

Man

The scholastic philosophy gave the place of man to a God conceived by the medieval Church, which was inspired by the ancient Greek views in respect of their gods and mixed this conception with some religious myths. The Greek gods had a hostile relation with man and were considered to be apprehensive of man's gaining access to the Holy Fire and acquiring knowledge and power. They regarded man as their rival on the earth, who should be checked by any means possible.

The lords of the species, which were believed to be controlling the forces of nature were afraid lest man should overcome these forces and should subdue nature.

The story of Adam's Paradise was depicted as an attempt by God to keep man ignorant. The Forbidden Tree of which man was not supposed to eat, was represented as the tree of knowledge which man should not approach so that he might not rise in rivalry with God.

Furthermore, Adam's disobedience was believed to be an eternal sin and a total depravity of human nature. At last for the salvation of man and his deliverance from his original sin, God Himself had to appear in the body of Jesus Christ through the Holy Ghost. Thus spirituality became the speciality of the successors of Jesus and the churchmen.

From this point of view man is a despicable sinner. Only the ecclesiastical ministers deserve divine blessing. The key of the hidden treasures being in their hand, one must approach them for one's salvation.

Knowledge became confined to the Christian doctrines and all intellectual faculties were devoted to the discussion and interpretation of the religious texts. Virtue lay in the attachment to the organization of the established church.

Man believed to be deprived of divine grace, became a captive in the hand of the custodians of the

sanctuary of the son of God. As he had lost everything, man was compelled to surrender himself submissively. In this process what totally disappeared was his self-respect. This was the position of man in the West prior to Renaissance.

Appearance of New Humanism

Naturally this situation had a reaction. Renaissance began as a revolt against the existing conception of God and brought about the re-birth of man. Humanism took roots in a new form and tried to emancipate man from the bondage of the God which was imposed on him. But alas! The emancipated man was put into the clutches of new human gods and was placed under a new bondage, that is to say mechanism, expansion and diversification of consumption and a race of exploitation and making profit.

The way of thinking was freed from the shackles of medieval doctrines. Sciences flourished, but they all were harnessed to serve the cause of the enhancement of production and exploitation.

As all restraints were removed and stress was laid on complete freedom, man was given to libertinism and permissiveness and his life became meaningless (as is the case with Western Liberalism).

Again 'man' has been forgotten, and the question still remains: What is man? What should he be? What should he do to remain a man and attain human perfection?

Man from the Qur'anic point of view

The story of Adam as portrayed in the Qur'an shows that in the course of his material development and physiological changes,¹ man reached a stage where he obtained a new birth² with the infusion of the Divine spirit.³ Then in the course of his normal development, he suddenly experienced a divine change as the result of which he was transformed into such a super being⁴ that even the angels were asked to pay obeisance⁵ and the world forces were made subservient, to him.

The Forbidden Tree of Paradise is not that of knowledge which should not be approached, but it is a tree of lust which should be controlled. It is a means by which man tests his will-power and the power of self-control. Even man's disobedience is a symbol of the freedom granted to him by Allah.

To have access to 'knowledge' is not forbidden to him: In fact, it is a gift with which he has been especially blessed. Allah taught him that which none else knew.⁶ Knowledge is one of the factors by which man gained superiority over the angels.⁷

Even Adam's expulsion from Paradise was a forerunner of a sort of self-sufficiency, the blooming of his talents and the beginning of his creative struggle.⁸ It was a stage preliminary to his self-making. Though 'fall' came in the wake of disobedience, but it did not culminate in condemnation and permanent contempt. As the result of seeking forgiveness and attaining self-consciousness, it became a matter of blessing.⁹

Man's relation with Allah is not that of hostility or rivalry, for Allah is Self-sufficient and All-powerful. Even if all men disobey him, He is going to lose nothing.¹⁰ He is far away from jealousy and any kind of anxiety. Therefore man cannot place any restraint on Him through his disobedience. Man's disobedience is only a manifestation of his free will and power of choice granted to him by Allah.

Allah appointed man as His vicegerent on the earth,¹¹ that is to say, He gave him authority and power. Not only that, whatever man could use and could control in the heavens was also subdued to him.¹²

Allah is not apprehensive of man. He urges him to settle on the earth¹³ and make use of all the forces hidden in its mountains and plains.¹⁴

Man's domination over land and sea and his control of them is one of the requirements of his dignity.¹⁵

According to the Qur'an man is neither a predestined being¹⁶ nor has he been given a free reign to pass an aimless life.¹⁷

He has been endowed with many capabilities, dispositions and motives accompanied by a sort of inner direction¹⁸ and innate guidance¹⁹ which, if not corrupted, will lead him to truth, knowledge,²⁰ and all stages of creative skills, including those of new discoveries based on previous experience, those of the invention of new tools and equipment for the expansion of his control of nature and those of increasing his efficiency in overcoming any hurdles which he may have to face.

Besides that, man is also the bearer of the 'Divine trust'²¹ representing consciousness, will and power of choice, which are the symbol of his humanity and make him a responsible being. This Divine trust is that magnificent gift of Allah, which the heavens, the earth and the mountains were not competent enough to accept. Only man could bear the responsibility of having the power of conscious choice and free will.

Range of Man's Choice and Will

In order to know the conditions, limits and the field of man's choice, to ascertain the effects of this power on him, and to find out what factors influence his way of thinking, we must take the following points into consideration:

(1) Innate nature of man and his disposition

Man has many motives and instincts which pull him towards themselves. Some of his instincts are derived from a material source, and some others from a Divine spirit.

You may call these instincts propensity, disposition, natural urge, tendency or inclination. Some most important of these instincts are as under:

- a. Inclination towards and need of food, clothing and shelter;
- b. The instinct of self-defense;
- c. Sexual urge;
- d. Aesthetic sense;
- e. The instinct of gaining position and respect;
- f. The instinct of seeking truth and liking it;
- g. Love of knowledge;
- h. Love of justice;
- i. Fellow-feeling;
- j. Love of perfection and a desire to seek it.

Such instincts and urges are interwoven with the innate nature of man,²² and hence they are not transient and acquired. But still their existence does not mean that man is a captive of them. These instincts only bring about a sort of inclination and attraction. They work as a motive force, but they do not tie the hands of man. Man has the power to follow or not to follow them. It is within his power to satisfy his instinctive desires or to restrain them, to supervise and guide them or to change their direction.

These urges are actually controlled by man's will based on his way of thinking.

(2) Modification of Propensities

The modification of propensities and instincts is essential, though it is very difficult and requires a great deal of effort, awareness and hard work.

It may be easily understood that each of the abovementioned instincts is in itself a need of life.

Should there be no sexual urge, there shall exist no motive for procreation and formation of a family.

Should there be no inclination to food, man shall take no steps to meet his nutritional requirements and consequently he shall perish.

Should man have no desire to gain honor and social position, he shall succumb to disgrace and humiliation.

A desire to secure position and social respect can impel one to make fruitful efforts and to do social work etc. But if this very desire becomes too excessive, it may overcome all other motives and may turn into a lust for power and position. In that case man begins to worship the idol of power and becomes a tyrant. He may go to any extent and may adopt any means, including spending moneymaking flattery and taking any mean action. In some cases one may even bear hunger and any other hardships to gain one's selfish ends.

Even after gaining power in order to maintain and enhance it, such a person may commit any crime – and resort to telling lies, and intimidating and slaughtering people.²³

In other words he may trample upon the high values of justice, realism and benevolence.²⁴

We observe how one instinct can overpower a man if it is not properly checked and is allowed to exceed the proper bounds; but we must not forget that in this case the instinct becomes an idol which man creates for himself²⁵ by misusing his power of choice, and it is he himself who can break this idol and can promote his higher tendencies. He can check and reform those instincts which exceed the proper bounds, so that he may save himself from sinking into sin.

"As for him who repents, believes and does what is right, it is hoped that he will prosper". (Surah al-Qasas, 28:67).

"But he who fears the position of his Lord and curbs his base desires, shall surely dwell in Paradise". (Surah al-Nazi`at, 79:40-41).

"Those who are saved from their own greed shall surely be prosperous". (Surah al-Hashr, 59:9).

There are many other verses which strongly censure imbalance in tendencies and declare that the problem should be solved by making positive efforts to promote higher tendencies.

The Qur'an considers man to be always responsible to make efforts to reform himself and to guide all his tendencies so that none of them may exceed its limits and shrivel the freshness of human nature.

(3) Role of natural and geographical environment

It is not possible that the natural and geographical environment of a man should have no effect on his spiritual and emotional life. Just as the features and muscles –power of all men cannot be the same, similarly the spirituality of a man who has grown up in the scorching heat of a desert amidst sand–dunes cannot be similar to that of another man who lives in a coastal region having humid climate and dense forests. There is no doubt that hot climate, salt water, or mountainous region cannot have the same effect on human tendencies as for instance, cold climate, sweet water or marshy land has. This is just as the physique of the people of all regions cannot be the same.

However these varied natural and physical conditions do not compel a man to go in a particular direction though they may provide him to some extent a conducive atmosphere to induce him to adopt a certain way of life. No region compels a man to maintain or lose his self–respect, to defend his freedom or succumb to subjugation, to be virtuous or wicked or to be lazy or industrious.

It is man himself, who in spite of all difficulties and unfavorable conditions, can find his way and use his will–power to strengthen his constructive spirituality.

(4) Role of historical, social and economic factors

The historical factors, social atmosphere, economic relations and social conditions also play a basic role in giving direction to man's tendencies, his motives, his outlook and his way of life. Some times they set up hurdles in the way of man's freedom and his power of choice.

But we should not forget that the present conditions were brought about gradually by some people and other people can fight the existing evil factors under the banner of freedom and knowledge, can add to their intellectual matureness, and by using what remains of their will and decision–making power can fight corruption. This subject will be discussed further while we deal with the historical outlook of Islam.

(5) Role of the rules and regulations in the field of choice

We have come to know that man has certain tendencies and instincts which must be guided and modified. As natural factors and environmental conditions affect his choice and his mode of life, he must take steps to improve his surroundings and change them for the better. The principles and rules on the basis of which this modification and improvement should take place, are one of the most important topics connected with the question of man's choice and his will.

How should he mould his life and in what direction should he turn himself? What should he choose and on what basis? Should he allow others to impose certain principles on him and then of his own accord choose those very principles and go the way to which he is led in an invisible manner, as normally is the case in modern democracy?

Or should he allow himself to be involved in an ideological conflict on the basis of the theory of material compulsion and historical dialectic as advanced by certain schools of thought, and by bringing about further contradiction in this process, invigorate the movement and development of history?

Or should a man, as a principle, free himself from all principles already enunciated, get rid of his own pre-conceived ideas, and then with complete freedom make his choice and create his own principles and rules, because there exists no principle other than that which one himself chooses? Or is there any other way out? If so, what is that?

From Islamic point of view, man has been created free from all such compulsions and no pre-conceived principle or view can be imposed on him to deprive him of his free will and power of choice.

Man should himself choose the rules and principles for moulding himself rightly and to serve his society in the light of his expanded knowledge. All the emphasis which the Qur'an lays on thinking, understanding and reasonableness and that too on the thinking free from whims, myths and the wrong notions prevalent in the environment or inherited from forefathers, is aimed at paving the way for finding the truth.

(6) Divine revelation

One of the most important sources of knowledge and the domains of thinking is Divine revelation.

The world is not dark and void. In addition to those inner faculties with which Allah has provided man in order to help him find the truth, He has sent Prophets to guide him aright. This guidance does not mean forced imposition of Allah's will, nor does it mean the suppression of the creative will of man. It only

means a sort of exhortation and Divine help. It shows kindness and graciousness of Allah. This guidance is a light which adds to the insight of man and does not restrict his will.

Man should get benefited by this guidance with his eyes wide open, and for that purpose, he should use his knowledge and insight. He should first think and evaluate, and only then make his choice. If even after identifying the truth, he persists in his disbelief, he shall stand condemned.

In support of these points, there is enough evidence in the Qur'an. We have already quoted some verses.

(7) Man's own deeds make his destiny

Another question which gives direction to man's will and choice is his giving attention to the fact that his deeds make his destiny and that every action of his shall have a reaction sooner or later. Man's future actually depends on his own deeds.

The Qur'an says:

"Man gets only what he strives for". (Surah al-Najm, 53:39)

"Corruption has become rife on land and sea because of the misdeeds of the people". (Surah al-Rum, 30:41).

It is the resistance of the people which prevents corruption.

"If Allah had not repelled with the might of others, the earth would have been corrupted". (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:251).

Paradise and Hell are the outcome and the reflection of the deeds of the people.

"This is Paradise which you have inherited by your righteous deeds". (Surah al-Zukhruf, 43:72).

"In fact those who commit evil and are engrossed in their transgression, shall be consigned to the fire in which they shall abide". (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:81).

In fact the deeds of the people are preserved accurately and carefully.

"These shall have a share of what they have earned. No doubt Allah is swift at reckoning". (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:210).

As in this world everything is well-planned and well-managed and there is nothing futile and haphazard, all human deeds have a role and a constructive effect.

This view makes it very clear that a man has to be very careful while making his choice. He is not allowed to set his hand to anything haphazardly and carelessly.

It is also essential that he should choose only what is right. He must not take a decision light-heartedly. That is why he is anxious and apprehensive. Perhaps it is this fear of Allah that leads one to practical piety.²⁶

(8) Aim of Man's efforts

Now let us see what should be the aim of man's efforts. We know that Islam proposes certain goals and principles and calls man to adopt them. This in itself is a blessing of Allah. But it is man himself who should choose his way thoughtfully.

Prosperity and salvation

According to the Qur'an one of the aims of the efforts of man is to achieve *falah* which means salvation and prosperity.

Fallah means the cultivator, who cleaves the land, prepares it for cultivation and arranges for all the conditions necessary for the growth and development of seed, which under the favorable conditions of soil and water shoots forth from land and with the help of natural forces increases in height and size.

Similarly if man arranges the conditions conducive to his human growth and perfection in every sphere and all dimensions of his nature, he will become free from the shackles of selfishness and base desires. He will be able to take full advantage of his talents and potentialities and his higher instincts will take a firm root. Such a man is said to have achieved *falah* and to have 'prospered'. The Qur'an declare that this prosperity depends on self-making²⁷ modification of natural urges,²⁸ good deeds,²⁹ constructive and positive efforts,³⁰ resistance against the evil, co-operation for the good, piety,³¹ betterment of the environment, diffusion of virtues, prevention of corruption³² and the like.

(9) Ideals and values

With one evolutionary jump man begins to hold an ideal for the sake of which he forgets himself, concentrating his attention on faith and the service of humanity. A stage comes when for the realization of his ideal he not only forsakes his pleasures and comforts, and his position and wealth, but even lays

down his life.

A scientist makes sincere efforts to make a discovery, not to serve a tyrant or to get fame or secure a reward, but to add to knowledge and to serve humanity.

A sincere social worker makes efforts for the treatment of the sick for helping the afflicted and the hungry and for defending the oppressed, not for the sake of any reward or publicity and not in a just formal or a professional way, but for the sake of humanity and service.

An ideological worker faces all sorts of hardships and dangers and makes sacrifices for the deliverance of a nation. What name will you give to such a man and how will you interpret his working for an ideal?

There is no harm if you call him an idealist, for what he strives for, does not already exist as a reality, neither in nature nor in society. He only perceives it as an ideal in his mind and makes it a part of his life. This ideal becomes a driving force which moves him to continue his efforts till what was a mere idea, is realized and becomes a historical fact.

Every ideological school must have an ideal, which though does not already exist as a reality, but sacrifice should be made to achieve it. This is a thing which no theory of material compulsion can explain. It cannot be judged by any scientific standard, nor can it be interpreted by any material or natural law.

These very ideals are the high values to which one should dedicate himself and for the sake of which one should make sacrifice. If you want to find a person who really possesses 'human' qualities, you should look for one who is dedicated to these ideals and values, which are beyond the scope of physiological and biological laws.

(10) Seeking Allah and Truth

Islam maintains that these values in their highest form are concentrated in Allah, and the man of Islam is enamoured of this absolute perfection. He is fit to yearn for and move towards the source of all virtues and values. A man having a perfect faith actually moves towards this goal. This absolute perfection is a pure reality and the essence of existence, which has created values and power. This truth cannot be perceived by material thinking, which cannot go beyond matter and energy and cannot think of reality and value or the source of power and motion.

As far as man is concerned, it is he himself who begins his move towards perfection, though he is invited and attracted towards it by Allah, but not to the extent of compulsion and imposition, for in that case his move will have no value. He himself is responsible to make the journey with untiring efforts to reach his

goal. How encouraging this promise is!

'Man, strive hard to get closer to your Lord, and so you will certainly receive the recompense (of your deeds)': (Surah al-Inshiqaq, 84:6).

Man from the View Point of Existentialism

As existentialism is one of the most well-known contemporary schools of philosophy which has devoted much of its attention to man, we must study its doctrines in order to have a clear idea about the prevalent theories about man. For this purpose we propose first to reproduce some of the views of the thinkers and the commentators of this school and then to make our comments on them:

Existence of man precedes his essence, and hence, firstly there exists no purpose, plan or destiny concerning him prior to the emergence of his personality or his existence; and secondly, as free agents we can choose and change our essence at will. *Jean Paul Sartre*

I emerge alone and faced by the commotions and anxieties go forward and backward. That is what gives shape to my existence. It is I who can overcome all hurdles and provide value to my existence. Nothing other than me can give satisfaction to me. I have severed my relations with the world. I fight my own basis, that is the non-existence, which I am myself. It is my duty to bestow reality on the meaning of the world and of myself. I alone take a decision. *Principles of the Philosophy of Existentialism*

As far as 'disappointment' is concerned, that means that we confine ourselves to depending on what is within our will or within the total possibilities, which make our action possible. We sever our relations with everything else and cherish no hope. When Rene Descartes said: "Subdue yourself, not the world", he actually meant that we should work without cherishing a hope. *Sartre*

The conception of man is synonymous with a mixture of anxiety and encouragement. When a man makes a commitment and determines that by his action he is not only deciding about himself and choosing what he shall be, but is also giving a law for all mankind, at that moment he cannot avoid feeling complete and deep responsibility. *Sartre*

Those who bear such a responsibility as that of a military commander who undertakes to launch an attack, know well the anxiety with which we are concerned. *Sartre*

In respect of 'bad intention' and 'self deception', which must be avoided, Sartre says:

As the human beings are free and independent beings and they themselves invent their moral

standards, the only thing which they may be asked to do is to be loyal to their own standards and values.

The assertion that man is a free agent, necessarily means that human beings are not a plaything in the hands of gods or any power other than themselves. They have absolute freedom, and are 'released', 'independent', not interrelated and 'not interconnected'. In short, 'they axe what they axe'.

Quoting Dostoyevsky, who wrote: "If God did not exist, everything would have been permissible", Sartre says: This is the starting point of this school. Really if God does not exist, everything is permissible. Consequently man feels dejected, for he finds nothing to depend upon either within himself or outside himself.

Man is condemned to be free. I say "Condemned", because he has not created himself. Still he is free, and from the moment he is dropped into this world, he is responsible for all his actions.

In respect of the views of this school in regard to man, the following points may be deduced from what has been cited above:

(1) In contrast to other natural beings which have a definite and ready-made essence, man has no particular essence. His essence is that which he makes himself.

(2) Man is a free agent and has power of choice.

(3) No will, principle or law restricts the range of man's freedom.

(4) It is man himself who is responsible for his own making. His destiny rests exclusively on his personal choice. He is also responsible for making his social environment and bringing about changes in his natural surroundings, and that too on the basis of the principles which he formulates himself.

(5) For this very reason he is always agitated and he feels uneasy because he can have no guidance or support from outside and the choice he makes is not easy.

(6) Man feels lonely and detached from everything. As he has to depend on himself alone, he feels disappointed.

(7) The uneasiness and constructive 'disappointment' that induce him to 'action', are like everything else the outcome of his own 'action'.

As for the belief in God, it may be said that this philosophy does not necessarily amount to atheism.

Sartre says:

There are two types of the existentialists. On the one hand there are Christian existentialists, among whom I name Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, both of whom confess to be Catholics. On the other hand, there are existentialists, who are atheists, like Martin Heidegger and I. The only thing common between these two types of individuals is that they generally believe that existence of man precedes his essence.

At another place Sartre says:

In the philosophy of existentialism the conception of atheism does not involve the denial of the Creator. It only means that nothing would be upset even if the Creator did not exist. Man should himself find out and know that no means of his deliverance exist anywhere.

He again says:

If the existentialist is greatly disturbed at the idea of the non-existence of God, that is because in that case the possibility of finding 'values' in perceptible Paradise disappears totally. Further, obviously no virtue can exist, for no conscience is so perfect and infinite that it should think of every virtue. It is not written anywhere that the virtue has a definite existence and is always judged rightly.

We observe that the existentialists who hold atheistic views do so because they imagine that man can have absolute freedom only if there is no outside 'will' behind him to determine his action.

Sometimes they expressly say: Should there be a God who destines everything or at least knows everything, all future events will necessarily take place as anticipated by Him. For this reason the denial of an Almighty Creator is a logical pre-condition of the absolute freedom of man.

We propose to analyse this point while making a comparative study of Islamic and existentialist view-points.

Man from the View Point of Islam

Taking into consideration what we have already said concerning man and the range of his will and choice, we can come to certain conclusions. Here we briefly refer to some of the principles only. While doing so, we will try to touch upon the basic views of the Existentialist School in order to make clear the questions under consideration:

(1) Essence of man (what he has and what he himself should make)

Man has an inborn essence. He has a nature which is terrestrial and celestial at the same time. He has various tendencies and instincts and various capabilities and desires. But he has to develop his individual essence through his personal efforts and will. His tendencies and talents provide a ground on which he has to build his essence and decide what he should be.

(2) Human freedom and Divine destiny

Man is a free agent, but this freedom has been given to him by Allah. In the words of some contemporary writers, man is destined to be free.

No school of thought asserts that it is man himself who has given freedom to him. All agree that freedom has been given to him and imposed on him from outside. If it is so, why should we not admit that it has been bestowed on him by Allah³³ and it is a Divine gift.

It may be said that such a belief leads to predetermination, which amounts to the negation of man's freedom and his free will.

We know that according to the religious outlook, if there exists any Divine compulsion in respect of man, that compulsion is in regard to his having volition and freedom, and if there is any predetermination by Allah, that means that man should exercise his choice with consciousness and freedom. Hence divine will necessarily implies the freedom of man and not his predestination.

(3) Sphere of choice and role of guidance

We know that natural urges, Divine guidance and even environmental conditions affect man's choice and his freedom. But their role is not compelling. They only create a tendency and pave the way for taking action. It is always man's own free will which gives a definite shape to these tendencies and modifies them. It is up to him to identify the truth and take advantage of the guidance with insight. We have already said that Divine revelation is a guidance which is enlightening, instructive and helpful. It is a blessing of Allah which guides man to the right path.

(4) Man has a purpose

We have already stated that the universe has not been created without a purpose and in vain. Man and life also cannot be without a purpose. He has been created to make an evolutionary progress in all the dimensions of his existence and ultimately to make a journey towards Absolute Perfection (as we have

stated earlier).

(5) Man is responsible

It is man who is responsible to make himself and his environment. But responsible to whom?

Some schools of thought give no answer to this question, for they maintain that beyond man there is no conscious authority to question him. But in Islam there exists a responsibility and that too towards the Almighty, the Wise and the All-knowing, who will call every one to account, and recompense him.

The holy Qur'an says:

"You will indeed be questioned about what you used to do". (Surah al-Nahl, 16:93).

"By Allah! You shall indeed be called to account for what you have been forging". (Surah al-Nahl, 16:56).

"Detain them for they are to be interrogated". (Surah al-Saffat, 37: 24).

"Allah cannot be questioned as to what He does, but they will be questioned". (Surah al-Anbiya, 21:23).

Such a responsibility can produce a great effect, and may work as an incentive.

(6) Vigilance and anxiety

A man who has received training in Islamic ways, is vigilant. In other words he feels anxious and uneasy, because he is responsible for making the right choice. He is responsible for his salvation, for his well-being and for the well-being of his society. Similarly he is accountable for his fall and his decadence. Every action of his is lasting and produces a result. Therefore this anxiety and vigilance are constructive, add to his responsibility and affect his choice.

(7) Man is not without a refuge

In Islam man's free will does not mean that he has no refuge and that he has to depend on himself alone totally. He is blessed with Divine protection and favor. If he makes effort and moves in the right direction, he receives Allah's help.³⁴ He is not alone; Allah is with him.³⁵ You may say that everything is in the hand of man. If he really establishes relation with Allah, the doors of clear thinking, knowledge and

power are opened to him.³⁶ He feels encouraged *and* a spirit of new zeal is infused in him.

(8) Self-dependence, fear and hope

Islam recognizes a particular sort of `disappointment'. One must not depend on the deeds of others.³⁷ Family position, children and wealth can save none.³⁸ Everyone is self-made and has to depend on his own deeds.

Thus man is a mixture of fear and hope,³⁹ and yearning and apprehension. His fear is such that it saves him from making mistakes and falling into sin. It is not that kind of fear which may frustrate him and lead him to inertness.

His hope inspires him to good deeds and renders him neither haughty and selfish nor lazy and sluggish.

View Point of Dialectical Materialism

According to this philosophical theory it is society, which has the main importance. Man is studied only as a part of society, the laws of whose development originate from the dialectical law which is supposed to govern nature. As such, in order to be able to know the views of this philosophical school concerning man, we have to study the basic principles of dialectical materialism in regard to nature and society. Here again we first reproduce some of the views of the exponents of this school. Thereafter we shall describe the point of view of Islam in regard to them.

(1) Nature does not consist of things heaped together or events detached from each other. It is a collection of things and events which are interrelated. No natural phenomenon can be understood and studied in isolation from other natural events and their environment.

(2) Nature is not static and at rest. It is in a state of motion and continuous change. Every moment something emerges, changes and evolves, and something else is annihilated.

(3) The developmental movement of things is not a simple movement of growth. It is a development in which slight and hidden changes are suddenly and speedily transformed into open and basic qualitative changes, of inevitable and unavoidable character. The developmental movement is not a circular movement, nor is it a simple repetition of anything. It is a forward movement, and a shifting from an old qualitative state to a new qualitative state. This movement is from below to above.

(4) All things and all natural events contain an inner contradiction. The previously existing thesis comes in conflict with an antithesis produced by it. Their conflict produces a new synthesis, which in turn rises

in conflict with another antithesis that emerges from within it. Thus the way for evolution is paved. According to this theory, all developments originate from this very inner contradiction.

Now let us see what this school says about man and society and how it interprets history.

(5) Man is a material and natural being, whose brain and nervous system are more developed than those of all other animals, and because of this evolution he enjoys a better power of understanding and grasping.

It is society which has real importance. Individual man is a weak being whose efforts are confronted with failure. It is society which grants will to him. Man minus society is prone to make too many mistakes and is always in danger of utter destruction.

(6) As the material world exists independently of human perception and thinking, the material existence of man and the material life of society are more important than their intellectual life, which is only a secondary element derived from the material life. Even the perception and the thinking of the people are only a reflection of the material world.

(7) The means and methods of production constitute the life of society. At various stages of the development of society the methods of production and the appliances used in this connection differ. The people in the primitive social system have one method of production and in the slave-holding system another. Similarly in the feudal system the method and the appliances used are different.

And so on and so forth. As the methods of production change, the social system of the people, their intellectual life, their views and their political organizations also undergo a change.

(8) The main motive force of history is the change in the means and the methods of production, which brings about a contradiction with the old productive relationships. As a result of this conflict and contradiction the productive relationships are changed.

In every period of history the economic and social system which was forced by such a change, has constituted the political and intellectual history of that period. Consequently since the ownership of land displaced the primitive social system, history has been mainly a record of class war between the oppressors and the oppressed and the rulers and the ruled. It is this contradiction and conflict which brought about the various stages of the evolution of society.

(9) According to the views of this school, history comprises five periods which successively displace each other. They are the periods of:

(1) Primitive socialism, (2) Slavery, (3) Feudalism, (4) Capitalism, and lastly (5) Socialism leading to Communism

(10) In respect of the role of the new ideas in bringing about a change in society, this school says: The new social ideas and the new social theories appear only when a change in the material life of society creates new duties towards society. As the new ideas develop, they turn into a power which facilitates the discharge of the new duties and enables society to make progress. As every change is caused by contradiction, the contradiction within society should be intensified so that the solution of the problems facing society may be found. It is contradiction only that introduces new ideas and new theories which help to solve the existing problems.

Islam's approach to these questions

As for the points raised in the first four paragraphs, we have discussed them in detail in the preceding chapters of this book. Anyhow, to maintain continuity, here again we refer to them briefly:

(1) There is no doubt that there exists a definite coherence and harmony in the universe, and all the elements and phenomena of nature are minutely interrelated. That is why it is not possible to have an accurate and full knowledge of any single natural phenomenon without having a knowledge of all the elements which form it and all the causes and factors which affect it, and similarly without having a knowledge of its relationships and its evolutionary tendency.

(2) All the natural phenomena are ceaselessly and uninterruptedly in a state of motion. No material element and no natural phenomenon is static and at rest. Change and evolution, growth and decay, life and death and transformation and transfiguration are the patterns by which matter is governed.

(3) On the whole this movement is evolutionary and progressive. It is purposive, well-calculated and well-organized. Generally speaking, the net result of this movement of the world and its phenomena is growth, development, resistance against anti-evolutionary factors and utilization of positive factors for evolutionary progress and a change for the better.

(4) This motion and this transformation have certain characteristics and produce certain effects in accordance with the laws concerning matter and nature. These laws affect every material thing from within and without, and influence its relationship with other phenomena. This influence may be either in the form of contradiction and conflict or in the form of harmony and agreement, or simply in the form of preserving the existence and growth of the thing concerned.

The sum total of these laws and relationships constitutes the Divine ways, the creative design and the

judicious will of Allah. As we shall see, these Divine ways operate in nature and society ceaselessly and uninterruptedly.

Now we come to the main feature of our discussion relating to man and society. The Islamic point of view in this respect may be summarized as under: –

(5) Man is a part of nature, having material and natural characteristics. But he has reached such a stage of evolution that he has become fit for being gifted with Divine spirit and supernatural values. Consequently he has acquired the faculties of free will, knowledge and responsibility. Because of these gifts, he is not subservient to the material phenomena nor bound by the genetic relationships. In contrast, he is capable of subduing nature and bringing about changes in material relationships and natural phenomena.

(6) Man, as we know, despite his being an integral part of society, is an independent being. He is not so subservient to society that he should have no personal will, freedom and the right of choice. His conduct is not determined by society and history only, though he cannot be regarded as being apart from society.

(7) As the entire existence of man is not the direct result of the evolution of matter, his mental and intellectual life cannot be purely inspired by and derived from matter or from material and genetic relationships of society. Nevertheless, as he is embedded in matter and has emerged out of it, the natural, geographical and physical conditions and the material relationship of society are bound to affect him.

(8) The contradiction which exists within man is the outcome of the conflict between his material yearnings (human desires) and his celestial impulses (inspirations from beyond this world). As man is endowed with freedom and knowledge, he should make the best use of this contradiction, and should take steps to modify all his impulses and to guide them towards his own evolution, the betterment of his surroundings, the making of history and moving it forward.

While discussing dialectical materialism, we reproduced certain views having a direct bearing on the historical conception of this school. Hence it will be in the fitness of things to study also the Islamic conception of history and the factors which make and move it. We propose to discuss this question in a comprehensive manner.

"They fear their Lord and dread the evil consequences of the Reckoning". (Surah al-Ra'd, 13:21).

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1. "We created you from clay, then from a living germ, then from a clot of blood and then from a lump of flesh ". (Surah al-Hajj, 22:5)
 2. ". Then from it We produced anew being". (Surah al-Mo'minin, 23: 14).
 3. "He completed him and breathed His spirit into him ". (Surah al-Sajdah, 32:9).
 4. "Indeed We have honored the children of Adam and have definitely given them superiority above many of Our creatures": (Surah al-Isra, 17:70).
 5. "When I have completed him and breathed My spirit into him, then fall prostrate before him": (SurahSad, 38:72).
 6. "He taught man what he did not know ". (Surah al-Alaq, 96:5)
 7. "He taught Adam all the names, then He presented those (things) to the angels(Surahal-Baqarah, 2:31).
 8. "The earth will provide you dwelling and sustenance for an appointed time". (Surah al-A'raf, 7:24).
 9. "Adam acted contrary to the counsel of his Lord and thus he erred. Thereafter his Lord forgave him. He accepted his repentance and rightly guided him ". (Surah Taha, 20: 121 – 122).
 10. "If you all those who are on the earth prove to be ungrateful, Allah does not at all need your thanks. He is Laudable". (Surah Ibrahim, 14:8).
 11. "When your Lord said to the angels: I am appointing on earth a vicegerent": (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:30).
 12. "Have you not seen that Allah has put at your service whatever there a in the heavens and the earth". (Surah Luqman, 31:20).
 13. "He produced you from the earth and settled you there": (Surah Hud, 11:61).
 14. 'It is He who has made the earth subservient to you. So walk about in its regions and eat what Allah has produced". (Surah al-Mulk, 67: 15).
 15. "Indeed We have honored the children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea ". (Surah al-Isra, 17:70).
 16. "Does man think that he will be left unchecked". (Surah al-Qiyamah, 75:36).
 17. "Did you think We have created you in vain and that you would never be returned to Us?" (Surah al-Mo'minin, 23:115).
 18. "Indeed We have created man from the union of sperm and egg, to test him. We gave him the faculties of bearing and seeing". (Surah al-Dahr, 76:2).
 19. "By the soul and its Creator who inspired it as to what is right and what is wrong for it". (Surah al-Shams, 91:7 – 8).
 20. "Follow the dictates of (true) human nature as created by Allah. Allah's creation is not to be changed. This is surely the upright religion". (Surah al-Rum, 30:30).
 21. "We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it. And man undertook to bear it ". (Surahal-Ahzab, 33:72)
 22. "Follow the dictates of (true) human nature as created by Allah": (Surahal-Rum, 30:30).

"Surely man was created restless". (Surah al-Ma'arij, 70: 19).

"Alluring for people is the love of the joys that come from women, sons, hoarded heaps of gold and silver, horses of mark, cattle and plantations ". (Surah Ale Imran 3 : 14).

"He is passionate in his love for wealth ". (Surah al-Adiyat, 100: 8).

23. "Look! Indeed man rebels, when he considers himself to be independent and self sufficient". (Surah al-Alaq, 96:5 – 6).
24. "Judge rightly between people and do not follow your own caprices, which will deviate you from the path of Allah". (SurahSad, 38:26).
25. "If we give him a taste of affluence after adversity that had befallen, he says: My bad days are over, and becomes proud and insolent; except those who are steadfast and do good deeds ". (SurahHud, 11: 10).
26. "This is the punishment of which Allah warns His slaves. Therefore, my slaves! Have fear of Me". (Surah al-Zumar, 39:16).
27. "The prosperous is he who purified himself". (Surah al-A'la, 87: 14).
28. "Those who are saved from their own greed, shall surely be prosperous". (Surah al-Hashr, 59:9).
29. "Worship Allah, and do good so that you may prosper". (Surah al-Hajj, 22:77).

30. `Prosperous indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers, who keep themselves aloof from what is absurd ' (Surah Mo'minun, 23:1 – 11).
31. Believers, have patience, help each other with patience, establish good relations with one another and have fear of Allah so that you may prosper". (Surah Ale Imran, 3 :200).
32. ` They call to virtue, exhort to what is good and restrain from evil. It is such people who shall prosper". (Surah Ale Imran, 3:104).
33. "We offered our Trust ". (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:72).
34. "As for those who strive for Our cause We will definitely guide them to Our paths' : (Surah al-Ankabut, 29:69).
35. "We are closer to him than his jugular vein ". (Surah Qaf, 50:16).
36. "Do not lose heart and do not grieve, for you shall have true dignity, provided you are believers ". (Surah Ale Imran, 3 :139).
37. "No one shall bear the burden of someone else". (Surah al-Fatir, 35:18).
38. "The Day when wealth and sons will be of no use; and only he who brings a sound heart to Allah (will be profited by it) ". (Surah al-Shu'ra, 26:89).
39. "None but the disbelieving people despair of His mercy". (Surah Yusuf, 12:87).
- `My slaves! You have nothing to fear or regret today". (Surah al-Zukhruf, 43:68).
- "Who forsake their beds to pray to their Lord in fear and hopes". (Surah al-Sajdah, 32:16).

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