

cause, is governed by a chain of causes and effects, which terminates another causal chain, says:

...How can one discover in history a coherent sequence of cause and effect, how can we find any meaning in history, when our sequence is liable to be broken or deflected at any moment by some other, and from our point of view, irrelevant sequence?⁶

The solution to this difficulty is dependent upon the question whether society and history have a particular direction. If history in itself has direction, the role of accidents would be insignificant, which means although certain accidents may change the position of some pawns on the chess-board of history, they do not exercise any significant influence on the course of history as a whole. At the most, they can accelerate or arrest it for a moment. But if history is devoid of nature and personality and does not follow a path determined by its own nature, it would be without any particular direction, and also it would be impossible to formulate any universal laws and to forecast the future.

In my view, history has a specific nature and personality which is a composite product of the individual human beings who make it, and who have a natural urge for perfection. I believe that the role of accidental events does not affect historical necessity and universality of history.

Montesquieu has beautifully explained the role of accidents in history, a part of which I have quoted earlier. He says:

...if the outcome of a single battle, i.e. a particular cause, was the ruin of a state, there was a general cause which decreed that, that state was destined to perish through a single battle.⁷

He further says:

It was not the affair of Poltava that ruined Charles. Had he not been destroyed at that place, he would have been in another. The casualties of the fortune are easily repaired; but who can be guarded against events that incessantly arise from the nature of things?⁸

Is History Materialistic in Nature?

WHAT is the nature of history? Is the real nature of history cultural, political, economic, religious, or moral? Is history materialistic or non-materialistic, or a combination of both? This is one of the main questions related with history. Unless this question is not answered, our understanding of history would not be correct and sound.

It is evident that all the above-mentioned intellectual and material factors have participated in the fabric of history. But the question arises, which of them is the determining factor that plays the most important role and is prior to all others. There has been controversy as to which of the factors represents the real spirit of history and its essence, and which of the factors is able to subordinate and explain the subsidiary role of other factors. Which of them is the base, to which others serve as superstructure?

Usually, history is compared to a machine with many motors, in which every motor is independent of the others. In fact, history is considered to have a complex not a simple nature. But if we regard it as having many motors, then what are we to think of its evolution and its course of development? It is not possible that many motors, each of them having a specific momentum pushing history in its own direction, could carry history on a specific course of evolution, unless we consider the above-mentioned factors as the moving forces subordinate to a super-force, the spirit of history. This spirit, by employing various historical forces, drives it towards a predetermined evolutionary goal. It is this spirit which actually represents the essence of history. But this interpretation is different from the doctrine of monistic view of history. The nature of history is synonymous with the spirit of history, and it cannot be derived from, what are called, the moving forces of history.

In our age, a theory which has attracted many supporters is that of 'historical materialism' or the 'dialectical materialistic theory of history.' Historical materialism, which is an economic interpretation of history and an economic-historical view of man—not a humanistic interpretation of economy or history—explains every human activity from

the economic point of view. In other words, according to historical materialism, history is materialistic in nature and essence and follows a dialectical process. This means that the basis of all historical movements, revolutions, and historical manifestations of every society, is its economic structure. They are the material forces of production of society and its relations of production which fashion history and give direction to all intellectual manifestations of a society like morality, science, philosophy, religion, law, and culture. These manifestations change with changes in the mode of production and relations of production.

The expression that history is dialectical in nature means that the evolutionary movements of history are dialectical movements caused by a series of dialectical contradictions, which are concomitant with those contradictions. Dialectical contradictions are different from non-dialectical ones in the sense that every phenomenon is compelled to give rise to its own negation from within. As a result of a series of changes caused by this inner contradiction, the phenomenon undergoes a radical qualitative change at a higher level, wherein the two lower stages attain perfection through synthesis.

Thus historical materialism is comprised of two basic stands: firstly, that the nature of history is materialistic; secondly, its movements are dialectical movements. Here we shall study the first problem. The second shall be taken up while dealing with the evolution and development of history.

The theory of materialistic nature of history is based on a series of certain philosophical, psychological, and sociological principles that logically lead to other theories of ideological significance. I would like to throw some light on this subject, especially because some Muslim writers claim that although Islam does not approve of the philosophical materialism, it accepts historical materialism. Consequently they have based their own historical and sociological views on this theory. It is, therefore, essential to discuss this problem in some detail, first expounding the foundations and principles on which this theory is based and then the conclusions which are derived from them. After this exposition we shall evaluate the basis of this theory from the Islamic and scientific points of view.

Basic Principles of Historical Materialism

1. Priority of matter over spirit

Man has body as well as spirit. Human body and its functionings are the subject of biological, physical, and physiological studies. But the spirit and processes related with the soul are the subject of philosophi-

cal and psychological studies. Thoughts, beliefs, feelings, desires, concepts, and ideologies represent spiritual processes. The principle of priority of matter over spirit implies that spiritual processes are not independent, but they are only a sequence of reflections of material processes; i.e., they are caused by the influence of the conscious matter on the nerves and the brain.

These processes are significant only to the extent that they form a connecting link between the internal physical forces and the external world, but they can never dominate human existence in the manner in which its opposite forces, i.e. the material forces, do. For example, the psychical processes may be compared to the headlights of an automobile. An automobile cannot move about without its headlights in the dark hours of night. It finds its way in the light of its headlamp. But what drives it is not the headlamp but its engine.

If these psychical processes, such as thoughts, beliefs, theories and ideologies, participate in the drama of material forces of history, they assist the movement of history, but they in themselves are unable to generate any movement. They can never be compared to the material forces. Psychical processes are not independent; they depend for their existence on matter. The real forces are those which signify human existence and are identified with material forces, and which are measurable in material terms.

In this way, the psychical processes are not capable of generating movement and directing the course of history, and cannot be considered as a 'lever' for the movement of society. The spiritual values have absolutely no chance to become the motivating force, the source, and the goal of a social movement, unless they serve to support and explain the material values of history and society.

Accordingly, one has to be very careful in interpreting history. This theory emphasizes that we should be cautious not to be deceived by the appearances. Occasionally, at some point in history, it may appear that a thought, belief, or a faith has brought about change in a society, and stimulated it at a particular stage of development. But if we analyse history correctly, we shall see that such beliefs do not have an independent existence; they are only the mirror-image or reflection of material forces of society. There were actually material forces, which in the guise of those beliefs, moved and changed the society. Material forces are the progressive, leading force of history. They are represented, technically, by the society's system of production, and, from the humanistic point of view, by the deprived and exploited class of society.

Feuerbach, the famous materialist philosopher, from whom Marx himself has borrowed many of his ideas, raises the following questions:

What is theory? What is praxis? What is the difference between the two?

He himself answers that:

Everything which is confined to the mind is theoretical. Whatever moves the minds of many is practical necessity. It is action which unites many minds together and organizes the masses, and in this manner finds a place for itself in the world.⁹

And Marx, his faithful pupil, writes:

It is obvious that the weapon of criticism cannot replace criticism of weapons. Only the material forces can defeat other material forces.

Marx does not believe in the independence of non-material forces. He, at the most, recognizes their value in relation to material existence. He says: "Theory also, only by taking roots into the lives of the masses, can be transformed into a material force."¹⁰

Priority of matter over spirit, priority of the body over the mind, inessentiality of spiritual forces, and rejection of intellectual and spiritual values as fundamental, are among the basic principles of the philosophy of materialism.

Quite contrary to this philosophy is the other philosophy which is based on the essentiality of spirit, according to which all the fundamental dimensions of human existence cannot be interpreted by means of matter or its modes. In the domain of human existence, spirit is a fundamental reality, and the spiritual energies are independent of the material energies. In this way, the spiritual forces, i.e. the intellectual forces, faith, belief and emotions, are regarded as independent factors for some movements at the individual level and at the level of society. They serve as 'levers' which can be used for the movement of history. Many of historical movements have ultimately arisen because of these 'levers,' especially those which belong to a higher human plane. The higher individual and collective movements are independently originated by these forces, and derive their sublimity from these very forces.

Psychic forces sometimes strongly influence physical and material powers, not only at the level of voluntary activity, but also at the level of mechanical, involuntary, and physiological activity, and employ them for attaining their own specific purpose. The effects of psychical suggestions for curing physical ailments and the miraculous effects of hypnotism, which belong to the same category, cannot be overlooked.

Knowledge and faith, particularly faith, and specifically whenever these two psychic forces are harmonized, a great and useful force is generated which can create wonders by playing an extraordinarily progressive and revolutionary role in transforming the course of history.

Independence of mind and spiritual powers is one of the fundamental principles of "epistemological realism."¹¹

2. Primacy and priority of material needs over intellectual needs

Man has at least two types of needs for his social existence. Firstly, there are the material needs, such as the need for bread, water, shelter, dress, medicine, and other such needs. Secondly, there are the intellectual needs, such as the needs for education, knowledge, literature, art, philosophical speculation, faith, ideology, prayer, morality, and other such things. These two types of needs accompany man in all situations and conditions. But which of them precedes the other? material needs or intellectual needs? or none of them? The theory of priority of material needs is based on the notion that material needs are more important and preferable. Their importance is not because of the fact that at the initial stage man is in pursuit of material needs, and when these needs are satisfied, he can divert his attention and energies towards the attainment of intellectual pursuits, but because material needs are also the basis and the source of intellectual needs. It is not that man is created with two types of needs and two types of instincts: material needs and material instincts, intellectual needs and intellectual instincts; rather man has been created with only one type of needs and one type of instincts. Intellectual needs are only secondary needs, which serve the sole purpose of gratifying the material needs in a better manner.

This is the reason why the intellectual needs, from the point of view of form, quality, and also essence, are subordinated to the material needs. In every age, man has given a specific form, character, and mode to his material needs, according to the stage of development of the means of production. His intellectual requirements, which originate in his material requirements, correspond in form, mode, and quality to his material necessities. Hence, there is a twofold relationship of priority between the material needs and the intellectual needs: priority of existence, i.e. intellectual needs are the by-products of the material needs; and the priority of essence, i.e. the form, quality, and nature of the intellectual needs remain subordinated to that of the material needs. In his book *Historical Materialism* P. Royan quotes from page 92 of Hymen Louis' book *Philosophical Ideas*:

Man's material course of existence led him to propound theories corresponding to the material needs of the time about his world, society, art, and morality; all intellectual manifestations are the resultant products of material conditions and the mode of production.¹²

Accordingly, scientific judgement, philosophical thought, artistic

and aesthetic sensibility, moral values, and religious propensities of every human being are subject to his way of life. Applying this maxim, "Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you think," which refers to individuals, to the society, it may be said: "Tell me what is the degree of development of the means of production, and what are the economic relations among the members of a society, and I will tell you what ideology, which philosophy and what ethics and religion the members of that society follow."

Radically opposed to this theory is the theory of independence of intellectual needs. According to it, although in the individual human being the material needs sprout up early in life—as soon as a child is born he gropes for his mother's breast—the intellectual needs which are hidden inside the human nature, blossom gradually. During the later stages of his development and maturity, man sacrifices his material needs for the sake of intellectual needs. Or, in other words, the urge of intellectual enjoyment is stronger and more indigenous to human nature than the physical enjoyments and attractions.¹³ The greater an individual's education and training, the more he considers his material needs, material enjoyments, and material existence as subordinate to his intellectual needs, intellectual enjoyments and intellectual existence. Society also follows the same principle. In primitive societies material needs are more dominant than intellectual needs; but as society advances and becomes more refined, intellectual needs assume more important position and become the goal of human life, while material needs, becoming secondary, are demoted to a lower place as mere means to attain higher ends.¹⁴

3. Priority of action over thought

Man is a being who thinks, understands, and acts. Is action prior to thought or vice versa? Is the essence of man action or thought? Does human nobility depend upon action, or does it depend upon thought? Is man the product of action or thought?

Historical materialism is based on the idea of independence of action and its priority over thought. It considers action as the base, and thought as its offshoot. Ancient logic and philosophy considered thought as the key to action. According to that logic, thought is divided into concepts and judgements, each of which may be further divided into *a priori* (self-evident) and theoretic. *A priori* ideas are acknowledged as the key to theoretical ideas. In that logic and philosophy, the essence of man (the self) is regarded as pure thought. Human perfection and nobility is seen as lying in wisdom. The 'perfect man' is synonymous with the 'man of wisdom.'¹⁵

But historical materialism is established on the principle that action is the key to thought and the criterion of thought. The essence

of man is his productive activity. Action is the source of man's identity and it moulds him also. Marx says, "The entire so-called history of the world is nothing but the begetting of man through human labour."¹⁶ And Engels says, "Man himself is the creation of action."¹⁷ From the very beginning, man, instead of contemplating over natural calamities, conquered the external environment by means of his hard labour, and in the same way (through revolutionary action) he overpowered the powerful aggressors to establish a society according to his own desires.

In the book *Marx and Marxism*, the author says:

Whereas in the philosophy of being (a philosophy that interprets the world in terms of "being" as opposed to the philosophy of "becoming," which interprets the world in terms of motion. Marxism belongs to the group of the philosophies of "becoming") it was customary at first to set forth the ideas and the principles from which practical conclusions are derived; praxis (practical philosophy), on the other hand, regards action as the origin and basis of all thought. It replaces the faith in thought by the philosophy of power. In agreement with Hegel, it asserts: "The real being of man, in the first instance, is his own action." In this belief he joins the German thinker who reversed the famous phrase, "In the beginning there was the Word"—in which the Word signifies spirit, for it is through the word that the spirit expresses itself—and declared "In the beginning there was the Act."¹⁸

This is one of the principles of the materialistic philosophy of Marxism. This principle is known as "praxis" in the Marxist terminology, and is borrowed by Marx from his materialist predecessor, Feuerbach, and his another master, Hegel.

Opposed to this principle is the principle of the philosophy of ontological realism [idealism] that believes in the priority of thought over action and reciprocal interaction of thought and action. In this philosophy, thought is the essence of man (e.g. the self's 'knowledge by presence' of itself). Man has a reciprocal relation with action and work: he creates work and his work in turn moulds him. Man, through his action upon the external world, acquires the data of his knowledge from the external world; until the mind becomes enriched with these primary data, it remains incapable of any intelligent activity. After collecting this data, the mind reciprocally exercises its powers on the data in various fashions, as by generalization, abstraction, and inference (ratiocination). In this way, it prepares the grounds for the correct understanding of objects. Understanding is not merely the reflection of external matter in the mind. It is only after the reflection of external matter is transformed inside the mind through a series of mental processes, which originate in the nonmaterial substance of the soul, that understanding becomes possible. Hence, action is the origin of thought and thought is the origin of action. Action is the test of thought and at the same time thought is the test of action. This is not a

vicious circle. Man's nobility lies in his wisdom, faith, and dignity; and in turn his work is valuable because through it he acquires these virtues. Man is the creator of his work, and, at the same time, he is also its product. This is the distinguishing characteristic of man, which is not found in any other being, and which is derived from a mode of Divine creation special to his species.¹⁹

Mans' creativity in relation to work is inventive and positive, while work's formative power in relation to man is only quantitative. It means that man actually creates his own work, but work does not really create a man. It is work, exercise, and repetitive practice, which provide the grounds for the making of man from within. Whenever there is a reciprocal relationship between two things which is inventive and positive from one side and quantitative and numerical from the other, the former is prior to the latter.

Hence man, whose essence is consciousness ('knowledge by presence' of his own self), has reciprocal relationship with work. Man creates work and work moulds man. Considering the fact that man is the necessary creative cause of work and work is merely a potential or quantitative cause of man, it may be said that man is prior to work, and work is not prior to him.

4. Priority of the Social Existence of Man Over His Individual Existence, or the Principle of Priority of Sociology Over Psychology

From the biological point of view, man is the most perfect of all animals. He has a kind of capacity for self-improvement which is specific to his kind. Man is endowed with a specific personality whose dimensions form his human Dasein (existence). As a result of continued experiences and learning, the philosophical and intellectual dimension of man's existence is shaped. And due to the influence of some other factors his existence gains another dimension which is the ethical dimension. It is this dimension which is the source of all values, and basis of all the moral 'musts' and 'must nots'. The artistic and religious dimensions are also evolved in a similar manner. Man himself styles a system of intellectual principles which serve as the basis of his thinking within the framework of his philosophical and intellectual dimensions. In the course of his judgements, he arrives at a set of absolute and semi-absolute (comparatively relative) values in the moral and social spheres of life. All these dimensions combined together constitute human existence.

Human dimensions are entirely effects of social factors. At the time of birth, man is devoid of all these dimensions; he is actually like a raw material ready to acquire any form, ideological or emotional,

depending upon the factors that exercise influence upon him. He is like an empty pot that has to be filled from outside, like a blank recording tape on which any sound can be recorded. Whatever is recorded on it is retrievable. To sum up, the actual maker of human personality, and whatever that transforms man from a 'thing' into a 'person,' is nothing but the external social factors, which combined together constitute that which is called social process. Man in himself is purely a 'thing,' which is transformed into a 'person' as a result of the impact of social factors.

P. Royan in his *Historical Materialism* quotes from page 42 of Plekhanov's *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*:

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

In the same book, it is further stated that:

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

In contrast to this principle is another anthropological principle which is based upon the view that the foundation of human personality, from which man's intellect and higher ideals arise, is itself inherent in human nature, ingrained in him by the agents which are responsible for his creation. It is correct that man, contrary to the well-known theory of Plato, is not born with a ready-made and finished personality, but the real foundation of his personality is inborn, not acquired from the society. If we want to interpret this idea in philosophical terms, we shall have to say that the real source of the human

dimensions of man's existence—including the moral, religious, philosophical, artistic, scientific, literary, and emotional dimensions— have their origin in his rational self, which is man's distinguishing characteristic, and is bestowed upon him by the process of creation itself. Society fosters man, nurtures him, or distorts him according to his individual aptitudes. At first the rational self is potential, then it gradually attains actuality. In this way, man, according to the basic principles of thought, and also according to the principle governing his material and intellectual inclinations and aptitudes, is like all the other living beings, whose all faculties are potential in the beginning, and as a result of a series of mutational movements (*ḥarakāt jawhariyyah*) gradually actualize, develop, and attain perfection. Man, under the influence of external factors, nourishes and cultivates his innate personality and attains perfection, or sometimes he deviates from the normal course and distorts it. This is the same principle which in Islamic writings is called the "principle of nature," and is regarded as the mother principle in Islamic teachings.

On the basis of the principle of nature, human psychology is prior to human sociology. Sociology itself originates in human psychology. According to this principle of nature, although at the time of birth man possesses neither perception nor imagination, neither the power of judgement nor human aptitudes, he however is born with some existential dimensions besides his animal dimensions. It is because of the same dimensions that he gradually evolves a sequence of abstract ideas and judgements (in philosophical and logical terms, the 'secondary concepts') which form the real foundation of human thought, and without which any kind of logical reasoning is impossible. The same dimensions develop a series of sublime aspirations in man, and are considered to be the foundation of human personality.

According to the theory of priority of human sociology over human psychology, man is merely a passive receiver, not an active seeker. He is a raw material which is indifferent to any form given to him, a blank tape on which any song can be recorded. In it there is no kind of inherent movement towards any fixed preordained form. Whatever form is given to it is accepted without causing any distortion; because it neither has any form of its own, nor is any form alien to it. The tape does not require any particular song, because of its ability to receive any song without being alienated or estranged from its own essence or nature. The relation of this raw material to all forms, the relation of the tape to all songs, and the relation of the pot to whatever fills it, are similar and of the same kind.

But according to the principle of nature and the principle of priority of human psychology over human sociology, although in the beginning man lacks actual understanding and actual inclinations, from

within he moves in a dynamic way towards a series of primary judgements, which are called *a priori* or primary principles. He also moves towards a series of higher, sublime values which constitute his ideals of humanity. After that a set of simple ideas, which are the primary elements of thought (and are called in philosophical term 'primary concepts'), enters into his mind from outside; those principles emerge in the form of a system of theoretical or practical judgements, and the innate human inclinations gradually assume definite form in the course of time.

According to the first theory, man, under the existing conditions, believes for example, that the arithmetical formula, $2 \times 2 = 4$, as being absolutely true for all times and places. But actually this belief is a product of specific conditions; which means that it is due to the prevailing conditions which make it true, and it is just possible that under different conditions and a different environment the judgement would be quite different, such as $2 \times 2 = 26$.

But according to the second theory, although the external conditions help man to arrive at the idea of numbers 2, 4, 8, 10 and so on, but the calculations like $2 \times 2 = 4$ or $5 \times 5 = 25$ are essential products of the human mind, and it is impossible for them to have different forms. Similarly the perfectionist tendencies of human nature are also inseparably essential characteristics of man's mind or soul.²⁰

5. Priority of Material Aspect of Society Over its Intellectual Aspect

Society is comprised of different strata, classes, and structures: economic, cultural, administrative, political, religious, legal, etc. From this angle, a society seems to be quite similar to a complete house where a family dwells and which consists of a drawing room, bedroom, kitchen, toilet etc.

One of the different social structures is that which serves the purpose of the base or the foundation of the whole structure, upon which stands the system and the superstructure. If it is disturbed or collapses, the whole structure is necessarily bound to fall. It is the economic structure of the society. The social structure of the society consists of whatsoever is related with its system of material production, such as tools and means of production, sources and relations of production.

Tools of production, which comprise the most important part of the social structure, are themselves always changing and developing. Every stage in the development of the tools of production, necessitates a specific system of relations of production which negates all that existed prior to it in the society.

The type of relations of production existing in a society depends upon particular laws and conditions concerning the institution of ownership, which really means the laws and conditions that govern the members of society and their conventional relationship with the sum total of the product of society. With inevitable changes in the relations of production, the basis of all legal, intellectual, moral, religious, philosophical, and scientific principles is bound to change. In one sentence: economy is the foundation of society.

In the book *Marx and Marxism*, a passage from Marx's preface to his work *The Critique of Political Economy* is quoted:

In the social production of their life, men enter into specific relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life-process in general. It is not the consciousness of man that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.²¹

In the same book Marx's letter to Annenkov is also quoted:

Assume a particular state of development in the productive facilities of man and you will get a corresponding form of commerce and consumption. Assume particular degrees of development of production, commerce, and consumption and you will have a corresponding organization of the family, or orders or of classes, in a word a corresponding civil society.²²

Peter explains Marx's view in the following words:

In this fashion Marx has compared the society to a building, the base and foundation of which are the economic institutions, whose superstructure (the building itself) is comprised of political, religious, and legal patterns, customs and norms. As in the case of a building, it depends upon the position of its base and foundation, the economic forms (relations of production) and technical modes are also dependent upon and associated with the modes of thinking, the political system and the customs, and each of them is subject to economic conditions.²³

The same book quotes from Lenin's *Marx-Engels Marxism* a passage reproduced from the third volume of *The Capital*:

The mode of production manifests itself in the human activity in relation to nature and, following that, in social conditions and intellectual patterns resulting from them.²⁴

The same book quotes further from the *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

My investigations led to the result that the legal relations as well as forms of the state are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in the material conditions of life... the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy.²⁵

Marx, in his book *The Poverty of Philosophy*, has written:

Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces, men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand mill gives you a society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, a society with the industrial capitalist.²⁶

The theory of the primacy of material structure of society in relation to other social formations corresponds to the theory of priority of action over thought. The theory of priority of action over thought is applicable to the individual level, and the theory of priority of material aspect over other social aspects is actually based upon the theory of priority of action over thought but at the level of society. Since the advocates of this view also advocate the theory of priority of human sociology over human psychology, hence the priority of individual action over individual thought is a form and result of the theory of priority of material aspect over other social aspects. Contrarily, if human sociology is considered to be prior to human psychology, the priority of material aspect of society over its other aspects would be considered as the effect and result of the priority of individual action over individual thought.

The material aspect of society, which may be also termed as the economic structure or economic base, consists of two constituents: firstly, the tools of production, which are the product of man's relation with nature; and, secondly, the economic relations of the members of society on the grounds of distribution of wealth, which are sometimes termed as the "relations of production." Often both of them are referred to as "the means of production" or "the mode of production."²⁷ It should be noted that these terms used by the founders of historical materialism are not free from ambiguity, and are not well-defined and specific.²⁸ When they say that economy is the base and the material aspect of society is prior to other social aspects, they mean the whole system of production, but generally refer to the tools of production and relations of production.

Special attention should be paid to an important point fully expli-

cit in the writings of the founders of historical materialism that the base itself is two-tiered; a part of it acts as the base for the other part, which is built upon it. The basis, the real foundation at the bottom of the structure consists of the tools of production, i.e. the physical labour materialized. It is the physical labour which creates and posits particular economic relations according to the distribution of wealth. These relations, which reflect the degree of the development of the tools of production, are not only in harmony with the tools of production, but are also considered to be their incentive and motivating force. It means that the specific economic relations in a society are the means of deriving the greatest benefit from the tools of production. They are like a garment tailored to fit the body, i.e. the means of production. But the tools of production in themselves are subject to development. Any change in the tools of production can disturb the harmony between the two constituent parts of the system of production. The productive and economic relations, i.e. those laws which were evolved to suit the earlier tools of production, become outdated in the same manner as a child's dress does not fit the fully grown-up man, and hinders his free movement. Similarly the primitive tools do not suit a more developed society and obstruct its growth by creating contradiction between the two tiers of production structure. The new tools of production are inevitably established and the base, i.e. the economic structure of society, is totally transformed and, in consequence of this change, the legal, moral, philosophical, and religious superstructure is also overthrown.

Keeping in mind the primacy of collective labour, i.e. labour materialized which is represented by the tools of production, and also considering the fact that Marx is one of those sociologists who regard sociology as being prior to psychology, who also considers man *qua* man as a social being or in his own words "*sui generis*", the philosophical role of labour according to Marxism—which is the essence of the Marxist philosophy and to which little attention has been paid—becomes clear.

Marx gives the same importance to human labour in the context of human existence that Descartes gives to the rational being of man, Bergson to the dynamic aspect of human existence, and Jean Paul Sartre to man's feeling of guilt.

Descartes says, "I think, therefore I am" (*Cogito ergo sum*). Bergson says, "I have continuity, therefore I exist." Sartre says, "I feel guilty, therefore I exist." Marx would have said, "I work, therefore I exist."

Apart from these diverse modes of existence (thought, continuity, guilt etc.), none of these thinkers tries to posit human existence or 'ego' in absolute terms. Some of them even maintain that man's existence cannot be conceived beyond and apart from one of these

specific modes. Moreover, everyone of them wants to define man's essence and reality of human existence in these terms only.

For instance, Descartes intends to say, "My existence is synonymous with the existence of my thought; eliminate thought, and I am nothing." Bergson intends to say, "Human existence is identical with continuity and time (duration)." Sartre also intends to say that "man's essence and actuality of his existence lies in the sense of guilt; take away guilt from human nature, and man is nothing." Marx also in his turn intends to say, "The whole of man's existence and his actual being is work. Work is the essence of humanity; I labour, therefore I am. It is not in this sense that work is the proof of the existence of my self, but in the sense that work itself is identical with the existence of my self; work is my actual existence."

Marx says, "For a socialist person the entire so-called history of the world is nothing but begetting of man through human labour."²⁹ He distinguishes human consciousness from man's real existence, and says, "It is not the consciousness of man that determines his being, but his social being that determines his consciousness."³⁰ He further says that the premises with which we start are not self-willed or absolute, but are derived from real individuals, their actions, and from material conditions of existence. He explains the term "real individual" in the following words: "But the real individuals act not according to the whims which cross their imagination...but according to what they materially produce and make; i.e. they act on the basis of definite material conditions and certain limitations—conditions which are independent of their will."³¹

Engels says: "Labour is the source of all wealth, the political economists assert... but it is infinitely more than this. It is the prime basic condition for all human existence, and this is true to such an extent that, in a way, we should say that it is labour which has created man himself."³² All these extracts from the writings of the founders of Marxism indicate their emphasis on the role of labour. However, Marx and Engels have borrowed this idea regarding the role of labour from Hegel, who said, "The real being of man, in the first instance, is his action."³³

Hence, according to Marxism, existence of man is primarily social and not individual. Secondly, the social existence of man is synonymous with his materialized labour, i.e. collective labour. All individual modes like feelings and emotions, or all social modes such as morality, philosophy, art, religion etc. are only expressions and manifestations of man's real being; they are not identical with his being itself. Accordingly, the actual evolution of man is identical with the development of collective labour. But intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development or evolution of the social system is only a manifestation and reflec-

tion of the real development and not the development itself. The material development of a society is the criterion of its intellectual development. As action is the criterion for judging thought, truth or falsity of an idea is also judged through action and not by intellectual or logical standards. In the same way, the measure of intellectual development also is material development. Hence, if the question arises as to which school of philosophy, morality, religion or art is more progressive, the intellectual and logical standards cannot provide the answer to this question. The only criterion should be to see what are the conditions of which that particular school of thought is the product and manifestation, and at which stage of development of social labour or tools of production it has emerged.

This type of thinking is, of course, very strange to people like us who consider the real existence of man as his own 'self' and this 'self,' too, an immaterial substance and a product of mutational movements of nature and not the product of society. But for one like Marx, who thinks in material terms and does not believe in the immaterial substance, is bound to interpret the essence of man and his actuality from a biological point of view, and say that the essence of man is identical with the physical constitution of his body, as the ancient materialists, like the materialists of the eighteenth century, believed. But Marx has rejected the mechanistic view of life and has claimed that the being of man is grounded in society not in nature. Whatever has been formed by nature is the potential human being, not the actual one. Furthermore, either Marx should regard thought as the essence of humanity, and work as the manifestation and expression of thought or, on the contrary, he should consider labour as the essence of humanity and thought as the manifestation and expression of labour. Marx, being a materialist, not only does approve of the primacy of matter in the individual, but also rejects the idea of any supra material essence besides the individual's material existence. In the context of society and history also, he accedes to the priority of matter. As a result he has to adopt the second alternative.

Here a basic difference between the point of view of Marx and that of other materialists concerning the nature of history comes to light. Every materialist, since he considers man and other manifestations of his existence as material, inevitably tends to regard history also as materialistic. But what Marx says is more than this. Marx tries to say that history is essentially economic in character, and in economics, too, the economic relations of production occupy the most important place. Since he considers the economic and production relations, i.e. the relation of workers with the products of their labour, as essential and necessary, derived from the stage of development of the tools of production, Marx's viewpoint is that history is determined by the tools or

instruments of production. Merely to say that history is materialistic in nature, or to say that history is economic in nature, is not enough to define the Marxian viewpoint. We should notice that according to Marx the essence and nature of history is "instrumentalistic." I, in some of my works,³⁴ have termed Marx's historical materialism as an "instrumentalist theory," which is opposed to my own "humanistic theory" of history.

Actually, the manner in which Marx is absorbed in his philosophy of labour and conceives the idea of 'social labour,' shows that human beings as he conceives them are not the same as those who walk in the streets and think and resolve, but as if they are, in fact, like tools and machines in factories. Human beings who walk, talk, and think are seen as images of the 'real' human beings conceived by Marx. Marx's view of social labour and tools of production seems to advance a view according to which man is a being who acts blindly and mechanically without any resolution and will. He is merely a shadow of man, not man himself, whose development and progress is determined strictly externally and who has no will or purpose of his own, and is forced to follow a predetermined path blindly.

It may be said that whatever Marx has said regarding the priority of collective labour over the conscious mind and human will sounds to be quite similar to the views expressed by some of the religious thinkers about the unconscious functionings of human organs, such as the functioning of digestive system, heart, liver etc., which are considered to operate under the influence of a hidden single will. According to these thinkers, desires, wishes, 'oughts' and 'ought nots,' and consequently the matters which are related to the practical aspect of the mind, i.e. the lower, functional, and physiological sides of the human self, which appear on the surface of the conscious mind and without its knowing their origin, are reflections of a series of compulsive natural needs originating from the subconscious. It is similar to what has been termed by Freud as the subconscious or the unconscious, which dominates the conscious mind.

The views of those ancient thinkers and that of Freud, however, relate to a part of the conscious mind and to the influence of a concealed consciousness. Besides, whatever they talk about is not external to human existence; but what Marx says is external to human existence. Careful observation shows that Marx's theory is quite astonishing from the philosophical point of view.

Marx compares his own discovery with the well-known biological discovery of Darwin. Darwin has proved that a process quite external to the animal's will and consciousness gradually and unconsciously causes biological changes in the course of time. Marx also claims that a blind process (identical with the real existence of man) gradually and

unconsciously causes the formation of the social structure, i.e. all the things named by Marx as superstructure, and even a part of the base also, i.e. the socio-economic relations. He says, "Darwin has called the attention of scientists towards the history of natural selection, the formation of organs in plants and animals corresponding to the means of production necessary for their survival. Isn't the history of generation and formation of organs producing the social human being, i.e. the material basis of all types of social organizations, worthy of such a treatment? ...Natural selection lays bare the modes of human action vis-a-vis nature; the mode of production lays bare man's material existence, and as a result, the source of social relations, thought, and intellectual products that spring from it."³⁵

It is quite obvious from all that we have said about the theory of historical materialism that it is based on several other theories, some of which are psychological and others are sociological, some philosophical and others anthropological.

Conclusions:

The theory of historical materialism itself leads to a series of conclusions which are influential in practical social strategy. Historical materialism is not merely a theoretical and intellectual approach without relevance to social behaviour and social choice. Now we have to see what sort of conclusions can be drawn from it.

1. The first conclusion is related to the problem of study of society and history. On the basis of historical materialism, the best and the most reliable way to study and analyse historical and social events is to investigate their economic basis. Without studying the economic foundation of historical events, their correct understanding is impossible; because it is presumed that all social changes are materialistic in essence, even though they may appear to have an independent cultural, religious, or moral essence. It means that all these changes are reflections of the economic and material conditions of society, being their effects. Ancient thinkers also claimed that knowledge of objects by means of identification of their causes is the most reliable and the best way of understanding them. Hence, if we assume that the root cause of all social changes is the economic structure of society, the best way of studying history is socio-economic analysis. In other words, as the cause has priority over its effects, at the stage of study, also, priority lies with it. Hence, the priority of economic base exists not only at the level of external reality, but it is also to be observed at the level of intellectual inquiry and study.

In the book *Revisionism from Marx to Mao*, this problem has been discussed as follows:

For analysing social revolutions, one must not judge social conflicts in political, legal, or ideological terms; on the contrary, they are to be interpreted in terms of the contradiction between the productive forces and relations of production. Marx has seriously warned us of the dangers of such a judgement, firstly because such a judgement is not realistic, for it replaces the cause, which economic changes and contradictions are, by the effect, i.e. political, legal, and ideological forms, which are the effects. Secondly, such an interpretation is superficial; as instead of probing deeply into the real causes, it only touches upon the surface, and what is apparent reality is considered to be sufficient for explanation. Thirdly, it is illusory; because the superstructures, which are on the whole ideological, are nothing but inaccurate images of the reality. Depending on inaccurate images instead of a realistic analysis of the problem under study, will no doubt lead us into confusion and error.³⁶

Here the author quotes from the selected works of Marx and Engels:

As in the case of an individual mere self-introspection does not help us to make any judgement, in the same way, during the period of disturbance and chaos, the ideas of that period should not be treated as helpful for judging its character.³⁷

Marx makes an attempt to reject the role of consciousness, thought, and innovation, which is generally considered to be a basic agent of development. For instance, Saint Simon, from whom Marx has borrowed a number of ideas, writing about the role of creativity in the process of evolution, says:

Societies are governed by two moral forces which are equally strong and operate alternately. One is the force of habit or custom, and the other is inclination towards innovation and creativity. After some time customs necessarily become evil....At such times, the need for something new begins to be felt. It is this need which really constitutes the revolutionary situation.³⁸

Proudhon, another of Marx's teachers, says about the role of ideas and beliefs in the evolution of societies:

Political forms of nations have been the manifestations of their beliefs. Movement of the forms, their transformation and annihilation are the tests which reveal the value of the underlying ideas, through which an absolute and unchangeable reality is revealed to us gradually. But we see that all political institutions necessarily seek adjustment with the existing social conditions in order to be saved from inevitable death.³⁹

Despite all this, Marx claims that every social revolution, more than anything else, is a socio-economic necessity. It is caused by the process of polarization of civil social structure, the forces of production and social relations.⁴⁰

Marx tries to say that it is neither inventiveness and creativity nor revolutionary ideas and beliefs that are instrumental in the process of social change, but it is socio-economic necessity that makes men develop and embrace new revolutionary beliefs and ideologies. Hence if we try to apply the conclusions of historical materialism for analysing certain historical events such as the wars of Persia and Greece, or the Crusades, or the Islamic conquests, or the Renaissance in the West, or the constitutional movement in Iran, it would be a mistake to study and evaluate them from the viewpoint of superficial forms of these events, which are occasionally political, religious, or cultural. It would not be right to accept even the views of the revolutionaries, who might have regarded those movements as religious, cultural, or political as a criterion. We should concentrate our attention on the real substance of those movements, which is economic and material in essence, in order to arrive at correct conclusions.

Nowadays we see that the contemporary Marxists, while trying to explain any historical movement, snatch some rudimentary facts from here and there, and without having any authentic and conclusive information about it discuss the economic conditions of the past events and movements.

2. The law governing history is deterministic, inviolable, and external to human will.

In previous chapters, I have already discussed whether a series of binding causal laws rules history. I have also explained that some people in the name of accidents, and others on account of the freedom of human will, have rejected the law of causation and consequently negated the existence of certain necessary permanent laws for society and history. But I have proved that such a theory is baseless. The law of causation, and consequently the necessary relation between cause and effect, governs history in the same manner as it governs other natural phenomena. In addition to it I have also proved that society and history have an organic unity and objective existence, and, therefore, possess a specific nature, whose laws are necessary and universal. Hence according to the previous statement, a series of general and necessary laws govern history and society. We shall term this type of necessity as 'philosophical necessity.' This necessity is responsible for directing the course of history according to a series of definite and necessary laws.

But the Marxist notion of historical determinism means economic determinism. It is a unique interpretation of philosophical necessity. This theory synthesizes two different theories. The first one is the conception of philosophical necessity, which holds that no accident can occur without a cause. Occurrence of every historical phenomenon is made inevitable and certain due to presence of particular causes responsible for bringing it into existence. No accident can occur in absence of

its causes. The second theory is that of the primacy of material foundation of society as against other foundations. This theory has already been discussed earlier. The necessary corollary of these theories is materialistic determinism of history, i.e. dependence of the superstructure on the base is necessary and inevitable. Any change in the base necessarily brings about change in the superstructure. Without a change in the base, any change in the superstructure is absolutely impossible.

That which, according to the Marxist claim, makes Marxist socialism 'scientific,' and makes it assume the garb of a natural law like other natural laws, is the very principle of historical determinism. According to this principle the tools of production, which are the most fundamental part of the economic structure, continue to develop according to a system of natural laws. Their development is similar to the evolution of animals and plants which in the course of several hundred million years continued their gradual development, attaining new forms at every stage. As changes in species and evolution in animals and plants are independent of their own will and desire, the process of development and evolution of the tools of production also takes place automatically.

In the course of their gradual development, the tools of production pass through certain stages. At every stage they cause irresistible transformation in all social modes, and this process is irresistible. Before it reaches a specific stage of development, the possibility of initiative changes in the superstructure of the society does not exist. The socialists, and in general the advocates of a just social order, who do not pay much attention to the possibilities realized through the development of the tools of production, and merely cherish the desire for social justice and socialism on sentimental grounds, cannot achieve anything; they waste their time and energy in futile daydreaming. Karl Marx, in his preface to the first German edition of *The Capital*, says:

The country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed the image of its own future.⁴¹ ... And even when a society has got upon the right track for the discovery of the natural laws of its movement ultimately ...it can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development. But it can shorten and lessen the birth pangs.

Marx himself has expounded certain points in the latter part of his statement, which either have been ignored or underestimated. He is actually trying to answer a possible question and objection. Someone might have said: "The step-by-step development of society follows irresistibly the orderly step-by-step development in nature only, as long as man does not understand this process and fails to discover it. But as soon as man understands it, it comes under his control and domina-

tion. It is said that as long as man does not understand nature, it dominates him, but as soon as he understands it, nature becomes his obedient servant. For example, a disease remains uncured as long as its causes and cures are unknown, but as soon as it is understood, it becomes curable and is eradicated. In the same manner cyclones and other natural calamities may be prevented."

To elaborate the above-quoted statement, what Marx wants to say is this: The orderly step-by-step movement of society is a kind of organic change. It is the type of automatic internal movement of things, like the growth of animals and plants. It is a kind of motion which is not mechanical. But changes brought about in things by means of external factors, like all technical and industrial changes, and other changes imposed on nature by applying external pressures, such as killing of insects by insecticides or elimination of bacteria by means of drugs, are mechanistic. When the knowledge of natural laws is employed by man to subjugate nature, the relation between man and nature is mechanical.

In the case of organic transformations and internal and essential movements of things, the utmost role that human knowledge and consciousness can play is to act in accordance with them, and to apply his knowledge for extracting the greatest benefit from them.

Man, by discovering the laws governing the growth and evolution of plants and animals—and of these are the laws governing the growth of embryo inside the animal's womb—also discovers the necessity and unchangeability of those irresistible laws.

Marx means to say that, social development of man, which is subject to development in the tools of production, is a kind of organic, autogenetic, essential, and spontaneous evolution from within, that cannot be controlled by knowledge or consciousness. Man is compelled to pass through the specific stages of a determined social evolution, just as an embryo has to undergo a definite course of development inside the womb. Any idea of changing that course is nothing but futile. It is not possible for society to reach the highest stage without passing through certain intermediate stages. It is also impossible for a society to reach the highest stage by adopting a course different from the paths determined by history.

The Marxist conception of social evolution as a spontaneous, unconscious, or involuntary, natural, and necessary process resembles the Socratic conception of human mind, according to which ideas are inborn. Socrates used the dialectical method in his teachings. He believed that if the questions were asked step-by-step in a systematic way with an accurate knowledge of the workings of the mind, it finds the answers automatically and naturally without any external guidance. Socrates was the son of a midwife. He used to say that he performed

the same duty with minds as his mother performed in regard to pregnant women. A midwife does not give birth to a child. It is nature which makes mother deliver the child at a certain time. In spite of this she needs the services of the midwife, who takes care that any untoward incident does not happen which may endanger the life of the mother or the child.

From the Marxist point of view, though the knowledge of the laws of sociology and philosophy of history does not cause a social change, yet the knowledge of sociology and philosophy of history is valuable. And scientific socialism is nothing but the discovery of these laws. The least service it can render is to liberate minds from the influence of utopian socialism and sentimental advocacy of justice. The laws of dynamics, on the contrary, although they are unchangeable and permanent, their knowledge offers an advantage, i.e. they are useful in predicting the future course. In the light of scientific sociology and scientific socialism the pattern of every society can be investigated. We can discover its present stage of development and predict its future course. Consequently, one can know in which stage of embryonic development is the baby of socialism in the womb of society. At every stage one must expect only what it is right to expect of that stage, avoiding all undue expectations. A society which is still in the stage of feudalism should not be expected to enter into the phase of socialism; because, a four-month-old embryo cannot be expected to be born immediately as a fully developed baby.

Marxism makes an attempt to identify the natural-dynamic stages of society, and discover such inviolable laws of evolution of societies which are applicable to the transition of society from one epoch to another.

According to Marxism, all societies have to pass through four phases of development in order to reach the stage of socialism, viz. the period of primitive communism, the period of slavery, the period of capitalism, and the period of socialism. Sometimes instead of four periods five, six, or even seven, periods are enumerated, which means that the periods of slavery, capitalism, and socialism may be further divided into two subperiods.

3. Each historical period is quite different from the other period in character and nature. As the process of evolution changes one species into another, in case of historical epochs the same thing happens. Every period of history has its own specific laws; the laws belonging to an earlier period or any of the latter periods can never be applied to a certain period of history. Water, as long as it is water, follows the laws governing liquids; but when the same water is converted into steam, it does not follow those laws but becomes subject to the laws of gases. Society also follows this principle; for example, as long as it is in the

stage of feudalism it has to follow the laws peculiar to feudalism, but as soon as it leaves back that stage and reaches the stage of capitalism, any effort to retain the laws belonging to feudalism would be absurd. Accordingly, a society cannot have any eternal and absolute laws. According to the theory of historical materialism and the doctrine that economy is the base, all the laws that are claimed to be 'eternal' are actually dependent upon the base and so transient. One of the basic differences between historical materialism and religion, specially Islam, is that religion firmly believes in the eternity of a set of (Divine) laws.

The book *Revisionism from Marx to Mao*, quotes from an appendix to the second edition of *The Capital*:

Every period of history has laws of its own... accordingly as life passes from one stage to another stage, it evolves and is governed by a new set of laws. Economic life, in the course of its historical development, brings forth a phenomenon that we come across in various branches of biology... social organisms are distinguished from one another in the same way as animal and plant organisms are differentiated.⁴²

4. From the dawn of history, it is development in the tools of production that is responsible for giving rise to private ownership and dividing society into the two classes of the exploiters and the exploited. These two main classes have represented the two basic poles of society from the beginning of history to the present day. There has been, and always there shall be, a struggle and antagonism between these two poles of society. But bipolarization of society does not mean that all groups are either exploiters or exploited. Possibly there may be certain groups who are neither exploiters nor exploited. What is meant is that the important groups that influence the fate of society are these two groups which form the two basic poles of society. Other groups are dependent on one of these two main groups.

In *Revisionism from Marx to Mao*, the author writes:

We find two different patterns of division of society according to classes and their conflicts; according to Marx and Engels: one is bipolar, and the other is multipolar. Definition of class also differs in both the patterns.⁴³ In the first pattern it is an imaginary class, while in the other it is a real class. The rules regarding the divisions of classes are also different. Engels, in his preface to *The Peasants' War in Germany* tries to reconcile these two patterns by evolving a uniform standard for class division. He distinguishes various classes in society, and, within each class, he differentiates various subgroups. But according to his belief, there are only two classes who accomplish a definite historic mission: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; because they form the really opposite poles of society.⁴⁴

According to the philosophy of Marxism, as it is impossible for the

superstructure of a society to precede its infrastructure, similarly it is also impossible for society to be considered as unified whole at the level of superstructure despite its being divided at the level of the base (social and economic relations, and property relations) into two poles of the exploiters and the exploited. Social consciousness itself is also, in its turn, to be analysed into two types, i.e. the consciousness of the exploiters and the consciousness of the exploited. Thus two types of world outlooks, two ideologies, two moral systems, and two types of philosophy emerge in society. Social and economic conditions of each class inspire a specific type of thinking, a specific social point of view, a particular taste, and a particular social attitude and approach in each class. It is not possible that a class's consciousness, taste, and manner of thinking should precede its economic situation. The only things that are not bipolar and which are specific to the class of exploiters are religion and state. Religion and state are invented by the exploiting class for the surrender and subjugation of the exploited. As the exploiting class is the owner of all material resources of society, they impose their own culture and their religion on the oppressed. In this manner the culture of the ruling class, i.e. the world outlook of the ruling class, their ideology, their morality, their tastes, their sensibility, and more than everything, the religion of the rulers, is predominant; and the culture belonging to the oppressed remains always dominated like themselves, obstructing their progress. In *German Ideology* Marx says:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas; i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal...The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas, hence of the relations which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. In so far, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an historical epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range; hence among other things they rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of epoch.⁴⁵

The class of the rulers and exploiters is by nature reactionary, conservative, traditionalist and obscurantist. Its culture, which is imposed by force is also reactionary, traditionalist, and obscurantist. But the oppressed and the victimized class is by nature revolutionary, anti-traditionalist, progressive, and futurist. Their culture, which is oppressed like them, is a revolutionary, rebellious, and progressive culture. The condition of being oppressed is the essential condition for being revolutionary, i.e. this is the only class which is capable of being

revolutionary.

In the book *Revisionism from Marx to Mao*, after the passage which I have quoted from Engel's prefatory note to *The Peasants' War in Germany* is written:

One year after the publication of this prefatory note, (prefatory note to *The Peasants' War in Germany*) the Congress of the German Socialists has written in its Gotha Program that all classes form a reactionary front against the labour class. Marx severely criticized this statement. But if we are logical, we should admit the fact that since these miserable socialists could not possibly differentiate between his bipolar or multipolar patterns after what Marx had written in the Manifesto. In the *Manifesto* (Manifesto of the Communist Party), Marx presents the class conflicts of those days as the war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. He writes: "Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a revolutionary class."⁴⁶

In some of his remarks, Marx has himself said that the only class that fulfils all conditions and qualifications of being a revolutionary class is the proletariat, and these conditions mean:

1. The condition of being oppressed; they should be productive also.

2. The condition of being propertyless (the peasants also fulfil this and the first condition).

3. Organisation, which requires centralization and solidarity (the class of proletariat, who work together inside the factories, alone fulfil this condition, while peasants, who work on fields scattered in different lands, do not).

Regarding the second characteristic Marx says: "The worker is free in two ways: free to sell his labour, and free of every kind of property." And regarding the third characteristic he says in the *Manifesto*, "With the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number, but it also becomes concentrated in greater masses. Its power increases, and it becomes conscious of that power."⁴⁷

The above-mentioned doctrine can be termed as 'the doctrine of correspondence between the ideological foundation and the class and social foundation.' On the basis of this doctrine, every class produces a certain type of thought, ideas, morality, philosophy, art, and poetry which fulfil the requirements of its life-style, economic conditions and interests. We can also name it 'the doctrine of correspondence between the source of every thought and its direction.' It means that all types of thought and all kinds of moral and religious systems originating from a particular class will suit the interests of that class only. It is not possible that a system of thought originating from a certain class should aim to serve the interests of the other class, or a system of thought evolved by a particular class may serve the interests of humani-

ty without having a particular class orientation. Thought can become humanistic and can transcend the class only when the development in the tools of production reaches a stage which affirms the abolition of all classes. It means that by negating class contradictions, ideological contradictions are also negated, and by negating the basis of ideological contradictions, the contradictions between different currents of thought are also negated.

Marx, in some of his earlier works written in young age (*Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*), was more interested in the political aspect of classes (the rulers and the ruled) than the economic aspect (exploitation and the exploited). He considered class conflicts as wars for independence and freedom from bondage. He suggested two stages of these wars: the first as the partial and political stage, and the second as the total and humanistic stage. He stated that the proletarian revolution is the last stage of the revolution of the enslaved of history. A revolution is the basis of total emancipation of man from all sorts and forms of domination and servitude. Marx has tried to solve the problem as to how a class transcends its class character and proceeds forward to attain a goal which is universal and human, and at the same time to reconcile this notion with the laws of historical materialism. He explains that as subordination of this class is a fundamental fact, its revolution also is of basic significance. This class has not been subjected to any particular injustice, but the very essence of injustice itself is imposed upon it, thus stimulating it to aspire for the ideals of justice and human freedom.

This explanation, if poetic, is by no means scientific. What does Marx mean by the "essence of injustice" itself being imposed upon a class? Is it so that the exploiting class before assuming that role had to adopt this course according to a different logic and indulged in the acts of tyranny for the sake of tyranny, not for exploitation, and pursued the acts of injustice for the sake of injustice, not with the purpose of exploitation, as a consequence of which the proletariat reacted to obtain justice for itself? Moreover, the assumption that the exploiting class reaches this position during the period of capitalism, is quite contrary to the doctrine of historical materialism, and a kind of idealism.

The doctrine of correspondence between the ideological and class bases requires that there should be correspondence between the source of a thought and its orientation. It also requires that there should be a relation between the inclination of an individual and the particular school of thought which is the product of his own class; i.e. the natural propensity of every individual is towards the ideology which originates in his own class and is useful for the interests of his own class.

From the viewpoint of Marxist logic, this principle is of extraordinary sociological usefulness in understanding the nature of

ideologies and the aspirations of social classes.

5. The fifth conclusion is about the limited role of ideology, guidance, propaganda, exhortation and other such things, as they are matters associated with the superstructure in directing the society or social classes. Ordinarily it is presumed that ideology, propaganda, logical argument, education and upbringing, indoctrination and exhortation are capable of moulding and changing human thinking in accordance with preferred ends. Keeping in mind the fact that the consciousness of every individual and every group is the product of their social and class character and is necessarily bound to reflect it, it is also impossible for them to take a lead over or lag behind their class consciousness. The notion that the superstructure, and various phenomena related to it, is a source of social change is an idealistic conception of society and history. It means that the movement of the forces of the intelligentsia, reformers and revolutionaries is self-propelling. In fact, it is frustration and deprivation of the class which from within inspires the intelligentsia and motivates the spirit of reform and revolution, not any external factors like education, training, etc., or at least it is the class character which is responsible for preparing ground for these matters automatically. The maximum role of ideology, leadership, and other enlightening activities is only to the extent that they help in awakening the consciousness of contradiction between classes, giving rise to self-consciousness in the oppressed class; or it helps in transforming a 'class-in-itself,' into a 'class-for-itself,' i.e. a class unconscious of its class character into a class possessing class consciousness. Hence the sole intellectual factor that can mobilize a particular class in a class society is awakening of consciousness to its condition of being exploited. But other so-called universal humanitarian approaches such as love of justice and mankind cannot play any role in a class society divided into two groups of the exploiters and the exploited who are alienated from their own selves, and in which social consciousness has been split into two parts. It is true that with the development in the tools of production a proletarian government is established, abolishing class-distinctions, and man is restored to his original classless existence. Human consciousness divided on the basis of ownership is again unified. At that time the approach of universal humanitarianism, reflecting the communistic pattern of ownership of the tools of production, can play an effective role. Socialism, which is in fact a superstructure for a specific period of history, cannot be arbitrarily produced beforehand in any earlier period (as the Utopian Socialists desired.) Also, in any particular historical epoch in which society is divided into two classes, the consciousness of a specific class can in no way be imposed on the other class, there is nothing like common human consciousness.

In class societies, therefore, any general and universal ideology

without a class alignment cannot emerge. Every ideology that appears in class societies, inevitably possesses a specific class character. Even if such an impossibility should occur, it could not play any practical role. Accordingly, all the claims of religion, or at least that which in the form of guidance, preaching, moral advice, and exhortation addresses the whole humanity in the name of universal justice and equality for all, if not entirely deceptive, should at least be considered utopian.

6. The other conclusion we should infer is that all revolutionary figures, leaders, guides, and heroes essentially arise from the exploited class.

After demonstrating that it is only the exploited class that has the aptitude for enlightenment, reform, and revolution—only the condition of being oppressed and exploited can produce this aptitude, and at the most the superstructural factors may be credited for a waking class antagonism and self-consciousness—it becomes obvious that those prominent individuals who come forward to make the ideas of enlightenment instrumental in awakening class consciousness should themselves be fellow sufferers belonging to the same class and sharing its class consciousness. As it is historically impossible for a superstructural pattern to precede its base, and for a class to have a social consciousness that precedes its class character; in the same way it is not possible that a person as a 'leader' may precede his class, demanding more than what is required by his own class. Similarly, it is also impossible for a person belonging to the exploiting class of society to stand against his own class in the interests of the exploited class.

In the book, *Revisionism from Marx to Mao*, the author says:

Another original contribution of *The German Ideology* is analysis of class consciousness. Here Marx, contrary to his earlier works,⁴⁸ regards class consciousness as the product of the class itself; it does not come from without. The real consciousness is nothing but an ideology, because it is bound to give a generalized form to the interests of a particular class. But it does not exclude the fact that this consciousness, which is based upon the awareness of its own conditions, strengthens the interests of the class. In any case, the class cannot attain maturity without producing its specific class consciousness.

Marx's view affirms the division of labour within the working class itself, i.e. the intellectual work (the ideological work, leadership) and manual work. Some individuals become thinkers or ideologues of the class, while others rather passively accept and act upon the ideas and concepts provided for them.⁴⁹

In the same book, while discussing Marx's philosophy with reference to the *Manifesto* and *Poverty of Philosophy*, the author says:

In this way, awakening class consciousness and organizing it in the form of a 'class-for-itself' is the task of the proletariat and also the result of its self-fuelled economic battle. This upheaval is neither brought about by any intellectual theory which is alien to the workers' movement, nor by any political party. Marx condemns Utopian socialists who despite their proletarian inclination do not see the historical self-propulsion of the proletariat and their specific political movement...and try to replace with their fancies the gradual and self-motivated organization of the proletariat into a class.⁵⁰

This principle is particularly important for understanding the Marxist viewpoint about society and social inclinations, and the Marxist criteria for evaluating individuals, especially leaders and social reformers.

From whatever has been said above, it is obvious that Marx and Engels did not believe in any independent groups of intellectuals free of and above classes. That is, there is no room in the principles of Marxism to allow for the existence of such a class of intellectuals. If Marx occasionally makes statements contrary to this, it is because he himself does not remain a Marxist. And such occasions, as we shall discuss later, when Marx has contradicted himself, are not rare. Now, the question arises as to how Marx and Engels explain their own position with regard to intellectuals in the light of the principles of Marxism. None of them belonged to the proletariat class. Both of them were philosophers, not workers, yet they have produced the greatest theory of labour and working class.

Marx's answer to this question is interesting. In the book *Revisionism from Marx to Mao*, the author says:

Marx has spoken little about the intellectuals. He apparently does not regard them as a special stratum of society, but a part of certain other classes, particularly the bourgeoisie. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx considers academics, journalists, university teachers, and lawyers as the part of the bourgeois class, like priests and army men. In the *Manifesto*, when he wants to mention the names of the theorists of the working class who by origin do not belong to it—like Engels and himself—he does not call them intellectuals, but regards them as 'groups of people from the ruling class... who have embedded themselves amongst the proletariat,' and 'have brought many elements for the education and training of that class.'⁵¹

Marx does not offer any explanation as to how he and Engels tumbled down from the skies of the ruling class to the depths of the subject class, and how they could manage to bring with them those precious gifts for the teaching and training of the downtrodden and the "dhā matrabah" (the destitute), as the Quran calls them (90:17). In reality, whatever Marx and Engels could attain—and through them the lower and the downtrodden class of the proletariat—could not be attained by Adam, the father of mankind, who according to the

religious tradition, fell from heaven to earth. Adam could not bring such a gift along with him.

Marx does not explain as to how the ideology which can liberate the proletariat takes shape in the minds of the ruling class. In addition to this, he offers no explanation as to whether this descent or de-classing is especially reserved for only these two persons, or if it is possible for others too. He also does not throw any light on the matter that if sometimes, though in exceptional cases, the doors of heaven are opened to earth, whether it is the 'descent' alone that takes place and the members of the heavenly class come down to the level of the earthly class, or if it is possible the other way round too? Is the 'ascension' also sometimes possible in which the members of the downtrodden class attain the lofty heights of the ruling class? Perhaps, even if that were possible, they could hardly carry with them such gifts as may suit the heavenly ones.

Basically, it is meaningless to carry gifts from the earth to the heaven; but if one were blessed with the opportunity of ascension and were not merged into the heavenly class, he might return to earth, like Mr. Marx and Mr. Engels, with heavenly gifts for the earthly.

Criticism of Historical Materialism

NOW that we have dealt with the fundamentals and the conclusions of the theory of historical materialism, the time has come to make a critical appraisal of it.

First of all, I would like to point out that my aim is neither to criticize Marx's views scattered in all of his works, nor to appraise Marxism in its entirety. I only intend to evaluate his materialistic interpretation of history or historical materialism, which is one of the basic tenets of Marxism. Basically, the criticism of Marx's views or Marxism as a whole is a different thing from the criticism of one of its elements such as historical materialism.

The criticism of Marx's theories, i.e. the study of his views in totality based upon the entire bulk of his writings belonging to the different periods of his life, and which are full of many contradictions, is a work that has been done by several individuals in the West. In Iran, as far as I know, the book *Revisionism from Marx to Mao*, from which I have drawn abundantly and quoted extensively in this chapter, is the best book on this topic.⁵²

Our purpose here is criticism of historical materialism by analysing one or more of the fundamental principles of Marxism which in Marx's own view were considered indubitable, and by critically examining one or more principles which Marx himself does not consider as definite, and has occasionally contradicted them in some of his works, but are nevertheless the necessary part of Marxism; since Marx's own contradiction is to be regarded as a kind of deviation from Marxism.

Here I have critically examined certain definite and generally accepted principles of Marxism and the conclusions which necessarily follow from them. Our purpose is not to point out all the occasions when Marx has expressed views contrary to his own principles in his writings, which are replete with contradictions. The real target of my criticism is historical materialism and not the theories of Marx in general.

It is one of the wonders of history that in his philosophical, sociological, and economic writings Marx is more or less preoccupied with the

idea of historical materialism, but while analysing and evaluating certain contemporary historical events, he pays little attention to the principles of historical materialism. Why does he do so? This question has been answered variously. Furthermore, this attitude is not confined to this issue alone; on several problems of Marxism, Marx's attitude is one of self-contradiction. Theoretically or practically a sort of departure and deviation from Marxism in Marx himself can often be observed. Accordingly, we have to find a comprehensive answer to this question.

Some writers attribute this inconsistency to immaturity and shortcomings which he showed in different periods of his life. But this explanation is indefensible at least from the Marxist point of view; the major part of Marxism which is considered today as constituting the Marxist dogma is related to Marx's youth and the middle years of his life, and the most part of what are considered his deviations, including his analysis of contemporary events, belongs to the later period of his life.

Some other writers attribute this difference to his split personality. They claim that on the one hand he was a philosopher and an ideologue, which naturally requires of him to be inflexible in his dogmas, trying occasionally to interpret actual events, either by hook or by crook, according to his own ideas. On the other hand, he had a scientific temperament and spirit, which always necessitates total acceptance of reality and absence of adherence to any fixed dogma.

Certain other writers make a distinction between Marx and Marxism. They consider Marx and his thinking as only a stage of Marxism. Marxism in itself is considered to be a school of thought in the process of development. There is nothing wrong if Marxism left behind Marx in the course of its development. In other words, the view that the Marxism of Marx represents the primary stage of Marxism, does not violate the credibility of Marxism as a school. But this group does not explain what in their view is the essence of Marxism. The main condition for the development of a school is that its basic principles should remain permanent; changes occurring only in secondary matters without affecting the basic principles; otherwise there would be no difference between total rejection and development of a theory. If we do not consider the permanence of fundamental principles as a condition for its developmental process, then, why not pre-Marxian thinkers, viz. Hegel, Saint Simon, Proudhon or any other thinker of this type, should be considered as stages in the evolution of this school? Why should not Marxism be regarded as a stage in the development of one of these schools?

In my view, the cause of contradictions in Marx is due to the fact that he himself was lesser of a Marxist than the majority of Marxists. It is said that once in a gathering of ardent Marxists where Marx was

trying to defend his position which contradicted his earlier position, he said: "I am not so much of a Marxist as you are." It is also said that in his later years Marx said: "I am Marx, not a Marxist."

Marx's departure from Marxism in some of his views is because of the fact that Marx was too intelligent and ingenious to be a hundred percent Marxist. It needs some measure of stupidity in order to be a staunch Marxist. Historical materialism, which is a part of Marxism and the subject of our present study, as explained earlier, consists of certain fundamentals and corollaries, which neither Marx the scholar could impose upon himself for ever, nor Marx the philosopher and the thinker could accept to be permanently saddled with. Now we propose to critically evaluate this theory.

1. Baselessness

The first objection is that this view is not more than a mere 'theory' without any proofs. A philosophical theory of history ought to be based upon observation of contemporary events and historical facts, and should be applicable to other times also. Either it should be formulated on the basis of historical evidence, being in addition applicable to events of the present and the future, or it should have been deduced and inferred from *a priori* premises based upon a series of scientific, philosophical, and logical principles.

The theory of historical materialism does not fulfil the conditions of any of the above-mentioned methods. Neither the historical events of the times of Marx and Engels can be explained on its basis (as Engels himself has admitted. Engels says that he and Marx made a mistake in emphasizing the importance of the economic factor in some of their works. But, he adds, they were saved from this error in case of their analysis of contemporary events where they were confronted with historical reality itself), nor the historical events that occurred during thousands of years of human history confirm this theory. It is amazing to read the writings of some followers of Marxism who dogmatically try to explain the past history in the light of historical materialism, and read their master's opinions into the pages of history. For instance in the book *History of the Ancient world...*⁵³

2. Revision of Views by Its Founders

I have repeatedly mentioned that Marx terms economic foundation of society the 'infrastructure,' and other of its constituents as the 'superstructure.' This interpretation is evidently enough to show one-sided dependence of all the other structures on the economic base. Moreover, Marx explains in many of his writings quoted earlier, that the

influence in this relationship is unilateral; i.e. the economic factors are always the influencing factors, while all other social modes are passively influenced. The economic factors act independently and other factors are dependent on them.

No matter in whatever way Marx interprets his basic thesis, his theories always affirm the priority of matter over soul, the priority of material needs over intellectual needs, the priority of human sociology over human psychology, and the priority of action over thought.

But Marx, in many of his writings, has raised another issue on the basis of dialectical logic, which may be regarded as a revision of his view and also a kind of departure from absolute historical materialism. That issue is related to the problem of reciprocal causation. According to the principle of reciprocal causation, the cause-effect relationship should not be regarded as a one-sided process. If 'A' is the cause of change in 'B', in the same way 'B' also in its turn becomes the cause of 'A'. According to this principle, there is a kind of reciprocal causal relation between all parts of nature and all parts of society.

For the time being I am not concerned here with the validity or invalidity of this dialectical principle interpreted in this form. But we may say that, according to this principle, the suggestion of priority of one thing over the other is meaningless with regard to causal relation between two things like matter and spirit, or action and thought, or economic base and all other social institutions. Because if two things are interrelated and dependent upon each other for their existence, and the existence of one is conditioned by that of the other, the question as to which is prior or fundamental, is meaningless.

Marx, in some of his statements, considers all social processes, essential or nonessential, as based upon economic factors, and has not suggested the effect of superstructure on the infrastructure, as referred to earlier. However, in some of his statements he accepts a reciprocal cause-and-effect relationship between the infrastructure and the superstructure, but maintains that the basic and ultimate role is played by the base. In the book *Revisionism from Marx to Mao*, two works of Marx, *The Capital* and *The Critique of Political Economy*, are compared. The author, while stating that in both the works Marx regards the economic base as unilaterally determining the entire social structure, says:

In spite of this, Marx, consciously or unconsciously, has added a new dimension to this definition by stating that superstructures, despite primacy of the base over superstructures, can play an essential role in society.⁵⁴

The author further asks: What is the difference between the predominant function or 'determining role' that the economic infrastruc-

ture always plays and the 'essential role' played by the superstructures? It means that if the superstructure occasionally plays the essential role, it becomes the main determining and governing factor. In such cases, it may even be said that what we call the superstructure is not a superstructure but is really the infrastructure or the base, and what we call the infrastructure is the superstructure.

Engels, in a letter written in his later years to one Joseph Bloch, writes:

...According to the materialist conception of history, ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life.⁵⁵ More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase.⁵⁶ The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure; political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas, also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary.⁵⁷

Strangely enough, if the view that "the economic element is the only determining one" is a meaningless, abstract, and senseless phrase, this phrase has been uttered by no other person than Marx himself. Moreover, if the elements of superstructure "in many cases preponderate in determining historical struggles," it means that the determining and decisive element is not the economic one. After saying this, there is no need to believe that "the economic movement, amid all the host of accidents, asserts itself as necessary."

It is more amazing that Engels, in the later part of the same letter, accepts that he himself and Marx may be held responsible for this mistake (or in his own words, twist). He says:

Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasize the main principle vis-a-vis our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or opportunity to allow the other elements involved in the interaction to come into light.⁵⁸

But some other people offer quite the opposite explanation of this excessive emphasis by Marx and Engels on the economic elements. They say, this overemphasis is not meant for their opponents in the other camp, but aimed at disarming the rival supporters of this view in their own camp.

In the book *Revisionism from Marx to Mao*, the author, after pointing out that in the *Critique of Political Economy* Marx has emphasized the unilateral role of the economic factors more than in any other work—and I have already quoted the well-known passage from the preface to that book—explains Marx's reasons for compiling the *Critique*:

Another cause of writing the *Critique of Political Economy*, was the publication of a book by Proudhon, *Manuel du speculateur a la Bourse*, and another book by Darimon, the follower of Proudhon. When Marx saw that his rivals in the camp of Proudhon from one side, and the followers of Lassalle from the other side were relying upon the economic element in a reformative (not revolutionary) way, he endeavoured to seize this weapon from their hands and used it for the purpose of revolution. This necessitated a rigidity suited to the purpose of popularizing his beliefs.⁵⁹

Mao has reinterpreted the meanings of historical materialism and economic base according to the requirements of Chinese conditions. His new interpretation was aimed to explain his own role as the leader of the Chinese Revolution also. His interpretation of historical materialism reaches a point that one finds this theory and its emphasis on the economic base, and as a consequence the so-called scientific socialism whose basis is historical materialism, reduced to mere play of words and nothing else.

Mao, in his treatise on contradiction, under the title, "The Principal Contradiction and the Principal Aspect of Contradiction," says:

...The principal and the non-principal aspects of a contradiction transform themselves into each other and quality of a thing changes accordingly in a certain process or at a certain stage in the development of a contradiction. the principal aspect is A and the non-principal aspect is B. at another stage of development or in another process of development, the roles are reversed—a change determined by the extent of the increase or decrease in the strength with which each of the two aspects struggle against the other in the development of a thing.⁶⁰

He further says:

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

principal and decisive role; this must also be admitted. When the productive forces cannot be developed unless the relations of production are changed, the change in the relations of production⁶¹ plays the principal and decisive role. As Lenin put it, without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. The creation and advocacy of the revolutionary theory plays the principal and decisive role.... When the superstructure (politics, culture and so on) hinders the development of economic foundation, political and cultural reforms become the principal and decisive factors. By saying this, are we running counter to materialism? No. The reason is that while we recognize that in the development of history as a whole it is the material essence of things that determines spiritual things, and social existence that determines social consciousness, at the same time we also recognize and must recognize the reaction of spiritual things and social consciousness on social existence, and the reaction of superstructure on economic foundation. This is not running counter to materialism; this is precisely avoiding mechanistic materialism and firmly upholding dialectical materialism.⁶²

Whatever Mao says contradicts historical materialism. When he says, "if the relations of production hinder development and progress of the productive force," or when he says "a revolutionary movement requires a revolutionary theory," or when he says, "the superstructure hinders the development of economic foundation," he asserts something which can and should occur always. But according to historical materialism, the development of the productive force necessarily transforms the relations of production, and revolutionary theory necessarily emerges spontaneously. As a result, the superstructure is necessarily transformed with change in the base.

But Marx has emphatically stated in his preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*:

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces, these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of economic foundation, the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed.⁶³

Such notions as the change in relations of production prior to the development of productive forces in order to pave the way for the progress of productive forces, the formulation of revolutionary theories prior to spontaneous birth of revolutionary ideas, the notion that transformation of superstructure transforms the base—all imply priority of thought over action and priority of spirit over matter. They imply the essentiality and independence of political and intellectual aspects with respect to the economic aspect, and this contradicts historical materialism.

Mao's statement that if the process of effect and action is accepted to be one-sided, dialectical materialism is negated, is correct. But what is to be done if the basis of so-called scientific socialism rests upon this very principle of unilateral effect, and contradicts dialectical logic, i.e. the doctrine of unity of opposites, which is one of the laws of dialectics? We are forced to discard either the so-called scientific socialism and reject dialectical logic, or we have to uphold dialectical logic and reject 'scientific' socialism and historical materialism, upon which it is based.

In addition to this, what does Mao mean when he says "... we recognize that in the development of history as a whole it is the material essence of things that determines spiritual things, and social existence that determines social consciousness"? Doesn't his own admission that superstructure can reciprocally act on the base, imply that sometimes productive forces determine relations of production and sometimes vice versa, i.e. the process is reversed? sometimes revolutionary movement produces revolutionary theories and sometimes vice versa? sometimes politics, culture, power, religion, etc. are the factors responsible for bringing about a change in the economic foundation of society and sometimes the process is reversed? sometimes, it happens that material things decide spiritual matters and social existence determines social consciousness, and sometimes the process is quite reversed?

Actually, Mao's statement that "the principal and non-principal aspects of a contradiction transform themselves into each other" is made to justify his Maoist viewpoint--which practically goes against Marxist historical materialism--not to explain the Marxist theory of historical materialism, despite the claim that he does so. Mao too, like Marx, has practically demonstrated that he is too intelligent to remain a Marxist forever. The Chinese Revolution under Mao's leadership practically violated scientific socialism and historical materialism, and, consequently, Marxism.

Under the leadership of Mao, China overthrew the feudal regime of old China by means of an agricultural revolution to establish a socialist regime in its place. Though according to the theory of scientific socialism and historical materialism a country that is at the stage of feudalism should first pass through industrialization and capitalism. When industrialization reaches its climax, it can proceed towards the goal of socialism. According to historical materialism, as an embryo cannot pass through two stages within one leap, similarly a society also cannot enter into the final stage without passing through the intermediate successive stages. But Mao has practically demonstrated that he is one of those midwives who can bring forth a four-month old embryo in healthy and sound condition. He has proved, contrary to Marx's claims, that all the factors which are regarded by him as elements of

consciousness such as leadership, partisan training, political organizations, revolutionary ideology, social awareness, which do not have concrete existence according to Marx and are regarded by him as part of the superstructure and not the base, can transform the relations of production to make a country an industrial one. In this way the Chinese Revolution has practically ignored the doctrines of so-called scientific socialism.

Mao has also contradicted the Marxist theory of history in another way. According to the Marxist theory though the peasant class fulfils the first and the second conditions of being revolutionary, i.e. they belong to the exploited class and are without property, they cannot fulfil the third condition which demands unity, cooperation, mutual understanding, and awareness of their own power. Hence the peasant class can never take any initiative for bringing about a revolution. The most they can do is to participate in the revolution by following the revolutionary proletariat class in a semi-agricultural and semi-industrial society. Marx sometimes even calls them "the wretched who are reactionary by nature" and "completely lacking in any type of revolutionary initiative."⁶⁴ In his letter to Engels, dealing with the uprising in Poland, Marx wrote about peasants, "The wretched peasants, reactionary by nature... must not be called to struggle."⁶⁵ But Mao created a revolutionary class out of the same wretched people who are advised not to be called to struggle. This very class overthrew the old regime of China. According to Marx, peasants are not only incapable of leading a country toward socialism, but also they cannot participate in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The class that can lead a society in the transition from feudalism to capitalism and has a revolutionary character at that historic moment is the bourgeois class, not the peasantry. But with the help of the same wretched class reactionary by nature, Mao made a historic leap by traversing two stages in one step, i.e. from feudalism to socialism. Hence Mao, with the kind of departure he had to make from Marxism, was justified in raising the Maoist idea of 'transformation of the principal and non-principal aspects of a contradiction into each other.' Instead of proclaiming deviation from Marxism he pretends to follow Marxist theory of historical materialism and scientific socialism by offering a new scholarly interpretation.

Mao learnt the lesson from his trusted predecessor, Lenin, that "a Marxist necessarily deviates in practice from Marxism." Before Mao, Lenin brought about a revolution in Russia which was then still a semi-industrial state and founded a socialist state for the first time.

Lenin realized that he could not hope to live to wait patiently for the Czarist Russia to become fully industrialized and to wait for capitalism and exploitation of workers to reach the ultimate stage so that a

spontaneous revolution may occur with a dynamic and conscious movement of its own. He saw that he could not wait for the mother to complete her period of pregnancy. Accordingly, he started from the superstructure and made full use of such things as party politics, revolutionary ideology, the war, and armed struggle, and converted the semi-industrial Russia of those days into the Soviet Socialist Republic of today. Lenin practically realized the meaning of the proverb: a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

3. Self-contradiction in the Doctrine of Necessary

Correspondence between Base and Superstructure :

According to the theory of historical materialism there is always a sort of correspondence between superstructure and base in societies, to the extent that one can identify the base by means of the superstructure and one can know the superstructure by knowing the base. Whenever the base is changed, the correspondence between the base and the superstructure is affected, disturbing the social equilibrium and giving rise to crisis, followed sooner or later by a necessary deterioration of the superstructure. And if the base remains in its original state, the superstructure also necessarily remains permanent and unchanged.

Contemporary historical events have practically disproved this Marxian thesis. Taking into consideration a series of economic crises from 1827 to 1847 accompanied with a series of social and political revolutions, Marx and Engels concluded that the social revolutions were necessary and inevitable consequences of economic crises.

But, in the words of the author of *Revisionism from Marx to Mao*:

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

Countries like England, Germany, France, and America have made great industrial advancement taking capitalism to its peak; but contrary to Marx's prophecy that these countries would be the first and foremost to experience the workers' revolution and to be converted into socialist states, they have not changed politically, legally, religiously or in other aspects which are termed as constituents of superstructure. The baby whose birth Marx was awaiting has not been delivered despite the lapse of more than ninety years, and there is little hope of it in the

future.

Of course, these regimes shall sooner or later be overthrown, but the revolution that is expected can never be the revolution brought about by the working class and the Marxist theory of history shall not be realized. The regimes of so-called socialist countries of today shall also be overthrown, and would not remain as they are now. But the future regime will certainly be not a capitalist one.

On the other hand the countries of East Europe, Asia, and South America have become socialist despite the fact that they have not yet attained the stage of giving birth to a socialist state. We see that there are certain countries quite similar in respect to the (economic) base, but different from one another regarding their superstructure. Two super-powers, U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., are the best example of this phenomenon. America and Japan also have the same type of economic regime (capitalistic) but with regard to such aspects as politics, religion, morality, etiquette, manners, and art they are quite different. In the same way certain countries having similar superstructure, i.e. political regime, religion, etc., are different in respect of economic base. All these cases conclusively prove that the notion of necessary correspondence between superstructure and base as upheld by historical materialism is nothing but a mere illusion.

4. Nonconformity of Ideological and Class Bases

As stated earlier, according to the theory of historical materialism, the superstructure cannot precede the base at any point of history. On the basis of this doctrine the consciousness of every epoch is necessarily associated with that age. With the lapse of every particular period, the corresponding consciousness also expires. Ideas, philosophies, plans, predictions, religions—all are by-products of needs of a certain period and cannot be applicable to those of other periods.

But practical evidence goes against this hypothesis. There are a number of philosophies, personalities, ideas and outlooks—leave alone religions and religious ideologies—which are ahead of their times and their own class interest. There are many ideas that were the products of the material needs of a specific period which still remain alive even after the passage of a considerable time, and shine as stars over the horizons of human history.

What is striking is that in this regard, too, Marx in some of his statements departs from Marxism. In *German Ideology*, he says:

¹Consciousness sometimes is seen to precede the contemporary empirical relations, to the extent that it is possible to find the evidence for the conflicts of a later age in the writings of theoreticians of the preceding age.⁶⁶

5. Independence of Cultural Developments

According to the theory of historical materialism, cultural and scientific temperament of a society like all the other aspects, viz. political, legal, and religious, is related to its economic mode. It cannot develop in independence from economic development. The development of science follows the development in the means of production and the economic base of society.

First of all, it should be noted that the means of production are not capable of developing automatically without human intervention. The means of production develop in the context of man's relationship with nature and his curiosity, inventiveness, and endeavour. The development in the means of production is accompanied by the growth of science and technology. But the question arises as to which of them comes first: Whether man first invents something and then utilizes it in practice, bringing industry into existence, or if industry comes into existence and then man tends to invent something. It cannot be denied that the second alternative is correct.

It is evident that the discovery of scientific laws and technological methods is made as a result of human inquisitiveness and experimentation. Without contact with nature, inquiry, research, and experimentation, man can neither discover any scientific law nor perfect any technique. No one can challenge this view. The question arises only with regard to the priority of man's inquisitiveness, experimentation and growth of his scientific knowledge over tools of technology: whether man first develops his scientific knowledge and then externalizes his knowledge to invent technological tools or vice versa? The validity of the first part of the statement cannot be doubted.

Moreover, it is to be noted that meaning of expressions such as 'evolution' and 'growth' is literal in the context of human beings, and figurative in the context of technological and productive implements. 'Evolution' and 'growth' are literal in the case of a real entity which passes from a lower to a higher stage. The use of 'evolution' in the figurative sense applies to an objective entity which does not go through actual evolutionary stages, but which becomes either non-existent or obsolete and is replaced by another entity which is different from it.

In the process of the growth of a child, for example, the development is real. Now, taking another example, if a teacher teaching a class is replaced by another more qualified and competent, in this case to say that the level of instruction has improved and developed, is a figurative application of the word 'development.' In fact the human progress in manufacture of production tools is a real progress. It is man who develops and progresses intellectually; but the term industrial progress

is used in a figurative sense, when what is meant is that every year a more sophisticated, improved, and better equipped model of an automobile comes into the market. In this type of development there is no objective entity that rises from a lower to a higher stage. The automobile of the last year has not become more developed and perfect, but is discarded and becomes obsolete, and a new automobile takes its place.

In other words, in this kind of development, a deficient individual or object becomes obsolete and is replaced by another which is better and improved; not that the same individual has attained perfection in the course of time. Wherever real development and figurative development take place side by side, it is quite obvious that the real development is to be considered the principal development and the figurative development is secondary.

Moreover what we have said applies only to technical knowledge and know-how. In other sciences like medicine, psychology, sociology, logic, philosophy, and mathematics, there is not even the possibility of such a unilateral correlation. Progress in these sciences depends to the same extent or more or less upon the material and economic conditions as the material and economic conditions depend upon the growth of sciences. K. Schmoller, in his refutation of Marxism says:

No doubt, the material and economic conditions are essential for the attainment of higher culture, but to the same extent it is also undoubtedly true that intellectual and moral development follows an independent course.⁶⁷

If we ignore a defect in August Comte's point of view which confines man and humanity to the mind, which is only a part of human faculties and only half of the essence of man, his theory regarding social development is far more valuable than that of Marx. August Comte claims:

Social phenomena are subject to a strict determinism which operates in the form of an inevitable evolution of human societies—an evolution which is itself governed by the progress of the human mind.⁶⁸

6. Historical Materialism Contradicts Itself

According to historical materialism, all thought, all philosophical and scientific theories, and all ethical systems represent certain material and economic conditions, and are inseparably connected with their own specific objective conditions. Hence their value and validity are not absolute, but dependent upon a specific period. With the lapse of a particular period and changes in the material, economic, and social conditions, which are necessary and inevitable, every idea or thought,

every philosophical or scientific theory or ethical system is invalidated and is ultimately bound to be replaced by a different idea, thought or theory. According to this principle, historical materialism, too, is subject to this universal law. Because if it is not subject to this universal law and is an exception, it would mean that there are some scientific and philosophical laws which are fundamental and independent of any kind of economic base; and if historical materialism is subject to the general law, its value and validity are confined to one period and it is applicable to that period alone which has given rise to it. It is not relevant to an earlier or later period. Thus, in both cases, historical materialism is contradicted by itself.

It means that historical materialism as a theory, as a philosophical point of view or as a part of superstructure, either applies to itself or it doesn't. If it does not apply to itself, it contradicts itself. If it is governed by itself, it is valid for a limited period only; it cannot be applied to other periods from which it excludes itself. This objection is also valid in the case of dialectical materialism, which considers the principle of dialectical movement and the principle of unity of opposites applicable to the whole reality including scientific and philosophical laws. In the *Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism* (vol. I, II) I have dealt with these problems. But it is clear that the claim that the universe is the playground of the forces of dialectical materialism and society that of historical materialism is absolutely baseless.

Certain other objections are also valid against historical materialism. For the time being we refrain from mentioning them. But I cannot conceal my amazement as to how such a baseless and unscientific theory could become famous as a scientific theory. The art of propaganda is indeed capable of working wonders!

Islam and Historical Materialism

DOES Islam accept the theory of historical materialism? Is the Quranic logic based on historical materialism regarding the interpretation and analysis of historical events? There is a group of people who claim that historical materialism was forwarded by the Quran at least one thousand years before Marx. Dr. 'Ali al-Wardi, a Shi'ite scholar of Iraq and author of several controversial books including the one entitled *Manzilat al-'aql al-bashari*, ("The Place of Human Intellect"), is most probably the first to raise this issue. It has become a fashion among a group of contemporary Muslim writers to analyse history in Islamic phraseology from this point of view, which is considered a mark of being an intellectual.

But in our view those who think in this way either do not correctly understand Islam or historical materialism or both. A general review of the five fundamental principles of historical materialism and the six conclusions discussed earlier, is sufficient to tell anyone well acquainted with the logic of Islam that the logic of Islam and historical materialism are radically opposed to each other.

In view of the fact that this approach to the study of society and history—especially when it is tinged with Islamic colour and bears the stamp of Islamic acceptability for enhancing its authority and worth—is a grave danger for the thought and teachings of Islam, I consider it essential to investigate and analyse the problems which may otherwise lead to the misunderstanding that Islam considers economy as the basis of society and regards history as being materialistic in essence.

I would also like to remind that I have here discussed these issues in a more comprehensive manner than put forward by the proponents of this view themselves. The advocates of this view pick up two or three verses from the Quran or a few traditions of the Prophet (S) in support of certain points. I have dealt not only with their arguments, but also with those problems which they have not touched at all, but which, in my opinion, can be raised by them, thus making the whole discussion inclusive and comprehensive. Following are the arguments of those who imagine that the Quran believes in historical materialism.

1. The Quran has put forward various social notions, and I have already quoted about fifty sociological terms from the Quran while discussing sociology. The study of the verses having sociological implications, where these terms occur, may lead one to infer that from the Quranic viewpoint societies are in a sense bipolar, i.e., they are divided into two classes. On the one hand, the Quran points out a kind of polarization of society on the basis of material conditions, i.e., on the basis of prosperity and deprivation of its people. The Quran refers to one class by such names as, *mala'* (ruling clique), *mustakbirūn* (the arrogant, oppressors, tyrants), *musrifūn* (the extravagant, the wasteful), *mutrafūn* (the affluent), and refers to the other class by such names as *mustaḍ'afūn* (the oppressed, the weakened and deprived), *nās* (mankind, masses), *dhurriyyah* (the insignificant, the unnoteworthy—as opposed to the *mala'*), *arāḍhil* or *ardhalīm* (the vilest, the lowest).⁶⁹ The Quran regards them as two opposite poles. On the other hand, the Quran puts forward the notion of bipolarity of society in spiritual terms. On the one side are the *kāfirūn* (infidels), the *mushrikūn* (idolaters, polytheists), the *munāfiqūn* (hypocrites), the *fāsiqūn* (the corrupt), and the *mufsidūn* (mischief mongers), and on the other side are the *mu'minūn* (the believers), the *muwaḥḥidūn* (monotheists), the *muttaqūn* (the pious, the God-fearing), the *ṣāliḥūn* (the virtuous), the *muṣliḥūn* (correctors, reformers), the *mujāhidūn* (the warriors), and the *shuhadā'* (the witnesses, the martyrs).

If we study and analyse the material and spiritual polarities in the context of the Quranic verses, we shall observe a kind of correspondence between the first material pole and the first spiritual pole and also between the second material pole and the second spiritual pole. That is, the *kāfirūn* (infidels), the *mushrikūn* (idolaters), the *fāsiqūn* (the corrupt), and the *mufsidūn* (corrupters) are the same people who are called the *mala'* (the ruling clique), the *mustakbirūn* (the tyrants), the *musrifūn* (the prodigal), the *mutrafūn* (the affluent) and the *ṭaghūtī* ones. They neither form a separate group nor draw other people into their fold to form a composite group. The *mu'minūn* (the believers), the *muwaḥḥidūn* (the monotheists), the *ṣāliḥūn* (the virtuous), and the *mujāhidūn* (the warriors) are the same people as the *mustaḍ'afūn* (the oppressed), the *fuqarā'* (the poor), the *masākīn* (the wretched), the slaves, and the deprived. This pole does neither consist of a separate group nor is a combination of various other groups or persons. It means that society is not composed of more than two poles. The opulent, the oppressors, and the exploiters, who are also the disbelievers, are on one side and the oppressed, who are also the believers, are on the other side. It is quite obvious that the division of society into oppressors and oppressed is responsible for giving rise to two groups at level of faith, viz., the disbelievers and the believers. Oppression is the essential

condition accompanying polytheism, disbelief, hypocrisy, inequity, and corruption; being oppressed is the condition accompanying belief, monotheism, virtue, goodness, and piety.

In order to be sure of the meaning of this correspondence, it is enough to study the verses of *Sūrat al-'A'rāf* beginning from the verse 59 ... *لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ... وَدَثْرًا إِذَا كَانَ يَنْشَعُ فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمَهُ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْرِشُونَ* • (We sent Noah unto his people....) till the end of the verse 137, • (We annihilated all Pharaoh and his folk had done and that they had contrived.). In these forty verses, the stories of Noah, Hūd, Šāliḥ, Lot, Shu'ayb and Moses are narrated. In all these stories (with the exception of the story of Lot) it may be observed that the class that followed the prophets was the oppressed class (*mustaḍ'af*), and the class that arose in revolt and negated them was the ruling class (*mala'*) of the tyrants (*mustakbīrūn*).⁷⁰ This correspondence is explained by nothing except class consciousness, which is the requisite condition as well as the result of historical materialism. Thus according to the Quran the conflict between belief and disbelief reflects the corresponding struggle of the oppressed and the exploited against the oppressors and the exploiters.

The Quran clearly considers *ghinā* (i.e. ownership, property and wealth) to be the source of man's rebellion, against God i.e., the riches are contrary to the values of modesty, humility, and submission—the virtues to which the prophets called the people:

كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُفٍ • أَنْ رَأَاهُ اسْتَكْبَرَ •

Verily man is rebellious when he thinketh himself wealthy [and contented].
(96: 6,7)

Again we see that, in order to show the evil of property and ownership, the Quran narrates the story of Korah. Korah was not an Egyptian, but belonged to the tribe of Israel. He was one of Moses' people, the same oppressed people whom Pharaoh was exploiting. However this man belonging to an oppressed people, after becoming wealthy, started exploiting his own fellow sufferers and rebelled against Moses. The Quran says:

إِنْ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَىٰ قَتَلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ....

Now Korah was of Moses' folk, but he rebelled against them.... (28:76)

Does it not show that the stand of the prophets against rebellion is actually the stand against the haves, the rich, and their wealth? The Quran has disclosed in some of its verses that the real adversaries of the prophets were the affluent class, the *mutrafūn*; those who were

immersed in the good things of life, being the pampered of history. In *Sūrat Saba'*, verse 34, this view is developed in the form of a general principle and a universal law:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ *

And We have sent not unto any township a warner, but its pampered ones (the mutrafūn) declared, 'Lo: We are disbelievers in that which you bring unto us.' (34:34)

All this indicates that the confrontation of the prophets with their adversaries and the struggle between faith and infidelity reflect the hostility between two social classes: the oppressed and the oppressors.

2. The Quran calls its addressees 'nās' (mankind). 'Nās' means the deprived and underprivileged masses. This indicates that the Quran acknowledges the concept of class consciousness, and considers the deprived masses as the only class capable of responding to Islam's invitation. This also indicates that Islamic ideology is class-oriented, and it means that Islam is the religion of the oppressed and underprivileged masses. The addressees of Islamic ideology are the underprivileged masses alone. This provides another basis for inferring that Islam regards economy as base and approves of the materialist conception of history.

3. The Quran makes clear that leaders, reformers (*muṣliḥūn*), warriors in the way of God (*mujāhidūn*), martyrs (*shuhadā'*), and ultimately the prophets, the apostles of God, arise from among the masses and not from the affluent, the wealthy, and the pampered class. Regarding the Prophet of Islam (S), the Quran says:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ ...

He it is' Who has sent among the illiterate (ummiyyūn) a messenger of their own.... (62:2)

The *ummaḥ* (the religious community) is none other than the underprivileged masses. Similarly, the Quran declares about the martyrs in the way of God:

وَنَرْعَاهُم مِّنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا فَقُلْنَا هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ ...

And We shall raise from every nation [the same deprived masses] a shahid (martyr) and We shall say, 'Bring your proof forward....' (i.e. your martyrs). (28:75)

The fact that leaders of revolutions and reform movements necessarily arise from the deprived masses also implies that there is a necessary correspondence between social and religious origin on the one hand and economic and class origin on the other. This necessary relation cannot be interpreted except on the basis of the materialist conception of history and on the basis of assumption that economy is the real base.

4. The prime target of the mission of the prophets and their social movement is the base not the superstructure. It is inferred from the Quran that the mission and the message of the prophets aimed at establishing justice and equity by implementing social equality and obliterating class distinctions and divisions. The prophets have always started their mission from the base and later on brought changes in the superstructure, not the other way round. The superstructures, i.e. doctrines of faith, dogmas, moral and behavioural reforms, always occupied a secondary place in prophetic missions, as they were attacked only after the base was transformed. The Prophet (S) said:

مَنْ لَا مَعَاشَ لَهُ لَا تَعَادَ لَهُ.

One who does not have a means of subsistence does not have Hereafter either (which is a product of spiritual life).

This statement indicates the priority of the means of subsistence over the Hereafter, and the priority of material existence over spiritual existence. If stretched to its logical conclusion, it means that spiritual life is synonymous with superstructure and is based upon material conditions of human life. The Prophet (S) also said:

اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ لَنَا فِي الْخُبْزِ، لَوْلَا الْخُبْزُ مَا تَصَدَّقْنَا وَلَا صَلَّيْنَا.

My God, bless our bread with abundance; for had it not been for bread we would not have been charitable, nor would we have offered prayers.

This statement also indicates the dependence of the spiritual superstructure upon the material base.

Nowadays, majority of people tend to believe that the prophets had set before them the task of reforming only the superstructure; that is they aimed at making men true believers and were interested only in the reform of their beliefs, morals, and behaviour; they were not concerned with changing the foundation, or at the most they considered matters related with the base or economic activity merely secondary in importance. It is imagined that the prophets thought that once the people became true believers all the matters would automati-

cally be set right; justice and equality would be established and the exploiters would come up on their own to surrender their privileges to the exploited and the oppressed. To be short, it is believed that the prophets have used faith and belief as the weapon for attaining their goals, and their followers should follow the same path. This is nothing but a deception and an illusion that the priests and clergymen associated with the class of oppressors and exploiters have invented and imposed on the society in order to render the teachings of the prophets ineffective and futile. In the words of Marx, "The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of intellectual production...The material rulers are the intellectual rulers of the society and rule over the social mind as well."⁷¹

The approach and the method of work of the prophets were quite opposite to the view generally accepted by the majority of people. The prophets first delivered society from the evils of social polytheism, social discrimination, injustice, repression, and exploitation which are the root causes of ideological polytheism, and moral, behavioural, and religious perversions. After socially emancipating the people they engrained in their souls the faith in the unity of God (*tawhid*), and taught them the methods of attaining moral and behavioural piety.

5. The Quran holds that the logic of the opponents of the prophets has always been opposed to the logic of the prophets and their followers throughout the entire course of history. The Quran explicitly explains that the ideology of the opponents has been always conservative, obscurantist, traditional, and backward-looking, whereas the ideology advocated by the prophets and their followers has been necessarily dynamic, anti-traditional, progressive, and futuristic. The Quran clearly propounds the view that the first group practised the same ideology which according to sociological analysis is practised in a society divided into two classes of exploiters and exploited by the class of exploiters, who are the beneficiaries of the existing system and advocate the ideology of status quo. The prophets and their followers on the other hand followed and practised the ideology which, sociologically speaking, is employed by the sufferers and deprived in human history.

There are frequent references in the Quran to the specific logic held by the opponents and the followers of the prophets, indicating what sort of philosophy these two groups followed. They are actually meant for pointing out that these two types of philosophies, like the two groups themselves, have always been opposed to each other. The Quran, by pointing out the logic of the opponents and that of the followers of the prophets, provides us with a criterion for today.

The Quran pictures several scenes in which these two ideologies confront each other. Those who are interested may study the following

Quranic verses, *Sūrat al-Zukhruf*, verses (40-50); *Sūrat al-Mu'min*, verses (23-44); *Sūrat Ṭāhā*, verses from 49 to 71; *Sūrat al-Shu'arā'*, verses from 16 to 49; *Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ*, verses from 36 to 39. Here, for the sake of example, we quote verses from 20 to 24 from *Sūrat al-Zukhruf* with some brief explanatory remarks about their meanings:

وَقَالُوا لَوْ شَاءَ الرَّحْمَنُ مَا عَبَدْنَاكُمْ مَالَكُمْ يَدْرِكُ مِنْ عِلْمِ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ • أَمْ أَنْتُمْ لَنَا كِنَانًا
 مِنْ قَبْلِهِ قُلْ هُمْ بِمُتَنَبِّئِكُمْ • بَلْ قَالُوا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ آثَرِهِمْ مُعْتَدُونَ •
 وَكَذَلِكَ مَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ آثَرِهِمْ وَإِنَّا
 عَلَىٰ آثَرِهِمْ مُعْتَدُونَ • قَالَ أَوْلَوْ جُنُكُم بِإِهْدِي مَعَا وَجَدْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ آثَارًا فَكَلِمًا قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ
 بِهِ كَافِرُونَ •

And they say: 'If the Beneficent had so willed, we should not have worshipped them (the angels). (Now that we worship them, it means that it is the will of God—absolute determinism). They have no knowledge of whatsoever of that; they are only conjecturing (about the matter of determinism). Or have We given them any Scripture before (this Quran) to which they hold? (i.e. it is nothing of these two: neither a sound faith in determinism nor any Scripture which could serve as evidence). Nay, for they say only 'We found our fathers following a religion, and we are guided by their footprints.' And even so We sent not a warner before thee into any township, except that men who lived at ease (mutrafūn) said, "We indeed found our fathers following a religion, and we are following their footprints. (And the warner) said: 'What! even though I bring you better guidance than that you found your fathers following? [i.e. although the path shown by me is more in accordance with correct logic?] They answered, "We disbelieve in that you were sent with." (43:20-24)

We see that the opponents of the prophets sometimes utilize the idea of fatalism and predestination to impress upon people that we are not free to act according to our will. This idea, as sociologists point out, always suits the interests of the beneficiaries of the status quo, who do not want any change in the existing conditions and, therefore, take shelter in the doctrine of predestination as an excuse. Sometimes they lay emphasis upon following the traditions of ancestors and consider the past as something sacred and worthy of imitation. Everything related with the past is accepted as right and correct, and is considered sufficient for guidance. This is the logic preached by the champions of status quo and vested interests.

In opposition to this view, the prophets never supported traditionalism and fatalism. They upheld logic, knowledge, and emancipation, which represent the approach of the revolutionaries and the sufferers under the status quo. The adversaries, when they see that they cannot win the battle due to their weak logic and arguments, as a last

resort, declare that whether we believe in fatalism or not, whether we respect tradition or reject it, we are against your message, your mission, and your ideology, because your message contradicts the present social reality and class structure.

6. The most obvious aspect of the Quranic teaching is its siding with the oppressed. The Quran promises, in accordance with the prophecy of historical materialism on the basis of dialectical logic, that in the struggle between the oppressed and the oppressors the final victory is on the side of the oppressed.

The Quran through this alignment really affirms the necessary course which history is determined to follow, because according to it the class which is revolutionary in character ultimately emerges victorious in its struggle against the class which is reactionary and conservative due to its class situation, and is destined to inherit and rule the earth:

And We desired to show favour unto those who were oppressed in the earth, and to make them leaders and to make them the inheritors. (28:5)

Similarly the verse 137 in *Sūrat al-'A'rāf* declares:

And We caused the people who were oppressed to inherit the eastern parts of the land and its western parts, thereof which We had blessed. And the fair Word of the Lord was fulfilled for the Children of Israel because of their endurance; and We annihilated all that Pharaoh and his folk had done and that they had contrived. (7:137)

This view of the Quran, that history moves in the direction of the victory of the oppressed, the exploited, and the enslaved, fully corresponds to the principle derived from historical materialism, according to which reaction and conservatism are the characteristics of exploitation which are opposed to the law of evolution, and are, therefore, bound to face extinction. The essential character of the exploited is enlightenment, dynamism, and revolutionary spirit, which being in harmony and agreement with the law of evolution are bound to be victorious.

Here it would not be inappropriate to quote a passage from an article lately published by a group of so-called Muslim intellectuals—who have left intellectualism behind to embrace Marxism. There, under

the above-quoted Quranic verse, the following explanatory remarks are made:

...What is greatly remarkable is the position of God and all the phenomena of existence with respect to the world's oppressed. It cannot be denied that the oppressed of the earth according to the Quranic teachings, are the underprivileged, enslaved masses, who are forced not to play any role in determining their own fate...If we pay attention to this fact, taking into consideration the absolute will of God governing the course of being and all the phenomena of life, which tend to favour the oppressed, the question arises: Who are the persons that are instrumental in realization of the Divine Will? The answer to this question is quite obvious. When we evaluate the administrative organisations of societies as two poles of the oppressors and the oppressed, with the knowledge that the Divine Will can be translated into action, on the one hand, by bestowing the inheritance and leadership of the earth upon the oppressed, and on the other by destroying the institutions of exploitation and ultimately negating them, we find that the oppressed themselves and their apostles and committed intellectuals, who arise from within the oppressed class, act as the agents of the Divine Will in realizing this end. In other words, they are these chosen apostles⁷² and the departed martyrs from among the oppressed⁷³ who make the initial moves in the struggle against destructive *lāghūlī* regimes, moves which pave the road for establishing the leadership of the oppressed and enabling them to inherit the resources of the earth. This view, in fact, represents our understanding of the Quranic interpretation of historical upheavals and the monotheistic revolutions,⁷⁴ in the sense that in the same way as monotheistic revolutions, from a sociological point of view, revolve around the axis of the leadership of the oppressed and their inheritance of the earth, so also the leaders and the groups in the vanguard of this movement should necessarily arise from among the oppressed. Their ideological and social views should also be derived from the intellectual attitude and social alignment of the oppressed and exploited masses.

There are several implications of this statement.

a. From the viewpoint of the Quran, society is bipolar and is always divided into two classes representing the oppressors and the oppressed.

b. The will of God (according to the expression used in the article, 'the position of God and all phenomena of existence') with respect to the leadership and inheritance of the oppressed and the downtrodden is universal and applies without any discrimination whatsoever to believers and non-believers, monotheists and polytheists. It means that the relative pronoun *الَّذِينَ* is used in a general sense applicable to all people. The Divine promise guarantees the victory of the oppressed qua oppressed over the oppressors. In other words, the main conflict going on throughout history up to this date is between the exploited and the tyrants. The purpose of the evolution of the universe dictates that the downtrodden should emerge victorious against the oppressors.

c. The will of God is executed through the means of the oppres-

sed. The leaders, guides, apostles and martyrs necessarily arise from among the oppressed; not from the other side.

d. The ideological base is always in harmony and correspondence with the social base and class character.

Thus we see how certain Marxist principles regarding history are derived and inferred from the Quranic verse, and how it is claimed that the Quran, one thousand and two hundred years before Marx came into the world, anticipated and echoed his thought and philosophy!

Well, now that such a view about history has been found in the Quran, what conclusions can be drawn in its light while analysing contemporary history? These gentlemen have hastily tried to draw conclusions from this so-called Quranic principle, applying it as a test to the contemporary movement of the 'ulamā'. They say that the Quran has taught us that the leaders and guides of revolutions should necessarily be from the class of the oppressed. On the contrary, nowadays we see that the 'ulamā', who represent one of the three dimensions of the system of exploitation throughout history, have shifted their social base and have become revolutionary. How is this phenomenon to be explained? The solution is simple. We can surely and with certainty conclude that there is an intrigue involved in this affair. When the ruling class finds itself in trouble, it asks the allied clergy to arrange a revolutionary pageant to manage its own escape. This is another conclusion derived from this Marxist—excuse me, Islamic—view. It is quite clear who will pocket the profits yielded by such interpretations.

CRITICISM:

All that has been said about the justification of historical materialism from the Quranic viewpoint may be regarded as being either basically wrong, or if correct the inference drawn from it is totally wrong. We have to critically examine the arguments given above.

1. The claim that the Quran has divided society materially and spiritually into two classes and that these two classes coincide with each other, is absolutely false. To say that according to the Quran the group consisting of the *kāfirūn* (unbelievers), the *mushrikūn* (idolaters), the *munāfiqūn* (hypocrites), the *mufsidūn* (mischief mongers), is the same as that of the *mala'* (ruling clique), the *mustakbirūn* (arrogant, oppressors) and the *jabbārūn* (tyrants), on the one hand, and on the other hand the group consisting of the *mu'minūn* (believers), the *muwaḥḥidūn* (monotheists), the *ṣālihūn* (righteous), the *shuhadā'* (martyrs) is the same as the oppressed and the exploited class, and to say that the confrontation between the believers and the unbelievers reflects the basic conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors respectively, is not correct. This type of coincidence is not at all

validated by the Quran. On the contrary we find that the Quran affirms the absence of such a coincidence.

In its treatment of the lessons of history the Quran cites the examples of believers who belonged to a tyrannical ruling class, yet revolted against that class and its values. The believer of the family of Pharaoh, whose story is narrated in *Sūrat al-Mu'min*, is an example of such individuals. The Quran also mentions Pharaoh's wife who, in spite of being his life partner and equally sharing his luxurious life style, was a true believer in God.⁷⁵

The Quran, in several places, in a moving style recalls the story of Pharaoh's magicians, and shows how the natural truth-seeking conscience of man, when faced with the truth, can rise on occasion against falsehood and error, setting aside all personal interests and ignoring with contempt Pharaoh's threats:

لَأَقَطَّرَنَّهُ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلافٍ ثُمَّ لَأَضْلَبَنَّكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ •

"I shall assuredly cut off alternately your hands and feet, then I shall crucify you all together." (7:124)

Basically the revolt of Moses (A) as related by the Quran, contradicts historical materialism. It is true that Moses belonged to the tribe of Israel—he was neither an Egyptian nor a kinsman of the Pharaoh—but Moses was brought up since infancy like a prince in Pharaoh's household. The same Moses who was brought up by Pharaoh revolted against the tyrannical system of his patron, a system in the midst of which he had grown up, renouncing him and preferring to work as a shepherd for the old man of Median, until he was chosen by God for prophethood, when he formally confronted Pharaoh.

The Holy Prophet (S) was orphaned in childhood and led a life of poverty until his youth. It was after his marriage with Khadijah that he became prosperous and rich. The Quran refers to this point when it says:

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَىٰ... وَوَجَدَكَ عَالِمًا فَلَأَعْنَىٰ •

Did He not find thee an orphan, and shelter thee? Did He not find thee needy, and suffice thee? (93:6,8)

It was in this period of prosperity that the Prophet (S) devoted his time to prayer and contemplation in solitude. According to the doctrine of historical materialism, during this period the Prophet (S) should have changed and assumed the role of a conservative advocate of the status quo. But it was during this period that he started to propagate his revolutionary message, rising in rebellion against the capitalists, the

usurers, and the slavers of Mecca, and revolted against the practice of idolatry which symbolized the corrupt life of those days.

As all the believers, the monotheists, and the monotheistic revolutionaries did not arise from the oppressed class, the prophets also absorbed the good-natured and the relatively untainted natures from among the oppressor classes and aroused them to revolt against themselves (by way of repentance) or against the interests of their own class (by way of revolution). In the same way, all the oppressed people did not belong to the ranks of the believers and the monotheistic revolutionaries.

The Quran pictures numerous scenes where the people belonging to the oppressed class are counted among unbelievers and included among the doomed subject to Divine chastisement.⁷⁸

Therefore, neither all believers belong to the oppressed class nor all oppressed are believers. The claim that there is complete correspondence between them is absolutely absurd. Undeniably, the majority of the followers of the prophets have belonged to the oppressed class, or at least came from those whose hands were not stained with blood and repression. Similarly the majority of the opponents of the prophets belonged to the class of oppressors. This is so because although the human nature which accepts the Divine message is common to both classes and exists in everyone, but the oppressors, the affluent, and the extravagant confront a great barrier because their souls are polluted and their habits are deeply entrenched in the evil existing system. There are few out of this class who are capable of freeing themselves from under the mountain load of these evils. But the oppressed class has no such restraints. Their nature not only responds readily to the Divine call, but they see in it the opportunity to recover their lost rights. Identifying themselves with believers has a double advantage for them. It is on this account that the majority of the followers of the prophets consist of the oppressed and individuals of the opposite group among the believers form only a minority. Despite it the notion that the group of believers and the class of the oppressed are one and the same is totally groundless.

There is an acute difference between the fundamental principles regarding the nature of history laid down in the Quran and the basic doctrines of historical materialism. In view of the Quran, the spirit is a fundamental reality, and matter in no way is prior to the spirit. The spiritual needs and urges are fundamental to human existence and are not dependent on the material needs. Thought is also independent of action and the psychological nature of man precedes the social makeup of his personality.

The Quran, since it believes in the fundamental nature of the human being, a nature which is found even within extremely dehumanized persons like Pharaoh, who is a natural human being whose

growth has been arrested, it also admits even for the most corrupt persons the possibility, however weak, of moving towards truth and self-realization. Accordingly the prophets were encharged to admonish the tyrant in the first place and perchance to liberate the natural man imprisoned within the oppressor, arousing his inherent humanity against his evil social personality. We know that success was achieved in a great number of cases, and what is called "repentance" is the name of this phenomenon.

Moses (A) at the initial stage of his prophethood, was entrusted with the task of persuading Pharaoh and awakening in him the true human nature by means of admonition. He was advised to fight against him only if he failed in this attempt. In Moses' view Pharaoh had internally captivated and fettered the man within himself, and enslaved and imprisoned other human beings externally. Moses first attempts to arouse the man imprisoned within Pharaoh to revolt against himself. He endeavours to arouse the remnants of humanity left in him against his social personality, i.e. the Pharaoh forged and fabricated by perverse social conditions:

• اذْهَبْ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ • فَقُلْ هَلْ لَكَ إِلَٰهٌ إِلَّا أَنَا تَرَكَهُ • وَآمُرْكَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَتَخْشَىٰ •

'Go to Pharaoh; he has waxed insolent. And say, "Hast thou the will to purify thyself, and that I should guide thee to thy Lord, then thou shalt fear?"'
(79:17-19)

The Quran believes in the power and value of guidance, advice, admonition, reminder, argumentation and logical reasoning (in Quranic terminology: *hikmah*, wisdom). According to the Quran these devices can change a man, alter his course of life, transform his personality, and bring about a spiritual change in him. This approach is contrary to Marxism and materialism, which restrict the role of guidance to merely transforming the 'class-in-itself' into the 'class-for-itself,' by bringing about consciousness of class antagonism and realization of class character.

2. It is claimed that the addressees of the Quran are *nās* (mankind, people), and *nās* as a term is synonymous with the deprived masses. Hence Islam addresses itself to the oppressed class, and Islamic ideology is the ideology of the oppressed class; therefore, Islam recruits its followers and warriors exclusively from the underprivileged masses. This whole line of argument is wrong. Of course the addressees of the Islamic message are *nās*, i.e., human beings, which include the whole mankind. No dictionary of Arabic language gives the meaning of the word *nās* as 'the underprivileged or oppressed masses,' and this word does not refer to any particular class of men. The Quran says:

.... وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا....

...It is the duty of all men towards God to come to the House as pilgrims; whoever can afford to make his way there.... (3:97)

Does this verse refer to the underprivileged masses only? The phrase *يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ*, "O, mankind!" which repeatedly occurs in the Quran, nowhere refers exclusively to the underprivileged masses but to all mankind in general. The universality of the Quranic address is also derived from the principle of universality of human nature propounded in the Quran.

3. It is said that the Quran claims that the leaders, the guides, the prophets, and the martyrs arise exclusively from among the oppressed. This is yet another mistake regarding the Quran. The Quran never makes such a statement.

The argument concerning the verse 62:2... *هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ* that messengers of God arise from among the *ummah* (community) and the *ummah* is equivalent to 'the oppressed masses,' is ridiculous. The word *أميين* (*ummiyyin*) is actually the plural form of the word (*ummi*) which means a person who is unlettered. Furthermore, *أمي* is derived from *أم* (*umm*), not from *أمة* (*ummah*). Moreover, the meaning of the word *أمة* is a society which is composed of different groups and occasionally different classes. By no means can it be used to signify 'the underprivileged masses.' Still more ridiculous is the argument regarding the verse 75 from *Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ* about martyrs: *وَنَرْزُقْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا* *أَقْبَلْنَا مَا نَوَّارُوا بِرُءُوسِهِمْ*... They have interpreted it (or rather distorted it) to mean this: "We shall raise from every *ummah* (the masses) a *shahid* (martyr in the way of God); i.e. We shall make him a revolutionary, then We shall ask every *ummah* to produce its proof, which is the same as its martyr—the revolutionary killed in the way of God."

Firstly, this verse follows another verse and both of them are related to the Day of Judgement, the day when God would address idolaters. The preceding verse is as follows:

Upon the day when He shall call unto them, and He shall say, 'Where are now those whom you claimed to be My associates?' (28:74)

Secondly, *نَرْزُقْنَا* (*naza'nā*) means, "We shall separate," or "We shall draw out." It does not mean, "We shall raise" or "We arouse."

Thirdly the word *شَهِيد* (*shahid*) is not used here in the sense of martyr but in the sense of witness-witness to the actions of his people.