(In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful)

ISLAM or MARXISM?

BY

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ECONOMIC NEEDS

SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE

In attempting to solve problems, a start is often made at the wrong end of things. All factors that exist in the outside world are taken into consideration, but the most potent of all factors, the one that lies within our own selves, is invariably ignored. It is difficult to say whether it is just an oversight or a deliberate evasion of a task which appears insuperably hard. Whatever it be, there is little doubt that it is overlooking a factor which is the most essential of all. Economic needs there undoubtedly are and we appreciate the tacit belief of our communist friends that there is enough in the world for every one to be satisfied with. In a way, it is believing in a wise providence. But there is certainly a world of difference between genuine need and greed. The one can be
satisfied but not the other. And so it is our firm belief that all attempts at an equitable and satisfying distribution of life's provision must be frustrated so long as the greed in man remains uneradicated. If you analyse jealousy, the basic element in class war, you will find it nothing but a kind of uneasiness arising out of a sense of scantiness of one's provision. This sense, of course is awakened in man through a comparison with the possessions of others, but its source lies within his own self. And this sense of scantiness should not be regarded a limited or a conditional thing. Left to itself, it brooks no limitation and suffers no condition. Lack of self-culture has produced a class of people in our modern civilization who are jealous almost of every one. They are jealous not only of those who are better than themselves but also of those who are on the same level with themselves. So even if a complete equality of possession and amenities be brought about—a consummation still an elusive dream—the feeling of
jealousy, from a psychological calculation, will be rampant all the same. Nay, if we go deeper we may discover that it is the very same feeling that causes what we call the exploitation of the weak and the simple-minded by the strong and the resourceful. The spirit of grabbing is only the ugliest form of jealousy. The velocity of what is called struggle for existence, accelerated beyond a certain point, makes one feel jealous of the very existence of others. To such a perverted man the only justification for any other person’s existence is the latter’s abject subservience to his own existence and comfort and power. So the root cause of all injustices and iniquities is this feeling of jealousy which again has its source in the greed of the human mind. This does not mean that man is by nature greedy. Greed is only a perverted form of the urge of acquisition and love of possession. In its original uncourrupted form it is the mother of all earnings, enterprises, and inventions. It is the indiscriminate and unregulated exercise of this faculty that produces greed. The true urge for ac-
acquisition is judicious. It knows what things can be acquired without disturbing the social peace as also what is really useful to himself and to others. And if it fails in its objective it feels neither any dejection nor any annoyance. Whereas greed is rash and desperate and when baffled it becomes either down-hearted or furious. Preponderance of greed in a man or a society shows that there is lack of guidance or training in the exercise of this very fundamental and beneficial urge of the human mind. It makes the individual or the society not only unfit to earn fairly but also a stranger to the art of spending. The needed training in this respect can be provided by religion alone. One need enter a sound religious system to prevent the wholesome faculty of acquisition from turning into greed. The system of Islam had a very successful experiment carried out in this respect at the hand of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

Islam created a society of people who not only scrupulously maintained in the course of their economic activities, the distinction between
what is lawful and wholesome and what is not but also were "neither extravagant nor parsimonious and (kept) between these the just mean". By a persistent self-culture described in the words:

And the servants of the Beneficent God are they who walk on the earth in humbleness, and when the ignorant address them they say "peace"!

And they who pass their night prostrating themselves before their Lord and standing they had freed their minds from the contamination of greed. They were a people of vigorous action, self-reliant and enterprising, a fact which shows that they had a keen sense of economic needs. But they were neither marauders nor pirates nor imperialists, because they successfully banished all greed from their minds. In other words, they were aware of the distinction between a true sense of need and the false craving called greed. Guided by the prophetic genius of their master they realised that the subjective aspect of man's economic life was even

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more important than the objective one. And if we of this age, with all our sincerity, leave this fact out of consideration and confuse genuine need with the greed of man, we shall never satisfy his economic needs and banish either individual or class jealousy. There can, then, be no peace on this score anywhere at any time in the world.

To be clear, the sense of need in an imaginative mind is more often a mental phenomenon than a physical fact. It hardly needs any pointing out that civilized existence makes one aware of ever newer "needs" and lack of a corresponding moral culture aggravates this awareness to a degree that if one man is given the wealth and comfort of the whole world, to the exclusion of all others, one will still need more. The most sensible attitude should, therefore, be to be satisfied with the actual necessities of physical existence and, if anything more, whatever may fall to one's lot without much craving for it. But this needs a self-culture, that comes only through devotional practices. It
is only through such a culture that a man can confine his sense of need to the things actually needed for his physical existence and to what may come to him without being jealous of others. It is to this moral attainment that the Holy Qur-án refers when it says:

And whoever is saved from the greediness of his soul these it is that are the successful. 1

It is exactly here that our economists have blundered. In the beginning of their speculations they just evaded this subjective aspect of economic needs. But as they proceeded in formulating their theories they came positively to repudiate the claim of inner culture on the peaceful settlement of the economic demands of man. The result is before us. The economic classes are engaged in a war of mutual annihilation. Not able either to hide or avert this unpleasant fact these economists and social thinkers have come forward to console us by their specious dictum that this

1 The Holy Qur-án 64:16.
horrible state of things is a necessary stage in the social evolution of mankind, as if burning hatred from both sides has by itself ever given birth to love and amity between two contending parties. A more depressing and helpless philosophy cannot be imagined. Possibly it is a logical conclusion to the theory of “the survival of the fittest” deduced from a mal-observation of the animal world. Man is but too apt to read facts in the light of his own predilections. Civilized humanity, however, is getting tired of these “theories,” advanced as principles of social action. It is coming gradually to realise that it is not for the scientists and economists to adumbrate rules of social behaviour and that a higher type of people is needed to handle this rather delicate and responsible task. It is dawning on thinking humanity that questions of social relationships can be properly solved by leaders who have an understanding of the power of the mind over matter. It is being increasingly appreciated now that the so-called needs of man are more often unreal than real
and that they can be considerably reduced by a suitable culture of the mind. Such a reduction, if it comes to be accomplished, will not only facilitate an equitable distribution of wealth but also give man that inner happiness which he actually seeks through his passionate pursuit of worldly comfort and possession. Given a correct vision of the subjective aspect of our economic needs, we shall be able to distinguish between the real needs and the artificial ones, as also between the right means of their satisfaction and the wrong ones. The effort for the supply of real needs to every one born of human parents is undoubtedly a praiseworthy one. But unless due attention is paid to the subjective aspect of the question, artificial needs unleashing the unbounded greed of man will defeat the very object of this noble effort. As we have already remarked, it is the uncontrolled greed in man that lies as the root of all exploitation. If, therefore, we are able to create a standard of culture that makes it dishonourable to give expression to the weakness of greed in man, we shall have stopped
the tyranny of exploitation at its origin. Neither is it an impossible task to attempt. All prophets,—the founders of religion—have attempted it and have succeeded in their attempts. It is all a question of determination and a vigorous action on such a determination. It is, moreover, the only correct way to achieve the object in view.

Unfortunately the rules of our current civilization not only condone the exhibition of greed but even regard it as quite decent to arouse and excite greed in others under cover of art, entertainment, business propaganda and the like. We all own and even admire misguided people who misguide a whole world by an appeal to its fancy for economic needs. We concede that in the course of this avalanche of debasing propaganda, certain things are introduced in the everyday life of man, which are truly beneficial to him and have accordingly a really economic value. But their proportion is ever so small compared to those numerous other things of which the value lies only in the fancy
of man. As a matter of fact, it may be truly said that a modern man is overwhelmed with his sense of "needs" thanks to the insidious and licensed propaganda of those who control and manage our civilized life through thoughts and suggestions as much as through manufacture. And while this state of things continues to exist, we in our simplicity still hope to bring satisfaction to the mind of man in respect of his economic needs through outside regulation and management of things. Surely this is nothing better than running after the will-o’-the-wisp.

Analyse a modern mind and it will be found to consist principally of two things: (1) An extreme dissatisfaction with life owing to unfulfilled "economic needs"; and (2) a dread of poverty, in the sense of the lowering of the standard of life.

Whether at any time in the future, the state will be in a position to enforce the rule "to each according to his needs" is yet a question of speculation. Far from approaching that ideal
state of things, we find a contrary tendency in states that profess a faith in this ideal. The reason is not far to seek. To ascertain individual needs in all their details is a task too stupendous to be undertaken by a human state at any time in history.

And unless and until this ideal is attained, the external arrangements cannot bring any relief to the mind of man on these two scores if the collective mind of society is not instructed to look down upon any expression of or any appeal to the greed in man. In the absence of this training the raging dissatisfaction on the basis of fancied economic needs together with the dread of poverty will paralyse the urge of civilized existence and letting loose anti-social feelings in the minds of men will disrupt even social life itself. Rightly has the Holy Qur-án called the latter disease, i.e., dread of poverty, the work of the devil:

*The devil threatens you with poverty.*

Indeed, if the chief function of the devil is to

1 The Holy Qur-án 2: 269.
jeopardise the prospect of man through wrong suggestions, this dread of poverty must be regarded as the most potent of its weapons in accomplishing its object in these days. This dread chases a modern man all throughout his life and haunts his mind perpetually like the proverbial sword of Damocles. It paralyses all his energy for good and noble deeds. It makes him self-centred and cowardly. Above all, it makes him dissatisfied with his fellow beings and even with his own self. And what is poverty to the vast majority of these people? It is mostly a fall in the existing standard of living. What a boon of our much vaunted civilization! Indeed, we have mistaken the weed for the plant and are frightened by a ghost of our own creation. It is obvious, that freedom from this false fear will make mankind healthier economically as well as morally. It will be ridding humanity of an evil spirit, so to speak. But this cannot be accomplished but through a sound religious culture of the mind.
II

RELIGION AND CLASS WAR

One may agree or differ with the view that the history of social humanity, as known to us, is a history of class war or class struggle, but there is no denying the fact that class antagonism exists in an acute form in the present-day society. The hatred and ill-feeling between different economic classes have assumed fearful proportions. And when it is said that class antagonism is a very old story, it really means no more than that material comforts have a great attraction for men and that it affords a strong ground for mutual jealousies. It would be equally true to say that sex also furnishes a strong ground for jealousy. The stories of Helen of Troy, of Cleopatra, of Sita, or of Draupadi, are repeated every day in different forms. The police records will disclose the exact proportion between the wealth-crimes and sex-crimes. The one may be more fundamental and universal an urge
than the other, but they both lead to jealousy and bad blood. Absolute equality of worldly possessions, in spite of relentless wars, both class and international, still remains a distant ideal. It cannot be denied that the basis of class war exists today as it did centuries ago, and, for all we know, it may continue to exist for all times to come. But this does not mean that the relationship between the classes will or should continue to be of the same bitter nature as we witness to-day. Things must improve if humanity is not to experience a social cataclysm. Jealousy and class hatred will raise its head here and there, in every case of human possession and assertion, but they ought to be kept submerged beneath a higher and better feeling, and should be controlled by a more refined standard of the values of things. No sane person can assert that the materialistic tendency can ever be altogether eliminated from human nature and hence the view that jealousy and class struggle on this score is as old as the historical man is correct in its own way. We
are prepared to go further and say that it is as old as man himself—even the primitive man—who lived in supposedly small communistic groups. In spite of all this it would be incorrect to say that this is the only tendency working in the social life of man. Concurrently with this tendency is the idealistic tendency in man which curbs its fury by a sublime diversion. It has been the role of religion to keep this idealistic tendency alive in man. And it is only when religion has failed to play its part efficiently that the other tendency becomes predominant and gives one the impression that it is the only and the most basic tendency in man. It must be recognised that efficiency and talent has a value of its own. In the absence of a higher standard it demands a material valuation. An efficient man, a talented person, a high-thinking personage, would demand a "good living" as we call it—one may say "high living." But analysing the nature of man one can see that he does not necessarily want this kind of valuation. He derives greater satisfaction from less concrete
valuation of his gifts. He may as well feel satisfied with such an abstract thing as honour and esteem. As a matter of fact, man has been found to give away his material possession to see such an abstract return for his service. Indeed, even to-day, when materialism reigns supreme, there does not appear to be anything possessed by man more valuable than his honour. The highest security that a man can give to his fellow being is his "word of honour." In a society artificially built, such as our modern society is, honour seems to be indissolubly connected with material possession. We honour a man only when he happens to have an appreciable possession of material wealth. But it is so because there is no device in our days to detach honour from material wealth. This task of detachment has always rested with the people of religion. It is the religious leaders that, possessing a high vision of things and able to maintain an abstract measure of valuation, set an example of how high efficiency and high thinking can be maintained in the midst of
material simplicity. They embrace what is called poverty in popular parlance but it is a self-imposed one. The communistic programme aims at evolving this type of man, but has so far failed in creating this class. A man of this type is extremely efficient and deserve highest material return, but he exchanges it for an abstract prize—the esteem and regard of people. Through him the centre of honour is shifted from affluence to asceticism, from the aristocracy and the bourgeois to the proletarian quarters. It is with reference to this self-imposed poverty that the Holy Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: "Poverty is my pride." Yes, one who has experienced this kind of poverty, is undoubtedly proud of it. But to create such a valuation of efficiency in one's mind and have it established in, and recognised by, the society, one needs a higher kind of culture which religion alone can provide. And as a point of fact religion in all ages has provided this culture. It is only when the religious culture has waned in a particular society and its religious teachers
have themselves fallen victims to the general worldly standards of valuation, that the society is left with this as the sole standard. Then a keen competition for material possession, and consequent jealousy, becomes the order of the day. Having no example of high thinking and plain living, people vie with one another in high living on the slightest pretext of efficiency, or, even without any such pretext, not only because high living is enjoyable in itself but more so because it is the only, though artificial, criterion of honour and respectability in society. Christianity has suffered this fate. From early times in its history the Christian clergy has been betraying a weakness for worldly power and possession. The continuous struggle of the Church with the State, the Pope’s love of power, the Church’s anxiety for worldly possession, are all matters of history. Not once do we find during this period the clergy establishing their supremacy on pure spiritual grounds. With the separation of the Church from the State, the political ambi-
tions of the clergy were all dashed to the ground. But the money greed continued and the clergy found its melancholy satisfaction in the fact that they were classed with the aristocracy everywhere. They discarded their real role of combining the mental vigour, and moral refinement of the ideal bourgeois with the material surrounding of the natural proletariat. Had they stuck to their allotted position they would not only have been a consolation and an encouragement to the "have nots" but would also been a whip for the "haves." By creating an abstract standard of honour, they could have minimised the honour and prestige of the people of wealth. The jealousy between the economic classes could thus have been prevented from assuming any fearful proportions. But the weakness of the flesh, deplored by Master, prevented the Christian clergy from playing their part faithfully. They failed in their mission and would not allow their flock to come in contact with another religious tradition that could remove these drawbacks. The history
of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and his Successors in spiritual office, was shut out from the knowledge of Christian nations. No wonder, the laymen in Christendom should develop a system of society that “has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with revent awe......has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourer, has torn away from the family its sentimental veil and has reduced the family relation to mere money-relation.”

For all these outrageous changes in man’s social psychology, the entire responsibility rests with the priestly class. They were expected to rise above the money value of things and set a standard of moral values for the people at large. But they themselves became victims of the “money value” and the whole structure of society was inevitably reduced to this despicable depth. Material possession thus became the sole standard of man’s honour and class-war

1 The Communist Manifesto.
became inevitable.

What then is the remedy? Is it to fan the flame of class-war, as is proposed by Marxism, and thus to annihilate the bourgeois by force? Let sane humanity give some thought to the question before plunging headlong into any action.

Let us remember that efficiency must have its price, and economical living, the true basis of capital, must have its reward. When nature has gifted a man with a talent, does it befit man or even lie properly in his power to deny him the credit for it? Indeed, to deny it will be to upset the order of nature. Then if you do not reward thrift, you will be penalising a virtue, which, apart from its moral values, is the only safety-valve in man’s grim struggle for existence.

Give unskilled labourer his human rights, and maintain him in his human dignity by all means. Rather give a virtuous labourer more respect and honour than to a skilled but unscrupulous labourer. But still the skilled labourer must have his due and thrifty worker must have
his reward.

Let us not be frightened by the fact that capital has led to Capitalism with all its current evils. The tragedy of Capitalism is no fault of capital as such or of thrift out of which it grows. It is rather due to a lack of proper guidance in the accumulation of capital and its use in trade and commerce. If Europe had adopted Islam as a code of social conduct when it took to large-scale production and international distribution, this calamity would never have befallen humanity. We should not forget that suppression of any tendency by violence, has never succeeded in the world; it has always fostered animosity and suppressed rage bursting out into a counter fury.

The remedy, therefore, does not lie in this direction. Efficiency, talent and economical living must be rewarded in some way or other. For an ordinary man with no higher vision of things, money or worldly possession can be the only measure of such a reward. But the matter should not be left there. Let religion do its
work and create a value higher and truer than the material. Let civilized humanity be introduced to a religion which has a living tradition for creating such a value, a religion of which the leaders have always been proud of their altruistic and self-imposed poverty—meaning extreme simplicity of living, in spite of their extraordinary talents and the capability of producing enormous wealth. In other words, let the tradition of Islam be widely known to Europe.

Nor would we be confused to find this class struggle as a recurring phenomenon in history. This repetition merely establishes that Divine intervention in human affairs is a recurring need of humanity. This feature of history can confuse only those who believe that Divine Will has ceased to be revealed after a certain point in history. Muslims believe in a God Who is never indifferent to human affairs and repeats His guidance from age to age. Thus, so long as the effect of one guidance continues, struggle of the classes is kept within its bounds. Classes do exist, as they must. The less fortunate do
feel uneasy. The more fortunate do exhibit some arrogance as it is natural for them to do. But the higher values of life created by religion do not allow this uneasiness and this arrogance to break all bounds of moral consideration. These feelings are controlled and checked together with other passions of men, in the interest of ordered social life and the common interest of humanity. A time comes, however, when the religious inspiration received through one revealed guidance ebbs in a particular society. The teachers of religion themselves become wordly-minded. Greed and avarice sway their minds as much as those of other people. The society is thus left with only one standard whereby to judge a man's worth and honour, the standard of material possessions! When such a state of things prevails, the antagonism between the classes naturally becomes acute. The higher class becomes more wealth-conscious and the lower more jealous. But all that such a situation indicates is that a fresh intervention of God has become necessary to re-establish the discarded
moral values of things, as a sublime diversion from the raging competition in the field of money possessions. Believers in the providential care of God look for and do find this Divine intervention coming at the proper moment, and illuminate their souls with the light thus provided. The rest of the world turns to it only after prolonged and painful experiences in other directions.

It has also been suggested that a kind of evolution is noticed in this class-struggle, that it does not appear in the same hue and colour at every fresh appearance, that classes show a steady progressiveness with the progress of history. This again will confuse such people of religion as do not believe in the evolution of human social relationship. Islam believes in such an evolution. Islam inculcates that from the Patriarchal to the International life there has been a steady progress in the social consciousness of man and that this is one reason why religious guidance is repeated from time to time,
that a progressive revelation is needed to meet the new social conditions. With the advancement in social consciousness, social evils assume an advanced appearance too. People who would stick to a guidance vouchsafed at the clan or tribal period of history, may regard religion inadequate for an advanced stage of social consciousness. But to a Muslim the case is very different. He finds his religion quite abreast of the international age and finds therein ample provision for mitigating the bitterness seizing the economic classes of this evolved stage in human social consciousness. It is for the world to turn to the religious leaders of Islam to be benefited by this Divine light and guidance.
III

Islam and the Eradication of Poverty

Only one man in history has tried to define poverty and it is he who has prayed to God to be spared the ignominy of poverty. It is the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The fact is that when you specify the barest necessity of human life you really define poverty, as it is deficiency in the barest necessity that, strictly speaking, constitutes poverty. Without this specification it is difficult to say what poverty is. Equal distribution of the national wealth, the object of Communism, may still leave the members of a nation poor. Seen from the point of view of a higher standard of life, under the socialistic administration, far from poverty being eradicated, a whole nation may be regarded as suffering

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1 C Allah! I seek refuge in Thee from infidelity and poverty—Al-Nisai.
from poverty. The reformers may only have the satisfaction of making all the members of the nation share the poverty, instead of it being shared by a section of people; but poverty may still be regarded as a feature of the nation's life. Take the case of India. An average middle class man here lives in conditions which will be unbearable to an average so-called poor man in England. If to-day India is socialised, we do not expect the standard to be raised higher than the middle class man level. And if the dream of the Western socialists comes true and the whole of the world is socialised, and equal provision be made for inhabitants of fertile productive countries as well as for those of barren and unproductive ones, the standard of living may, for all we know, have still to be lowered. So judging by the current capitalistic standard, the whole world may in that case be regarded as suffering from poverty. It is essential therefore for a correct understanding of the true nature of the economic disease, called poverty, to come to a decision as to what
constitutes poverty, i.e. the absence or shortage in the barest necessity of life. In the absence of this, eradication of poverty will ever remain an unrealised dream. In the words of the Holy Prophet Muhammad:

The son of man has no better right than that he should have a house wherein he may live and a piece of cloth whereby he may hide his nakedness, and a piece of bread and some water.¹

And in the absence of a better and a more sensible standard, the world will have to accept this as the correct standard to judge the presence or absence of poverty in a nation or an individual. Neither does it need any facts and figures to convince one that taking this as the measure of poverty, poverty can indeed be eradicated from the world. But if you leave the matter to the unbounded desire of man, you will never remove poverty either from an individual or from a nation; far less from humanity. Indeed, the more you think of it, the greater will appear to you the essential need of specifying this barest necessity of human life. Because, unless you

¹ Tirmizi.
first settle it, you cannot start on any programme for the eradication of poverty. While once you settle this question the movement for the socialisation of property and national wealth loses its sting of extremism, and the compromise between capital and labour becomes a practical proposition. Because, any system that guarantees this barest necessity to the most unlucky man or woman in the realm, can be regarded as having rooted out poverty from its body politic. Systems of society may vary from nation to nation and from country to country, but so long as they agree to guarantee this minimum necessity of human life to its individual members, they may be regarded as having conceded the principal demand of Socialism. And for all we know, no enforcement of a dead level of equality is needed to ensure this minimum. As a matter of fact, the idea of absolute communism may be regarded as already dead, seeing that Russia itself has discarded it. So, all that really remains of this social commotion of the 20th century is this question of the eradication of poverty.
Now, this responsibility for the provision of the minimum need of the individual may wholly, categorically and unconditionally rest with the Government, which as we have always contended is an unwieldy affair, or the responsibility may indirectly and ultimately rest with it. In the Islamic system the responsibility of the state is of the latter type. Had the European social systems acknowledged this much of responsibility of the state one can say, without any fear of contradiction, that the extremism of Marxism would never have come into existence.

Living in a world which condones poverty making it almost an invariable feature of social life it is difficult for a modern man to believe that poverty may be an exception and an accident even in a society where there is no enforced socialism. And the Islamic Society is exactly the type of society where it is really an accident. Yes, in a society where man's mind works normally, inspired by an enlightened philosophy and code of life and social behaviour follows normal rules of conduct, poverty in the sense
enunciated above is an accident just like any other accident, such as a motor-car accident or the accident of drowning. And it needs no wild imagination to comprehend that even in a perfectly organised socialist state, such accidents of want of food or barest clothing or barest residence may not be altogether non-existent. The only thing to see is whether it is really an accident taking place in spite of all the effort to avert it or a course of things allowed to happen by sheer callousness or by lack of will to control and stop it altogether. Since a wrong social feeling and social behaviour in the West has produced a state of things that condones poverty and in a way enjoys it, it is wrong to suppose that poverty is a rule with all other societies and not an accident with them. As a rule it may be abolished even by force, but as an accident it will be there so long as accident of all sorts will continue to take place owing to the inherent imperfections of human control of things. Thirteen hundred years of experience has shown that in Islam poverty has never been a rule, unless it be
in a society that has been de-Islamised through its close contact with outside cultures. The standard of living may be low in a particular Islamic society but to call it poverty in the true scientific sense of the term will be a mistake if not an intentional attempt to confuse issues. The social system of Islam does not allow any individual to go without food or minimum dress or residence. The institution of the mosque apart from other institutions which are many, is a guarantee against such a mishap. Any wayfarer or homeless person can stay in the mosque and has to be fed by the congregation if he so stays, and clothed as well if indeed he needs that too. But while waging ruthless and ceaseless war against true poverty, Islam has created a mentality in its followers which makes it honourable to give and not to take, either from an individual or from a collective body, call it state or whatever you like. This sense of self-respect, if you will think over it, is the only guarantee of economic stamina in a nation. Devoid of it, it may turn into a nation of shameless indolents. It
needs a positive effort to keep alive this sense in a nation just as it needs an effort to banish poverty from a nation. Islam started this double war in the beginning of its history, and succeeded quickly to achieve its object. It is reported in authentic history that at the time of Caliph Umar, one could not find a person that would receive any help; every one was in a position and a mood to give and not to receive. This, indeed, is the ideal society towards which Western Socialism called Sovietism is vaguely groping. The hand that gives, whether individual or collective, is better than the hand that takes whether individually or collectively. That is a dictum of the Prophet Muhammad. It is a strange understanding indeed that whereas private charity is deemed as derogatory to a man’s self-respect the Western mind does not revolt at the idea of collective charity, viz, the help that comes from the state. Perhaps it will be said that the private rich man shows an arrogance while giving the help but that again is lack of culture. Any man who has any experience
of the Islamic Society, will readily aver that the giver in Islam assumes the humility of a beggar whereas it is a common experience to see a beggar assuming the pride of a giver. It is not unoften that one sees a beggar reprimanding a rich man who has not given anything to him or whose gift falls short of his expectations. No doubt, this is carrying a thing too far but it is a case of virtue carried to an excess becoming vice. In Islam it is honourable not to ask from any one but from God, the Sustainer of the Universe. But if one does need any help he is never made to feel the small man that he will be if he becomes a member of the Christian community.

In Islam it is the foremost duty of the state to see that no poverty in its true sense exists anywhere in the nation, but not always through direct interference. And here comes in another question that has been unnecessarily puzzling the minds of our Christian friends of the West.

State is neither a curse nor a punishment nor indeed the sole vehicle of collective social
expression. It is a self-felt need of the individual. State is a provision made by the individual himself for guiding and controlling himself in moments of forgetfulness or excitement. It is an essential need and yet not the supreme need of social life. In normal condition of things, the native social feeling of man guided by his practical common-sense is enough guidance for social behaviour. State interference in such a condition will do more harm than good. It will stunt the growth of the nation mentally, morally, economically and politically. The state, however, must look after the cases of accident. Islam favours that view of the question which stands for as little state interference as possible, but it insists that its range of interference must cover all cases of accident.

Like all other accidents, the accident of poverty must be its duty to avert and to redress. The State is accordingly held responsible for the provision of food, clothes and residence to the individual if he cannot provide for these himself. But it must not be burdened with the entire
duty of feeding, clothing and housing the whole population. That will be a task too unwieldy and cramping at the same time. It will, moreover, be an unsuitable approach to the question to paralyse the instincts springing from biological elements of animal life, because on these lines, as Islam rightly holds, lies the moral and spiritual evolution of man. It is noteworthy that whereas other religions as they exist today discard animal instincts as wholly Satanic, Islam considers these as the very basis of spiritual faculties. According to this religion original animal instincts properly guided and controlled are transformed into moral qualities which in their turn give birth to spiritual life in man. As we see it, Marxism has its moral source in the other, i.e. non-Islamic theology and believes animal instincts as of the devil and productive of nothing but evil. That is why it is so anxious to crush the animal instincts of family affection and natural group loyalty. It may be that it possesses no means whereby to utilise them to the advantage of man but that was a weakness
of Christianity as well. But just because you cannot handle a thing, is it wise to kill it particularly when you find some other systems using it to the great advantage of humanity? It is not only wrong but arrogant. So at bottom with all its abhorrence for religion and theology, Marxism is blindly following Christian theology. It would appear as if one can never get rid of theology particularly when one is dealing with human conduct and character. You have to go by some theory or other about the potentialities and drawbacks of human nature; you must have some conception of the ultimate aim of human social life and this is entering in the field of theology. Let, therefore, no one be seduced into the belief that Marxism involves no religious belief and has nothing to do with Christianity. Let it be realised that although Marxism has repudiated some mystical beliefs of Christianity it has faithfully adopted what really matters in that faith viz, the conception of human nature and its ultimate goal. Its conception of state and the idea of its jurisdiction is a natural and
logical sequel to the Christian conception of human nature. It wants to eradicate poverty by force because it cannot trust the good sense of man. It regards poverty as a natural state because it regards human nature instinctively callous. It fails like Christianity to see that man’s callousness towards some has its paradoxical counterpart somewhere in the opposite quality of exorbitant love for some others. It is the want of balance and proportion that causes the mischief. If one religion has failed to establish the balance, all religions cannot be said to have failed. Islam’s appeal to our Marxist friends is that they should not wholly distrust human nature and for that matter the individual man and his natural affections, as these are the seeds of the spiritual man to whom are revealed the hidden laws of existence and the soul-stirring vision of the ultimate destiny of man.

Given necessary guidance, the nature of man functions quite normally, making for the best of ordered social life. But it has its lapses,
causing accidents and consequent disturbances which must be provided against. It is here that state must step in. Provided the state knows where to step in and stop the accident growing into a menace, the society will exhibit all those qualities of brain and heart which are the only real safeguards against poverty.

If in this controlled and guarded freedom, there still remains some room for accidents, it is not a very heavy price to pay. As we have said, even in the enforced eradication of poverty there must be some room for such accidents, and we do not think the number of accidents in the system contemplated by Islam will be any greater. This is a strange age in which one is more impressed by riddles than by plain logical truths. And of such riddles one is that a rule of unmitigated state violence is a necessary preliminary to the dissolution of all states. It is really a wonderful proposition that whereas you cannot trust the individual human nature you must have implicit faith in a group of people having uncontrolled power of violence to evolve an era of absolute peace and concord in the
world. Power is always a hard thing to digest whether it be in an individual or a group. The person to whom uncontrolled power is first delegated is invariably a benevolent man. But benevolence in a man of power is a rare quality and more often than not dies with the man and even before him. History has shown that the group is no better than the individual in this matter. And of all powers the power of violence is the most unsafe thing that a population can delegate to any individual or group. At least, Islam never recommends such a delegation of powers. All executive powers in Islam must be under the strictest supervision of constitutional law. As for violence, there is no room for it anywhere in its system.

It disallows all kinds of revengefulness. Its attitude towards the enemies is enunciated in the following words:

"Repel evil by what is best, when, lo, between whom and you there was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend." (The Holy Qur-án, 41 : 34).

In what a sharp contrast does this stand to
the policy of terrorisation advocated by Marxism and implied in the term class-war! Islam has no faith in violence. It believes only in fighting in self-defence and in replying in the same term and on an equal footing, never regarding anyone or any party as incorrigibly inimical. It knows that violence reacts in a greater violence, and cruelty in a greater cruelty. It knows that man goes wrong only through misguidance or through temporary insanity, if the term may be permitted in this connection. One may act with the object of stopping the evil so produced from spreading trouble but in no case should one regard the man as inherently vicious. That being the attitude of Islam, it does not favour either wholesale responsibility of the state in the eradication of poverty nor yet any violent measures adopted for the purpose. It believes in the native goodness of man to work for the imperceptible eradication of poverty provided no immoral influences are at work. Like all other sins, economic sins fall within the purview of state censorship. Indeed if economic sins, i.e., earning by anti-social ways, are not allowed
to consolidate themselves in any society, poverty in its real sense, cannot find any room to grow. It is because the Christian social system has no principles to guide them in this matter that they now feel obliged to cause violence to certain instinctive play of human faculties. Islam, luckily, is placed in a more fortunate position. It has regulations to guide man in his small economic affairs, so that even when matters assume wider dimensions nothing is found to threaten social peace. The dictum, "A stitch in time saves nine" is very appropriate to this case.

Given proper guidance to the individual man, telling him clearly which line of economic effort is right and which wrong, he will never be a callous hoarder. It is the sins of earning that mostly hardens the heart of a man. Nay, he must also be told the wholesome ways of spending the money. Given these instructions, there remains very little for the state to do in the eradication of poverty, excepting to bring the stray sinning person to book and making
reparations for any accident that may have been caused either by intentional sin or the unavoidable imperfections of human efforts. In short, the state's function should be one of supervision and correction like that of the police and nothing beyond.

"Capitalism," a typically Western phenomenon, may be regarded by some as a natural evolution of human social organism but to us, Muslims, it is a calamity befalling humanity in consequence of a wrong religion putting a premium on human sins, individual and social. From the era of Islam to that of Capitalism is a lapse, a fall. As a true offspring of the current system, Marxism may condone it, but we Muslims deplore its very existence and consider it a nightmare. It plays no part whatsoever in human social evolution unless it be to stay its progress. The poverty which forms the basis of Marxist slogan is a peculiar creation of Capitalism with all its Western implications. And if any system can really eradicate poverty in its truest sense, it has to be the one which
believes Capitalism to be a false system in its very origin. And while believeing it to be false it must not adopt any violent measures to rectify its mistakes, otherwise the evil will go on swinging from extreme to extreme in the manner of a pendulum. And this is exactly the attitude of Islam towards the question.

Indeed, the enthusiasm for any reform of this nature must be enlightened by a correct knowledge of the deeper laws of human nature. The absence of this enlightenment always makes matters worse in the course of time.