

Analysis of Social Elements 2

Society consists of three elements: Men, nature and the social relations which influence the course of history. In the previous lectures we spoke about man and his basic role in historical field. We also spoke about nature and discussed its characteristics. Now we propose to discuss the social relations so that we may know our position in regard to these relations vis-à-vis what we deduced from the Qur'an in respect of the role of man and nature on the stage of history.

We have already made some comments on this third element, namely the social relations and social ties. Social relations include two kinds of contacts, one being man's contact with nature and the other man's contact with his fellow beings. These are two different and comparatively independent lines of relationship, their reciprocal impact on each other being almost insignificant, as we shall explain.

These two lines are not identical. Each of them is comparatively independent and corresponds to the solution presented in case of each problem.

The first line represents man's contact with nature. Man tries to exploit the natural resources. He wants to bring nature under his control so that he may meet the needs of his life. Here he faces a big problem which we may call the problem of contradiction between man and nature. In other words, nature takes a stand against man and does not respond to his needs. Consequently a clash between man and nature takes place. Nature shows might and does not obey men.

This contradiction between man and nature is the biggest problem of this line. The solution of this problem lies in acting according to a law of nature which is an important norm of history. This law is the law of reciprocal effect between practice and skill. As man's ignorance about nature diminishes and his knowledge of its language and laws increases, proportionately his control over nature to meet his needs, is enhanced. As with more practice he acquires more skill, he makes many new discoveries.

The law of reciprocal effect between practice and skill being a sound law, can undertake to resolve this contradiction. Hence the solution of the problem of contradiction between man and nature can safely be left to this law.

In other words it may be said that the more man's ignorance about nature diminishes and the more his acquaintance with it increases as the result of practical experiments, the more fresh skill is gained by him.

The fresh skill thus acquired awards man a power of controlling nature in new fields and with further practice and experiences in new fields, he again acquires more fresh skill. This process continues so long as no unexpected accident occurs to disturb man's relation with nature. The expansion and practical application of this law gradually resolves the problem of contradiction between man and nature.

Therefore it may be said that from historical and realistic point of view this problem stands resolved. Perhaps the under mentioned Qur'anic verse is meant to refer to this very solution:

And he gives you of all you ask of Him, and if you would count the bounty of Allah, you cannot reckon it. (Surah Ibrahim 14:34)

In this verse asking is not meant to mean any verbal prayer, for this verse refers to all men without any distinction. It does not make any difference between the believers who pray to Allah and the disbelievers who do not. It is also a known fact that it is not always necessary that one gets all that one prays for. There is no doubt that every prayer is heard, but that does not mean that all that is asked is granted. Yet in this verse Allah says:

He gives you all you ask of Him.

In other words, in this verse a practical response to every request has been promised. Most probably, the request mentioned in this verse relates to all men over history, during all times, past, present and future. This request lies in man's creational scheme and applies over history to the law of reciprocal effect between practice and skill. As such this verse shows how the problem ensuing from man's contact with nature is to be resolved.

Basic Contradiction in Man's Existence

In the case of the second line, that is man's contact with his fellow human being, like two brothers, in various social fields including such cases as the distribution of wealth and the clash of different human cultures, we are confronted with another problem. This time the problem is not that of contradiction between man and nature, but is that of contradiction between man and his fellow beings.

This contradiction between men in various social fields has many forms and many names but basically it is a contradiction between the strong and the weak, between the powerful and the powerless. When a powerful being is unable to resolve his own contradiction, that is his inner conflict, his obsession will before long appear in the form of a social contradiction, which may take any shape or form and may be tagged with any law or cultural usage yet in the final analysis will be same form of contradiction between the strong and the weak.

It does not make any difference if sometimes the strong is an individual by the name of Pharaoh, sometimes a class and sometimes a community or a nation. All these are various forms of contradiction and the ruling spirit in each case is that of conflict and exploitation. In each case there is a clash between a weak individual and a strong man whose inner conflict and contradiction has remained unresolved and who consequently tries to exploit a weak individual to satisfy his own vanity.

We observe various forms of social contradiction along the line of man's contact with his fellow man, yet the spirit in each case is the same, and all contradictions spring, as we have just said, from one basic contradiction, that is man's inner conflict or the contradiction between a handful of clay and a flash of the desire to meet Allah. So long as one of these two tendencies does not completely suppress the other tendency, the contradiction will continue to exist in all circumstances.

Although both these tendencies are always present, yet one of them is usually predominant according to the actual condition of society and according to the level of the thinking and general education of the individual concerned.

The viewpoint of Islam in regard to the problem of human relations is very vast and deep. No form of contradiction has been ignored by it. It takes into consideration all forms of contradiction, analyses them fully and finds out their common spirit. So it has linked all contradictions to a more deep-rooted contradiction, that is man's own inner conflict.

That is why Islam believes that one mission alone can solve the whole problem of human relations. It can simultaneously work on two levels. It can strive in the historical field to remove social contradictions and at the same time or even before it and after it, can resolve man's inner conflict. Thus it can dry up the social contradictions at their very source.

Islam believes that if we leave the source of inner conflict unattended and try to resolve outward social contradictions with the help of some laws and their interpretations, we will be attending to only one half of the problem. The other half, that is the crystallization of the inner conflict, if left unattended, will soon give rise to some other forms of the same contradiction which we have tried to exterminate.

Therefore a mission which wants to propose a realistic solution of this problem, while doing so must take into consideration both the inner and outer levels, and believe that to resolve the problem finally it is necessary to carry out the struggle on both the levels. The struggle which is carried out to remove inner conflict and purify the heart is called by Islam major Jihad.

The other type of jihad is that which is carried out to do away with every form of social contradiction and to put an end to the exploitation of the weak by the strong. Instead of confining our struggle to any one form of exploitation we should try to remove the root cause which is common to all acts of exploitation.

Short-sightedness of Marx

This is the viewpoint the correctness of which has been proved by human experience over history. In contrast to it, is how the materialistic revolutionaries interpret the social contradiction or the social conflict.

Because of his being a European Marx with all his super intelligence could not go a step further than the limits of the views held by the ordinary Europeans, to whose popular view he considered himself to be indebted. The Europeans think that the world ends where Europe or rather the West ends. Their view in this respect is similar to that of the Jews who maintain that they alone represented the entire humanity. They used to say:

What have we to do with the ordinary people (of Makkah or Hijaz). (Surah Ale Imran, 3:75)

The Jews meant that the Arab of Hijaz had no importance. Similarly in the eyes of the Europeans the world is confined to Europe or rather the West. Marx has not been able to set himself free from the European way of thinking, nor could he rescue himself from the pressure of the class factor which plays an important role in his theory of historical materialism. Influenced by this cheap theory he has made a comparatively limited interpretation of the contradiction faced by man.

According to him all human contradictions boil down to just one contradiction, that is class contradiction or class conflict, existing between a class that owns all or most of the production instruments and another class that does not own them and works for the interests of the former class and depends on it for the use of the production instruments.

When wealth is produced through the sweat of the brow of an exploited worker, it is grabbed by the class that owns the production instruments and the other class gets only a very meagre amount that is only enough to guarantee the continued living of this class so that it may continue to work for the former class. That is the class conflict which, according to Marx, is the basis of every other conflict and contradiction.

This class conflict from social point of view is the outcome of class war between the proprietor class and the worker class. The clash between these two classes grows in intensity with the development of the production instruments and the progress and complexity of the industrial means, for with the development of the production instruments the standard of life comes down and that gives the capitalist class an excuse to lower the wages of the worker.

As we know, the capitalists try not to give the workers more than that on which they can subsist. As production instruments develop and the living expenses come down, the capitalist on the one hand tries to reduce the wages of the workers, and on the other, with the development of the production instruments he gets an opportunity to reduce number of workers gradually and extract more work from a

lesser number of them, for an improved industrial instruments can do the job of many workers.

Accordingly the capitalists retrench the surplus workers with the result that the conflict and differences between the two classes grow to the extent that they ultimately culminate in a revolution and an explosion.

This revolution is mainly brought about by the working class, which will ultimately put an end to the class conflict and succeed in converting whole society into a unified classless unit, all members of which will form one class only. Only then all contradictions will be eliminated, for the basis of every contradiction is the class contradiction. When this contradiction will vanish, other secondary contradictions will also disappear.

This is a very brief summary of the viewpoint of the materialistic revolutionaries regarding the contradiction or conflict, the solution of which we are seeking. It may be mentioned that this limited and short-sighted theory does not correspond with the reality, nor does it tally with the historical facts.

Actually the factor which brings about historical events is neither the class contradiction nor the development of the tools of production. In fact it is man, the maker of the tools, who brings about historical events. As for contradiction the European man himself is extensively responsible for it.

The production instruments never set up a capitalist system. It was the European man who when production instruments fell into his hand, established this system to put his own values of life into practice. It is also to be noted that the class contradiction is not the only form of social contradiction.

Several other forms of contradiction in the social field also do exist. The class contradiction is not even the most important of these forms. In fact all these contradictions in the social field are the products of a basic conflict in man himself involving a hidden tussle in his inner content which regularly and ceaselessly appears in different forms of contradiction.

Now let us draw a comparison between the short-sighted view of the materialists and the reality shown by human experience, and find out which of the above mentioned two theories more corresponds with the world in which we live, so that we may know what future developments we can expect.

Should the theory of the materialists and their interpretation of all contradictions as the class contradiction be correct, would we not be justified in expecting that the class contradiction and conflict between the capitalists and the workers in the industrial societies of Europe having well developed industrial tools, would be going up day by day?

Should we suppose that in industrial societies like those of England, America, France and Germany class contradiction has greatly gone up and class conflict is growing in intensity day by day? If that were so, the exploiting system of these countries should be decaying progressively and should be on the verge of collapse and annihilation, for the wealth of the exploiting capitalist class of America, England,

France, etc is growing.

We were waiting for such a development and expecting that the difficulties of the capitalist countries would grow, the European and the American workers would come to believe in the necessity of a revolution and would regard it as the only way of resolving class conflict. This was the right conclusion, had the Marxist idea of the interpretation of contradiction been correct. But what has happened in history proves direct to the contrary.

Unfortunately we see that the capitalist system in the capitalist countries is being more and more firmly established day by day and there are no signs of its early collapse. All the sweet hopes of our materialist revolutionaries that because of the development of production instruments and industrialization of these countries a revolution would hit England and other industrial countries of Europe, have come to naught.

Against all these predictions revolution has taken place in such countries as Czarist Russia and China where production instruments had not developed, industrialization had not taken place and where no class contradiction as defined by Marx existed or should have existed.

On the other hand the position of the workers in the industrialized countries did not diminish. Actually their income increased, they got more advantages and comforts, and their importance grew in the eyes of the exploiting capitalists.

The income of an ordinary American worker is far more than that of any manual worker in any socialist country. The position of workers in the capitalist countries has tremendously improved. The workers and their representatives have organized themselves on semi-democratic lines. They have gained political importance. They neither think of a revolution, nor do they accept its logic. They live hand in glove with the capitalists and believe in obtaining their rights through their representatives and the parliament.

According to our thinking all this has happened in a very short time. Then how has it happened? Was Marx too suspicious of the capitalist exploiters and for that reason he made such predictions, which proved false, without a single one of them having come true even by chance? Was it a sort of mistrust on the part of Marx in these exploiters? Have the capitalists ever been afraid of Marx, Marxism or the liberation movements of the world? Have they condescended to allow a part of their income to pass to the workers because they were afraid of the workers' revolt against them? Has the American millionaire any apprehensions in this respect.

Even the most optimist of those who look forward to a revolution cannot expect a real revolution in America against oppression earlier than a hundred years henceforth. Then how can it be believed that the American millionaires have any apparition of fear before them because of which they have surrendered a part of their profits? Or alternatively can we believe that the American capitalists have become pious all of a sudden?

Have their hearts been filled with the light of Islam like the Muslims of the early period of Islam who did

not recognize any limits for their cooperation, tolerance and equality with other people and shared the booty gained by them with their Muslim brethren?

Have the capitalists of the west embraced Islam or has their hearts been converted into that of the Muslims? None of these things has happened. Karl Marx was not too suspicious of the capitalists. He held a correct opinion about them. Neither had any fear of the workers gripped the hearts of the capitalists and forced them to surrender a part of their profits to the workers in order to quieten them, nor has the heart of the capitalists been shaken by piety and fear of God. They are not aware of piety and so long as they are absorbed in their pleasures and passions, they will never be.

Then what has happened and how should the happenings of everyday be interpreted? Actually what has happened is the result of another contradiction which from the beginning has accompanied the class contradiction but Marx and his comrades failed to discover it.

They could only know the contradiction that existed between the American millionaire and the American worker and that existed between the British capitalist and the British worker. But they ignored the bigger contradiction resulting from the conflict and clash between the Europeans and the non-Europeans.

This contradiction, the symbol of which the European himself is, conceals class contradiction and holds its operation in abeyance for a considerably long time. What is the nature of this contradiction? We believe that with a cursory glance we can see this contradiction and put our finger on it, for we do not believe that class contradiction is the only form of contradiction.

As we have said, man's inner conflict constantly continues to create new forms of contradiction. There are some forms of it in which American or European capitalism plays no part. There are still other forms in which sometimes the capitalists and the workers or the oppressors and the oppressed join hands to become a party of the contradiction.

In this case they forget all their differences and join together to create a contradiction far bigger than all the contradictions which have existed from the beginning of history until now. Now the question is that if the capitalists and the workers of the West form one party to this contradiction, where is the other party?

The other party are we and you, that is the poor countries of the world, known today as the third world, that is the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. These countries form the second pole of this contradiction.

Both the social classes of Europe have agreed to extend their battlefield to the poor countries and to exploit them. They have conspired to create the biggest contradiction. This contradiction has many colonial forms. It begins when the European or the American sets out from his country to explore the underground minerals all over the world in order to snatch the wealth of the poor nations of various countries.

This contradiction counteracts the class contradiction and even nullifies it, for all classes get equal interest in grabbing this wealth. The whole or at least the greater part of the immense riches in the hands of the capitalist class of the capitalist countries comes as the war booty obtained through the raids of the white men in the poor countries. The immense affluence enjoyed by the Western countries is not the result of the sweat of the European worker's brow, nor is the result of the class conflict between the capitalist and the worker.

This immense affluence is due to the oil of Asia and Latin America, to the diamonds of Tanzania, to the iron ore, tin, copper and uranium of the various African countries, to the cotton of Egypt, to the tobacco of Lebanon and to the wine of Algeria. Yes, the wine of Algeria, for the colonial non-Muslim power which colonized Algeria converted all its lands into vineyards so that wine might be produced from their grapes.

This wine was supplied to the workers also to win their hearts by intoxicating them in order to persuade them to cooperate with the capitalists. The Algerian were allowed to drink Algerian wine and pluck grapes. They are nice things, but obtained from the sources mentioned by us. From these sources they got intoxicated by the Algerian wine.

Thus the bigger contradiction that exists between the two classes of the capitalist countries on the one hand and the poor countries on the other. This contradiction has superseded class contradiction in the western world, and brought it to a standstill.

In these circumstances the European and the American capitalists deemed it advisable to grant to their workers a part of the booty they seized by plundering you and me, that is the poor and the weak of the world. They agreed that they and their workers both should enjoy the wine of Algeria and both should bedeck their wives with the diamonds from Tanzania.

So we see that as predicted by Marx the life style of the worker has improved. But this change is neither due to the generosity and broadmindedness of the European and the American capitalist nor to his piety, but is due to his feeling that out of his big booty he should give some share, a very small share, to the European and the American worker also to keep him satisfied.

History has recorded only that contradiction which has always existed. This should not lead us to think that there is only one form of social contradiction. It has many forms, but all of them spring from one basic source, which is man's inner conflict, which produces varied forms of contradiction. If man gets rid of one form, he may fall prey to another form.

Therefore we should not confine contradiction to the class contradiction between the haves and the have nots. However, if we succeed in resolving this basic contradiction all other contradictions will be resolved automatically. Though social contradictions are innumerable, they all amount to the exploitation of the weak by the strong.

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