹

In this contemporary life, Muslim societies are frequently perceived as backward or underdeveloped in various parts of life, i.e., economically, politically, technological and social infrastructures, where they become consumers of ideas and commodities of other societies. Only through mastery of knowledge and strong foundation of civilization as enshrined in the Qur'an, Muslims are able to become producers, sellers, and donors instead of indulging themselves as merely consumers, buyers, beggars, etc. Hence, Muslims manage to balance and excel in both spiritual and material pursuits. Muslim societies should be competitive with other world communities in all fields of knowledge and science. Though this concept targets a variety of issues; freedom, human rights and quality of life being among them, much emphasis however, is given to the enhancement and strengthening of the educational positions of the Muslim *ummah*. Illiteracy should be eradicated; knowledge-based lifestyle should be encouraged in all levels of the society, as knowledge is not only a societal demand but religious as well. Knowledge is for all and everyone in the society.² In short, it is pertinent to emphasize that:

The engagement in the study of knowledge
by seeking it or teaching is the most

¹ Ibid.

² Islam made acquiring knowledge an obligation upon every Muslim, as the Prophet of Islam s.a.w. asked his followers to seek knowledge even in far distances. The Prophet said, “Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim” (Ibn Majah, Sunan, v.1, p.81.)

meritorious pursuit. Knowledge is sought not only for its intellectual and material benefits but also for the sake of Allah whose pleasure we should always aspire to earn.¹

In addition, mobilizing scientific and technological achievements throughout the social institutions are also indispensable steps to achieve such aim. Indeed, mobilizing science and technology ² in all levels of society (where knowledge will be accessible to everybody in the society) is the only way to achieve a 'knowledgeable society'. Muslims therefore, should prepare themselves to perform their task by applying available tools in the new information and communication technology to maintain economic growth and cultural enhancement.

They should master the secrets of the trade in the new technology so that they are not duped. There is no doubt that a person who knows the language of another people would not be fooled by others. The knowledge of the tongue of a people does not merely mean language of communication in the ordinary sense, but ...even the most up-to-date

¹ Abd. Rauf, Muhammad (1991). The Muslim Mind Foundation and Early Manifestation, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, K.L, Malaysia, p.24.

² There can be no little doubt that science and the technology that stems from knowledge have brought a higher standard of living to people in advanced countries, just as it has enabled developing countries to subsist and flourish. It is the prospect of rising living standards that makes the acquisition of new scientific knowledge so attractive.

technical and scientific language and philosophy, so that we are not duped in any way.¹

It is indispensable to note that political supremacy, economic and civilization progress, as to develop Muslims to cultivate moderate personalities are closely related to knowledge and science in the Qur'an. Knowledge and science will not only play vital roles in transforming the nation into developed and self-depending in economics and technology, but also into cultural supremacy both at the personal and societal levels,

In regard to the necessity of knowledge for civilization progress and eventually to prepare moderate Muslims personalities, the Qur'an narrates story of Prophet Dawud and his son Sulayman, who had established a powerful state in the holy land of Jerusalem, whereby Allah (s.w.t) had bestowed everything on them for their state consisted of various Jinn, men and birds, and they were all kept in order and ranks.

And before Solomon were marshaled his hosts- of Jinn and men and birds, and they were all kept in order and ranks. At length, when they came to a (lowly) valley of ants, one of the ants said: "O ye ants, get into your habitations, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you (under foot) without knowing it." So he smiled, amused at her speech; and he said: "O my Lord! So order me that I may be grateful

¹ Muhammad Uthman El-Muhammady, p.24.

for Thy favors, which thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may work the righteousness that will please Thee: And admit me, by Thy Grace, to the ranks of Thy righteous Servants.¹

In addition, the reason behind their success as stated by the Qur'an was due to the knowledge bestowed to both Dawud and Sulayman:

We gave (in the past) knowledge to David and Solomon: And they both said: "Praise be to Allah, Who has favored us above many of his servants who believe!"²

In another chapter, the Qur'an narrates the story of Dhu al-Qarnayn, whom Allah established power on earth, and gave him the ways and means of life. In one of his travels on earth, he went to the people who were threatened by Gog and Magog and were desperately in need of help. They helplessly cried to Dhu al-Qarnayn for protection before catastrophic and mischievous conditions spread on their lands by the powerful and illimitable Gog and Magog. Dhu al-Qarnayn, because of his dependence on God, and his ingenuity in engineering technology and architectural designs, told them it was possible to stop such catastrophic incident to happen. He then started designing and laying out his work plan, asking them to provide the necessary equipments and tools to build a barrier between Gog and Magog and their lands.

¹ Al-Naml; 27: 17-20.

² Al-Naml; 27: 15.

He gathered blocks of iron and when he had filled up the space between the two steep mountain-sides, he told those people to blow their bellows and when he had made it red as fire he poured over it molten lead. Through the engineering and architectural provisions, Dhu al-Qarnayn was able to make Gog and Magog powerless and unable to cause destruction and mischievous damages.

Until, when he came to the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had provided no covering protection against the sun. (He left them) as they were: We completely understood what was before him. Then followed he (another) way, until, when he reached (a tract) between two mountains, he found, beneath them, a people who scarcely understood a word. They said: "O Zul-Qarnayn! The Gog and Magog (People) do great mischief on earth: shall we then render thee tribute in order that thou mightiest erect a barrier between us and them? He said: "(The power) in which my Lord has established me is better (than tribute): Help me therefore with strength (and labour): I will erect a strong barrier between you and them: "Bring me blocks of iron." At length, when he had filled up the space between the two steep mountain-sides, He said, "Blow (with your bellows)" Then, when he had made it (red) as fire, he said: "Bring me that I may pour over it, molten lead." Thus were they made powerless to scale it or to dig

through it He said: "This is a mercy from my Lord: But when the promise of my Lord comes to pass, He will make it into dust; and the promise of my Lord is true.¹

Meanwhile, transmission and distribution of knowledge through acquiring and learning processes are essential for such society to make effective use of it. Hence 'knowledgeable society' equals collective intelligence and capacity to build collectively a civilized and manageable culture. This achievement is essential to develop attitudes of moderate people who manage to maintain peace and eventually promote justice on the earth. Thus, transgression of excessiveness and deficiency could be avoided.

Mastery of knowledge as a collective intelligence has enormous impact on social stability and economic well-being of the nation. It is a self-explaining fact that the diffusion of knowledge will in fact narrow the gap between the social quarters. Likewise, society should be informed of the new patterns of contemporary lifestyle and future challenges of life in the technological oriented way of life as to ensure stability and balanced outcome.

The above expositions justify that 'mastery of knowledge' is a backbone factor for the civilization progress and future cultural enhancement efforts, which ultimately producing moderate society. Without mastery of knowledge, society will not be able to, intensively and properly, utilize and

¹ Al-Kahf, 18: 90-98.

benefit from the modern information and communication technology, while the current attempts of greater social integrations and cultural enhancements will be superficial. Mastery of knowledge is the only guarantor for progressive civilization attitudes such as openness, interaction, assimilation, absorption, revision, and examination, which will prompt creative culture and way of life. Mastery of knowledge is an essential building block for generating:

The attitude of society characterized by being descriptive and perspective, with readiness for positive change and involving analysis of the current state of education, scientific research, the media, the publishing industry, culture encompassing religion, intellectual heritage.¹

Mastery of knowledge is extremely necessary especially in the construction of a viable and progressive society, which in turn requires effective economic, social, and political institutions to overcome the chaotic circumstances and challenging epochs. In addition, by mastering knowledge, people would become actively involved in the process of cultural reproduction, dissemination, and technological regeneration of progressive lifestyle. This will eventually motivates and boosts the formation of well-balanced personalities in all aspects; be in spiritual and material

¹ Muhammad Uthman El-Muhammady, p.23.

fulfillment¹, individuals and collective levels² and other instances’.

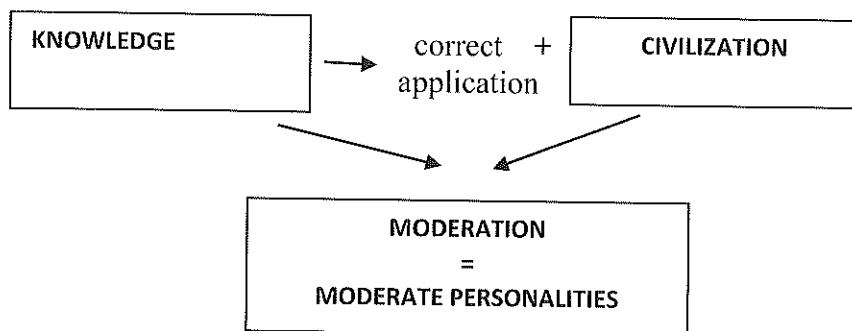
Final Remarks

Since the concept of moderation denotes well balanced aspects of intellectual, cultural, and material development in Muslim societies, marked by progress in the arts and sciences, based on Islamic teachings and principles, knowledge and civilization progress emerge as the indispensable elements in such condition. Without authentic knowledge, the implications of *wasatiyyah* (moderation)

¹ Allah s.w.t. Himself guides men to maintain equilibrium, for instance, in the aspect of spiritual and worldly needs. Few Qur’anic verses manifest this aspect of *wasatiyyah* (moderation). In Surah al-Qasas; 28: 77, Allah says: *‘But seek, with that (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on you, the home of the Hereafter, and forget not your portion of legal enjoyment in this world, and do good as Allah has been good to you, and seek not mischief in the land. Verily, Allah likes not the Mufsidun (those who commit great crimes and sins, oppressors, tyrants, mischief-makers, corrupts).’* The verse in Surah al-Jumu’ah; 62: 9-10 is another best illustration on the method to maintain balance in worship taught to Muslims.

² Islam preserves the perfect system that considers both sides in human (individuality and collectivity), so that, no side takes over on the account of the other. For instance, Islam admits the sanctity of wealth, as it conserves the individuals’ rights to possess and their wealth should not be taken from them against their will. At the same time, Islam teaches its adherents to be responsible towards society in the matters of wealth possession, and further reminds an individuals that the possession is not absolute since every single possession is bestowed by Allah. Hence, Allah commands Muslims to give *Zakah* as stated in Surah al-Dhariyat; 51: 19, *‘And in their properties there was the right of the beggar, and the Mahrum (the poor who does not ask the others).’*

might not be thorough and even doubtful. Knowledge as a collective intelligence of the human race has an enormous impact on social stability and economic well-being of the human life, hence, it should be given precedence. It is a striking reality that without proper appendage of necessary knowledge, skills, values and awareness the attainments of the targets set could not be possible. On the other hand, the Qur'an sturdily accentuates the inevitability of *ilm* and *hadarah* in human life and eventually to strike *wasatiyyah* (moderation).



Therefore, according to Qur'anic verses, there could be neither civilization progress nor moderate personalities without mastery and correct application of knowledge. The Qur'an also records some instances of previous nations who were civilized and prosperous. Nevertheless, they had been destroyed and annihilated due to their transgressions and mischiefs. Their transgression and mischiefs undoubtedly led to imbalance and immoderate attitude. Allah says in Surah al-Fajr; 89: 6-13

“Did you (O Muhammad) not see (thought) how your Lord dealt with ‘Ad (people)? Who were very tall like lofty pillars, the like of which were not created in the land? And (with) Thamud (people), who cut (hewed) out rocks in the valley (to make dwellings)? And (with) Fir’aun who had pegs (who used to torture men by binding them to pegs)? Who did transgress beyond bounds in the lands (in the disobedience of Allah). And made therein much mischief. So your Lord poured on them different kinds of severe torment.”

The above verses vividly portray on the failure of those people of ‘Ad, Thamud, and even Fir’aun to apply their knowledge in an authentic manner. Though those people possessed knowledge and skills in the field of architecture, engineering and even mathematics; in which they managed to build their own civilization, yet they caused imbalance and immoderation due to their misuse of knowledge, and eventually led to Allah’s wrath and torment against them.

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