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

ISLAM AND SOCIALISM

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ISLAM is a religion, whereas Socialism is simply an Economic Institution taking finally the form of a state—a Political Institution. Both stand for some purpose—some end. The end or purpose of the latter is the physical and economic welfare of man or, in other words, the total removal or extermination of poverty from all classes of people in the state. The end or purpose of Islam, on the other hand, is the Perfection of man in all forms—i.e., the elevation of man to Insan-Kamil—a perfect man. What is a perfect man? A perfect man is one who has the best of conduct and character (Akhlāq), the best of intellect (Aql), the best and finest sense for the appreciation of beauty (Husn) and has the best of health, is free from all cares and wants and is consequently the happiest of all creatures. Evidently, the last, the physical and economic
welfare of man, from the Islamic standpoint, is only an aspect, an element, of the end, but not an end in itself. For Socialism, on the other hand, it is an end in itself, the sole end, to which all other ends must be subordinated. This is the fundamental distinction between Islam and Socialism. But however they may differ, there is one point at least which is common to both, namely, the principle of the eradication of poverty and bringing into being freedom from want. But even so the affinity is merely in the principle as such, *i.e.*, in the aspiration to remove poverty, but not in the *ways and means or methods* devised by each for the achievement of the same. The means and methods adopted by each differ violently and the point at issue, therefore, is, which of the methods is better and more successful in removing the evil of poverty and bringing into being freedom from want? Some maintain that the methods devised by Socialism are better than those of Islam; others maintain that the two systems are almost identical and can be reconciled; still others maintain that they are essentially different and
that the methods devised by Islam are superior to those of Socialism. I agree with the last group of people and maintain that the two systems are fundamentally different and that the means adopted by Islam are far more successful than and superior to those adopted by Socialism or any other hypothesis.

1. Socialism starts with the assumption that all men are equal and therefore justice demands that each man should have equal share of the total wealth of the nation; that there should be an equal distribution of it among all and that there should be no distinction between man and man or class and class. But the assumption of the equality of man is erroneous, for all men are "ideally" equal, not "factually" so. Factually, some are weak and others are strong; some are vicious and others are virtuous and so on. If now the stronger and the more capable people, by sheer dint of honest labour, accumulate more wealth than the weaker and less capable people, no institution in the world has any right to deprive such people of their wealth
for the sake of equalising them with the inefficient and unworthy people. If yet they are deprived of their honest earnings, as Socialism would have it, this would be gross injustice. Socialism, which starts with the specific object of dispensing justice to all, involves itself in the grossest injustice conceivable.

II. Socialism further assumes that the richer and wealthier people are necessarily cruel and wicked; and that the wealth they accumulate is earned through callous and vicious means. But is wealth necessarily accumulated by such methods? Many may have earned their wealth through honest and sincere work and to deprive them of their wealth is obvious injustice.

III. Again, all men are equal and there should be an equal distribution of wealth among all, but since the equal distribution of wealth, they maintain, is impossible so long as the institution of Private Property exists, it must disappear. So long, they argue, as each person retains his own wealth for himself, there shall
always arise a class of more prudent, capable and tactful people who would earn more than the less capable and tactful people; and once such persons have taken a start, they will go on multiplying their wealth without much effort on their part—by investing and reinvesting it in different forms. Of necessity, therefore, must Capitalism and unequal distribution of wealth result again and again from the institution of Private Property. This institution should be totally abolished and not the individuals but the State should be the owner of all property. The individual should entrust his all, whatever it may be, great or small to the State, and the State should be the sole owner of 'total property.' There should be thus no 'MINE' or 'THINE'; all wealth should belong to the State and then the State shall have to distribute it equally among all, thus resulting in complete justice. All will have equal share of the commonwealth of the nation, in which there would be no distinction between the rich and the poor and all will be equally well provided.
But again this position has a difficulty of its own kind. The *efficiency* of individuals ‘singly’ and that of the State ‘collectively’ will suffer considerably on that account. Man is primarily an individual and only secondarily a social being. The more capable must naturally think why, after all, should they work for the sake of others, when their own interest must necessarily suffer; why after all should they add more to their income, when that excess would always be denied to them. Again, man is primarily *lazy* and seeks play and happiness rather than work and strain. Left to himself, he would never work or strain himself willingly. He works only under the stress of circumstances—not work for the sake of work. Thus the less capable people in the Socialistic State would naturally think why after all should they strain themselves and work harder, if already their share of the wealth of the nation is secured; why after all should they produce more, when that more will be taken away by the State? Thus the rich and the poor, the competent and the incompetent, would all lose interest in their work,
and society would necessarily become inefficient. The result would be that the total wealth of the nation, as also the share of the individual in it, would go on decreasing from year to year, until a day would come when the share of the individual would reach a point far lower than even what a most incompetent person would have earned, if left to himself. Socialism started with the object of providing sufficient for each and all, but failed to provide even the barest minimum for any. It must give up its first and most fundamental thesis, *viz.* "The abolition of private property" and its corollary, *viz.* "all property to be owned by the State."

But even assuming that Socialism does succeed and succeeds a hundred per cent, then, in that case, each and all would be well-fed all right but none would be moral, because the 'giving' in the case of each is not voluntary or out of free-will. There is, indeed, no giving on the part of the individuals, leave alone voluntary or involuntary. All property belongs to the State and it is the *State* that gives to the individual
and not the individual that gives to the State. The share of the individual is not so much "given" by the individual to the State, as it is really "taken" from the individual by the State. But morality of an action consists really in "giving" things over to rather than be "taken" away from. Thus a Socialistic State on this hypothesis is tantamount to a kingdom of animals in a huge jungle where there is plenty to eat and drink and where each and all are well-fed and properly stuffed, and yet all remain animals in spite of it—animals and not moral human beings.

But one might say that the question of "giving" and giving things voluntarily does certainly exist in a Socialistic State. After all, as Socialists surmise, every individual in a Socialistic State is absolutely free to give his vote to anybody, and once his original vote is freely given, his subsequent acts that follow from it are all freely determined. But this is a wrong argument, the original free vote does not necessarily make all subsequent individual acts
free and hence moral. I might have freely voted for Mr. X to become a minister and yet it is possible that, subsequently, I might differ with his policy and conduct. If yet I obey his orders, it can be for no other reason than from fear or prudence in which morality has no share. Morality is not a matter of habitual and mechanical action according to certain principles, as Socialism would like it to be. For instance, once you have freely voted for certain principles, you shall have to follow them mechanically, necessarily and compulsorily in all your individual acts, whether you subsequently agree or disagree with them. But morality is quite the opposite of it. It is not a free act once or casually done in life but is a series of free acts ever and ever anew!

1. Generally speaking, Socialism conceives the nature of man essentially as animal, a feeling being, with food and happiness as his sole end in life. But food, wealth or happiness are precisely the things which each man will have all for himself and not share with others. Left to feelings and animal impulses as being the standard, we
never share our wealth and happiness with others and never become one with them. Where we share our well-being and happiness with others, it is our reason that bids us so to do and not our feelings or animal impulses. Reason must intervene into the life of man if we are to share our weal and woe with others and be anything better than an animal. With the dawn of this reason, new demands would be made on us—the demand or yearning to seek Truth, Goodness, Beauty and Holiness. But this is neither open to Socialism nor does it actually admit it. Hence the materialism and Godlessness of this system. We thus pass to the second thesis of Socialism.

2. Socialism assumes that the church and priests who represent God on earth are vicious institutions and they make capital out of it. Here again we are involved in Capitalism which is their foremost duty to destroy. State and Statesmen should thus take the place of the church and the priests. The State should be all in all and nothing besides the State should exist. There should be no God, no Religion side by side
with the State to inspire people and to challenge its supremacy.

But let us analyse this argument. From the casual or even wholesale badness of the priests, we are not entitled to jump to the conclusion that Religion itself is bad.

Socialism is not clear on the point that it is precisely Religion from which all fundamentally human values first originate and then finally culminate in it. Even the economic welfare of man, as described above, would be somewhat impossible without religion. Without religion, society would be something like Hobbe's Kingdom of Wolves, where everyone would perennially run at the other's throat and be at war among themselves. All would be destruction and no production. Thus even with Economic Welfare as the end, let alone other yearnings, it is indispensable to retain God and Religion.

Moreover, since all fundamental values originate from and culminate in Religion, it is, at the basis of all Culture and Civilisation.
Without it there would be neither Culture nor Civilisation. But even if we presume that some sort of culture and civilisation can exist in spite of it, it will be grossly primitive and unworthy of man. But without a really advanced Culture and Civilisation, no nation has any moral right to Internationalism, as Socialism would have it. Hence again Socialism would be obliged to abandon yet another thesis of its own, its Godlessness, and that too, if not for itself, at least in the interest of the Internationalism which is the third chief thesis of Socialism.

3. The starting point of Socialism is: All men are equal and therefore there should be an equal distribution of wealth among all. This necessarily leads to Internationalism when consistently followed. If all men are really equal, then not only are all individuals within the same State but also all States and people within the same world, are equal to each other. Hence all States and people should have equal share of the total wealth of the world. But who is to enforce this principle? Who is to be the
torch-bearer and pioneer of it? The thought, as such, would not be acceptable to those who may have to suffer on that account. Who could compel America to share its surplus wealth with Arabia, China, Afghanistan, etc.? Evidently, this presupposes the existence of some one State strong enough to enforce the same thought. But here again we shall encounter the same difficulties as I have stated above. Even if a State that could enforce the thought were to come into being, the giving on the part of the individual States will not be voluntary and hence not moral. Moreover, the total wealth of the world, as also the share of the individual States, is likely to fall from year to year as it will be an involuntary imposition and man does not like it. Besides, the thought of equal distribution is not open to Socialism, for it conceives the nature of man essentially as animal, and as an animal I can never pass from the circle of "my good," "my happiness," to that of "your good" "your happiness." What is impossible as between individuals will be equally impossible as between States. Once this principle of Socialism, namely,
that food and happiness is the sole end of man, is accepted, neither the individuals nor indeed the States will part with what is the only and the most valuable thing according to them.

But even assuming that the individual States could well part with their surplus, the case would be no better either from the Socialist standpoint. The surplus would not go to the poorer States but to the richest and the strongest of all States. For of all States, this very Socialistic State with its materialistic background, will of necessity lapse into Imperialism and its evils, indeed a worse sort of imperialism, a world-wide Imperialism, a thing which was the starting point of Socialism to fight against and eradicate in all possible forms.

To this one might object that Socialism does not really maintain that the richer States should entrust their surplus to some stronger one in order that it may distribute it among the poorer States. All that it maintains is that every State within its own sphere should have equal
distribution among the individuals. But this would defeat the ideal of International Socialism only to be replaced by National Socialism. In any case, it will be simply compelled by the sheer contradictions and inconsistencies to give up one thesis after another until we shall have merely a form without content—a bare principle of the removal of poverty without its original means to work it out. But this simple principle is not peculiar to Socialism. All religions, long before Socialism, had ordained it, and even to-day many worldly States aspire to realize it in their own way. What I have simply formally stated, is actually proved by the hard facts of life. Already Socialism has permitted private property and has abandoned its Godlessness and Internationalism. Thus it is no more Socialism; at best it is Neo-Socialism. But Neo-Socialism is a new Socialism and is something other than Socialism; is anything but Socialism. If yet you call it Socialism, then it is like the miser's sock, patched up with new threads again and again and over again until not a single thread of the original remains and yet it is the same old sock.
This may be true of the sock for all practical purposes but not of ideologies. We now pass to Islam to see how the problem of the removal of poverty is tackled by it.

Socialism maintains that so long as the institution of Private Property exists, the result would be Capitalism and its consequent evils. But if Private Property is abolished, the result is no better either, for efficiency would suffer and the result would be a considerable decrease in the total wealth of the nation, as also that of the individual. Evidently, we are involved in a sort of conflict or antinomy, for both the positions are right. The problem now is how to resolve this antinomy and how to reconcile this conflict. Islam offers a solution which is quite correct and fair.

Islam assumes that the institution of Private Property is good from the point of view of efficiency that it promotes; but it is bad from the point of view of Capitalism which it encourages. Hence private property should be retained as well as abolished in the same breath—retained in order
to encourage efficiency, and abolished in order to discourage Capitalism. But how is it possible to retain and not retain a thing at one and the same time? How am I to conceive that the property is mine and yet not mine at the same time? This is possible when the concept “mine” and “not mine” is looked at from different standpoints and this is precisely the attitude which Islam actually takes towards it. Empirically, factually, and actually, the property is mine all right, because it is in my possession. Hence it is natural that I should have interest in it and should promote it as much as it is in my power to do so. But transcendentally, rationally and ideally it is not mine and is God’s property, because He alone is the ultimate Creator of all things. Hence I should have no hesitation in parting with it, if God so desires. Hence also the synthesis of the conflicting theses and the solution of the antinomy. The institution of Private Property is kept intact without necessarily resulting in Capitalism. The point of efficiency is combined with a set-back to Capitalism in a most harmonious way. This much abstractly speaking.
We may now give three concrete illustrations.

Islam encourages the production of wealth (efficiency) and yet discourages the accumulation of the same in the hands of a few (Capitalism). This it does by the institution of the "Law of Inheritance," by forbidding "Interest" and by the injunctions of "poor tax," "almsgiving," "lending without remuneration," "gift," "trust," "the giving of one-third in will to anybody other than legal successors," etc., etc.

(i) The Islamic Law of Inheritance is an immense blow to Capitalism for through it the property of man is divided and redivided among his successors and even among the remote successors, if there are no immediate ones. In any case the property cannot remain compact and in the hand of a few in the long run. Thus the property will circulate from person to person until many are benefited thereby; and when many are benefited, the total wealth of the nation also increases.
(ii) The abolition of usury is another great setback to Capitalism. Usury is a vicious institution and is at the basis of Capitalism. The rich, thereby, gain more and more money without doing "any positive work." In other words, it is the money that makes money and not the man behind it. It is the mere possession of money that brings money and not the work or toil of the person possessing the money.

In Islam it should be the man himself and not his bare money to make more money—the man and his nerves, tissues, muscles, brain, etc. Thus there is no room in the Islamic State for the exploitation of the individual by the individual. The individuals would be no longer perennially under debts to money-lenders. Nor would certain States be perennially under debts to other States.

(iii) Hence there would be no Capitalism, no exploitation, and therefore no poverty. Thus an Islamic State, when it comes to the task of Internationalism, would never, like Socialism,
lapse into Imperialism. زکوات (tithe), خيرات (alms), صدقات (charity), قرض حسن (loan without interest), وقف (bequest), وصيت (endowment), etc., etc., are other such measures which put a ban on Capitalism and restrain it. These institutions prevent the money from being accumulated in the hands of a few, rather must necessarily flow from man to man and class to class in a rapid circulation. This is very nearly the essence of the economic well-being of both the individuals and the State. But one might object that these injunctions were perhaps helpful for maintaining the poor, but can hardly be expected to meet the gigantic demands and requirements of a modern State. This may be right, but nothing can stand in the way of an Islamic State either to impose more and more taxes or demand from the individual whatever he could spare for the amelioration of the condition of his brethren. The Quranic verses (God had purchased from believers their property and their lives in lieu of Paradise) clearly indicates that the wealth and body of a Muslim
is purchased by God in lieu of Paradise and can be requisitioned when He so desires.

Further, of all these injunctions, جزؤات (tithe) is one form of duty, whereas صدقات (alms), خيرات (charity), هبة (gift), قرض حسن (loan), وقف (endowment), وصية (bequest), etc., form another kind of duties. 

Tithe (ژکوات) is an absolute duty, whereas the others are meritorious duties.

ژکوات (tithe) is compulsorily enforced and collected by the Khalifa in the name of God, whereas the other institutions are not so enforced by the Khalifa. جزؤات (tithe) is a duty which Muslims have necessarily and absolutely to perform; and its non-observance is a vice, and its observance a virtue. Whereas the other meritorious duties are of a nature that if we do not perform them, our act is not vice, but if we perform them, our action is virtue, indeed, a meritorious virtue—a virtue par excellence. This sort of virtue does not exist in any worldly State or organisation, not even in a Socialistic State. In a Socialistic State there is hardly any room for
virtues, leave alone the meritorious ones. It is a *wholesale* compulsion and whatever you have in excess of your wants will be taken away from you, and you will be left on a par with others—the question of *yet giving more*, *i.e.*, meritorious duties, not arising at all.

The State is all for Socialism, whereas God is the all in all for Islam. In the former the act of giving is for *fear of the State*, whereas in the latter it is for the *fear of God*. Evidently, the latter is *moral* action, whereas the former is only a *legal* one. Thus for a Muslim the act of "giving" is not only conducive to *feeding* others but is also helpful to his *own reformation* or *self-perfection*.

But to this, one might object that an action done out of "fear" is non-moral, whether it be for fear of God as in the case of a Muslim, or for fear of the State as in the case of a Socialist. Hence in either case the action is non-moral. But this is a wrong position. There is a radical difference between fear of God and fear of State, the two being different in kind. The fear of
God is a matter of *Faith* and the fear of State is a matter of "knowledge." The object of Faith is God, who is not a concrete object, is not immediately present before me; it is my *Faith* in Him, indeed an إيمان بالغيب (faith in the Unknown). Evidently, His punishment is not imminent, if I do not believe in Him; even His punishment *itself* is a matter of Faith. Thus there is no *compulsion* in Religion, indeed, much more the opposite of it. I am free to believe or not believe in God, or even to believe in one notion of God or the other. The sword of God is not immediately present before me to compel me to believe in Him, or believe in Him one way or the other. That I yet believe in Him in spite of the absence of His punishment, amounts to *complete freedom* in the choice of my faith. Thus my faith in God and the consequent fear of Him are both my own creation, are *autonomous* and there is no *compulsion* involved in it. On the contrary, the fear of the State is a fear of a concrete object, which is present before me and its punishment is imminent, if I disobey it. It is the fear of a thing outside me and of an external
origin and is heteronomous. It is a thing or person other than myself who compels me to do this or that for fear of his sword immediately present before me. Hence the distinction between the two fears, of which the one is freely chosen, self-created, autonomous and hence the condition of the existence of morality, which the other is not.

In conclusion, I must say that even assuming that Islam does not succeed in exterminating poverty altogether, the case is not likely to be bad either. For the worth or dignity of a man, according to Islam, consists essentially in the character and righteousness of a man rather than in the wealth or riches possessed by him. Thus the poor in an Islamic State will not be looked down upon for the mere fact of poverty, nor the rich would in any way be respected for the mere fact of wealth they possess. The result would be that the rich and the poor would be all alike and shall form one brotherhood. In this brotherhood the rich will have no feeling of superiority, nor the poor that of inferiority, so that there
will be neither quarrel among the individuals within the State nor war among the States within the world, in spite of the inequality in wealth. All would be peace and peace and a Kingdom of God on Earth would be established in the truest sense of the term. This is precisely what the word Islam means and this is precisely what the Quran invites mankind to enter into—a Peace—perfect and universal!

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