

## ECONOMIC SYSTEM IN ISLAM

In Islam all Muslims are equal. The Prophet asserted, "The common goal of creation is a fraternal society..." Some Muslim sociologists and scholars referring to this tradition of Prophet (pbuh) affirm the view that Islam tends towards a system of absolute equality based on a fraternal society which excludes any factors of inequality, inequity, oppression and inhumanity. They think that this fraternity will be achieved by a common consideration of all the different kinds of properties. The herd of camels and sheep, the only property of the Prophet (pbuh) left after his death, he bequeathed them to the community with the following words, "the Prophet's goods belong to the community." These scholars claim that Islam is opposed to private wealth. The Koran considers the rich as human beings addicted to excess. This is how Koran judges wealthy, wealth is considered as a rebellion against the social order which God has created upon the earth for the happiness of mankind, "you cling to riches with boundless love. I have already warned you of the fire ablaze you are worried by the desire to increase your riches—until the moment when you will go down into the grave. He who hoards riches and keeps them for the future, thinks that these treasures will make him live eternally—assuredly he will be hurled down into al-holama."

The same Muslim scholars assert that in several Koranic verses meanings are found that are nothing less than the present communist definition which levels the inequality of social conditions by means of collective work.

The Koran says "But God in his mercy has given

you night and day, to rest or to give you at his liking riches by work in order that you be grateful to him." The scholars assert that this amounts to saying that every individual shares the wealth produced by his labour and it is the community which has to give him his share!

This is according to a limited number of Muslim philosophers and sociologists, who interpret the order issued by the Koran concerning the riches, the individual possession of which fosters social trouble, causing all the wrongs from which mankind has always suffered on account of unequal distribution of earthly goods. The communal possession of major earthly goods is in conformity with the Will of God. It is expressed in several Koranic verses and the Prophet complied with them in his actions which have become traditions in Islam. The philosophers conclude that Islam is a picturesque translation of communism. Its interpretation is based on the Koran and on the traditions and customs of the Prophet. God commands communism, by His order and Muhammad by his words and actions. Unfortunately, these philosophers and sociologists exaggerate. Islam, in fact, does not allow for communism as is defined by Karl Marx.

Marx defined man by his physical aspects. He denies entirely the spiritual life of man. He rejects every kind of religion which deals with the spiritual life of man. Thus, Lenin in one of his speeches expounded that religion is an opium for man and he stated religion has always been the cause of inhumanity, oppression and unhappiness in society. He believed that religions are fabrications whose bases is the camouflage of economic exploitation.

<sup>1</sup> Qur'an V.7

<sup>2</sup> Qur'an LXXIX 21

<sup>3</sup> Qur'an XCII 14

<sup>4</sup> Qur'an CII.3

<sup>5</sup> CII . 3

<sup>6</sup> CII 4

<sup>7</sup> Qur'an CII 4

According to Marx, society is divided into two classes, the oppressed and the oppressors and that these two classes constantly have been struggling against each other. He alleged that the history of mankind has been a history of class struggles. He concluded that all socio-economic disorder can be avoided when the oppressor class disappears and both classes become one. Therefore, he invited the labor class to revolt. He believed that the labor class has this potentiality. Proliterate is the only force which can emancipate the society from all kind of exploitation. This is the historical role of the proletariat. In communism, the Marxist has to give his entire being voluntarily and necessarily to the dialectical determinism of history. According to Marx, the state is the master of each man. Therefore, communism confiscates the liberty of man totally; his conscience and his labor-power. He has no right to have personal beliefs, private property and family. Marx abolishes the personal property which is man's own labor, property which is the ground work of all personal freedom, activity, and independence. The labor class which having no means of production of its own, is reduced to selling its labor-power in order to live. This is the reason that the worker is not interested in the output of his work. If he works more or less, he is always entitled to get the same salary. The communistic state in Russia, to ameliorate this situation, applies a system which is invented by a worker, named Stakanov. Stakanovism system encourages the laborer to be interested in the production of his work by rewarding him according to result of his labor. Marx makes of labor class a slave labor camp. Finally, man gives his entire liberty for an equality of eating at the same table and sleeping in the same dormitory.

Marx states that when private property is abolished, the dependence of woman upon man will cease. He expounds that the bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production and consequently exploits her like any other instrument of production. According to Marx, the community of women exists because in addition to having access to prostitutes, the bourgeois abuse the wives and the daughters of the proletariats and moreover seduce each other wives. Thus "bourgeois marriage is in reality a system of wives in commune" and he affirmed that communism intends to replace a hypocritically concealed "community of women" by an openly legalized community. Finally, in communism, man has no conscience his body is entirely uprooted from

human emotions and from human ethics and aesthetics and this becomes a piece of clay which the state shapes according to its desire. Contrary to communism, Islam defines man by spirit and asserts the superiority of spirit over the body. Man differs from the animal by his soul and his spirit. Islam looks upon man, on account of his soul and his spirit, as the noblest of creatures and declares the dignity of man which is created in the image of God and makes, therefore, the soul, his divine nature. Man has been created to be the vicar (Khalif) of God on earth; he must love God as his only master. This union between man and God is of an abstract nature, Islamic mysticism has come to believe in an abstract notion of divine love. Islam does not admit humanized God. Islam's God is not shown through the intermediary of a human being. Every Muslim may reach God's love without any intermediary. The idea of a direct union between God and his creatures is to be found in all Muslim mystics in Islam. This monotheistic humanistic religion, is sufficiently dynamic to produce heroes, mystics and saints who guide man towards a higher evolution. To reach this state of mind, man, who is created by God and His own concept of man, he can obtain the divine qualities of God which are mentioned in Koran. Islam atones all tenet of obstacles in order that man may attain this summit. Islam opens an infinite horizon for man to arrive at his perfection. Islam believes that man is able to possess all divine qualities in his own person. Muslim scholars agree that Islam gives great importance to the mind and intelligence of man which leads him to great freedom. Because of his intelligence and mind, man is the noblest of all the creatures in the universe. One of the traditions says that Muhammad declared in the name of God, "the noblest of my creations is the human mind;" he adds, "after creating man's reason, God said to him the following, "O mind of man, you are the most generous of my creations, and the criterion by which I reward or punish man". Similarly, in another Hadith, the Prophet speaks of the human mind in the following way: "The old man plays the part of a sure guide in society; this privilege is not due to great wealth or age, nor physical strength, but the great experience; which is the fruit of the human mind only."

Man differs from an animal by his intelligence and his mind; he knows his rights and duties and has a free will to choose what is right. This is the reason why Islam insists on freedom of opinion. It never deprives man of his conscience; it respects

the realm of conscience. For the same reason Islam does not admit confession. It encourages Muslims to develop their reasoning power and intelligency by means of knowledge. Thus, according to another tradition: "Wisdom is the lost thing which the faithful seek wherever it may be found." Knowledge is the result of the work of intelligence. Due to his intelligence and knowledge man is endowed with freedom. If man were deprived of freedom of conscience which intelligence and knowledge give him, he would be a physical force and could not be distinguished from an animal anymore. Islam is a religion which insists on the right of freedom of man and gives much importance to freedom of reasoning, to the intellect and to the development of the latter. It abolishes all obstacles to the intellectual development of man and blames blind limitation in matters of faith and the mechanical execution of religious duties. Islam arouses the intellect out of its numbness and raises its voice against the prejudice of the ignorant, declaring that man is not to be conducted by dreams, but his nature is to let himself be guided by science and knowledge. Islam has thus freed the mind from its chains and in particular, from blind limitation which has enslaved it. Islam has re-established the mind in its realm where it takes decisions according to its judgment and wisdom. It leaves the mind entirely free to express personal opinion. It considers the right to think freely as a natural right of man who cannot progress towards perfection if he is not free to think and expound his opinions. This is why Islam insists at length on freedom of thought and opinion. Islam never admits an interference in a question of human conscience. It does not accept an ecclesiastical authority imposing its commandments upon man. Every man is responsible to God alone through the intermediary of his conscience. In Islam there is no priesthood nor class hierarchy. It accepts neither the superiority of the clergy nor cleansing by confession. Islam never imposes its creed on a non-Muslim. The Koran recommends great tolerance in the domain of conscience, liberty and respect of all opinions. It blames every injury to faith either society or individual. The faithful must guide themselves by persuasion and no opinion must be imposed upon them. Koran declares, "No compulsion in religion; truth in itself is distinct from error." This attitude respects freedom of conscience, and belief and tolerance for all opinions. These propositions may be found in sixty three sourat and 125 verses and constitutes

the essential thought, the main preoccupation of the Koran.

We have to point out however, that Islam is strict as regards apostasy. Islam is not interested only in the spiritual life of man, but also in his life in this world. In Islam all the social institutions are based on faith and consolidated by it. An abjuration of the faith is considered as treason of social institutions, on this point Islamic democracy is different from the democracy of J.J. Rousseau. Rousseau draws a distinction between the citizen's religion and man's religion but, he is not able to separate the dogmas of one from the others. Professor Rene Capitant reproaches Rousseau for neglecting the importance of personal religion in social institutions and he asserts that this is the reason that democracy has failed to be an ideal political system for the world. Democracy as a matter of fact even in the most advanced countries is like a sick man; in that its subjects take advantage of its weakness. Consequently, Islam believes that the notion of liberty is the source of all democratic principles such as equality, equity, progress and wisdom. They all are derived from the notion of liberty and its development. To deprive man of his liberty is to deny his human value, treat him as an animal and prevent his evolution.

Islam has divided the natural human rights into two parts. 1) Natural human rights as a man, the individual possesses these natural rights as inalienable rights. all men have these rights equally until their death, provided that they do not encroach upon his neighbors' rights and do not create disorder within his society. 2) On the other hand, man possesses other rights as a result of living in a society and as a counterpart of his social duties. The Koran subdivides natural human rights into four groups: a) the right to live, b) the right to freedom, c) the right to property and use of property and d) the right to equality.

Islam respects the rights of the human being in accordance with natural law. It considers private property as being beyond any social ascendancy. Respect of private property is cited in several Koranic verses. Respect due to Muslims property is as important as that due to Islamic blood, "he who not being entitled to it takes possession of a Muslim strip of land, will be submerged with it until the seven earth on resurrection day." The protection of the right to private property was one of the basic articles of the engagement entered into by the first faithful on the famous Akolia Provisions which were made: do not consume your

property among you in vanity—bestow upon the orphans their property—do not give to the weak in mind the property which Allah has appointed you to manage—do not substitute the bad for the good, and do not consume the property of others in addition to your own.<sup>11</sup>

These different rules have made it possible to give a correct definition of property in Muslim Law. "The right to dispose of a thing exclusively and in the most absolute way and to enjoy all the fruits which it produces."<sup>12</sup> Islam while respecting private property confers to the individual the right to make use and enjoy his property according to his wish. He has the right to get all the benefit from it, by means of reasoning the Prophet has said, "Start with providing for yourself and then provide for those who depend on you."<sup>13</sup> Thus another verse in Koran declares "Do not covet the property by means of which God has raised some individuals above the others. Every man and woman will receive the portion that he has earned. You may ask God to give you that which you deserve. He has full knowledge of everything."<sup>14</sup> Similarly, in the Prophet's famous "homely" at his last pilgrimage called "the information and leave taking from pilgrimage, it is said, "All attack on the life and property of people is prohibited to you till the day when you shall meet your Lord," and he exclaimed: "Have I made known the news," and repeated three times, "(my God, be witness of it)."<sup>15</sup> "This is the right to one's life. For this reason according to Muslim law, manslaughter or wounds inflicted in defense of a person's life, his or another man's property are not punishable."<sup>16</sup>

Several Hadiths proclaim in the most absolute way the inviolability of the right of man to private property. They refer to various Koranic passages which implicitly but unquestionably establish this right. A for example thereof may be cited "Do not covet what Allah has bestowed on bounty upon one more than another."

Islam respects the liberty of the individual in his work, the choice of his profession and the exchange of commodities and services.

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<sup>1</sup> Kadi Af Jouhara, Af Nairah p. 437

<sup>1</sup> Koran IV, 2, 3, 4

<sup>2</sup> Al Absmili Al Moustaraf, I, p.24

<sup>3</sup> Verse 36 CH.H

Boukhari, II 1-142

<sup>1</sup> Vandenberg Principle of Muslim Law p. 183

<sup>2</sup> Koran IV 36

Some Muslim philosophers and scholars even go as far as assuming that the Koran admits the liberty of the individual most categorically even if it results in the greatest inequality of wealth and a system of government similar to liberalism, which creates the capitalistic system. One of the most eminent Muslim philosophers, Ibn Khaldoun, admits the principle of inequality of condition and makes numerous applications of it from the economic point of view. He is opposed to the intervention of public authorities into the economic activities of the private person. He asserts that the Koran recognizes the inequality of capacity and fortune. According to him, the Islamic State remains neutral in the economic system. Thus, for instance price formation by means of competition should exclude, according to Ibn Khaldoun, any interference either by the State or individuals. He prohibits hoarding<sup>1</sup> as an immoral act favoring private monopoly and falsifying the free formation of prices. He is opposed to state intervention<sup>2</sup> in exchange and refuses tariff prices being established by the State. The phenomenon of the formation and variation of prices appears to Ibn Khaldoun as the outcome of various factors governed by providential laws, and the State should not intervene against them lest it cause prejudice to individual interests, and thus to social interests. He concluded that Islam refuses to comply with a selling of fortunes and considers private property as the basis of economic relations. He excluded state intervention in economic exchange.

Ibn Khaldoun is, however, wrong in attributing such theories to Islam. Islam does not assign absolute liberty to the individual capable of creating a shocking inequality, and authorizing and misuse resulting in a strong dominion over the weak.

Islam certainly does not deny that men are born different as to their mental and physical capacities. Some are gifted by nature, the others ill-favored. This inequality by birth creates an inequality of social conditions of life.

Another Koranic verse says, "God has raised you one above the other." The question arises here whether Islam accepts the inequality of conditions of social life created by nature? Can we say in other words, that Islam sacrifices equality to an absolute freedom of the individual? No, Islam does not remain inactive in front of this inequality which

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<sup>1</sup> Al Khabi op. Cit 11, 282

<sup>2</sup> Abou Youssuf p. 203, Note 3

may result in the domination of the strong over the weak. It tries to abolish as far as possible birth, environmental and educational privileges and to re-establish social equality, drawing its principles from the Prophet's proverbs: "All men are children of Adam, and Adam is the child of dust." This means that men are born equal, devoid of any kind of privileges and are at the same time brothers.

Koran does not remain indifferent to the harm which birth inequalities might cause. It endeavors to reduce it to a minimum by various means. It attempts to abolish inequalities of the social class and does not permit the rich to exploit the poor. The Prophet himself belonged to the poor class. He was witness of the misery of his time which was raging among the greater part of the population to such a degree that infanticides was often committed to avert the ghost of famine in poor families.

However, the Prophet being a moderate reformer did not use violence towards the rich. He did not want to abolish the rich class in favor of the poor. The first converts such as Abou Bakr, Othman or Saad ben Abou Quakkass, who happened to be wealthy, did not feel at all obliged to deprive themselves of their possessions in favor of those who have the same religion of the

community. Islam refuses to the poor class the right to do away with the rich by means of violence. Moreover, to conciliate the two classes, the Koran advises the poor: "If a man is content with little pious actions." With similar end in view in the Koran says, "Do not covet things which we have supplied to some of you; do not envy the way of life of some. The goods which are reserved for you by your Lord are better and more lasting than those you possess in this world."

Islam endeavors to bring the poor class nearer to the rich rather than to incite them to quarrel. Contrary to Islam, communism proposes to abolish the rich class in favor of the proletariat. Morse thinks that this provision is necessary for safeguarding of the poor class, and that eradication of the rich is only possible by a means of a revolution of the proletariat. He prompts the poor to rebel against the rich, while Islam uses moderation and is confined to measures intended to protect the poor and to raise their social and economic condition. For this end Islam introduced the Zakat.

(To Be Continued in the Next Issue)

In the next issue it will be shown how Islam through Zakat tries to establish a social-economic order of equity and fair play.

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