

# Who is Gamal Al-Banna?

Gamal Al-Banna

## WHO IS GAMAL AL-BANNA? SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE THOUGHT OF GAMAL AL-BANNA

People are used to seeing whoever speaks about Islam as a venerable, bearded sheikh who wears a turban or a Saudi headdress for men, a cloak, and a puckered mark on his forehead because of much prayers and prostration. In their view, he should hold a rosary, and begin his speech in a long, tedious preamble of religious sentences known by heart. The emergence of Gamal Al-Banna in the domain of Islamic thought was a shock to such people who hold these expectations, for he is bareheaded, beardless, with no rosary, or a puckered mark on his forehead. He never begins his speech with the familiar, formal, gratuitous, and long sentences. He never wears the garments of sheikhs, nor a suit like ordinary people, instead he wears a simple, unique dress, and he never went to the university of Al-Azhar.

Gamal Al-Banna never cared for fame, and he used to work alone, away from limelight. He never undertook any post or important position, and he did not care about his name to appear in the media. To mainstream people, he seems as if he emerged suddenly, and accordingly he seems different to them. That is why ignorant, false accusations were leveled against him. Some claimed he is an errant youth, others said he is a doting old man, a secular man who aims for fame and controversy... etc.

Gamal Al-Banna was sent a hate mail (via his email address).by someone saying to him that before he speaks about religion, he should first grow a Sunni beard.

Seeing this negative feedback to the Islamic Revival Movement, Gamal Al-Banna has decided to introduce himself to the audience and readers.

Yet, he prefers to speak about himself in the third person method of narration. He said about this respect: *"I find it hard in my position to talk about myself, for the cause is objective, and speaking about oneself is something subjective. Yet, using the third person method of narration would make readers part of the discussion, whereas using the first person method of narration alienates the reader"*.

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# [ I ]

## DISTINCTIVE ISLAMIC ROOTS

Gamal Al-Banna was born in a Muslim family, to which Islam was the main axis, especially to its prominent members: Sheikh Ahmed Abdel-Rahman AL-BANNA, and his firstborn son, the martyred imam Hasan AL-BANNA.

This family worked in the service of Islam, and it had two exceptional and distinctive features: high resolve and strong will. Sheikh Ahmed Abdel-Rahman Al-Banna began his great intellectual project of classifying the “Musnad”<sup>1</sup>, and interpreting hadiths<sup>2</sup> compiled by imam Ahmed Ibn Hanbal<sup>3</sup>, as no one undertook this task since this imam compiled these hadiths a thousand of years ago, in the third Hegira century. This project began in the thirteenth Hegira century by Gamal Al-Banna's father. To understand this great work, we have to know that Ibn Hanbal was a great imam who compiled about thirteen thousand hadiths of Prophet Muhammad, unlike any other references and books of hadiths. Yet, these hadiths were not classified thematically, but according to sequence of narrators. This arrangement prevented making use of this compilation as a reference in Fiqh, and no one tried to reclassify these hadiths before, during the last thousand years except Ibn Kathir<sup>4</sup>, who failed in this task.

Sheikh Ahmed Abdel-Rahman Al-Banna performed this daunting, arduous task single-handedly. He classified these hadiths in many volumes, and within them, there are parts and chapters according to the divisions of Fiqh. Later on, he wrote his interpretation of these hadiths in an easy language and style, and he tackled the phrasing and wording of each hadith to verify if it is weak, trusted, fake, strange ... etc. This task took him thirty-five years, in the first half of the twentieth century. Hasan Al-Banna performed another miracle, which is establishing the Muslim Brotherhood group within twenty years. His genius is clear, as this group and its existence have defied the enmities of rulers of Egypt since King Farouk I, Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak until now.

This is what we mean by high resolve, as the father and the brother of Gamal Al-Banna undertake great, original tasks for the benefit of all Muslims, not seeking worldly rewards, fame, or personal interests.

As for the strong will, both men began their mission while they had no money, nor fame and prestige, nor high position. Both never stepped into Al-Azhar University, whose thousands of graduates would never dare to do similar great deeds. Hasan Al-Banna was a teacher of the Arabic language; could any ordinary teacher establish a group similar to the Muslim Brotherhood, inside or outside Cairo?

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<sup>1</sup> Musnad: is a collection of [Hadith](#) collected by the famous [Sunni scholar Ibn Hanbal](#) to whom the [Hanbali madhab](#) of [Sunni](#) is attributed. It is said by some that [Ibn Hanbal](#) made a comment in regards to his book which read as follows: "There is not a [hadith](#) that I have included in this book except that it was used as evidence by some of the scholars." An issue concerning [Imam Ahmad's hadith](#) collection, his Musnad, was that during his work on it, he struck out various hadith as not belonging to his collection. This methodology was not understood by some of the copyists and they reinserted some of these hadith which Ibn Hanbal had made efforts to remove in their transcriptions. (source: [Wikipedia.com](#))

<sup>2</sup> Hadith: are narrations originating from the words and deeds of the [Islamic prophet Muhammad](#). Hadith are regarded by traditional [schools of jurisprudence](#) as important tools for understanding the [Qur'an](#) and in matters of [jurisprudence](#). (source [Wikipedia.com](#))

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hanbal Abu `Abd Allah al-Shaybani was an important [Muslim scholar](#) and [theologian](#) of [Persian](#) background. He is considered the founder of the [Hanbali](#) school of [fiqh](#) (Islamic jurisprudence). Ahmad ibn Hanbal was born at [Merv](#), in [Khorassan](#), of the city in which his parents were natives, in 780 (AC) [164 AH] and died at Baghdad in 855(AC) [241 AH]. (source: [Wikipedia.com](#))

<sup>4</sup> His full name is Abu Al-Fida, 'Imad Ad-Din Isma'il bin 'Umar bin Kathir Al-Qurashi Al-Busrawi. He was born in 1301(AC)(687 AH) in [Busra](#), [Syria](#) (hence Al-Busrawi). He was taught by [Ibn Taymiyya](#) in [Damascus](#). In later life, he became blind. He attributes his blindness to working late at night on the [Musnad](#) of [Ahmad Ibn Hanbal](#) in an attempt to rearrange it topically rather than by narrator. Ibn Kathir died in February 1373(AC) 759 (AH) in Damascus. (source: [Wikipedia.com](#))

When Sheikh Ahmed Abdel-Rahman Al-Banna began his long project, he was just a peasant who left his village after memorizing the Quran, and he went to the city of Alexandria to participate in the free Islamic studies in the Mosque of Ibrahim The Leader, until he acquired a basic Islamic knowledge. He knew his target very well, and he quit his studies and worked as a watch mender to earn his living and as a kind of hobby between long hours of reading and writing. He decided to devote the rest of his life to complete the volumes of his great work. It took him thirty five years to write it. It was not imaginable that such a simple man, living in one of the Cairene alleys, would devote his life to such a great work, which took him 35 years to fulfill. He had no connection to Al-Azhar, or any other institution that represent Islam, and he was unknown to people.

Yet, Sheikh Ahmed Abdel-Rahman Al-Banna did it alone, printing and publishing it himself in twenty-two volumes, although he was a poor man who provided living for a large family and knew nothing about publishing. This is what we mean by the strong will, which surmounted any kind of obstacles. He bought reams of paper and hired a worker to print the letters of words on them, until he formed the first volume and he would send it to a nearby printing house. The process was repeated until he printed the whole twenty-two volumes of his work. He believed that most publishers were 'thieves', and he used to save all the printed copies in a spacious vault under his office room. He did not sell copies of his book unless to those who came to buy a copy, after people knew about his work from others. When he died, he left to his inheritors a vault full of copies of the twenty-two volume book, whose title was "Al-Fath Al Rabbani" i.e. 'the divine grace'.

This was mission impossible by all criteria, and it cannot be possibly done by a single individual, yet he did it all single-handedly. This is the high resolve and the strong will. These two traits are the manifestation of the grace of God that allowed him to complete his great individual, unique, outstanding work, which was characterized by originality, creativity, and uniqueness.

The same traits are found in the work of Hasan Al-Banna. Before his activism, the Islamic call took the shape of local and divided charity societies, which did used to guide and preach. Hasan Al-Banna established the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, in the city of Ismailia and he started by six persons in a cafe, not in a mosque. This modest beginning was transformed within twenty years into an international organization, with five hundred divisions in Egypt, and many branches in the Islamic world, with five hundred thousand members worldwide. The innovation done by Hasan Al Banna included two main elements:

Firstly, his organizational innovation that transformed the Islamic call from being local into being international. He set standards for other Islamic organizations all over the Islamic world. By this work, Hasan Al Banna left his mark in the Islamic calls in the modem age, as the Muslim Brotherhood group, which commenced in 1928 and reached its peak in (1946-1948), has become a standard yardstick to measure the success and the formation of all other Islamic organizations. The success of Hasan Al Banna in this endeavor was like the success of the Standard Oil Company in the USA, which was the model in oil industry, or the success of the Bolshevik party of Lenin in setting the standards for labor parties all over the world. Secondly, Hasan Al Banna set the notion of 'Islam as a way of life'. Islam in liberal Egypt was pushed aside in a comer, and the law article that stipulates that Arabic is the official language and Islam is the official religion of the state was one of the last few articles in the constitution.

Religion was confined to the domains of mosque imams and preachers of ministry of religious endowments. Gamal Al Banna lived his childhood in a time when mosque imams would mount the pulpit with a wooden sword at hand, and he would deliver the sermon by reading it from yellowish old papers. Gamal Al Banna witnessed a permissible era, when wine was sold in any ordinary grocery, prostitution was supervised and institutionalized by the state, and the economy of the state was run by foreigners.

Hasan Al-Banna made Islam engraved in the heart of the community members and he made university students excellent in the Arab and Islamic culture. His disciples and followers were his students whom he taught his knowledge, faith, and devotion. He used to pray with them in the open air, as their imam, in long sunset and night prayers in Thursdays, and the dawn prayers in Fridays. He used to recite the Quran to them in a vivid, enchanting voice that enraptured them.

The perception of Islam to Hasan Al-Banna and his father was different from the mainstream, common perception of it preached by Al-Azhar, which was showing and emphasizing the differences between doctrines that led to divisions among Muslims, even in forms of prayers. Islam before Hasan Al-Banna had no role to play in the public sphere, which was occupied by socio-political and economic events. Hasan Al-Banna and his father added, by their own understanding of Islam, the elements of objectivity and originality, as they advocated the overlooking of petty doctrinal differences, using the mind and the mental faculty of reasoning, and reviving the Sunna (traditions of Prophet Muhammad). The aim of reviving the Sunna was the motive for Hasan Al-Banna to commission sheikh Sayed Sabek with the mission to write a book summarizing the 22 volume book of his father. Both men wanted the Islamic nation to obey the guidance of Prophet Muhammad, not the commands of religious scholars.

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[II]  
**THE INTIMATE RELATION BETWEEN  
GAMAL AL-BANNA  
AND HIS FATHER AND BROTHER**

Someone might ask, what is the relation between the works of Hasan Al-Banna and his father on one hand, and Gamal Al-Banna on the other hand?

What many do not know is the fact that the relation of Gamal Al-Banna with his brother and his father was more strong and intimate than the relation of the other brothers and sisters to both their father and their elder brother Hasan Al Banna. This was due to many reasons, which will be revealed later on, but chief among them was that Gamal Al Banna refused the familiar bourgeois life (i.e. a university education, then a job, and then getting married to build a family ...etc.). This lifestyle was embraced by the other brothers and sisters of Al-Banna family, and it led them to be not in good contact with the father and the brother Hasan Al-Banna.

Gamal Al-Banna, on the other hand, was free to spend most of his time with his brother and his father, as both of them needed him to do many errands and tasks. They might have noticed his quiet and yet rebellious nature at the same time, and so Gamal Al-Banna was close to both men. Their bond was distinctive and long. Gamal Al-Banna admired both men because of their sense of mission, as both wanted to convey a certain message to the mainstream Muslims, another source of admiration was their devotion of their life to their cause. Gamal Al-Banna has the same traits and nature, despite the difference of many influences that had their impact on him, unlike the father and the elder brother Hasan Al-Banna.

His sense of mission was like theirs, except for the content of his message and the form of his mission. These are the similarities and differences between Gamal Al-Banna and both his father and his elder brother Hasan Al-Banna.

Gamal Al-Banna remained faithful to the memory of both men and commemorated them. He has published the book titled "*Letters of Hasan Al-Banna to his Father*" and they are letters sent in the period (1926-1945) and Gamal Al-Banna saw they worth publishing for their valuable content, despite the personal side of them. These letters/stories are preceded in the book by a long introduction, notes follow each letter, and some of these letters mention things about Gamal Al-Banna. These letters and comments are the second half of the book, as the first half is dedicated to the biography of Gamal Al-Banna' father, mentioning the processes and obstacles of writing his 22-volume book. This book contains unique information about Hasan Al-Banna and his father.

Gamal Al-Banna has published another book titled "*Beyond the Muslim Brotherhood*", presenting the work of Hasan Al-Banna, his historical roles, stances and policies, which cannot be fully understood in their reality unless in light of their circumstances. Gamal Al-Banna defends his brother from the accusations leveled against him by those who did not know him quite as well as Gamal Al-Banna did.

***The relation between Gamal Al-Banna and his father:***

Gamal Al-Banna was the youngest son of the family, and no one of his siblings was born after him, except his sister Fawziya. Shortly before Gamal Al-Banna was born, his family had moved from the countryside paradise of El-Mahmoudiyya, in El-Beheira governorate (located 50 km from Alexandria, near the estuary of the River Nile) to the narrow, humid, cold alleys of Cairo. He was the last son to a mother who was tired of giving birth to a lot of children and of caring for her large family, as her husband left to her all responsibilities to devote his time to writing his 22-volume book. As a child, Gamal Al-Banna was frail and had an emaciated body-built, whereas children of the alley were strong, and so he was an introvert. Reading was his only pastime. Once he learned how to read, he began reading whatever he could lay his hands on. His father used to accompany him, as a child, to his office. The father would begin

his work, leaving young Gamal Al-Banna in the anteroom of the office, which was full of papers and magazines that the child used to peruse. The child had read many issues of the papers, magazines, and Arabic novels of that age, including Al-Ahram newspaper and its installments of the translated novels to Arabic. His father used to collect these pages of the novels installments, to arrange and bind them in a book form.

One might ask, what is the relation of sheikh Al-Banna the rural man, who devoted his lifetime to his 22-volume book, with such newspapers and novels? How could he be interested in these novels, collected these scraps and binding them in a book form? This was one aspect of his unique character. This was the foundation of his civil culture and the basis of his free, easy writing style before he set out in his life project.

This cultural background led him to avoid the complicated, difficult style of his contemporary religious scholars. This made him have a more broadened vision and widened his cultural horizon as well.

Since these early days of the childhood of Gamal Al-Banna in his father's library until the father's death, this bond between both of them was never cut. Al-Banna the father used to love and favor the last two of his offspring, Gamal and Fawziya Al-Banna. The father named his son Gamal after the great leader Gamal El-Afghani<sup>5</sup>. The father used to say to

his son that he is the successor of El-Afghani, and the child Gamal used to say to others that his name is Gamal El-Afghani. Gamal Al-Banna used to visit his father in his office to cheer him in his loneliness. He used to accompany his ailing father in his last days to help him, as he was the only one of his children that had no job, no wife and children, and used to live in the family household, unlike his siblings who were married and had their own houses. When the father had fallen ill shortly before his death, he moved to the house of his son Abdel-Rahman so that doctors could visit him easily, and he brought with him some of

his books and references. He told Gamal Al-Banna how to finish the volume no. 22 by using the reference titled *"The Beginning and the End"* by Ibn Khatheer, as this 22nd volume covers Islamic history, while the reference by Ibn Khatheer recounts these historical events with their sequence of narrators.

When sheikh Al-Banna the father died, his library and office were inherited by Gamal Al-Banna, who used to pay its rent and sell the copies of his father 22-volume book. Yet, due to negligence, humidity destroyed some magazines and

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papers, especially the issues of the daily newspaper of the Muslim brotherhood. The books of library, however, remained intact, yet some people damaged a few books inadvertently. When a municipal order came to destroy the office building, Gamal Al-Banna managed to find a spacious flat to move to it most items of the library of his father. Al-Banna family continued to print copies of the father's book by using the money of its sales. The late Al-Banna used to store the copies in a vault, but when it was filled, he had built a loft to store further copies. The only one who had time to oversee the printing process and completing the book until it has reached the total number of 24

volumes was Gamal Al-Banna. This great book of the father, with its many volumes, is still the ornament of the library of Gamal Al-Banna, along with its manuscript, and the manuscripts of other unfinished books by the late sheikh Al-Banna.

We can summarize the influence of the late sheikh Al-Banna on his son Gamal Al-Banna in the following points:

Firstly, one might think that sheikh Al-Banna was a Salafist, but this is not true. He never believed in blind imitation and following one of the main four doctrines of Islam, but he was a Sunni who wanted to adhere to the Sunna and leave out the differences of doctrines. He believed that there is a difference in the Fiqh of Sunna and Fiqh of the doctrines. That is why his work had the element of innovation and Islamic revival.

Secondly, sheikh Al-Banna was a self-made man, and this fact is a source of inspiration to Gamal Al-Banna, which encouraged him to drop the idea of getting a university education and degree, and to refuse the established bourgeois lifestyle at the time. Sheikh Al-Banna never entered Al-Azhar University and yet he did a service to Islam never accomplish in the last thousand years by those who attempted to do it in the course of

Islamic history. He was a writer in the sense that the domain of his mission, struggle and message was the printed word, not theorization or organization. Gamal Al-Banna longed to be a writer who makes the printed word his tool of struggle in the domain of thought. The life of his father encouraged him to seek this path. The influence of the father in this respect exceeds the influence of Hasan Al-Banna on Gamal Al-Banna.

Yet, Gamal Al-Banna's specialization in reading, writing and thought did not make him a good orator or preacher. He is seen best in his writings rather than his TV programs and interviews. These writings includes book like the following titles: *"The Rise and Fall of Weimar's Republic"*, *"The Spirit of Islam"*, *"Can the Sharia Be Applied?"*, *"Deepening the Sense of Work in the Islamic Community"*, *"The International Labor Movement"*, and *"The Labor Opposition in the Leninist Era"*. The character of Gamal Al-Banna is seen clearly in his weekly articles as well in the newspaper *El-Masry El-Youm* on Wednesdays. These writings show the creativity and originality of Gamal Al-Banna, as well as his special ability in writing in an elegant, easy style while introducing serious, full-of-substance material to readers. Most Egyptian people are TV viewers rather than readers, and so Gamal Al-Banna might have lost many people who might never read his books. He always says that his crisis is that he is a writer living in a community of people who do not have the desire to read. Yet, he is writing for the next generations, as books remain eternally for the forthcoming generations, not for the present TV addicts whose eyes are glued to the TV screens. That is why he says that his cause is not lost, as he trusts the future generation of readers, and he accepted that conclusion.

Thirdly, his father was self-made as he never had connections or relations with people in his community, and he never had a governmental job. He was like a hermit who renounced worldly affairs. He never cared for the Muslim Brotherhood established by his son Hasan Al-Banna, even after this organization reached its peak and became the most powerful organization in the Egyptian society, with his son as its head and leader. He entered the headquarters of this organization only a few times. His work was based on the belief in himself, which led him to abandon the restrictions of his community in order to devote his time to his work. This element was engrained in the psyche of Gamal Al-Banna.

Fourthly, the high resolve of sheikh Al-Banna made him print his 22 volume book, and other two books of hadiths compiled by imam Al Shafie<sup>6</sup> and Abi Dawood Al-Tilasi<sup>7</sup>, despite his poverty and need, and the fact that he lived from hand to mouth. His only worry was to provide the needed amount of paper for every volume of his book. He used to say that God would never fail him, and God would help him surmount all obstacles. Gamal Al-Banna followed his late father's footsteps by publishing and distributing his own books himself to liberate himself from the dependence on and restrictions of publishers.

Fifthly, sheikh Al-Banna used to work several hours on end from sunrise to 11:30 pm, never leaving his work except to perform prayers in a nearby mosque, eat his lunch, or to have brief moments of repose on a couch in his office. He used to spend his day in his office, and even in his youth, he used to mend watches on the same desk, in the same office, which rarely saw the light of the sun. Sheikh Al-Banna had no means of entertainment, and sometime he would leave the newspapers unread on his desk. This devotion, perseverance and hard work are laudable. Gamal Al-Banna often says to himself that his father was better than he is, as he used to finish work at 11:30 pm, whereas Gamal Al-Banna works until 10:00 pm.

Sixthly, and lastly, sheikh Al-Banna abstained from worldly pleasures and led an ascetic life. He had neither a fridge nor an air conditioner, he just owned in his last days a noisy fan, and of course, he had no bank account. He never went to movie theaters and rarely visited anyone. He was visited in his last days by some of the people who learned a lot from his book. He was happy to receive them to break his monotonous routine of living immersed in sheets and sheets, and because they showed him their appreciation and praise, which he never sought.

What was thought provoking is that when sheikh Al-Banna moved to Cairo in 1924, he never thought of buying a house although small houses were very cheap, and instead he bought a graveyard for his family, when a small child of Hasan Al-Banna died. All the dead members of Al-Banna family were buried there, including the martyred imam Hasan Al-Banna.

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### [ III ]

## THE RELATION BETWEEN GAMAL AL-BANNA AND HIS ELDER BROTHER

The relation between Gamal Al-Banna and his elder brother Hasan Al-Banna was intimate and distinctive. This unique relation had affection and its points of disparity due to the difference in temperament in both men, yet this dissimilarity made both men complement each other in many aspects. Hasan Al-Banna was the firstborn who enjoyed the love and tender care of his mother, while Gamal Al-Banna was the last son, after his mother had given birth to five siblings and so he did not have enough care and affection except what necessity allowed. Hasan Al-Banna spent a happy, idyllic childhood in the countryside of ElMahmoudiyya area, in El-Beheira governorate (located 50 km from Alexandria), whereas Gamal Al-Banna spent his childhood in the narrow alleys of Cairo. Accordingly, Hasan Al-Banna was strong and healthy, whereas Gamal Al-Banna was emaciated and had a frail body-built.

Gamal Al-Banna began to wear eyeglasses since he was in the primary stage of education, whereas his elder brother never wore them despite the fact that he was an avid reader. The best, outstanding quality of Hasan Al-Banna was "organizational abilities", and that of Gamal Al-Banna is theorization. Hasan Al-Banna was a genius organizer, who established the grand edifice called the Muslim Brotherhood, whereas Gamal Al-Banna failed to organize a small party that comprised some workers and students, and this party did not continue except for two years. The line of Hasan Al-Banna's call was clear, straightforward, and well defined, and he walked that straight path until his assassination and martyrdom. The path of Gamal Al-Banna was long and arduous, and when Hasan Al-Banna reached the peak of his career, Gamal Al-Banna was beginning his early steps.

Hasan Al-Banna realized with his usual intuition and intelligence that his younger brother has the sense of conveying a message to people, as was their father. This was the source of the strong bond between both men despite their different temperament. This difference led to emotional bond and complementarities, not disharmony and discord. Hasan Al-Banna was a man of positive action, whereas his younger brother used to sometimes refuse and sometimes agree on things done by his elder brother. Hasan Al-Banna alluded to his younger brother on two separate occasions that he wanted him to join his work and assist him. Yet, the young brother remained silent, as he could not overtly refuse this valued trust, and at the same time, he could not accept this mission. Hasan Al-Banna, with his intelligence and shrewdness, realized his younger brother's embarrassment, and he changed the course of the conversation.

One of these occasions was when Gamal Al-Banna was arrested among members of the social labor party because of distributing a pamphlet that denounced the memory of the bombardment of the British fleet to the city of Alexandria shortly before the British occupation of Egypt. Hasan Al-Banna sent one of his men to the sheriff of Cairo to release Gamal Al-Banna.

Hasan Al-Banna rebuked his younger brother, after his release, and advised him to join the Muslim Brotherhood to enjoy the easy fruits of its efforts, and disband the party that he formed. Gamal Al-Banna replied that he did not want the fruits of the Muslim Brotherhood. Hasan Al-Banna did not get offended by such response, and he advised his younger brother to change the appellation of the growing '*party*' to

the naming '*group*', so as not to clash with the government and its ruling party, and Gamal Al-Banna applied this piece of advice.

This situation shows the tolerant nature and the understanding of Hasan Al-Banna of his younger brother. Gamal Al-Banna expressed to his elder brother on several occasions his reservations about the Muslim Brotherhood, especially about its thought and notions about women, arts, politics ... etc. Hasan Al-Banna used to hear his younger brother's criticism, and smile without commenting on these reservations. What Gamal Al-Banna said to his elder brother was not new to him, as the martyred imam was knowledgeable about modern writings, but he was a leader to his followers and disciples and they restricted his footsteps, as he must deal with them according to their simple understanding. Hasan Al-Banna worked by the policy of periods, as every stage would take its time, as part of the solution to any dilemma is the element of time. He believed in giving women their rightful share of liberty, but in due time, and if he were not assassinated he would have tackled this issue thoroughly later on.

In some periods, the relation between Gamal Al-Banna and his elder brother was so close that in the days of the holy fasting month of Ramadan, Hasan Al-Banna would recite some verses of the Quran from memory from the afternoon to sunset, and Gamal Al-Banna would read it from the book itself. Hasan Al-Banna would then explain for Gamal Al-Banna the difference between some Quranic terms that are nearly similar.

Gamal Al-Banna advised his elder brother once to learn the English language, but he told Gamal Al-Banna that they had better memorize the Quran. This was accepted by Gamal Al-Banna, as he knew that his elder brother was open-minded.

Hasan Al-Banna was concerned about the state of his younger brother as he felt familial duty toward him, as the young Gamal Al-Banna did not have a job. Hasan Al-Banna knew that his younger brother voluntarily rejected the notion of having a governmental job, and so he sometimes proposed a few jobs that suited him, for instance, he appointed him as the director of the Muslim Brotherhood Print House. Gamal Al-Banna agreed to this because he wanted to acquire experience in that field as it agreed with his desire to become a writer. Yet, he never became close to the members of the Muslim Brotherhood group nor he followed them in their religious practices. Sometimes, Gamal Al-Banna would be busy working to the extent that he would not pray the noon prayers with other workers, and one of them said to Hasan Al-Banna that the room of Gamal Al-Banna

became a haven for those who did not want to pray. Yet, Hasan Al-Banna said to him, "*Leave him alone*". Gamal Al-Banna at that time became a vegetarian, and that went against the traditions of that time, yet Hasan Al-Banna used not to give him meat to respect his wish, as he was tolerant toward whatever his young brother did. That last job given by Hasan Al-Banna to his young brother was the editor of *Al-Shihab* magazine (i.e. the Comet), which was the zenith of Islamic writings, and it resembled the well-known Islamic magazine of the time, *Al-Manar* (i.e. Lighthouse). Hasan Al-Banna was the editor-in-chief of *El-Shihab*, and Gamal Al-Banna used to edit all articles and the previews before printing the magazine, as well as writing a column on the major political events using the pseudonym Ahmed Gamal El-Deen Ahmed Abdel-Rahman.

Hasan Al-Banna used to follow the progress of his young brother. The former minister of religious endowments in Jordan, sheikh Abdel-Aziz El-Khayat said that in 1946, he was studying in Al-Azhar university, and he saw Hasan Al-Banna

reading an article written by Gamal Al-Banna on political negotiations, and he heard Hasan Al-Banna saying; *"Learn politics from that youth, for Garnaal has written an excellent article about negotiations"*. He expressed that opinion although the article was issued in the name of the Social Labor Party formed by Gamal Al-Banna.

### ***What Gamal Al-Banna gained and learned from his elder brother:***

Gamal Al-Banna admired distinctive features and traits in his elder brother, and was influenced by them, despite the fact that both men differed in temperament from each other.

1) He admired the sense of mission in Hasan Al-Banna' character, and conveying a message to people. He was an ideal leader and he carried the burden and responsibilities of leadership and submitted to it totally.

He worked day and night with the members of the Muslim Brotherhood, eating with them, praying with them as their imam, lecturing them in religious matters...etc. He used to spend the four-month vacation from his work as a teacher in Upper Egypt to meet members of the Muslim Brotherhood there, and he went to them using the third class trains.

2) Hasan Al-Banna led an ascetic life like his father, and he did not care about what to eat and drink and how to dress.

3) He was well mannered, civil, polite, amiable, and good-natured. He used to talk to people while respecting their simple way of reasoning, their conditions, and their circumstances. That was why he earned the respect of both his friends and foes, and he gained the support of many people. His younger brother did not follow him in this respect, due to his different temperament and the nature of his call through writing and thought.

4) The lesson learned by Gamal Al-Banna in his last days in the company of his elder brother was that the man with a mission should be either an organizer or a theorist. To try to be both is the road to total failure. The martyred imam was an excellent organizer who established the Muslim Brotherhood Organization within twenty years, which became the standard organization to any other Islamic organizations, and the bonds between its leaders and members are so strong by the grace and love of God. Yet, this grand edifice does not enjoy intellectual depth that would help formulate a comprehensive, original theory that could be applied in the modern age. Time did not allow Hasan Al-Banna to do this. Formulating such a theory needs a lifetime for the theory to mature, while Hasan Al-Banna was so busy in group-work, and he used to come to the headquarters of El-Shihab magazine late at night, feeling exhausted from too many meetings, to write his articles and columns.

This gap was negatively reflected in the Muslim Brotherhood organization and its effectiveness, despite the fact that the notion of Hasan Al-Banna about Islam as a way of life could have been the basis of a comprehensive theory about Islamic stances on all social issues.

Gamal Al-Banna is different in nature and temperament in comparison to the martyred imam, and he has decided to be exclusively a theorist, and to leave organizing despite its allure. This idea is so deep-seated in his mind that he has refused to form an institution of any kind to include all believers in the Islamic

Revival Movement. He thinks that organizing would be at the expense of theorizing. Organizing, however effective and successful it might be, stirs up financial and administrative problems, entails many risks and little benefit, and it is inevitably linked to the level of understanding of the followers. Organizations are liable to the vicissitudes of time that might have a negative influence. Gamal Al-Banna has chosen to leave his theory free and to be owned by whoever believes in it, without an organization that might impose its regulation on the adherents of that theory. Gamal Al-Banna hopes, with the passage of time and with development, his idea or theory would be a public opinion, as modern development stands to his side in the long run.

Gamal Al-Banna in his message is away from caring for sensitivities and flattering people of authority. He feels free to face with his thought the thought of the bodies that hold opposing views, and he does not fear any consequences of such confrontations, however dire they might be.

His book titled *"No for Traditional Scholars and Imposters of Enlightenment"* testifies for this fact. In this book, he criticizes religious scholars who call for the blind imitation and following of the ancient scholars (i.e. the Salafist trend) and he criticizes the imposters who claim to call for enlightenment or a renaissance but in fact disregard religion.

This stance led most trends and groups in the Egyptian society to ignore him in their activities and writings, as he criticizes them. Hence, he was ignored and overlooked by the Left, academicians, the official religious institution, Al-Azhar, the ruling regime and the government. They do not mention him in their writings nor invite him to their meetings and gatherings. Gamal Al-Banna is not sorry about that, in fact; this relieved him from many social obligations. He sees that the current generations cannot carry his message, but maybe the next generations will. This might happen after half a century or more, when the writings and theories of Gamal Al-Banna would be discovered and the climate would be ready to accept his views rejected by former generations. The only solace to Gamal Al-Banna is that he presents his theories to the future generations,

which might apply them and gain their benefits. That is why the fruits of the work of Hasan Al-Banna were there before his eyes in his lifetime, whereas the fruits of the work of Gamal Al-Banna are postponed to future time and future generations.

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## [ IV ]

# THE REPERCUSSIONS OF THE RELATION WITH THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

The relation of Gamal Al-Banna with his elder brother ended abruptly when Gamal Al-Banna was arrested in December 8, 1948, and he remained detained in prison outside Cairo until 1950. He never witnessed the dramatic events of the martyrdom of his elder brother, nor how he was assassinated, nor did he attend the funeral of his elder brother, which was attended by his father and the women of the family. Yet, Gamal Al-Banna was told by his elder brothers, who used to visit him in his detention, that shortly before the assassination of Hasan Al-Banna, the martyred imam was very much concerned with the families of the detained members of the Muslim Brotherhood. These families lost their breadwinners and Hasan Al-Banna wanted to gather and distribute monthly allowances for them. In the meanwhile, a malevolent group of politicians who refused any kind of settlement proposed by Hasan Al-Banna caused him a great deal of nuisance. His martyrdom relieved him from feeling guilty about the families who had no breadwinners, and from so many troubles that he faced alone.

Gamal Al-Banna kept his close relation with his father until his death in 1959, and he attended his funeral and buried him beside his son in the family graveyard.

Gamal Al-Banna inherited his father's legacy, as well as that of his mother, and sister Fawziya. Even the elder brother Abdel-Rahman Al-Banna, second to Hasan Al-Banna, bequeathed his papers and library to Gamal Al-Banna. Hence, Gamal Al-Banna had the possessions of his mother, like the copper washbasins, round small tables, a balance, a quem made of stone, many blankets and mattresses ... etc. He got rid of all these things with the passage of time, yet he kept an old blue china big dish that was part of the trousseau of Gamal Al-Banna's mother.

### ***The repercussions of the relation with the Muslim Brotherhood:***

The Islamic influence on Gamal Al-Banna was not confined to his relation with his father and his elder brother. His position made him acquainted with some members of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1940s. Gamal Al-Banna used to go to the headquarters of that group as Al-Banna family house was close to it, before he had his own office. He used to enter a communication room to get into contact with the Islamic world, which was situated above the servants' quarters and no one would enter that room at day except him. He used to write in that room. Gamal Al-Banna made friends with many members of the Muslim Brotherhood, although he was not a member in this organization set up by his elder brother, like Mr. Abdel Hafeez El Seify, Sheikh Ashmawy Soleiman - President of Quwesna' Muslim Brotherhood office, and Sheikh Sayed Sabek, who accepted to teach Islamic guidance to a group of a mix young muslims of boys and girls gathered by Mrs. Enayat El Hakim, wife of Mr. Abdel Moghny Saeed, the manager of the Cultural institution, who had Islamic tendencies, and were close friends to Gamal El-Banna. Another friend was Mr. Anas El Hagay who wrote a book about Hassan El-Banna, and was one of the

writers at "The Warning" magazine. During this time, Gamal El-Banna used to attend a few activities, gatherings and lectures of the Muslim Brotherhood organization, especially when he participated a few times in prayers of sunset and night in the desert, with Hasan Al-Banna as their imam in these prayers, and the entire group would sleep in tents to wake up and pray the dawn prayer. This activity of praying in the open air in the charming nature, with the enchanting recitation of the Quran by Hasan Al-Banna, was one of the main factors that influenced members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

One of these friends was a close one to Al-Banna family, whose name was Tawfik Ahmed, the Muslim Brotherhood Secretary and Administration Officer, he used to wear the turban and a cloak. Through Sheikh Tawfik, he got acquainted with Mr. Sayed Oweis, and Sheikh Khaled Mohamed Khaled. -This man became famous when his book was censored, and he remained an intimate friend of Gamal Al-Banna. He even has written in his autobiography that he was astonished when he became a member in the Muslim Brotherhood that the brother of Hasan Al-Banna was not a member, and he formed an independent party -

Gamal Al-Banna used to go discretely to the cinema with Tawfik Ahmed. One day, this friend asked one of the ushers if there is a praying place in the cinema, and the usher burst out laughing.

Sheikh Khaled left the Muslim Brotherhood a while after he got a good position in the Royal Agricultural Association, and got rid of his turban, cloak and shaved his beard. Then he subscribed to the British Institute to learn the English language. It was a club not only an institute. Sheikh Tawfik also joined the British Institute and learned the good manners and the civilized behavior. He, of course wore the western suite and trousers a while after.

This friendship lasted with Gamal Al-Banna, until Tawfik died in the 1980s and Gamal Al-Banna attended his funeral and burial with his family.

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In December 8, 1984, the Prime Minister AL-Noqrashi Pasha issued a military order to disband the Muslim Brotherhood, and he ordered the arrest of any people in its headquarters. This arrest included Gamal Al-Banna although, ironically, he was not a member, but he was present by chance in the headquarters. This showed that the intelligence police had an opposing view of the political activism of Gamal Al-Banna. This irony lessened as number of detainees increase with the passage of time, and

they were moved from the area called Hike Step to another prison outside Cairo. Their numbers was a few thousands, and Gamal Al-Banna seized the chance to know more about the mainstream members of the Muslim Brotherhood. The two brothers Muhammad and Abdel-Basset Al-Banna were arrested shortly after Gamal Al-Banna, and the detained members of Al-Banna family received special attention and exceptions in prison.

Gamal Al-Banna made acquaintance with the mainstream members of the Muslim Brotherhood despite the mental barrier between their thought and his. Gamal Al-Banna tried to write a book about this period of detention with the cooperation of Abdel-Malik Ouda who was a graduate of the AUC and translated many works for the Muslim Brotherhood. This idea was never accomplished as Gamal Al-Banna saw that this project would stir trouble between him and members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

To make use of detention time, Gamal Al-Banna read the collection of complete poems of the classical poet Al-Mutanabi, and he memorized it from much reading and rereading. He read in English the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by the English novelist Thomas Hardy, as he read it in Arabic years ago. He read as well the book titled "*I Preferred Freedom*" by the Soviet writer Kravchinko, and so he lived through imagination in pre-Revolution Russia and the Stalinist USSR.

When the Muslim Brotherhood detainees tried to organize a series of lectures in prison, Gamal Al-Banna recommended to them to include Abdel-Malik Ouda who was a graduate of the AUC, but they refused to include him. He said to Gamal Al-Banna, in English, to mock the Muslim Brotherhood attitude toward him, "*This is equal to excommunication from the kingdom of Allah!*". Gamal Al-Banna never talked to leftist and Jewish detainees who were in the same prison, but he made friends and talked a lot with a foreigner detainee called Henry Coryell. During his detention, Gamal Al-Banna wore pyjamas or a suit, and shaved daily, whereas members of the group wore gowns and grew their beards. Visitors used to think mistakenly that he was one of the administrative people of the prison. Gamal Al-Banna wrote his memoirs about his two-year detention, but he has kept the manuscript until now, and never published it. Hence, Gamal Al-Banna found he was caught in the middle of the Muslim Brotherhood members because of the strange circumstances although he was never convinced with its line of thought. Although he was never a member of the Muslim Brotherhood Organization, he had close relations with some of its members.

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When Gamal Al-Banna was released out of prison, in 1951, and became an editor, with a fixed salary, in a magazine called "*Al-Da'wa*" (i.e. the Call). He used to edit two rubrics, one about the general events and one about workers and labor. He wrote a series of articles about reforming prisons, under the title "*From behind Bars*" signed by "*The Popular Committee for Reforming Prisons*". Later on, these articles appeared in a book form, and Gamal Al-Banna formed "*The Egyptian Society of Caring for Prisoners and their Families*". He wrote a series of articles as well on the influence of the Islamic thought in the constitutional movement.

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Shortly after his release from prison in 1951, Gamal Al-Banna was visited by the Socialist party head Ahmed Hussein, who proposed to Gamal Al-Banna to have a job in his party. Gamal Al-Banna refused and said to him that he had a sacred principle never to engage in any political party and that he wished to serve this party without being a member in it.

He seized the chance to propose to Gamal Al-Banna to serve the youth in the name of this party by organizing social and cultural activities to them. One of these activities was having some famous guest speakers in seminars to discuss any issues. Gamal Al-Banna wrote as well on some articles under the title "*Quranic Guidelines*" in the weekly famous magazine at the time titled "*Socialism*". Ahmed Hussein and Gamal Al-Banna chose among the best photos of the street beggars to publish them in that magazine under the headline "*Your Subject, your Royal Highness!*".

Before the 1952 Revolution and the Nasserist era, the motto of that magazine was "*We Call for a Revolution!*" Gamal Al-Banna unexpectedly gained much from his

relation with Ahmed Hussein, as he made acquaintance with many people, chief among them was Mrs. Bahiga El-Bakry, a rich woman from the aristocracy, whom he met in a ball in one of the sumptuous villas. The gathering in that occasion talked ceaselessly about socialism, Ahmed Hussein as a socialist reformer, the bourgeois class ... etc. his close relation with Mrs. Bahiga El-Bakry led him to accompany her, among other women with her, to the cinema many times. Gamal Al-Banna made many acquaintances through her connections, friends, and relations. Mrs. Bahiga El-Bakry and five other women of her friends helped Gamal Al-Banna by funding, exerting efforts, as well as charity, in forming *"The Egyptian Society of Caring for Prisoners and their Families"*.

Since 1978, Gamal al-Banna used to travel to Geneva every June to attend the international labor conference, which would last forty days. During his visit to Geneva, Gamal al-Banna used to stay in the house of Dr. Said Ramadan the husband of his niece, Mrs. Wafaa, Hasan Al-Banna' daughter.

Her husband's house was a refuge place for great Islamic personalities that went to Geneva. One time, Gamal al-Banna met there, and talked much with, Omar Abdel-Rahman, who defended polygamy in Islam staunchly. Among other personalities was the Yemenite leader Ibrahim El-Wazir, who had read Gamal al-Banna' book *"The Pros and Cons of Islamic Movements"* and was surprised why the Muslim Brotherhood did not help Gamal al-Banna. The close relation between Gamal al-Banna and Ibrahim El-Wazir led the latter to donate the sum of 12 thousand dollars to the establishment of the Islamic Thought Publishing House owned by the former. Apart from his relations, Said Ramadan himself had an encyclopedic Islamic knowledge and he used to issue a magazine called *The Muslims*, which resembled very much *Al-Shihab* magazine founded by the martyred imam.

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## [V]

### GAMAL AL-BANNA DECIDES HIS FATE

The Islamic background of Gamal Al-Banna had its influence on him, but what he had in mind concerning his career and future took another different route. He never imagined himself to be an ordinary employee to gain his daily bread. He never cared about money, but he cared for his financial independence as well as about devoting his time to reading, writing, and thinking. He cared for his liberty and fought to preserve it from all restraints of any kind. He cared not to waste his precious time in jobs to manage his time to suit his aim. He remembered Gorky who never entered a university, and thought that if he had, we would not have enjoyed his literary masterpieces. Gamal Al-Banna has chosen writing as his vocation, and when in the 1950s Egyptian government began to impose the system of ID cards, Gamal Al-Banna wrote in his ID card and his passport that his job is a writer and an author. This decision to become a writer dates back to his days of adolescence, as no one of his family imposed anything on him, as this was not in the spirit of Al-Banna family. His father and elder brother had chosen their way of life of their own accord, and they could not possibly coerce Gamal Al-Banna to choose something that he did not like. After getting the primary certificate, Gamal Al-Banna entered the Khediwiya Secondary School, a well-known, prestigious school at the time. He was an average student, not a brilliant one, he had difficulties in learning the English language, and it was taught then by a British teacher. One time, Gamal Al-Banna made a mistake and this teacher told him, in English, " *You have to say 'I beg your pardon, sir!'*". Gamal Al-Banna thought about the meaning of this phrase ' *Beg your pardon, sir*' and its words, and he thought that the word 'beg' is derived from the word 'beggars', and 'pardon' means 'sorry', while 'sir' is a word to address a man as if he were your lord. Although Gamal Al-Banna later on knew that this is a simple phrase that does not make one lose his dignity, he was sensitive then and refused to say this phrase, which he did not understand as a student. The result was that the British teacher's caused Gamal Al-Banna to flunk the English exam. Gamal Al-Banna took a decision never to complete his secondary education, and never to set foot in the university. He decided to break with the bourgeois society norms. The young Gamal Al-Banna did not know how serious this decision was, but in retrospect, he never regretted that decision, and he believes until this very moment that he made the right decision.

Under the familial pressures, Gamal Al-Banna enrolled in the Commercial Secondary School, so as not to fail his family and the hopes they pinned on him. He was the youngest student there, and had a very thin body-built in comparison to other students. He made acquaintances with many men who became later well known in the Egyptian society in the field of economy, and he gained benefit from them by knowing different ideas and notions of economy and commerce. He used to debate the issue of usury with his favorite teacher there. His teacher used to say that usury is prohibited in any case, while the young Gamal Al-Banna thought that it might be permissible in certain, reasonable boundaries.

After three years (1934-1937), Gamal Al-Banna got his Commercial School certificate and left it inside his desk drawers, and forgot totally about it. He was by then free to form his own cultural basis by extensive readings.

## **Cultural Formation:**

Gamal Al-Banna began his cultural formation in the early childhood in the library and office of his father, from reading magazines, newspapers, as well as novels and other world classics translated in Arabic. He read, for instance, the novels of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Andre Gide, among others, in good translations. Gamal Al-Banna read Arabic literature as a child, starting from *The One Thousand and One Night*, to sagas and epics, which were written in many volumes that formed some kind of Arab/Islamic mythology. He believed that this mythology could be the basis of about thirty novels. He read as well contemporary Arab literature and many classical books of Arab history and literature. He read volumes of classical Arabic poetry, contemporary Arab poetry and plays of Ahmed Shawky<sup>8</sup>. He regarded Shawky as an example of the Egyptian genius, as Egypt was the melting pot that melted all races, making all foreign descent residing in it Egyptians. He read contemporary literature of Taha Hussein<sup>9</sup>, Abbas El-Akkad<sup>10</sup>, Tewfik El-Hakim<sup>11</sup>, and M. Heika<sup>12</sup>. Gamal Al-Banna liked the writing style of some of them and disliked other writing styles, because Gamal Al-Banna, as a writer, has an aesthetic tendency to writing. He did not like the redundant writing style of Taha Hussein, and never liked the dry, scant one of El-Akkad. He loved the style of Heikal and El-Hakim especially that the latter cared for the issue of religion and tackled the loss of collective consciousness in the Nasserist era in Egypt.

He liked the European aesthetic writing style of Ahmed El-Sawy<sup>13</sup> in his magazine titled "*Megalliti*" (My Magazine), as he maintained the spirit of the Arabic language as well as the European style in a great mix that captivated the people of his readership. The same applies in the short stories of Mustapha Sadeq El-Rafee<sup>14</sup>. Gamal Al-Banna used to read translated literature and liked immensely Thomas Huxley's novel *Brave*

*New World* and its allegory. Gamal Al-Banna liked as well to read American, French and Russian literature, especially novels, translated into Arabic. He liked in particular writings of Albert Camus, Benjamin Disraeli, Eton Sinclair, Arthur Costner, and George Orwell and his novels *Animal Farm*. Some of that literature he read in Arabic and some in English. He liked to read political plays and novels as well, especially those that tackle World War I, World War II, and political life of the USSR. Among other writers and authors, Gamal Al-Banna read in English and liked books of Peter Drucker and Fukuyama. He also read in Arabic some readings of Greek philosophy, history and literature. He liked Socrates and Plato particularly, and he disliked Aristotle who advocated racist views and marred the European thought. Islamic thought and Fiqh were influenced by Aristotelian logic when Muslim philosophers introduced it, a fact immensely disliked by Gama! Al-Banna.

Gamal Al-Banna read about ten books on Greek mythology and read the book of Plutarch "*Heroes*", which influenced European leaders especially Napoleon. Gamal Al-Banna read extensively about the history of the Roman Empire, among these

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books were the encyclopedia of Gibbon titled *"The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire"*, but Gamal Al-Banna liked better the book of Robert Graves about the Roman Golden Age as well as the glory and the eccentricities of the history of Rome.

The titles mentioned above are but a few examples that still cling in the memory of Gamal Al-Banna, but in fact, in the 1950s and the 1960s, he used to read a book in Arabic every day and a book in English every three days.

In the cultural journey of Gamal Al-Banna, he was interested in the two marginalized categories of people: workers and women. Gamal Al-Banna read about feminism in Britain, and read the book of Mary Wollstonecraft *"The Rights of Women"* and the book of John Stuart Mill *"The Subjection of Women"* and the history of the suffragettes. Gamal Al-Banna read more on the cause of women. He sees that the patriarchal society victimized women, even in Judaism and Christianity she was held accountable for the 'original sin'. Islam aims at liberating women, but it has failed in this mission for many historical reasons. Other philosophers institutionalized the inferiority of women, like Aristotle and Schopenhauer, who were misogynists. Women did not have their full rights even in the modern era. Gamal Al-Banna wrote four books on the rights of women, but the most popular, controversial one of them is about the veil, and it was reprinted four times.

As for the cause of workers, Gamal Al-Banna was attracted to the syndicalism and he believed in it. He says in one of his books that, *"syndicalism comes directly after religions, and before both democracy and socialism"*. Gamal Al-Banna thinks that syndicalism is more than a theory or an organization, for it is what elevated the status of people.

Syndicalism created a successful tactic to save workers from the hell of capitalism, and to raise their standard of living, in a creative way that has nothing to do with political work and its clamor. Gamal Al-Banna sympathized with workers, and he studied syndicalism movement in Britain that grew as a reaction to the industrial revolution. He studied economics of Britain, labor laws, and history of labor and workers.

Gamal Al-Banna read hundreds of books in English on workers and labor before he wrote his first book on labor movement in Britain, but it has remained as a manuscript and it was never published. Gamal Al-Banna translated reports of the freedom of syndicalism committee in the International Labor Organization in Geneva, on syndicalism in Britain, Sweden, the USSR, the USA, Burma, and Malaya, and these reports were published in Geneva.

Yet, Gamal Al-Banna never engaged in syndicalism as he was of special temperament that does not prefer activism and he was physically frail. He is of an artistic temperament, who believes in the people and the masses, but he cannot be one of them and he cannot follow the herd. Yet, Gamal Al-Banna loved workers to the extent that he wanted to try the work of any worker. He worked for one month as a worker in a textile factory

owned by one of the members of the Muslim Brotherhood. He got a certificate to prove this period of work, and then he became a member of the syndicate of textile workers.

He wanted to know all about syndicalism and the practical field of workers. Yet, Gamal Al-Banna was not a real worker in the full sense of the word, and a clash

erupted between him and the demagogue head of the syndicate who had a communist tendencies. Finally, Gamal Al-Banna and that demagogue were fired from the syndicate and its board of administration. Yet, it was transpired that this was a plot hatched to exclude this demagogue, as the syndicate and its board of administration formally tried to regain Gamal Al-Banna as a member. Gamal Al-Banna, however, refused to return to the syndicate simply because he found out that this is not his place, as his role is to guide the syndicalism movement in Egypt. He returned to his favorite domain - i.e. reading and writing and he produced about thirty books on syndicalism in many countries, as well as liberty, democracy, organization ... etc. of syndicalism.

Gamal Al-Banna delivered lectures in the syndical units and centers of the Cultural Labor Institution in Cairo. He studied in the high institute of syndicalism studies since its inception in 1963, and attended lectures in it delivered by famous university lecturers of the time. Later on, he became a lecturer in the same institute from 1963 to 1993. In the 1980s, Gamal Al-Banna made acquaintance with Dr. A. Abdel-Aziz Al-Naggar, the pioneer of Islamic system of banking. Gamal Al-Banna gave him a copy of his book *"The Spirit of Islam"*, and later Al-Naggar called Gamal Al-Banna and expressed his deep respect to the ideas in that valuable book. He asked permission to reprint the book and he appointed Gamal Al-Banna as a consultant to the

International Union of Islamic Banks, as Al-Naggar was its leader, for a salary of LE 200. Gamal Al-Banna was consulted on various issues and projects especially founding an institute of Islamic banking systems in Cyprus. Al-Naggar promised Gamal Al-Banna to finance his publishing house if he to win the case against Faysal Bank, but he died shortly afterwards, and the case was closed by his death.

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Islamic readings and writings had a major share in the period from 1930s to the 1970s of Gamal Al-Banna' life, as Islam is one of the main branches that formed his mind and soul. He read extensively in Islamic history, especially the famous references in that field of knowledge. Gamal Al-Banna used to read the Quran many times, but he failed to memorize all of it, but memorized parts of it, and this was a weak point in his speeches as a lecturer. His lectures missed the Islamic appearance and imprint, because he never quoted the Quranic verses that he memorized. The close relation between Gamal Al-Banna and the Quran is explained in the book" *The Quran Shows the Responsibility of Deterioration between People and Leaders*".

He was interested in studying the main sources of Fiqh, and not the branches and minor issues of it explained by judgments of ancient religious scholars. He sees that these ancient religious scholars held ideas that only suited their age. Besides, they had their own mistakes as some of them flattered caliphs who were like emperors, and by being subservient to rulers, these scholars moved away from the spirit of the Quran and the Sunna of the Prophet.

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## [VI] MODERN AND EUROPEAN INFLUENCES

Gamal Al-Banna decided in his youth to learn and master the English language on his own, and that took him many years to accomplish until he could easily read books and references in English. Shops of second hand books were filled by English books in the 1940s, especially books of Left Book Club, in their cheap editions, as labor and socialist thought flourished in Britain at the time. Moreover, there were politics and socialist books in Pelican and Penguin cheap editions. Gamal Al-Banna used to buy any book for less than five piasters at the time, and he owns now three thousand books in English, all of them bought from the shops of second hand books. He made friends with the owners of these shops.

Gamal Al-Banna bought many libraries of deceased men of science, especially books on socialism, the Left, labor, workers, and British economy. Among these books were those of Karl Marx, especially *"The Capital"*.

He regretted for not buying some precious books as he could not afford the prices and could not negotiate for a discount, and

sometimes he had to give up and buy books at expensive prices. Gamal Al-Banna never read Shakespeare or any other poets, as his practical aim in learning English was to read English books of economy, civilization, history...etc. with relative ease, and not to read literature in English. He never liked English literature and until now, he cannot speak English or listen to it, as his English was that of an avid reader only.

In the 1940s and the 1950s, Gamal Al-Banna used to read one English book every three days, and he has now three thousand English titles in his library. He made use of these books to write his own books on the history and movement of syndicalism in the USA and Britain, especially his book titled *"The Rise and Fall of Weimar's Republic"*. He sometimes made use of a few lines of an English book to write them in his books, as he staunchly believed that to understand syndicalism, one has to study all the societies with their politics, economy, cultural background, and civilization. He did that in the societies of the USA, the USSR, Britain, Turkey and Germany and wrote books on their syndical movements.

Gamal Al-Banna is well versed in Russian history, politics, socialism, economy...etc. He read all about Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky, to mention but a few among so many other characters. He has many manuscripts of books summarizing what he had read. He had the idea to write a book on the emergence of the USSR to set the example of the struggle after decadence and corruption, especially that he wanted this book to appear after the 1967 defeat in Egypt, to make people learn the lesson that we should not fall into despair after any setback or defeat. Yet, the idea of such a book was never accomplished. Gamal Al-Banna made the utmost use of his readings on the USSR. He liked in particular, the Isaac Deutscher' trilogy on Trotsky, as well as books on Lenin and on the Bolshevik Revolution. He believed that any thinker in the modern age has to study communism from Robert Owen to its fruition in the hands of Karl Marx. Gamal Al-Banna liked the virgin mind found at the dawn of humanity, but disliked the iron collar Marx restricted humanity with, and he disliked the dictatorial and totalitarian systems that suppress liberties as in the era of Lenin. Yet, he understood the

fascination of European humanist thinkers of it as it symbolized justice for the masses, and their rejection to the church institution. Another book that Gamal Al-Banna decided not to write was about turkey, and if both books about the USSR and Turkey were to be authored and published, they would have been a valuable addition to the political literature. Such readings as well as Islamic readings influenced Gamal Al-Banna and his thought. He is a staunch believer in liberty of thought and politics, and he is interested in the notion of justice in all domains, like the relationship between the two genders, the rich and the poor, and between the ruled and the rulers. He liked the popular fronts that helped propagate labor rights of workers and called for the liberation of women. He sees that such values and knowledge give light and power, and open new areas to social progress. Ultimately, Gamal Al-Banna realized that the human being is the end of all human activity, while other things are means and tools to help humanity.

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The American movies in the Egyptian movie theaters influenced Gamal Al-Banna very much and added to his culture. Gamal Al-Banna saw the American lifestyle and its society in the cinema, after he had experienced them in books. He liked immensely movies adapted from novels. He liked many movie stars of the time like Lana Turner, Greta Garbo, Rita Hayworth, Cary Grant, Clark Gabel etc... Gamal Al-Banna learned the lifestyle, thought, manners, contradictions, values and ways of foreign societies via these movies. He knew for the first time the "social conscience" expression and its meaning through these movies, and he saw London, Paris and New York in these movies before he traveled abroad for the first time in 1978. Gamal Al-Banna used to go to the movie theater twice a week in the soiree show from 9:00 pm to midnight, and he would return late at night to find his mother had prepared dinner for him on the table. However, Gamal Al-Banna disliked Egyptian movies and never liked the plays found in the Egyptian theaters of that time. This activity of frequenting movie theaters to watch foreign (especially American) movies widened the scope of culture of Gamal Al-Banna after his extensive readings about Europe and its culture. This gave him a kind of emotional fulfillment in the atmosphere of restraint in the conservative societies. Later on, in the 1960s, and with the television invention, he could no longer frequent movie theaters due to the crowdedness of the streets and his busy lifestyle.

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## [VII] THE BEGINNING OF THE HARVEST

In 1945, Gamal Al-Banna published his first book titled *"Three Obstacles in the Road to Glory"*, which was a social study on the social services society that appeared in the first time in Egypt then. Gamal Al-Banna was friend with the head of the Egyptian Society for Social Care and Service, which was established in 1945. In 1946, Gamal Al-Banna authored many works and he felt he was prolific. He wrote *"Criticism to Marxism"*, *"On the Margin of Negotiations"* and his important, controversial book *"A New Democracy"*, whose chapter titled '*A New Understanding of Religion*' has the seeds of the Islamic Revival Movement, and its pivot which is the human being. Gamal Al-Banna has said, in this book, to the members of the Muslim Brotherhood Organization as it reached its peak, "*Do not just believe in faith, but believe as well in the human being*". In the same year, Gamal Al-Banna established the Labor Social Party. This was an original, unprecedented step, as Egypt at the time had no labor party. This party was unique in its appellation and objectives, and it had nothing to do with socialist thought, as it was concerned with simple people and not interested in politics. This party was 'social' in the sense of the civilization identity of the party and not the political one. The main objective of that party was to preserve and revive the cultural and civilization identity of Egypt after long decades of foreign occupation, and to solve problems of labor workers and propagate labor rights. This party was unique in its name and aims at that time in Egypt, as other political parties were named after their founders or their ideologies. The aims of that party surpassed the resolve and energy of the existing Egyptian parties at the time.

Ironically, this 'party' was nothing but a group of workers, students and employers, about 30 persons, and they were simple people who understood little of its objectives. The only activity of that 'party' was to hold meetings and simple tea and cake parties to honor celebrities and listen to lectures delivered by famous guests at the time. Another activity was rounds of readings and borrowing of books among the members.

This party embodied the mental and psychological makeup of Gamal Al-Banna.

This party failed to continue for more than two years, as Gamal

Al-Banna discovered his failure as an organizer, and the 'party' dissolved once Gamal Al-Banna was arrested. He discovered his excellence in theorizing not organizing. He tried to revive that 'party' after his release but under a different name. Gamal Al-Banna became interested in the issue of reform of prisons, and read about its experience in Europe.

Gamal Al-Banna established the Popular Committee of Prisons Reform. He wrote many articles, columns in magazines, and issued pamphlets that caught the attentions of some women who liked works of charity. Gamal Al-Banna used his relations with those aristocratic women to visit prisons and to study their conditions. People thought he must be was highly connected as he visited many prisons and his assistant took many photos, but many of them were lost. The committee achieved some success and raised the social awareness of the predicament of prisoners and the sordid conditions of prisons. Many of the reforms advocated by

the committee founded by Gamal Al-Banna were applied to improve the conditions of prisons and prisoners.

Eventually, the government took control of the committee from Gamal Al-Banna, especially when animosity emerged between the government and members of the Muslim Brotherhood Organization (people thought Gamal Al-Banna was among its members). Gamal Al-Banna could have fought to regain control over the committee he founded, but he did not, as he was not a man of social work, but a man of theories. He gave it up and felt it was enough for him to succeed in raising the public awareness of the plight and despicable conditions of prisoners, and help in solving their problems by taking the initiative. With the passage of time, most objectives of this activity were accomplished, and Gamal Al-Banna felt his endeavor and efforts were not fruitless.

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## [VIII]

### THE POINT OF CONVERGENCE : THE HUMAN BEING

When Nasser led his successful coup d'etat, Gamal Al-Banna wrote his book about this military coup and the revolution titled *"The Guidance of Renaissance: A Study through Egypt' future"*. The dedication of the book was for Mohamed Naguib the first president of Egypt, and it was *"To the heroes, M. Naguib and his companions, to remain heroes and succeed indeed"*.

The first chapter of this book is an evaluation of this revolution, Gamal Al-Banna says in that book that the military coup d'etat was not a real revolution as it lacked solid theoretical basis. It did not aim at comprehensive change, and people did not participate in it. Gamal Al-Banna gave the revolutionaries pieces of advice in that respect and other guidelines for the sake of creating a renaissance in Egypt. In the second chapter of this book, Gamal Al-Banna poses the question whether this coup d'etat could be turned into a real revolution, in light of the circumstances in Egypt at the time (1950s). Gamal Al-Banna says in the third chapter of this book that theoretically this is impossible unless a theoretical basis is formed. In the fourth chapter, Gamal Al-Banna called for establishing a new party for the revolutionaries and for comprehensive change. These chapters formed the 80 pages first part of the book. The book was censored at once and it was never published. While Gamal Al-Banna was writing this book with enthusiasm, he did not know that the chapters sent to the printing house one by one were sent to the censorship body of the state. When Gamal Al-Banna went to the printing house, he was met by a group of police officers, who made him sign a paper to stop writing and printing this book. Gamal Al-Banna realized that the revolutionaries had restrictions on civil liberties. Eventually, the head of censorship confiscated the printed copies of the book. He then went to Lt. Sadat, who was then an officer and the head of the censorship body, to discuss the matter, but in vain. Lt. Sadat, who became later the president of Egypt who succeeded Nasser, told Gamal Al-Banna that four officers read the book, confiscated its copies, and issued a decree to stop printing it. Gamal Al-Banna thought of litigating these officers, but he had no money at the time, and he had written this book ten days after the revolution. Gamal Al-Banna had written this book quickly and with enthusiasm, and had given all his money to the print house.

It is noteworthy that the revolutionaries arrested the assassins of Hasan Al-Banna and Al-Banna family went to President M. Naguib and Nasser to pay homage and thank them. President M. Naguib was a simple man but Nasser was a shrewd man of the world who suspected everyone and hated communism, as he saw it a threat to the revolution. Nasser thought that Gamal Al-Banna was a communist, but he told Nasser that he authored a book criticizing Marxism. Nasser talked to him about his books. At that moment, Gamal Al-Banna realizes that the revolution men did not allow any sort of criticism and he preferred then not to start a battle against oppressive authorities and decided to publish books tackling issues of workers, labor, and syndicalism, postponing publishing and writing books about issues of religion and politics.

Gamal Al-Banna managed in the period of good relations between the revolutionaries and the Muslim Brotherhood members, to get a license from a weekly magazine, owned by a wealthy friend, to publish a monthly supplement to it

named 'El-Fikr' (Thought). The turmoil followed the Nasser's assassination attempt in 1954 poisoned the relations between the revolutionaries and the Muslim Brotherhood members, and Gamal Al-Banna had to stop the supplement. Later on, he published the supplements in the form of booklets. The first two booklets were titled

*"The Stance of the Arab Thinker Toward Contemporary Political Doctrines"* and *"Crisis And Unemployment in Capitalism"*. Both booklets were 160 pages each, there was not a third one. Gamal Al-Banna was not interested to edit more booklets as he was busy in the syndicalist movement, and he received an ultimatum that he would lose his license if he would not issue more booklets, but he did not respond.

During the Nasserist era, Gamal Al-Banna decided to abandon any field of activity and he devoted his time to delivering lectures in labor institutes.

He published over 30 books on the Egyptian labor movement. The book on its history since the early beginning until recent times was 750 pages. Another book was on liberty of syndicalism, and it was 700 pages and covered three volumes. The labor movement lacked such references. With the death of Nasser and Sadat's ascendancy to power, the atmosphere was open for Gamal Al-Banna to return to his Islamic writings. The seed was implanted in 1946 grew and sprouted, and Gamal

Al-Banna published many books on Islam starting in 1972, such as *"The Spirit of Islam"*, which was published in three editions, and another book titled *"The Two Great Sources"* was published in 1982, and it conveyed the developed thought of Gamal Al-Banna concerning the Quran and the Sunna.

### ***The point of convergence: the human being:***

The extensive readings of Gamal Al-Banna in the 1970s and 1980s led him to believe in the human being. His European readings were aimed at the same notion. His belief in liberty and freedom (the basis for the European set of values) has become boundless. At the same time, his studies on the Quran and Prophet Muhammad led to the same notion.

Gamal Al-Banna did not confuse his mind by studying old tomes of ancient religious scholars in Fiqh and ancient interpretations of the Quran, as well as other different branches of Islamic knowledge. His studies on Islam were from outside sources, and this led him to avoid partial influences to be able to see Islam as a whole, without the convoluted labyrinth of ancient studies of the past centuries. This allowed him to pass general judgments without being concerned with petty details.

Gamal Al-Banna discovered that the Quran begins with expressing the divine will of God to make the human being His deputy on earth, and to make everything on earth at the command of the human being. God has taught Adam the names of all things, i.e., the keys to knowledge. God ordered the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam, and He equipped Adam by the will and conscience. Hence, the human being has the will to choose in his life. This notion of free human will, is also expressed in the philosophy of Schopenhauer. The Quran speaks about the liberty of thought and belief in a better way if compared to any texts tackling human rights. The Quran has made the choice to believe or disbelieve a personal one, which has nothing to do with the general system, because the belief or disbelief of an

individual will not influence the kingdom of God, but will have an impact on the individual himself.

Eventually, Gamal Al-Banna found in Islam what he sought, which was better than what he found in the Western civilization: the values of liberty, knowledge, and will. These three concepts are found in the Western civilization, but they are found in a better way in the Quran. The new element in the Quran, which was rarely found or applied in the

Western civilization, was justice that would protect the great above mentioned three values from any excess.

Hence, the long intellectual journey of Gamal Al-Banna ended up in the rediscovery of Islam, and the point of convergence is the human being.

The early sign of this intellectual project began in 1946 in the chapter titled "*A New Understanding of Religion*" in the book titled "*New Democracy*". The call for Islamic Revival came to its fruition in 2000.

Before 2000, this new image of Islam was under studying, experimenting, processing, and developing. Gamal Al-Banna was not annoyed to keep this call unannounced all these years (1946-1999), because he is a man of thought. He has lived this call as it lives inside him. He had to study all aspects and dimensions of it, and to differentiate between the nature of Muslims and Europeans. This call was "an old embryo" that grew all these years until it was complete and was given birth naturally in 2000, amidst the right circumstances and the required atmosphere.

The main advantage of this was that the call was much considered and reconsidered. Its process of intellectual development - removing, modifying and adding of ideas - continued until the last moments in 1999. This distanced the call of Gamal Al-Banna away from the glittering allure of any brilliant prevalent trends and ideas of the past decades. Gamal Al-Banna kept in his call for the Islamic Revival the notions and ideas that were proved sound by progress, and by the passage of time.

Although ideas are the same, some of them had numerous images and interpretations. For instance, the idea of an Islamic rule system was not excluded at first, if it would be a just rule controlled by Islamic guarantees set in the Quran. These ideas were expressed in details in two books by Gamal Al-Banna: "*The Responsibility of the Failure of the Islamic Caliphate in the Modern Age*" (1994) and "*Five Criteria of the Islamic Rule*". Yet, these ideas were developed eventually in the book published in 2004 titled "*Islam as a Religion and a Nation, not as a State*" which excluded the emergence of the so-called Islamic rule or state. In this book, Gamal Al-Banna argues that Islam does not call for establishing a sort of 'Islamic rule' to any countries. The notion of the Islamic was considered before an inherent part of Islam as a religion, but this false idea is refuted in that book.

The English historian Arnold Joseph Toynbee talked about the notion of the absence of the builders of civilizations to hold internal dialogues and purify the inner deep recesses before they emerge. For instance, Prophet Muhammad, who was a builder of a great civilization, withdrew for a period in a cave before emerging and beginning his call for God. Jesus Christ, as well, spent about 40 days in the wilderness before beginning his ministry. The same notion or vision was expressed by Friedrich Nietzsche in his book titled "*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*". Likewise, Gamal Al-Banna has had a similar experience until the call of the Islamic Revival emerged in 2000.

This long period of living and experiencing the concept, developing, experimenting and modulating it, was stable, as it was not influenced by the age of its author. The callers for 'enlightenment' in Egypt, like Taha Hussein, El-Akkad, Heikal...etc. discarded many of their revolutionary ideas when they grew old, and they grew more conservative, unlike Gamal Al-Banna, whose advancement in age, with the passage of years, lends him more vitality in terms of thought, intellect, will, perseverance, and prolificacy as well.

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# What is the Call of Islamic Revival?

## ABOUT GAMAL AL-BANNA

- He was born in El-Mahmoudiyya, in El-Beheira governorate (located 50 km from Alexandria) in 15-12-1920, to an enlightened family of reputed members who were known for their high resolve. His father had classified the greatest encyclopedia of hadiths (titled: 'Musnad Imam Ahmed Ibn Hanbal Al-Shaybany', in 24 volumes). His brother is the renowned martyred imam Hasan Al-Banna, the founder and leader of the Muslim Brotherhood Organization.
- Since his early childhood, he used to read extensively and acquire a great deal of knowledge. Having obtained his primary certificate, he entered the Khediwiyya Secondary School. A quarrel had erupted between him and his British teacher of the English language at school, resulting in dropping school without regret, and he resumed his studies on his own.
- Gamal al-Banna resumed his extensive readings, and he published his first book in 1945 on social reform. In 1946, he published his book titled "*A New Democracy*", which included a chapter titled, '*A New Understanding of the Quran*' and he has presented in this chapter the notion of the general human benefit as introduced by imam Al-Tofy. He criticized the fervent wave of the Muslim Brotherhood members and said to them, "Do not belief just in faith, but believe in the human being as well". This comment is still one of the landmarks of the Islamic Revival Movement founded by Gamal Al-Banna.
- In 1952, he published "*The Responsibility of Decadence between People and Leaders as Presented in the Quran*". He established the Egyptian Community for the Welfare of Prisoners (1953-1955), which succeeded in radical reform in Egyptian prisons, and led to a confrontation between Gamal Al-Banna and the authorities.
- Shortly after 1952 Revolution, Gamal Al-Banna began to write a book titled "*The Guiding Process of Renaissance*", in whose first chapter he mentions that this revolution is a mere coup d'etat and not a revolution in the real sense of the term. This book was censored, and Gamal Al-Banna, having seen the dictatorial, suppressive tendency of the revolution, discovered that there would be no use in writing in politics at the time.
- During the Nasserist era that opposed Islamic trends, Gamal Al-Banna was interested in syndicalism. He published and translated many books and references of the International Labor Organization in Geneva, the Labor University in Nasr City, Cairo, and the National Library. He lectured regularly in the institute of syndicalist studies since its inception in 1963 until 1993, when he criticized the established syndicalist organization. The last of his books on syndicalism was a translation and a commentary on the book of Madame Kollontai titled "*Labor Opposition in the Leninist Era*".
- In 1981, Gamal Al-Banna established the International Islamic Union of Labor. The International Labor Organization sought his assistance in translation works, while the Arab Labor Organization made him its consultant expert. Accordingly, he kept a network of relations with leaders of syndicates and unions all over the Islamic world. In 1981, he invited most of these leaders to convene in Geneva, to establish the International Islamic Union of Labor during the conference of the International Labor. The representatives of labor unions of Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Sudan, and Bangladesh were also present. The International Islamic Union of Labor also has quarters in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and in Rabat, Morocco.

- With the advent of the 1970s, the political atmosphere was favorable for writing books on Islam; Gamal Al-Banna began to write numerous books, the first of them were *"The Spirit of Islam"*, and *"The Two Great Sources: the Quran and the Sunna"*.
- In 1990, he began to write a great work titled *"Toward a New Islamic Jurisprudence"* in three consecutive volumes, in which He calls for the formulation of a new Fiqh that would break with the traditional one. This new Fiqh is unrestricted by ancient interpretations and branches of explaining hadiths, pillars of Fiqh... etc., among other ancient Islamic branches of knowledge. The last volume of this series was published in 1999.
- This three-volume book caused a controversy and a heated debate. Some voices called for censoring it and collecting its editions from markets. Yet, officials saw that this might give more propaganda to the book, and accordingly they maintained a policy of silence toward the book. Gamal Al-Banna established in 2000 the Islamic Revival Movement to disseminate his cultural, Islamic, and political thought.
- In 1997, he established with his sister Fawziya Al-Banna the Foundation of Fawziya and Gamal Al-Banna for Culture and Islamic Media, and she contributed with nearly 500,000 LE for this foundation to perform its activities without relying on any outside grants or funds. The wife of Gamal Al-Banna died in 1987 and he did not get married ever since, and accordingly he turned his apartment into a library carrying the name of the foundation. It includes 15 thousand books in Arabic, 3 thousand in English. This library includes the library of the father and one brother of Gamal Al-Banna, Abdel-Rahman Al-Banna, and many of the legacies of Al-Banna Family, including the manuscripts of the great work of the father sheikh Al-Banna. The library is furnished with a reading hall, Xerox machine, and a computer unit.
- The library includes a section of periodicals and magazines that includes 150 titles, some encyclopedias, issues of the newspapers of the Muslim Brotherhood since 1936, manuscripts of the martyred imam Hasan Al-Banna, many documents of the Muslim Brotherhood Organization, cutouts from newspapers, and drafts of books written by Gamal Al-Banna.
- Gamal Al-Banna has managed, through devoting his time to writing books, to author about 125 books (and to translate 10 books as well from English into Arabic). He writes in an easy, literary style, with mastery and skill. He published a 300-page book titled *"The Rise and Fall of Weimer's Republic"*, and his books on Islamic calls worldwide are among the main references on the subject, as Gamal Al-Banna has many relations with people and many references on that domain.
- The Islamic Revival Movement was met with silence and ignorance as it was overlooked in the media so as not to make it known to people. Yet, this Movement made its way in Egypt and the Arab countries, and some international bodies and universities are interested in it. This Movement does not aim at forming a party or a group, but it merely presents a free vision of Islam, which is shared and owned by whoever believes in it.