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## A Qur’anic Framework for Spiritual Intelligence

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the perspective of the Qur’an on spiritual intelligence in an attempt to understand its foundations, meaning and nature, as well as derive its indicators, in an effort to develop a competency-based criterion for it. This paper draws on some illustrations that effectively highlight the Qur’anic perspective on the subject of spiritual intelligence. The paper concludes that spiritual intelligence developed in accordance with a Qur’anic framework that incorporates spiritual consciousness into a system of belief, worship, morality and social responsibility. The understanding of the Qur’anic perspective helps uncover some of the broad underlying theoretical principles and values of Islamic spiritual intelligence which shapes much of Muslim spiritual undertaking with relation to a wider spectrum of interaction with faith-groups and society; effectively developing more inclusive models of evaluation and capacity-building in contemporary multi-religious societies.

**Keywords:** Islamic spirituality; Islamic spiritual intelligence; spiritual experience; spiritual experience; spiritual consciousness

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### 1. Introduction

The concept of spiritual intelligence is relatively new. Over the past decade, it has become subject to increasing scholarly attention of researchers. Some popular works on the topic include Emmons A.

Robert in ‘The Psychology of Ultimate Concerns: Motivation and Spirituality in Personality; Gardner Howard in ‘Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences’; Halama Peter and Strizenec Michal in ‘Spiritual, Existential or Both? Theoretical Considerations on the Nature of Higher Intelligences’ [1]; Vaughan, Frances in ‘What is Spiritual Intelligence?’ [2]; Mayer D. John in ‘Spiritual Intelligence or Spiritual Consciousness’ [3]; Wolman N. Richard in ‘Thinking with your Soul: Spiritual Intelligence and Why It Matters’ [4]; and Zohar Danah and Ian Marshall in ‘SQ: Connecting with Our Spiritual Intelligence and Spiritual Capital Wealth We Can Live by’ [5].

Perhaps, the foremost and most frequently cited definition of spiritual intelligence is that of a framework for identifying and organizing the requisite skills and abilities needed for the adaptive use of spirituality [6]. Vaughan defines spiritual intelligence as the inherent capacity for a deep understanding of existential questions and insight into multiple levels of consciousness [2]. For Wolman, spiritual intelligence reflects the inherent human capacity to ask ultimate questions concerning the meaning of life and to simultaneously experience the seamless connection between the individual and the world in which they live [4]. Vaughan views spiritual intelligence as a capacity for a deep understanding of existential questions and potential for insight into multiple levels of consciousness. He believes that spiritual intelligence emerges as a consciousness that evolves into an ever-deepening awareness of matter, life, body, mind, soul, and spirit. Spiritual intelligence therefore is more than individual mental ability, and even transcends conventional psychological development. Wolman further notes that while practicing psychotherapy, his impression remains that spiritual intelligence opens the heart, illuminates the mind, and inspires the soul; while connecting the individual human psyche to the underlying ground of being... it may be expressed in any culture as love, wisdom, and service [4].

Zohar and Marshall on the other hand define spiritual intelligence as the intelligence with which we access our deepest meanings, values, purposes, and highest motivations [5]. For them, it is reflected in how we use our spiritual maturity throughout our thinking processes, in the decisions we make, and in the matters we think worthwhile to deal with. Such decisions include how we create and allocate our material wealth. They also view spiritual capital as pertaining to what a community or organization exists for, aspires to, and takes responsibility for [5]. Spiritual intelligence for them leads to the realization of moral purposes in life, raises the courage to ask fundamental questions, and helps plot a better and more meaningful course of life. Spiritual intelligence is meant to be dissociated from religious beliefs so as to accommodate non-religious thinking.

Zohar and Marshall argue that the use of the word ‘spiritual’ has no connection with religion or any other organized belief system. For them, religious organization and religiously based cultures have undoubtedly built some genuine spiritual capital but have done so within the limitations of belief systems that excludes those who hold other religious beliefs and those who hold no religious beliefs [5]. For Vaughan, it is not enough for a person to claim spiritual knowledge if it is not expressed in the world through wisdom, compassion, and action. Integrating spiritual intelligence means living in accordance with one’s core beliefs. This integration reinforces a sense of purpose, whereas fragmentation leads to alienation and despair [2].

## 2. Preliminary Remarks on Islamic Spirituality

A survey of the Qur'an essentially points to the following fundamental categories of knowledge; The Creator, human, the physical world and the unseen. One of the viable fields of knowledge that touches on those categories and which the Qur'an discusses extensively however is the spiritual pre-disposition of man whose cultivation is rooted in the belief in God, constant internalizing of faith through individual spiritual practice and reaching out to society. Spirituality is made through a process of profound inner reflection, devotion to God, commitment to lifestyle of worship, and adherence to morality; all however set to enhance a solid awareness of themselves and the world around them while furthermore refining human character, building balance and strengthening effective social bonds. Muslim spirituality is geared to synchronize the inner and outer make-up of emotional, rational and behavioural exercise in light of revelatory norms, and as such would lead Muslims to a stage whereby they develop inner peace, maintain healthy wellness, and sustain driving motivation for good.

The concept of spiritual cultivation is moreover associated with another fundamental theme in Islamic theology, namely, the multi-dimensional innate human nature (*fitrah*). The revelatory knowledge on human nature represents the primary ground for cultivating spirituality and maintaining it in the effective organization of human life. Nature connotes constitution, or meanings such as the natural, native, innate, original disposition, temper; or qualities and properties such as idiosyncrasy and the faculty of knowing God [7]. Three key terms have been used in reference to its being; the soul or spirit (*ruh*) (Qur'an 32:9), the self (*nafs*) (Qur'an 91:7), and body (*jism*) (Qur'an 2:247; 21:8). The Qur'an also alludes to the presence of other dimensions of human creation such as the spirit, psyche and human predisposition. Along this parallel, the Qur'an describes the various earthly composites of human creation such as dust (Qur'an 30:20), potter's clay (Qur'an 55:14), potter's clay of altered black mud (Qur'an 15:26), plastic clay (Qur'an 37:11), and a product of wet earth (Qur'an 23:12).

Nevertheless, the Qur'an declares that the human intellect possesses the ability to access the mysteries of the physical world, yet knows little of the soul and spirit (Qur'an 17:85). Similarly, humans are granted free will and are shown two courses in life (Qur'an 90:10), the first leading to spirituality, piety and wellness while the second engenders perplexity, moral vice, and corruption. Similarly, humans are equipped with cognitive means and supported by divine guidance. While current scholarly literature speak of value-free forms of faith, and focus on psychometric instruments to test and measure spiritual skills and abilities in a context of transient human interests [5], the Qur'an speaks rather of a holistic approach to spirituality in a manner that sets and at the same time builds and regulates the process of spirituality with balance. This corresponds in proportionate measures to the very nature of human creation, motivation, aspiration, destiny and religious responsibility, supported throughout by a system of legal, ethical and social values that ensure the gradual and undisturbed human ascension to God. Islam finds the man's spiritual being to be an indicator of true life, in contrast to those who neglect their inner spiritual potential; describing their state as a form of death. The Qur'an states: "Can he who was dead, to whom We gave life, and a light whereby he can walk amongst men, be like him who is in the depths of darkness, from which he can never come out? Thus to those without faith their own deeds seem pleasing" ([8], Chapter 6:122).

According to the Qur'an, the spiritual states represent the outcome of conscious interaction with the divine, made manifest in an open relationship with the Creator. Spirituality according to Qur'anic logic

is not merely a means set to lead humans to raising fundamental questions about the meanings of life and secrets of existence, but also serves as an avenue that justifies and elicits the constant generation of positive ideas, thoughts and emotions (Qur'an 75:2). As such, believers are exhorted to preoccupy themselves continually with purification and vigilance in the forms of preservation, improvement, amendment, and reform. These highlight an inherently dynamic interaction with the environment in such a way that both the soul and subject of interaction are constantly affected. Briskin was correct in pointing to this interaction. He states:

We live in organizations—families, communities, social clubs, workplaces—and it is in these groups that our souls are shaped and textured. Being open to the demands of relationship, whether with a single human being or within a group, provides an extraordinary opportunity. When conflict arises between the individual and the group, there is an opportunity to learn more about what our souls are made of [9].

Nevertheless, the essence of spiritual exercise according to the Qur'an revolves around the fear from God (Qur'an 3:175), hope in His absolute pardon (Qur'an 39:53), trust in His reward (Qur'an 16:97), and awareness of His Divine presence (Qur'an 2:186; 50:16) alongside the sustained cultivation of positive expressions of emotions and behaviour. This is the reason for which the Qur'an exhorts believers to pursue a path of obedience to God, and one that is characterized by hope and fear in Him, trust in His mercy and companionship, and the active spread of good and compassion. These steps however are bound to the dynamic nature of humans; continuously proceeding from within a context of change; one from which it affects one or some of the following components such as the reproaching self (Qur'an 75:2), the commanding self, the blaming self, the inspired self, the satisfied self, the consenting self, the inner, the heart, the soul, lust, desires, Satan, vanity, self-deceit, pride, or the association of deities or partners with God.

Islamic spirituality dictates that consciously balanced intimacy with the divine generates a positive awareness of the self and the environment, and further ensures intense motivation for good; this perhaps explains the Qur'anic commendation of 'those drawn close to God' (Qur'an 83:18). Such a reference, however, is made in contrast to human preoccupations with lower physical needs; pointing to a catastrophic degradation in the quality of human life to categories described as the *lowest of the low* (Qur'an 95:5), and as a result, the devastating destruction of life and environment. Human degradation according to the Qur'an is rather caused by ignorance of the divine, and misappropriation of the objectives of life which only occur when spiritual capital is effectually degraded or adherence to sound intellect is overlooked.

Furthermore, spirituality slowly loses its *raison d'être* as soon as its compass misses the course of positive direction of the individual and community. This notion finds support, theoretically at least, in the fundamentals of Islam; as found within the declaration of faith, performance of prayers, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage, all of which are set to function as spiritual catalysts in the life of the community, essentially geared to steer, drive and sustain a conscious, mature and solid positive change in the human environment. Muslims are instructed to effectually cultivate within themselves the inner force of harmony and peace (*sakinah*), and the positive force for life through transparent yet amicable interactions with God, with His devout servants and with His enemies.

The Qur'an shows that believers are better motivated when they act according to their inner nature and proceed according to their connection with God (Qur'an 28:77). Believers need not underestimate

their internal needs and motivations should they wish to develop their spiritual discipline, which in itself is an indication that in usual circumstances, religiosity leads to a state of spiritual health, positive self-awareness, and productive life. This is understandable in view of the fact that religion essentially seeks to develop a state of balance in all of life's affairs so as to create a sense of harmony within the inner being of man, with fellow humans and the environment.

For one to achieve a state of spiritual health, however, the Qur'an exhorts humans to enjoy the blessings and bounties of God with gratefulness (*shukr*) and kindness (*ihsan*) and not to indulge in despair, seclusion or self-oppression. On one occasion at least, the Qur'an chastises worshippers who opt for seclusion and monasticism as a means to spiritual perfection (Qur'an 57:27). The Qur'an states: "Then, in their wake, We followed them up with (others of) Our messengers: We sent after them Jesus the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel; and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him Compassion and Mercy. But the Monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them: (We commanded) only the seeking for the Good Pleasure of Allah; but that they did not foster as they should have done." ([8], Chapter 57:27). Prophet Mohammed is also reported to have said: "There is no monasticism in Islam" [10]. Hence, Islam does not approve of holding oneself aloof from people and life in order to cultivate purity or attain self-perfection. Rather, it calls Muslims to associate with others, work for human welfare and common interest, and work on their self-perfection and the perfection of others. Prophet Muhammad is reported to have commended mingling with others while showing patience. He said: "The believer, who mingles with people and is patient with their annoyance, earns more reward than the believer who does not mingle with people and does not observe patience with their annoyance".

### 3. The Concept of Spiritual Intelligence

While it is held that spirituality is generally viewed as the innate human need to connect with something larger than ourselves, the Qur'an appears to have advanced a far more integrated view capable of raising and dealing with fundamental questions of existence and creation, while permeating the inner creation of man and at the same time modelling the very texture of human intention, morality, law, and social networks. The definition of spiritual intelligence as the ability with which we exercise goodness, truth, beauty, and compassion in our lives [5] implies the presence of certain intuitively gifted knowledge and a number of soft skills; including the awareness of one's worldview and purpose of life, of ego and self, and also the awareness of the universe and Laws of the Divine shown in in human conduct and association (*shara'i and sunnan*). This in addition to the awareness of the limitations of human perception, of spiritual laws and order, the experiences of transcendent oneness, commitment to spiritual growth, and spirituality bearing a weighty role in decision making. To translate these dimensions, Emmons determines five defining, interrelated characteristics of spiritual intelligence: the capacity for transcendence; the ability to enter into heightened spiritual states of consciousness; the ability to invest in everyday activities, events, and relationships with a sense of the sacred or divine; the ability to utilize spiritual resources to solve problems in living; and the capacity to engage in virtuous behaviour or to be virtuous (to show forgiveness, to express gratitude, to be humble, and to display compassion) [6].

The growing intellectual quest in human virtue and compassion shows superficially, at least, a keen interest to ‘*pragmatize*’ spirituality in an attempt to optimize short-lived happiness, maximize financial profit making, or support the well being of society in general; all set, however, in a form of a *de-sacralized* setting often violating the very nature of Islamic spirituality. Zohar perhaps provides an ideal example when she looks forward to a complete separation between religion and spirituality. She argues that when she speaks of spiritual capital, or of the spiritual intelligence needed to build such capital, she does not mean anything to do with religion or theological belief systems. She says: “I am not suggesting that companies become more spiritual in the sense of building shrines in the reception foyer or calling their employees to prayer” [5]. Her orientation reveals an interest in spiritual intelligence insofar as it enhances and further sustains economic interests, thus deconstructing the very notion of religiosity or at best diluting the broader theme of religious spirituality. Such an interest perhaps highlights a natural human awakening striving to re-connect with an externally unidentified divine presence and to ensure peaceful human society. These examples however, generally point to a genuinely increasing spiritual thirst bothering the conscience of man today and seriously affecting the shaping of human society, yet often found to be shrouded in confusion and frustration; resulting in series of intellectual inconsistencies and at times abnormalities.

Spiritual intelligence develops alongside spiritual knowledge and spiritual experience. It is neither static nor genealogically transmitted, but rather, represents the very result of the human endeavour with relation to God, society and the world. Spiritual intelligence according to the Qur’an refers to the manifestations of profound intrinsic states of faith and belief in the One God with the ability to generate positive emotions, thoughts and actions. According to Islam, humans are granted the potential to rationalize and embody faith and to move forward throughout a reflective process of spirituality leading to continuous improvement of the conditions of human life (*‘umran*), most notably beginning with the self. As such, when spirituality is operative, it only creates a normal yet positive condition of change instead of appealing to extraordinary miracles and shows. When spiritual intelligence is practiced according to the norms of Islam and its regulations is expected to neither draw nor cause conflict or destruction to humans nor to the environment. Instead, it represents the eventual result of believers’ confirmation of their decisions with the intents of the divine revelation in the field of knowledge, beliefs, morality and laws.

Islamic spiritual intelligence is not left unattended; it is rather guided, supported, regulated, and intertwined with belief (*iman-taqwa*), morality (*akhlaq*) and excellence (*ihsan*) in life in such a way that human spiritual ascension only develops insofar as it leaves a positive imprint upon the life of fellow human beings, and the ecological order in general. Spiritual intelligence is accessible, transparent, flexible, optimistic, socially validated, morally grounded, and constantly subject to rise and decline. Its course is reflective of inward and outward actions; continually affecting the lives of individuals, communities, and society while improving the spiritual character of the individual and further strengthening her spiritual sights (*basirah*). This is understandable in regards to believers’ continuous investment of their spiritual consciousness in every bit of life in an attempt to bridge the divine and mundane world through embodiment of the divine qualities such as mercy, compassion, benevolence, justice, forgiveness, relief, forbearance, generosity, guidance, patience, truthfulness and wisdom. Muslims according to the religious tradition are instructed to inculcate the divine values and characteristics in themselves (*takhallaqu bi-akhlaq Allah*).

#### 4. Foundations of Spiritual Intelligence in Islam

Islamic spiritual intelligence is grounded firmly in the teaching of Revelation and has been demonstrated practically throughout the life and example of Prophet Muhammad, nourished through the contribution of people of wisdom, scholars, and those grounded in knowledge and action (Qur'an 4:162), who are able to integrate in themselves spiritual awareness, knowledge and experience while maintaining an active presence in society. Furthering its distinction, Islamic spiritual intelligence is distinct from some courses of thinking or acting such as philosophy, witchcraft or black magic. Spiritual intelligence necessitates an awareness of the boundaries and horizons of spiritual experiences. Those horizons are open, accessible and tangible, and motivate believers into further exploration, discovery and understanding. It is worth noting that knowledge alone builds a solid basis for the exercise of spiritual intelligence in view of the fact that ignorance and pride cause poor records of spiritual performance. Spiritual knowledge also helps explain the content, operation, characteristics, and values of spiritual knowledge.

Spiritual intelligence is imbued in the process of continuous learning. This organic relationship is shown in the Qur'an's thesis whereby the cognitive dimensions of spiritual intelligence are integrated. The first dimension of this approach is exemplified in the Qur'an's explanation of the essence of human nature and detailed spiritual, psychic, behavioural, intellectual and physical constituents (*fitrah*). The Qur'an, for instance, draws attention to the spirit (*ruh*) and soul (*nafs*), which in spite of their inter-relationship; remain essentially different, in contrast to the earthly composition of the body consisting of dust, sounding clay, transmuted dark slime, and the essence of humble fluid. Moreover, God blesses humans with the potential of reading (Qur'an 91:1–5) without which life would have been fundamentally different. Reading, in this regard, does not merely relate to the ability to string together characters, but rather stands for the profound understanding of the self on the basis of Revealed Knowledge as seen in the Qur'an addressing the theme of human being more than 1,252 times); creation (Qur'an 3:137; 29:20); and the Creator with the word of Allah having the highest citation frequency (2,690).

The Qur'an draws on divinely-granted cognitive and physical tools given to humans such as hearing, sight and feeling; showing a keen interest in their function instead of their ascribed status as they are essentially intertwined and cannot be separated, which only reflects the unity of the human essence. Assigning the heart a very special position, the Qur'an also allots it special tasks such as reasoning and understanding while simultaneously acting as the center of faith and emotion. The Qur'an further designates the heart with different names, each reflecting a specific task. For example, the name *lubb* refers to deeper insight and perception, *fu'ad* brings human emotions to the surface while *hijr* is related to prevention. A healthy or sound heart is described in the Quran as *qalb salim*, which produces healthy feelings, judgments and lifestyle and *vice versa*. According to the following prophetic tradition, the heart occupies the centre of human personality. Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: 'Surely there is in the body a small piece of flesh; if it is good, the whole body is good, and if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted, and that is surely the heart' [11].

Interestingly, spiritual intelligence draws on a number of intertwined foundational blocks including the metaphysical order (*al-ghayb*), prophethood, and wisdom (*hikmah*). First, the metaphysical order contextualizes the nature and activity of spiritual intelligence and highlights its values, dynamics, and

direction. This order, however, is not idealistic, dialectic, abstract, or philosophically complex; one which violates the universal knowledge and basic needs of humans. Rather, it embodies universal principles expressed in a commonly understandable language, and is further built upon the foundations of the divine message, preserved in scripture, and promotes the honorability of man while exhibiting the guidance of God and His unfailing support. According to the Islamic metaphysical order, human personality is perceived as one single whole [12] with no room for strict dualism and idealism or perfection and that which applies to any of its units affects the other. One may for example adopt, feel or assume belief, but may only accrue confusion in regards to the question of authenticated religious scripture. Original forms of spirituality do not necessarily occur within the boundaries of formal logical reasoning and laws, yet are found to be regulative, subject to the human conditions of understanding, and are guided by revelation. Such spirituality may be authenticated, recovered, developed, weakened or subject to decline, and is further elegantly expressed through divine rapport with the community.

Prophethood represents the second foundation and implies that prophets of God never promote polytheism, atheism, materialism, or annihilation and only act as admonishers and bearers of glad tidings (*bushra*) and guides to Him (*hidaya*). Prophetic teaching and role models provide a sustainable platform for spiritual discipline and, consequently, the eventual ideal manifestation of spiritual intelligence. Thus, the philosophical and theoretical shaping of spiritual intelligence requires external assistance. Unlike the physical world where one would ordinarily use the cognitive faculties, senses and imagination to capture pictures and render them into abstract concepts and meanings, the spiritual domains instead reflect fundamentally different states of being and unquantifiable tastes, perhaps with the most concrete form of being as found in dreams. As a result, engagement in the spiritual world needs the imperative requisite of a higher spiritual capacity; something often familiar to Prophets in their guidance of humanity. It is in this context that one understands the statement of Ibn Khaldun, that in the case of Prophets, the trend towards the divine is found to be more powerful than that of humanity as far as the powers of perception and desire—*i.e.*, concupiscence and wrath—and other conditions of the body are concerned [13].

The third is wisdom (*hikmah*) which is described in the Qur'an as abundant good (Qur'an 2:269) which perhaps explains the reason why Prophet Muhammad was instructed to teach wisdom alongside the scripture (Qur'an 2:151). Qur'an commentators like Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 922), Ibn 'Atiyyah al-Andalusi (d. 1147), Abul Fida 'Imad al-Din Ibn Kathir (d. 1373), and Abu Muhammad al-Husayn al-Farra' al-Baghawi (d. 1122) understood wisdom as the tradition of the Prophet. Muslim philosophers, however, drew wisdom closer yet, and sometimes rendered it identical to philosophy as reflected in the title of Ibn Rushd's work 'On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy (*hikmah*)' [14]. Fakhr Din al-Razi (d. 925) for instance sees wisdom as hitting the right target in speech, thought and action to represent attainment of that which is true and right through knowledge and action [7]. A person is wise when equipped with knowledge and action [15]. Wisdom is one component of spiritual intelligence which generates an inner compatibility and balance between speech, thought and action (Qur'an 2:269). The concordance of spiritual intelligence with wisdom is seen in the degree according to which spiritual intelligence accords and reflects the objectives of Revelation.

Another key Islamic spiritual practice relates to sustain conditions of supplication which are much related to the human needs and changes and are often about moving forward to better conditions. Supplications prepare Muslims for better life [16]. This is significantly important especially when we

realize that the Qur’anic approach to social change begins with the self, as evidenced in the verse: “God does not change the condition of people unless they change that is in themselves” ([8], Chapter 13:11). When Muslims practice regular supplication to God, they prime themselves for cognitive and emotional aptitude which is necessary for better life choices. As an example, the practice of *Salat al-Istikarah* (The Islamic prayer to help decision making) reported in the tradition of the Prophet (pbuh). To explain how supplication affects the lives of Muslims, the Qur’an sets out the following objectives for religious invocations: (a) repenting (seeking forgiveness after sinning) using verbs like pardon (*afw*), forgive (*safh*), accepted repentance (*tawbah nasuha*), expiation of sins (*ghufran*): thus opening opportunities for positive thoughts; (b) requesting a needed thing as indicated in forms such as ‘grant’ or ‘lend us’ which can either be spiritual or physical (Qur’an 3:38); (c) seeking protection as expressed in negative forms like do ‘not over-burden’, ‘let us not deviate’, and ‘take to task’, ‘lay not on’, ‘do not forsake me’, and ‘do not disgrace me’: with some verbs in the affirmative form carrying the meaning of protection such as ‘remove away’, ‘save me’, ‘support me’, ‘relieve’, ‘protect us’, ‘have mercy on us’, ‘defend’, and ‘support us’; (d) requesting divine bounties; or (e) expressing thankfulness to God (Qur’an 27:19). The Qur’an, however, alludes to four areas of focus for spiritual intelligence: (a) spiritual with relation to erasing of sins; (b) behavioural, as in the increase of good deeds; (c) cognitive, as with the increase of knowledge; and (d) social relations, including the necessity to preserve communal and collective safety, prosperity, protection, stability, and peace.

Invocations involve combinations of aptitudes as found in genuine intention, will and piety. Draz views intention as the ultimate end towards which the intelligence and conscious effort are inclined and intended to reach. Intention is not just a state of the psyche, consciousness, will, desire, and motive, but a complex combination of all results in the moments during which actions are undertaken. According to Draz, intention needs to embrace understanding ‘to understand what one is doing’, will ‘to want to do it’, and determination ‘to want it precisely because it is recommended or prescribed’ [17]. Islam considers intention as a validating factor not only for religious or spiritual practices but for the social acts as well. Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: “The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended. So, whosoever emigrated for worldly benefits or for a woman to marry, his emigration was for that which he emigrated for” [11]. He is also reported to have said: “Deeds are evaluated on the basis of original intentions of their actors” [18]. As far as the will and act are concerned, we find terms such as ‘we have heard’ and ‘we have obeyed’ which point to humans acting according to the order of spirituality, implying obedience and submission to the Divine will. Another key word is human capacity, which allows individuals to execute the Divine Will. In one invocation, God is asked not to charge human beings with that which is beyond their capacity. Such an invocation corresponds with the spirit of divine law according to which God charges human beings according to their respective capacities (Qur’an 2:233, 286; 6:152; 7:42; 23:62).

## 5. Illustrations of Spiritual Intelligence in the Qur’an

Perhaps, one of the oldest historical tragedies is the story of Cain and Abel, Adam’s two sons. Their account exhibits complex reactions and manifestations of human desires, conflict, fear of God, piety, sacrifice, crime, goodness, evil, and regret. The Qur’an reports their story as follows: “Recite to them

the truth of the story of the two sons of Adam. Behold! they each presented a sacrifice (to Allah): It was accepted from one, but not from the other. Said the latter: “Be sure I will slay thee.”... “Surely,” said the former, “Allah doth accept of the sacrifice of those who are righteous”, “If thou dost stretch thy hand against me, to slay me, it is not for me to stretch my hand against thee to slay thee: for I do fear Allah, the cherisher of the worlds... The (selfish) soul of the other led him to the murder of his brother: he murdered him, and became (himself) one of the lost ones” ([8], Chapter 5:27–32). These verses show that the reaction of Abel and his concurrent decision stemmed purely from fear of God.

Unlike Cain, however, Abel reiterated his reluctance to stretch his hand against Cain to cause him any harm, in spite of Cain’s extreme hostility and aggression. The conversation points vividly to a rather high level in the stature of Abel’s spiritual self-state. Abel’s peaceful response to Cain’s aggression further highlights clarity of purpose and confidence, most assuredly resulting from a sense of spiritual transparency and a full-fledged commitment to peace instead of unjustified violence and hostility. Abel’s spiritual awakening appears to be crystal-clear and even irresistible to a point where he was ready and able to overcome the negative temptations of revenge. His spiritual-based decision points to a high degree of consciousness of God and a profound knowledge of the nature of the temporary world in contrast to an eternally infinite one; granting him access to beautiful power in contrast to Cain’s blindness, spiritual deficiency, and perhaps social disconnection. Some commentators of the Qur’an argue that Abel’s response to his brother’s aggression was a conscious decision, demonstrating a high level of spiritual and moral consciousness while showing how piety was able to generate firm ground for peace-making instead of bloodshed and destruction and even supports basic self-defence.

The series of events concludes with the miserable killing of Abel and the bone-deep regret of Cain. The Qur’an extends its moral instruction far beyond the crime scene so as to advance universal implications determined for wiser organization of the human future; therefore, establishing the ultimatum that whosoever terminates one life, his deed is as heinous as if he has terminated all of humanity, and he who brings life to one, it is as if he has brought life to all of humanity. According to the tradition of Islam, individuals are allowed to defend themselves in a manner proportionate to the degree of assault but are at the same time highly urged to exercise forgiveness and pardon instead of revenge. The Abelian experience also shows how the spiritual states described as fear of God and seeking of the divine satisfaction are able to play a major role in the course of decision making. Had it not been for the effects of spiritual consciousness, Abel’s response might have been diametrically different, for it was neither weakness nor cowardice that brought about his unconditional submission.

Another interesting manifestation of spiritual intelligence is shown in the Abrahamic account (Qur’an 87:19) according to which God granted Abraham specific personality traits such as imploring God, mildness, penitence (Qur’an 11:75), being a model for humanity, devoutly obedient to God, upright by nature (Qur’an 16:120), truthful (Qur’an 19:41), and an excellent example to follow (Qur’an 60:4). Abraham built the Ka’bah, instituted pilgrimage, declared monotheism, struggled against polytheism and established what might be described as the logical method for knowing the divine. Soon after the building of the Ka’bah, Abraham declared Mecca as a sacred city and prohibited the spilling of blood, hunting of animals, cutting down of trees, destruction of foliage, or uprooting any vegetation within the sacred borders [19].

Abraham is also described as ‘naturally upright’ [7]. This term suggests that Prophet Abraham made a great effort to confront the dominant pseudo-religious beliefs of his time. Natural uprightness implies holding and adhering to a different alternative religious way. Nevertheless, in the context of the struggle and confrontation with dominant religious practices, it was extremely challenging to uphold the qualities of uprightness. This is the case with the idols that Abraham never worshipped. The Qur’an states: “Abraham was not a Jew, nor a Christian; but was one pure of faith and a Muslim (who submitted to God with a sound heart). He was never of those who associate partners with God” ([8], Chapter 3:67). Abraham’s course of action indicates an articulation of spiritual intelligence shown through his responses to the tests of life and its struggles (Qur’an 2:124). Abraham successfully passed the tests and as such was raised to the ‘rank of friend of God’ [19]. His tests began during his childhood when he lived among a family devoted to idol worship; the trials he faced through his submission to the will of God and the decision he undertook concerning his son Ishmael.

Perhaps, one of the clearest manifestations of spiritual intelligence in the case of Prophet Abraham is seen in the quest he undertook upon himself for the truth. While his people worshipped idols, Abraham set out on a rather different questing course to satisfy his inner needs for affection and protection. In his journey, Abraham used his innate abilities of thinking and observation of things around him with a simple innate criterion of love, as illustrated in the following Qur’anic verse. “When Abraham noticed a star, he exclaimed it to be his probable Lord. Yet, when the star disappeared, Abraham said: “I love not the things that disappear” ([8], Chapter 6:76). “A beloved one who disappears is not beautiful; for one doomed to decline cannot be truly beautiful. It is not, and should not be loved in the heart; for the heart is created for eternal love and mirrors the Eternally-Besought-of-All. A desired one doomed to disappear is unworthy of the heart’s attachment or the mind’s preoccupation. It cannot be the object of desire and is unworthy of being missed. So why should the heart adore and be attached to it?” ([8], Chapter 6:76–79). Not only does this reflect the manifestations of spiritual intelligence which does not necessarily depend on higher forms of learning or sophisticated styles of thinking and observation skills, but more importantly, it defines the potential for the innate nature and its inherent ability, which if applied properly are enough to produce the first forms of spiritual intelligence, setting people on the right path.

The third example relates to the story of Prophet Joseph. His experience showcases significant elements such as God’s immediate support, social relations, interpretation of dreams, and management of the community’s financial crisis among many others. According to the Qur’anic account, the wife of the Egyptian governor fell in love with Prophet Joseph and was intensely drawn to his attractive physical look. We are told that she sets herself for him, locked the doors and eagerly attempted to seduce him [20]. The Qur’an describes those moments in the following: “And she, in whose house he was, asked of him an evil act. She bolted the doors and said: Come!” Joseph responded as follows: “He said: I seek refuge in Allah! Lo! He is my lord, who hath treated me honorably. Lo! Wrongdoers never prosper” ([8], Chapter 12:23). Joseph explained his indebtedness, trust and loyalty of his master. According to Ibn Kathir, the lord in this context refers to Joseph’s master who treated him with kindness and who was not to be betrayed in his family. According to Ibn Kathir, Joseph’s desire was simply inner voice of the self. Yet, in spite of Joseph’s bold decline, the woman never gave up her intent for seduction [20].

According to the Qur'an, Prophet Joseph resolutely holds on to the decision of choosing prison instead of falling into immorality and disloyalty. The Qur'an records Joseph's decision as follows: "He said: O my Lord! Prison is dearer than that unto which they urge me, and if Thou fend not off their wiles from me I shall incline unto them and become of the foolish" ([8], Chapter 12:33). Joseph's reaction to the seductive plan was made as follows: "God protect, that I betray my master who honoured me and treated me with kindness. They are at loss those who are unjust committing that they should not do" [20]. For Baghawi, Joseph's resistance was possible despite the woman's mounting urge for him to surrender to her class authority. Baghawi argues that Joseph preferred a temporary prison sentence in this world rather than submitting to instant desires which would condemn him for eternal torment. Baghawi argues that knowledge and wisdom both proved the need to advance actions with benefit and gain, and to further choose actions with positive results. For him, the choice made by Prophet Joseph was only possible with divine support in view of his good-will, determination, and also personal weakness [21].

The Qur'anic account reflects Joseph's spiritual competence and moral consciousness causing him to seek divine pleasure alone. While prison is commonly seen as a place of pain and misery, for Joseph, it was a time of solitude and purification of the soul from temporary transient pleasures and illusions. Joseph preferred a harsh course of life against one that is short, shallow and temporary. Joseph showcased significant levels of spiritual intelligence as well as profound degrees of awareness in his choice which he based on profound spirituality, awareness, morality and wisdom. What appears to have clearly underlined Joseph's spiritual-moral decision however was his deep awareness of God which was associated with fear, hope, and an unwavering loyalty and commitment to his master. Joseph's awareness oscillates between an Eternal Master and a temporary one. His decision illustrates a deep spiritual-moral interface meant to create a positive course of action; effectively engaging the seducing woman in a process of considerate thinking rather than becoming entangled in worldly physical shackles. Joseph's inclination to imprisonment preserves the genuine character of prophethood, maintains the purity of servitude to God, transcends the world of short-lived temptations and desires, endorses moral integrity, and safeguards the healthy and vibrant relationships of trust, commitment and loyalty. These considerations demonstrate a highly dynamic interface of spirituality and morality; working together for the religious and moral well-being of the individual and the community. It sets a precedent model for similar circumstances where physical desires may possibly ruin spiritual and moral integrity. This very moral integrity was necessary for Joseph's future career as a minister of finance in Egypt, who helped his family in times of famine and his community during food shortages. Following his prison sentence, the governor of Egypt wanted to release him; Joseph, however, rejected the offer, opting to wait until his full innocence was established (Qur'an 12:51).

## **6. Indicators of Spiritual Intelligence in Islam**

The hierarchy of Islamic spirituality not only allows its seekers to attain spiritual merits, but also helps them master various levels and stages of self-discipline reflecting their states of spiritual awareness and experience. Different views of spirituality articulate different levels and stages set according to respective norms, styles and merits whose objectivity is not an easy task. This is particularly true when super-natural, mystical, extraordinary factors are used as theoretical tools to

justify the form of spiritual sense as might be the case for those who experience spiritual excitement yet are unable to express their experiences in commonly understandable language. According to Islam, the expression of spiritual intelligence should neither be ambiguous nor employ convoluted language.

The Qur'an identifies three distinctly inter-related levels within the spiritual hierarchy; namely, submission (Islam), faith (*iman*), and excellence (*ihsan*). As far as the level of submission is concerned, the Qur'an describes humans as weak creatures characterized by need and dependence, which perhaps explains why spiritual experience first begins with submission to God, following His Guidance, and showing diligent attention to external environments surrounding the self. In its generic meaning of peace, Islam transforms submission into inner tranquillity. When submission is made for God, life is expected to change for the better. In essence, spiritual submission in Islam is perceived as passive, static or even subconscious, and beyond this, reflects deep consciousness, thirst for knowledge, wisdom, will, optimism and order. It also generates spiritual deeds, states, and thoughts as a reflection of religious devotion [22]. Faith concerns itself with the confirmation of belief in God, the Angels, the holy books, the Prophets, the Day of Reckoning and Destiny; leading believers to acquire nearness to the transcendental truth, resulting in good deeds, states, and thoughts [22]. Excellence in this regard is seen as the highest level of faith and requires active engagement in the process of awareness and submission to God. Life at this stage revolves continually around worship and devotion to God with excellence and perfection.

The example of Islamic charity illustrates some of the meanings mentioned above. At the most basic level, Islamic charity stands as an act of benevolent spending and due religious obligation. At the level of faith, however, the individual advances supplementary acts of kindness such as charity, gifts, loans, and endowment. Climbing higher to the level of excellence and perfection requires fulfillment of both submission and perfection in such a way that the human intention, deeds, means, and outcomes are affected. Perfection however, requires piety and righteousness. Spiritual intelligence at this level turns into shining wisdom shaping the entire personality of the individuals in all that they plan or do. The following illustrate these meanings further:

“In most of their secret talks there is no good: But if one exhorts to a deed of charity or justice or conciliation between men, (Secrecy is permissible): To him who does this, seeking the good pleasure of Allah, We shall soon give a reward of the highest value” ([8], Chapter 4:114).

In a Hadith Qudsi, Prophet Muhammad narrated:

“My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious obligations I have enjoined upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it. I do not hesitate about anything as much as I hesitate about [seizing] the soul of My faithful servant: he hates death and I hate hurting him” [11].

The Qur'an shows a rather keen interest in the improvement of the human character in accordance with individuals' freedom of choice and will. This implies that spiritual intelligence in Islam is not static, but rather grows dynamically; leading one to continually protect and improve the self, others and the environment. This would embrace a deep-found consciousness, authentic knowledge, wisdom

in action, and realistic vision. For example, the Qur'an provides visual illustrations of the spiritual intelligence of Prophets, believers, and communities. Although it may not be easy to discuss all of the indicators of spiritual intelligence in the Qur'an, we shall attempt to highlight some of its categories, namely, internal, external, individual, and communal. The internal indicators of spiritual intelligence essentially relate to two types of qualities: positive characteristics identified as goodness, which embraces positive actions such as belief, devoutness, piety, remembrance, humility, return to God, satisfaction, trust, obedience, truthfulness, fear from God, hope, and knowledge; and their opposite counterparts, *i.e.*, its negative characteristics such as evil, including disbelief, hypocrisy, envy, wickedness, arrogance, heedlessness, ignorance, deception, enmity, and despair.

Muslims' inner emotions manifest themselves when internal qualities and external behaviour are interactive. The Shari'ah organizes those external indicators according to five ethico-legal values; namely, the obligatory, recommended, reprehensible, permissible, and unlawful. High indicators of spiritual intelligence are proportionate with the fulfillment of good, whether at the level of mandatory, recommended or desirable. In contrast, unlawful acts proportionately affect spiritual intelligence. Sinning for instance negatively affects the level of spiritual intelligence and may even impair it to its weakest points. When sins become major, however, as with associating a partner with God, killing fellow human beings, or propagating scandals, the inner sight will be temporarily dysfunctional. Spiritual intelligence in the Qur'an is manifested in good achievements based on the fulfillment of the objectives of Shari'ah, which are inclusive of the protection of religion, the self, the faculties, human possessions, reason, dignity, offspring, wealth, property, natural resources as well as the environment.

The indicators of spiritual intelligence are also viewed in terms of individual and community status. Good deeds invested in the community are raised in value and sustainable worth. Positive actions, however, begin at the individual level. The spiritual capital of the community is nothing but the aggregate spiritual will of individuals. Knowing one another, competition, resistance, struggle for the sake of God, sympathy, mutual support, and unity are just a few indicators observed at the communal level. This gains particular significance in light of the Qur'an establishing that spirituality leads to a good life (*hayat tayyibah*). The term 'good' as used in the Qur'anic verse denotes themes such as offspring (Qur'an 2:38), places of dwelling and homes (Qur'an 9:78; 61:12), favourable natural phenomena such as the wind (Qur'an 10:22), quality of life (Qur'an 16:97), words, language and communication (Qur'an 14:24), creation (Qur'an 24:61), cities or townships (Qur'an 34:15). The Qur'an speaks of a life characterized by security from fear, grief or frustration (Qur'an 10:62). Moral and spiritual capital contribute to the effective building of society's consciousness while defining its basic existence and character, and supplying it with its *raison d'être*, balance and motivation.

According to the Qur'an, those indicators extend to the use of human faculties such as the heart, the five senses, and reasoning. The Qur'an states: "Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge (whether it is good or bad), and refrain from groundless assertions and conjectures. Surely, the hearing, the sight, and the heart are each subject to accountability (you are answerable, and will be called to account, for each of these faculties on the Day of Judgement)" ([8], Chapter 17:36). The Qur'an also states: "For, Believers are those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts, and when they hear His signs rehearsed, find their faith strengthened, and put (all) their trust in their Lord" ([8], Chapter 8:2). Yet, while agreeing on a minimum set of spiritual indicators, the Qur'an leaves ample space for spiritual excellence and creativity. The following Qur'anic description, nonetheless, provides another

set of indicators: (a) vision and purpose: inheritors of paradise (Qur'an 23:2), (b) purification of the soul, wealth and resources (Qur'an 23:3), (c) calmness, serenity, tranquility, dignity, and humility (Qur'an 23:4), (d) strength of faith (Qur'an 7:201; 8:2;), (e) remembrance of God (Qur'an 7:201), (f) dependence on God and self-assurance (Qur'an 76:9–10), (g) observing regular prayers (Qur'an 23:8) courage and positivity (Qur'an 42:39), (h) doing what is useful and abstaining from vain talk, deeds and falsehood, not wasting time on things of no benefit (Qur'an 23:10), (i) trust and fulfillment of promises and pledges (Qur'an 23:8), (j) decency and forgiveness (Qur'an 42:37), (k) purity of chastity (not indulging in immorality) (Qur'an 23:5).

We may further draw on some other general indicators such as the following: strength of self-assurance resulting from trust in God; strong connection to the Divine and engaging remembrance of God (*dhikr*) alongside the recitation of the Qur'an; contemplating and pondering over God's creation; swift change from negative courses of action; leading others towards goodness and change; high levels of motivation in seeking God's pleasure alongside the constant renewal of intention; seeking perfection and excellence in doing things; renewed awareness of the Divine; increased sensitivity to the needy and poor; learning from mistakes; positive feelings while performing religious acts, visiting religious sites as found in Makkah, Medina, Jerusalem or others religious places; commitment to serving others; hospitality, caring and kindness; flexibility and tolerance; optimism; thankfulness and gratefulness; being inspired by religious, spiritual masters and wise individuals; sensitivity to environment; forgiveness and not holding hatred towards others; working independently and being led by one's conscience; and empathizing and sharing both joy and pain with others.

Spiritual intelligence also draws on the 'Other', thus leading humans to travel and migrate. Spiritual intelligence provides different instructional guides for those interested to gradually move on to the transcendental world. At times, the 'Other' is made to appear very near to us, not very far from our actual world. At other times, however, it seems exceedingly far, ambiguous, unreachable, or even non-existent. Spirituality supports the final destination alongside cultivation of beliefs and in turn generates attitudes that contribute to the fundamental shaping of human life including God, the self, others, living creatures, the visible world, cosmos, and unseen world. It may also be noted that some forms of spiritual intelligence appear to be ego-centred or disconnected from the transcendent world and only promote what might be viewed as secularized spirituality, or rather, a self-centred spiritual source or a self-consuming source.

## 7. Sustaining Islamic Spiritual Intelligence

Belief in God, Prophets and Angels represent some of the major constituents of a sustainable spiritual platform. Some other religious principles, however, contribute to the building of sustainable spiritual intelligence including purification of the self (*tazkiyah*), learning the purpose of actions, appropriate responses to divine trials, and cultivating discipline. According to the Qur'an, trial represents both test and affliction [7]. The objective of the trial is to pursue proofs for truthfulness and falsehood (Qur'an 29:2), perseverance and endurance (Qur'an 25:20). Appropriate response to the divine trials implies that for every credited spiritual success, there are moments of associated hardship and trial. [23] The higher the intensity of difficulty and trial, the more efficient is the make-up of spiritual intelligence as is the case with Prophets and Messengers.

According to the Qur'an, spiritual wellness yields success and prosperity (Qur'an 7:96). The term *barakah* in the Qur'an (Qur'an 7:96) refers to blessing and connotes growth and development [24], and according to Zamakhshari (d. 1143), it indicates goodness originating from all directions [25]. At the individual level, however, spiritual capacity leads to lasting positive results, and enrichment of capital as a result of charitable deeds. What is interesting, however, is that the Qur'an sets out the spiritual order according to three inter-related stages—Islam, beliefs and perfection—while considering the transition throughout them as a prerequisite for submission to God. This may be seen through performance of prayers such as the five compulsory prayers, Friday congregation prayers, other desirable additional prayers prescribed for specific seasons and conditions such as the nightly prayers of Tarawih during the fasting month of Ramadan, the prayer of need (*salat al-hajah*), prayer offered during lunar and solar eclipses (*salat al-khusuf wa al-kusuf*), prayer for rain (*salat al-istisqa*) or prayer for consultation with the divine (*salat al-istikhara*). These spiritual avenues are set to respond to and simultaneously accommodate a variety of human, natural, and environmental changes and as such contribute to sustaining a spiritual mode of life and thought, in addition to the homogenous development of a shared perspective with respect to God, life and social responsibility.

Similar theological analogy may be applied to some other religious acts of devotion, which altogether point towards a deeper interest in spiritual and moral sustainability. Fasting for instance, include the prescribed fasting during the Month of Ramadan, the Day of 'Arafah during Muslims' pilgrimage to Makkah, and on certain days of the Islamic sacred months, Monday and Thursday, and three days every lunar month (Muslim calendar). Whether compulsory or optional, fasting is meant to support the individual spiritual and moral self-discipline while gradually remedying society's state of being; resulting in an increasingly steady development of social capital. The institutions of Zakat (purifying alms) and pilgrimage make no exception. Muslims are required to spend 2.5% out of their accumulated savings over a one-year period and are exhorted to give due financial attention to eight categories of needs as highlighted in the Qur'an (Qur'an 4:95) and to extend a helping hand to others in need or during difficulties, endow goods (*waqf*), and exchange gifts. Even when potentially unfit to share financial assets, Muslims are still responsible for investing in a broad range of avenues in a manner that affects the general, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being of society, not to mention deriving intrinsic rewards for individuals. Such examples involve smiling, reconciliation and moderation among quarrelling parties, removal of harm from public spheres, and providing advice and counselling to others. Pilgrimage may be performed once a year, while the spiritual trip to Mecca or even visiting the holy Mosques of Medina or Jerusalem remains a religious option.

The spiritual hierarchy is reflected through the Qur'an's exhortation of believers to exercise abundant remembrance of God which is done in three forms: emotional, meditational, and behavioural. The Qur'an describes God's remembrance as the greatest action and deed (Qur'an 29:45). In it, the following concepts are entrenched: praise of remembrance and promise of rewards of forgiveness (Qur'an 7:205; 33:35; 33:41–42); believers should engage in profound remembrance of God for its negligence implies lack of honesty and integrity; success is achieved through remembrance (Qur'an 62:10); remembrance is a reliable method for inner peace and tranquility (Qur'an 13:28); remembrance of God involves a number of interrelated intermediaries such as remembrance of God by heart (Qur'an 3:135)

On numerous occasions, however, the Qur'an records a number of negative influences that result in the de-sustaining of spiritual intelligence manifested in strategies and devices Satan utilizes to

manipulate thoughts and feelings of spiritual discipline, and most importantly perhaps, to affect the very process of decision making. Satan is able to manoeuvre and sway the cognitive-spiritual course of believers, causing them setbacks such as relapsing into sin, bewitchment, and fear by means of issuing orders and promises, inducing to slip, or provoking enmity, stirring desire, winning over, plotting, misguiding, associating, scattering, causing to forget, beautifying, slandering, seducing, dictating, whispering, attracting, proposing the opposite, leading with guile, betraying, engrossing, conspiring, descending upon, confounding with confusion, leading, inspiring, deserting in the hour of need, enslaving, establishing a brotherhood, and provoking strife.

The aforementioned manoeuvres reflect the Satanic potential to blur the vision of spiritual direction, whether at the individual or collective levels, causing disturbance to the very process of decision making. According to the Qur'an's description, in some cases, Satan breaks promises, invites, stimulates or beautifies ideas or objects; thereby, causing confusion, ambiguity and fear. Satan's influence also extends to a number of cognitive perceptions brought about through the use of strategies of misguidance or causing one to slip and forget. This yields imbalanced perceptions and as such poor evaluation of the context of human and social interaction. On another level, however, Satan may potentially disturb human movements towards peace and serenity; effectively causing sadness, stress and agony. Acts such as inspiring, revealing, associating with, leading to, or winning over all exhibit Satan's skills of twisting, influencing, and eventually contributing to the emergence of negative energy and distorted courses of action.

When spiritual progression is potentially poor, believers tend to forget or even underestimate the many potentials granted by God and to rather surrender to external influences, causing gradual domination of despair, depression, loss or self devastation. In sharp contrast to this, the spiritual capital of believers would potentially generate states of peace, balance and responsible social action. The influence of Satan in stirring up confusion or blurring the vision of human action does not mean possession of an independent power to affect the ultimate destiny of man. Satan holds no sway or influence over the course of action. Satan owns no decisive influence, and is even characterized by weakness in contrast to the sincere will inherent within individual's devotion to God. On a social plane, however, Satan causes enmity and hate, elicits fear of material deficiency and prompts indecency and evildoing. As described in the Qur'an, Satan manipulates different mediums of communicating with humans, each of which cater to human strengths or weaknesses and include acts such as ordaining, inspiring, whispering, suggesting, proposing counterproductive options, conspiring, dictating, and inviting to evil ends.

Islam instructs its followers to act with decency and in good spirit, and show trustworthiness and commitment to spiritual perfection as per the illustrative models described in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Similarly Muslims should strive to grasp the meanings and implications of states, stages, means, objectives and forms associated with their ascension to God and obedience to Him on their path to attaining the guidance, support and companionship of God (Qur'an 9:36, 9:40). According to the Qur'an, throughout the course of spiritual growth and perfection, believers would attain increased degrees of spiritual capabilities and potential from the divine, a guiding light and companionship. The Qur'an states: "Is he who was dead (in spirit), and We raised him to life, and set for him a light by which he moves (without deviancy) among people, is he like the one who is as one lost in depths of darkness, from which he cannot get out?" ([8], Chapter 6:122). One supporting example is found in the

following Qur'anic verse: "O ye who believe! if ye fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion (to judge between right and wrong), remove from you (all) evil (that may afflict) you, and forgive you: for Allah is the Lord of grace unbounded" ([8], Chapter 8:29). According to this verse, God provides believers with a sense of direction and a criterion to distinguish right from wrong, moral from immoral choices, and truth from falsehood. The resulting spiritual and cognitive precision varies according to the degree of belief, knowledge, and commitment to cultivation of moral discipline.

This also implies that the degree of healthy and sustainable growth achieved therein is proportionate to the input of spiritual doses affecting moral and social change. In contrast, however, communities are able to improve their conditions when their collective spiritual dedication to change is carefully integrated within the course of community's development. Nevertheless, the building of spiritual capital should be made easy, simple and straightforward for the reason that the religion of Islam appreciates goodwill and discipline, particularly in relation to the comprehensive development of communities. This is probably the reason why Islam did not promote the *sauve qui peut* style of spirituality and considers passive forms of spiritual education by way of social seclusion, isolation, withdrawal, and rejection as blameworthy methods of spiritual exercise which might only be strictly justified in extreme conditions of corruption or chaos affecting the community at large.

## 8. Conclusions

All efforts to standardize models of spiritual intelligence over diverse settings of complex religious and cultural compositions require giving due attention to the very system of beliefs, spirituality, morality and law so as to not *de-sacralize* or secularize them. Our intellectual struggle to improve the conditions of life should reflect a genuine understanding of human diversity whose neglect may entail corruption of the very essence of religions and religiosity in a broader sense, and, specifically, spiritual intelligence in the global age, and may even result in the unjust treatment of others, especially when we force their spiritual ambitions and experiences into irreligiously academic ambitions and a 'scientific' view of the world. For Muslims, the Qur'anic perspective on spiritual intelligence is holistic; it engages the human soul, intellect and needs in a dynamic movement of spiritual purification, character improvement and moral perfection, not only of an isolated self, but of individuals engaged with God and with building human society. Spiritual intelligence is evaluated not only in terms of its clarity, resulting in life peace or joy, but also with regards to the positive transformation of life in general and the harmony brought about as a result of understanding of the fundamental questions and purpose of life. This is brought about by establishing God at the very center of every spiritual pursuit in such a way that spiritual intelligence would have spiritual and rational resonance with the Divine while sustaining a spiritually positive, balanced, and transparent transformation of the self and environment.

## Author Contributions

This paper is based on the collective writing and research of these three authors, and is the outcome of their design, analysis and writing up.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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