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Concept of Islamic Leadership in Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas's Philosophy

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Abstract

Islamic leadership is defined as a divine trust (amanah) from Allah, based on the Tauhidic paradigm of oneness of Allah that is focusing on serving HIM as HIS servant, while at the same time be the servant of Allah, perform the role of Khalefah (vicegerent) of Allah fully adheres to the Sunnah central to Islamic personality, characteristics and aklaq (Islamic moral and ethical) that was exemplified by the prophet (s.a.w), leading followers to the organization goals and to the straight path of the success in the Hereafter. It is based on this adopted definition that the paper tries to investigate the notion from perspective of a Malaysian Muslim Philosopher to the core, Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, who believes in delivering amanah given to him, and at the same time perform the role of vicegerent of Allah. He suggests that lack of good leaders or rise of unqualified and false ones is one of the major problems of Ummah. Content analysis approach is engaged on both primary and secondary data collected. That is to say, it is qualitative research in nature. The finding shows that the basis of Al-Attas's concept of leadership is entrenched in Al-Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) in addition to his deep understanding on the Islamic Sciences such as Islamic theology, philosophy, and metaphysics and so on.

Keywords: Al-Attas, leadership, philosophy, Islamic worldview.

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Introduction

Leadership is one of the contemporary concepts that the researchers venture into nowadays, whether in relation to Islamic worldview or from western point of view. Leadership is very important in any spectrum of life. The concept in general is given an attention in Islamic worldview. It is backed with many injunctions from the al-Qur'an and Hadith. Many classical scholars such as Al-Mawardi (972–1058), Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), Ibn Taimiyah,(1236-1328) Ibn khaldun (1332-1406) and so on have engaged themselves with the concept in various degree likewise many contemporary researchers, such as al-Attas himself, Rafik Bekun, Jamal Badawi, Ismail Noor, Hisham Altalib, Murad Khurram, Khaliq Ahmad and host of others.

Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas is a contemporary Malaysian Philosopher, who wholeheartedly believes the good Muslim must perform his/her responsibility towards him/herself, to the family and the society at large. He argues that things must be placed in their proper place. Contrary to this is what is imbued in larger meaning of his concept "Loss of Adab". Al-Attas generally believes that leadership is *amanah* given to humankind which will be accountable for on the Day of Judgment.

In other to achieve the objective of the paper which is to study the concept of leadership form Al-Attas point of view, the paper utilizes qualitative methodology whereby content analysis approach is engaged on both primary and secondary data. The former is deep rooted in Al-Qur'an and Hadith as main sources of Islamic scholarship, while the latter is essentially concentrated on Al-Attas publications in particular and other related literature in general.

The finding depicts that the basis of Al-Attas's concept of Islamic leadership is deep-rooted in Al-Qur'an and *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) coupled with his deep understanding on the Islamic Sciences such as Islamic theology, Sufism, philosophy, and metaphysics and related disciplines.

After the introduction, the paper sheds light on the history of the erudite scholar, his birth, education, and general life. It then discusses the leadership in Islam in general. This is followed by the notion of Al-Attas as a subject matter, that is to say, concept of leadership in his philosophy in detail. The paper is concluded by the summary and conclusion.

Who is Naquib Al-Attas?

Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, was born on 5th September 1931 in Bogor, Java. His father was Ali bin Abdullah bin Muhsin Al-Attas. His ancestral family could be traced back to the notable Ba'Alawi Sayyids of Hadramaut in present day Yemen. This lineage was descendant of the prophet Muhammad (s,a,w) through his grandson Imam Hussein.¹ His

mother was Sharifah Raquan Al-Aydarus from her maternal side, originated from Bogor Java with Sundanese royal family of Sukapura's blood.

Syed Muhammad Naquib's started his basic education from his family in Bogor, where he was introduced to various forms of Islamic Sciences and developed his foundation in Malay language and culture in Johore. He started his primary education in Johore at Ngee Heng Primary School in 1936 and graduated in 1941, while staying with one of his uncles, Ahmed and later aunt Azizah. He returned to Java and enrolled in *Madrash al-'urwatul 'lwuthqa* at Sukabumi from 1941-1945. In 1946, Naquib returned to Johor and enrolled first at Bukit Zahrah School, then at English College where he graduated in 1951. He joined Malay Regiment as Cadet Officer number 6675 and later selected for military education in England from 1952-1955. This qualified him to serve as an officer in the Royal Malay Regiment, Federation of Malaya. Because of his passion for education, he voluntarily resigned at the commission and enrolled at the University of Malaya in Singapore from 1957 to 1959.

In 1959, Al-Attas was awarded Canadian Council Fellowship by the Canadian Government to join Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University, Montreal, Canada. He was then conferred M.A. degree with distinction in Islamic philosophy in 1962. He was encouraged by some eminent orientalist scholars of the day such as A.J. Arberry and Mortimer Wheeler to transfer his further education to England. Eventually, he joined the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London as a doctoral candidate. He worked with Professor Arberry and Dr. Martin Lings on his thesis "*The mysticism of Hamza Fansuri*", this earned him a Ph.D. degree with distinction in 1965.²

The philosopher became the first Malaysian to obtain his Ph.D. from University of London and among the few vanguards of Malaysians Ph.D. holders. Consequently, he was appointed as Head of division of literature in Department of Malay Studies, University of Malaya. Subsequently, he was appointed as Dean of the Faculty of Art from 1968-1970. Here, he demonstrated leadership qualities in reforming the academic structure and upholding the faculty to meet the standard. He was one of the senior founders of the National University of Malaysia with aim of using National Language (Malay) as medium of instruction. He was given task to conceptualize the original philosophical basis of the University. He was also a founding director of Institute of Malay Language, Literature and Culture at UKM in 1973.

Al-Attas emulated some earlier Muslim thinkers such as Al-Ghazali, Al-Shafhi, Ibn Khaldun, Ibn thaimiyyah, Ibn Al-Arabi to mention but few who were competent in many fields or branches of knowledge. Al-Attas is an authority and contributes significantly to many fields such as history, literature, metaphysics, philosophy as well as calligraphy. In fact, he is a great guru when it comes to Islamic and Malay Civilization. His sense of art and calligraphy is at peak, unique ISTAC buildings both old and new at Damansara and Jalan Duta respectively are concrete evidence to his genius and originality. Syed Hosein Nasr testifies to this and says: "...found the institute stunningly beauty, surely one of the

most successful buildings constructed in recent years from the point of Islamic architecture”.³ Another scholar also declares thus:

I suddenly realized that the Professor, when he talks about “fleeting forms reflected in the mirror of the world” actually encompasses the entire nature spectrum from the sensory images of the virgin nature to the humanly conceived and constructed orders of void, of opacities and transparencies of absences and presence of light, of places and paths, of geometry and arabesque of silence and mind, and of trees, plants, flowers, and fragrances..... In fact the feeling I gotwas that he wished the architecture to encourage a state of being that would be predisposed, inclined and ready to receive the enlightening reflection of the “Devine Beauty and Majesty” and thus knowledge”.⁴

Al-Attas is one of the reputable contemporary scholars whom through their works gain reputation across the globe. He was honoured in 1975 and given fellow of the imperial Iranian Academy of philosophy. He was principal consultant to the world of Islam festival in 1976 in London, Britain. A year later, he chaired the committee on Aims and Definition of Islamic Education at the First World Conference on Islamic Education staged at the Makkah. He was also in USA as a visiting professor of Islamics at Temple University in Philadelphia. In National University of Malaysia, Al-Attas was the first holder of the Chair of Malay Language and Literature. He held the position for 14 years (1970-84). Likewise, he was the first holder of the Tun Abdul Razak Chair of Southeast Asian studies at Ohio University in United States of America.

Significantly, his position as the Founder-Director of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) in Malaysia in 1987 could not be overlooked. He is a great Professor who has giving numerous lectures home and abroad, public as well as academic lectures. He is a prolific writer whom through his writings has gained reputation globally. Many of his books and articles have been translated to other languages such as Arabic, Persian, Turkish and so on. Some of his writings have been complied by one of his closed associates, Wan Mohd Nor wan Daud in one of his books.⁵

Concept of Leadership in Islam

“A definition is a statement of the meaning of a term, a word, phrase, or other set of symbols”, which shows the direction which the author is going, it is very essential in any act of writing. Therefore, it is very crucial to define the word “leadership”. The term is a sophisticated modern term or concept which surfaced in the first halve of 19th century. People define it based on their point of views, these make it so difficult for the term or concept to have a universal definition.⁶ However, based on Islamic perspective some definitions have been accorded to it. It is a “process of moving people in a planned direction

by motivating them to action through non-compulsive means. Good leadership moves people in a direction that is truly in their long-term best interest.”⁷ It is also mentioned that “leadership is both a role and process of influencing others.”⁸

According to Khurram Murad, leadership is the “ability to see beyond assumed boundary and to come up with solutions or paths that few can visualize.”⁹ Rafik Beekun and Jamal Badawi describe leadership “as the process by which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of the followers in an effort to reach organizational objective.”¹⁰ It is also mentioned that “Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is the human factor which binds a group together and motivates it toward goal.”¹¹ Ismail Noor describes leadership as “any action that focuses resources towards a truly beneficial end.” He pronounces further, “action is a dynamic word implying movement and initiatives.”¹² It is said to be “a process of inspiring and coaching voluntary followers in an effort to fulfill a clear as well as shared vision.”¹³

Majali describes the term as “ability to show the way, to guide or conduct, to direct and govern, to influence the actions or opinions of others.” He further declares that it “implies a deep sense of responsibility and dedication to serve others and to enable them realize fully their inherent capability.”¹⁴

Furthermore, Leadership is

defined as a divine trust (amanah) from Allah, based on the *Tauhidic* paradigm of oneness of Allah that is focusing to serve HIM as HIS servant, while at the same time be the servant of Allah, perform the role of *Khalefah* (vicegerent) of Allah fully adheres to the *Sunnah* central to Islamic personality, characteristics and *aklaq* (Islamic moral and ethical) that was exemplified by the prophet (s.a.w), leading followers to the organization goals and to the straight path of the success in the Hereafter.¹⁵

This quoted definition seems to be more comprehensive definition of leadership from Islamic perspective and is hereby adopted as this paper’s operational definition.

In Islam, leadership is very important, and its necessity takes root from al-Qur’an and Sunnah. This can be seen from Surah Āl-‘Imrān where Allah says: “Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good (Islām), enjoining Al-Ma`ruf (all that Islām orders) and forbidding Al-Munkar (all that Islām has forbidden).”¹⁶ The verse is particularly referring to the leaders. It was also conveyed that the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) said: “*When three men travel together, they should make one of them their leader.*”¹⁷ The scholars across the ages also felt the necessity of leadership in any given

society. For instance, Ibn ‘Arabi, declares that human beings are vulnerable to temptation. Love to do bad things while many of them are even criminals by profession. Therefore, there is a need for an authority who will be enforcing the law and regulation as prescribed by Allah for the interest of men and general welfare.¹⁸ He was supported by other scholars such as Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, Al-Mawardi, Ibn Taimiyah, Ibn Khaldun and so on.

Al-Attas concept and definition of leadership can be inferred from his concept of Islamic worldview in relation to what he calls “man of *adab*” as opposed to the loss of *adab* which produces “the rise of unqualified and false leaders”. A good leader must be an educated fellow, “man of *addab*” (insan adabi.). This will be elaborated further later to avoid repetition.

Concept of Leadership in Al-Attas Philosophy

As it has been mentioned previously that Al-Attas is a multidisciplinary scholar who emulated classical scholars of the different ages of Islamic civilization, such as Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), Ibn Taimiyah (1236-1328), Ibn khaldun (1332-1406) as so on. No wonder, Al-Ghazali chair was conferred on him in ISTAC. Al-Attas concept of leadership in Islam sprang up from his versed in Traditional Islamic Sciences such as Islamic theology, education, history, literature, metaphysics and of course philosophy. Al-Attas and his favourite and most popular disciple formed what they called “The ICLIF leadership Competency Model” the model is basically based on Islamic worldview which includes the nature of God, the revelation, creation of seen and unseen creatures, knowledge, freedom, values and ethical virtues, happiness and so on. They claimed that the principles and values which they based their model are shared by all Muslims. The concept presented in the model is organized according to their priority which are cognitive, emotive and executive.¹⁹ Al-Attas believes in nature of man thus:

Man thus equipped and fortified is meant to be the vicegerent (Khalifah) of God on earth and as such the weighty burden of trust (*amanah*) is placed upon him - the trust and responsibility to rule according to God’s will and purpose his pleasure. The trust implies responsibility to rule with justice and the ‘rule’ means not simply ruling in the social-political sense, nor in the controlling of nature in the scientific sense, but more fundamentally in its encompassing of the meaning of nature (*al-tabi’iah*) it means, the ruling, governing, controlling, and maintaining of man by his self or his rational soul²⁰

It can be seen from the quotation that Al-Attas strongly believes that man is granted to be leader on the earth and thus position is ‘a trust’. Therefore, the absolute leadership is rest on Allah alone. Man is just acting as trustee; therefore, he should act or rule according to Allah’s will. Furthermore, every human being is a leader and everyone will be held

responsible and accountable for his leadership. This is an established fact emphasized by numerous verses from the holy Qur'an and Hadith. Allah Says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing.²¹

Also

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَخُونُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ وَتَخُونُوا أَمَانَاتِكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

O you who have believed, do not betray Allah and the Messenger or betray your trusts while you know [the consequence].²²

It can be deduced from Al-Attas philosophy that any good and effective leader must possess some virtues so as to attain happiness here and hereafter. He calls it “the four Cardinal Virtues.” Which are Wisdom (hikmah), Courage (shaja’ah), Temperance (‘ifah) and Justice (‘adalah). Under these four main virtues there are other qualities which must be acquired by the leader. He says:

Wisdom (hikmah) is given God to man through the faculty of the rational soul, which is both cognitive and as well as active. The cognitive aspect of wisdom is referred to as theoretical and the active as practical. Practical wisdom (reason) acts in accordance with principle derived from theoretical wisdom (reason). Practical wisdom is the state of the soul by which he perceives right from wrong, rectitude from error. It is the mean between deceit, shyness, cunning and stupidity. Wisdom is one of the first principles of the science of ethics. It is one of the Beautiful Names of God. In man it is excellence of discernment; discretion; intelligence; penetration of idea; correctness of opinion; quickness of understanding; clarity of mind; easy in learning; sagacity; eloquence.; fairness of opinion; determination; truthfulness; faithfulness; amity; mercy; and awareness of the subtle actions of soul.²³

About Courage (shaja’ah), He says:

Courage is a subdivision of anger in the motive and appetitive faculty of the animal soul. It is the greatness of the soul; nobility; magnificence; intrepidity; bravery; patience; self-possession; composure; manliness; gentleness; fortitude; endurance; pardon; amiability; forgiveness; open-mindedness; keeping secret; and correct evaluation of the self.²⁴

The absolute and real meaning of courage is not limited to absence of fear but contain ability to conquer it. Courage can be physical or moral. It is the middle course between cowardice and foolhardiness or rashness. It is the strength against shock and tranquility in case of calamity, adversity or crisis. It is a motive behind one's action despite his or her fear.²⁵ This virtue had been one of the virtues cherished by Arab since the pre-Islamic era. They displayed dauntless, reckless courage in all their affairs and of course in the battlefield to gratify an irresistible desire. It was then transformed into a noble and well-discipline courage.²⁶

Al-Attas describes Temperance ('ifah) thus:

Temperance is a subdivision of desire in the motive and appetitive faculty of the animal soul. It is abstention from what is unlawful and base. It is to restrain the requirements of the appetites and anger, and although it refers mainly to the external senses of taste and touch it defiantly ultimately pertains to the faculty of soul.²⁷

About the fourth virtue justice ('adalah), he says:

Justice ('adalah). Is derived from one beautiful name of God. It must be regarded, like wisdom, as the first principle of science of ethics, it is a condition of things and beings being in their rightful and proper places. It is order bringing about harmony in the soul, in the state of nature..... Justice is based on wisdom and is related to the soul and its faculties.²⁸

It can also be inferred from Al-Attas philosophy that education is a must for a leader that will make him "a man of *adab*" that is to say an educated person is a good one and by 'good' it means such a person possess *adab* in all its ramifications (spiritual and material life). Therefore, he describes a truly educated man as a man of *adab*. He says:

A good man is the one who is sincerely conscious of his responsibilities towards the true God, who understands and fulfills his obligations to himself and others in his society with justice, who constantly strives to improve every aspect of himself towards perfection as men of *adab* (insan adabi.).²⁹

In fact, in his thought, education is very important in a meaningful society it is an imperative for both leader and the led to acquire education. He had been emphasized on this as far back as 60s. This is one of the teachings which Islam has been called for since its onset. That is to say, Islam compulsory seeking knowledge for all its adherents irrespective of age, race or gender. Furthermore, Al-Attas postulates that the problem of leadership in underdeveloped and developing countries is associated with 'lack of proper

education'. He believes that confusion and error in knowledge of the leader are the primary causes for the ascending corrupt leaders at all levels.³⁰

It equally relevant to mention here that Al-Attas belongs to the group of scholars who favour the notion that leadership is learned or acquired. Which opposed to the belief of the group of trait approach researchers. Ogunbado concludes on this 'a pernicious myth' thus:

Every baby born has his or her own inborn traits, which qualifies him or her to be a leader. However, these traits need to be nourished. The nourishment comes through learning which can be formal or informal. Formal nourishment is in terms of education, leadership training and so on, while informal sustenance or improvement comes through the practices or accumulative experiences.³¹

The Root Vice Destructive to Leadership

Al-Attas proposes four things that causes total destruction to the leadership whether in micro or macro firm, organization or society. (1) Lying, breaking promise and betraying trust (2) Slander (3) Envy and (4) Avarice. It is from these four root vices that others emanated. He groups lying, breaking promise and betraying trust together based on the popular *hadith* that exposes the hypocrites. Thus:

Whoever has the following four (characteristics) will be a pure hypocrite and whoever has one of the following four characteristics will have one characteristic of hypocrisy unless and until he gives it up. 1. Whenever he is entrusted, he betrays. 2. Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie. 3. Whenever he makes a covenant, he proves treacherous. 4. Whenever he quarrels, he behaves in a very imprudent, evil and insulting manner.³²

The second root vice destructive to leadership according to Al-Attas is Slander (*fitnah*) which he defines as "false charges or misconceptions which defame and damage another's reputation". Its effect is more disastrous than ordinary lying. He assumes the worst slander is to invent a lie against Allah, the creator. Allah says:

Who does more than he who invents a lie against Allah or reject His signs? On the day shall we gather them all together we shall say to those who ascribe partners to us: "where are the partners whom you invented and talked about?" There will then be no excuse for them but say: "by Allah, our Lord we were not those who joined gods with Allah" Behold! How they lie against themselves but lie which they invented will leave them lurch.³³

The Professor believes that the slander against Allah is the worse injustice subsequently, this would deceive other people from knowing and beholding the truth. He

further admits that if a slander is made against a righteous person or a “leader to be” in a society. Such society, group or firm would be deprived of proper leadership then fake leaders would emerged.

Envy (hasad) is another great vice which according to the scholar under the study is worse than rancor, destructive in itself as well as a root of other dispositions. It is a state of mind in which a person pained when another person is fortunate and wishes him/her to lose it even though the envier gains nothing from the misfortune. Al-Attas believes that every good things or fortune in any man’s possession is a gift from his creator he declares that any wish by another person for the removal or destruction of such fortune or treasure illustrates “(a) his displeasure with God’s decree and (b) an avarice beyond that usual found, for a miser is parsimonious with his own possessions, but an envious man is parsimonious as regards the gift which come from God’s treasure.”³⁴ Furthermore, he postulates that showing “envy and displeasure” at another person’s misfortune are the extreme or deviation of the faculty of desire from its mean state. Envy is a sinful behaviour which manufactures other bad ideas such as slander and murder. Envy is one of the worst behaviours which are associated with soul and which Islam discourages. It was mentioned:

...this soul is associated with the worst characteristics such as self-admiration, arrogance and pride, hardness of the heart, oppression of creatures, lack of contentment, constant complaining or nagging, lying, gossip, back-biting, envy, jealousy, bitterness, lack of gratitude, blindness to its blessings, lust and all worst characteristics that can be mentioned.³⁵

However, Al-Atas declares that envy is distinguished from emulation and competition. The former may be necessary and praiseworthy based on the situation. Islam encourages emulation and competition towards achieving good things. Which otherwise known as health competition as Al’Qur’an graciously commands “So race to [all that is] good”³⁶ also “...so race to [all that is] good. To Allah is your return all together, and He will [then] inform you concerning that over which you used to differ.”³⁷ It also says:

سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ
ءَامَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

Race toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth, prepared for those who believed in Allah and His messengers. That is the bounty of Allah which He gives to whom He wills, and Allah is the possessor of great bounty³⁸.

Avarice (bukhl) is the fourth root vices destructive to leadership according to the Professor. He defines it as “to keep the wealth when it should be spent” its opposite extreme is extravagance which is spent when it should be kept” or overspent on unnecessarily. The

mean between these two extremes is the virtue of generosity. Religion, humanity and custom has clearly hypothesized the situation where wealth should be spent or kept. Religion for instance, recommends spending on maintenance of one's family, charity, zakah and even mentioned those who are entitle to the disbursement of zakah. Islam vehemently discourages avarice and Al-Qur'an says:

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ بِمَا ءَاتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَّهُمْ
سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخُلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
خَبِيرٌ

And let not those who [greedily] withhold what Allah has given them of His bounty ever think that it is better for them. Rather, it is worse for them. Their necks will be encircled by what they withheld on the Day of Resurrection. And to Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth. And Allah, with what you do, is [fully] acquainted³⁹

The verse warns against having in mind that niggardliness serves as protection of the wealth in hand, rather than spend it for a good purpose. Another ayah even threatens with heavy punishment against the behavior on the Day of Judgment. It says:

الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُونَ مَا ءَاتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا
لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا

Who are stingy and enjoin upon [other] people stinginess and conceal what Allah has given them of His bounty - and We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment⁴⁰

Instead, Islam encourage generosity which is mean between niggardliness and extravagancy or the squandering of money. Here, the concept of *wasattiyah* moderation in spending is encouraged. Al-Qura'n says:

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا

Do not be miserly, allowing your hand to remain shackled to your neck, nor stretch it out fully to the utmost limit, lest you find yourself being blamed or reduced to destitution.⁴¹

Al-Attas concludes that a meaningful leader must possess some cognitive competencies, which comprises of strategic visioning whereby he/she will have clarity of vision for the future. It is otherwise called foresight. He/she must be able to articulate and communicate the vision he/she has to the followers or subordinates in order to arise their commitment. This must be based on sincere and consistent ethical practice. Likewise, a

leader must be able to formulate as well as implement strategies to accomplish both short- and long-term visions. He must also be able to build other future leaders, able to develop like-minds around him who can continue his legacy in the future. Al-Attas believes that a leader must have stomach for knowledge, demonstrate a quest for knowledge as Islam constantly request from its adherence. He or she must be able to showcase the capability to identify, define and evaluate issues. In addition, a leader must be able to produce alternative approaches when situations warrant it.⁴²

As per emotive competences, Al-Attas proposes that a leader must be able to influence others to accept a point of view, adopt a specific agenda. Likewise make an impact for a specific intentional objective. A leader must be able to fathom situational context and nuances likewise must be able to control and lead in influencing direction. The first caliph of Islam Abubakar Siddiq demonstrated these qualities. When people were in confusion of where to bury the Prophet. He suggested as he heard that the Prophet should be buried where he dies. Likewise, when some Arab tribes around Medinah refused to pay zakah and some renounced Islam. The Caliph opted to fight them.⁴³ A leader should possess interpersonal understanding, applies emotional intelligence in sensing and understanding other's need perspective and feeling. This is what is known as empathy. He/she should be able to foster relationship building with others, fostering amicable and cooperative climate. Ability to demonstrate team leadership in other words, a leader should be able to form team synergy in pursuing collective goal.⁴⁴

Regarding executive competence, Al-Attas postulates that the leader must understand that result being aimed at and the way of achieving them are guided by *Shariah*. And he/she must be accountable for the result. The leader must exhibit drive, urgency and assertiveness, boldness in the quest of result. A leader must unveil tenacity resilience in the case of adversity to attain his/her goal. Al-attas substantiates this by quoting this ayah:

Or do ye think that ye shall enter the Garden (of bliss) without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? they encountered suffering and adversity, and were so shaken in spirit that even the Messenger and those of faith who were with him cried: "When (will come) the help of Allah?" Ah! Verily, the help of Allah is (always) near!⁴⁵

It can further be seen in al-Attas philosophy of leadership that a leader must be able to create a climate of excellence, setting the highest standard in every spare of the work that the firm, society or organization is engaged in. Likewise, one should be able to display capacity to balance idealism with scepticism in decision making.⁴⁶ A leader should be able to make a decision, a prophetic tradition makes it known that if a person make a decision and right, he/she will be given two rewards but if he/she errs in such decision a reward will

be awarded. ‘Umar bin khattab then advises that if such error is discovered, nothing should prevent the person from making correction. He says:

If you give a judgment yesterday and today, upon reconsideration come upon the correct opinion, you should not feel prevented by your first judgment from retracting for justice in primeval, and it is better to retract than to persist in worthlessness.⁴⁷

Leadership and Organizational Derailment

Al-Attas considers leadership and organizational derailment as manifestations of what he recognizes as “the loss of *adab*”. He further defines “*Adab*” as:

The recognition and acknowledgement of the reality that knowledge and being are ordered hierarchically according to their various grades and degrees of rank, and of one’s proper place in relation to that reality and as in one’s physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities and potentials.⁴⁸

Al-Attas considers loss of *adab* as result of another fundamental problem which is “confusion and error in knowledge.” He says:

These two conditions-namely, the confusion and error in knowledge as well as loss *adab*- create a most pervasive and devastating problem within the Muslim community globally, viz, the rise of false individuals who are not qualified for valid leadership, who do not possess the high moral, intellectual and spiritual standard required for Islamic leadership in all field, who perpetuate these two conditions and ensure their continuous control over the affairs of the community by leaders like them.⁴⁹

The erudite scholar continues to link the causes of such derailment to the “weaknesses of leader.” The weaknesses can be divided into two internal and external. The former comprises of forgetful of the creator (Allah) and surrendering to one’s lust or arrogance. While the latter includes other party’s envy and jealousy or bad company or advice. It is worthy to remind the reader here that “envy” has moderately been discussed earlier under The Root Vice Destructive to Leadership.

Summary and Conclusion

The paper explores the concept of leadership from Islam perspective as it can be seen from a Malaysian Philosopher, A Professor of Islamic thought and civilization, Sayed Naquib Al-Attas. The paper sheds light on his biography, birth, education and life experiences. It is believed that he is a genius and gained sound education from various part of the world. He believes that leadership is necessary, and it is an *amanah* (a trust) which Allah bestowed on human being. Everyone is a leader and will be accountable for his/her leadership. The

professor postulates that a leader must be a knowledgeable person which he calls “man of Adab.” Likewise, he believes that the emergence of fake leaders is misappropriation of things in its place and tags it as “loss of Adab”. It is loss of *adab* that responsible for the leadership and organizational derailment.

Al-Attas formulates a leadership model and names it “The ICLIF leadership Competency Model” the model is basically based on Islamic worldview. In the model he suggests that leadership must be based on “the four Cardinal Virtues.” Which is Wisdom (hikmah), Courage (shaja’ah), Temperance (‘ifah) and Justice (‘adalah). Al-Attas sanctions four things that causes destruction to the leadership which are (1) Lying, breaking promise and betraying trust (2) Slander (3) Envy and (4) Avarice. The paper also elaborates what Al-attas calls cognitive, emotive and executive competencies which he believes that a meaningful leader must possess.

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