

Introduction

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

An inquiry into the system of the laws which govern the process of history and the effects which historical events produce on the life of society is one of the most important needs of our society at the present juncture. An insight into this system is essential for the continued vitality of our cultural revolution and its extension to other peoples of the world.

There is no doubt if a society wants to free itself from its environmental limitations, suffocating atmosphere and overbearing conditions, it must know to what extent societies are compulsorily regulated by their circumstances and how they can overcome their limitations in this regard.

What is important is only to find out the ways and means of overcoming the limitations and hinderances. It is immaterial to us whether this discovery is called a scientific discovery or is given the name of a religious, philosophical, gnostic or some other kind of unravelling. Now let us see what Ayatullah Sadr has said on this subject from the standpoint of the Qur'an in his last lectures in the Religious Centre,^{[1](#)} Najaf Ashraf (Iraq).

This study is significant, as it relates to the Religious Centre and Ayatullah Sadr. In our institutes of learning, study is mostly based on the four sources of law, the Qur'an, the Sunnah, the Reason and the Consensus of the juristic opinions. Naturally in these seats of learning the Qur'an is studied either from the juristic point of view or with a reference to fundamental, philosophical, scholastic and moral questions, which all come under the term of the exegesis^{[2](#)} of the Qur'an.

In the Religious Centre two different methods of teaching the exegesis are followed. One of them is the old and conventional method and the other is topical. In the first two lectures Ayatullah Sadr has explained in detail the difference between these two methods. According to the traditional method either the Qur'an from its beginning or a particular chapter of it is taken and explained verse by verse, chapter by chapter and word by word.

First the linguistic, grammatical and literary characteristics of every verse are dealt with, and then the subtleties of its meaning are elucidated. Next its historical background and the occasion of its revelation

are explained. Simultaneously the relevant traditions³ and other similar questions are also discussed. In this way the whole Qur'an is expounded. This type of exegesis may be called the split and part by part exegesis⁴.

The other method is that of topical exegesis.⁵ In this method a particular subject is chosen and studied from various angles. First suitable mental data are formed, and then a reference is made to the Qur'an in order to seek its verdict on the subject. From the traditions of the Prophet's progeny it is gathered that this method is more desirable than the other one. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) has said: "Here is the Qur'an. Let it express its opinion". The fact is that the Qur'an can reveal every truth. It is only up to the people to refer their questions to the Qur'an so that it may answer them.

If we refer to the Qur'an in the form of a question an idea which has already been investigated and discussed by various schools of human society, we can be guided by the Qur'an as to which is the best answer. In order to prepare ground for this kind of exegesis, it is necessary that the study of the whole Qur'an should first be completed in accordance with the first method.

In other words to be able to undertake topical study one should to some extent be familiar with the verses connected with the Islamic and Qur'anic questions and should be able to bring together all the verses concerning the subject under study.

This kind of work has already been accomplished in connection with the Islamic law when all the traditions pertaining to each subject have been brought together and elucidated. Ayatullah Sadr wanted to make a topical study of several subjects and deduce from the Qur'an its view on them, but unfortunately he could get the opportunity of completing his study of only one subject, namely the methodology of history or the philosophy of history. What is important to us is that this subject has been studied for the first time from religious and Qur'anic point of view.

This study has been given the name of 'The Trends of History in the Qur'an'. Now let us see what these words signify and what points they are expected to cover. Here it may be appropriate to point out that history has several connotations.

One of its connotations is the transmitted history that is an account of the events concerning a past subject. Another is the study of the historical events concerning a particular society. The third is a broad view of history detached from every limitation of time and place.

So far we have been studying the Qur'an from the standpoint of the transmitted history or have occasionally studied some past society in the light of what the Qur'an has said about it. In this connection we have been confronted with some difficulties too. For example we find that while relating the stories of the past the Qur'an does not describe the events in the terms of numerical facts. Not that it has any doubts about the figures, but it omits them intentionally. For instance, in the story of the People of the Cave, the Holy Qur'an says:

Some will say: They were three, their dog the fourth, and some say: Five their dog the sixth, guessing at random; and some say: Seven, and their dog the eighth. Say: (O Prophet!) My Lord is best aware of their number. None knows them except a few. So do not argue about them. (Surah al-Kahf, 18:22)

This way of expression shows that the Qur'an intentionally does not pay much attention to transmitted history. For the purpose of being benefited by historical events, it does not want to make us prisoners of any conventional form.

In contrast it wants to break the rigidity of such forms. The Qur'an has an identical attitude in respect of all historical stories. It makes no difference to it whether the events narrated concern such eminent people as the Prophets, or some wicked tyrants or some other extraordinary people. As such we have no right to fill in any gaps in the Qur'anic stories with any lore, myth, guess or our own personal opinion. We have only to find out what Islam (the Qur'an) aims at by narrating these stories. The fact is that Islam has a special philosophy in regard to the nations and the communities.

Similarly it has its own so called sociology. It does not want simply to recount the events, nor is it interested in any particular period of history or in the sociology of any particular people. If Islam has referred to these things, it has done so purely with a view to deduce certain universal laws which govern all human societies and determine their future course, whether good or bad.

Therefore it is of utmost importance for us to find out what laws of history the Qur'an puts forward so that we may understand our society as well as the past societies, be able to ascertain our future course and distinguish between what is right and what is wrong.

There is no doubt that for this purpose the Qur'an is the only reliable source on which we can depend. If we want to know if there has been any precedent for such a deduction of the laws of history, we see that a great thinker and philosopher, Ibn Khaldun made such deductions eight centuries after the revelation of the Qur'an. He for the first time in 'The Introduction' of his history turned his attention to the question of the development of societies and to the basic laws of history. Unfortunately after him his ideas were not pursued further and were almost entirely forgotten.

It was four centuries after Ibn Khaldun that the so called progressive elements of Europe who claim to be the forerunners of all sciences, and experts in every field, realized that human societies are governed by certain laws and norms. They called these laws the philosophy of history. With the passage of time every scholar began to interpret these laws according to his own thinking, his mental background and his personal whims.

Consequently now we are faced with divergent philosophies of history, the most well-known of them being those of Hegel, Toynbee and Marx. Each of these philosophies has its own method. As for our own society, it took eight centuries to turn its attention to this subject and then abandoned it before long. Others took to it, but they fell in grave errors, some of which we propose to point out later.

Another point which needs clarification before we enter upon our main subject is whether the Qur'an has a right to intervene in the discussion of the norms of history? Is it within its bounds to discuss a scientific subject at all?

If it is admitted that the Qur'an can put forward the laws of history, this subject becomes of utmost importance to us in our present circumstances. We have many problems of physics, chemistry, nuclear technology, mathematics etc. Can we turn to the Qur'an for their solution? Has the Qur'an dealt with scientific subjects?

If it has, why has the scientific progress of the Muslims been so much delayed? Why have we reached, even the present level of our culture, at least 1000 years after the revelation of the Qur'an? Should we not have attained this level when the Qur'an was revealed? And if the Qur'an has not dealt with the scientific subjects, why should we seek their solution in it now?

It is a fact that the Qur'an is not a book of science. But the question is: Why is it not a book of science when science solves so many problems of society? The answer is that science is unable to solve any problem unless and until it runs parallel to the course of guidance. Otherwise it only adds to the problems and aggravates them. Anyhow, this is a social question and outside the scope of our present discussion.

Briefly it may be said that the Qur'an is a book of Divine guidance. It tells the human beings what will happen in the wake of and in consequence to what they do. There is no information service in any part of the world which may tell us what the consequences of our deeds will be at a time subsequent to these deeds.

The knowledge which science provides is in its entirety based on the causative system, but it cannot envisage the future relation of any cause and its effects. It cannot say in what way the effect produced by a cause will be useful to man and in what way it will be harmful to him, nor can science indicate the direction to which man should be guided so that he may enjoy the beneficial results of a cause.

The function of science is confined to showing only the insipid relation between a cause and its effect. Even to discover this relationship man himself has to make effort and study nature so that his talent may unfold to the extent of understanding this relationship. He can exploit this relationship only through his own endeavour and experience.

All the tribulations and sufferings of the world including the wars, the diseases, the tragic incidents and all other problems and difficulties which man has to face are meant to give him impetus to surmount the difficulties and to find his way through them. Still the question of Divine guidance is something different. If a man is not religiously guided, he is bound to be swayed by the ideas and the problems which would ultimately pervert him.

It is the Grace of Allah that He guides men and sends for them Holy Books and clear guidance. The

Prophets come so that men may not be perplexed and deviate from the right path. Hence it is an indisputable privilege of the Qur'an to guide people. It is also a fact that due attention to the laws and the trends of history is an important part of guidance, for it protects man from the evils of deviation and perversion.

There is an important difference between the laws of history on the one hand and the laws of physics and chemistry on the other. The laws of physics and chemistry, which are based on the causative system of the world, apply to inanimate objects unable to receive any guidance.

On the other hand the laws of societies, though as firm and definite as any scientific laws, apply to human beings. It is the peculiarity of man that he can take himself out of the scope of one law, which he considers to be harmful to him, and put himself under the purview of another law which he regards as beneficial.

In other words he can decide for himself which law should apply to him, whether the law which leads him to happiness or the law which leads him to misery. The choice is with man himself.

Anyhow, that does not mean that man can violate any law. All that he can do is that instead of being under the purview of one law he may make himself subject to another law. He can do so because it is within his power to make or mar himself. It is for this reason that the Qur'an has paid special attention to the history of the nations and human societies. It has done so mainly with a view to give an opportunity to the people to derive from the laws of history the best systems suited to them.

History helps man in deriving general laws. If the Qur'an has referred only to some laws of history, it is because the Qur'an does not want to curtail the role of man's effort. There is no reason to think that the laws to which it has referred, are the only laws concerning human life and human society.

According to the Qur'an it is man's own duty to find out the trends of history and derive the laws. Man must take this problem seriously, try his best to discover the laws of history and accept their firmness. As an example of the verses which explain the laws of human history, we come across a verse in which the Qur'an in connection with the Battle of Uhud says:

If you have suffered a setback, a similar setback was suffered by these people (your enemy) also. And We bring about these vicissitudes in man's life. (Sarah Ale Imran, 2:140)

No people can say that they will always be victorious, nor are any people condemned to be always defeated. Victory and defeat depend on certain social conditions and are subject to the laws of history. Any nation or community which abides by these laws, gains victory, irrespective of the fact whether there are any virtuous people in it or not.

In fact, what is important is the system prevailing on the whole in a society. A few individuals do not count. That is why it should cause no surprise if in a bad society good people are also affected by

adverse social laws, for the destiny of a society is determined by the conduct of the great majority of its masses.

If a society on the whole is perverted, a good man, howsoever exemplary his personal conduct may be, will certainly suffer the evil consequences of the misdeeds of his society. The Qur'an says:

And beware of involving yourselves into a trouble the consequences of which shall surely not affect in particular those who are wrong-doers. (Surah al-Anfal, 8:25)

This verse conveys the same idea as mentioned above. The behaviour of a society is different from that of the individuals. Although it is the individuals who make society, yet the virtuous individuals singly cannot escape the evil consequences of the misdeeds of their society as a whole, unless they are able to change its general condition.

The best proof of the correctness of this rule, is provided by the story of Prophet Musa (Moses) and his people, as narrated in the Qur'an. The people of Musa wanted to reach the land of the covenant and settle there. But they asked Prophet Musa to wrest the holy land first from the oppressors with the help of his Lord, Allah and then invite them to enter it. They said to Prophet Musa:

So go you and your Lord and fight them. We are sitting here. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:22)

The Qur'an says that this attitude of theirs proved that they were not fit to gain victory.

He answered: Then this land shall be forbidden to them for forty years during which period they will be wandering aimlessly across the earth. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:26)

And so it happened. Prophet Musa undoubtedly had true faith in Allah, was sincere in his purpose and had heroically carried out a successful struggle against Fir'awn. But because his society was not disciplined and lacked forbearance and spirit of self-sacrifice, he like others had to wander in the desert and undergo hardships.

In this connection the charming interpretation of the Karbala tragedy made by Ayatullah Sadr is noteworthy and thought-provoking. He says that the people of Kufah were coward and timid while the people of Syria were perverted and covetous. The Kufans tolerated the despotic and blood-thirsty rule of the Umayyads. It means social behaviour of theirs was bound to cause disorder and bring about calamities.

Accordingly the Kufans were beset by adversities, famines and bloodshed: The incident of Karbala in which Imam Husayn and the members of his family suffered very heavily, was one of a series of such incidents. It was a social process which culminated in such a great tragedy. Such a process cannot be halted unless something is done to change its course.

In case we succeed in doing so, we save ourselves from the impact of an adverse law and put ourselves under a different law. Another point is that according to the Qur'an societies are governed by some fixed

and unchangeable laws. The Qur'an has laid much stress on this point. The relevant verses can be divided into several categories:

(i) The verses which lay down a general rule – The Qur'an says:

Every nation has a term; when it comes, they cannot put it back a single hour, nor can they put it forward. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:34)

This is a universal law of history.

(ii) There are other verses which refer to the consequences of injustice and oppression. One of them says:

If Allah took people to task by that which they deserve, He would not leave a single living creature on the surface of the earth; but He reprieves them to an appointed term. (Surah Fatir, 35:45)

No doubt it is within the power of Allah to punish and destroy the unjust and perverted societies immediately, but He has given them some respite. Here it may be pointed out that as regards to time the law of societies is different from the law of individuals. An individual may be punished or rewarded immediately after doing an evil or good deed. But as it is gathered from a number of verses of the Qur'an, the social changes may take hundreds or even thousands of years.

In the case of societies, the time is relative and only relative promptness is taken into consideration. Hence, one should not expect a quick change in society, for social changes have their own appointed time under the laws governing them.

(iii) Some verses of the Qur'an exhort people to study historical events and carry out investigations about them. In this connection there are several verses of similar wording. One of them says:

Have they not travelled in the land to see what happened to those who were before them? Allah wiped them out. And for the disbelievers there will be the like thereof. (Surah Muhammad, 47:10)

Allah asks those to whom this verse is addressed; why they do not make inquiries and travel in the land to see the deeds of the past people and the results of their doings? Why do they not see how Allah destroyed the disbelievers and the wrongdoers in the past and how he disgraced them? From these verses it becomes clear that society is governed by fixed and unchangeable laws and norms.

Now let us take up our main topic and see what these laws are and how they work. But before advancing the specimens of these laws it is necessary to mention some of their characteristics, for these characteristics draw a line of demarcation between our outlook on the norms of history and the outlook of others interested in this question.

We believe in three basic characteristics of these norms, by means of which it is possible to identify the course of history.

The first characteristic of the historical norms is their universality. They have no exceptions. The Qur'an has magnificently brought out this point. Wherever it mentions the fate of any people, it adds that to be so is a Divine method or a law. It firmly says:

You will not find for Divine Law any substitute, nor will you find in Divine Law any change. (Surah al Fatir, 35:43)

None can alter these norms or violate these laws. They are fixed and unchangeable. This position is not confined to the material questions of life, but is equally applicable to the question of Divine succour, which also, according to the Qur'an, operates in conformity with the laws and norms of history. As such the laws of society have no exception.

The second point is that the laws of society have a divine aspect or a divine characteristic. This position is somewhat thought-provoking. All physical relations in nature are based on a system of cause and effect. If we overlook this system and consider everything to be spontaneous, miraculous and a direct outcome of Allah's will, we will have to nullify all branches of science and abrogate the entire causative system. As a result our outlook on science will be totally changed and will become similar to that of Christianity on history as may be gathered from the sayings of St. Augustine.

According to his view the divinity of a thing means the negation of the sequence of causes and effects. In other words, if a thing has a divine aspect, that means that it is directly governed by the will of Allah. Can we also subscribe to this view? No, this view is irrational and contrary to all scientific knowledge and principles.

The view which we hold about the divine method and practice, passes exactly through the same channels as the system of causes and effects. The only thing is that while we accept what science says about the causative and other systems, we also believe that all systems ultimately depend on Allah.

Take a simple example. We know that it rains by the will of Allah. But we do not deny that the process of rainfall begins with the evaporation of sea-water and the rise of vapours. Then with a change in the temperature of the air, vapours again change into liquid and because of the gravity of the earth fall down in the form of the drops of water. We accept all this, but also maintain that at every stage everything depends on Allah, and at no stage causes operate or function independently of Him. That is our belief as well as our observation. It is not a question of any fictitious theory.

It is a reality that shows that in all its processes and causative motions the whole world depends on Allah. Although science works on the basis of causative system, it ignores that a reality underlies this system. It is essential to realize that everything depends on Allah, so that man may not lose himself and may not become self-conceited.

All the troubles and all the errors which the Western outlook on science has caused, are due to the false notion that man is not in need of his Creator. Such a notion makes man arrogant and conceited.

Hence one must give up this notion and find out that course, which has been prescribed for him by his Lord, for that course is actually the course along which the world operates. Hence, it is clear that there is a basic difference between the divine aspect which we accord to history and the divine aspect or the divine colour which Christianity accords it.

The third point which is important to us, is that the laws of history are not inconsistent with human freedom. We referred to this point earlier also. Now we quote some verses in support of our view. The Qur'an says:

Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change that which is in their hearts.

(Surah ar-Ra'd, 13:11)

In this verse Allah does not mean to say that He would repeal His law if people changed their condition. That is not the point. The real point is that it is a divine law that people will have one destiny if they change their condition, and quite a different destiny if they do not change and stick to their old habits and customs. Thus while this verse emphasizes the existence of a law, at the same time it confirms man's freedom. At another place the Qur'an says:

We destroyed these townships because they did wrong. (Surah al-Khaf, 18:59)

In this verse an invariable law has been mentioned for obviously nobody is forced to do wrong.

If they continue to tread the right path, We shall give them water to drink in abundance. (Surah al-Jinn, 72:16)

If the people of these towns had believed and practised piety, We would have surely showered on them the blessings of the heaven and the earth. But they disbelieved and therefore We seized them for their misdeeds. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:96)

You may notice how man has been given a choice of placing himself within the purview of two alternative laws. He has been told that he can place himself under the purview of either of them so that he may be dealt with according to the definite provisions of the law of his choice.

We have already hinted at the important question of divine succour. Here we propose to explain it a little further. Usually people think that divine succour is a concession and favour granted by Allah to some people of His choice. Actually that is not the case. Divine succour is granted according to its relevant law, and in this case also man's freedom has been ensured.

Thus even entry into paradise and the receipt of divine succour are governed by a law and that law requires perseverance in the face of the oppressors and a steadfast struggle against them. Allah's help

comes in the wake of man's own constant effort. This shows that the whole world and all its systems are governed by some law or other.

Recapitulating our discussion we may say that the norms of history have three characteristics. The number of the verses which throw light on them is quite large. We have quoted only a few of them. Referring to the classification of these verses we said that one group of them stipulated the universality of the laws of history. In this connection we cited the verse saying:

Every nation has a term; when it comes, they cannot put it back an hour, nor can they put it forward. (Surah Yunus, 10:49, Surah al-A'raf, 7:34).

The second group of them exhorts to the study of that which happened to the past people.

One such verse says:

Have they not travelled in the land to see what happened to those who were before them? (Surah ar-Rum, 30:9)

The third group of these verses tells the stories of the Prophets. The Qur'an is concerned only with the teachings that these stories contain and the moral which can be drawn from them. It is not interested in their outward aspect.

As from this angle all stories are similar to one another, they may be regarded as pages of the Qur'anic science dealing with the norms of history. As we have already emphasized three qualities of the laws of history should not be forgotten. These qualities are:

(i) Universality: The Quranic verses clearly show that the norms of history are fixed and invariable. The Qur'an has emphatically indicated that even in the case of divine succour no exception is admissible. Unlimited divine help cannot be expected. The Qur'an says:

Did you suppose that you would enter paradise while yet upon you has not come the like of that which befell those who passed away before you? They were afflicted by misery and hardship and were so shaken that the Messenger of Allah and those who believed along with him said: 'When comes Allah's help? Now surely Allah's help is near!' (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:214)

Allah says: Do not think that you are an exception to the general rule of divine help. The rule about it is firm and it is as applicable to you as it has been to others. The past peoples also had to face similar hardship and setbacks, but they continued their struggle and remained firm. You should also continue your struggle.

In their case the ground for a change was prepared only when they were almost tired of waiting for divine help. Only then the fruit of their patience and fortitude was made ready for them to pluck. Remember that Allah's help is in close proximity!

It follows from this that divine succour is subject to a well-calculated laws. Similarly the fight against falsehood is also governed by the laws of history. Mere wishes and desires can stir no movement in the domain of the laws of history, nor can they alone serve any purpose. Allah says:

It is not a question of your desire nor that of the desires of the people of the Book. (Surah al-Nisa, 4:123)

Actually it all depends on what you do.

(ii) The second quality of the norms of history is their divine aspect. As we have already pointed out what we believe in this respect is quite different from what Christianity holds regarding the question of divinity. We never cross the limits of the doctrine that everything has a cause, and maintain that all things occur through their normal channels.

The only thing is that besides believing in cause and effect relationship and scientific channels, we also believe that all things depend on their first cause. This belief is necessary so that man may not break away from his origin and may not fall a victim to arrogance and living in vacuum.

(iii) The third point or the third quality of the norms of history, which we would like to emphasize is the question of man's freedom. The norms of history, firm as they are, do not in any way curtail human freedom. In this connection we have already quoted some verses and later also we are going to cite some more. The most important verse on which this question is based is the following verse:

Surely Allah does not change the condition of a people until they themselves change what is in their hearts. (Sura ar-Ra'd, 13:11)

It is itself a norm of history that the development which a nation makes should come from within it and not imposed on it from outside. These are the points to which we have already referred. The next point we would like to explain is that of the field in which the norms of history operate.

This is a very important question. In this world many incidents take place, which are produced by the cause and effect material relationship, but the norms of history do not apply to them at all. Man is governed by physical, physiological and biological relations. Someone becomes ill. Someone dies. Someone is involved in an accident.

Such incidents may sometimes even change the course of the history of a nation, but still they have nothing to do with the norms of history. In history some very minor incidents have been of great importance.

In connection with the Marwanid Caliphs it is said that a dynasty perished because of urination. It was a mere chance that Marwan II felt the need of passing water. While doing so he was captured by the enemy and killed. With him his dynasty fell. Such incidents are not governed by any law of history. In other words such minor incidents by themselves do not change the destiny of nations.

Ayatullah Sadr has cited another instance. He says: Had Uthman not been murdered, would the course of history have been as it happened to be, when people with great zeal and farvour rushed to Imam Ali to pledge their allegiance to him, or would history have turned a different leaf? Similarly it may be asked about the Holy Prophet himself.

If in the 10th year of the Prophethood the two sad events of the death of the Holy Prophet's wife Lady Khadijah and the death of his uncle, Abu Talib had not occurred, would history have moved as it did and would the Holy Prophet still have migrated? These events may be regarded as the outcome of biological, physiological and temperamental factors concerning Lady Khadijah and Abu Talib, and as such they cannot have any connection with the norms of history. Hence let us find out the actual sphere of these norms.

We know that besides man the cause and effect relationship applies to scientific field also. For example water boils at a particular degree of heat (100° Centigrade) except on the surface of the sea. Similarly at a particular degree of heat, gas turns into liquid. These properties are invariable and are not subject to any change. But we cannot regard them as the norms of human history, because man's will is not involved in them in any way.

Similarly for an act to be within the scope of the norms of history it is not enough to have a causative agent. The agent must have some purpose also. In other words he must have an object in view. As such only that act falls within the range of the norms of history which not only has a causative agent but also has an object. This object may have only mental existence.

It may be mentioned that when we think of a cause we look backward from its effect, but when we think of an object we look forward from the effect. As far as the object is concerned the agent has no control over it. He cannot be sure of achieving it. He can have only a desire and an inner craving for it.

For the applicability of the norms of history the existence of this desire, which is merely a mental process, is essential. In short, norms of history apply to those human acts which have an object. Those things for which no object is kept in mind and occur simply as the result of some cause and effect relationship are outside their scope.

Again if we go deeper, we will find that even all those acts which man performs with an object in view, do not fall within the scope of the norms of history. Suppose a man needs a house for his residence. He makes plan for it, purchases a plot of land and engages some engineer and architect. Then he begins to build the house. He does all that with the object of living there. But so long as he requires that house for his personal use, his action can have no impact on history. When we feel hungry, we look for food. When we feel thirsty we go after water. To satisfy our private needs we do something purposive. We make deliberate moves.

In each case we have an object in our mind. But such acts certainly do not fall within the range of the norms of history. Anyhow, there are some other purposive actions of mass which start a social wave.

They have a popular aspect and hence stir a reaction among the masses. All those social actions which have an object and create a wave in society can become historical. Such actions include even vast trading activity and a scientific discovery, which changes society from within. Such are the things to which the norms of history apply.

Hence, the scope of the norms of history becomes clear. Now we know that the laws and the norms of history can be expected to apply to those acts which have three dimensions: (i) the causative dimension, (ii) the purposive dimension and (iii) the popular dimension.

The popular dimension means that the act in question should have the support of society as a whole. It is needless to add that for such acts the whole society will be called to account by Allah and will be given a collective deed-sheet.

In other words people are accountable for their collective as well as their individual acts. An individual act may affect the individual concerned only or it may affect a society as a whole. The collective acts are the acts of a nation or a community as a whole. The Holy Qur'an says:

And We shall have fastened every man's deeds to his neck. On the Day of Resurrection We shall confront him with a book which he will find wide open. And it will be said to him: Read your book. Today it is enough for you that your soul should call you to account. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:13 – 14)

The book mentioned in this verse is the individual deed-sheet. An individual will be called to account for all his deeds whether they affect him only or others also. The collective deed-sheet is mentioned in the following verse:

And you will see each nation crouching, each nation summoned to its book. And it will be said to them: 'Today you are requited what you used to do. This Our Book pronounces against you with truth. We have caused all that you did to be recorded'. (Surah al-Jathiyah, 45:28-29)

In this context a collective deed does not mean that all the members of the community or the nation concerned should take part in its performance. Moral support or even tacit approval is enough. In Nahjul Balaghah Imam Ali, the Commander of the faithful, says: "He who is happy with what a people do, should be regarded as one of them."

In this connection the example of the tribe of Thamud and the killer of the Prophet Salih's she-camel may be cited. It was only one man of the tribe of Thamud who actually killed the she-camel. But as the whole tribe approved his action, all were subjected to a celestial punishment.

This shows that the will and desire of a nation are enough for the applicability of the laws of history to it. For individual acts the individuals concerned will be brought before Allah singly. The Qur'an says:

There is none in the heavens and the earth but comes before the Beneficent as a slave. Surely He

knows their numbers with right numbering. And each one will come to Him alone. (Surah Maryam, 19:93–95)

For the deeds done collectively by a nation or a society there will be a separate appearance before Allah.

And you will see each nation crouching, each nation summoned to its book. (Surah al-Jathiyah, 45:28)

Now we know the scope of the norms of history. We see that all nations will be summoned so that their deed-sheets may be checked. That means that the nations as such are accountable.

Let us now take up the main point. We find that in the Qur'an the norms of history have been described in three different ways:

I. Some norms of history have been described in the form of conditional clauses. Their conditional nature must be noted. The result of this form of expression is that the relevant verses emphasize on man's freedom.

For example, someone says to you: "If you come to the meeting at the appointed time, you will be able to take part in it." It follows that if you do not come, you will not be able to take part in the meeting. That shows an option. It is up to you whether you come and take part in the meeting or do not come and do not take part in it. This position is quite unlike that of water which must boil at a certain degree of heat.

Of course we can say: "If you provide the necessary heat to it, water will boil." Here you are at liberty to provide or not to provide the necessary heat, for in this case the statement is conditional. Man being the master of his destiny, it is up to him to do or not to do a thing.

An example of conditional verses is that verse which we have already mentioned and are now quoting it again. This is a verse worth remembering:

Surely Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change that which is in their hearts. .(Sura ar-Ra'd, 13:11)

In other words if a nation wants to change its social conditions it should begin to carry out the change from within itself. This verse has the form of a conditional statement. Here there is another verse:

If they continue to tread the right path, We will surely give them water to drink in abundance. .(Sura al-Jinn, 72:02)

Here the right path means the path of justice and equity. Allah says that if there is an equitable distribution of the essential commodities and there is no extravagance, amassing of wealth, hoarding, wastage and negligence, He will provide them with abundant produce.

On principle we can derive from the Qur'an a general rule. Abundant produce depends on fair distribution. This is a norm of history. We cannot find a single instance of the failure of this rule. All cases of shortages and scarcity are due to man's own extravagance or lethargy. Man can use his freedom to enhance production provided he observes fair distribution. He can create famine also if he indulges in injustice and encroachment on the rights of others.

Take another following conditional Qur'anic verse:

When We intend to destroy a town, We first warn those of its people who have an easy life. If they persist in their wickedness there, they become liable to punishment. So We totally annihilate them. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:16)

In other words it is a divine practice that if any nation or the people of any country disobey the commandments of Allah, they are destroyed. The cause of their destruction is not Allah's sovereign power alone. They are destroyed because of their own doings. Allah has granted freedom to man. Man has a choice. He can obey Allah or disobey Him. If he prefers wickedness, his destruction becomes inevitable.

Hence, it is clear to what extent man's own will determines his destiny. The beauty and elegance of this verse lies in its beginning with the word 'iza' (when), its division into a principal and a subordinate clause and its implying that man's destiny is in his own hand.

This was the first of the various forms in which the norms of history have been mentioned in the Qur'an.

II. The second form is that of a definite statement. These statements are as firm as our statement can be when, for example, we say that a solar eclipse or a lunar eclipse will take place on such and such date at such and such time. The only difference is that an eclipse is not a human act.

Anyhow, we find the specimens of this form in the Qur'an in connection with the norms of history. These definite statements arouse a suspicion that the norms of history conveyed by them are imposed on man, which amounts to predetermination and compulsion of history. Then how can we reconcile man's freedom with the compulsion of history?

Some have denied man's freedom. They hold that the laws of history are fixed and inexorable. Some others with a view to safeguard man's freedom deny the very existence of any norms of history. Some others maintain that the norms of history do exist, but they are subject to man's will. All these people have failed to resolve this problem satisfactorily.

But we are in no need of any such explanations, for we have shown that conditional clauses adequately guarantee man's freedom. It is man who in all cases determines the destiny of society and the norms of history.

We will give examples of this kind of norms when we discuss the elements which form society.

III. The third form of the norms of history is a window through which we can see the most important norms and understand a significant feature of history. This form manifests itself in the shape of human tendencies, desires and emotions which are not peculiar to any particular society and have no local colour. They determine how man thinks and behaves in society.

But these tendencies are not as rigid as the rule that water must boil at a particular temperature. There are so many tendencies and cravings which can at least temporarily be checked, curbed and controlled, or can be diverted to a different direction.

Anyhow natural tendencies and cravings cannot be curbed or diverted for a long time, for in that case history itself punishes the defaulters, and the punishment of history is a reality that is not escapable. Sexual desire may be cited as an example of a natural craving that can to a certain extent be curbed. Sexual desire has a definite and direct link with the instinct of procreation.

As such is it possible to curb that instinct and satisfy the sexual desire in some other way? No doubt through various forms of sexual perversion it is possible to satisfy it. There are people who satisfy themselves through homosexuality, masturbation or in some other unnatural ways.

It may be found interesting to know that in cultured America the Association of the Homosexuals has launched a campaign. It stages public demonstrations and has succeeded in winning the support even of some members of the congress.

During my travels in America one day I saw a big demonstration on the roads there. The same day the American Television telecast the news of similar demonstrations in other states and towns. The demonstrators were crying: "We are human beings, and want to satisfy our needs this way."

In fact this way of satisfaction is against the divine norms of history, the violation of which is a culpable offence. The only thing is that in such cases history takes a lenient view to give a chance to the defaulters to realize their mistake and change their ways. If they do not do that and persist in their error, they should expect nothing but a punishment like one meted out to the people of Prophet Lut (Lot). That is a reality.

In the field of human affairs other examples also may be cited. For example, by their nature man and woman have separate fields of activity. The woman is naturally inclined to tender and emotional jobs. She likes to show her skill in tenderness and the elegance of human nature. We may entrust these feminine jobs to man, who is a symbol of toughness and strength, and entrust man's jobs to woman.

This is quite practical and apparently there is no difficulty. But such an arrangement is not lasting. For a week it can be arranged that all men stay at home, feed the children with bottle, wash and clean them and perform other domestic chores, and in exchange women do the hard jobs.

This arrangement is possible. But it would look like giving the job of the man of one trade to the man of

another trade in an under-construction building. For example we give the job of a carpenter to a brazier, the job of a mason to a cabinetmaker, and the job of a cabinetmaker to a blacksmith, or ask a veterinarian to act as a civil engineer.

All these people can work and erect a building, but such a building will not last long. The rain and the wind will soon pull it down. Similarly if a society goes against the norms of history, it will disintegrate very quickly.

At the most the word 'quick' has a special reckoning in the terminology of the norms of history. Here the quickness is relative. It is this case to which the following verse applies:

A day with Allah is as a thousand years of what you reckon. (Surah al-Hajj, 22:47)

Quickness being relative, for the purpose of changes in history, one day according to the Qur'an is equal to 1000 years. Hence quickness does not mean what we understand by it ordinarily. That the above verse is related to the norms of history is shown by the words with which it begins. The beginning words are:

"They ask you to hasten the punishment." (Surah al-Hajj, 22:47)

The pagans of Makkah were saying: "If it is true that those who fight against the Prophets are destined to be defeated and punished soon, where is that defeat and when will we be punished? We are ready to receive the punishment."

The Qur'an says that those who violate the norms of history are bound to be punished but in due course. The quickness of the punishment is relative. Anyhow, they should rest assured that the punishment will come soon.

We have another verse:

The angels and the spirit will ascend to Him in a Day whereof the span is fifty thousand years.
(Surah al-Ma'arij, 70:3)

At the end of this verse the Qur'an says:

That day the sky will become like molten copper.

These words show that this verse relates to the Day of Resurrection, because only on that day the sky will be like molten copper. No such thing will ever take place in this world. Hence it is evident that the previous verse relates to this world and mentions the norms of history.

The above point having been made clear, we may now say that religion is also one of the norms of history.

This point may be elaborated in the light of the Surah al-Baqarah, 2:30, which stipulates the vicegerency of man on the earth.

In every society there exist three elements: (i) Human element, that is men;

(ii) Natural element termed by the Qur'an the earth;

(iii) The bond which exists between man and the natural element.

The first two elements are constant and invariable. There can be no place where man may exist but he should have no contact with his environment that is other men and nature. Nor can we imagine nature anywhere in human history not linked with man. Hence man and nature are two constant elements in all societies. The important point to be studied is the nature of the link between these two.

If we analyse this link from the viewpoint of vicegerency as mentioned in the Qur'an, we find that this proposition has four sides as under:

(i) The authority appointing the vicegerent, that is Allah, who appointed man His vicegerent on the earth.

(ii) The vicegerent, that is man.

(iii) The things to administer which the vicegerent has been appointed. They are two things: man and nature. Thus there are four sides of this case.

When we consider the question of vicegerency, we find that man has been made responsible for other men and nature. On the whole he holds responsibility in respect of everything in this world. His responsibility is so vast that Imam Ali has said: "You are responsible for all places and animals."

The fourth element, Allah has not been added to the list merely to enhance the number. It is He who has allotted this responsibility to man. Anybody who disregards this link, is liable to become arrogant and to consider himself the absolute master of everything on which he can lay his hand. The Qur'an itself says:

Surely man is rebellious when he thinks that he is independent. (Surah al-Alaq, 96:6-7)

If man does not believe in Allah his relation to the world becomes based on exploitation and despotism. Such a man enslaves his fellow-beings and exploits them for his own gain. He imposes his absolute authority on lands and property.

His self-conceit makes him oblivious of himself. So long as his relation to his environment is merely three-sided, that is confined to other men and nature, he is selfish, but the whole situation changes as soon as he realizes that he holds a trust and works on behalf of the Lord of this world.

You can clearly see the difference between a three-sided and a four-sided relationship, if you see the films of American inhuman treatment of the red Indians and the blacks and the films of the American

crimes in other countries like Vietnam etc. All this commotion, sense of irresponsibility, and the feelings of conceit, lust and greed are due to man's being three-dimensional.

We have another verse which covers the same point from another angle:

We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it. Surely he is unjust and a fool. (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:72)

It must be understood that here the assumption of a trust does not mean the assumption of any duty because at no time man was in a position to do that or had a choice of accepting or not accepting such a responsibility. Then what is the nature of this trust which Allah places on us? We are rational beings, still we did not know whether we should or should not accept this trust. Then what to say of those which had not even the capacity of understanding?

Are the hills able to understand anything? Do the heavens and the earth understand? It was not an offer of any duty that could be accepted by one and refused by another. Here the acceptance of a responsibility is a subtle and beautiful way of saying that religion is ingrained in man's nature, who is instinctively inclined to seek it.

Man by nature accepts the existence of Allah. He is automatically drawn towards Him. The heavens, the earth and the hills have no such natural tendency. They do not have the capacity of submitting to Allah's commands and obeying them.

In another verse in which the true state of man's nature has been mentioned, the Qur'an refers to this natural tendency of man from the angle that it has been granted to him by Allah.

Set your face towards religion as an upright man and follow the true state of nature in which Allah has created man. (Surah al-Rum, 30:30)

In the above quoted verse of the Surah al-Ahzab the Qur'an refers to this very quality of man from the angle that man has accepted it. This acceptance had been done by man's nature. Religion is a divine trust and it is in the making of man. But it is that type of trend of his which can temporarily be disregarded.

Religion is not like fire which must always burn, its burning and heating qualities being such that they can never be separated from it. Religion is also not like water which always boils at a particular degree of heat. It is one of those norms which can be disregarded at will and can even be temporarily suppressed and curbed.

In this respect it can be compared to sexual drive. If a man does not go the natural way, he can adopt some other course to satisfy himself. Similarly a woman instead of doing what nature has prescribed for her, may take up some masculine jobs. But it must be remembered that going against nature always has dire consequence.

The same is true of religion, and evil are the results of opposing it. It is only his bad luck if any man is hostile to religion in contravention of his own natural tendencies. Surely man is unjust and a fool.

He is unjust to himself if he tramples upon religion, and it does not give a free hand to his true nature and does not submit to the injunctions of Allah. In such a case the subsequent part of the Qur'anic verse which says:

"But most men know not,"

will apply to him.

Many people do not know that the observance of religion has vital social importance for them. They contravene religion and then say: "If it is true that religion is a norm of history, how is it that people can safely afford to contravene it?" We say that they cannot afford to contravene it. The defaulters have only a short respite and they will soon see the consequences. Of course 'soon' in this context means historical 'soon'.

In fact, man is surely unjust and a fool. He has consented to bear the 'trust' and made it a part of his nature, but in actual practice he does wrong to himself and out of ignorance goes against his own nature. We will later discuss how religion makes its way to society and how the outside influences affect man's environment. For the present we put off the discussion of man and nature.

Now we revert to our main subject. As we have pointed out earlier the Qur'an indicates that religion is one of the most important norms of history. The discovery that religion is a norm and not merely a divine idea is very significant and requires that this question should be studied from scientific point of view, for many vital questions are linked with this question. It is to be noted that the years, days and hours of the norms of history are relative and longer than those according to which we reckon the ordinary events.

We earlier inferred this point from the Qur'an. Nevertheless we still have to study it as a scientific law. The discovery that religion plays a significant role as a norm of history, makes it necessary that we cast a glance on the question of man's vicegerency of Allah and on the elements which constitute this vicegerency.

In this connection all that is derived from the Qur'an is that Allah has appointed man His vicegerent in respect of men and nature.

In this relationship there are four sides or four elements, each one of which should be considered separately.

The first side is man, the second is Allah, the third is man's relation with nature and the fourth is man's relation with his fellow beings. If we study the two constant elements – man and nature and place man in the perspective of history, we find that the man who makes history is different from the man who is a causative dimension of his past.

There are many factors, responsible for man's coming to this world and his being placed under the existing conditions, but he must have some other factors in his mind to induce him to go after an objective and ultimately become a future-maker. What type of man is the future-making man? We assert that man makes history with his own hands. Does history exist in a material form? Is it a thing which man can hold in his hands? Nothing of the sort.

All that man can have is a mental conception of future followed by a mental determination and a will not executed so far. That is why as far as the movement of history is concerned, we adjudge all the concrete questions and the questions of the past, on the basis of the general law of causation.

But we have no basis for all that is concerned with the future or with our aims and objects, except a mental conception and subsequently a mental determination or a state of preparedness to make a future move. It is this state which is called 'will'. The whole structure of society is built on two pillars:

- (i) man's mental conception and
- (ii) his will and determination to give a concrete shape to his ideas.

It is evident that whatever takes place in society, is a superstructure based on man's thinking and his intentions. That is why the Qur'an believes that there exists a close relationship between this infrastructure and the superstructure of society built on this infrastructure. When we closely study the following verse, we find that in it there is a direct reference to these sections of the structure of society:

Surely Allah does not change the condition of a people, until they change that which is in their hearts.

It means that the superstructure of society can be changed only if its infrastructure is changed. To bring about a change in society, it is necessary to change its basic thinking and the will. If its way of thinking is changed, society will automatically be changed. In this connection there is one more essential condition.

Every action must be a reflection of its social thinking. When an idea creates a wave in society and that wave becomes strong enough to change its social thinking, the will of society is also changed.

As a result, a sequence of outer developments appears in society. But all the developments must be the result of a basic and infrastructural change. Otherwise they are fake and dangerous for society. That is why Islam emphasizes that **Jihad** (the holy war) conducted by the Muslims is only a minor **jihad**.

The major and genuine **jihad** is that which is waged inside man himself. If the inner thinking and the outer action are not in harmony with each other, the correct name of this state is hypocrisy. A hypocrite is known by the disagreement of his thinking and doing. Describing the hypocrites the Qur'an says:

There is such a man whose views on this worldly life please you. He even calls on Allah to vouch for that which is in his heart. Yet he is the deadliest of your opponents. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:205)

What a hypocrite says is apparently very pleasing, but he is still a hypocrite because what he harbours in his heart is not in consonance with what he says:

No *sooner he leaves you than he tries to make mischief in the land, destroying crops and cattle.*
(Surah al-Baqarah, 2:205)

If a man's actions do not agree with his thoughts and his intentions, he is a hypocrite and a mischief-maker. He is likely to cause devastation and subversion. It is our duty to pave the way for the forward march of history. The wheels of history move in the right direction when their movement is inspired by the ideals of the right-thinking men.

Actually it is big ideals which move everyone along a particular line, feed the small movements and boost the wavering wills. We find our ideals in the light of our outlook on the most important questions of our life. These ideals become a motivating force and make the things moving. Only then we are able to make some contribution to the development of society.

An ideal is a thing which man always keeps in his view, by which he is guided and to which he is absolutely devoted in his life. He continues to advance along the line determined by his ideal. It may be called his aspiration and ideology also. It is man's motivating force. Sometimes it so happens that a licentious man makes his lewdness his ideal. The religion also can be the ideal of some people. That is why the Qur'an says:

Have you seen him who has chosen for his god his own lust? (Surah al-Furqan, 25:43)

There are people who are inspired and motivated by their base desires. Their only ideal is their lust.

The main ideals of men can be studied under three different headings. The first category of the ideals is that which is connected with the existing conditions. Many people get so absorbed in the questions of daily life that they remain content with the existing conditions and are motivated by them only throughout their life.

If we look for the reasons why they are content with the status quo and do not find any attraction in working for the future, we will find that there are two reasons of that: The first is their lethargy.

Being easy-going they do not realize the need of moving towards future. They are interested only in passing their life somehow or other and do not want to take any trouble or to exert any pressure on their mind.

To this category belong those who adhere to what their forefathers did. In the Qur'an so many verses refer to these people. For example take this verse.

They say: Enough for us is that wherein we found our fathers. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5: 104)

These were the people who accused the Prophets of misguiding them and diverting them from their forefathers' way of life:

We found our fathers following a religion and we are following their footprints. (Surah al-Zukhruf, 43:24)

They forget that following the footprints of forefathers is not a goal nor an ideal which could ensure their future. The Qur'an has another expression for this attitude. It describes it as sticking to the earth, that is having the materialistic tendency of satisfying one's base desires, adhering to the existing conditions and passing a lazy life.

This tendency has eroded so many people from within and prevented them from moving forward. Because of their lethargy they have failed to join the caravan of advancement. These people, to ensure the satisfaction of their base desires, stick to the ways of their forefathers. This is the internal reason.

Besides that, there is an external reason also, which compels some people to regard the existing conditions, as their ideal, if the status quo could be described so. This reason is the force of authority exercised by the Pharaohs (tyrants) of the time. Pharaohs were particular persons, but we can use this word in its derived general sense.

All over history the pharaohs have followed the same pattern. They have always demanded that complete obedience and total submission to them only should be the ideal of everybody under their control. The tyrants want the existing situation to be accepted by the people as their ideal. The Qur'an says that Pharaoh (Fir'awn) asked Prophet Musa how he could think of any god other than him when he had all that could be expected of a god.

Fir'awn said: `O Chiefs, I do not know that you have a god other than me'. (Surah al-Qasas, 28:38)

The pharaohs imposed their views on others:

I do but show you what I think and I do but guide you to a wise policy. (Surah al Mo'min, 40:29)

The tyrants neither want the people to think independently, nor do they allow them to have their own way. People can get rid of the tyrants if they think for themselves and do not blindly follow those who like Fir'awn claim that whatever they say is right.

Islam exhorts people to shatter the limitations imposed on them and find their own way. A part of this verse refers to the point under discussion:

Give good tidings to My bondmen, who hear advice and follow the best thereof. (Surah az-Zumar, 39:17-18)

The verse 17 of Surah az-Zumar begins with these words:

For those who refrain from adoring the tyrants and turn to Allah in repentance, for them there are good tidings.

Obviously unqualified obedience is a sort of adoration. The Qur'an says that there are good tidings for those who keep away from the tyrants, fight against them and turn to Allah. Then Qur'an continues to say that these are the people who do not follow the orders of anybody blindly, weigh carefully what they are told and choose their ideal themselves. Thus the first category of the ideals is that which makes people content with the existing state of affairs.

There are two factors which prevent them from thinking of any other ideal. One is internal and the other is external. Both these factors are dangerous for humanity. It is significant that gradually these ideals are given a religious turn and clothed with a sort of sanctity. The devotion shown to ancestors and forefathers becomes comparable to divine worship.

According to the Qur'an these things have no reality. They do not bring about any factors of homogeneity in society. At the most they create some future hopes and expectations, but when these hopes do not materialize, people become still more absorbed in the existing conditions and make them their ideal. Then all hopes of the homogeneity of society are lost.

Everybody's attention is concentrated on meeting his own personal and family needs and securing bread, butter, shelter etc. As a result, although the members of society may have a semblance of unity, their actual condition is represented by the verse which says:

Their adversity among themselves is very great. You think them as a whole, whereas their hearts are diverse. (Surah al-Hashr, 59: 14)

People may belong to one formation, yet they have no homogeneity. In their ideals nothing being common to the whole community, each individual goes after his own personal interest. When a nation falls to such a low ebb, the past experience shows, that there are three ways how the things may develop. In fact, there are some people who have some half-way ideals, but after having achieved them they forget about their future and become contented with the existing state of affairs.

The three ways of development hinted above are predictable. The situation becomes most serious when a nation having no ideal is subjected to a military attack from outside. In this situation everybody thinks of saving his own life and property only. Such a nation cannot forge unity to be able to withstand the foreign forces and hence its resistance is broken soon.

In our history we have experienced the results of being interested in transitory and momentary questions. The Mongol invasion of Iran is an event which still requires some investigation. At the time of this invasion people's interest in material questions and day to day life had diverted the attention of society from its real ideal. Chaos and disunity were the order of the day.

As society had no conception of an earnest and historical action, it was completely shattered by the Mongol invasion. In the circumstances prevalent at that time it was but natural that a foreign power should come and destroy the crumbling and moth-eaten nation.

The second development which may take place when a nation does not have an ideal of its own, is that it may pick up some imported ideal. Nowadays many nations are facing this situation.

We saw a glaring example of this situation in our country when the Persian Kings, Raza and Muhammad Raza tried to impose on us the Western culture as if we were a nation which had nothing of our own and had to beg for Western ideas. Ataturk did the same in Turkey. Other instances can be seen in various other countries.

The third possible development is that a nation should find out its real ideal and should start a movement to reconstruct itself. This was the case with us when we launched our revolutionary movement in the years preceding 1963. This movement gained strength day by day till we succeeded in bringing about a revolution; and this is the third category of the ideals. We will study it further at its appropriate place.

If we make a thorough study of the second category of the ideals we may say that this category does not provide any absolute ideal. Anyhow, some of the ideals of this category may be regarded as a stage which must be passed.

We must not stop at the stage of these ideals. They may be a thing which may be desirable for a nation, but not enough in itself, neither horizontally nor vertically. In other words it must develop further with the passage of time. For example, let us take freedom. It is a good ideal. It is required. But the question is whether it is a content or only a form which we must pass to reach the content.

There was a time when Europe was under the pressure of the Church, which had monopolized knowledge and had thereby placed restrictions on the common man. People were groaning under the yoke of the feudalists. Trade, industry and other affairs of life were controlled by a cruel and oppressive aristocracy.

At that time the most important question for the people of Europe was that of freedom. They thought if they got freedom, they would obtain all that they desired. They made freedom their ideal. But freedom is only the first step towards making a historical move. It is not a thing with which one should become content. Other steps must follow the first step.

One must see what is that for which freedom is required. We want freedom to go to bazaar to be able to purchase something. If we have a freedom to move, we must know what for we want to move. If we get free, but do not know what to do with our freedom, we will be like a boat aimlessly released in the middle of a sea.

Freedom is very important for marching towards the main ideal, but it is extremely dangerous to regard it

as the goal of life. Especially with the present technical and industrial progress it may culminate in playing with atomic weapons and drawing the world to bloodshed and ruin. Means of devastation in the hands of a free but irresponsible man are just like matches, cotton, gunpowder and other incendiary material in the hands of the children playing with them.

From vertical point of view, that is from long term point of view a half-way ideal is relatively good, but it is of no use if further progress is not made towards the absolute ideal. A halfway ideal is fit to be a stage and a means only. Another example of this sort of an ideal is the unit formed by family members.

Several families make a tribe; several tribes make a clan; a number of clans make a community and then several communities make a nation. Instead of extending our outlook to the world level, we often make our family our ideal and make every sacrifice to safeguard its interests. This is another example of giving undue importance to a relative ideal. The Qur'an says:

As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are as a mirage in a desert. The thirsty one supposes it to be water till he comes to it and finds it nothing, and instead finds with him Allah, who pays him his due. (Surah al-Nur, 24:39)

The deeds of those who have no proper goal and have not a divine outlook are like a mirage. They run after what has no real existence. They find Allah before them because Allah is everywhere. Wherever one goes Allah is there.

When the Qur'an says He finds Allah before him, it means that Allah is at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of everything. When those who have not a divine outlook reach the end of their journey towards their ideal, they find no trace of it.

On the other hand, they find Allah everywhere. All their ideals being half-way ideals, they must move forward from the stage of these ideals. Otherwise they will again and again come across the same boring ideals which cause society to degenerate and decompose it from within.

In short the declining societies find themselves facing one of the four situations. In one of the situations they may have some relative ideal. The Qur'an admits that a society having a relative ideal may obtain some positive results as far as its material life is concerned. The Qur'an says:

Whoever desires this worldly gain, We hasten for him in this world that We will and for whom We please. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:18)

It is a different thing that in the next world he may have to face difficulties. As for those who seek next worldly gain, the Qur'an says:

And whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it with the effort necessary, being a believer; for such their effort finds favour with their Lord. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:19)

That means that those who have an eye to the more distant horizon, their wish is also fulfilled. The next verse makes it clear that both these groups are helped in achieving their respective objects.

Each do we supply, both these and those, from the bounty of your Lord. And the bounty of your Lord can never be blocked. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:19–20)

Those who have only a relative ideal, work to achieve it. That is the first stage. After they have achieved their objective, the second stage comes, which is a stage of pause. But as man cannot remain without an ideal for long at the third stage they choose some prominent personalities from among them as their ideal. That is why the Qur'an says:

They say: Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and elders, and they misled us from the way. (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:67)

They follow their chiefs, because they had reached the stage of pause. It is at this stage that man begins to adore other human beings, for he cannot sit idle and must have something or someone as his ideal.

As a result, these chiefs and elders form an aristocratic class and begin to lead a luxurious life. To maintain their position thus acquired, these luxurious people oppose every reform. The Qur'an says:

We never sent a warner before you (Holy Prophet) to any township, but its luxurious ones said . . . , (Surah al-Zukhruf, 43:23)

Whenever a Prophet comes, he is first of all opposed by this very wealthy class, the members of which are held in respect and awe by those, who having been cut off from their ideal, cannot think of anything except maintaining the existing position.

Once having gained power, the luxurious and oppressive class never agrees to loosen its grip on society. Then the fourth stage comes when this class rides so roughshod over society that it deprives the common people of all the fruits of their civilization and seizes and destroys their resources.

We find many such instances in the past and the contemporary history. Hitler and his German Nazis destroyed the fruits of civilization amassed by so many countries over long periods through all kinds of trickery. When wealthy classes come into existence, side by side with them there appear those who ultimately annihilate them. The Qur'an says:

And similarly We have allowed in every town its ringleaders to intrigue therein, but they intrigue against themselves only. (Surah al-An'am, 6:123)

They intrigue to create disorder which culminates in their own destruction and the destruction of their civilization. Though none of the ideals so far mentioned by us was a true ideal, yet it is a fact that society regards each of them as a religion. Stalinism is a religion. Nazism is a religion. Despotism and even licentiousness are religions.

As we have already said, one of the ideals is the existing state of affairs. It is accepted as such either because of laziness or as the result of pressure by some oppressive force. Another ideal is some half-way movement. This ideal also in the long run leads to the same results as the first one.

In the wake of it society passes through various vicissitudes and is ultimately annihilated. As such we must find out some other ideal which may be consistent with man's forward-looking nature. As he can satisfy this yearning of his by directing his attention to Allah, we propose Allah as the third ideal.

There are two advantages of our proposal. The first advantage is quantitative, for by following our suggestion man can incessantly move forward towards his infinite goal. His movement is not stopped at any stage, nor does he reach an impasse. There is no limit to his achievement. Society can never come to a stand-still. Way is always open for society to move forward.

From this point of view this advantage is quantitative. We have seen that in the case of all other ideals man's progress comes to an end soon and as a result, society begins to decay. Therefore a continuous and constructive movement of society towards Allah is the only natural alternative.

The other advantage of our proposal is qualitative. By following our suggestion man can find a way to resolve the inner contradiction existing in him. First let us see what this contradiction is. We can study this question in the light of independent views as well as from the viewpoint of the Qur'an.

It is gathered from the Qur'an that man has two kinds of tendencies. He has some material tendencies which include both his physical and mental needs and drives. He is naturally inclined towards ensuring his self-interests. He strongly desires to be rich and feels compelled to satisfy his sexual and other biological needs. He wants to live in comfort and luxury.

At the same time man has a different kind of urge also. Having been made of clay, he has material tendencies, but has a flicker of divine spirit also in him. Allah says:

"I breathed in him of My spirit". (Sura al-Hijr, 15:29)

As a result man has two conflicting kinds of tendencies. There is a conflict between truth and falsehood, between justice and injustice, between good and evil and between right and wrong. This is an inner problem of man. Social studies do not provide any solution of this problem. They only confirm its existence. Man is always in a fix which way he should go. He appears to have no means to resolve this contradiction.

Hence there must be an outside force which may pull him to one of the two conflicting sides. By nature we know the necessity of being pulled to that side which represents justice and virtue. Allah being the source of the pull, evidently we must have Him as an ideal. If societies organize themselves in such a way that they proceed toward Him, two great reforms will simultaneously take place.

First, society will be reformed and secondly, man himself will change for the better. Other ideals cannot

do this, because they cannot instil in man a sense of responsibility. Man regards other ideals either as his equal or an existence below himself. Allah is far above man. He is the Creator and Sustainer of the whole world. There is nothing like Him. He is not of the same category as man. Man cannot oppose Him, nor can he be His rival. Allah is Omniscient, All-hearing and All seeing. He is Just, He keeps an account of everything and recompenses for evil and for good. In Allah man can find all those forces which can induce an individual or a society to do a thing.

As a result Allah's religion is the most important factor which can persuade a society to reform itself. In this connection it is necessary to explain how it is possible that Allah has a role in connection with human societies which on the one hand are concerned with such affairs as technical, industrial, agricultural and those connected with animal breeding, and on the other with human relations.

Before giving our explanation in this respect, let us see what the proponents of dialectical and historical materialism, who bore us with their lectures on philosophy of history, have to say on this subject. These people who wish to reduce man to animal, insist that man should have no connection with Allah. They say that religion is the opium of the nations. This statement is quite appropriate in respect of the religions we mentioned above – the religions which make a god of the existing state of affairs and deify their leaders, the religions which regard the material condition of their family or half-way independence as their ideal.

No doubt these things have a narcotic effect and are the opium of the nations. We want man to get rid of these narcotics, but we do not want to make him the victim of a more dangerous opium. If you think of liberating man totally from religion, to what else do you want to hand him over for his future?

While entertaining the reality of this divine ideal, we have to accept the five fundamental principles of Islam on which the ideality of Allah is based. These principles are: Monotheism, and Prophethood, which forms a link between Allah and humanity, and the Ummah, which is the external crystallization of Prophethood, the Hereafter, which serves as an incentive to human efforts and lastly Divine Justice.

Should we try to elaborate these principles, we will have to go into the relation of religion to society and history and will have to discuss historical norms. Hence we skip over the ideological and intellectual aspects of the question and take up the theme of society.

If society has a link with Allah, the two-fold relationship which exists in every society works better. There are two constant elements in every society, man and nature. Man's relation with these two is important, that is man's relation with his fellow human beings and his relation with nature. We want to study this relationship from the point of view of religion and would like to see what should be done if we want to improve the relation between man and man.

Here Marx comes with his analysis of the social questions. He says that society is always divided into a privileged class and an under-privileged class. In order to get rid of its deprivations that under-privileged class has always been engaged in a constant class war over all periods of history. The struggle between

these two classes will continue till all class disparities vanish and an ideal classless society comes into existence. This should be regarded as an inexorable process and a historical inevitability.

He says that all revolutionary activities that he wants to be conducted are meant only to push forward this historical movement, though the process will inevitably continue even otherwise. If we involve ourselves with the discussion of this controversial theory, we are afraid that our own programme and purpose will be left incomplete.

Hence we overlook the criticism which has been levelled against this faulty theory. For example it is asked why this theory of revolutionary process has failed in the case of industrialized countries such as the U.S.A., Britain, France and Germany?

Why do we see that in certain countries the rich and the poor classes have come close to each other and instead of fighting against each other, work together without any mutual conflict at all. In the U.S.A. the workers and the employers cooperate with each other. In this case what happened to the principle of contradiction and conflict? Is this class contradiction true in the case of certain selected peoples only or is there a contradiction between the material prosperity of some and the poverty of others?

If the theory of class conflict is really valid, this conflict should be universal irrespective of the time and place. But we see that the Marxists themselves admit that the divergent conditions prevailing in each country make a lot of difference.

Incidentally it may be remarked that there appears to be an ominous concord between the American workers and the American employers that America should seize the resources of the countries under its influence and divide them between its own workers and employers. The whole case appears to be that of cocks making free with horse's corn.

All have eyes on oil of the Middle East, diamonds of Tanzania, cotton of Egypt, and tobacco and wine of Algeria. There are other sectors also where the American workers and employers have an agreement. As we cannot accept the basis of contradiction pointed out by Marx, we must find out another basis of it.

Despite all his originality, intelligence and study of history Marx's thinking is limited. The flight of his thinking could reach only a minor aspect of the real contradiction. He discovered that human relations centre round a conflict between the strong and the weak. The strong may derive his strength from his wealth, his post or any other sphere of power and influence. Even science is an evil which may provide someone with strength to trample upon the weak. It is not a question of capital only.

In fact the root of this phenomenon goes much deeper. Hence we must find out the real root-cause of the contradiction and conflict prevailing in human society. The main question is whether man should have a materialistic tendency or should tend towards the flash of divine light. As this is a question of man's inner feeling, the contradiction can be resolved only when all societies and men follow that course which man's vicegerency of Allah demands.

As we know, Allah has placed every thing of the world at the disposal of man as a trust. All problems are automatically solved, when man follows that course. We see that a man who recognizes Allah and follows the course prescribed by Him is compassionate and kind-hearted. He shows respect to his fellow human beings and does not regard them as tools for the satisfaction of his own desires.

As far as class war is concerned, it is to be noted that there are cases when both the classes of a nation unite together to crush another nation. Therefore class war does not have a root in society all over history, nor are the ups and downs in the history of societies always determined by economic and material questions.

The problem is more deep-rooted. Man has two contradictory elements in his nature. The question is to which side he should incline. Within him man has no force to give a definite turn to one of his conflicting tendencies.

Therefore there must be an outside force to direct him, and that force can be nothing except his turning and leaning towards Allah. This is the position as far as the relation between man and man are concerned. In fact our problem is two-fold: man's relation with other men and man's relation with nature.

A link with Allah and religion solves both these problems. As for man's relation with other men, the problem is that man while dealing with others turns to selfishness and ignores the interests of others. This not only creates conflict of interests, but is also contrary to man's natural inclination towards Allah. The solution of this problem lies in our belief in Allah and religion.

The second problem is how to subdue the ruthless and inflexible nature and bring it under our control so that we may obtain from it all that we need in life. This problem can be solved if we work with nature more and more.

Thus we will get the experience necessary to bring nature under our control. In fact this is a two-way process. The more we work with nature, the better we control it and the more we control it, the more experience we gain and consequently new avenues are opened to us.

But the problem is that when man begins to control nature and becomes capable to make a better use of it, he enslaves others and his power of exploitation increases. We had no power of exerting pressure on others when we depended on hunting for our livelihood and could defend ourselves only with wooden and stone weapons.

But with the availability of huge industrial outfits and modernized means of agriculture, man acquires power of exploiting other fellow beings also. This is affirmed by the Qur'an when it says:

Surely man is rebellious when he thinks that he is independent. (Surah al-`Alaq, 96:6-7)

When man could cultivate only his own land and could produce only as much food as was barely enough for himself, he could not think of seizing the land of others. At that time he scarcely had any

means to exploit others. But today he has acquired enough power of exploitation.

Now what is to be done to ensure that man subdues nature, gets maximum benefit out of it and at the same time does not exploit his fellow beings? In our opinion the solution of this problem lies in the relation between work and experience. The more man exerts himself, the more experience he gains. The only condition is that he must not sever his relation with Allah.

He must look at all natural resources as a divine trust, at himself as the vicegerent of Allah and at other human beings as his brethren. If he does so, surely prosperity will grow many fold and the blessings of Allah will shower from the heaven and the earth. There will be no shortage of anything for human society. There is another way of saying the same thing. If there is a fair distribution, the production is bound to go up to the required level.

This is a belief which has its roots in the Qur'an. There are many verses which lay stress on it. This view is also supported by historical norms. As for the Qur'an we may quote the following Qur'anic verse for example:

If they continue to tread the right path, We shall give them to drink of water in abundance. (Surah al-Jinn, 72: 16)

The following verse is clearer in its import:

If the people of the townships had believed and kept from evil, surely We should have opened for them blessings from the sky and from the earth. But they disbelieved, and so we seized them on account of what they used to earn. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:96)

Of course this view can be accepted only by those who have faith in the Qur'an. But we can observe the applicability of this formula in our everyday life. If in a society justice, virtue and piety prevail; the factors which unify it become strong. Its homogeneity which is necessary to run the colossal wheels of industry and agriculture is galvanized. Because of its unity and cohesion such a society can overcome all its difficulties and never faces any disruption.

Societies not having this unifying force are liable to decay and disintegrate. The authorities which subjugate these societies, themselves create disunity and discord. One may think that they are civilized and have unity and solidarity, but as a rule their solidarity is artificial. They are split at the places where human solidarity is required.

It is interesting to note that such words as arrogant, tyrant and oppressor which we have used, we have derived from the story of Fir'awn in the Qur'an. Some people may think that the Qur'an recounts historical stories such as the story of Fir'awn and Prophet Musa, merely to narrate history. Now we can say that this notion is wrong.

The Qur'an wants to point out that the factors of disruption and annihilation are inherent in despotic

societies. We can predict their fate. On the other hand a divine society is blessed with the quality of homogeneity.

Surely this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord, so worship Me. (Surah al-Anbiya, 21:92)

Allah says that He has made the Muslims one single formation. Hence it is their duty to march forward and open new avenues. The position of the pharonic society is, on the other hand, quite different. The dissensions of the members of this society inevitably split them into six classes. We would name the first one the despised class. This class depends on the despots and pharaohs and cooperates with them. In respect of them the Qur'an says:

When the wrongdoers are brought before their Lord, Those who were despised (on the earth) say to those who were arrogant: But for you, we should have been believers. (Surah as-Saba, 34:31)

This verse depicts the scene of the Doomsday. On that day some of the wrongdoers will be blaming some others. The verse makes it clear that even all those who belonged to the despised and depressed class were not virtuous. Some of them also were wrongdoers. Allah says when the wrongdoers will be brought before Him, some of them will be belonging to the despised class and they will have a verbal contest with the arrogant.

The second class consists of the pharaohs' favourites and their advisers. They encourage and guide the pharaohs. So to say they are often more Romans than the Romans themselves.

The Qur'an says:

The chiefs of Pharaoh's people said: 'Will you allow Musa and his people to make mischief in the land?' (Surah al-A'raf, 7:127)

These Pharaoh's favourites were instigating him and saying: We wonder why do you leave Musa and his people alone. They will be making mischief and will not accept your godship. These chiefs provoked Fir'awn to say that he would soon kill the sons of the Israelites and enslave their womenfolk.

Thus the second class comprises the Pharaohs' favourites and advisers.

The third class consists of those who have no goal or ideal. This class includes mostly the illiterate, backward and poor people, who are always dragged from one side to another. According to the Qur'an they will say on the Doomsday:

Our Lord, indeed we obeyed our chiefs and elders and it is they who misled us from the way. (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:67)

It may be pointed out that these illiterate and barefooted people have a remarkable role in society. It is

our duty to dissuade them from following their wicked chiefs and to guide them to the virtuous people. Imam Ali has mentioned this group.

He classifies the people into three categories: the divines, those who receive education for their salvation and the stupid having no goal. The last ones are ready to follow anything false which may come across them.

There is a reference in the Qur'an to those who follow the divines. It mentions the virtuous companions of the Holy Prophet and then adds: and those who followed them in earnestness. (In Islamic jurisprudence the followers of the divines are called *muqallids* – followers of a *mujtahid*).

It is our duty to persuade the great masses of the people to adhere to their juristic authority instead of going after false ideals or having no goal at all, so that they may be included among those who follow them in earnestness or in the words of Imam Ali among those who "receive education for the sake of salvation". In short these people form a large section of society.

In a despotic society a fourth class is also found. This class comprises the people who fully understand the unjust and tyrannical nature of the policies pursued by their rulers, but they keep quiet in respect of these policies. Referring to them the Qur'an says:

The angels take them when they are unjust to themselves. The angels ask them: Where were you? They say: We were suppressed in the land. (Surah an Nisa', 4:97)

They mean to say that they were controlled by the despots and were not free to take a decision. But the fact is that it is not permissible to remain quiet in such a situation. The Qur'an quotes the angels as saying to them:

"Was not the land of Allah vast?"

Why could they not emigrate to a safe place and save themselves from the tyrants? Thus under a tyrannical and despotic government there exists a fourth category comprising those people who keep quiet and make no move. Even if they do not cooperate with injustice, they live in a despotic atmosphere and take no action to change the situation.

The fifth class consists of a small number of people who alienate themselves from society. They actually have no right to keep themselves in seclusion. Society requires men who work to reconstruct it, not those who renounce it. Allah reproached Prophet Yunus (Jonah) when he abandoned his society and told him that he must have stayed with his people. Consequently Prophet Yunus turned to Allah in repentance.

The Qur'an says:

Many of the Jewish rabbis and the Christian monks devour the wealth of the people and turn

them away from the way of Allah. (Surah Tawbah, 9:34)

Nowadays there are people who say that religious scholars have no right to interfere in politics, for religion and politics are two separate things. Those who have this logic, in the words of the Qur'an,

"debar the people from the way of Allah."

To the sixth class belong those who despite being underprivileged and suppressed do their best to change the prevailing conditions. In this connection there exists a divine law and a historical norm which we would have discussed in detail if the space allowed.

Anyhow, according to this law if the whole underprivileged and down-trodden class living under a corrupt system rises against it, it always gains victory. Today this is an important question of our present world. The subjugated nations making struggle for their liberation must know that this historical norm materializes invariably. The Qur'an says:

We desire to show favour to those who are oppressed in the earth and to make them leaders and the heirs. (Surah al-Qasas, 28:5)

This verse refers to the same rule. The story of Prophet Musa and Fir'awn also proves its truth.

"When We delivered you from Pharaoh's folk."

But if no effective resistances made gradually the pharaohs and tyrants succeed in crushing and destroying the social forces by creating dissensions among them. When social forces have been disintegrated, the industrial and scientific forces are not of much avail or at least cannot produce the desired results.

Even if any results are produced they do not benefit the common people and do not bring prosperity to them in a disintegrated society. As a result society is hit by disorder and chaos. In these circumstances how can society be reformed?

It can be reformed only when all people have trust in Allah, believe in a hidden force controlling them and follow the path of justice. Then all the treasures of the earth are unveiled, all the potentialities become effective and all that has been deposited in the earth and the space for the welfare of mankind blossoms forth and becomes available. All this will happen on the day when the Mahdi (May Allah hasten his solace) will set up his government.

Then the Muslim Ummah will take the reign of justice in its hand. The whole world will be following one single line of action. Consequently all latent capabilities will be unfolded. All this will be perfectly in accordance with the laws of history which indicate the course of man's development.

When man will have experimented with base and loose ideals and will cease to be attracted by them, he

will naturally move in the right direction and will cast off stagnation, mental laziness and lethargy. As a result he will be drawn to the course that will lead him to this historical development. This subject is quite vast, but its further discussion will require more time and space than available to us.

1. (Hawzah `Ilmiyah)

2. (Tafsir)

3. (Ahadith)

4. (Tafsir Tajziyah).

5. (Tafsir Mauzu'i).

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