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*Society  
&  
History*



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The outlook of a school of thought on society and history and the opinion that it forms about these two, plays a decisive role in the ideology of that school. Hence it is essential to find out how Islam looks at society and history in the perspective of its conception of the world. It is evident that Islam is neither a school of sociology nor a philosophy of history. In its revealed Book no social or historical problem has been dealt with in the language of these two sciences.

The Holy Qur'an also has not used the usual terminology of the relevant sciences while dwelling on any moral, juristic or philosophical subject. None the less, Islamic view on a large number of questions pertaining to these sciences can be derived and deduced from the verses of the Holy Qur'an.

Islamic thinking in respect of society and history, being of special importance, it deserves an elaborate study and investigation. Like many other teachings of Islam, its views on these subjects are also a sign of the depth and profoundness, of its precepts and doctrines. For the sake of brevity we propose to deal with Islamic thinking about society and about history together in one chapter and confine our discussion to only those questions which in our opinion are essential for the identification of Islamic ideology.

We shall begin with society and then take up history. In this respect the relevant questions are as under:

- i. What is society?
- ii. Is man a social being by nature?

iii. Is the individual that is basic and society only a drawn idea, or the other way round? Or is there a third alternative?

iv. What is the relationship between society and tradition?

v. Has the individual a free choice of action in the face of society and social environment?

vi. What are the basic divisions of society?

vii. Are all human societies on the whole of one and the same nature and essence, the dissimilarities existing between them being like those existing between the individuals belonging to one species? Or have they divergent natures varying according to their rational differences, temporal and spatial conditions and cultural levels? If so, naturally the various societies shall have various sociologies and in that case each of them can have its own peculiar ideology.

We know that all human beings in spite of their regional, racial and historical differences from physical point of view belong to one species, and that is why the same medical and physiological laws apply to all of them. Now the question is whether they form one species from social point of view also and consequently are governed by one moral and social system? Can one ideology be applicable to all mankind or should each society have a special ideology conforming to its special regional, cultural, historical and sociological conditions?

viii. Are human societies which have been from the dawn of history to the present time scattered, independent of each other and subject to multiplicity and divergence of at least individual nature, advancing towards unity and uniformity? Is the future of humanity unity of society, uniformity of culture and the disappearance of contradictions and conflicts? Or is humanity doomed to remain culturally and ideologically diverse and divergent?

These are some of the questions about which, from our point of view, it is necessary that the Islamic point of view should be made clear. We propose to discuss these questions one by one briefly.

## Chapter 2

### What is Society?

A group of human beings linked together by certain common systems, traditions, conventions and laws and leading a collective life, forms a society. A collective life does not mean that a group of men should necessarily be living side by side in a particular region and should be utilizing the same climate and consuming the same kind of foodstuffs. The trees of a garden live side by side, utilize the same climate and consume the same type of nourishment. Similarly the herd of deer grazes together and moves together. But neither the deer of one herd nor the trees lead a collective life nor do they, form a society.

Human life is social in the sense that it has a 'social nature'. Human needs, achievements, enjoyments and activities all have a social nature, for they all are closely linked with certain customs, usages and systems of division of work, division of gains and division of the fulfillment of needs.

There are certain dominating thoughts, ideas and habits which keep a particular group of people united. In other words a society is a collection of people who are compelled by certain pressing needs and influenced by certain beliefs, ideas and ambitions, to be amalgamated together and lead a common life.

Common social needs and the special relations of human life so unite people that they become like passengers travelling together in one automobile, in one aeroplane or aboard one boat heading towards a particular destination where either they all reach or none of them reaches. On their way if they face any danger they face it together and have a common destiny.

The Holy Prophet while describing the philosophy behind exhortation to

what is good and restraining from what is evil has used a beautiful similitude. He has said:

"A group of people embarked a boat which sailed and cleaved the bosom of the sea. Every passenger was sitting in his own place. One of the passengers on the plea that the place where he was sitting exclusively belonged to him, began to make a hole at his place. If other passengers immediately caught hold of his hand and restrained him from making a hole, they would not only save themselves but would save him also." Is Man Social By Nature?

The question, what factors have made man social, has been under discussion from ancient times. Has man been created social from the very beginning? In other words, has he been created as a part of a whole, and is instinctively inclined, to join its whole? Or is it that he has not been created social, but social life has been imposed on him by external factors? In other words, is it that man in accordance with his inborn nature tends to be free and is not willing to accept the restriction of collective life, but having learnt by experience that he is unable to lead a lonely life, has perforce acquiesced in the limitations of a collective life? Another theory is that although man is not social by nature, it is not a factor of compulsion which has induced him to become social.

But man through his intellect and reason has discovered that by means of cooperation and collective life he can enjoy the bounties of nature in a better way. According to this theory man has agreed to cooperate with his fellow beings by his own choice. Thus man is social either by nature, or by compulsion or by choice.

According to the first theory the social life of man can be compared to the domestic life of husband and wife. Each of the two spouses is a part of a whole and has a natural tendency to join its whole.

According to the second theory, social life is comparable to the alliance and cooperation between the two countries which feel that they are unable to face the common enemy singly, and hence are compelled to conclude a treaty of alliance and cooperation in their mutual interest. According to the third theory, social life is comparable to the partnership of two capitalists who voluntarily agree to set up a commercial, agricultural or industrial concern in order to earn better and higher profits.

In accordance with the first theory the main factor that has made man social is his inner nature; according to the second, it is some external force; and according to the third, it is his rational and calculation faculty.

According to the first theory to be social is a general goal which human nature instinctively aspires to attain; according to the second, it is something accidental and non-essential or in the terminology of the philosophers, a secondary objective; and according to the third theory it is one of the intellectual objectives and not one of the natural goals.

Some verses of the Holy Qur'an indicate that sociality of man is a part of his creation. The Holy Qur'an says:

"O mankind! We have created you of a male and a female, and have made you nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Surely the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious of you."(Surah al-Hujurat, 49:13).

In this verse in the course of a moral teaching the social philosophy of the creation of man has been enunciated. The verse says that man has been created in such a way that various nations and tribes have been formed. People are identified by means of a reference to the nations and the tribes to which they belong. Thus the verse resolves a social problem, for it is an essential condition of social life that people should be able to know and distinguish each other.

Had there been no national, tribal and similar other affinities, which are a uniting as well as a distinguishing feature, identification of people would have been impossible and consequently there would have been no possibility of the existence of a social life based on the mutual relations of men.

National and tribal affiliations and such other distinctions as those of shape, colour and size fix the identity of each individual. Had all individuals been of the same shape, the same colour and the same features and there had existed no difference of affiliations among them, all individuals would have been identical like the machine-made goods produced by a factory and would have been indistinguishable from one another.

Consequently their identification would have been impossible and as a final result no social life could be established on the basis of mutual relations and the exchange of ideas, goods and services. Therefore man's affiliation to different tribes and communities has a goal and a purpose. This kind of distinction is an essential condition of social life.

Anyhow, affiliation to a particular race or family is not a matter of pride or the basis of claiming any superiority. In fact the basis of superiority is nothing but human nobility and individual's piety. The Holy Qur'an says:

"And He it is Who has created man from water and has appointed for him kindred by blood and kindred by marriage." (Surah al-Furqan, 25:54) This verse describes the blood and marriage relationships which bind the individuals to one another and form the basis of their identification, as a creational scheme designed for a sound and wise purpose. At another place the Holy Qur'an says:

"Is it they who apportion the mercy of your Lord? We have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of the world and raised some of them above others in rank so that some of them may take labour from others; and the mercy of your Lord is better than what they amass." (Surah az-Zukhruf , 43:32)

In the course of our discussion on monotheism (Monotheistic conception of the world) we have already explained the meaning of this verse. Briefly it may be said that the verse indicates that men have not been created alike in regard to their potentialities and talents. Had they been created alike, everybody would have had what the others had and would have lacked what the others lacked.

In, that case naturally there would have been no question of reciprocal need of each other and reciprocal service to each other Allah has created men dissimilar to each other in regard to their talents and their physical, spiritual, intellectual and emotional potentialities.

He has made some of them superior to some others in certain respects, while those others are often superior to these in some other respects. In this way all depend on each other and are naturally desirous to join

hands with each other. Thus Allah has paved the way for social life of men. The above verse shows that social life is something natural. It has neither been forced upon man, nor has it been adopted by him of his own choice.



## Is the Existence of Society Real and Substantial?

Society is composed of individuals. Had there been no individuals, no society could exist. Now let us see what the nature of the composition society is and what kind of relation there exists between society and man. In this respect the following theories have been put forward:

I. Composition of society is only fictitious and not real. In other words, no actual compounding has taken place. Actual compounding occurs only when as a result of the action and reaction of two or more things a new phenomenon emerges with its own characteristics as we see in the case of chemical compounds. For example, as a result of the action and reaction of the two gases, classed oxygen and hydrogen, a new phenomenon called water emerges with its own properties and characteristics.

It is essential that after their combination and amalgamation the original components should lose their individual properties and effects and be totally dissolved into a new compound. In their social life men are never amalgamated in this way, and they are not dissolved into society. Therefore society has not real and substantial existence. Its existence is only fictitious and imaginary. It is individual alone that has a real existence. Therefore, in spite of the fact that human life in society has a social form, the individuals do not make a real compound by the name of society.

II. The second theory is that although society is not a real compound like natural compounds, yet is a synthetic compound. A synthetic compound is also a kind of a real compound, though not a natural one. A synthetic compound is an interconnected whole like a machine, the parts of which are assembled and put together. In a natural compound its component parts lose their identity and their independent effect, and are dissolved in the whole; but in a synthetic compound, the components lose their

independent effect but not their identity.

They combine in a particular manner and consequently their effects are also combined. They assume the form of some new effects which are not exactly the total of the independent effects of the components in question. For example an automobile transports goods or persons from one place to another, but this effect neither relates to any part of it, nor to the total of the effects of all the parts in the unassembled state. In a motor vehicle all parts of it are compulsorily interconnected with each other and they all work together. But there is no question of the loss of their identity in the whole.

In fact in this case the whole has no existence independent of the parts. The whole vehicle is actually equivalent to the sum-total of its parts plus the special connection existing between them.

The same position is held by society. Society consists of primary and secondary systems and arrangements. The systems and the individuals, to whom they are related, are interconnected. Any change in any one of these systems - cultural, religious, economic, legal or educational - brings about changes in other systems also. Thus, social life is the final product of the entire social process. But in this process the individuals do not lose their identity, neither in society as a whole nor in any system of it.

III. The third theory is that society is a real compound like any other natural compound. But it is a combination of minds, thoughts, emotions, desires, wills and lastly of cultures, and not that of physical. Just as the material elements as a result of their mutual action and reaction pave the way for the emergence of a new phenomenon, or as the philosophers say, able to assume a new form, and thus give birth to a new compound, similarly individual human beings with their individual inborn and acquired attainments enter the social life, are spiritually amalgamated and acquire a new spiritual identity known as 'collective spirit'.

This compound is natural but of a unique kind. It is natural and actual in the sense that its component parts mutually act, react, cause a change and become the parts of a new identity. Yet it differs from other natural compounds, because in this case the 'whole' or the compound does not exist as a 'real unit'. In the case of other compounds the combination is real, because their component parts mutually act and react in a real

manner and in such a way that the identity of the parts is changed, and the resulting compound appears in the form of a real unit, for the plurality of the parts is changed into the unit of the whole.

But in the case of the combination of individuals into society, though this combination is again real because as the result of their actual action and reaction, the individuals acquire a new identity, yet their plurality is in no way transformed into a unity. Any 'overall man' incorporating all individuals does not exist as a unit. Only the aggregate total of individuals can be called the overall man. But his existence is only imaginary. IV. According to the fourth theory, society is a real compound and, for that matter, a compound par excellence.

In the case of all natural compounds their component parts before being combined have their own identity. Apart from their social existence, men are mere animals having only potential humanity or the feeling of human ego. Human thinking and human feelings such as human emotions and desires appear only in the wake of the emergence of collective spirit.

It is this spirit which fills a vacuum and gives man his personality. Collective spirit has at all times been with man and its manifestations have always been visible in ethics, religion, science, philosophy and art. Men influence each other spiritually and culturally and are influenced through and in the wake of this collective spirit, not at any stage prior to it.

In fact the sociology of man precedes his psychology, contrary to the previous theory which maintains that psychology of man precedes his sociology. This theory holds that if man had not acquired social existence and sociology, he would not have reached the stage of acquiring human psyche and individual psychology.

The first theory is purely of the fundamentality of individual only. According to it, society has neither a real existence, nor any law, norm nor destiny. It is only individuals who have actual existence and can be identified. The destiny of every individual is independent of the destiny of other individuals.

According to the second theory also what is basic is the individual. The proponents of this theory do not believe that society as a whole and as a

combination of individuals has an actual existence. Anyhow, they maintain that the bond existing between the individuals is real and similar to a physical bond.

According to this theory though society has no existence independent of the individuals and it is only the individuals who have an actual existence, yet in view of the fact that the individuals in a society are linked with each other like the various component parts of a factory and all their actions are intertwined in a mechanical chain of causes and effects, these individuals have a common destiny, and society being composed of interconnected components, has also identity independent of that of its component parts, that is the individuals.

As for the third theory, it holds that both the individual and society are basic. It maintains that as the existence of its component parts (individuals) is not dissolved into that of society, and the component parts do not cease to exist, as is the case with the chemical compounds, the individual is basic. But society is also basic for the combination of the individuals from spiritual, intellectual and emotional point of view is similar to a chemical combination.

The individuals in society acquire a new identity that is of society, though they retain their own identity as well. According to this theory, as a result of the mutual action and reaction of its component parts, a new and living reality emerges in the form of society. In addition to the individual conscience, will, desire and thinking, a new conscience, a new will, a new desire and a new thinking appear which predominate the individual conscience and consciousness.

According to the fourth theory only society is basic. All that exists is collective spirit, collective conscience, collective consciousness, collective will and desire and collective psychic. Individual conscience and consciousness are only a manifestation of collective conscience and consciousness.

As for the Qur'anic verses, they support the third theory. As we pointed out earlier, the Holy Qur'an does not deal with human questions in the same way as a book of science or philosophy would. It deals with these questions differently. Anyhow, it mentions the questions concerning society and individual in a way that substantiates the third theory. The

Holy Qur'an maintains that the peoples (societies) have a common destiny, a common deed-sheet, and an understanding and consciousness. They obey and disobey.

It is evident that if a people were to have no actual existence, there would have been no question of their destiny, understanding, consciousness, obedience and disobedience. This proves that the Holy Quran believes in some sort of collective and social life. Collective life is not a mere allegory. It is as much a reality, as collective death. The Holy Qur'an says: "Every nation has a term; when it comes, they cannot put it back a single hour, nor can they put it forward." (Surah al-A'raf, 7:34)  
The Holy Qur'an says:

"Every nation shall be summoned to its record." (Surah al-Jathiyah, 45:28)

This shows that each nation has a record of its deeds, and as a living, conscious and responsible being, shall be summoned to render an account of what it did.

The Holy Qur'an says:

"To every nation We have made their deeds seem fair." (Surah al-An'am, 6: 109)

This verse indicates that every nation acquires a special outlook, a special way of thinking and some special standards. Each nation has a special way of looking at things and understanding them. The judgements of each nation are based on the special standards adopted by it. Each nation has its own taste. The acts which seem fair to one nation appear to be unfair to another. It is the social atmosphere of a nation which determines the taste of its individual members. The Holy Quran says:

"Every nation tried to seize their Prophet and argued falsely with a view to refute the truth. Then I seized them, and how awful was My punishment." (Surah al-Mu'min, 40:5)

This verse refers to a shameful collective decision with a view to fight the truth. In it, there is also a mention of a general punishment for this collective offence.

In the Holy Qur'an there are instances in which the act of one individual in society has been attributed to the whole society or the act of one generation has been attributed to the subsequent generations.<sup>16</sup> This is possible only in the cases in which a particular people may be of one collective way of thinking and may be having, so to say, one collective spirit. For example, in the story of the tribe of Thamud, the action of one man who hamstrung the she-camel of Prophet Salih, has been attributed to the whole tribe. The Qur'an says: "They hamstrung her".

Thus the whole tribe has been regarded as culpable and deserving punishment. "So your Lord destroyed them".

Explaining this point in one of his sermons Imam Ali says:

"Men! The only thing which unites people and provides them with a common destiny is happiness and resentment". When people collectively feel pleased or displeased with something which might have been done by one single person, they are to be regarded as one man and they have a common destiny. The she-camel of Thamud was hamstrung by one individual, but Allah punished the whole tribe, because they all were pleased with his action. Allah has said:

"They hamstrung her and so they had to regret." (Surah ash-Shu'ara', 26:167)

Allah punished them all because they all approved the decision taken by that one man. Hence, when that decision was put into practice it was actually the collective decision of them all. Though hamstringing was the action of one man, Allah has ascribed it to them generally. He said that they hamstrung the she-camel, and not that one of them hamstrung her.

Here there is another point worth-remembering. To be merely pleased with a sin without practically committing it, is not regarded as a sin. If a person feels happy on knowing that some other person has committed or is about to commit a sin, that person himself will not be regarded as guilty. Even if a person decides to commit a sin himself, but does not commit it actually, he is not to blame.

The approval of a sin committed by another individual is considered to

be a sin only when this approval amounts to some sort of participation in the decision about that sin or in the commitment of it. That is the nature of all collective sins. First the social atmosphere and the collective spirit of people approve the commitment of a particular sin and pave the way for it.

Then one member of society whose decision is a part of the decision of other members and whose approval is a part of the approval of others perpetrates that sin actually. In this case the sin of that individual is the sin of all members of that society. What has been stated by Imam Ali visualizes this kind of situation and inter alia explains the meaning of the above quoted verse. Otherwise mere happiness or resentment not involving participation in the decision and the action of the actual perpetrator is not regarded as a sin.

In the Holy Quran occasionally the deeds of one generation also have been attributed to the subsequent generations. For example the past deeds of the Israelites have been attributed to the Jews contemporary to the Holy Prophet. The Holy Qur'an says that these people deserve humiliation and ignominy because they used to kill the Prophets.

That was said because from the viewpoint of the Holy Qur'an the Israelites of the time of the Holy Prophet were a continuation and an extension of their predecessors who used to kill the Prophets. Not only that, but from the point of view of collective thinking they were exactly those people of the past who still continued to exist. The French philosopher, Auguste Comte says: "Human society consists more of the dead than of the living".

In other words, in all periods of history the people of the past influence mankind more than the living people. The statement that "the dead more than ever continue to rule over the living", means the same thing. (Vide: Raymond Aron's *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, Vol. I, p. 91) *Al-Mizan*, the celebrated commentary on the Holy Qur'an,

discussing the question that a society having one spirit and one collective thinking assumes the position of just one human being and all its members become as if they are the organs of one person, says that all the members of society become so absorbed into the personality of society that their joys and grief's become the joys and grief's of society and their

prosperity and misery become its prosperity and misery. Al-Mizan continues to say:

"The Holy Qur'an has expressed this view regarding the nations and societies having a collective thinking as a result of their religious or national bias, by declaring the subsequent generations accountable for the deeds of the preceding generations. The Holy Qur'an blames the present people for the deeds of their fore-fathers. Obviously this is the only correct way of passing judgement on the people having a collective thinking and a collective spirit". (al-Mizan, vol. IV, p. 112)



## **Society and Tradition**

Should society have a real existence, it must also have its own laws and conventions. But if we accept the first theory about the nature of society as mentioned above, and deny its actual existence, we have to admit that society has no laws or conventions. In case we accept the second theory and hold that the combination of society is synthetic and mechanical, society will certainly be having laws and conventions, but only those which relate to the causative system of its component parts and their mutual mechanical effects. It will not be having any signs or characteristics of life.

In case we accept the third theory, society should be having its laws and conventions independent of the laws and conventions of its component parts (individuals), for in this case society enjoys a sort of independent collective life, although not removed from the life of the individuals, but scattered in it.

On getting organized into society, the individual human beings lose the independence of their identity only comparatively. Otherwise they retain it to a very large extent. The individual life and individual endowments and acquirements are not totally dissolved in the collective life. In fact according to this theory man lives with two lives, two spirits and two egos,

- one being his human life, human spirit and human ego born of his basic nature and the other his collective life, collective spirit and collective ego born of his collective life and absorbed into his individual ego. That is why man is governed both by psychological and sociological laws. According to the fourth theory, the only laws and conventions that govern man as such are the social conventions.

The first person among the Muslim scholars, who mentioned the laws and conventions governing society and distinguished from the laws and conventions of the individuals, and consequently maintained that society had a personality, a nature and a reality, was Abdur Rahman Ibn Khaldun of Tunis. He in his celebrated Introduction to History has discussed this question in detail. Among the modern scholars the first person who discovered the conventions governing the communities, was the French philosopher of the 18th century, Montesquieu. About him Raymond Aron says:

"His purpose was to make history intelligible. He sought to understand historical truth. But historical truth appeared to him in the form of an almost limitless diversity of morals, customs, ideas, laws, and institutions. His inquiry's point of departure was precisely this seemingly incoherent diversity. The goal of the inquiry should have been the replacement of this incoherent diversity by a conceptual order.

One might say that Montesquieu, exactly like Max Weber, wanted to proceed from the meaningless fact to an intelligible order. This attitude is precisely the one peculiar to the sociologist". (Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, vol. 1, p. 14)

The gist of this statement is that behind the so many forms of social phenomena apparently inconsistent with each other, a sociologist discovers such a unity that all the varying phenomena are recognized to be the manifestations of that unity.

In the same way, all the similar social events and phenomena have their origin in a similar sequence of analogous causes. Here is a passage from the observations on the causes of the rise and fall of the Romans:

"It is not fortune that rules the world. We can ask the Romans, who had a constant series of success when they followed a certain plan, and an uninterrupted sequence of disasters when they followed another. There are general causes, whether moral or physical which operate in every monarchy, to bring about its rise, its duration and its fall. All accidents are subject to these causes, and if the outcome of a single battle, i.e. a particular cause, was the ruin of a state, there was a general cause which decreed that that state was destined to perish through a single battle. In short, the main impulse carries all the particular accidents along with it".

(Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, vol. I, p. 4) The Holy Qur'an declares specifically that the nations and societies as such have laws and norms according to which they progress or decline. When it is said that a nation or a community has a common destiny, that amounts to saying that society has its law. In respect of the Israelites the Holy Qur'an says:

"In the scriptures We decreed for the Children of Isra'il: Twice you shall create disorder in the land and you shall become great tyrants. When the time of the punishment of your first transgression came, We sent against you, Our slaves of great might who ravaged your country. Thus the prophecy was fulfilled. Then We granted you victory over them. We heaped you with wealth and sons and made you a greater host. (We said to you): If you do good, it shall be to your own advantage; but if you do evil, you yourselves shall suffer.

So when the time of the punishment of your second transgression came, (We sent against you other slaves of Ours) to ravage you and enter the Masjid in the same way as had the former army entered it, utterly destroying all that they laid their hand on. (And We said): It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you, but if you repeat (the crime), We shall also repeat (the punishment). We have Hell, a prison for the disbelievers." (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:4 - 8)

The sentence: "If you repeat (the crime), We shall also repeat the punishment", has been addressed to a community and not to any individual. Hence it clearly shows that the laws governing societies are universal.

### **Compulsion or Volition**

One of the basic questions which have been under discussion among the scholars, especially during the last century, is the question of the compulsion or volition of individual spirit vis-a-vis collective spirit. If we accept the first theory concerning the composition of society, regard its composition as merely imaginary and hold that it is only individual who is basic, then there can be no question of collective compulsion, for in that case there would be existing no collective force or power.

Hence if there were any compulsion, that would be on the part of an

individual or individuals only. No individual would be compelled by society in that sense in which the supporters of the theory of collective compulsion talk of it. But if we accept the fourth theory, look at the individual only as raw material and an empty receptacle from the viewpoint of human personality, think in the terms of exclusive basis of society and regard the entire human personality,

human intellect and human will, which from the basis of the volition of an individual, as a manifestation of the collective will and intellect and as a guise which the collective spirit has assumed to promote its ends, there will be left no room for a conception of free will of the individual in social matters.

The French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, who believes that society is basic and of prime importance says:

"Unlike such things as eating and sleeping which have animal aspect, all social and, in fact human matters are the product of society, and not that of individual thinking or will. These matters have three characteristics: they are external; they are compulsive and they are general. They are external because they are imposed on an individual by society from outside.

They actually existed in society even prior to an individual's being born. The individual accepts them under the influence of society. That is how an individual accepts moral and social customs, religious precepts and the like. The social matters are compulsive in the sense that they impose themselves on the individual and give their own colour to his conscience, judgement, feeling, thinking and sentiments. As these matters are compulsive, they are automatically general and universal also."

However, if we accept the third theory and hold that both the individual and the society are basic, that would in no way mean that the individuals are helpless in human and social matters even if it is conceded that the force of society predominates the force of the individuals. Durkheim believed in compulsion because he ignored the importance of human nature, the development of which is due to basic and substantial human evolution. This human nature gives man a sort of freedom which enables him to resist the impositions of society. That is how a sort of balance exists in the relations between society and the individual.

The Holy Qur'an maintains that society has a nature, a personality and an actuality. It holds that society lives and dies. It has conscience and the power of obeying and disobeying. At the same time the Qur'an also maintains that the individual has enough power to ignore the dictates of society, if he so desires, and bases its doctrine on what it calls (human) 'nature framed by Allah'.

There were some people in Makkah who described themselves as weak and put forward their weakness as an excuse to shirk their responsibility. In fact they said that they were helpless and could not defy society. The Holy Qur'an says that their excuse was not acceptable because at least they could migrate from that social atmosphere:

"Was not Allah's earth spacious so that you could have migrated therein." (Surah an-Nisa, 4:97) At another place the Holy Qur'an says:

"Believers, look after your own souls because he who goes astray cannot harm you if you have the right guidance." (Surah al-Mai'dah, 5:105) In the famous Qur'anic verse there is a reference to a trait of human nature. In that verse of the Holy Qur'an after declaring that He has put the covenant of monotheism in the nature of man, Allah has added:

"So that you may not say that our forefathers were pagans and we, being their posterity, had to follow them." (Surah al-A'raf, 7:172 - 173) Therefore, with this kind of human nature, there can be no question of any compulsion.

The teachings of the Holy Quran are based absolutely on, a sense of responsibility - responsibility towards oneself and towards society. Exhortation to what is good and restraint from what is evil are a manifestation of the individual's revolt against the corruption and weaknesses of society. The stories related by the Holy Qur'an mostly represent this element of individual's revolt against the atmosphere of social corruption. The stories of Prophet Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa, the Holy Prophet, the People of the Cave, the Believer of the tribe of Fir'awn, all contain this element. .

The root cause of the misconception about the helplessness of individuals in relation to society and social atmosphere is that it has been

wrongly presumed that in the case of a real compound its components are fully dissolved and with the emergence of a new reality their plurality is assimilated to the unity of the whole. It is said that there are only two alternatives: either the existence of the personality, freedom and independence of the individuals be admitted and consequently it should be denied that society is an actuality and it is a real compound; or alternatively it should be admitted that society is a real compound.

In the case of the first alternative the position will be in conformity with the first and the second theories, and in the case of the second alternative it will have to be denied that individuals have any personality, freedom or independence. That is what the proposition of Durkheim states. Anyway, it is not possible to combine both these alternative theories. As all indications and sociological arguments support the actuality of society, the counter-theory must be regarded as invalid.

As a matter of fact all real compounds are not alike from philosophical point of view. In the lower grades of nature that is in the case of inorganic matter and lifeless beings, according to the philosophers each existing thing is governed by one absolutely simple force, and nature has dealt with all of them in a like manner.

In their case the component parts are assimilated fully and the existence of the parts is dissolved absolutely into the existence of the whole. That is what we see in the case of water which is a compound of oxygen and hydrogen. But the more the level of a compound goes up the more its components acquire relative independence of the whole, with the result that a sort of plurality in the unity and a unity in the plurality is established. We find that man in spite of his unity enjoys a wonderful plurality.

Not only his faculties and subordinate forces retain their plurality to a great extent, but there also exists a sort of permanent conflict and struggle between his inner forces. Society is the most real being in nature, and its component parts relatively enjoy a great deal of independence.

The component parts of society are human beings, who are equipped with their innate intellect and will. Their individual and natural existence precedes their social existence. In addition, as we said earlier the

components of the high grade compounds retain their relative independence. In view of all these facts the individual spirit of man is not helpless against the collective spirit of society.

## Notes

16. "Therefore woe to those who write the scripture with their own hands and then say:

"This is from Allah, in order to make some paltry gain. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn thereby!" (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:79)

"Ignominy shall attend them wherever they are found, except in cases in which they came to terms with Allah and people. They have incurred the wrath of Allah and humiliation has been stamped on them. That is because they used to disbelieve the revelations of Allah and kill the Prophets wrongfully. That is because they disobeyed and used to transgress." (Surah Ale Imran, 3:112)

# Chapter 5

## Social Classification

Although society enjoys a sort of unity, from within it is divided into various groups and classes, which are sometimes incongruous. At least some societies are so. As society possibly has different and sometimes conflicting polarities, it may be said that it has both unity and plurality. According to the terminology of the Muslim philosophers, societies are governed by a specific sort of 'unity in plurality and plurality in unity'.

In the previous chapters we discussed the nature of the unity of society. Now we propose to take up the nature of its plurality.

In this connection there exist two well-known theories. The first one is based on historical materialism and dialectic contradiction. According to this theory, which we will elaborate later, the question of the unity and the plurality of society hinges on the principle of ownership. The societies in which private property does not exist, such as the primitive social society or the social societies that are likely to come into existence in future are basically unipolar. But the societies, in which private property holds sway, are bipolar. As such society is either unipolar or bipolar, there being no third alternative.

In a bipolar society all men are divided into two groups or classes, the exploiters and the exploited or the rulers and the ruled, there being no group or camp other than these two groups or camps. This division becomes applicable to all affairs of society, such as philosophy, ethics, religion and art. In other words, in a bipolar society there are two kinds of philosophy, two kinds of ethics, two kinds of religion and so on, each kind having a particular economic character.

If in any case there prevails only one philosophy, one religion or one set of moral rules, that philosophy, religion or morality is always tinted with



the colour of that class which has succeeded in imposing its colour on the other class as sometimes happens. There can exist no philosophy, art, religion or morality transcending the economic classes and having no class colour.

According to the other theory the unipolarity or multipolarity of society is not subject to the principle of private ownership. The cultural, social, racial and ideological factors also can make society multipolar. Especially cultural and ideological factors may play a basic role in dividing society into conflicting camps or making it unipolar even without the abolition of private property.

Now let us see what view is held by the Holy Qur'an in regard to the plurality of society.

Does it or does it not accept its existence? If it does, does it hold that society is bipolar because of the existence of private property and exploitation or does it forward some other view?

It appears that the best way or at least a good way of ascertaining the Qur'anic point of view in this respect is to pick out the words having social connotation used in the Holy Qur'an and to see what they signify.

The words with social significance used in the Holy Qur'an are of two categories: Some of them are related to only one social phenomenon. These words are such as Millah (community), Shari'ah (Divine law), Shir'an (law) Minhaj (way of life), Sunnah (traditions) etc. These words are outside the scope of our present discussion.

There are other words which serve as a social designation of all or several groups of men. It is by means of these words that we can determine the viewpoint of the Holy Qur'an. Such words are: Qawm (people), Ummah (community), Nads (men), Shu'ub (nations) Qaba'il (tribes), Rasul (messenger of Allah), Nabi (Prophet), Imam (leader), Wali (guardian), Mu'min (believer), Kafir (unbeliever), Munafiq (hypocrite), Mushrik (polytheist), Muzabzab (wavering), Muhajir (emigrant), Mujahid (warrior), Siddiq (truthful, righteous), Shahid (witness), Muttaqi (pious, God-fearing),

Salih (virtuous), Muslih (reformer), Mufsid (corrupter), Amr bil maruf

(exhorting to do good), Nahi 'anil munkar (restraining from evil), Alim (scholar, learned), Nasih (admonisher), Zalim (tyrant), Khalifah (deputy), Rabbani (Divine), Rabbi (rabbi), Kahin (sooth-sayer), Ruhban (monks), Ahbar (Jewish scribes), Jabbar (mighty, despot), Ali (lofty, sublime, strong), Musta'li (superior, master), Mustakbir (haughty), Mustaz'af (suppressed), Musrif (extravagant lavish prodigal), Mutraf (affluent, living in luxury), Taghut (oppressor, idols), Mala (notables, chieftains) Ghani (rich), Faqir (pauper, poor, needy), Mamluk (the ruled), Malik (owner, master), Hurr (freeman, librated), Abd (slave, bondman), Rabb (lord, master) etc.

There are certain other words which apparently resemble the above words. They are such as: Musalli (worshipper), Mukhlis (sincere, devoted), Siddiq (truthful, loyal), Munfiq (charitable), Mustaghfir (seeker of Allah's forgiveness), Ta'ib (repentant) 'Abid (adorer), Hami'd (extoller) and the like. The difference is that these words have been used in connection with the description of certain acts, not to denote any groups of people. As such there is no possibility that these words should signify any social divisions.

It is necessary that the verses mentioning the first set of words especially the verses related to social orientation should be studied carefully so that it may be ascertained whether they cover two or more than two groups of men. Suppose they all can be accommodated to cover two groups, what are the distinguishing features of these groups?

For example, is it possible that all of them be accommodated to cover the two groups of the believers and the unbelievers, on the basis of their religious orientation, or the two groups of the rich and the poor, on the basis of their economic position? In other words, it is to be seen whether or not all divisions and classifications in the final analysis turn to one main division, and all other divisions being merely its ramifications? If they finally turn to one division, then what is the basis of it? Some assert that according to the view of the Holy Quran, society is bipolar.

Primarily it is divided into two main groups:

1. The rulers and the exploiters;
2. The ruled, the exploited and the subjugated.

The group of the rulers is that which has been described by the Holy Qur'an as the 'haughty' and the group of the ruled is that which has been described as the 'oppressed'.

Other classifications such as those of the believers and the unbelievers, the monotheists and the polytheists or the virtuous and the corrupt are of subsidiary character. In other words, it is haughtiness and exploitation which lead to disbelief, polytheism, hypocrisy and the like, whereas it is the state of being oppressed that leads to faith, migration, jihad, virtuousness, reformation etc.

In other words the root of all those things which have been denounced by the Holy Qur'an as dogmatic, moral or practical deviation lies in a particular state of economic relationship known as exploitation. Similarly the root of all the things advocated and supported by the Holy Qur'an from dogmatic, moral or practical point of view, lies in the state of being exploited. The conscience of man is by nature subject to the state of his material life. There is no possibility of a change in man's spiritual, psychological and moral state unless the condition of his material life is changed.

On this basis the Holy Qur'an holds that the basic and proper form of the social struggle is the class struggle. In other words, the Holy Quran gives more importance to social struggle than to economic or moral struggle; and it maintains that the 'infidels, the hypocrites, the polytheists, the corrupt, the wicked and the tyrants are the offshoots of those groups which it terms voluptuous, extravagant, elite, imperial, haughty and the like.

The infidels and the wicked cannot emerge from the class opposite to these groups. The Prophets, the Imams, the saints, the martyrs, the emigrants and the faithful all come out of the oppressed class. There is no possibility of their coming out of the opposite class. It is the state of being the oppressor or being the oppressed that frames social conscience and gives a direction to it. All other qualities are mere manifestations of these two states.

The Holy Qur'an considers all the above mentioned groups to be the various manifestations and ramifications of the two diametrically opposite classes: (i) The haughty, and (ii) The oppressed. It has mentioned a

number of good qualities, such as truthfulness, chastity, sincerity, worship, insight, kindness, mercy, manliness, submissiveness, generosity, sacrifice, Allah-fearing, and humility, and a number of bad qualities such as, telling lies, treachery, lewdness, ostentation, licentiousness, obstinacy, hard-heartedness, miserliness, arrogance etc. The Holy Qur'an regards the first set of qualities as belonging to the oppressed and the second set of qualities as belonging to the oppressors.

Therefore the state of being the oppressors and the oppressed is not only a characteristic of the two different and opposite classes, but also gives rise to two sets of contradictory qualities. Being the oppressors and the oppressed is the basis of all orientations, leanings and the choices, and is the root of all cultural and civic phenomena.

The ethics, philosophy, art, literature and religion emerging from the oppressor class, depict the orientation of that class, serve to justify the status quo and cause stagnation and fossilization. In contrast the ethics, philosophy, literature, art or religions emerging from the oppressed class are always informative, inspiring, dynamic and revolutionary.

The haughty people by virtue of being oppressors and because they possess social distinctions are not broad-minded. They are the obscurantist's, conservative and peace-loving. In contrast the oppressed are tradition-breakers, enthusiastic enterprisers and revolutionaries.

In short, according to the proponents of this theory, the Holy Qur'an supports the view that it is economic condition which makes man, determines as to what class he belongs to, gives him direction and determines his intellectual, moral, religious and ideological foundation. A study of the verses of the Holy Qur'an as a whole indicates that this view is the basis of the Qur'anic teachings.

As such the criterion of everything is the class to which a man belongs. We can judge all claims by this standard. On this basis we can accept or deny the claim of anyone asserting that he is a believer, a reformer or a leader. This criterion can be applied even to the claim of a Prophet or an Imam.

Actually this theory is based on a material conception of man and society. There is no doubt that the Holy Qur'an attaches great importance to

the social condition of the individuals. But does it mean that the Holy Qur'an considers it to be the basis of all divisions and classifications of man? In our opinion this conception of society is not in conformity with the Islamic outlook on man, the world and society, and is the outcome of a superficial study of the Holy Qur'an. As we propose to study this question in detail under the heading, Is History Materialistic in Nature? We withhold our further comments at this stage.

### Singleness or Multiplicity of Societies

As we pointed out earlier, for every school this question is important, for on it depends whether all human societies can follow one single ideology or each nation, community and cultural unit must have its separate ideology. We know that an ideology means a scheme that leads a society to prosperity and perfection. We also know that each species in this world has its own characteristics and capabilities, and hence the conception of prosperity and perfection which awaits each other is different. The prosperity and perfection of the horse are not exactly the same as the prosperity and perfection of the sheep or man.

Therefore, if on the basis of the actuality of societies, we presume that all of them have one nature and essence, and their variations are only within the range of individualistic variations of a species, we can safely say that they may have one single living ideology having enough flexibility to be applicable to all individualistic variations. But if the various societies have different natures and essences, naturally they should have multifarious schemes for their well-being and one ideology cannot be applicable to all of them.

There arises exactly the same question in respect of the changes that overtake societies with the passage of time. Does the essence of societies change in the course of these changes? Are these changes of the nature of a change in species or merely of the nature of a change in some members of it while the nature of the species itself remains essentially unaltered, despite all changes.

The first of the above two questions relates to society and the second to history. We now take up the first question and leave the second one till we come to the discussion of history.

A study of sociology can throw a light on the question whether the various societies primarily and fundamentally have some common characteristics, their variations being only superficial and not basic; or they are basically and by nature different from each other, even though they appear to be similar outwardly. This is a philosophical way of ascertaining the singularity and multiplicity of the things in the case of ambiguity.

Here there is a shorter way also, and that is the way of the study of man himself. It is an admitted fact that all men belong to one species. From biological point of view man has not undergone any biological change since he has appeared. Some scientists say that nature after evolving living beings to the level of man has changed its course. It has shifted the process of evolution from biological and physical changes to social and spiritual development.

Earlier while discussing the sociality of man, we came to the conclusion that as men belong to one species not many, they are social by nature. In other words, man's sociality and his collective spirit are his inborn and essential characteristics. In order to be able to attain due perfection befitting his capabilities, man has a social tendency which paves the way for the emergence of a collective spirit, which in its turn is a means of leading him to his ultimate perfection. The fact that he belongs to a particular species, determines the course of man's collective spirit. In other words, man's collective spirit is in the service of his human nature. So long as his human nature lasts, it will continue to perform its function. Hence it may be said that his collective spirit is a by-product of man's individual spirit, and, in other words it is a part of his nature. As all men belong to one species, all human societies also have a single nature.

Just as an individual sometimes deviates from the normal course of his nature, the same is true of society also. The diversity of societies is similar to the moral variety of the individuals, which in no case falls outside the human framework. Thus all societies, cultures and the collective spirits dominating societies, in spite of all the difference in their forms, always have a human colour and their nature cannot be other than human.

Of course, if we accept the fourth theory of the composition of society, regard the individuals as merely receptive matter like empty receptacles and deny the principle of true human nature, only then we can consider the hypothesis of the fundamental diversity of societies. But this theory

as propounded by Durkheim is not acceptable by any means for the most important question which remains unanswered by this theory is:

If collective spirit does not primarily spring from the individual spirit of man and is not a by-product of inborn human nature, then from where has it come? Has it come into existence out of absolute non-existence? To answer this question, is it enough to say that since man has existed, society also has existed.

Moreover, Durkheim himself maintains that social matters such as religion, moral principles, art etc. have existed and will always be existing in all societies. In his own words, they have temporal permanence and spatial diffusion. This in itself proves that man's collective spirit is of one single type and has one single nature.

According to Islamic teachings there is only one religion. The differences of canonical laws are merely subsidiary, not substantial. We also know that religion is nothing but a scheme of individual and collective evolution. This shows that Islamic teachings are based on the conception of the singleness of the type of societies. Had societies been of many types, their evolutionary goals and the ways to attain them would certainly have differed, and there would have been plurality of religions basically different from each other. But the Holy Quran insists that there has been only one religion, not more, in all regions and societies and in all ages and times. From the viewpoint of the Holy Qur'an religions (in plural form) have never existed. What has existed is the religion (in singular form). All Prophets have preached and taught one religion, one way of life and one goal. The Holy Qur'an says:

"He has ordained for you that religion which He commanded to Nuh, and which We revealed to you and which We commanded to Ibrahim, Musa and 'Isa, saying.- Establish the religion and be not divided in it." (Surah al-Shura, 42:13)

Several verses of the Holy Qur'an indicate that during all times and in all places the true Prophets sent by Allah preached the same religion. The idea that fundamentally religion is not more than one is based on the conception that all men belong to one species, not to more than one. Similarly human society as an actuality is basically of one type not of several types.

# Chapter 6

## Future of Societies

We may not admit that modern societies and cultures are basically divergent and dissimilar as far as their nature is concerned, yet it cannot be denied that in regard to their form and quality they widely vary. Now the question is: What is the future of human societies? Will these cultures and civilizations and these societies and nationalities for ever continue to retain their existing position? Or will humanity move towards a single culture, a single civilization and a single society and will all societies one day coalesce and assume a genuine human form? This question hinges on the question of the nature of society and the relation between individual and collective spirits.

It is evident that if we believe in the theory of the fundamentality of human nature and hold that the collective existence of man, his collective life and the collective spirit of society are the means which human nature has chosen to attain its ultimate perfection, it may be said that all societies, cultures and civilizations are marching towards their unification and final amalgamation into each other. The future of human societies is one fully developed world society in which all possible human values will be realized and man will attain true perfection, real well-being and finally genuine humanity.

From the viewpoint of the Holy Qur'an it is an indisputable fact that ultimately truth shall prevail and falsehood shall be totally vanquished and obliterated. Ultimately piety and the pious are bound to succeed.

Allama Tabatabai in al-Mi'zan says:

"A deep investigation into the conditions of the world reveals that in future man also as a part of the world will attain his perfection. The Holy Qur'an says that the establishment of Islam in the world is inevitable.



That is another way of saying that man will reach his complete perfection. When the Holy Qur'an says: "Believers, whosoever of you becomes a renegade from his religion, (in his stead) Allah will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him"(Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:54) it actually wants to underline what for creation is necessary and to describe man's final destiny". (Al-Mizan, vol. IV, p. 106)

The Holy Qur'an says:

"Allah has promised such of you as believe and do good works that He will surely make them to succeed in the earth as He caused those who were before them to succeed (others) and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has approved for them, and will give them safety after fear. They worship Me. They ascribe nothing as partner with Me." (Surah an-Nur, 24:55)

At another place the Holy Qur'an says:

"Surely My righteous slaves will inherit the earth." (Surah al-Anbiya, 21:105)

The author of al-Mizan under the heading: Belief in the Frontiers of the Islamic World, not its Geographical or Contractual Boundary, says:

"Islam has repealed the principle that national divisions have an effective role in forming society. There are two main factors which have caused these divisions. One of them is the primitive tribal life based on racial affinity and the other is the difference of geographical regions. These are the main causes of the division of mankind into nationalities and tribes. They are also the source of the linguistic and colour differences. These two factors at a later stage were the reason why each nation acquired the exclusive control of some region, called it its homeland and undertook its defense.

Though this is a natural process, yet it involves something which is against human nature that requires entire mankind to live as one whole and one unit. The law of Nature is also based on assembling what is scattered and unifying what is separate. It is through this process that Nature attains its goals. The working of this law can be observed if we study natural phenomena and see how primary matter assumes the

shape of elements and then of plants, then of animals and finally of man. Though national and tribal divisions unite the people belonging to one country or one tribe, they at the same time place these people in opposition to other human units. The people of one country regard their fellow-countrymen as their brothers but regard others as aliens, and look at them as if they were lifeless objects only worthy of being exploited.

That is the reason why Islam has abolished nationalistic and tribal divisions which split humanity, and instead of race, country- or nationality has declared faith (the discovery of truth which has an equal value to all and to which all are naturally inclined) to be the rallying point of humanity. Even in such matters as marriage and inheritance it declared the fellowship of belief as the criterion". (al-Mizan, vol. IV, pp. 132 - 133)

The same book under the heading: Rightful Religion will Ultimately be Victorious, says:

"Mankind by virtue of its nature collectively seeks to attain true prosperity and perfection. In other words it wants to reach the highest position of material and spiritual life, and one day it will certainly reach it. Islam, being the religion of true monotheism provides a plan for attaining this cherished goal. The deviations which become the lot of man while traversing the long way to this goal, should not be construed to mean the invalidity of true human nature or its death. Man is actually always directed by his nature.

The deviations and errors are-caused by a sort of misapplication of its dictates. Man sooner or later will one day attain that perfection which he seeks by virtue of his nature. This idea may be deduced from Surah ar-Rum, verses 30 to 41. These verses show that the dictates of human nature are immutable, and that man is bound to find his way after making several experiments and going about in different directions gropingly.

Once man finds his way, he will stick to it. One must not listen to those who say that Islam is a stage of human culture which has already completed its mission and now it is nothing more than a historical relic which has outlived its utility. Islam, in the sense in which we know and discuss it, is the ultimate perfection which man must attain one day, because that is a requirement of the law of creation". (al-Mizan, vol. IV, p.

14)

Some assert that Islam in no way advocates the unification of human cultures and human societies. In contrast it supports and recognizes the diversity of cultures and societies. They say that the personality and the identity of a nation are equivalent to its culture, which represents its collective spirit. The collective spirit of a nation is formed by its special history which is not shared by other nations. Nature makes man. History makes man's culture, his personality and his real ego. Every nation has its characteristic and distinctive culture that moulds its personality. The protection of its culture by a nation actually means the protection of its identity.

We know that the personality and the identity of every individual are his own. To give them up and accept some other identity and personality would amount to stripping oneself of one's self, and becoming alienated from it. To every nation any culture other than the one which has become a part and parcel of its life over its long history is foreign to it. Every nation has a particular kind of feelings, and sentiments. Every nation has its own outlook and taste. Every nation has its own literature, music, manners and ways.

Every nation likes certain things which are not liked by other nations. The culture of a nation is the outcome of its successes and failures over a long period of its history. It reflects its deprivations and endowments, its contacts, the climate of the region in which it lives, the distinguished personalities it has produced and the waves of immigrations that it has received. The culture of a nation gives a particular shape and a particular dimension to its collective and national spirit.

Philosophy, science, literature, religion and ethics are the elements which over successive periods of common history of a human group are so shaped and so combined that they accord a basically distinctive existence to that group in comparison with other groups. This process creates a spirit which forms an organic and vital link between the persons forming that group and converts them into members of a distinct body. It is this spirit which gives this body not only an independent and definite existence but also gives it a sort of life which distinguishes it from all other cultural bodies forever.

This spirit is clearly felt not only in the collective behaviour and the collective spirit of that body, but also in its reactions to nature, life and all that happens. It may be felt not only in the sentiments, desires and tendencies of that body but also in the works of science and arts which it produces. In short, this spirit can be seen and felt in all spheres of human life, both material and spiritual.

It is said that religion is an ideology, a faith and the sentiments and actions resulting from that faith. As for nationality, it is "personality" and the distinctive features created by the common spirit of the individuals having a common destiny. Hence relation between nationality and religion is the same as exists between personality and faith.

It is also said that the opposition of Islam to racial discrimination and national hegemony does not mean its opposition to the diversity of nationalities in human society.

The principle of equality in Islam does not mean the rejection of nationalities. In contrast, it means that Islam does recognize the existence of nationalities as an indisputable fact and an undeniable natural phenomenon. The under-mentioned Qur'anic verse which is often quoted as a proof of Islam's denial and rejection of nationalities, in fact confirms and supports their existence. This verse says:

"Men, We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the most pious of you." (Surah al-Hujurat, 49:13)

This verse first mentions the classification of mankind from the viewpoint of sex, which is a natural classification. Immediately thereafter the verse mentions another classification of mankind from the viewpoint of nations and tribes. This shows that the second classification is as natural and appointed by Allah as the division of mankind into males and females. Hence, it is evident that just as Islam wants a special kind of relationship between man and woman and does not want to abolish sex distinction, similarly it is in favour of the establishment of international relations on the basis of equality and does not call for the abolition of nationalities.

The fact that the Holy Qur'an ascribes the making of nationalities to Allah like the creation of sexes means that the existence of definite nationalities is a natural reality in consonance with the creational scheme. The fact that the Holy Qur'an has mentioned the knowing each other as the philosophy behind the existence of numerous nationalities, indicates that every nation has some special features by means of which it makes itself distinct from other nations and by means of which its personality is crystallized and comes to life.

Thus, contrary to what is generally believed, Islam is not opposed to nationalism as such. In fact it supports nationalism in its cultural sense. What Islam opposes is nationalism in its racial sense. In other words Islam is against racism only.

This theory is again faulty in several respects. It is based on a particular conception of man and a particular view about cultural material that is philosophy, science, art and ethics. Both these ideas are defective.

It has been presumed that man, from intellectual point of view, that is how he looks at this world and how he perceives it, and from emotional and behavioural point of view, that is what he wants, how he moves and what is his destination, is even potentially devoid of any content and form. All thoughts, sentiments, manners and goals are to him alike. He is like an empty receptacle having no form or colour. Every side of his personality is conditioned by what is subsequently put in him.

In fact he acquires his ego, his personality, his ways and manners and his goals and objects from a subsequent input. This input gives him a form and a personality. Whatever form, colour, quality, personality and goal this input, in fact the first input, gives him that is his real form, real colour, real quality, real personality and real goal, for his 'self' is formed by this input. Whatever change in his personality and colour is brought about by an input he receives later, that is only a borrowed and alien stuff because it remains foreign to him, for it is not in consonance with his original personality. It is caused merely by some historical accident. This theory is inspired by the fourth theory about the fundamentality of the individual and society, according to which only society is basic. We earlier commented on this theory.

This view about man is not tenable, neither from philosophical nor from

Islamic point of view. Man by virtue of his nature has, at least potentially, a fixed personality and a fixed goal based on his divinely appointed innate character which determines his real 'self'. Any distortion of his basic character and his dehumanization should be adjudged by the standard of his essential and innate qualities and not by historical standards.

Any culture, which is consistent with man's human nature and which fosters it, is genuine, although it may not be the first culture imposed on him by historical circumstances. And any culture which is not in consonance with his nature is foreign to him, is a sort of distortion of his identity, and means falsification of his 'self', although it may be a product of his national history. For example, the idea of duality and the sanctification of fire is a distortion of Iranian humanity, though it is believed to be a product of Iranian history. In contrast, the idea of monotheism and the rejection of the worship of everything other than Allah is a return to the real human identity, although it may not be a product of the homeland of the Iranians.

In regard to human cultural material it has been wrongly presumed that it has no definite form and that its form and quality depend on historical factors. After all philosophy is philosophy whatever may be its form. In the same way, science is science; religion is religion; moral principles are moral principles and art is art, whatever their form and colour may be.

Their quality and form are relative matters which depend on history. The history and culture of every nation give birth to a particular form of philosophy, religion, ethics and art, peculiar to that particular nation. In other words, just as man as such is without any identity or form and it is culture which gives him these characteristics, similarly the principles and the primary material of human culture are also without any shapes, form or colour. It is history which gives them shape and imprints its mark on them. Some sociologists, such as Spengler etc. have in this respect gone forward to the extent that they claim that even "mathematical thinking is influenced by the particular approach of a culture". (Quoted by Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, vol. 1, p. 107)

It is the same theory which is known as the theory of the relativity of human culture. In the 'Principles of Philosophy' we have discussed the question of the absoluteness and relativity of the ideas,

and proved that it is only practical sciences and perceptions that are relative and change with the time and place. Such perceptions do not reflect realities and cannot be a criterion of judging what is right and true and what is wrong and false. In contrast, theoretical perceptions and ideas which are the product of philosophy and theoretical sciences, such as the principles of the religious conception of the world and the primary principles of ethics, are firm, absolute and non-relative. Unfortunately we are unable to pursue this question further.

Secondly, to say that religion is belief and nationality is personal identity, that the relation between these two is that of belief and personality and that Islam confirms and recognizes national personalities as they are, is virtually tantamount to the negation of the most important mission of religion. The mission of religion, especially of a religion like Islam is to impart a world conception based on the correct knowledge of the universal system operating on the principles of monotheism,

to build the spiritual and moral personality of man on the basis of that conception, and to bring up the individuals and society on a basis implying the foundation of a new culture, which is human, not national. Islam offered a culture to the world, which is now known as the Islamic culture. It did not do so simply because every religion on coming in contact with the existing culture of the people more or less influences it and is influenced by it.

The reason was that the offering of a new culture was a part and parcel of the mission of this religion. The mission of Islam includes stripping of men of that culture which they have but should not have, furnishing them with that culture which they do not have but should have and confirming to them what they have and should have. A religion that does not interfere in the existing national cultures and is in harmony with all of them can be of use only once a week in the church.

Thirdly, the verse 13 of the Surah al-Hujurat does not mean to say that Allah created you in two sexes, male and female, so that it may be possible to assert that in this verse first a classification of mankind from the viewpoint of sex has been mentioned and immediately thereafter another classification from the viewpoint of nationality has been given. It cannot be claimed that the verse indicates that the difference in sex being

natural, ideologies should be evolved on that basis, not on the rejection of it, and that the same is true of the difference in nationality.

In fact the verse in question means:

"We created you from a male and a female".

It either signifies that all men are descended from one single male and one single female; or that all men are alike so far as each of them has one father and one mother, and in this respect there is no question of any distinction.

Fourthly, the phrase: "So that you may recognize each other"; which has been mentioned as the aim, does not mean that the nations have been diversified for this purpose. Hence it is wrong to conclude that the nations must stay as independent personalities so that they may be distinguished from each other. Had this been the intention, the phrase used instead of saying: "So that you may recognize each other", should have said: "So that they may recognize each other".

This verse which is addressed to all the people, tells them that these divisions have a good reason behind them and the reason is that they may be able to recognize each other by means of the tribes and the nationalities to which they belong. We know that this purpose can be served otherwise also, and it is not necessary that the nations and communities should retain their personalities remaining independent of each other.

Fifthly, what we said earlier about the theory of Islam concerning the singleness and multiplicity of the nature of societies is enough to refute the above theory. There we pointed out that the natural advancement of societies is towards the formation of a single society and a single culture. In Islam the philosophy of Mahdism is based on this idea about the future of Islam, man and the world.



## What is History?

History can be defined in three ways. In fact there are three branches of history closely linked with each other.

I. History is that branch of knowledge which deals with the past events and the conditions connected with the people of the past as distinguished from the present day conditions and circumstances. All events which relate to the existing time, that is the time when they are recorded, are called the events of the day, are judged, reported, and recorded by daily newspapers. But as soon as its time passes, every event becomes a part of history.

So in this sense history means that branch of knowledge which deals with the past events and occurrences and give an account of the past people. Biographies, narratives of the conquests and the stories of the eminent people as compiled by all nations come under this category.

In this sense history means; firstly, the knowledge of the individual matters and the events concerning the individuals, not of general laws, and rules of mutual relations. Secondly, it is a transmitted science.

Thirdly, it is a knowledge of 'being', not that of 'becoming'. Fourthly, it is related to the past, not to the present. We in our terminology call this sort of history 'transmitted history'.

II. In another sense history signifies that branch of knowledge which deals with the rules and the traditions which governed the life of the peoples in the past.

These rules and traditions are deduced from the study and the analysis of the past events. The subject of the transmitted history and the

questions with which it deals, namely the past events and occurrences, serve as the preliminaries of this branch of history. In fact the past events, for the purpose of history in this sense, can be compared to the material which a physicist collects in his laboratory for his study, analysis and experiment in order to find out its characteristics and properties and to discover general laws concerning it. The job of a historian in this second sense is to discover the nature of historical events and to find out their causative relations in order to be able to deduce some general rules applicable to all similar events of the past and the present. We call this branch of history 'scientific history'.

Though the past events are the subject of study in scientific history, the general rules which are drawn from these events do not exclusively belong to the past. They are equally applicable to the present and the future as well. This aspect of scientific history makes it very useful to man as a source of knowledge and helps him control his future.

The difference between the work of a research scholar of scientific history and a natural scientist is that the subject of study of a natural scientist is the material which actually exists at present and hence his entire study and analysis are physical and experimental; whereas the material which is studied by a historian, though existed in the past, is extinct now. Only some information about it and some documents connected with it are at the disposal of the historian.

As far as his findings are concerned, he can be compared to a judge of a court of justice pronouncing his judgement on the basis of documentary evidence, not in the basis of the evidence of eye-witnesses. As such the analysis of a historian though logical and rational is not physical. He carries out his analysis in his mental laboratory with the instruments of reasoning and inference. In this respect the job of a historian is like that of a philosopher rather than like that of a natural scientist.

Like transmitted history scientific history also relates to the past, not to the present. It is the knowledge of 'being' not of 'becoming'. But unlike transmitted history it is general, not particular, and it is rational not merely transmitted.

Scientific history, in fact, is a branch of sociology.

It is sociology of the past societies. The contemporary societies and the past societies both form the subject of study of sociology. But if we confine our sociology to the study of contemporary societies, scientific history and sociology, become two different branches of knowledge, though still closely related to each other and dependent upon each other.

III. The word, history in its third sense is used to denote philosophy of history, that is the knowledge of the development of society from one stage to another and the knowledge of the laws governing these changes. In other words, it is the science of 'becoming' of societies, not of their 'being' only.

Here the reader may ask whether it is possible that societies should have the two qualities of 'being' and 'becoming' and that 'being' be the subject of one branch of science, named scientific history and 'becoming' be the subject of another branch of science named philosophy of history, while we know that it is not possible to combine these two qualities, for 'being' indicates rest and 'becoming' indicates movement. Societies can have only one of these two qualities. The picture we form of societies can depict either 'being' or 'becoming'.

The respected reader may pose this point in a better and more comprehensive form and say: The picture we form of the world and of society as a part of the world can on the whole be either a static or a dynamic. If it is static, it can have the quality of 'being', not that of 'becoming'; and if it is dynamic, it will have the quality of 'becoming', not that of 'being'. We find that on this very basis there exists a clear division of philosophical schools. One system of philosophy believes in 'being' and the other in 'becoming'.

The school which believes in 'being' maintains that 'being' and 'non-being' cannot exist together for they are contradictory and the simultaneous existence of contradictories is impossible. If there is 'being', 'non-being' does not exist, and if there is 'non-being' 'being' does not exist. In each particular case either of these two must be chosen.

As the world and society being existent, obviously have the quality of 'being', naturally they are governed by stillness or motionlessness. In contrast to this view, the school which believes in 'becoming', maintains that 'being' and 'non being' can exist at the same time, for the idea of

'becoming' implies motion, which means nothing but that a thing is and at the same time it is not.

The philosophy of 'being' and the philosophy of 'becoming' reflect two completely opposite outlooks on existence. One has to choose either of these two philosophies. If we choose the first one, we must presume that societies have the quality of 'being' only not that of 'becoming'. On the contrary if we choose the second philosophy, then we must presume that societies have the quality of 'becoming' and not that of 'being'. This means that either we have scientific history in the above mentioned sense and do not have philosophy of history or we have philosophy of history and do not have scientific history.

The answer to this question is that this view about existence and non-existence, about stillness and motion, and about the principle of the impossibility of the simultaneous existence of contradictories, is purely a figment of Western idea. This way of thinking is actually due to ignorance of many vital questions concerning existence, especially its fundamentality and some other relevant matters.

Firstly, to say that 'being' is tantamount to stillness, or in other words that stillness means 'being' and motion' means a combination of 'being' and 'non-being' that is a combination of two contradictories, is a grave error, in which some philosophical schools of the West have fallen.

Secondly, the question under discussion has nothing to do with the above mentioned philosophical question. What has been brought out here is that society like any other living being has two types of laws. The first type is that which governs species within the framework of its class, and the second is that which becomes applicable to it with its evolution and transformation to another species. We call the first type the laws of 'being' and the second type the laws of 'becoming'.

Incidentally some sociologists have taken due notice of this point. Auguste Comte is one of them. Reymond Aron says:

"Statics and dynamics are two basic categories of Auguste Comte's sociology ... Statics consists essentially in examining, in analyzing what Comte calls the social consensus (social unanimity). A society is comparable to a living organism. It is impossible to study the functioning of an

organ without placing it in the context of living creature. By the same token it is impossible to study politics of the state without placing them in the context of the society at a given moment... . As for dynamics at the outset it consists merely of the description of the successive stages through which human societies pass". (Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, vol. I. pp. 85, 86)

If we take into consideration every species of living beings, from mammals, reptiles and birds to all others, we find that there are special laws which relate to each class. So long as the members of a particular species continue to belong to it, they are governed by its special laws, such as the laws relating to the embryonic stages of an animal, its health and sickness, its mode of nutrition, its mode of reproduction, its way of rearing its young ones, its instincts, its migration or its mating habits.

According to the theory of the development and evolution of species, in addition to the special laws peculiar to every species and operating within the fabric of its own class, there exist a number of other laws which relate to the process of the evolution of the lower species to the higher species. These laws have assumed a philosophical form and are sometimes called the philosophy of evolution instead of biological laws.

By virtue of its being a living thing, society also has two kinds of laws: biological laws and evolutionary laws.

1 There are some laws of societies which relate to their social life and the origin and decline of their cultures. They govern all societies in all stages of their development. We call these laws the laws of 'being'. There are other laws which relate to the development of societies from one stage to another and from one system to another. They are known as the laws of 'becoming'. When we later discuss both these kinds of laws, the difference between them will become clear.

Thus history in the third sense is the study of the evolution of societies from one stage to another. It is not merely the knowledge of their living conditions at any particular stage or all stages. Not to confuse it with the questions, we call scientific history; we have named this knowledge the philosophy of history.

As most people do not differentiate between the questions of non-

evolutionary movements dealt with by scientific history, and the question of evolutionary movements of history dealt with by philosophy of history, confusion crops up and leads to misunderstanding.

Like scientific history, philosophy of history is also general, not particular and is rational, not transmitted. But unlike scientific history it is the knowledge of 'being', not of 'becoming'.

Moreover, unlike scientific history, the questions with which it deals are not considered to be historical because they relate to the past events alone. They are considered to be so because they represent a process which began in the past, though it still continues and will be drawn to the future.

Time is one of the dimensions of these questions, not merely the period of their duration.

The knowledge of history in all these three senses is useful. Even transmitted history that is the knowledge of the conditions and the events connected with the life of the individuals can be useful, inspiring, instructive and constructive. Of course the usefulness of transmitted history depends on the persons whose life account it is, and on the points which are drawn from their life. Man by virtue of the law of imitation is influenced by the behaviour, conduct, habits and customs of his companions and contemporaries.

Just as he learns manners and rules of behaviour from the actual life of his contemporaries and sometimes like Luqman learns politeness from the rude and goodness from the wicked, by virtue of this very law he is benefitted by the account of the people of the past also. Histories like movies turn the past into the present. That is why the Holy Qur'an mentions useful points from the life of those persons who are fit to be a model for others. About the Holy Prophet it says:

### III. Precedence of Action to Thought

Man is a being who thinks, understands and acts. What is more important, his action or his thought? Which one of these two constitutes his essence? Does the dignity of man depend on his action or his thought? Which of these two makes him?

Historical materialism believes in the independence of action and its precedence to thought. It regards action as fundamental and thought as subsidiary. On the other hand ancient logic and philosophy considered thought to be the key of thinking. According to the old system of logic thought was divided into perception and affirmation, and each of them was further divided into axiomatic and theoretical. According to that system of logic and philosophy the essence of human ego was regarded as a mere idea. The perfection and nobility of man consisted in his wisdom. A perfect man was equal to a man of wisdom.

But historical materialism is based on the principle that action is the key and the criterion of thought. The essence of man is his productive activity. Man is known by his activity which moulds him. Marx has said:

"The entire world history is nothing but a creation of man through human labour".

Engels has said:

"Man himself is a creation of action", for instead of brooding on natural hardships he exerts himself to conquer his external environment and in this way (through a revolutionary action against aggressive tyrants) he dashes forward and makes a society of his own choice".

The author of Marx and Marxism says:

"Whereas in the philosophy of being (a philosophy that interprets the world in terms of 'being' as opposed to the philosophy of 'becoming', which interprets the world in terms of motion. Marxism belongs to the group of the philosophies of 'becoming') it was customary at first to set forth the ideas and the principles from which practical conclusions are derived; praxis (practical philosophy), on the other hand, regards action as the origin and basis of all thought. It replaces the faith in thought by the philosophy of power". In agreement with Hegel, it asserts: "The real being of man, in the first instance, is his own action". In this belief he joins the German thinker who reversed the famous phrase, "In the beginning there was the Word" - in which the Word signifies spirit, for it is through the word that the spirit expresses itself - and declared: "In the beginning there was the Act".

This theory is one of the principles of Marxist materialism and is known as practical philosophy. Marx picked it up from his materialist predecessor and preceptors, Feurbach, and Hegel.

Entirely contrary to this principle is the philosophical principle of realism, which holds that thought and action influence each other reciprocally, though thought has precedence to action. According to this philosophy the essence of man is thought (essential knowledge of one's own existence). Man through his action and contact with the outside world acquires his informative material about the world. He cannot embark on any activity of knowing things unless his mind is enriched with this raw material. After collecting his material his mind uses the data provided by action in different ways such as generalization, deduction and demonstration. Thus action paves the way for the acquisition of correct knowledge. Knowledge does not mean merely a simple reflection of external material on mind. Knowledge becomes available subsequent to this reflection through a mental process emanating from the immaterial substance of spirit. Thus action is the source of thought. But at the same time thought also is the source of action. Action is the criterion of thought and at the same time thought is the criterion of action. Anyhow, this is not a case of vicious circle. It is nobility of his character, his knowledge, his faith, his dignity, his self-respect and his action that make a man a human being. Man accomplishes action and is himself produced by it. This is a distinguishing feature of man. No other being shares with him in this feature, which springs from his special Divine creation.



Anyhow, man performs action in the creative sense, whereas action makes man in the preparatory sense. Man actually creates his action, but action does not actually create man. Anyhow, action and its practice and repetition pave the way for the creation of man from within. In all cases in which the mutual relationship between two things is creative and imperative on one side and preparatory and potential on the other side, the creative and imperative side always has precedence.

In short man whose essence is a sort of knowledge (essential knowledge of one's own existence), has a reciprocal relation with action in the sense that man creates and develops action and action develops man. But in view of the fact that man is the creative and imperative cause of work whereas action is merely a preparatory and potential cause of man, man has precedence to action, not action to man.

#### IV. Precedence of Social Existence of Man to His Individual Existence:

In other words, the principle of the precedence of man's sociology to his psychology.

From biological point of view, man is the most perfect of all animals. He is capable of making a particular kind of evolution and self-building called human evolution. He can enjoy a special personality formed by human dimensions. Under the impact of a series of experiences and learning, man acquires an intellectual, philosophical and scientific dimension, and under the impact of certain other factors he gets another dimension, called moral dimension. It is in this dimension that he creates values and moral 'musts' and 'must not's. Similarly there are man's artistic and religious dimensions also. In his intellectual and philosophical dimension man discovers a number of principles and general laws which thenceforth form the basis of his thinking. Similarly in the course of his moral and social appreciation he gets at some absolute and semi-absolute values. All these human dimensions combined together constitute human existence.

Human dimensions are entirely the consequence of social factors. Man lacks all these dimensions when he is born. At the time of his birth he is merely a bundle of raw material capable of assuming any intellectual or emotional shape, his final shape depending on the factors which

influence him later. In the beginning he is like an empty vessel which is to be filled from outside. He is like a blank magnetic tape on which any sound can be recorded and which plays back whatever is recorded on it. In short, it is external social factors called social work which builds man's personality and convert him from a thing to a person. Man in himself is only a 'thing' and only under the impact of social factors, becomes a 'person'.

In his book, Historical Materialism P. Royan reproduces what Plekhanov has said in his book, Fundamental Problems of Marxism. He says:

"The characteristics of a social system are determined by the current level of development of the means of production of society. It means that when the stage of development of the means of production is determined, the characteristics of the social order and the psychology (of the people) related to it, and all the other corresponding relations within the system, on the one hand, and the ideas and the pace of progress, on the other, are also (of their own accord) determined".

In the same book, it is further stated that:

"When psychology, through the means of production, is determined, ideology too, which is deeply rooted in the psychology of the people, is also consequently determined. But as the ideology at a particular historical stage is the product of social requirements, and as it always continues to protect the interests of the ruling class, it necessarily strengthens and perfects the existing social structure. Hence the social structure in class-societies, which comes into existence for protecting the ruling class and propagating its ideology, is in reality, the result of the social order and its requirements, and, in the last analysis, is the product of the character of the modes and the means of production. For instance, the church and the mosque are for preaching of the religious beliefs, which in all the religions are based upon the faith in the final judgement or resurrection. The belief in resurrection is the logical outcome of the particular social order that is based upon the division of society into classes, which in its turn is the product of a particular stage of development of the means of production. Hence, belief in resurrection is the product of the means of production (at a particular stage of social development)".

In contrast to this principle there is another anthropological principle

which is based upon the view that the foundation of human personality is the basis of man's thinking and higher tendencies, and is itself inherent in his creation. It is true that contrary to Plato's well-known theory, man does not come to the world with a ready-made personality, but still he receives the basic features of his personality from his creation, not from society. If we wish to use philosophical terms, we may say that the main ingredients of the human dimensions, whether religious, moral, philosophical, artistic, technical or amorous, are the form and the distinctive features of man's species and his rational soul which are formed simultaneously with the factors of creation. Depending on the personal capabilities of a man, society either tends him and brings him up or distorts him. In the beginning the existence of rational soul or intellectual faculty of man is only potential. It becomes actual gradually. From the viewpoint of his thinking, his tendencies and his material and spiritual leanings and sentiments man is like any other living being. In the beginning all his faculties exist potentially and then in the wake of certain basic developments gradually shoot up and grow. Man under the impact of external factors nurtures his natural personality and brings it to perfection or sometimes distorts it and turns it away from the normal course. This is the same principle which in Islamic sciences is described as the principle of fitrat (natural state) and is considered to be the most basic principle.

According to this principle man's psychology has precedence to his sociology. In fact man's sociology depends on his psychology. According to the principle of nature, when a child is born, though he has neither perception nor conception, neither confirmation, nor human aptitudes, he comes to this world with human dimensions in addition to animal dimensions. It is these dimension which gradually form the basis of human thinking. Without them logical thinking would not be possible. It is these dimensions which bring high and noble tendencies into existence. It is these dimensions which are regarded as the real basis of human personality.

According to the theory of the precedence of man's sociology to his psychology, man is merely a receiving being and does not automatically move in any particular direction. He is a bundle of raw material. To him it makes no difference what shape is given to him. He is a blank tape, to which it is immaterial what sound is recorded on it. This raw material does not tend to any particular shape, nor can any shape be called its

natural shape. This tape does not require the recording to any particular sound and it cannot be said that if any other sound will be recorded on it that sound would be inconsistent with the reality of the tape. As the raw material bears the same relationship to all shapes, this tape bears the same relationship to all sounds.

But according to the principle of the basicity of nature and the precedence of man's psychology to his sociology though man in the beginning lacks any actual perception and any actual tendency, yet from within himself he dynamically advances towards a series of primary judgments known as a priori or primary principles and towards a series of higher and sublime values which constitute the standards of his humanity. Following the entry from outside into his mind of a number of simple conceptions forming the basic material of thinking, these principles shoot up and grow into theoretical or practical affirmations and the latent tendencies become conspicuous.

In the present circumstances, man, for example, asserts that  $2 \times 2 = 4$  and thinks that this rule is absolute and true in all times and all places. According to the first theory this judgement of his is the product of the special conditions of his environment. These special conditions have given him this rule, and his judgement is his reaction to the environmental conditions. In a different environment and under different conditions he could have thought differently. For example, he could have believed that  $2 \times 2 = 26$ .

But according to the second theory, what the environment gives to man is only the conception of 2,4,8,10 etc. As for the judgement that  $2 \times 2 = 4$  or  $5 \times 5 = 25$ , that is something inseparable from the structure of human spirit, and cannot take any other form under any circumstances. Similarly the human desire to attain perfection is also an essential part of human spirit.

#### V. Precedence of Material Aspect of Society to Its Intellectual Aspect:

Society has many sectors and consists of various organizations: economic, cultural, political, administrative, religious and judicial organization etc. From this viewpoint society is like a full-fledged building comprising the drawing-room, the bed room, the kitchen, toilet etc.

Among the social organizations there is one organization which is virtually the real foundation of the whole of society, for its whole structure stands on it. If it were to collapse, the whole building would collapse automatically. This is the economic structure of society, or in other words, all that relates to the material production of society including the production implements, economic resources, production relations etc.

Implements of production are the most basic section of the structure of society. They continuously change and develop, and each stage of their development leads to a particular kind of change in the production relations, making them different from what they were previously. Production relations include all the rules and regulations regarding the form of ownership and the contractual relations between man and the products in a society. Any compulsory change in these relations automatically leads to a change in all legal, intellectual, moral, religious, philosophical and scientific principles of man. In short it may be said: 'Economy is the foundation of society'.

In the book, 'Marx and Marxism', Marx has been quoted as having said to the following effect in his book entitled Critique of Political Economy:

"In the social production of their life, men enter into specific relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life-process in general. It is not the consciousness of man that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness".

The same book quoting a letter of Marx says:

"Assume a particular state of development in the productive facilities of man and you will get a corresponding form of commerce and consumption. Assume particular degrees of development of production, commerce, and consumption and you will have a corresponding organization of the family, or orders or of classes, in a word a corresponding civil society".

Peter explains the views of Marx as under:

"In this fashion Marx has compared the society to a building, the base and foundation of which are the economic institutions, whose super-structure (the building itself) is comprised of political, religious, and legal patterns, customs and norms. As in the case of a building, it depends upon the position of its base and foundation, the economic forms (relations of production) and technical modes are also dependent upon and associated with the modes of thinking, the political system and the customs, and each of them is subject to economic conditions".

The same book quotes from Lenin's book, Marx-Engels Marxism as having written in the Capital, vol. III as under:

"The mode of production manifests itself in the human activity in relation to nature and, following that, in social conditions and intellectual patterns resulting from them".

In the Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Karl Marx says:

"My investigations led to the result that the legal relations as well as forms of the state are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in the material conditions of life; the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy".

Marx in his book, Poverty of Philosophy has written:

"Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces, men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you a society with the feudal lord; the steam mill, a society with the industrial capitalist".

The theory of the precedence of the material arrangements of society to all other social systems is in keeping with the theory of the precedence of action to thought. In fact the two theories are identical with the only

difference that the first theory is operative on individual level and the second on social level. In view of the fact that the supporters of this theory also hold that the sociology of man has precedence to his psychology, it may be said that the precedence of individual action to individual thought is a manifestation as well as a result of the precedence of material arrangement to all other social arrangements. On the contrary if we maintain that the psychology of man has precedence to his sociology, the precedence of the material arrangement of society would be the result of the precedence of individual action to individual thought.

The material arrangement of society which is described as the economic structure and economic basis also consists of two parts, the first part being the implements of production which are the outcome of man's contact with nature, and the other part being the economic relations of the members of society in the field of the distribution of wealth. These relations are sometimes described as productive relations also. The implements of production and the productive relations put together are mostly described as the mode of production or the method of production. Incidentally it may be noted that these terms as used by the leaders of historical materialism are not free from ambiguity and their meanings have not been exactly defined. When they say that economy is the infrastructure and the material arrangement of society has precedence to all other arrangements, by economy they mean the complete production system that is the implements of production as well as the productive relations.

Here there is a point to be noted well. As it is evident from what the leaders of historical materialism have said, the infrastructure of society in itself is a two-storied structure. Its real base and foundation is formed by the implements of production which in reality are the labour embodied. It is the embodied labour which necessitates the growth of special economic relations for the purpose of the distribution of wealth. These relations reflect the degree of the development of the implements of production and in the beginning not only are in harmony with them, but also encourage their use and provide the best means of their proper utilization. They are just like a dress that fits the body of the implements of production. But the implements of production continue to develop, and with their development the harmony between the two parts of the productive machinery is upset. The productive and economic relations, that is the laws which were previously in harmony with the implements of

production become too tight a dress for their developed form and become a barrier for their further progress. Thus a contradiction arises between the two parts of the production machinery. At last new productive relations, corresponding to the new implements of production develop, and thus the infrastructure is totally changed. In the wake of its change the entire legal, philosophical, moral and religious superstructure also undergoes a corresponding change.

If we take into consideration the prime importance of embodied labour, that is the implements of production and pay attention to the fact that Marx is one of those sociologists who maintain that the sociology of man has precedence to his psychology and that man as such is a social being or, in his own words, is a "sui generis" being, we can determine the philosophical role of labour from the view-point of Marxism. It may be mentioned that the philosophical role of labour is the main point of Marxist philosophy. Nevertheless scant attention has been paid to it.

Marx thinks about human existence or work and working existence of man much in the same way as Descartes, Bergson and Jean Paul Sartre respectively thought about rational, continuous and revolting existence of man.

Descartes says: "I think; therefore I am".

Bergson says: "I continue; therefore I am".

Sartre says: "I revolt; therefore I am";

Marx wants to say: "I work; therefore I am" .

By employing these diverse methods none of these philosophers intends to prove the existence of human ego in matters other than thinking, continuity and revolt. Some of them even do not believe in any existence of man not related to these matters. They only want to define inter alia the essence of humanity and the existential reality of man.

Incidentally Descartes wants to say: My presence is equal to the presence of thought; eliminate thought and I am nothing".

Bergson wants to say: "The existence of man is just the same as the



existence of continuity and time."

Saitre says: "The essence of humanity and the real existence of man lies in his spirit of revolt. If you take away this spirit from him, he will no longer be a man. "

Marx also wants to say: "The entire and real existence of man is his work. Work is the essence of humanity. I am for I work, not in the sense that work is the proof of my existence, but in the sense that work is tantamount to my very existence. In reality work is my existence."

That is what Marx wants to point out when he says:

"To a socialist the entire so called history of the world is nothing but man's creation through human labour;" or when he differentiates between man's consciousness and his real existence and says: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence; on the contrary it is their social existence that determines their consciousness". He also says: "It is not their will on the basis of which people make decisions. The real basis is the individuals and their material and existential conditions". Explaining the real individuals, he further says: "They really are not what they can imagine themselves to be. They are how they produce and make. In other words, they are how they act within definite material conditions and limits quite independently of their will."

Engels says:

"Economists say that labour is the source of all wealth. In fact labour for man is more than that. It is the basic condition of the existence of entire human life. At first sight it may be said that it is labour that has created man himself".

Marx and Engels have, in fact, taken over this theory of the role of labour in the existence of man from the writings of Hegel, who for the first time said: "In the first instance man's real existence is his work".

From the above, two points are clear: (i) that from the point of view of Marxism, human existence of man is social, not individualistic, and (ii) that the existence of social man is his social work, that is his embodied labour, and his individual work like his individual feelings and every

other social work, such as philosophy, ethics, art, religion etc. are a mere manifestation of his real existence and not his real existence itself.

Hence, man's real evolution is the evolution of his social action. As far as his intellectual, sentimental and emotional evolution or the evolution of the social system is concerned, it is a manifestation of the real evolution, not the real evolution itself. In fact the material evolution of society is the criterion of its immaterial evolution, just as work is the criterion of thought. The correctness or incorrectness of a thought should be measured by the standard of work and not by any intellectual or logical standard. The criterion of the immaterial things is the evolution of the material things. If it is asked which philosophical, moral religious or artistic school is more progressive, no intellectual or logical standard can provide an answer to this question. The sole criterion by which the progressiveness of any school may be judged is to find out what conditions and which degree of social work that is the development of the implements of production, have produced that school.

To us this way of thinking appears to be amazing, for we hold that the real existence of man is his ego, which is an immaterial substance, and that this ego is an off-shoot of the essential movements of nature, not a product of society. But a man like Marx who thinks in material terms only and does not believe in any immaterial substance, should interpret man and his reality from biological point of view and say that the essence of man is nothing but his physical structure, as was asserted by the past materialists like those of the 18th century. Yet, Marx rejects this view and asserts that the essence of man materializes in society, not in nature. What materializes in nature is potential and not actual man. Apart from that, Marx should either consider thought to be the essence of humanity and regard action as its manifestation; or the other way round consider action to be the essence of humanity and regard thought and ideas as its manifestation. Marx has to choose the second alternative, for he thinks in material terms only. He not only believes in the fundamentality of matter and denies the existence of any immaterial substance in the individual, but believes in the materiality of history also.

In fact, Marx is so engrossed in the philosophy of labour and holds such an idea of social labour that it may be said that according to his way of thinking men are not those who walk in the streets, think and choose, but the real men are the tools and the machines which, for example, run

the factories. The men who speak, walk and think are only the images of the real men, not the men themselves. According to the idea that Marx holds of social labour and the implements of production, these things may be described as living beings which automatically, blindly and unaffected by the will of the 'image of man' (not man himself), grow and develop and bring the 'show men' despite their will and thinking power, under their control and pull these show-men behind them.

It may be said readily that what Marx has said about the supremacy and domination of social labour over man's consciousness and will, is the same thing as what the philosophers have said about man's unconscious physical activity, such as the activity of the digestive system, the heart, the liver etc. under the influence of a hidden will. According to these philosophers all desires, inclinations and all the functions of bodily systems which appear at the level of conscious mind, are in reality a network of natural needs. They are arranged by a secret psychical power and the conscious mind does not know where and how they occur. This psychical power appears to be similar to what Freud has termed unconscious mind which, according to him, dominates the conscious mind.

But actually what Marx asserts is different from what Freud or past philosophers have maintained. What they have said relates to a part of the conscious mind and the domination of a hidden mind over it. Further, what they speak of is not a thing outside the existence of man, but what Marx says is outside of it. If the theory of Marx is correctly adjudged, it will be found extremely amazing from philosophical point of view.

Marx calls his theory a discovery and compared it to the well-known biological theory of Darwin, who proved that the developments outside the will and consciousness of animals gradually and unconsciously bring about changes in their bodies over a long period. Marx also claims that some blind event (the real existence of man itself is a blind event) gradually and unconsciously brings about changes in man's social structure, that is in all those things which Marx calls superstructure and in many of those which he calls infrastructure, that is socioeconomic relations. Marx says:

"Darwin has called the attention of scientists towards the history of natural selection, the formation of organs in plants and animals

corresponding to the means of production necessary for their survival. Isn't the history of generation and formation of organs producing the social human being, i.e. the material basis of all types of social organizations, worthy of such a treatment? ... Natural selection lays bare the modes of human action vis-a-vis nature; the mode of production lays bare man's material existence, and as a result, the source of social relations, thought, and intellectual products that spring from it".

Hence, from what has been said it is clear that the theory of historical materialism is based on several other theories, some of them being psychological, some sociological and some others philosophical and anthropological.

## Criticism and Comments of Historical Materialism

As we have now explained the basis of the theory historical materialism and drawn certain conclusions from it, it is right time to make some comments on it.

Let us first make it clear that we do not propose to discuss critically the total views of Marx as expressed by him in all his works, nor do we intend to criticize Marxism as a whole. Here we propose to critically review only historical materialism, which is one of the fundamental principles of Marxism. Basically it is one thing to criticize the views of Marx or to criticize Marxism as a whole, and it is a different thing to criticize a particular principle of Marxism such as historical materialism.

A critical study of all the views of Marx as scattered in the numerous works compiled by him during the various periods of his life, shows many contradictions. Such a study has been undertaken by several individuals in the West. In Iran, as far as we know, the best book available on this subject is the Revision of views from Marx to Mao,[17] from which we have extensively quoted in this chapter.

The criticism of Marxism as a whole or any of its fundamental principles is unexceptionable even from the view point of the personality of Marx. The criticism of those principles, which are not considered to be final by Marx himself and about which he has expressed contradictory views, is also justified in those cases which are concomitant with the basic principles of Marxism and the contrary views expressed by Marx himself may be regarded as his deviation from Marxism.

While dealing with historical materialism in this book, we have kept this principle in mind.

Here our criticism is based on the indisputable principles propounded by Marx, irrespective of the fact whether in his contradictory works and writings, he himself has or has not expressed any view to the contrary, for our main aim is to comment on historical materialism and not on the views of Marx.

It is an irony of history that in his philosophical, social and economic books Marx has more or, less supported the theory of historical materialism. But while analyzing and interpreting the contemporary events he has paid little attention to the principles of this theory. Why so? Varied answers have been given to this question, and that is not a thing peculiar to this problem only. In many cases Marx has adopted a contradictory attitude, and has theoretically or practically deviated from Marxism. Therefore what is required is a general answer.

Some attribute this weakness to the immaturity of Marx during the early periods of his life. But this explanation is indefensible at least from the point of view of Marxism, for many of his theories, which are today regarded as the recognized principles of Marxism, are related to the periods of his youth or middle age, and many of his deviations, including some of his interpretations of the contemporary events, are related to the last period of his life.

Some others attribute this contradiction to his double personality. They assert that on the one hand he was a philosopher, an ideologue and the founder of a school. Hence it was natural for him to regard the principles enunciated by him as firm and final and to use all the force at his disposal to reconcile between the actualities and his forethoughts. On the other hand Marx also had a learned personality and a scholarly spirit. This spirit compelled him to always submit to actualities and not to adhere to any definite principle.

Some others differentiate between Marx and Marxism. They claim that Marx and his ideas are only a stage of Marxism. Essentially Marxism is an evolutionary school, and hence there is nothing wrong if Marxism has gone ahead of Marx himself.

In other words, if the Marxism of Marx which is only an early stage of Marxism, is found to be defective, it is not fair to conclude that Marxism itself is faulty. Anyhow, these people do not explain what forms the

main essence of communism. A school can be called evolutionary if all its preliminary principles are definite and firm. Only the subsidiary matters can be disputable. Otherwise there will be no difference between the abrogation of a theory and its evolution. If firm principles are not accepted as an essential condition of evolution, there is no reason why we should not begin with pre-Marx theorists and thinkers such as Hegel, Saint Simon, Proudhon or some other personality, should not call Hegelism or Proudhonism a school in the developing state, and regard Marxism as a stage of that school.

In our opinion the contradictions of Marx are due to the fact that he himself is a less Marxist than most of the other Marxists. It is said that once at a meeting of the Marxists, he defended a view contrary to his own earlier theory. His audience was very much upset. Marx said: " I am not as much a Marxist as you are" . It is also said that during the last days of his life he declared that he was not a Marxist at all.

Marx did not agree with certain views of Marxism because he was too clever to be a hundred per cent Marxist. To be a standard Marxist requires more than a little gullibility. Historical materialism, which is now under discussion, is a part of Marxism. It has certain principles which lead to certain results to which neither Marx the scholar could subscribe nor Marx the philosopher and thinker could adhere to these principles and results. Now here are our comments on historical materialism.

i) Baselessness:

The first objection is that this view is not more than mere 'theory' without any proof. A historio-philosophical theory should both be based on contemporary historical evidence and then extended to other periods or should be based on historical evidence of the past events and extended to the present and the future; or should have valid scientific, logical or philosophical arguments to prove it.

The theory of historical materialism does not follow any of the above methods.

The events of the time of Marx and Engels cannot be explained by it; so much so that Engels himself has admitted that he and Marx committed certain mistakes while dealing with the importance of economy in some

of their books. But they could commit no such mistakes while analyzing the contemporary events because at that time they were facing reality. Further, the events of the past thousands of years also do not support the theory of historical materialism in any way.

(ii) Revision of Views by Its Founders:

As we have repeatedly mentioned, Marx calls the economic basis of society its infrastructure and other bases its superstructure. This expression is enough to show that other bases of society are subordinate to its economic basis and depend on it. Furthermore, many of the statements of Marx quoted by us earlier make it clear that according to him this dependence is one-sided. It is economic factors alone which influence all other social matters.

It is a fact that even if Marx had not specifically stated so, his views regarding the precedence of matter to spirit, precedence of material needs to spiritual needs, precedence of psychology to sociology and the precedence of work to thought would have led us to the same conclusion.

Anyhow, in many of his writings Marx has expressed a different opinion in regard to the basis of dialectic logic. This may be regarded as a sort of a change in his views and to some extent a deviation from the absolute materiality of history. The opinion to which we refer is his theory of reciprocal influence. On the basis of this theory the causative relation should not be considered to be unilateral. If A is the cause of B and influences it, in its turn B is also a cause of A and influences it. According to this principle there exists a sort of reciprocal dependence and influence among all parts of nature and all parts of society.

At present we are not concerned as to whether this dialectic principle in the form in which it has been advanced is correct or not. But we must say that, according to this principle, it is basically meaningless to speak of any precedence in the relationship between any two things whether they be matter and spirit,

work and thought or economic basis of society and all other social institutions; for if each of the two things is dependent on the other and is essential for its existence, the question of precedence and being infrastructure does not arise.



In some of his statements Marx does not mention the influence of the infrastructure of society over its superstructure, but simply allots a role, whether essential or nonessential to the economic basis of society. Still in some other statements of his he speaks of the reciprocal influence of the infrastructure and the superstructure, but still maintains that the main and the final role is that of the infrastructure. While making a comparison between the two books of Marx, *The Capital* and *The Critique of Political Economy* the Revisionism from Marx to Mao says that in both of these books Marx describe economy as the determining factor. The book further says:

" In spite of this, Marx, consciously or unconsciously, has added a new dimension to this definition by stating that superstructures, despite primacy of the base over infrastructure, can play an essential role in society."

The author further asks: What is the difference between the governing and determining role that is always performed by the economic infrastructures and this main role ascribed to the superstructures here? Even if the superstructures play the main role only occasionally, their role must be determining in those cases in which it is played. Not only that, but in those cases what we call the infrastructure should be the superstructure and what we call the superstructure should be the infrastructure.

In a letter written by him towards the end of his life to Joseph Bloch, Engels remarked as under:

" ... . According to the materialist conception of history, ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure: political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle,

etc., juridical forms, and then even the reflexes of all these actual

struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas, also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary."

Strangely enough, if the theory that the economic factor alone is the determining factor is a hollow fiction, it is amazing that this proposition has been advanced by none other than Marx himself. Moreover, if it is true that the so called super structural factors in many cases seriously determine the form of historical struggle, then the economic factors are not the only determining factors. As such it is out of place to say that economic movement necessarily makes its way through an endless mass of contradictions.

What is more amazing is that in this very letter Monsieur Engels puts the responsibility for this mistake or, in his own words, distortion, partly on himself and Marx. He says:

"Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasize the main principle vis-a-vis our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or opportunity to allow the other elements involved in the interaction to come into light."

But some other interpret, that too much emphasis laid by Marx and Engels on the economic factors, in a way different from what Engels has stated. They say that this excessive stress was not directed against the opponents of this theory, but was meant to disarm those rivals who supported it.

In The Critique of Political Economy Marx has laid more stress on the role of economic factors than in any other works of his. We have already reproduced a well-known extract from the preface of this book. Describing the circumstances in which this book was written, the Revisionism from Marx To Mao says: " Another cause of writing the Critique of Political Economy, was the publication of a book by Proudhon, Manuel du speculateur a la Bourse, and another book by Darimon, the follower of

Proudhon... . When Marx saw that his rivals in the camp of Proudhon from one side, and the followers of Lassalle from the other side were relying upon the economic element in a reformative (not revolutionary) way, he endeavoured to seize this weapon from their hands and used it for the purpose of revolution. This necessitated a rigidity suited to the purpose of popularizing his beliefs.

To meet the requirements of the special conditions of China and to justify the needs of his practical experience in leading the Chinese revolutionary movement, Mao so much changed the conceptions of historical materialism and the supreme importance of economy that nothing was left of them or of socialism based on historical materialism, except quibbling and play of words.

Under the heading, 'The Principal Contradiction and the Principal Aspect of Contradiction', Mao in his treatise on "Contradiction" says:

"The principal and the non-principal aspects of a contradiction transform themselves into each other and quality of a thing changes accordingly. In a certain process or at a certain stage in the development of a contradiction, the principal aspect is A and the non-principal aspect is B, at another stage of development or in another process of development, the roles are reversed - a change determined by the extent of the increase or decrease in the strength with which each of the two aspects struggle against the other in the development of a thing."

Some people think that this is not the case with certain contradictions.

For example in the contradiction between productive forces and the relations of production, the productive forces are the principal aspect; in the contradiction between the economic foundation and its superstructure, the economic foundation is the principal aspect and there is no change in their respective positions. This is the view of mechanistic materialism. True, the productive forces, practice, and the economic foundation generally manifest themselves in the principal and decisive roles; whoever denies this is not a materialist. But under certain conditions, such aspects as the relations of production, theory, and superstructure in turn manifest themselves in the principal and decisive role; this must also be admitted.

When the productive forces cannot be developed unless the relations of production are changed, the change in the relations of production plays the principal and decisive role. As Lenin put it, without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. The creation and advocacy of the revolutionary theory plays the principal and decisive role... . When the superstructure (politics, culture and so on) hinders the development of economic foundation, political and cultural reforms become the principal and decisive' factors.

By saying this, are we running counter to materialism? No. The reason is that while we recognize that in the development of history as a whole it is the material essence of things that determines spiritual things, and social existence that determines social consciousness, at the same time we also recognize and must recognize the reaction of spiritual things and social consciousness on social existence, and the reaction of superstructure on economic foundation. This is not running counter to materialism; this is precisely avoiding mechanistic materialism and firmly upholding dialectical materialism."

Actually what Mao says goes totally against the theory of historical materialism; when he says: "At the time that production relations impede the growth and development of productive forces" , or says: " At the time that revolutionary movement is in need of a revolutionary theory" , or says: " If the superstructure hampers the growth and development of infrastructure" he mentions what always happens and must always happen. But according to the theory of historical materialism such situations should never arise, for according to it the development of productive forces compulsorily changes the production relations; revolutionary theory invariably emerges automatically; and the superstructure compulsorily changes under the impact of infrastructure.

Has not Marx in his preface to the Critique of Political Economy expressly said: " At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or what is but a legal expression for the same thing — with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces, these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of economic foundation, the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed."

A change in the production relations prior to the development of the productive forces, the formation of a revolutionary theories prior to the automatic revolutionary insurgence and a change in the superstructure to pave the way for a corresponding change in the infrastructure, all this means the precedence Of thought to work, the precedence of spirit to matter and the importance and independence of political and intellectual basis of society as compared to its economic basis. Thus the idea of historical materialism is nullified.

Mao says that dialectic materialism would be violated, if it is hold that influence is only one-sided. That is true. But the problem is that scientific socialism is based on this very one-sided influence which is contrary to the dialectic principle of reciprocal dependence. Hence we have either to accept scientific socialism and to ignore dialectic logic or to accept dialectic logic and to ignore scientific socialism and historical materialism on which it is based.

Furthermore, what does Mao mean when he says that he admits that generally in the course of the development of history material essence of things determine spiritual things and social existence determines social consciousness. To admit that the main aspect of contradictions is subject to an occasional change, amounts to saying that sometimes the productive force determines the production relation and sometimes vice versa, i.e. the process is reversed. Sometimes a revolutionary creates a revolutionary theory and sometimes vice versa. Sometimes education, politics, religion, force etc. change the economic basis of society and sometimes the process is reversed. Therefore sometimes matter determines spirit and on some other occasion determines matter. Sometimes social existence determines social consciousness and sometimes social consciousness determines social existence.

In fact, what Mao has said about the change in the place of the main aspect of contradictions, is a Maoist theory which practically goes against the Marxist theory of historical materialism. It is not an interpretation of the Marxist theory as Mao claims. Mao has practically shown that like Marx himself he is also too clever to be always a Marxist. The Chinese Revolution led by Mao practically violated scientific socialism as well as historical materialism, and hence Marxism itself.

Under the leadership of Mao, China overthrew the old feudal system and set up a socialist regime instead of it, whereas according to scientific socialism and historical materialism a country passing through the stage of feudalism must pass over to the industrial and capitalistic stage first. It can step forward to socialism only when it has reached a high level of industrialization.

As a foetus in the womb cannot reach a stage without passing through the earlier stage, similarly society cannot reach the final stage without passing through the earlier successive stage. But Mao has shown practically that he is a midwife who can bring to this world a four-month old foetus in a healthy, perfect and flawless condition. He has shown that contrary to what Marx has said, a leader may ignore what scientific socialism teaches, totally change the production relations and industrialize a country by means of party teachings, political formations, a revolutionary theory, and social information. These are the same things which are called by Marx a kind of consciousness and superstructure and not a kind of existence and infrastructure. According to Marx they are not basic. Mao has shown that productive relations can be overturned and a country can be industrialized, ignoring the so-called scientific socialism for all practical purposes.

In another way also Mao exploded the Marxist theory of history. According to the Marxist theory and at least from the personal point of view of Marx, the peasant class fulfils only the first two conditions of being a revolutionary class. It is an exploited class and it holds no property. But it does not fulfil the third condition of being concentrated, having mutual cooperation and mutual understanding and being conscious of its power. For this reason the peasant class is not fit to initiate a revolution. At the most in a semi-agricultural and semi-industrial society the peasants may become the followers of the revolutionary proletariat.

Not only that, but from the point of view of Marx, the peasant class is basically mean and reactionary. It totally lacks every kind of revolutionary initiative. In a letter to Engels, on the revolution in Poland, Marx made this remark about the peasants: "The basically wretched and reactionary peasants should not be called upon to struggle." But Mao converted this very mean and reactionary class into a revolutionary class and with its help overthrew the old regime. According to Marx the peasants not only cannot lead a country to socialism, but they also can make no

contribution in the shifting of a country from feudalism to capitalism. It is the bourgeois class which brings about a social revolution at a historical moment.

But Mao jumped directly from feudalism to socialism with the help of the so-called reactionary class of the peasants. Therefore it was appropriate that in order to make a distinction between Maoism and Marxism, Mao should advance his own theory of a change in the place of the major aspect of contradictions. Anyhow, Mao himself does not speak of Maoism and he advances his views only as a learned interpretation of Marxism, historical materialism and scientific socialism.

Mao learnt from his distinguished predecessor, Lenin, the lesson that a Marxist when necessary should practically secede from Marxism. It was Lenin who before Mao brought about a revolution in Russia at the time when that country was semi-cultural and semi-industrial. It was Lenin who for the first time founded a socialist State.

Lenin did not expect that during his lifetime Czarist Russia would ever be fully industrialized and turned into such a capitalist country where the exploitation of workers might reach its final so that automatically a self-conscious and dynamical movement could bring about a total change. So he felt that it would be too late if he waited for the period of pregnancy to be completed before he undertook the job of midwifery. Hence he started with the superstructure and used party, politics, a revolutionary theory, a war and force in order to convert the semi-industrialized Russia of that day into the Soviet Socialist country of today.

Lenin practically proved the truth of the famous proverb that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush. He did not wait for the two birds of Marx and the automatic and dynamic readiness of the economic basis of the Russian society for insurrection. He fully exploited the one bird in hand and brought about a successful revolution by means of force, politics, party teachings and his own political insight.

(iii) Demolition of the Principle of Compulsory Harmony Between Infrastructure and Superstructure: According to the theory of historical materialism there should always be some sort of harmony between the infrastructure of a society and its superstructure, so that it may be possible to know the infrastructure by knowing the superstructure (by employing

the deductive method, which provides semi-perfect knowledge) and to know the superstructure by knowing the infrastructure (by employing the inductive method, which provides perfect knowledge).

If the infrastructure is changed, this harmony will naturally be destroyed, social equilibrium will be disturbed and such a crisis will begin that sooner or later it will ruin the superstructure. In contrast, so long as the infrastructure remains as it is, the superstructure will remain intact.

The contemporary historical events have proved the invalidity of the above proposition. Consequent to a number of political and social revolutions which accompanied the successive economic upheavals which occurred during the period from 1827 to 1847 Marx and Engels came to believe that social revolutions were an inevitable result of the economic crises.

But according to the author of the Revisionism from Marx to Mao: "It is the irony of history that there has not been any economic crisis accompanied with a revolution in industrialized countries since 1848. In the very lifetime of Marx, before his death, four times forces of production rebelled against relations of production without bringing about any revolution ... later, some economists like Joseph Schumpeter have gone to the extent of naming, these crises caused by technical innovation as 'gales of creative destruction, and as safety valves for reestablishing economic equilibrium and economic growth."

The countries like Britain, France, Germany and America have made stupendous industrial progress, They are at the zenith of capitalism. But contrary to the prediction of Marx that these countries would be the first to experience workers' revolution and would be converted into socialist countries, their so-called superstructure has gone under no change from political, legal or religious point of view. The child which Marx hoped to be born has completed nine months, has crossed not only nine but even ninety years, but still it has not seen the light of the day. Now no hope is left that this child will ever be born.

Of course there is no doubt that the present regimes in these countries will sooner or later be overthrown, but the awaited revolution of the workers will never come about and the Marxist theory of history will never prove correct. For that matter the regimes which are governing the



so-called socialist countries of today will also be overthrown one day or other. Anyhow, it is certain that the future regimes in these countries will not be capitalistic.

We find that several countries in Eastern Europe, Asia and South America have reached the stage of socialism without passing through the phase of capitalism. Today there are countries which resemble each other from the point of view of their infrastructure, but still they differ widely as far as their superstructure is concerned.

The two superpowers, that is America and Soviet Russia are the best example of this phenomenon. America and Japan have the same economic system, but their political, religious, moral, cultural and artistic systems different. On the other hand, there are countries whose political, religious and other superstructural systems are almost the same, but still their economic condition are totally similar. All this shows that the compulsory conformity of the superstructure of society with its infrastructure as conceived by historical materialism is merely a figment of imagination.

(iv) Nonconformity of the Basis of Class Ideology: As we have mentioned earlier, according to historical materialism superstructure of any period cannot go ahead of its infrastructure at all. As such the knowledge of every period is absolutely confined to that period. With the lapse of time it becomes old and obsolete, and is deposited in the archives of history. Ideas, philosophies, plans, predictions and religions, all are by-products of the special requirements of the age in which they appear and cannot be consistent with the requirements of any other age. But practically it has been proved otherwise. Not to say of creeds and religions, many philosophies, personalities, ideas and branches of knowledge appear to have been ahead of their times or their class. There are so many ideas which were produced by the material needs of a particular period, but though the times have since changed, the ideas still shine on the horizon of history.

It is amazing that in this case also Marx in some of his remarks has dissociated from Marxism. In his well-known book, the German Ideology he says: " Consciousness sometimes is seen to precede the contemporary empirical relations, to the extent that it is possible to find the evidence for the conflicts of a later age in the writings of theoreticians of the

preceding age."

(v) Independence of Cultural Development: According to historical materialism, like any other basis of society such as political, judicial and religious, its cultural and scientific basis also depends on its economic basis and cannot develop independently. Science develops only in the wake of the development of the implements of production and the development of the economic basis of society.

In fact, we know that implements of production, minus man, do not develop automatically. They develop as the result of man's contact with nature and his inquisitive efforts.

Their growth and development is accompanied by man's own scientific and technical development. Now the question is which of these two things comes first; whether man first makes a discovery and then implements it to produce the relevant tools and instruments or first the tools come into existence and then man makes the relevant discovery? There is no doubt that the second alternative is correct.

It is obvious that scientific laws and technical principles are discovered in the course of man's inquisitive and experimental contact with nature. If man does not make an inquiry and does not undertake experiments, he cannot discover any scientific or natural law. There cannot be two opinions about that. The only question is whether after inquiry and experiment man first develops scientifically within himself and then creates technical implements or the case is the other way round?

There is no doubt that the first alternative is correct.

Moreover, when the word, development is used in respect of man, it is used in its literal and real sense, but when it is used in respect of the technical and productive instruments and tools, it is used in its metaphorical sense. In its real sense development means evolution of a thing from a lower stage to a higher stage. But in the case of its use in its metaphorical sense, change is not in the stage of the same thing, but one thing disappears or is abolished and another thing takes its place.

When a child grows there is an actual development . But if a class teacher is changed and replaced by a better educated and more efficient teacher,

of course there is a development in the teaching of the class, but this development is metaphorical only.

In the course of tool making the development of man is real. Man develops mentally in the actual sense. But the development of an industry, such as the development of motor industry which every year brings to the market an improved new model is only metaphorical, for in this case nothing has actually gone from a lower stage to a higher stage. The car of the last year has not been equipped in a better way but actually it has been discarded and replaced by other cars of better design and latest model.

In other words an imperfect unit has been cast away and replaced by a perfect unit. In this case the same unit has not shifted from a stage of imperfection to the stage of perfection. Obviously where there is a real development and a metaphorical development at the same time, the real development will be primary and the metaphorical development subsidiary.

Furthermore, this is the position in respect of technology. As far as other sciences like medicine, psychology, sociology, philosophy, logic and mathematics are concerned, this kind of one-sided dependence cannot be confirmed. The development of sciences depends on the economic position as much as or even less than the economic position depends on the development of sciences. Criticizing Marxism K. Schmoller says: "No doubt, the material and economic conditions are essential for the attainment of higher culture, but to the same extent it is also undoubtedly true that intellectual and moral development follows an independent course."

If we overlook this one fault in the doctrine of the French philosopher, August Comte that he sums up man's humanity in his 'mind', which is only a part of his capabilities and only one half of his human spirit, August Comte's theory about social development is more valuable than that of Marx. August Comte asserts: " Social phenomena are subject to a strict determinism which operates in the form of an inevitable evolution of human societies - an evolution which is itself governed by the progress of the human mind."

(vi) Historical Materialism Is Self-contradictory: According to historical materialism every idea, every view, every philosophical or scientific

theory and every moral system, being a manifestation of special material and economic conditions, depends on the fulfillment of its own particular conditions and has no absolute value. Every idea, every theory and every moral system loses its validity with the passage of its time and a change in the material and economic conditions which made it inevitable. With a change of circumstances every idea and every theory must be replaced by a new idea or a new theory.

Obviously this universal law must also apply to the theory of historical materialism, propounded by some philosophers and sociologists. In case it does not, that would mean that there are some exceptions to this law and that there are some philosophical and scientific laws which operate independently and are not subject to any economic infrastructure. And if it is admitted that this law applies to the theory of historical materialism as well, the validity of this theory would be confined to only a particular period, that is the period during which it appeared, and it will have no value during any previous or subsequent period.

Thus in each case this theory stands quashed.

If historical materialism as a philosophical theory does not apply to itself, it is self-contradictory, and if it applies to itself as well as to other theories, its validity is confined to a limited period. The same objection may be raised against dialectic-materialism also, according to which the principles of dynamism and magnetism apply to every thing including the philosophical theories and scientific laws. We have dealt with this point in *The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism*, vol. I & II. All this shows how baseless is the claim that this world is a spectacle of dialectic materialism and society is a spectacle of historical materialism

The theory of historical materialism is amenable to other objections also, which we overlook for the present. It is really astonishing how such baseless and unscientific theory could become famous as a scientific theory ! Its reputation appears to be nothing but the outcome of a propaganda trick.

[17] This book was first written in French and then translated into Persian by Dr Anwar Khameh'i. He has exhibited profound wisdom in the treatment of the subject and praiseworthy capacity for evaluation and

analysis of the problems involved. He himself has been once an ardent supporter and exponent of this school for many years.

# Chapter 10

## Islam and Historical Materialism

Does Islam accept the theory of historical materialism? Are the Quranic analysis and interpretation of historical questions based on historical materialism? Some people think that they are, and maintain that at least one thousand years before Marx Islam based its analysis of history on this idea. Dr Ali al-Wardi, a Shi'ah scholar of Iraq who wrote several controversial books, including the one entitled *Manzilat al-Aql al-Bashari* (The Position of Human Intellect), is one of them. Perhaps he is the first person who originated this idea. Now among a certain section of Muslim writers it has gained popularity and it is regarded as a mark of being broad-mindedness and a fashion of the day to analyze history in Islamic phraseology from this point of view.

But from our point of view those who think on these lines either do not understand Islam or historical materialism or both. In view of the five basic points of historical materialism mentioned by us earlier and the six conclusions drawn from them, it is easy for those who are conversant enough with Islamic thinking to conclude that historical materialism and Islam's way of thinking are diametrically opposed to each other.

The material conception of society and history, especially if it is given the false colour of Islamic authenticity, is a great danger to Islamic teachings and Islamic culture. Therefore we think that it is necessary to study carefully the problems which have given or may give rise to the notion that Islam regards the infrastructure of society as economic and the nature of history as materialistic in essence.

It may be pointed out that in our study of the subject we have used more points than used by the supporters of this notion. They have based their arguments on two or three verses of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet, but we in order to make a full and comprehensive

study, have included some other points also, which although not used by the supporters of this idea, may be adduced in its favour.

I. The Holy Quran has given various social conceptions to the world. In the course of our study of society we have counted about 50 terms having a social significance. A study of the social verses of the Quran and the use of these terms in them indicates that from the view-point of the Quran, societies consist of two diametrically opposite categories of people. The Quran from one angle suggests the existence of a bipolar state of society on the basis of material prosperity. It designates one pole as the Mala' (self-indulgent, ruling clique) Mustakbirun (the arrogant, oppressors, tyrants, the immoderate and the voluptuaries), and the other Mustaz'afun (the under-privileged, oppressed and deprived), Nas (the masses) Zuriyya (the plebeians, ignoble, the means and insignificant- as opposed to Mala').[18] The Qur'an puts these two poles or these two categories opposite each other. From another angle the Quran envisages the bipolar state of society on the basis of spiritual and moral conceptions, and divides society into two distinct groups. The first group consists of the infidels, the polytheists, the hypocrites and the wicked, and the second group consists of the pious, the righteous, the reformers, and of those who fight for a sacred cause and those who lay down their lives for it.

If we carefully consider the meaning of the Quranic verses signifying the existence of these two material and two spiritual categories, we will find a sort of conformity between the first material and the first spiritual category and similarly between the second material and the second spiritual category. The infidels, the polytheists, the hypocrites and the wicked are the same people as the self-indulgent, the arrogant, the immoderate and the voluptuaries. They are none else. Similarly the Mu'minun (believers and faithful), the Muwahhidun (the monotheists), the Salihun (the righteous, virtuous) and the Mujahidun (the warriors and fighters for a sacred cause.) are none but the under-privileged, the poor, the helpless the servile, the oppressed and the deprived. Therefore on the whole, society has only two and not more than two poles or diametrically opposite categories. The first category comprises the opulent, the exploiters, the tyrants and the oppressors; who are the infidels and disbelievers. The second category is that of the oppressed and the underprivileged. It comprises the believers and the faithful. From this it is clear that it is the division of society into the oppressors and the oppressed, which brings into

existence the two categories of the believers and the disbelievers. It is oppressiveness that begets infidelity, hypocrisy, wickedness and depravity; and it is the state of being oppressed that gives rise to faith, piety and righteousness.

To comprehend this equation clearly it is enough to study the Surah al-A'raf, 7:59 - 137. In these verses the stories of Prophets, like Nuh, Hud, Salih, Lut, Shu'ayb and Musa have been briefly recounted. In all these stories, with the exception of the story of Lut, it may be observed that the class which joined with the Prophets was that of the underprivileged and the class which opposed them and resorted to disbelief was that of the arrogant and aristocratic gentry. This equation can have no explanation other than that of class conscience, the existence of which is essential and natural according to the theory of historical materialism. Therefore from the view-point of the Quran the confrontation between faith and infidelity is only a reflection of the confrontation between the oppressors and the oppressed.

The Quran expressly says that property, described by the Quran as 'riches', is the cause of oppression and arrogance, the qualities which are totally against the teachings of the prophets, who preach piety, modesty and peace. The Quran says:

"Remember that man is rebellious when he thinks himself independent and rich." (Surah al-Alaq, 96:7)

In order to underline the evil effect of property the Quran has recounted the story of Qarun (Korah). He was an Israelite, not a Copt and belonged to the tribe of Prophet Musa. He was one of those underprivileged people whom Fir'awn (Pharaoh) considered to be inferior and of low cast. But as he acquired great amount of wealth, he misbehaved with his own people and looked down upon them. The Quran says:

"Qarun was a man from the people of Musa, but he oppressed them. (Surah al-Qasas, 28: 76)

Does this not make it clear that the Prophets' opposition to oppression was in fact a confrontation with the property, the proprietors and the proprietorship? In some of its verses the Quran itself says expressly that the chief opponents of the Prophets were those who were deeply sunk in



ease and luxury. In the following Quranic verse this point has been expressed as a general rule:

"We did not send to any township a warner, but its pampered ones declared: Lo! We are disbelievers in that which you brings to us." (Surah as Saba 34:34)

All this shows that the mutual confrontation of the Prophets and their opponents and the mutual confrontation of faith and infidelity are a reflection of the confrontation of two social classes of the oppressed and the oppressors.

II. The Quran calls its addressees the 'Nas' or the masses that is the underprivileged common people. That shows that the Quran believes in class conscience and thinks that only the downtrodden masses are fit to give ear to its call to Islam. That (also shows that Islam has a class bias. It is the religion of the weak and the underprivileged. Islamic ideology is addressed only to the masses suffering deprivation. That is another proof of the fact that according to Islamic point of view economy is the infrastructure of society and the nature of history is material.

III. The Qur'an declares that the leaders, the reformers, the martyrs and even the Prophets rise from among the masses, not from among the aristocratic and well to do class. In respect of the Prophet of Islam the Quran says:

"He it is who sent among the masses of people (people belonging to the ummah) a messenger of their own." (Surah al Jumu'ah, 62:2)

These masses could be none other than the underprivileged masses. Similarly in respect of those who sacrifice their life for a right cause, the Quran says:

"We shall raise from every people a witness and then ask them to produce their proof."

Here also the word people refer to the deprived masses. It is because of the necessity of harmony between the ideological and social basis in the one hand and the economic and class basis on the other, that the leaders of all social movements and revolutions invariably rise from among the

underprivileged masses. This necessity cannot be explained except on the basis of the materialist conception of history and the prime importance of economy.

IV. The nature of the movement conducted by the Prophets and their confrontation as described in the Quran, is infrastructural, not super structural. The object of the Prophets' mission has been to establish justice, fair play and social equality and to pull down the walls of class distinctions. The Prophets always paid their first attention to infrastructural matters and only subsequently turned to the super structural matters such as doctrines, beliefs, and the reform of morals and behaviors, which have been their second objective.

The Holy Prophet said:

"He who has not the means of living, cannot prosper in the Life Hereafter".

In other words there can be no spiritual life without a material life. This maxim leads to the conclusion that the material life has precedence to the spiritual life and that the spiritual life is the superstructure and the material life the infrastructure of society. Similarly the Holy Prophet has also said:

"O Allah! Bless our bread with abundance; for had there been no bread, we would have given no alms, nor would we have offered our prayers."

This saying of the Holy Prophet also leads us to believe that spirituality depends on materiality.

It is absolutely wrong to say, as most of the people now think, that the activities of the Prophets were confined to the super structural matters, that they were keen only to reform people and improve their moral conduct, and had nothing to do with infrastructural matters or at the most attached a secondary importance to them. It is also wrong to say that the Prophets thought that when the people should embrace faith, everything would be all right automatically, justice and equality would be established and the exploiters would of their own accord restore the rights of the underprivileged to them. In short most of the people have the wrong notion that the Prophets pushed forward their objectives with the

weapon of faith and therefore, their followers also should go along the same path. This idea has been fraudulently invented by the exploiting class of the religious leaders in order to make the teachings of the Prophets ineffective and has been imposed on other people in such a way that it has been accepted almost unanimously. In the words of Marx, those who issue material goods to society, issue intellectual goods also to it. As a matter of fact those who are the material rulers of society are its spiritual rulers also and control its thinking.

The working method of the Prophets was contrary to what most of the people believe now. The Prophets first delivered society from social polytheism, social discrimination, tyranny and behavioral polytheism. They only later paid attention to the belief in monotheism and practical piety.

V. The Quran mentions the arguments adduced by the opponents of the Prophets all over history along with the arguments of the Prophets and their followers. The Quran clearly points out that the logic of the opponents has always been that of conservatism, conventionalism, and looking to the past, whereas the logic of the Prophets and their followers has been unconventionalism and looking towards the future. The Quran makes it clear that from sociological point of view the opponents of the Prophets used the same arguments which in a society divided into the exploiters and the exploited were usually used by the class of the exploiters. On the other hand the Prophets and their followers used those arguments which had throughout history been used by the sufferers and the deprived.

The Quran carefully recounts the; for and against arguments of the opponents and the supporters of the Prophets and shows what kind of logic they had. Like these two groups their two sets of arguments have existed side by side all over history. The Quran has recounted these arguments in order to set a standard by which the theories of even today may be adjudged. In the Quran there are many scenes where the arguments of the Prophets and their opponents stand side by side with each other.<sup>19</sup> As an example we quote here some Qur'anic verses with short explanation of them:

" And they say: If Allah had so willed, we would not have worshipped the angels. (As we now do, and our worship of the angels means that

Allah has willed so. Doctrine of predestination.) They have no knowledge whatsoever of that. (Of what they say about predestination. What they say is not based on any logical argument.) They do nothing but guess. Did We give them any Scripture before the Quran, so that they were holding fast thereto? (There is no such thing. They have no revealed Book to support their idea of predestination.) In fact they say only: We found our fathers following a way, and we are guided by their footprints. And even so we did not send a warner before you (Holy Prophet) to any township, but its luxurious ones said: Surely we found our fathers following a way and we are following their footprints. The Prophet said to them: Even though I bring you better guidance than that you found your fathers following? (And you know for certain that logically the guidance I have brought is better, but you stiff follow in the footsteps of your fathers.) They answered: In any case we reject what you have brought."(Surah al Zukhruf, 43:20-24)

We see that the opponents of the Prophets often use the argument of predetermination and fatalism. As sociology points out, this is the logic of the beneficiaries of the existing situation, who want to maintain the status quo, and use predetermination as a pretext to prevent any change. They often use the practice of their forefathers as a plea to justify their action and describe the past as sacred and worth following. To them it is enough to prove the propriety and validity of a thing that it has some connection with the past. This is nothing but the logic of the conservatives and the beneficiaries of the existing situation.

In contrast, the Prophets instead of supporting predetermination and conventionalism, advocate that which is more logical, more scientific and more beneficial. That is the logic of the revolutionaries who have suffered under the existing situation. When their opponents lose in their arguments against the Prophets, the last thing they say is: Whether predetermination is or is not a valid theory and whether conventional practice is or is not to be respected, we are against your message, your mission and your ideology, because your message is against our existing social and class interests.

VI. Most significant is the Quran's orientation in the conflict between the underprivileged and the arrogant. Just as historical materialism predicts on the basis of its dialectic logic, the Quran also believes that in this conflict the final victory must be of the underprivileged. In this connection

the Quran underlines the inevitable direction of the course of history, and points out that the class which possesses the quality of being revolutionary invariably gains victory in its persistent conflict with the class which by its nature has the quality of being reactionary and conservative and that the former succeeds the latter in the possession of the land.

The Quran says:

"We desire to show favour to those who are oppressed in the earth, and to make them leaders and to make them inheritors." (Surah al-Qasas, 28:5)

Similarly in the following verse it says:

"We caused those people who were despised to inherit the eastern parts of the land and the western parts thereof which we had blessed. And the fair word of the Lord was fulfilled for the children of Isra`il because of their endurance; and We annihilated all that Fir'awn and his people had done and that which they had contrived." (Surah al A'raf 7:137)

The view of the Quran that history advances towards the victory of the oppressed and the exploited, is in complete agreement with the rule we inferred earlier from the theory of historical materialism to the effect that reactionism and conservatism were the characteristics of exploitation. This quality being against the law of evolution, exploitation is bound to vanish sooner or later. It will not be out of place here to cite with some comments a part of an article published recently and written by some intellectuals who have passed from intellectualism to Marxism. The last quoted verse of the Quran has been used as the heading of this article. Under this heading the article says:

"What is more interesting is the support given by Allah and all the phenomena of the world to those who are despised. There is no doubt that according to the Quranic way of thinking these despised ones are the subjugated and oppressed masses who have no say in determining their destiny. In view of this position of the masses and the support given to them by Allah, who wills to favour them, the question arises: Who are the people who carry out this Will of Allah? The answer is evident.

When it has been admitted that society has been so organized that it is

divided into the two opposite classes of the oppressors and the oppressed and it is also known that it is the Will of Allah that ultimately the oppressed should inherit the land and be its leaders and the oppressors should perish, it becomes clear that the Will of Allah is to be implemented by the oppressed themselves under the leaders and the intellectuals who rise from among themselves.

In other words, it is the Prophets and the martyrs from among the oppressed class who take the first steps to fight against the tyrannical and oppressive system, and pave the way for the establishment of the leadership and the supremacy of the oppressed. This whole idea is actually a reflection of what we know about the Quran's conception of religious revolutions and historical changes. As, from social point of view, monotheists' revolutions revolve round the leadership of the oppressed and their inheritance of the land, the leaders and the pioneers of their movement must rise from among themselves and their social ideology must be their own."

The above thesis comprises several points.

" From the point of view of the Quran society is bi-polar and has always been divided into the two opposite classes of the oppressors and the oppressed.

" The Will of Allah (or in the words of the above cited article the support given by Allah and all the phenomena) is directed to the establishment of the leadership and inheritance of the oppressed as a universal rule. In this respect there is no difference between the faithful and the infidels or between the monotheists and the polytheists. The above quoted verse lays down a general and universal rule. Allah always grants victory to the oppressed as such against the oppressors. In other words all over history there has always been a conflict mainly between the oppressed and the oppressors and the law of evolution requires that the former gain a victory against the latter.

" In society Allah's will is realized through the oppressed themselves. The leaders, the pioneers, the Prophets and the martyrs rise from among the oppressed class, not from among any other class.

" There is always a sort of harmony between the intellectual and social

basis of society on the one hand and the class basis in the other.

Thus we see how from the above quoted Quranic verse several Marxist principles about history have been derived, and how the Quran has been made to reproduce the philosophy of Marx 1,200 years before Marx was born.

As this idea about history has been allegedly derived from the Quran, let us see what conclusions are drawn from its application to contemporary history. The gentlemen, who have derived this so-called Quranic idea, have immediately and without any delay applied it as a test case to the analysis of the present religious movement. They say that the Quran tells them that the leaders of any revolutionary movement must necessarily rise from among the oppressed. But today it is observed that the divines, who constitute one of the three dimensions of the system that corrupts history, have become revolutionaries. So how to solve this anomaly!

According to these intellectuals the answer is simple. There can be no doubt that there is a conspiracy. As the rulers felt that their existence was in danger, they in order to save their skin ordered the divines depending on them to play the role of the revolutionaries. This is the conclusion that is drawn from this Marxist idea (excuse me, the Qur'anic idea). It is obvious to whose advantage such conclusions are drawn.

## **Islamic Philosophy of History**

### **Criteria:**

To ascertain the view-point of a school in respect of the nature of history, a number of criteria may be used. By taking these criteria into consideration, it can be found out what exactly the approach of a particular school is on historical movements and the nature of historical events. Here we recount the criteria which have come to our notice in this respect. Of course it is possible that there may exist some other criteria which might have not come to our notice.

Before mentioning these criteria and finding out the view of Islam on them, we deem it necessary to point out that from our point of view the Quran hints at certain principles which point to the prime importance of the spiritual basis of society as compared to its material basis. The Quran expressly enunciating one of these principles says:

"Allah changes not the condition of a people until they change what is related to their own conduct and behaviour." (Surah ar-Ra'd, 13 :11) In other words, Allah does not change the destiny of a people until and unless they themselves change their spirit. This verse expressly negates the theory of the economic compulsion of history. Here we mention the criteria so far as they could be ascertained by us and in their light would determine the logic of Islam.

### **I. Strategy of Mission:**

Every school has a message for society and calls upon people to accept it. For this purpose it has to use some special method which may suit its main objectives and be appropriate to its general approach on the nature of its historical movement. The preaching of a school consists of



acquainting people with its basic view, and exerting pressure on special levers in order to stir and mobilize them.

For example, the school of Auguste Comte, which claims to be a sort of scientific school, holds that mental development is the essence of human evolution. This school believes that as far as his mentality is concerned, man has already passed through two stages, mythical and philosophical, and has now reached the scientific stage. As this school claims to be scientific, all the doctrines preached by it are couched in scientific terms and the levers which it wants to use as a means to mobilize people are also scientific levers.

Marxism is a revolutionary theory of the working class. Its preaching aims at creating consciousness of class contradictions among the workers. The levers on which it exerts pressure are obsessions and a sense of having been deprived and cheated.

The publicity that the various schools make and the points which they emphasize to mobilize people differ in accordance with the outlook of these schools on society and history. Similarly they have divergent views about the scope of their mission and about the morality and immorality of the use of force, in propagating and enforcing their doctrines in accordance with their particular outlook on the evolution of history and the development of man.

Certain schools, such as Christianity, maintain that as far as human beings are concerned only peaceful preaching conforms to the rules of morality. They consider the use of force in any form and under any circumstances to be immoral. That is why the Christian faith teaches that if anyone slaps you on your right cheek, offer your left cheek also, and if anyone seizes your forehead, surrender your cap also. On the contrary certain other schools such as that of Nietzsche are of the opinion that it is only the use of force that is moral, because man's greatest virtue lies in his power, and the most courageous man is equal to the highest man. From Nietzsche's point of view Christianity is tantamount to servility, weakness and humility, and is the main cause of the stagnation of humanity.

Some other schools hold that although morality depends on power and force, yet the use of force is not morally good in every case. From the

view-point of Marxism the force that an exploiter uses against the exploited is immoral, because it is used to maintain the status quo, and therefore it is a factor of stagnation. But the force which the exploited uses against the exploiter are moral, for it is used to revolutionize society and to push it to a higher stage.

In other words, in the eternal conflict prevailing in society, one of the two parties fighting against each other, performs the role of the thesis and the other that of the anti-thesis. The force that performs the role of the thesis, being reactionary is immoral, and the force that performs the role of the antithesis, being revolutionary and evolutionary, is moral. But the same force which is moral at one stage may become immoral at a subsequent stage when it plays a negative and reactionary role against some other force which is revolutionary. As such morality is a relative term. What is moral at one stage may become immoral at another higher stage.

From the view-point of Christianity the contact of a school with its opponents whom it considers to be anti-evolutionary is in itself a simple contact. It is moral provided it is gentle and friendly. On the other hand, Nietzsche holds that the only moral contact is that of the powerful with the weak. According to him there is nothing more moral than power and there is nothing more immoral than weakness. There is no bigger crime or graver sin than being weak.

From the view-point of Marxism there can be no contact between two groups holding opposite economic positions except that of force and the use of power. In this contact the use of force by the exploiting class is immoral, because it is anti-evolutionary, and the use of force by the exploited class is moral. Further there can be no doubt that the contact of a young force with an old one always amounts to a clash and for that matter, a morally justifiable clash.

Islam censures all the above-mentioned theories. Morality is not confined to peaceful contacts and kindly preaching of benevolent nature. Sometimes the use of force also can be moral. That is why Islam considers it a sacred duty to fight against violence and tyranny and considers jihad and armed uprising, under certain circumstances, an obligation.

As for Nietzsche's theory, it is obviously absurd, inhuman and anti-

evolutionary.

The theory of Marxism is based on the same mechanism as it believes to be the mechanism of history. From the view-point of Islam force is not to be used against an anti-evolutionary group in the very first instance. Contrary to the teaching of Marxism it is to be used only at a subsequent stage. First the method of convincing and exhortation should be employed. The Quran says: "Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and exhortation." (Surah an-Nahl 16:125)

The use of force against an anti-evolutionary front is allowed only when peaceful methods of convincing by arguments and through rational persuasion have been used and have failed.

In fact, all the Prophets who fought against their opponents first tried to convince them by means of arguments and exhortation and often entered into debates with them. They resorted to force only when they could achieve no success or achieved only a partial one which they often did. The basic thing is that as Islam reflects in spiritual terms, it believes in the remarkable power of arguments and exhortation. As it believes, in the words of Marx,

in the critical force of weapons, it also believes in the force of the weapon of criticism, and takes full advantage of that. Anyhow, it does not believe that it is the only force which should be used everywhere. It is because of the special spiritual outlook of Islam in respect of man and consequently in respect of society and history that it regards fighting against an anti-evolutionary front as the second stage of its contact with it, the first stage being the arguments, exhortation and debate.

That shows that the contact of a school with its adversaries may either be based on mere persuasion or on mere conflict or it may be a two-stage contact, firstly of persuasion and secondly of conflict and clash. The policy which a school pursues in this respect makes clear its view about the effectiveness of the force of logic and exhortation and the limits of their efficacy. Similarly it makes clear what that school thinks about the course of history and the role of conflict in it. Now we shall discuss the other aspect. Let us see what kind of consciousness Islam strives to awaken and what means it employs to invite people for embracing its message.

Islamic consciousness attaches paramount importance to the belief in the Divine Source and Resurrection.

This is the method which the Quran uses to inculcate its teachings, and says that it was used by the former Prophets also. The consciousness which Islam provides is in respect of the questions: "From where have you come? Where are you now? And where are you going? From where has the world come into being? What stage is it passing through? In which direction is it moving?" The first pinch of responsibility which the Prophets created was the pinch of the responsibility man owes to the whole creation and life. The pinch of social responsibility is a part of this pinch. As pointed out earlier, the chapters of the Quran revealed in Makkah during the first 13 years of the Holy Prophet's mission scarcely dealt with any subject other than that of the Divine Source and the Resurrection.<sup>20</sup>

The Holy Prophet started his mission with the declaration:

"Say, there is no deity except Allah so that you may prosper."

This was a religious movement which aimed at purifying human belief and thought. It is true that monotheism has vast dimensions. If all the Islamic teachings are analyzed, they can be summed up as monotheism, and if monotheism is expanded, it encompasses all these teachings. But we know that in the beginning the creed meant nothing more than an intellectual and practical turning from polytheistic doctrines and acts of worship to monotheistic doctrines and acts of worship. If the creed had any extensive meaning, people at that time were not conscious of that.

This teaching which struck roots in the depth of human nature, created in the followers of the Prophets such a zeal and spirit that they jealously defended their creed, left no stone unturned to spread it and did not hesitate to sacrifice their life and property for the sake of it. The Prophets began with what is known in our times as the super-structure of society and gradually reached its infrastructure. In the school of the Prophets man is more concerned with his faith and belief than with his personal gains and interests. In this school belief and thinking are the infrastructure; and work, that is the contact with nature and its gifts and with society, is the superstructure.

Every religious preaching must be prophetic. In other words it should be accompanied by the remembrance of the Divine Source and the Resurrection. The Prophets mobilized society by awakening this feeling, unfolding this consciousness and shaking off the dust from conscience, having trust in the Rizwan (good pleasure) of Allah, His commands and His retribution. In the Quran at thirteen places the pleasure of Allah has been mentioned. By pressing this spiritual point the Quran has mobilized the society of the faithful. The understanding of this fact may be called Divine or cosmic consciousness.

In the next category there are the Islamic teachings which draw man's attention to his own dignity and superior position. According to Islam man is not that animal which in the beginning was just like all other primates, but was so dexterous on the scene of the struggle for survival that over hundreds of millions of years he has acquired his present position. On the contrary man is the being who has a shadow of Divine spirit in him and before whom the angels have prostrated themselves. In spite of his animal propensities of lust and vice, man in himself has a pure essence which is against bloodshed, lies, corruption, meanness, lowliness, hatred and putting up with violence and tyranny. Man is a manifestation of Divine honour. The Holy Qur'an says:

"Honour belongs to Allah, to His Messengers and the believers." (Surah al-Munafiqun, 63:8) When the Holy Prophet says:

"Man's nobility lies in his vigil at night and his honour lies in his not being in need of the help of other people"; Or when Imam Ali says to his companions at Siffin:

"If you die as victors, that is your life and if you live as the vanquished, that is your death." (See Nahjul Balagha - Sermon 51) Or when Imam Husayn ibn Ali says:

"To me death is nothing but good fortune and living with the tyrants is nothing but a matter of grief."

All these sayings stress the sense of dignity and honour which man possesses by virtue of his true nature.

The third stage is that of the consciousness of one's rights and social responsibilities. In the Quran we come across several instances in which stress has been laid on the lost rights with a view to arouse people to create a movement.

"How should you not fight for the cause of Allah and of the oppressed among men and of the women and the children, who say: Our Lord! Deliver us from this town of the oppressors, and appoint for us from You a protector and send one that will help us?" (Surah an-Nisa 4:75 ) In this verse in order to persuade people to embark upon jihad, stress has been laid on two spiritual values:

i. that their movement is for the cause of Allah;

ii. and that helpless people are being oppressed by the tyrants. In the following verse the Quran says:

"Sanction is given to those who fight because they have been wronged; Allah is indeed able to give them victory. Those who have been driven from their homes unjustly only because they said: Our Lord is Allah for had it not been for Allah's repelling some men by means of others, cloisters, churches, oratories and mosques wherein the Name of Allah is often mentioned, would have assuredly been pulled down. Surely Allah helps the one who helps Him. Surely Allah is Strong, Almighty. Those who if We give them power in the land, establish worship and pay the zakat and exhort to do what is right and restrain from what is evil. And to Allah belongs the issue of all affairs." (Surah al-Hajj, 22:39-41)

In this verse we see that while giving permission of jihad, a reference has been made to the lost rights of the Muslims. At the same time a value which is higher than the lost rights, and which forms the real philosophy of defense has also been mentioned. The Quran says that if jihad is not undertaken and the believers do nothing, the safety of the mosques and other houses of worship, which constitute the throbbing heart of the spiritual life of society, would be endangered and they would cease functioning. In the Surah an-Nisa' the Quran says:

"Allah does not like the utterance of harsh speech except by one who has been wronged." (Surah an-Nisa, 4:148)

Evidently this is a sort of encouragement of the uprising by the oppressed. In the Quran after censuring the poets for their extravagantly fanciful ideas, adds:

"Except those who believe, do good deeds, remember Allah much and vindicate (by means of poetry) themselves after they have been wronged." (Surah as Shu'ara, 26:227 )

Although according to the Quran and the Sunnah (the conduct of the Holy Prophet) it is a grave sin to submit to tyranny and it is the duty of everyone to realize one's rights, these things have been mentioned as values having human aspect. The Quran does not rely on any psychic obsession nor does it excite jealousy or a carnal desire. For example it never says that such and such group is enjoying a lavish style of life, eating, drinking and making merry; why don't you take its place?

If an attempt is made to seize the property of someone, Islam does not allow the owner to keep quiet on the plea that material goods have no value. Similarly if an attempt is made to violate the honour of a person, it is the duty of that person not to take the matter lightly or keep quiet. According to a tradition, a person who is killed defending his honour or his property is to be regarded as a martyr who has laid down his life for the cause of Allah. If Islam urges people to defend their property, that does not mean that Islam asks them to amass wealth or to be greedy. It only asks them to defend their rights. Similarly when it considers it a duty to defend one's honour, it does so because it regards chastity as the highest social value and considers man to be the custodian of it.

## II. An Ideology's Nomenclature:

Every school of thought identifies its followers with a specific name. For example the racial theory is the distinctive mark of the adherents of that theory. When they say "We", they mean the whites. The Marxist theory is the theory of the workers. The followers of this school call themselves workers and identify themselves by this name. When they say "We", they mean workers. The Christians simply ascribe themselves to the person of Christ as if they have no doctrine or any ideology.

Their mark of identification is that they look for Christ and want to join him. It is a characteristic of Islam that it has not chosen any racial, class,

professional, local, regional or individual label to introduce its school and its followers. The adherents of this school are not known by any such designation as the Arabs, the Semites, the poor, the rich, the oppressed, the whites, the blacks, the Asians, the Easterns, the Westerns, the Muhammadans, the Quranians, the Qiblitites etc. None of the above names represents the real identity of the adherents of Islam. When the question of the identity of this school and its followers arises, all these names vanish. Only one thing remains, that is the relation between man and Allah.

Islam means submission to Allah. The Muslims are an ummah that submits to Allah, to truth and to the revelation and the inspiration rising from the horizon of truth and communicated to the heart of the most worthy persons. Then what is the nature of the identity of the Muslims? What label does their religion attach to them and under what banner does it want them to assemble? The answer is Islamic submission to truth.

The criterion of unity that every school approves for its followers is a reliable means of judging its aims and objectives. It also helps us to understand the outlook of school regarding man, society, and history.

### III. Favourable and Unfavourable Conditions for Acceptability:

We have said earlier that different schools have different view about the mechanism of the movement of history. One school is of the opinion that the natural mechanism of this movement is the pressure of one class against another class. Another school holds that it is the friction between a reactionary class. Still another school maintains that the real mechanism should be looked for in the pure state of human nature, which is evolutionary and progressive. Some other schools have some other opinions. Every school in its teachings enumerates such causes, conditions, obstacles and impediments of the movement of history.

as are appropriate to its conception of its mechanism The school which believes that the mechanism of the movement of history is the pressure of a class against another, in order to mobilize society and bring it into motion tries to create such pressure if it does not already exist. Marx in some of his works has pointed out that the existence of a subjugated and oppressed class is absolutely necessary for the emergence of a class of



free people. At the end of his study he says:

"Where does the possibility of liberation for the German nation lie? Our answer is that: We must form a class which is decisively in chains." Such an ideology regards reforms as an obstacle in the way of a revolution, because reforms reduce pressure and a reduction in pressure prevents the explosion or at least delays the revolution. In contrast, a school that believes that movement is an intrinsic and essential quality of society never suggests the creation of shackles for any class, for it does not regard pressure as a necessary condition of evolution, nor does it consider reforms as an obstacle in the way of progress.

What does Islam say about the conditions conducive to progress and the obstacles which may block its way? In Islam all prerequisite conditions and the difficulties in this respect revolve round what may be called a pure state of human nature. That is why on some occasions the retention of primordial purity has been mentioned as a condition. The Qur'an says:

"It is a guidance to the pious."(Surah al-Baqarah, 2:2).<sup>21</sup> In some places a prick of conscience ensuing from a sense of responsibility and duty which one owes to the world, has been mentioned as a condition in such words:

"Who fear their Lord in the unseen."(Surah al-Anbiya', 21:49) "Who fears the Beneficent in secret." (Surah Ya sin, 36 :11) At some places a 'living nature' has been mentioned as a condition. "To warn him who is alive." (Surah Ya sin, 36:70)

Islam maintains that its call is accepted by those who are pure, have a sense of responsibility and live a natural life. As opposed to these qualities it mentions such qualities as the spiritual and moral corruption, the sin of the heart, the rust of the heart, the hearts becoming sealed, the loss of insight, the heart's becoming inattentive, the deformation of the soul, the observance of ancestral customs and habits, the following in the footsteps of the elders and the notables, acting upon conjectures etc. The Quran regards all such things as obstacles in the way of the development of society and its moving towards peace and prosperity. Extravagance and luxurious living are also considered to be obstacles as they turn a man into a beast.

According to the Islamic teachings the young people are more prepared to accept the truth than the aged. The reason is that psychic pollutions have not yet spoiled their true nature. Similarly the poor, being free from the pollution of wealth are better prepared than the rich. The mention of this sort of qualifications and disqualification indicates that according to the Quran the mechanism of social and historical changes is rather spiritual than economic and material.

#### IV. Rise and Fall of Societies:

As a rule every school expresses its view about the causes of the progress and the decline of societies. The causes which a school considers to be the basic factors of the progress and the decline of society demonstrate its point of view about society, and about the evolutionary movements of history and its decline.

The Holy Qur'an, especially with reference to the stories and anecdotes related to these matters, explains its views. So let us see what things it regards as basic and infrastructural and what things as super structural. Does it look upon the economic and material questions as the basic question or considers the doctrinal and moral questions to be so, or does not discriminate between these two types of questions? In the Quran on the whole we come across four factors which affect the rise and fall of a society. We briefly refer to them here:

##### (i) Justice and Injustice:

This point has been hinted at by the Quran in many of its verses including the second verse of the Surah al-Qasas quoted by us earlier:

"Surely Fir'awn exalted himself in the earth and divided its people into castes. A section among them he oppressed, killing their sons and sparing their women. Surely he was of those who work corruption."

In this verse first it has been said that Fir'awn exalted himself. He claimed to be a super-god and regarded others as his slaves. In different manners he discriminated between his subjects and created rift among them. The Quran says that he oppressed a section of his people, killed their sons and spared their women (with a view to make them serve Fir'awn and his tribe). It describes him as one of those who work corruption.

This description implies that such social tyrannies as were perpetrated by him, were likely to destroy the foundation of society.

(ii) Unity And Discord:

The verse 103 of the Surah Ale Imran urges all to be united on the basis of faith and to hold fast to the bond of Allah. The verse 105 of the same Surah says:

"And be not like those who separated and disputed." The verse 153 of the Surah al-An'am also says almost the same thing. In the following verses the Quran says:

"Say: He is able to inflict punishment upon you from above you or from beneath your feet, or to bewilder you with dissension and make you taste the tyranny one of another." (Surah An'am 6:65 )

"Do not quarrel with one another for then you will be weak and your power will depart from you." (Surah al Anfal 8:46) (iii) Observance Or Disregard of Allah's Command About Exhorting to What is Good and Restraining from What is Evil:

The Quran has at many places stressed the necessity of acting according to this command. The following verse implies that the people who ignore this important duty, may be ruined and doomed to oblivion. One of the reasons why the Children of Isra'il were deprived of the blessing of Allah was that:

"They restrained not one another from the wickedness they did. Surely evil was what they used to do." (Surah al Ma'idah 5:79) (iv) Moral Depravity and Licentiousness:

There are various verses in the Quran in this regard also. Some of them describe luxurious living as a cause of ruin. In many other verses the word *Zulm* (injustice; cruelty, oppression, transgression, tyranny) has been mentioned. In Quranic terminology injustice does not exclusively mean violation of the rights of an individual or of a group. It also includes the injustice done by an individual to himself or by a people to themselves.

Every kind of moral depravity and going astray from the right path of humanity is injustice. The conception of injustice in the Quran is vast enough to include injustice done to others and the indulgence in all corrupt and immoral deeds. Mostly this word has been used in the Quran in this second sense. The number of the verses of the Quran in which injustice in its wider sense has been described as the cause of the ruin of a people, is too extensive to be cited here.

From the sum total of these criteria we can gather the view-point of the Quran in respect of the basis of society and history. The Quran believes in the definite and decisive role of many things which may be called super structural.

### Notes

20. Some contemporary so-called Muslim intellectuals absolutely deny the existence of even a single verse in the Quran referring to the Resurrection. Wherever in the Quran there is a mention of 'dunya' (this world), they interpret it as the lower system of life, that is the system of social discrimination and exploitation, and wherever there is a mention of 'Akhirah' (the next world) they interpret it as the higher system of life free from social discrimination, inequality, exploitation and private property. If 'Akhirah' really signifies this; then that means that the Quran one thousand years before the inception of materialist school gave up religion as the lost proposition.

21. This shows that the Marxist theory that the use of force by the exploited class is moral, for it has an effective role in progress and its use by the class of the exploiters is immoral, because in this case it is a factor of stagnation is not a valid theory. When this school believes that the pressure of the exploiters plays as much role in the development as the revolutionary reaction of the exploited class, evidently the action of the exploiters should be as moral as the action of the exploited.

The only difference between the two forces is that one looks to the past and the other to the future. Otherwise both of them play the same role in development. Hence the criterion of their morality and immorality should be the intention behind them and not that one looks to the past and the other to the future.

# Chapter 12

## Evolution and Change in History

What we have said so far concerns one of the two important problems of history. The question so far dealt with was whether the nature of history is materialistic or not. Another important question is that of the evolution of history.

We know that social life is not confined to man alone. There are some other living beings also, which more or less lead some sort of social life based on mutual cooperation and division of labour and sharing of responsibilities under well organized laws and rules.

We all know that the honey-bee is one of such living beings. But there is one basic difference between the social existence of other living beings and that of man. The social existence of other living beings always remains fixed and static. No change or development in the system of their life or in the words of Morris Metterlink, in their culture - if that expression is correct ever takes place.

In contrast, the social life of man not only develops and changes, but it also gradually gathers speed and gains momentum. That is why the history of the social life of man has been divided from different angles into distinct periods distinguished from each other.

For example, from the view-point of the means of living, it has been divided into the periods of hunting, agriculture and industrial development. From the view-point of economic system it has been divided into the period of primitive communism, the period of slavery, the period of feudalism, the period of capitalism and the period of socialism. From political point of view it has been divided into the period of tribal rule, the period of despotism, the period of aristocracy, and the period of democracy. From the point of view of sex it has been divided into the

period of matriarchy and the period of patriarchy. So on and so forth.

Why is this kind of development not found in the social life of other animals? Which basic factor is the cause of man's shifting from one social period to another? In other words, what is that which pushes life forward and is found in man and not found in animals? What is the mechanism of this progress?

In this connection the philosophers of history usually raise a question. They ask whether the social life of man has really made any progress over history, and if it has, by what criterion, we can judge it and be sure of it.

Some sociologists<sup>22</sup> doubt that the changes which have taken place may really be called a progress or an evolution. Some other sociologists hold that the movement of history is circular. They claim that history moves from a point, and after passing several stages reaches the same point again and then once more begins to move in the same fashion as previously.

For example, a stiff tribal system is set up by the nomads, possessing will and courage. The tribal government naturally leads to the establishment of an aristocracy. The dictatorial actions of the aristocratic government culminate in a general revolution and the establishment of a democracy. Sometime later the chaos and confusion caused by too much freedom under a democratic government once again lead to despotism with a tribal spirit. At present we do not propose to enter into the discussion of this point and leave it to some other occasion. As a basis of further study we assume that on the whole history has marched forward and made progress.

It may be pointed out that those who maintain that history is going forward admit that the forward movement of history does not mean that the future of all societies under all circumstances is better than their past, that societies always and without any interruption move forward, and that there is no chance of their ever declining and moving backwards.

There is no doubt that societies come to a halt, decline, retrogress, turn to the left or the right and finally fade out. Nevertheless on the whole they move forward.

The question, what the motivating force of history and the factor of the social development is, has been usually so described in the books of philosophy that the incorrectness of the description becomes clear after a little consideration of it. Usually the following views are expressed about this question:

### **I. The Racial Theory:**

According to this theory, certain races are mainly responsible for the advancement of history. It is supposed that some races have the capability of creating culture and civilization, whereas some others do not possess such talents. Some races can produce science, philosophy, ethics, art and technology. Whereas some others are mere consumers of these commodities; not the producers of them.

Hence, it is concluded that there should be a sort of division of labour among different races. The races which are fit for politics, education and the production of culture, art and technology should be exclusively responsible for human, fine and sublime activities. On the other hand the races which do not have such a capability should be excused from these activities and instead should be entrusted with manual and semi-animal work which does not require high thinking and sublimity of taste. This was the consideration why Aristotle who held such views, regarded some races fit for owning slaves and other races unfit for that.

Some thinkers believe that only particular races are able to lead the course of history. For example, they say that northern races in this respect are superior to southern races. It was the northern races which pushed human culture forward. Count Gobino, the famous French philosopher, who was for three years French Ambassador to Iran about hundred years ago, supported this theory.

### **II. The Geographical Theory:**

According to this theory it is a particular sort natural environment that produces culture, education and industry. For example, the temperate regions produce moderate temperaments; and powerful brains. In the first part of the Qanun, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) has discussed at length the effects of the natural environment on the mental and temperamental

personality of man.

According to this theory what pushes history forward is not the hereditary factor of race and blood. It is not that a particular race pushes history forward in every climate and every region and that another race wherever it may be living lacks that capacity. The difference in the capabilities of different races is the result of the difference in their environment. With the dispersion of races their capabilities also disperse. As such it is particular areas and regions which push history forward and cause new developments. The French sociologist of the 17th century Montesquieu in his celebrated book, *De Lesprit des lois* (the Spirit of the Law) advocates this theory.

### **III. Theory of Intellectual Giants:**

According to this theory all historical developments, whether scientific, political, economic, technical or moral, are produced by extraordinarily intelligent and ingenious persons. Man in this respect differs from all other living beings. Individual members of other species have biologically almost similar capabilities. At least there appears to be no appreciable difference.

In contrast, among the human beings as regards to their capabilities a great disparity is often observed. Exceptionally genius persons are found in every society. Whenever these geniuses possessing extraordinary intellect, taste, will or initiative appear in a society, they push it forward scientifically, technically, morally, politically or militarily.

According to this theory, most of the human beings lack initiative and creativity. They only follow and consume the ideas and the products of the industry of others.

In fact, more or less always, in every society there exists a minority which possesses a creative bent of mind. It has initiative, possesses original ideas, and goes ahead of others. It is this minority that pushes history forward and brings it to a new stage. The well-known English philosopher Thomas Carlyle believed that history was shaped by outstanding individuals. In his book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* he has made the following remarks about the Holy Prophet of Islam:



"The history of every nation is a manifestation of one or more than one outstanding personalities. More properly speaking, the history of every nation is a manifestation of the personality and the genius of one or more than one heroes. For instance, the history of Islam is a manifestation of the personality of the Holy Prophet; the history of modern France is a manifestation of the personality of Napoleon; and the Soviet history of the last sixty years is a manifestation of the personality of Lenin."

#### **IV. The Economic Theory:**

According to this theory economy is the motivating force of history. All social and historical affairs of a nation whether they are cultural, political, military or social, are a reflection of the production methods and production relations of that society. It is a change in the economic basis of a society that transforms its structure and pushes it forward. The geniuses mentioned above are not more than a manifestation of the economic, political and social needs of society caused by a change in the implements of production. Karl Marx, the Marxists on the whole and sometimes even some non-Marxists support this theory. Perhaps it is the most popular theory of our time.

#### **V. The Divine Theory:**

According to this theory, whatever appears on the earth is a heavenly affair which comes down to the earth in accordance with the profound wisdom of Allah. All historical changes and developments are a manifestation of His judicious will and profound wisdom. Therefore it is Divine will that pushes history forward and brings about changes in it. History is a scenario of the Divine Will. Bishop Bossuet, a well known historian and tutor of Louis XV advocated this theory.

These are the theories which have been usually discussed in the books of philosophy of history in connection with the causes that move history. From our point of view none of these theories represents the correct position and they all are the result of some sort of confusion. We want to find out the causes that move history, but these theories are largely irrelevant to what we want.

For instance the racial theory is nothing more than a sociological theory.

It is relevant only when the question is whether different human races have or have not some hereditary capabilities and whether they all are or not intellectually of the same level. If they are of the same level, that means that all races equally take part in the movement of history or at least theoretically they can. If they are not of the same level that means that some races alone are fit to take part in the process of pushing history forward.

So far this theory has been formulated correctly, but it does not resolve the mystery of the philosophy of history. Suppose we admit that all historical developments are effected by a certain race. Still our problem remains unsolved, for we still do not know why human life or the life of any particular human race develops, whereas animal life remains stationary. The question whether the factor of progress is one race or all races, does not unveil the secret of the movement of history.

The same is the case with the geographical theory. It is a useful theory and relates to an important sociological question as it shows that environments play an effective role in the mental, intellectual, temperamental and physical growth of man. Some environments keep man within or near the limits of an animal and others further his distance and distinction from animals. According to this theory, history moves among the men of certain regions and territories only.

In other regions it is stationary and monotonous. But the main question still remains where it was. For example honey-bees and other gregarious animals lack historical movement even in the regions conducive to mental growth. Then what is the real cause of the difference between these two kinds of living beings, one kind of which remains stationary, whereas the other kind always moves from one stage to another?

The divine theory is still more inconsistent than these other theories. Is history alone a manifestation of the Divine Will? In fact the whole world from the beginning to the end including all causes and hindrances is a manifestation of the Will of Allah.

The Divine Will bears the same relation to all causes of the world. As the developing and changing life of man is a manifestation of the Divine Will, similarly the stationary and monotonous life of the bees is also a manifestation of His Will. The real question is what that system is with

which the Divine Will has endowed the life of man to make it developing while the life of other animals is stationary because it is devoid of that system.

The economic theory lacks technical aspect and has not been advanced as a principle. The economic theory of history, as it has been propounded, throws light on the nature of history only and shows that it is material and economic, and that all other affairs are tantamount only to forms or nonessential characteristics. Consequently, all affairs of society necessarily change. But all that is a question of 'if'.

The real question still remains unanswered. Even if we admit that economy is the infrastructure of society and with its change the whole society undergoes a change, the question is why it is so. What is that factor or factors which change the whole superstructure following a change in the infrastructure? Economy may be the infrastructure of society, but that does not necessarily mean that it is the motivating force of history also. Of course if the supporters of this theory instead of describing economy as the infrastructure of society,

had described it as the motivating force of history, considered materiality of history to be enough for its dynamism, brought out the question of the inner contradiction of society and said that the real motivating force is the contradiction between the infrastructure and the superstructure of society or the contradiction between the two aspects of the infrastructure (implements of production and production relations), the theory would have been presented properly.

There is no doubt that the aim of the proponents of the above theory in its present form is to say that the real cause of all movements of history is the inner contradiction between the implements of production and the production relations. But we are concerned with the correct presentation of the theory, not with what is in the minds of its proponents.

The theory of the intellectual giants, irrespective of the fact whether it is correct or incorrect, directly relates to the philosophy of history or the motivating factor of history.

As such so far we have got only two theories about the force which moves history. One of them being the theory of the giants, according to

which history is created by the outstanding individuals. In fact, this theory claims that most members of society or almost all of them lack initiative, originality and power of leadership. They can bring about no change in society. But from time to time a very small minority with an extraordinary imaginative and creative capacity emerges in society.

Its members take initiative, plan things, take decisions and pull the ordinary people behind them. Thus they bring about a change. These heroic personalities are the product of extraordinary events, both natural and hereditary, but not of the social conditions or the material needs of society.

The second theory is that of the contradiction between the infrastructure and the superstructure of society. This theory may properly be called the theory of the motivity of economy. We have already referred to it, and need not dwell on it again.

There is a third theory also and that is the theory of the inborn characteristics. Man's nature is such that he has certain inherent characteristics which make his life evolutionary. One of these characteristics is his ability of gathering and preserving experiences. Whatever knowledge and information man acquires through his experience, he retains it in his mind and uses it as a basis for his further experiments.

Another characteristic of man is his capacity of learning through speech and writing. Through these mediums he can transmit his experience to others. The experience of one generation is preserved for the benefit of the subsequent generations by means of speech and writing and thus human experience continues to pile up. That is why the Quran has given special importance to the blessings of speech and pen. The Quran says:

"The Beneficent has made known the Quran. He has created man. He has taught him articulate utterance." (Surah ar-Rahman, 55:1-4) At another place it says:

"Read: In the name of your Lord Who created, - created man from a clot. Read: And your Lord is the Most Bounteous, who taught by the pen." (Surah al-Alaq, 96:1-4)

The third characteristic of man is his being equipped with the power of

reason and initiative. By means of this mysterious power he can originate things, for he is a manifestation of the creative power of Allah. His fourth characteristic is his inherent desire to do something original. In other words man is not only potentially creative, but he can actually create things whenever necessary. Not only that, but a creative tendency has been implanted in his nature.

Man's capability of remembering and preserving his experience, his capacity of communicating it to others and his inherent tendency to be creative combined together are a force that always pushes man forward. In other animals there exists neither a capacity of remembering their experience and communicating it to others<sup>23</sup> nor originality and initiative, nor any strong desire of being creative. That is the reason why the animals are stationary and man marches forward. Now we shall scrutinize these theories.

# Chapter 13

## The Role of Personality in History

Some people have asserted that history is a struggle between ingenuity and normal limits. The common and average people support the situation to which they have been accustomed while the geniuses want to replace the existing situation with a better one. Carlyle claims that history begins with the geniuses and the heroes. This theory is in fact based on two presumptions:

The first presumption is that society is devoid of nature and personality. The individuals composing society do not form a real compound. All individuals are independent of each other.

They act and react upon each other, but they do not form a compound having its own collective spirit, personality, nature and special laws. They all have their individual mentality and way of thinking. The individuals; bear the same relation to society as the trees to a forest. Social events are nothing but a total of individual events. As such society is mostly governed by the universal and general causes.

The second presumption is that individual human beings have been so created that they vastly differ from each other. Although generally speaking the human beings according to the terminology of the philosophers are rational animals, yet almost all of them lack originality and creativity. Most of them are the consumers of culture and civilization, not the producers of them. In this respect they differ from the animals only so far that the animals cannot even be the consumers of culture. The spirit of majority is that of imitation, unquestioning adoption and hero-worship.

But a very small minority of men consists of heroes, geniuses, independent thinkers of outstanding caliber, of those who have an original and

creative spirit, and of those who possess a strong will. They are distinct from the majority. Had there been no scientific, philosophical, artistic, political, social, ethical and technical geniuses and heroes, humanity would not have moved a step forward and would have remained where it was in the beginning.

From our point of view both these presumptions are defective. As for the first presumption, we have, while discussing society, proved that society has its own personality, nature, laws and norms and all events take place in accordance with its established general traditions. These traditions in themselves are progressive and evolutionary.

Therefore we must set aside this presumption and then see whether, in spite of the fact that society has its personality, nature and traditions, it is possible for the personality of the individual to play any role in the march of events. We will discuss this point later. As for the second presumption, although it cannot be denied that the human beings have been so created that they differ from one another, it is not correct to say that only heroes and geniuses have creative power and all others are the consumers of culture and civilization.

In fact more or less all human beings have creative capacity, and as such all individuals or at least most of them can take part in productive and creative activities, though their share may be insignificant as compared to that of a genius.

Diametrically opposed to the theory that personalities create history, there is another theory which asserts that it is history that creates personalities. In other words, it is actually the existing social needs that create a personality.

Montesquieu has said:

"Great men and important events are the signs and the results of the longer and greater events."

Hegel said:

"Great men do not give birth to history; but act as midwives."

The great men are the symbols, not the agents. According to the thinking of those who like Durkheim believe that collective spirit is the basic thing, and that the individuals as such absolutely lack personality and they borrow their whole personality from society, the individuals including big personalities are nothing but a manifestation of the collective spirit of society. In the words of Mahmud Shabistari they are a screen of the window of collective spirit.

From the view-point of those who like Marx consider individual consciousness to be a manifestation of the collective material needs, the personalities are a mere manifestation of the material and economic needs of society.

### Notes

22. See: E.H. Carr, *What is History?*; Will Durant, *Studies in History, The Pleasures of Philosophy*, pp. 291-312

23. Some animals can transmit to others what they have learnt, but only on the level of daily events, not on the level of any scientific experience. The Quran also hints at this fact when it says:

"When they (Sulayman's army) arrived in the valley of ants, one ant said to the others, 'Enter your dwellings lest you be carelessly crushed by Sulayman and his army.'" (Surah an-Naml, 27:18)



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