

# **Work and Islam**

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In 1907 Professor Mehdi Bazargan was born in Tehran, Iran. He attended elementary and high school in Soltani, then he graduated from the Teacher Training Center in Tehran. Professor Bazargan was among the first group of students who were granted scholarships to pursue post-graduate studies. Two years later, he entered the Central School of Paris where he earned a degree in Mechanical Engineering. For a year, he was employed at French industrial institutions.

With the establishment of the Tehran Technical College, he was invited to teach a course in Thermodynamics and Steamengines. He became department chairman and held that position until 1962. In 1945-1950, he was dean of the Technical College and in 1952-1953, he was chief executive of the water refineries in Tehran.

Professor Bazargan is one of the founders and leaders of Iran's contemporary Islamic Movement. He is the author of many books related to his field of specialization as well as Islam. An example of a good Muslim, Professor Bazargan throughout his life has been active not only in the realm of science and religion, but also extremely involved in social and political affairs. His activities may be summarized in two periods:

First, during 1936-1950 he attempted to establish a new movement for freedom and an improved introduction to the genuine Islamic doctrine. A series of lectures were presented to the masses, students, religious groups and political groups. Simultaneously, he wrote many books and participated in the programs of various social organizations.

Secondly, during 1950-present, following the movement's growth and development, Dr. Bazargan has been directly involved in social, political and religious activities at all levels. He has worked closely with and supported the "Islamic Society of Students, Teachers, Engineers and Physicians", the "Society of Islamic Studies" and the "Islamic Centers". He was an active member in the "Iranian National Front" and supported Dr. Mosaddegh in his struggle against the British government to nationalize Iranian oil (1950). Following the coup of 1953 and Mosaddegh fall, Professor Bazargan and other responsible Muslims created the underground organization of the

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"National Resistance Movement". Due to the fact that he opposed the colonialistic Contract of Consortium (which plundered Iranian natural resources), he was dismissed from the university in 1953. Soon after, in 1955, he was arrested because of his activities in the Islamic movement. After his release, he called upon many previously active members of the "National Front" to re-establish the "Second Iranian National Front"; this was in 1959. As a result of his stand against the government's false election in 1960, he was arrested again. With the assistance of some members of the "National Resistance Movement" and the conscious spiritual leaders, they were able to establish the "Movement For Freedom In Iran". Its purpose was to oppose the cruel and dictatorial regime in Iran. In 1962, Professor Bazargan and several leaders of the movement were arrested because they raised their voices against the Shah's "White Revolution"! He was finally released in 1969 only to be closely observed by the Shah's security agents.

Today, at the age of seventy-one, having spent a life of struggle and hardship and following the path of the prophets--Professor Bazargan is as strong and faithful as ever! He is watching the new generation and helping the growth of the movement.

Since the first edition was published, the author (who was actively involved in the Islamic revolution in Iran -- Feb. 12, 1979) has now become the provisional Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## INDEX OF CONTENTS

**Part One: The Evolutionary Course of Work Through Human History** — The Age of the Animal; The Age of the Cattleherds; The Age of the Quadrupeds; The Age of the Family; The Age of the Tribes; The Age of Servility; The Age of Agriculture; The Age of Village Settlement and the Dawn of Civilization; The Age of Nobility; The Age of Professions (Farming, Trade, Commerce and Craftsmanship); Military Power and Central Government; Independence of Labor and the Age of the Worker; The Age of Capitalism, Machinery and Democracy; The Money Government; Class War and Separation; The Present Situation and Internal Labor Governments; The Government of Work and Forecasts for the Future; Summary and Conclusion.

**Part Two: The Relationship Between Man and Work**

**Part Three: The Explanation of the Quran**  
The Aims and Intentions behind Creation and the Personal Fates of Societies and Individuals; Commands Given to Religious Leaders and the Faithful; Promises of Heaven; Deeds of Righteousness; Piety

**Part Four: Work in Iran (A Case Study)**  
Who is to blame?; The Role of Work in Iran; Work, Past and Present; Prayer - A Means of Inactivity; The Young Generation; Our Militants; Imitation; Where does the fault lie?; What can be done?

فَأْمُرْهُمْ لِلدِّينِ حَبِيفًا فَطَرَتَ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ مَجَلَّهَا لِأَنْتَبَدِلَ لِحُلُقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ  
الْفَيْمُ وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

**Quran XXX:30**

**So set thy purpose (O Mohammad) for religion as a man had created man. There is no altering (the law of) Allah's Creation. This is the right religion, but most men know not.**

## **The Evolutionary Course of Work Throughout Human History**

As far as it is possible to make use of sociological and historical information and subsequently separate and grade the gradually changing conditions of human societies into comparatively distinct forms, we can, from the point of view of the role and position that the factor of 'work' has occupied in the life of Man, speak of certain "ages" or "periods" which begin with that of the 'animal', and end with the present system of 20th Century Man.

### **The Age of the Animal**

Just as there are scientists who claim that man began his existence as a kind of ape, and has only reached his present form and condition through continuous, gradual advancement, there are, quite naturally, others that deny this theory. However, everyone seems to be in general agreement that Man of today is poles apart from Man of yesterday, and the further we browse back into the annals of history, the more remote Man's primeval state becomes from his present-day condition — and the closer it resembles the state of the animals. Through inductive reasoning we can see that man, having originally led an extremely simple and base existence, was classed as a pure and complete guest of nature, and, alongside other animals, fed on the scraps that fell from the grace of Nature's table. In his primeval state, he fed on grass, berries and fruit, while his thick skin and hirsute exterior protected him from the climate extremes. Mountain caves and tree-tops provided him with shelter. Actually, Man's food and clothing was provided by Nature "free-of-charge and ready-made"; in essence, Man used Nature. In this age, the age of the animal, or the dawn of Man as we know him, the role of work in the life of the human was more or less non-existent. In other words, Nature's basic materials were put to use by Man, firstly without any change or transformation in the former and secondly with the very minimum of effort on the part of the latter.

Towards the end of this particular state, it can be assumed that the early human individuals, like some of their feathered friends, gradually adopted migratory habits. In order to escape the intense heat and severe cold and also in search of water and food, they moved from place to place. In this way, the habit of organizing summer and winter camps was formed. For the very first time the prime example of 'toil' and 'movement', the two mechanical factors of work, became visible on the screen of Human existence. Quite naturally at this stage, such 'toil' and 'motion' took place without any second thought or complaint on behalf of man. It was something in which all had an equal hand.

## The Age of the Cattle Herds

Among all the animals likely to constitute man's prey, he chose the most defenseless and huntable of all — the sheep. It is the most peaceful and least harmful of animals with a multitude of uses — an animal that, in its simple ignorance, will follow the hunter and unknowingly offer itself into his trap! Thus, flocks were formed with Man leading them. The age of the cattleherds or the age of the shepherd, which is one of the longest and most honorable periods in humanity, began. In fact, examples of its duration can be seen all over the world, even today.

In the history of the Prophets we see that some of the great ones, such as Moses (PBUH), did their own 'basic training', as it were, in the noble and respectable profession of shepherding. Throughout the age of the cattleherds, man was viewed as a guest or a parasite of Nature — but a guest who, with a little work and forethought, began to intervene and collect the offerings on Nature's table himself.

## The Age of the Quadrupeds

As man roamed the plains and established summer and winter camps, he also met up with the quadrupeds who, although didn't offer the most succulent of meat, did, on the other hand, have strong backs and were fleet of foot. Furthermore, he realized that is he could possess and rule over them, then he could weigh them down with heavy loads and even mount them himself. Thus, man pursued the subjugation of Nature's beasts of burden, or, in today's terms, the enslavement and exploitation of the dumb animal — thus giving way to what must be titled the 'Age of the Quadrupeds'.

Consequently, Man's view of work became considerably more enthusiastic. The two aspects of work were divided fairly. The fruits which resulted from shipment and conveyance of various loads and cattle (and later on, ploughing) he, took for himself, and the actual toil

and trouble, along with a little fodder and protection, he reserved for his dumb, four-legged friends. In this way, work found a special place for itself and was assigned a definite agent to shoulder its responsibility.

The existence of quadrupeds at this stage and in following periods when farming and agriculture came into the scene, has always played an extremely vital role and had a considerable effect upon human societies — thus its importance is well deserved. However, it is an importance which, with the innovation of machines and motor transport, became increasingly weak and less effective. Should the Quran be studied, one will find clear descriptions of this rank and condition since there are numerous chapters that talk of these beasts of burden as men's basic wealth and asset, and furthermore as a Divine bounty, whether as a means of conveying loads and cargoes or merely as an object of sport and recreation. At the time of the revelation of the Quran, among Arabs the camel was reckoned as the most important factor of affluence — hence the regularity with which its name is mentioned in Arabic Literature. After all, the majority of economical, political, and business transactions were carried out on the backs of camels.

## The Age of the Family

The responsibility of leadership over the herds and the general organization of personal livestock gave rise to fresh problems for Man to solve. It also provided further tasks which had to be assigned to others. Naturally, work of this nature could not be entrusted to mere animals, and thus had to be assigned to Man himself. But to whom? Quite naturally, to the weakest and most inferior of those nearby — that is, the wife and children. In this way, the wife and the children became the servants of the general retinue and livestock. Apart from the sexual and sentimental qualities that they possessed, they took on an additional value — directly proportionate to the quality and amount of work which they accomplished! Simultaneously, Man slowly emerged from his primeval 'animal' state — a state where each individual was responsible for certain duties. Like any other individual, he managed to cope with difficulties. Equality and uniformity were the ruling order. Gradually, as division and specialization of jobs evolved, the element of exploitation and the allocation of personal distinctions and privileges was also introduced.

As a result, the family was placed in a completely different position. Apart from offering the fulfillment of basic sexual needs and safeguarding the procreational element, the inclination towards polygamy and the possession of an excessive amount of offspring were related to sociological and economical aspects — just as in some villages even today, wives and children are treated with special importance and sometimes looked upon with the same reverence as would be reserved for a milch-cow or any other beast of burden.

In the Quran, wife and children are regarded in two ways. In one place, during a discourse addressed to the Pagan Arabs, children fall into the classification of worldly wealth; any inflated pride or glorification shown towards them is definitely admonished. Examples can be seen in the following verses:

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

Quran LXIV:15

Your wealth and your children are only a temptation, whereas Allah! with Him is an immense reward.

اعْمَلُوا إِنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ هُوَ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ

Quran LVII:20

Know that the life of this world is only play, and idle talk, and pageantry and boasting among you, and rivalry in respect of wealth and children as the likeness of vegetation after rain, whereof the growth is pleasing the husband-man, but afterward it drieth up and thou seest it turning yellow, then it becomes straw.

وَكَانَ لَهُ تَمَرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهِ وَهُوَ يُحَادِرُهُ أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِمَّاكَ مَا لَأَوْاعَرَ نَفْسًا

Quran XVIII: 34, 46

And he had fruit, and he said unto his comrade when he spoke with him: I am more than thee in wealth, and stronger in respect of men.

الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ وَهُم مَسِيرُ الْجِبَالِ وَرَبِّي الْأَرْضَ

Wealth and children are an ornament of life of the world. But the good deeds which endure are better in thy Lord's sight for reward, and better in respect of hope.

Verses of this kind reflect the general opinions that men of that time held concerning offspring and family.

In another chain of verses, however, children (and especially, righteous children — be they male or female) are treated with the greatest importance and reverence. The Quran recognizes them as the greatest Divine gift, blessing and the sole guarantee for the permanence and completion of the race. We can see this in the following verses:

يَا ذِكْرَنَا إِنَّا بَشَرٌ لِّغُلَامٍ إِيَّاهُ نَحْنُ لَمَجْمَلٌ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِيمًا

Quran XIX:7

O Zachariah! Lo we bring thee tidings of a son whose name is John; we have given the same name to none before.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ

Quran VI:84

And we bestowed upon his Isaac and Jacob.

فَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا

Quran III:37

And her Lord accepted her with full acceptance and vouchsafed to her a goodly growth.

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَشَّرُكَ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ إِنَّهُ الْمَسْمُومُ

Quran III:45

When the angels said: O Mary! Lo! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from Him, whose name is the messiah, Jesus, Son of Mary.

## The Age of the Tribes

The family and all personal assets — retinue, livestock, wives and children — which were derived from and belonged to the 'father', presented a considerably personable and powerful assemblage. This structure not only granted prestige and leadership to the 'father' but offered a means of security for the individuals within the group. Subsequently, due to general habit and the security which such a group promised, the youngsters were married off under the auspices and guardianship of the 'father'. However, the matrimonial ties which were previously based on the sexual and procreative urge, were now amalgamated with need and profit.

Those who were in favor of protecting and preserving the idea of a family unit grouped together and formed tribes or clans. Each tribe, or clan, was headed by a 'grand-father', called a Sheikh (Chieftain) or Khan, who enjoyed absolute authority. Nevertheless, these families or tribes were not only institutions where a group of individuals lived. Each organization consisted of various sub-organizations in which every individual was delegated a special duty which he was to carry out. Thus, the family was really an assemblage of various kinds of work and duties, supervised and controlled by order of the Sheikh. In this way, both the subsistence of the family and the power of the Sheikh were secured.

This was the first time that work shifted from its original and singular state, where each individual was more or less responsible for his own personal interests, to one that was basically collective. Likewise, it was the first time that any kind of communal society and sincere, practical co-operation became apparent in human society. It was this communal society which grew increasingly weak and finally became obliterated — until thousands of years later — when its organization and implementation became, once again, the aspiration of mankind and the burning desire of countless schools of thought.

In this elementary, communal society, for the first time, appeared the absolute rule of an individual over society — such a rule whose source lay in 'fatherhood' and seniority but whose inherent power and foundation was purely a product of work.

## The Age of Servitude

Eventually, the families and tribes became more extensive and organized. As they grew in strength and number, their general way of life and conditions became more favorable. At the other end of the scale however, there were individuals who either by dint of some natural catastrophe or as a result of economic or political ill-fortune, did not have a family or tribe to belong to. They were thus deprived of all the fringe benefits that being a member of such an institution had to offer — the most important of which was security, whether physical, mental, or material. Such an individual either became annihilated or resigned himself to taking refuge in the shelter of the tribe or family.

However, finding sanctuary within the confines of the family unit, which basically meant having access to the protection and security offered, inevitably included immediate entrance into the service of the family. This encompassed the obligation to undertake any kind of toils or tasks that may have presented themselves — usually, the most laborious and degrading kind of work that there was to be done. In this way, the tribes and families gained the services of certain individuals who, having been forced into their position through wretchedness and solitude, now provided a barrier between the family and the family's animals. Their jobs consisted of fetching and carrying and, in short, general servitude. Thus, for the first time, work assumed a special and distinct quality. In return for refuge, a place to lay one's head and the scantiest of droppings from the table, a clearly-defined job and duty confined to only certain individuals was developed — the 'servant' was born. So any strenuous work such as the lifting and transportation of heavyloads which had previously been performed by animals found itself with a rise in status and was from then on transferred to humans — that is, those who occupied the lowest rungs on the family ladder.

Meanwhile, the inventory of family assets which had hitherto consisted of herds, livestock, wife, children and a few followers added another to its list — the servants. The word 'retinue' soon became a common feature in the chieftains' vocabulary.

Those individuals who volunteered to the family made up the group known as 'servants'. But, those who were taken into captivity during attacks of plunder and pillage occupied an even lower position in the family hierarchy; they constituted the group known as 'slaves'. Since their entire life and possessions were in the hands of their captors, their only fate was resignation to absolute service and suffering.<sup>1</sup>

So, work amongst human individuals now adopted its own character and exclusivity. Yet, it also brought forth humiliation, suffering and total abjectness and did not safeguard any kind of rights or respect for those it embraced.

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<sup>1</sup>Europeans, who still practice colonization and barefaced exploitation of weaker nations up to the point of almost total captivity, criticize Islam and its adherents. They ask why Islam never abolished slavery. Firstly, their question seems strangely contradictory considering the fact that their own religion has not abolished it either. Secondly, they cannot be aware of the fact that Islamic law does not give permission for any Muslim to be taken into slavery and repeatedly stresses the prime importance of freeing slaves whenever possible. In addition, Islam recognizes certain rights and laws concerning slaves and quite definitely stipulates their strict observation. Slave-masters are made aware of their obligations concerning compassion and equality toward to slaves. Islam also ardently reproaches any force or oppression which may be inflicted upon them. Subsequently, any servants who embrace Islam are treated as equals and pray in one line with the others during community prayers. Furthermore, depending on their own initiative, they can reach the highest and most excellent positions of society.

On the other hand, in the United States of America — the great, civilized nation who prides itself in its so called "abolition of slavery" — there is still so much blatant prejudice and unrest between blacks and whites. Despite the extensive influence and advertising power of various Christian religious groups, blacks in America and Africa have a strange and considerably strong inclination towards the Muslim religion.

## The Age of Agriculture

During these periods, man's basic food requirements were mostly provided through hunting and reliance upon the herds in his possession. However, before long, there was the natural realization that man could not subsist on lamb and milk alone. Considering the fact that man's limbs and body organs are shaped with a greater similarity to those of herbivorous and gallinaceous animals, and since his dietary taste is more naturally geared to grains and plant food, man began to focus his attention on various kinds of vegetation and their cultivation. Later on, he found ways of increasing them and eliminating those of inferior quality. Thus, gradually, man became agricultural.

So, following the age of the Cattleherd and the resulting periods, the Age of Agriculture began. In adopting this new way of existence, by the very nature of agriculture and cultivation man was forced to put his own shoulder to the wheel and tolerate a few days of heat for sowing or reaping. Man's food was still, however, the complete and unadulterated product of Nature, but a product that Man, with a little intervention and activity, collected for himself. It was the first time that man was able to taste the fruits of his own labor while feeling the hardships of it simultaneously — reserving the former for himself and the latter for his livestock, wife, children and servant. However, a faint glimmer of equality existed since those who actually planned and carried out the basic acts of cultivation, such as sowing the seeds and winnowing the harvest, also had to be prepared to do their share of the practical work.

## The Age of Village Settlement and the Dawn of Civilization

Thus from the amalgamation of various groups and families, large tribes were formed. Due to their size and meteoric growth and expansion, plus the natural inclination towards rest and repose resulting from agricultural activity, the general abatement of continual movement and migratory habits emerged. The chief and other leading members of the tribes were content. They much preferred to stay well protected from climatic extremes in their tents and huts, while the slaves, servants and beasts of burden were entrusted with housebuilding or any kind of work that involved excessive travel. In this way, the tribe made its more or less permanent camp-site at the edge of the land they used for cultivation. In addition, fences were built around their houses and general territory as a defense against intruders; and the whole arrangement became what we know today as a village — or in the dry regions of Arabia and Africa, an oasis.

Throughout the vast Iranian plateau, the villages formed by the early Aryan settlers were not only fully self-supporting agricultural units but also excellent examples of simple yet complete communal societies. It is due to the structure and strong sense of responsibility and co-operation between the individuals in face of hardships (such as irrigation, etc.) that this type of village has, throughout the centuries, more or less retained its singularity and become renowned as an independent economic, agricultural and administrative structure.

Thus, from the combination of the families and tribes, small villages and hamlets came into being. In turn, with the passing of time and the natural expansion of the village, in those areas where natural conditions proved favorable, cities were born and the age of city-dwelling and civilization began.

Gradually, across the plains and deserts which were the former grazing grounds and migratory routes of the tribes, towns and cities developed and were scattered far and wide like bright and shining stars. They were inhabited by some of the brightest and most advanced peoples and communities.

However, other problems existed — the constant need for harmonious relations between the various social units as well as the distinct threat of moral corruption and injustice within the unit. This was a direct outcome of excessive recreational possibility and the natural development of thought and personality; hitherto unmet necessities and requirements became accentuated. As a result, the Prophets appeared and offered guidance and protection to those in need. Furthermore, the Quranic stories of the initial formation and eventual self-induced destruction of such towns as 'Iram', 'Mutafekat', and 'Midian' are prime examples of the moral temperature of the time:

فَكَانَ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ فِيهَا خَاوِبَةٌ عَلَىٰ غُرُوبِهَا وَبِئْسَ مَعْقَلَةٌ  
وَقَصْرٌ مَشِيدٌ

Quran XXII:45

How many a township we have destroyed while it was sinful, so that it lieth (to this day) in ruins, and a deserted well and lofty tower.

ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْفَرَىٰ نَقَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْهَا قَائِدًا وَحَصِيدًا

Quran XI:100

This is (something) of the tidings of the townships (which were destroyed). We relate it unto thee (Muhammad). Some of them are standing and some already reaped.



## The Age of Nobility

So, the appearance of the servant and slave within the various family units somewhat eased the pressure of work and responsibility that had previously rested upon the shoulders of the wives and children. The grazing of herds, attendance and grooming of livestock and most of the general hard work that is associated with an agricultural lifestyle became the lot of the servants and slaves. The others participated in hunting, riding and the general administration of the community. They took the lead in defense and other matters which naturally required a certain amount of human trust and reliance. Thus, the tribe or family members, under the supervision of the chieftain or Khan, formed two distinctive groups.

The first group consisted of the common people — the servants, slaves and distant family dependents who were all responsible for 'work'. The second group consisted of the heads of the tribe or family, the 'upper class' who were involved in hunting and defense, constituted the 'warriors'. Subsequently, in addition to their financial strength and prestige, the Khans or tribal chiefs acquired a new power — the power of war and militancy. The Sheikhs and Khans, the chiefs of old, were now transformed into 'nobles'. Their practical asset was warfare while their general assets of acquisition (the direct result of the work of servants and slaves) were land and livestock. As a result of the newly introduced class system, work itself which in the initial stages of human society was distributed fairly among all members of the community and where each individual was responsible for his own share, now took on a different light. Separate classifications were established whereby each different 'kind' of work was carried out by a limited group of people. As one group — in this case the servants and slaves — did the work, the other, the nobility, reaped the profits! In addition, opulence and land-ownership, higher and above the individual need for food and accommodation, was another by-product of the newly-found 'nobility' and 'aristocracy'. It must be understood that the agricultural way of life with its communal village society and the industrial and commercial system with its town and city dwelling basis (as discussed in the next chapter) were much less suitable situations for the growth and development of the 'nobility' than the kind of existence enjoyed by the mountain tribes and desert dwellers. The latter, with their incessant shiftings and transformations and the inevitable war and pillage that came as a result, possessed a more obvious ability for militancy and thus had greater need for leadership. For example, among peoples such as the nomadic, desert-roaming Arab tribes or the Turkish-Mongol warriors who swarmed down in to China, Iran and Europe from North-East Asia, settling in the wild and

mountainous areas, there was a much intenser sense of 'eldership' and 'Tribal Leadership' or 'Khan-Khani' than in other folk, such as the peace-loving, plateau-dwelling Iranian farming communities or the civilized, valley-dwellers of Greece and Rome.

If we look at the history of the Middle Ages in Europe, there is clear evidence to show that it was directly after the attack made by Attila on the Roman Empire and the subsequent settlement of the Germanic, Gallic and Anglo-Saxon tribes, that such regimes paved the way for the introduction of 'nobility and aristocracy'. Consequently, the feudal system and serfage were born. On the other hand, despite the Arab attack and the prolonged suffering it underwent at the hand of the Turkish and Mongol invasions, Iran was never affected by nobility and class distinction to the extent that Europe or even India was; nor, in fact, was it subjected to a similar land and agricultural set-up and landlord-worker relationship that had developed elsewhere as a result of the cruel and oppressive serfage system. (Here, more detailed insight into this particular subject would have proven worthy of attention, but since it would be too digressive, it has been included in appendix form at the end of the book.)

## The Age of Professions (Farming, Commerce, Trade, Craftsmanship)

Although permanent settlement in one place eased the inherent hardships of the desert and plain-dwellings and provided basic human necessities such as relaxation and security, it also had the adverse effect of putting a great deal of the daily necessities out of the village-dweller's reach — things such as natural vegetable produce that lay along the tribal route and which were collected at the appropriate times and in the appropriate situations. In order to fulfill their needs they were forced to bring some of the trees and plants that they normally found in the course of their journeys and transfer them to the confines of their own settlement. Furthermore, if the ground in their settlement was, from the point of view of soil composition and water requirement, unfavorable, the inhabitants had to render it otherwise. (In addition, the general civilization and development of the individual was inevitably dependent upon the variation and extent of his needs.) Thus, the village dwellers and their servants pursued gardening and farming. In contrast to the relaxation that their village existence offered them, they provided themselves with a new type of work — agriculture. During this period, just as in the Age of the Animals, man was still considered nature's quest. But what sort of quest? The kind who makes himself at home in his host's house, personally preparing, cooking and serving meals which were products of nature, a little work and limited exertion.

Around some village, conditions of cultivation were so favorable that the amount of produce gained would be excessive. However, not every kind of agricultural produce was usable and inevitably there were certain things which were unavailable in some villages. Naturally, these had to be obtained from other sources and often involved travelling to distant and seemingly inaccessible places. Having accepted the hardships of such difficult and lengthy journeys and subsequently mastered the subtleties of trade and transaction, man thus adopted the habit of exchanging the goods he had for the goods that he required. From this simple method of bartering, the concept of 'trade' was born.

Farming and trade were two professions which naturally existed hand in hand with village and town dwelling respectively. Farming, in its initial stages, required nothing more than soil and water — both of which were gratis — although, in its more advanced aspects it needed both a great deal of work and deliberation. Trade, on the other hand, was something of a combination of work and merchandise, neither of which was free. Furthermore, since the preparation and accumulation of goods also required a certain amount of activity, it was evident that more than

50% of trade consisted of work and effort, be it physical or mental. This was the first time that work and wealth were collected in one hand — even though the former is merely a by-product of the latter. Incidentally, the sole security behind the act of work known as trading was provided by those who had wealth and possessions in the first place. Those individuals who arose above the 'lowly' slave-servant status commanded a certain respect and prestige within society. Therefore, although slightly the major factor in its amalgamation with wealth, work could on only be effectuated when there were individuals with wealth, possessions, a little honor and respect to support it. Thus, even at this stage, the two factors were interdependent. Naturally, after having established permanent settlement in a town or city environment, the tribes and clans gradually lost their original character and independence. The general administration of the tribe and its communal preparation and distribution of everyday necessities was no longer under the supervision of anyone single Khan or Chieftain. Each separate family unit was compelled to rely on its own resources and initiative as a means of support. In addition, the gradual growth and expansion of the town and the fact that each individual would, as a result, constantly lack at least one or more of life's vital, everyday necessities introduced the question of job-distribution, transaction of goods and the concept of wages — in other words, commerce. This, in turn, gave rise to such artistic workers as the tailor, the cobbler and the iron monger — all of whom worked under the banner of the 'craftsman'. These were people who started out with a little initial capital, but whose basic asset was their handicraft skills.

Craftsmanship was, in actual fact, the natural progressive continuation of servitude; the only difference was that the craftsmen were no longer dependent upon or bound over to the orders of any particular master. Using the scanty material assets in his possession, along with his own free will and initiative, he worked in his own home or shop during his available time. He sold his work or "services" only to those who wished to buy them. Through craftsmanship, work was raised to a new and finer level. It was the first time that the worker had gained any kind of independence.

As a result of the distribution of work and complete material needs of one individual for another, city-dwelling and civilization which symbolized man's natural development and offered a means for his rest and tranquility provided, the key which bound man and his life quite impermeably in the call of work.

## Military Power and Central Government

As the towns and villages increased in size and number, leading to the formation of greater cities and societies, and man made his gradual progression from his singular, independent lifestyle to one which was communal and based on mutual dependence, the need for security and law and order became increasingly urgent. However, it was obvious that rules and general standards had no effect unless there was some kind of administrator to enforce them. After the Age of Servitude those classes who had exempted and relieved themselves from the drudgery and humiliation of the lower, ignobler kinds of work and services and had subsequently specialized and became skilled in the art of defense and warfare were, considering their vast experience, material wealth and personal characteristics, the one who could inflict their own power and authority upon others with greater ease. Thus, they proved most suitable for the job of legislators — or, in that case, any position that implied leadership. As long as this imposition of personal power and authority served to bring about general order and security, people were satisfied. Consequently, the brute force of militant rule gradually took on a legal coloring. As a natural outcome, the feudal system was replaced by legislative central governments. Europe emerged from the Middle or 'Dark' Ages into the present era.

Arabia, on the other hand, had not experienced the feudal system whatsoever. The acceptance of Islam brought the Arab peoples from the age of the tribes on through a direct, unmediated path to the age of central governments and the Caliphate.

Although certain Quranic parables and religious laws have a definite interrelationship with Arabic history and culture, the completeness of the new faith and the comprehensiveness of its tenets and principles, with its emphasis on universal propagation, the stipulation towards 'amr-bi-ma'ruf' and its policies of rigid religious instruction and spiritual guidance illustrate the fact that Islam offered a great deal more than mere answers to the problems of the family, tribal and village periods. It offered a religion and a complete way of life that was not only pertinent to the system of centralized national and international government, but also compatible with the concept of Universal Government in future times. The transformation of the Arab peoples from the state of "jaheliat" or 'ignorance' to that of Islamization was a kind of 'mutation' or 'discontinuity'. It was a sociological phenomenon that was both unique and unprecedented. Prior to the advent of Islam, the standards and customs that were prevalent among the Arabs were so firmly established that all individuals were linked to each other and to the tribe with an apparently inseparable bond. The tribe as a whole provided security and means of subsistence for the individual; in return, he

showed obedience and allegiance to the tribal leader. If one member of the group was attacked by outsiders, then in retaliation, the whole of the group was expected to rise to his defense. Likewise, expulsion from the group not only resulted in the loss of wealth, accommodation and livelihood; it meant complete humiliation and certain death. With Islam's arrival, all of these habits and traditions were completely obliterated. Firstly, having endowed the individual with a total sense of character, independence and real security, Islam smashed the fetters of blind and ignorant submission to the tribal chief or father as well as the natural and patriotic intergroup ties. Secondly, obedience to the chief, laws and standards of the tribe were replaced by pure faith and submission to a sole, individual Creator. In one swoop, the limited, scattered and blindly zealous tribal community was converted to a vast and infinite society of humanity and brotherhood!

## Independence of Labor and the Age of the Worker

Previously, the appearance of the servant, or slave, came about as a direct result of the weaker family or individual's need for physical and material security. Later, the establishment of centralized governments saw that the lives of all individuals, irrespective of position, were offered total security to a much greater extent. In addition, the distribution of work and activity and the introduction and circulation of money conditioned the people to trade and transaction. As a result, the weaker individuals were able to break loose from the protective grip of the family. Subsequently, they would be accountable to their masters only during work hours; and their wages were paid in cash as opposed to the material reward of food and accommodation. In this way, the hitherto house-bound servant became the wage-earner or worker.

The appearance of the worker which was not only an extremely important sociological event but also had a much greater future consequence, was simultaneous with the birth of 'labor independence'. Firstly, the worker was able to live freely if he so desired — with need for neither basic capital nor workshop facilities. Secondly, the payment of wages indicated that man had finally recognized the act of work as worthy of value and esteem; he was ready to classify it with material goods and wealth.

From then on, just as the wage-earning worker had become the most notable and distinguished individual 'type' of the period, the general and continual trend that was one whereby all ranks and classes who were connected to the 'work' system in some way or other were led to the same position. Therefore, since work offered them a certain amount of security and in time provided the opportunity to amass a little basic capital, the craftsmen and laborers began to grow in strength and number. In time,

small family work-units were established. These families, apart from their natural blood-relationship, were united by their working interests. Under the watchful eye of the father who was both head of the family and the overseer, they undertook mass production in their own homes and workshops.

During recent years, in fact, a considerable number of factories and workshops that appeared have been based on the original alliance of a small number of related individuals or friends, most of whom started these business lives with a meager and extremely limited basic capital. These crude workshops were the forerunners of the contemporary modern factory. Siemens of Germany, Brown Boveri of Switzerland and Ford of America are a few prime examples of huge industrial empires which sprouted up from small private or family concerns during the last century.

As far as the inter-relationship between work and wealth is concerned, the factory or workshop set-up is completely opposite to that of the trading-house. The former bases its operations on its work factor, with capital taking a subsidiary position, and the latter vice-versa. Thus, it was the second time that the two rivals (who will inevitably be thrown into further contact as time passes) confronted each other in one particular situation.

## The Age of Capitalism, Machinery and Democracy

As a result of the first show of co-operation between work and wealth, projected in the name of 'trade' or 'commerce', man reaped considerable benefits. Those who possessed the capital fared particularly well, although tremendous profits were enjoyed by all. Occurring in the factory, the second display of co-operation sported work as its leading factor. It had even better results, especially in the early stages of factory and workshop development when industrial relations were blessed with complete harmony and production levels were overwhelmingly high.

Naturally, in order for such a co-operation to function in the smoothest and most trouble-free way and for as long as possible, the relationship between those who owned the capital and those who did the work had to be one of complete and continual sincerity. However, what eventually happened was that extensive economic programs took place which called for the accumulation of vast amounts of capital. But, they failed to form any well-organized shareholding companies offering benefits to all and lacked the basic faith and trust of the different individuals in the realm of legal security or constancy of rules and regulations. As a result, one-sidedness, co-operation and sincerity in all work situations, and most important of all in the offices and institutions where the affairs of state

were run, became endangered. Secondly, because of the employee's attachment to his job and the extensive profits which were achieved through his toil and initiative, much greater attention regarding basic rights and needs became necessary if he was to eventually recognize himself as a real and contributive factor in his own destiny as well as in society.

The accumulation and analysis of such theories directed almost inevitably to the establishment of social rule, that is, a democratic government — by the people for the people. At least the conditions necessary for the above mentioned co-operation were more favorable in governments of this kind. In the earlier communities such as the Aryan farming villages, the Greek and Roman city states and the original small family units, the idea of communal government was favored considerably, mainly because of its originally pure and just nature. Subsequently, governments faintly similar to this were established in such places. However, the abuse of personal wealth and power and the injustices that developed from class-distinction transformed them into aristocrat-orientated and despotically ruled systems. It is quite obvious that the planning and operation of any great economical or development programs which rely, for success, on the sincere co-operation, trust and enthusiasm of all those concerned, be it on a private or national scale, cannot be viable in an oppressive and unjust environment with a despotic government that is based on the whimsical desires, covetousness, initiative and private motives of a limited few, and which, in addition, completely denies any kind of freedom, individualism, trust or security.

Therefore, through social and economic means the second instance of co-operation between work and capital assured the rejuvenization or at least the re-strengthening of the democratic system. As a result, the age of capitalism and machinery can be regarded as being synonymous with the firm establishment of democracy — not disregarding the propagation of human rights, freedoms, equality and social justice that accompanied it.

Thus, the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth can be viewed as a symbolic period of re-cooperation between work, power and wealth. During this period, an overwhelming number of shareholding firms working on incredibly huge amounts of capital came into existence. A vast variety of new products were introduced to the market. On the one hand, the wealth-owner — henceforth referred to as the 'capitalist' — reaped huge profits; on the other hand, new and revolutionary machines and mechanical devices were introduced. Furthermore, the rate of productivity multiplied with indefinite and almost frightening speed. Even science and learning which had hitherto existed on a totally different plane to that of man's economic and

practical existence, was very much in demand. Not only did the fact that industry had a practical use for science increase the value of "work", but science underwent a long awaited revival. This led to successes and progress that took shape with stupendous swiftness.

At that point in time, everyone was relatively content with the general state of society and social affairs. Apart from the speedy headway made in the fields of science and technology, spectacular changes in human thought and intellect were witnessed. Consequently, there was a manifestation of great transformations. On the other end of the scale, incidentally, it was also when most of today's widely discussed and regretted social corruption and diseases first made their indelible mark on human society.

## The Money Government

Although work and capital have always played closely interconnecting and apparently inseparable roles, with the latter basking in the spotlight, it is an undeniable fact that man, in accordance with both his own nature and past experience, has always treated money with a much greater reverence. Not only has he always considered wealth to be the most basic and important element in everyday affairs, he has always considered work, the worker and his machines as its servants and subsidiaries. This happened to the extent where all products of the new machine era were attributed to intellect and wealth alone, without the slightest consideration for the factor of work or those who perform it. Money's interjacent role in all economic ventures and the fact that it is the most important means of security in such affairs means that work must, to a degree, tolerate its dictates and upper hand. Subsequently, it sees itself as defeated and hands over the crown of world rule to wealth and capitalism. It is with such problems in mind that the science of economics takes on definite personal attributes and independence. However, there has been so much blatant exaggeration and surmise concerning this new and highly specialized field that a great deal of its exponents even maintain that the one and only source of all social change — past, present or future — can be found within the confines of economics and economic affairs.

In the relationships and interconnections that exist between different members of a society and throughout the governmental structure and economic organization of any nation, wealth, be it cash or property, is considered the basic income and asset. In Iran, for example, the top priority and importance is, among the various ministries and governmental departments at least, still given over to the country's wealth-amassing, tax-collecting "money machine" rather than to the actual ministries and departments themselves who mastermind the plans behind the production of goods and money and thus form the

original base of all national goals and ideals. In fact, money and its amassment is so rigidly revered that the personal worth of any single thing or person is valued by its or his amount of ready cash or personal money-producing power. Subsequently, profiteering and the almost religious accumulation of wealth becomes the root of all aims!

The United States of America is a country where wealth and capital is most prevalent in all aspects of national and international affairs. Be it on an internal scale or in the wider international sphere, it is a nation completely based on capitalism and personal ownership; it also possesses the brightest economic potential.

## Class Discord

The co-operation between work and wealth during the age of capitalism and machinery was so effective that it captured the thoughts and inspirations of all. Those who possessed material goods converted them into industrial and agricultural shares and left them to grow in the hands of capital. Those who had hitherto existed as free and independent servants, craftsmen and wage-earners flocked in full force to the factories and joined hands with the already established swarms of industrial workers. On the other hand, those particular individuals who were not interested in such work were, due to the shatteringly powerful rivalry that mass-production and automation offered, either forced to surrender to its dictates or become gradually annihilated and eventually extinct. As a result, the numerous social classes that existed were dissolved and whittled down into two main distinct groups — the capitalist and the worker.

## Class War

With the formation of the working classes, the first faint whispers of complaint and objection were to be heard. Due to the fact that the work-money relationship was not quite so intense, class discord and war were unknown in previous times. However, later circumstances changed. Capital, which was considered on par with work and existed alongside it in peaceful co-operation, was now seen to shower its rival (the worker) with indifference and abuse. Capitalists attempted to maintain a considerably lower level of subservience and dependence. Naturally, such treatment brought cries of protest from the worker who, having unsuccessfully demanded a fairer share of their combined-effort profits, made accusations of injustice and exploitation against his erstwhile friends — the capitalists. Naturally, he also imagined that all the world's problems and calamities plus all of his personal hardships and deprivations stemmed directly from the actions and effects of capitalism. Subsequently, in order to prove his worth to his new master, he adopted the habit of collective industrial strikes and in doing so, sought to hold the capitalist at random. Meanwhile automation, with its daily increase in the invention of newer, highly sophisticated machines and devices, looked forward to the day when there would no longer be a need for human workers.

In response to such threats, the capitalist did not remain idle for long; he began to array his own troops in defense. In fact, not only did he mobilize his own strength and influence, he also saw fit to call on his old friends' religion, law and order and economy for assistance and moral support. Considering such a situation, society's intellectuals and innovators, be they sincerely concerned or only desirous of personal fame or power, could not remain passive. Although the majority of such individuals stemmed from middle-class, bourgeois backgrounds, they attempted to find solutions for problems of class war. More often than not, they defended the supposedly "down trodden" worker. Having petitioned their original claim for freedom, equality, intellectual awareness and development, their protests eventually and sometimes inevitably led to shouts of revenge and hatred. Consequently, schools of thought such as laborism, socialism and communism were born. These, while adopting economical and philosophical colors as a result of their campaign against ownership and capitalism, also took on moral, political and revolutionary aspects because of their natural dislike of the customs, rules and regulations that capitalism and its defense created.

Because the working-party leaders saw the capitalists taking refuge in religion and law and order, they began to breed enmity and hostility towards them also, the leaders imagined that in order to secure victory, such elements had to be attacked and the laws of nature had to be

crushed. However, such leaders were, and still are, unaware that all of life's customs and governmental regimes, apart from being in a permanent state of continual transformation, are governed by the law of evolution and thus transient. Truth, justice, piety and law and order are, on the other hand, just a few of the eternal laws of nature; any kind of disobedience or resistance against them, regardless of time, place or situation, will inevitably be met with eventual destruction and obliteration. Furthermore, if any particular governmental system or regime does not conform with such rules and laws, then any hope for success and permanence will be in vain.

Yet, none of the clashes and revolutions which have adopted various political, philosophical, religious or economic attributes is out of the ordinary or in any way new or unprecedented in world history. Indeed, it is only as a result of the effects of such continual change and transformation that man is able to find his place and determine his role in the course of history. With this in mind, it is inevitable that the kingdom of wealth, like all other states and ages which have come and gone, will also crumble. Its position will be resigned to a new and possibly more powerful ruler.

The Quran, revealed when the Arabs were simple village-dwellers and the concept of trade was in its earliest stages, did not actually pinpoint the natural problems and requirements of the worker and capitalist era. What it does do, however, is to define the real meaning of wealth and its rightful position in human society, setting out rules and regulations which were to be observed regarding wealth and its use in all future times. Furthermore, excellent methods designed to prevent the corruption which arises from the abuse of wealth and power were also suggested.

A few examples of such stipulations are included below:

### Mohammad (PBUH):

The lawful acquisition of wealth in order to provide a means of personal and family livelihood is not only obligatory but also worthy of religious merit.

(Hadith)

Quran CIV:1

The accumulation of wealth arising solely from a love of wealth is considered extremely improper.

وَبَلِّغْ لِكُلِّ مَعْرُوفٍ مَّا رَزَقْنَاكَ

Quran II:275

Usury, which allows man to subsist on the exorbitant profits made from the lending of wealth without any work or physical exertion, is religiously unlawful.

وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا

Mohammad (PBUH):

Wealth and social position should never create a sense of self-glorification or superiority over others. One in such a position should not expect special respect and reverence from others in the community. (Confirmed in a number of Hadith.)

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزُّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ

Quran XXI:105

The payment of religious taxes, khums and zakat, is obligatory. Furthermore, the importance of spending in the way of God and personal involvement in social service and reform, which require the accumulation and subsequent expenditure of wealth, is heavily stressed in the Quran. Such acts are a means of spiritual guidance and sanctification.

الَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَالَهُمْ يَتَرَكُوا ۝ وَمَا لِأَحَدٍ عِنْدَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تُخْفَىٰ ۝ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَىٰ  
وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضَىٰ

Quran XCII:18, 19, 20, 21

Personal wealth and social supremacy should only be used with one aim in mind — that of service to mankind and other acts of the same calibre which are acceptable and pleasing to God.

By discouraging the production and accumulation of money and possessions, not only does the Quran seek to prevent the concentration of wealth in the hands of a limited number of individuals, it also quite emphatically outlaws all unlawful uses of capital and any kind of social supremacy that they may create. Furthermore, lawful and proper expenditure which helps repel fiscal corruption and also provides a means of personal and spiritual purification, strengthening of will and incitement to work and activity, has been strongly and repeatedly recommended.

(Incidentally, work and its role in society which is after all the main theme of this book will be discussed in detail in Section Three.)

## The Present Situation and Internal Labor Governments

Thus, in various countries and in a host of different ways, the initial steps towards the deposition of capital from the ruling throne were taken. In many places, regimes that were totally socialist or even communist were formed. One of the basic principles of such regimes — and probably their only really correct principle — is that the personal profit of all members of society who do a job should, from the point of view of quantity, be regulated according to their individual needs and from the point of view of quality, be subject to the value of the job they are doing.

In some other countries, worker's parties, having opted for ideals and beliefs that are of a nature akin to socialism, have gone as far as to nationalize their large commercial concerns and industries. There are even places which both internally and externally appear to be solid capitalist regimes, yet continually effect changes and reforms in the welfare and support of their worker members.

It is important to note that even in countries which are externally laborite, the cornerstones of capitalist rule with all of its old strong-arm principles are still standing. Thus, even if the old factors of nobility, wealth and power have, in the internal systems of some countries, lost their earlier impact, in international relations and a world where racial differences, military dictatorships and economic infiltration are the definitive weapons, they still reign supreme.

## The Government of Work and Forecasts for the Future

Work will have won the throne from rival claimants (such as nobility, social pedigree, power and wealth) and have total rule over human society only when each individual fully recognizes and fulfills his duties

toward others and society, and where the degree of rank and fruition of each individual or country is gauged according to its personal circumstances and conditions. Indeed, such a time will surely come. Work will rule — although its rise to power and elimination to rivals will not occur in the way that latter-day extremists predict. If there is a re-examination of the times when “eldership” and “family” was the ruling factor, it is evident that even when man entered the period of city dwelling and civilization, the principle of the “father-figure” as the head of the family unit was not completely eliminated. Instead, there was a reversion to its natural and original rank; authority was entrusted to the higher and greater national and military powers. This was similar to those processes which occurred after those which are taking place now and those which will continue to occur in the future. Since ownership has transgressed the desirable stage of moderation (i.e. the stage at which all basic life needs are required) and has reached the point where it is used unfairly and, more often than not, to the advantage of one group and the disadvantage of another, it leaves itself open to protest. In fact, it becomes recognized as the root of all social unrest. However, once such unfairness and transgressions are eradicated and authority falls into the hands of work and activity, possession, which is after all a basic human instinct, will return to its natural and initial position in human affairs.

At present, although the government of work has not yet effected sufficient penetration to establish itself as a viable proposition, it has, as a result of class wars, moved from a defensive position to an offensive one. However, as demonstrated, work can be genuinely victorious only when total ruling power has been wrenched from the grasp of capitalism and ownership and when, in accordance with the Quranic verse

وَلِكُلِّ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوا

Quran VI:132

“the extent of fruition of any individual or nation is wholly dependent upon his work.”

Work is the only factor that should be considered when classifying ranks and individuals. Subsequently, all the old standards such as wealth, power and possession will become completely dependent on the work factor, and thus, revert to their original positions. Then, and only then, will each individual possess only that which he rightfully and lawfully deserves. Naturally, the establishment of such a period will not mean the end of human life on earth. For all that is known, this world and existence may only be in its initial, fetal stages of development. It could indeed be that the advent of a time where man’s fate lies totally in the hands of work will herald the beginning of the world’s natural life.

The arrival of such a period will also pave the way for even greater world progress and development, although we cannot hazard any guesses at the possibility of the emergence of fresh rivals to challenge work’s rule. It is certain, however, that work is not merely one single, indivisible concept but something which comprises many different and contrasting forms and also considerable weaknesses. Naturally, according to the laws of “natural selection” and “survival of the fittest”, differences and disputes between various types of work will occur until the particular kind of work or activity which best suits the natural social and world situation at any time and offers the most reliable promise of permanence and perfection will emerge victorious. The most favorable kind of work is that which is both positive and productive, completely free from any traces of ulterior motive and geared towards aims of truth and perfection. Deeds of righteousness, which will be discussed later, will prevail over deeds of baseless corruption and ignorance. Man will undoubtedly reap profit and rewards, the likes of which he has never before experienced — the actual quality and excellence of which cannot, at this moment in time, be described.



## Summary

Apart from the last point of discussion and the forecast for the future, (which may indeed be treated by some as pure fantasy), the more or less bumpy course taken by work and its role in society throughout human history have been traced. It started from absolute zero and, in its initial stages, was reserved for the dumb, four-legged friends. Gradually, as it rose in stature, it associated itself with the lower members of the family unit and the homeless wretches who attached themselves to such groups, until it became the specialty of a certain and limited set of people, henceforth known as servants. A little later, the appearance of trade and commerce saw a good deal more of the higher, more respected members of the community participating in work and toil. Meanwhile, the paid laborers emerged as free individuals, using work as their saleable goods and appealing to the needs of others in this way. From the marriage of paid-labor and commerce, craftsmanship was born; the craftsmen introduced the workshop which was the direct predecessor of today's factory. The factory, in turn, nourished a fresh friendship and co-operation between work and wealth, the former playing the most important role in the development of modern civilization. Thus, the worker and the capitalist are the two basic pillars of life and society. From the bitter disputes and confrontations that have emerged between these two former friends during recent years, it could well be that the birth of work as a ruling, dominating power is close at hand.

Just as work has gradually increased in value and risen to its present position, so has the dependency of man upon work increased in the same way. For example, one well-organized strike by a certain group of workers can, in a matter of hours, cripple a city or even a whole country. In the same way, as soon as a country's industrial system is disrupted by war or any other natural disaster, then all work grinds to a halt. As a result, the economic and social welfare of the people is seriously threatened.

The main motivation behind the long and calamity-ridden path taken by work throughout history appears, like in most other social changes and transformations, to be man's basic need for food, clothing and reproduction. Nevertheless, in actual fact, it stems from the natural desire for development, progression and prosperity that exists alongside his more basic animal and material instincts.

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْهُدَىٰ

## Quran XCII:12

Lo! Ours it is to give the guidance.

Man seems to be engaged in one constant struggle to find as much pleasure and comfort as he can. However, when observing the degree of human happiness and satisfaction, it appears to be at a constantly stable level. In other words, nature, with amazing dexterity and an even stranger sleight of hand, has successfully kept man hovering between a state of happiness and one of despair, never tilting the scales of happiness and sadness from its position of moderation.

Thus, if one examines the balance sheet of human activity from the point of view of enjoyment and satisfaction, it is evident that even if it is not exactly on the debit side, it is not on the credit side either! However, when the same balance sheet is considered from the point of view of wisdom and ability, it seems that man is quite obviously 'in the black' as it were, with his spheres of activity and progression increasing and widening century by century.

Human history, some of which has been studied, can thus be seen to have a multitude of external states and an equal variety of features, all being pushed and buffeted, changed and transformed along an ever continuing track. However, the world and life is not endless. Thus, all its external features are mere decorations while its track is a track which is most definitely based upon an aim and a destination. In this world, the aim and destination is nothing but WORK and ACTION. The material world is like a huge playing field where players exert themselves and attempt to score their hollow ball through the goalposts of their opponents. However, the ball, the field and the goalposts are mere ornaments; the running, diving and winning are supremely important. Likewise, anyone who does not offer his own fair share of effort and exertion or fails to run or indeed does so but in a misguided and incorrect fashion, will never taste the fruits of victory and must inevitably admit defeat. As will be discussed in Section Three, the Quran offers a similar interpretation, but one with greater clarity and precision.

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## PART TWO

### The Relationship Between Man and Work

The fact that the physical act of work, while causing strengthening and development of various body muscles which are activated in order to perform it, also renders the human individual both strong and healthy is an obvious one that needs no detailed explanation. The contention that work and the concomitant acceptance of service and responsibility are the basic keys to human experience, progress, independence and prestige, and that direct personal confrontation with the problems and pit-falls of life is the only thing certain of rendering man realistic and bestowing him with any "human" qualities, is the mere repetition of a well-known and universally agreed upon fact that needs no further proof. Thus, with the assistance of a little scientific analysis, this section intends to go one step further and examine the inherent attributes of work and the effects it has upon the internal and external structures and transformations of the human individual. In actual fact, and if such a phrase is scientifically permissible, the subject will be treated in the light of "physiological thermodynamics".

Man is a living being, composed of cells, tissues and numerous different chemical compounds. Regardless of his biological ingredients, he is generally considered to be what is commonly referred to as "matter". However, he is not to be confused with the solid, static and inorganic kinds of "matter" that undergo definite physical changes when placed under the effect of other matters and energies such as water and heat; nor is it in the same classification as the lifeless, mineral or organic chemical compounds which, although possessing very definite and regular internal structures, contain effects and properties that can only be expressed in a passive manner as a result of contact with external factors.

All separate sections of the living organism, the basic element of which is the cell, possess methodically exact forms and structures, each orientated towards definite directions and designed for different functions. For instance, that part of the being which is concerned with physical movement is naturally equipped with the exact kind of internal structure capable of performing such an action; the same is true of other functions such as seeing, breathing, eating and etc. Furthermore, the living being is built in such a way that it can, in order to replace its worn-out parts and ensure the continuity and permanence of the above-mentioned actions, reproduce itself with the greatest ease.

The living matter, like its inert counter-parts, also undergoes the effects of external energies and the actions and reactions of chemical matter. The basic difference is that it is constructed in such a way that makes it capable of selection and thus leaves itself open only to the effects of those energies and compounds that it desires. For example, it

only breathes the air it requires and only eats the kinds of food that it needs or likes. Subsequently in such actions, unsuitable air and poisonous foods are either completely rejected or at least made ineffective. Secondly — and vastly more important — it actually employs the service of other materials and energies and uses them to create new forms. In short, it works on the same principle as any factory, having qualities of initiative, transformation and creative power.

Furthermore, the living matter consumes other nutritional matter and forms from fresh blood and tissues. These, with the co-operation of muscle-power and a certain amount of free-will, can then be used to perform mechanical work. The production of movement from respiration is a good example. In other words, with the assistance of energies received from external sources, it transforms simple, mineral compounds into cellular compounds which are both orderly and extremely intricate; simultaneously, a small amount of the originally received matter is converted into energy. A prime example of such a process is photosynthesis in plant leaves.

Modern chemicals and biologists recognize the intense anatomical orderliness of the macro-molecular structured live matter as compared with the infinitely simpler and invariable internal system of inert matter as a state similar to that of crystallization. Crystalline matter, of which the common virus is a good example, is one whose particles are formed in the shape of a lattice, all situated in orderly rows with exact and equal distances between them, and a system which is graced with perfect order and orientation.

In fact, the application of such methodology and orientation is generally thought by some to be the initial step towards Creation and existence. Furthermore, although living matter possesses a basically colloidal state, the fact that it has such orderliness and orientation enables and equips it to perform work and duties that would never have been otherwise possible.

It is an undeniable fact that anything which possesses a definite form and complete structural orderliness is far more advanced than that which does not. For example, when the chain of events that lead up to the structure of a building are examined — right from the initial kneading, moulding and baking of clay to form bricks and eventually walls right through to the final transformation of all other construction materials such as iron, wood and glass into a habitable edifice — one finds that it is an action which, without necessitating any change in the original weight and nature of the basic materials, requires external factors such as time, thought, planning, toil, sweat and certainly a considerable amount of skill. Indeed, the probability of such an action taking place accidentally and without any external intervention is, mathematically speaking, extremely unlikely. In actual fact, such an event is considered absurd and quite impossible. On the other hand, however, the

subsequent destruction of that very same building and its reduction to a pile of rubble is something which requires extremely less time, trouble and deliberation. In fact, it is something which will take place quite naturally with the passing of time.

Thermodynamically speaking, the destruction of a building, which is effected naturally when the system is left to its own devices, is a process in which the 'entropy'\* of the system is increased. The first state — that in which the basic building materials are systematically arranged to form a habitable structure and where the possibility of such an event happening by pure chance is nil — is one in which the natural 'entropy' of the system is decreased and necessitates the use of energy and external assistance. In short, any kind of planned systemization and orientation that is affected upon matter or materials with the intent to render them capable of performing definite duties is, in itself, an action whereby the materials concerned are given a definite value and physically rejuvenated. It is an action in which, thermodynamically speaking, the 'entropy' of the system is decreased — or to an extent, reversed — and necessitates the use of energy and will-power.

Now, the question of matter and energy will be addressed. If defined in the most basic terms, matter includes things such as meat, water and soil etc., and energy includes such things as heat, movement, work-force and electricity.

Scientific experience and various theories expounded in recent years have concluded that in reality, matter and energy are basically inseparable and the former is simply a heavily condensed mass or 'knot' of the latter. Since energy does not have an external appearance, it is in the form of electrons. It is trapped in extremely tight and limited spaces which rotate at incredible speeds. Furthermore whenever, as a result of external radioactive particles or internal explosions, their chain-like enclosures split and decay, an enormous amount of some of the hidden and trapped energies are violently released. However, if matter cannot expose its hidden and infinite wealth of energy by natural methods, it can, on the other hand, offer itself as a place of entry, exit and stop-over for the weaker, free-moving energies around it and subsequently become their only place and means of accommodation and conveyance. In the same way, the inter-dependence between matter and energy is illuminated by the fact that the only way that energy can effectuate changes and transformations or make its presence and existence felt in any shape or form is by imposing itself upon and "mounting" the matter. For example, the application of heat energy on water results in the latter heating up and changing into steam, which is merely the intense dispersion of infinitely fast moving water particles. Subsequently, as

soon as the received heat energy is released, distillation occurs and the steam is converted back into its original liquid state. Similarly, when one inflates a balloon or a bicycle pump, the air inside becomes condensed; its degree of pressure and temperature increases and the compressed air is then, like a machine spring, able to reconstitute the work and physical effort originally imposed upon it. Actually, machine engines, electric generators and steam motors are simply devices which transform a certain amount of their fuel's heat energy into work; the combustion heat causes a rise in gas pressure or evaporation, which in turn inflicts pressure upon the motor pistons or turbine blades and set the machine into motion.

Thus, energy is stored within matter in two different ways — on the atomic scale and on the molecular basis (which is apparent either in the form of the distances and movements that the molecules adopt or through the changes in chemical structure that they undergo.) Naturally, the first kind of storage system, that of the atom, is exceedingly greater, but so designed that the stored energy cannot usually be given back. With the molecular system, on the other hand, a certain amount of energy can be retained in a restitutionable state. However, whatever form it may take, matter is essentially nothing but pure, amassed energy; in turn, energy is basically nothing but will-power . . . but that is another subject.

Now there will be a return to man himself and the question, "What is work?" will be raised. Work can be defined as the living being's conscious operation of muscles and members in the functions and duties for which they were originally built and orientated (i.e. running, eating, seeing, fighting, thinking, etc.). It is a known fact that in this miracle of Life and Creation, the more any one organ is used for a special purpose, the physically stronger and more experienced it becomes. Furthermore, its inclination towards that particular aim and direction also increases. In short, it becomes more equipped, more orderly and certainly more orientated for the intended purpose and aim. Moreover, certain scientists believe that "need is the creator of organs" and that the special attention focused by man on a definite aim and his use of will and physical movement in pursuit of fresh needs and desires all produce a new or more developed system or organ with which to secure them. Scientifically speaking, what actually happens is that a certain amount of body cells and molecules are entrusted with and channelled towards a new job or duty; subsequently, a whole new systemization, orientation and specialization in this area is found. It is almost like finding a new weapon or asset that one previously did not possess.

Apart from the human, other living beings such as plants and animals, undergo internal changes to a very much lesser extent. They are all deemed to have reached their final stage of evolution and progression; thus their state is one of satisfied equilibrium. Apart from the relatively

rare mutations that sometimes appear, they hardly ever come face to face with any new problems or situations. However, with man the picture is quite different, for his state is one of constant dissatisfaction and irregularity, mainly due to the fact that he is still treading the ever progressive path of evolution and is thus daily faced with new and increasingly challenging problems. In the same way, just as he ascends the ladder of development, then so his pursuit of new specializations and orientations extends accordingly.

Naturally, this need for specialization and orientation in the human interior is merely a reflection of the external aim or intention that the human individual has in mind. Subsequently, in accordance with the extent of orientation and specialization that is effected towards the desired object, the degree of love, longing and inclination towards that object also increases. Eventually, like natural human states such as thirst, hunger and sexual attractions, these feelings held for the desired object will become instinctive. The more peaks the mountaineer climbs, the more interested he becomes in mountaineering; the more plants a biologist examines, the greater his love for research. In fact, when any kind of specialization or activity is repeatedly practiced and established, then the inclination and orientation towards that particular act is increased accordingly.

Until now, the discussion has been purely from a physiological point of view. Thermodynamically speaking, however, we have seen that living matter is matter which not only utilizes other simpler forms of matter and energy and converts them in a multitude of different ways into new forms with greater sophistication and orientation, but also renders them capable of performing special duties and operations. In other words, it produces new forms and transformations which are able to release and convert a certain amount of the stored molecular energy into new and desired forms. It works like a factory; on the one hand, it converts some of the original, received matter into the new matter or energy it requires and at the same time, on the other hand, develops its own internal system (i.e. nerves, muscles and tissues etc.) into a more organized and orientated state, and indeed, to the degree where it is able to repeat all these actions more smoothly and effectively.

However, it must be noted that according to the First Principle of Thermodynamics, no living matter is capable of adding even one extra particle to the total weight and mass of all the world's combined energy and matter. It simply acts as a machine which can change and perfect the quality of a thing and by doing so, produce new forms and compounds of its own desire. It is a builder and not an absolute creator — although within its own limited capabilities, it can produce virtually what it likes.

Earlier when the two different forms of energy reservation were discussed, it was maintained that the molecular scale is one of which the

matter or system stores the energy in a relatively unconfined and restitutionable manner. However, in actual fact and in complete accordance with the Second Principle of Thermodynamics, the energy received by the matter or system, called internal energy, can never by 100% restitutionable or usable. This is due to the simple fact that a certain amount of that energy is used to supply the power behind the general internal working of the system, plus, the natural increase of its 'entropy'. Thus, such energy is used up internally and never given back. In fact, the more received energy that is dissipated within the interior of the system and, as a result of internal frictions and disturbances is converted to heat, then the more defective the system's ability to preserve and reconstitute that energy becomes. Increasing internal disorder will then cause the adverse dispersion, dissipation and detention of the received energy. The whole effect is rather like that of a self-indulgent individual who eats excessively, sleeps excessively, yet never reconstitutes the energy he receives. The natural result is obesity, indolence and inevitably illness or premature death.

Therefore, the more aware man becomes of his own aims and the harder and more conscientiously he "works" towards them, the more organized and orientated his physical and mental structure will become. In addition, his power of production, creativity and enthusiasm will increase. However, the more that the received energies are wasted on internal and personal uses, weaker and more disrupted his internal orientation will become. Subsequently, his ability to retain energy and reconstitute it as work, his power of production, creativity and general value will all become increasingly weak.

Just as our world is a pure manifestation and accumulation of matter and energy, and that they, in the final analysis, are nothing but a creation and embodiment of willpower, then man's physiological organization and orientation in his pursuit of external goals. Naturally, such organization and orientation can only be reached through the work, activity and the concomitant "acquisitions" of the individual himself.

In short, man is nothing save a mere accumulation of acquisitions gained from personal effort and exertion. Secondly, having based his goals on pure and strong faith, he must always be aware of corruptions such as egotism, indolence, lack of responsibility and general disruption and disorderliness — all of which threaten his existence.

Part Three will be devoted to the study of certain selected Quranic verses whose supreme explicitness give perfect support to the results which have already been determined.

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## PART THREE

### The Explanation of the Quran

The position of "deeds" or "action" in human existence and the importance attached to work and activity as the intrinsic means of securing prosperity in the Hereafter have been discussed and described in the Quran from numerous angles and points of view. A considerable number of verses concerning the subject have been revealed.

For the purposes of study, the Quranic view can be separated into the following sections:

1. The aims and intentions behind creation and the personal fates of societies and individuals.
2. Commands given to religious leaders and the faithful.
3. Promises of Heaven.

### The Aims and Intentions Behind Creation and the Personal Fates of Societies and Individuals:

#### Quran LXVII :2

**He who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed, and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-forgiving...**

This excellently phrased verse not only considers Life and Death to be natural, successive stages in human development, but also recognizes human existence as a gradual chain of difficulties and entanglements, with the physical world taking on the attributes of a rather large "playing field" of trials and tribulations — the place which offers man the very means of glorification and the eradication of all traces of sin and impurity. This can be more clearly understood from verses such as the following:

#### Quran VII:8

**That which is on earth We have made but as a glittering show for the earth, in order that We may test them — as to which of them are best in conduct. Verily what is on earth we shall make but as dust and dry soil (without growth or herbage).**

From these chapters, it is quite clear that the world's seas, mountains, jungles and all other natural or synthetic phenomena which in human eyes appear as basic like necessities, are, from the point of view of the Creator, pure ornamentation and merely convenient ways and means of entangling man and motivating him towards deliberation, edification and activity. It is in this way that the gradual selection of superior individuals can take place.

أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرْثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ

Quran XXI:105

The inheritors of the earth will be those of the faithful who most deserve and befit such a position.

Thus, eventually, when these superior and supremely industrious individuals have appeared, all events and happenings and their concomitant effects and traces will be obliterated from the face of the earth, which in turn will return to its original state of aridity and inutility.

Both verses are in accordance with the discussion concerning the natural course of human evolution in Chapter One. That chapter explained how excessive relaxation and other worldly pleasures are really only imaginary aims and that the only lasting and concrete product of toil and trouble, as a means of securing one's livelihood, is the elevation of work value and its subsequent expansion and circulation throughout society.

Naturally, it must not be presumed that this entanglement of man and the incitement towards work and activity on his part is in any way confined solely to the final stages of human existence. On the contrary, the aims of advancement and elevation by means of activity and work have been nurtured throughout all ages and by all peoples.

وَلَقَدْ أَهَلَّكَْنَا الْفُرُونَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ أَنَا ظَلَمُوا وَجَاءتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرَجَعْنَاكَ  
خَلَأْت فِي الْأَرْضِ

Quran X:13

We destroyed the generations before you when they did wrong; and their messengers came unto them with clear proofs, but they would not believe. Thus we reward the guilty folk.

According to the above verse, it is always the actions, whether righteous or adverse, of the peoples and nations themselves that has led to their perfection and permanence or eventual downfall. Whatever the case may be, the Creator is in constant watch over all kinds of activity; he is forever desirous of good deeds.

The previous Quranic verses have concentrated mostly on the various collective groups or nations of the past and the natural course of humanity in general. When the personal fate of the individual is

considered, the Quran views Life as nothing more than toil and effort produced in the way of evolution and development:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ لِلرَّبِّ كَدَمَا فَتْلَافِيهِ

Quran LXXXIV:6-12

O thou man! Verily thou art ever toiling on towards the Lord — painfully toiling — but thou shalt meet Him. Then he who is given his Record in his right hand, soon will his account be taken by an easy reckoning; and he will turn to his people, rejoicing! But he who is given his Record behind his back — soon he will cry for Perdition; and he will enter a Blazing Fire."

The word "Kadh" ( كَدَحَ ) basically means any kind of work that is particularly painful and laborious; its English translation is "toil". The first verse suggests that man's natural existence accompanies certain difficulties and hardships. It infers that the only way of spiritual edification and elevation towards eventual perfection — the meeting with the Lord — is through constant effort and activity, both physical and mental.

The second verse describes the pious and the brave; maybe the interpretation of the "right-hand" is an allusion to the proper and correct (thence 'right') activity with which these people have earned their blessed fate. Because of their passive submission to the corruptions and temptations around them and due to the fact that they have left the effects of their wretchedness and wickedness behind them, the other group receives their Book, or Record, behind their backs. Subsequently, having invited doom and destruction themselves, they enter Hell.

Another verse, in Sura Fatir, describes the essence of magnanimity and the proposed method of spiritual and material advancement:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدَ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْوَعُ

Quran XXXV:10

If any do seek for glory and power, to Allah belongs all glory and power. To Him mount up (all) Words of Purity. It is He Who exalts each Deed of Righteousness.

First and foremost, glory and eminence can only be found at the threshold of the Lord who is the Ultimate in Perfection. Secondly, all "Words of Purity" — the correct 'formula' as it were — must be presented in complete awareness and with total concentration on the Truth and God. Thus, prayer is nothing more than complete awareness and the concomitant spiritual elevation of one's sights and aims. Furthermore, it is not only the sole means of elevation, but also the only way of reaching the ideal of the "righteous deed".

## Commands Given to Religious Leader and the Faithful:

Pursuant to the story of Abraham and the allusions made to Lot, Isaac and Jacob in the Quranic Sura Anbia, one reads:

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ إِمَّةً يَهْتَدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا غَائِبِينَ

Quran XXI:73

And we made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command; and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practice regular charity; and they constantly served Us (and Us only)."

During a discourse with the Prophets in the Sura Mo'menin, a strict and emphatic order for righteous work is issued:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرِّسَالُ كُلُّوَا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ

Quran XXIII:51

O ye apostles! enjoy (all) things good and pure, and work righteousness: For I am well acquainted with (all) that ye do."

The Prophets were commanded to sustain themselves on the excellent bounties that had been created for them. They had to be prepared for correct activity and righteous work. God's love and consideration was with them at all times.

Another chapter, which speaks of the Prophets is the Sura Sabia. After the extollation of the power and glory of the court of David and Solomon, the following verse is revealed:

اعْمَلُوا آلَ دَاوُدَ شُكْرًا وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّاكِرِينَ

Quran XXXIV:13

Work ye, sons of David, with thanks! But few of My servants are grateful.

In return for the gift of the power to rule and the general bounty and providence that He had bestowed upon the House of David, God seeks their work and action in return. At the same time, He presents a reminder that very few of His servants are actually aware that spiritual and material bounty are rewards which stem from work alone.

In two Quranic chapters, once in the Surah Naml and again in Sura Ahghaf, the prayers and incantations of the faithful are seen as a complement to righteous action as well as assurance of its success. It also provides a means for seeking moral and material correction of offspring and dependents:

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي ذُرِّيَّتًا زَكِيَّةً طَائِفَةً مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ  
قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي ذُرِّيَّتًا زَكِيَّةً طَائِفَةً مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ  
قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي ذُرِّيَّتًا زَكِيَّةً طَائِفَةً مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

Quran XLVI:15

Oh my Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favor which Thou hast bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and that I may work righteousness such as Thou mayest approve; and be gracious to me in my issue. Truly have I turned to Thee and truly do I bow (to Thee) in Islam."

The content and phraseological style of the above verse is in itself worthy of special attention since it illuminates several things. Firstly, the Quran does not view a person as a completely individual and independent unit of life, the traces of which are to be eventually obliterated and forgotten. Instead, just as the individual is a natural link in his own ancestral chain, he is also considered by the Quran to be totally accountable for his present conduct and activity, and thus to some extent effective in his own future. If, in addition, certain tasks and duties have been assigned to him, then it is only with the intent of his correction and amelioration that they have been so designed — correction which enables the further development of the species (i.e. the individual's descendants). According to this verse, the pious and faithful person is the one who uses those qualities inherited from his ancestors along with his own natural attributes to the best of his ability and in the most advantageous of ways, thus profiting as favorably as possible. Naturally, the best kind of profit is reaped through activity and righteous work, provided they are accomplished in accordance with Truth and Faith and with the satisfaction of God in mind. As a result of the righteous work of the individual, any good qualities he may have inherited from his ancestors are perfected and in turn passed on to the future generation.

The pious and righteous Muslim Society is one which realizes the importance of a pure and unblemished community. Its programs consist of conscientious work towards Truth and Justice. Its prime ideal is the creation of a pure and righteous generation and a society which is steeped in prosperity.

## Promises of Heaven

As explicitly described in some Quranic verses, Heaven and Hell or the Hereafter is nothing more than "the direct outcome of all individual actions and acquisitions" in this transient life. It is something like the reward given to a worker for his good service, although on a much higher and more sophisticated level. Just as all natural causes have natural effects, the Hereafter is the direct and exact result of all causes and actions by the individual during his earthly existence. They are results which are not only direct but in exact proportion to the initial cause and can be felt and witnessed personally by the individual himself.



On the other hand, the view that most people have of the Hereafter is one where the rewards and punishments of that world are completely distinct and separate from the affairs of this life and that the whole arrangement is just a seemingly false and unnatural contract for the future. The Quran, however, is much more positive; its view of the subject is straightforward and extremely logical.

Particular attention to the following chapters may somewhat clarify the subject:

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ النَّارُ أَشْنَاءً لِيُرَىٰ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ۗ  
 وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ  
 وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

Quran XCIX:6-8

On that Day will men proceed in companies sorted out to be shown the Deeds that they had done. Then shall anyone, who has done an atom's weight of good, see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it.

يَوْمَئِذٍ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ نَاظِرَةٌ لِمَا كَانَتْ تَعْمَلُ ۚ  
 وَمَا كَانَ لَهَا مِنْ شِئْرَةٍ أَنْ تُغْتَابَ وَوَأَعْلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ

Quran III:30

On the Day when every soul will be confronted with all the good it has done, and all the evil it has done . . .

وَلِكُلِّ رَجُلٍ رِجَالٌ مِمَّا عَمِلُوا وَلَوْ هُمْ لَآيَظُنُّونَ  
 وَاللَّهُ لَظَالِمٌ لِّلْمُتَكِبِينَ

Quran XLVI:19

And to all are assigned degrees according to the deeds which they have done, and in order that Allah may recompense their deeds, and no injustice be done to them.

قَدْ قَالُوا الَّذِينَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ قَالُوا لَنُفِخَ عَنْهَا ذُنُوبُهُمْ لَأَنزِلُوا فِي الْجَنَّاتِ  
 فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جُمِعْنَا لَهُمُ الْيَوْمَ لِلْآرِبِينَ ۚ وَوَقِيتُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

Quran XXXIX:50

For the evils of their Deeds will confront them, and they will be completely encircled by that which they used to mock at!

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جُمِعْنَا لَهُمُ الْيَوْمَ لِلْآرِبِينَ ۚ وَوَقِيتُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

Quran III:25

But how will they fare when We gather them together against a Day about which there is no doubt, and each soul will be paid out just what it has earned, without favor or injustice.

## Deeds of Righteousness

These words have always been used in a general yet absolute manner in the Quran. It was almost certainly intentional that there be no further description or analysis given. However, in everyday terms, anything which requires a certain amount of toil and trouble and simultaneously has a definite aim attached to it comes under the general heading of work. For example, the laborer who carries hods of mortar up and down a ladder can be said to "work" since he is participating in an activity with a definite aim. In the same way, the person who exploits his own artistic dexterity and observation by depicting beautiful scenes of nature on canvas can also be categorized amongst those who "work". Even the policeman on traffic-patrol duty who keeps a watchful eye on the antics of passing cars and pedestrians and tries to prevent possible accidents cannot be classified as inactive. On the other end of the scale, those very people, who on that same street, stroll and laze around for hours on end under the pretext of fun and recreation, without any conceivable aim or purpose, can be classified as idle and unproductive. In fact, any activity which is pursued without the slightest consideration towards a definite aim or objective and totally devoid of any toil and trouble cannot be classified as work.

Nevertheless, it is not always necessary for work to be understood merely in its mechanical or material sense. A man who dares to speak out against the injustices and tyranny of his nation's king or leaders is often said to have done "a good job" or performed a commendable action. Likewise, although his work may not involve any great amounts of physical exertion or produce tangible, material results, the teacher or scholar whose instruction and general discourse is based on years of study and experience can hardly be written off as unimportant or unproductive. Even the learned professors and scientists who simply rely on mental ability to discover the whys and wherefores of apparently insoluble human mysteries are still performing an action — a job of work. However, none of the useless and fruitless activities — idle-gossip, the reading and writing of worthless and self-evident material — in fact anything which requires neither toil nor trouble and is devoid of any eventual profit — can be classified as work!

The word (عمل) deed, or action which is used in a general sense by the Quran is used here with the same broadness of meaning and should not be attributed with any religious or spiritual peculiarity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In the Sura IX:22, the direct outcome and fate of people in everyday affairs is seen to be completely dependent upon their deeds and activities:



Because nothing could they suffer or do, but was reckoned to their credit as a deed of righteousness — whether they suffered thirst, fatigue or hunger, in the Cause of God, or trod paths to raise the ire of the Unbelievers, or received any injury whatever from an enemy; for God suffereth not the

قَالِ بَوْمَ لَا تَنْظُرَ نَفْسٌ نَبِيًّا وَلَا تَجْرُونَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

Quran XXXVI:54

Then, on that Day, not a soul will be wronged in the least, and ye shall but be repaid for the deeds of your past deeds.

وَحَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَئِيْنِ كُلِّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

Quran XLV:22

Allah created the heavens and the earth for just ends, and in order that each soul may find the recompense of what it has earned, and none of them be wronged.

A verse which defines the Hereafter as the direct result and amalgamated product of all worldly actions and acquisitions, is one of many in the Quran, but maybe the final verse has the greatest comprehensivity and applies in a more general sense to all people and living things. In other verses, the Resurrection is repeatedly likened to the re-plantation and growth of a seed beneath the soil, re-appearing as a fresh plant in the spring season and displaying all the traces and effects of its past existence as it does so.

However, the promises of Heaven that God gives in this Quran are completely different from the general picture people have of it. There are, on the whole, 128 instances in the Quran where Heaven is promised. Each promise is, in turn, subject to the fulfillment of certain conditions and possesses a definite formula. These verses can be classified as follows:

In 84 instances, the absolute pre-requisites are faith and deeds of righteousness.

In 24 instances, the prerequisites are faith and piety.

In 7 instances, the sole prerequisite is faith.

In 7 instances, the sole prerequisite is righteous action.

In 3 instances, there is not sufficient explicitness to distinguish any one particular prerequisite.

In 2 instances, all three prerequisites — faith, piety and deeds of righteousness are mentioned.

In 1 instance, piety alone is mentioned as the sole condition, thus making a total of 128 instances.

فَلِلَّهِ أَتَعْبُدُ مَحَلَّ آلِهِ رَبِّي

Quran XXXIX:14

Say 'Oh ye My servants who believe! Fear your Lord. Good is the reward for those who do good in this world!

The unambiguous nature of the verses which will later be treated completely illuminates the fact that faith without righteous action or righteous action without faith or piety is simply not sufficient to secure entry into the state known as Heaven. According to the Quran, it is only with the fulfillment of all three conditions — *faith, piety and righteous deeds* — that the state of Heaven and its concomitant rewards can be embraced. A person who has strong and devout faith in God and the Truth but who takes steps in the wrong direction and thus fails to act in a righteous manner is not, to use a very crude term, Heaven material. Likewise, the person who spends his life generously and charitably in the service of humanity but whose faith is not with God and whose objectives have no inter-relationship with religious ideals is in the same category!

Before some of the earlier mentioned verses are studied, it is vital to gain a clearer insight into the true meaning of the oft-repeated words

The word ( *اصلاح* ), derived from the word ( *صلاح* ) which means 'amendment' or 'rectification' and ( *صلاحية* ) which means 'fitness', translated in Persian as ( *نایسته* ) or 'praiseworthy' or 'decent', is also used here in a general sense. thus means 'correct' and proper;

describes any deed or act which is morally correct or righteous based on pure Truth and definite policy and the performance of which can be guaranteed to have an effective and useful result.

For example, the mother who spends many a sleepless night pacing the floorboards in order to feed or pacify her restless baby is performing an act which is both morally correct and totally praiseworthy. Likewise, the man who toils incessantly to home, clothe and feed his family is, providing his means of sustenance is lawfully and religiously permissible, also acting in a correct and commendable manner. He is performing what is called a 'righteous deed'. On the other hand, the parasites of this world who are content to laze around and eat off others while offering no particular service to society or mankind neither 'act' nor 'work'. Furthermore, their behavior is far from 'correct' or 'praiseworthy'. At the extreme end of the scale, theft, murder and the like although 'acts' can hardly be said to possess any moral righteousness!

Where the act of prayer is concerned, the man who prays and bases his prayer on pure faith, complete awareness and concentration, coupled with the sincere intention of self-perfection and spiritual elevation can be said to perform a 'deed of righteousness'. However, the man who simply goes through the motions of prayer without any understanding or

concentration, uttering words which he probably has never taken the time to learn properly, is performing an action which completely lacks real thought or policy and is thus futile and fruitless. This also applies to all other acts of worship which are performed under the same circumstances.

## Piety ( تَقْوَى )<sup>1</sup>

( تَقْوَى ) which generally means piety or virtuousness has a reverse aspect in relation to 'deeds or righteousness' because it is really the restraint and abstention from all 'unrighteousness' acts, evils and carnal temptations. Despite the somewhat passive and neutral exterior of piety, its possessor is required to have an extremely strong and forceful defense against all external provocation. In the long run, the will-power becomes strong and determined, whereby a spiritual wealth that is both active and affirmative is eventually produced.

( تَقْوَى ) itself is taken from the root word ( وَقَايَه ) which means abstention and is the Arabic word for 'brakes'. Thus, the pious man is the one who has all his passions, desires and temptations under strict control. However steep their inclinations may be, the pious person can always apply his spiritual 'brakes' whenever necessary. Piety is thus very much the same as control — and is the counterpart of activity and 'deeds of righteousness'!

It is an obvious fact that any vehicle or moving machine with a powerful engine must also possess an equally powerful stopping-system with which to counteract. In addition, the accelerator and brakes must be in perfect working order and put into use at the right time in collaboration with each other. Naturally, if these conditions do not exist the destination will not be reached at the desired speed nor hope of safety. In the same way, total prosperity cannot be achieved if there is an absence of piety.

<sup>1</sup>Translator's note: and the verbs and nouns connected with the root, signify: a) the fear of God, which, according to the writer of Proverbs (1, 7) in the Old Testament, is the beginning of Wisdom; b) restraint or guarding one's tongue, hand and heart from evil; c) hence righteousness, piety, good conduct. All these ideas are implied; in the translation of Qur'anic materials, only one of these ideas can be indicated, according to the context.

As far as is evident, the three necessary conditions which must be fulfilled in order to understand and achieve the state of Heaven are as follows:

1) **Faith in God** — the sighting of one's aims and the subsequent movement in the direction of the desired objective. In other words, the disciplined organization and orientation (of all the states and attributes that form our existence) towards the Creator.

2) **Deeds of Righteousness** — this phrase is interpreted as morally correct and commendable activity — whether physical or mental. It includes activity which is used to effectuate the whole movement towards the above-mentioned objective. Without the necessary work and action, progress cannot be achieved. Likewise, no kind of material or spiritual acquisitions, edification or perfection can be realized.

3) **Piety** — which is, in its negative sense, the abstention from all kinds of evil and moral misdirection and in its positive sense, the domination of all adverse desires and inclinations, plus the strengthening of willpower and the development of character and morals.

Quite naturally, if any one of these three conditions is missing or in any way defective, the objective will not be achieved. Likewise, the special training and development that should be perfected in man in order to render him worthy and able to contend with a world and existence infinitely more advanced and excellent than this will not be secured.

Those people who contend that the basic motive behind the Prophets and all religion in general is the inducement to good deeds and service to mankind and subsequently do not attach much importance to prayer and other beliefs are sadly and quite seriously mistaken. First of all, good deeds, service to mankind and the abstention from corruption, dishonesty and all other evils require so much hard work, suffering and personal sacrifice that it is absurd to think that anyone without faith, devotion, love and hope could tolerate it. Secondly, service and charity are both relative concepts. Unless there is a definite and genuine aim, then neither can it nor its attributes be defined; nor can its correctness or incorrectness be clearly distinguished from each other. Thirdly, as was deduced, life is merely action and movement while prosperity is the result of the organization, orientation and perfection of the individual along with the final accumulation of all useful and new acquisitions. Thus, if a final and excellent objective (here, faith in God) is lacking and man, constantly taken on to negligence and misdirection by adverse external factors, cannot remain in remembrance and awareness of God or indeed fails to channel and perfect his thoughts and actions with intent to move closer to the final objective, then absolutely no progress can be achieved. The only result will be that his own physical and mental strength will become sapped in his nervous rush for scattered and

uncertain aims. The person who persists in moving with no particular aim, destination or direction in mind can only be likened to a donkey tied to a tree — aimlessly running around and around himself for hours and finally collapsing in a dejected heap at the same place that it started.

Now is an opportune moment to take examine and study some of the Quranic verses which offer promises of Heaven.

The first verses cited below are those in which 'deeds of righteousness' and 'faith' are mentioned together:

وَكَثِيرٍ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي

Quran II:24

But give glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness, that their portion is Gardens, beneath which rivers flow . . .

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يظْلَمُونَ نَبْرًا

Quran IV:123

If any do deeds of righteousness — be they male or female — and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them.

إِلَّا مَنْ نَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يظْلَمُونَ

Quran XIX:61

Except those who repent and believe, and work righteousness, for these will enter the Garden and will not be wronged in the least . . .

أَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْمَأْوَىٰ نُزُلًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Quran XXXII:19

For those who believe and do righteous deeds, are Gardens as hospitable homes, for their good deeds.

Chapters which lean predominately upon ( ) and do not mention action are few. They do not offer the greatest explicitness in this matter. The clearest examples, however, are the ones which follow:

Quran II:97

If they had kept their Faith and guarded themselves from evil, far better had been the reward from their Lord.

Quran XX:133

Enjoin prayer on thy people, and be constant therein. We ask thee not to provide sustenance. We provide it for thee. But (the fruit of) the Hereafter is for Righteousness.

Below is a selection of the Quranic verses which, having expressed the prime importance of 'action', stipulate that faith alone is not sufficient for the spiritual elevation of the believer. Only in conjunction with activity and righteous actions can happiness and prosperity in the Hereafter be achieved:

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلْبُحْرِ أَفْوَرٍ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا

Quran XVII:9

Verily this Quran doth guide to that which is most right (or stable) and giveth the glad tidings to the Believers who work deeds of righteousness, that they shall have a magnificent reward.

وَنِلَّكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي أُورِثْتُمُوهَا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

Quran XLIII:72

Such will be the Garden of which ye are made heirs for your (good) deeds (in life).

وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعَىٰ لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَشْكُورًا

Quran XVII:19

(In one verse alone, effort and exertion are mentioned no less than three times.) It becomes obvious that before fruits of that world can be tasted man must be prepared to face and overcome the difficulties that lie ahead. Without the necessary exertion and struggle, the goal will not be reached. In short, no pains — no gains!

فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْ جُلُودِ رِيَّةٍ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

Quran XVIII:110

Whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness; and, in the ownership of his Lord, admit no one as partner.

So this (لِقَاءِ رَبِّ), this Meeting with God, Union with the Lord, Arrival before the Absolute Perfection or anything else one cares to call it — the ultimate favor and blessing which is totally beyond the imagination and understanding of any human being — can only be achieved in one way. How? Through work and effort and through activity which is proper, praiseworthy and unblemished; in other words, by pure obedience to God and behavior that is in accordance with Truth alone!

This is, in short, the word of the Holy Quran.  
This is the word of the Book of Heaven.  
This is the true meaning of work in Islam.

The most truthful and sincere examples of Quranic teaching were the actual lives of the Prophet and the Imams (PBUT)<sup>1</sup> and the unprecedented dynamism which was evident amongst the members of the Islamic community during the first stages of Islamic expansion — be it during wartime or peace, hardship or ease or any other human state. The Prophet and the Imams who were infinitely active beings and constantly engaged in the struggle against religious infidelity and general oppression, apart from the general ruling and education of their respective communities, can never be accused of living at the expense of others. Having outlawed all personal alms-collecting, they were content with the lawful and respectable professions of shepherding, trading, irrigation and agriculture as a means of subsistence. In addition, numerous transmissions, hadith and other religious laws have been handed down to us from the Prophet and his Household which repeatedly stress the importance of work, involvement and personal exertion. Finally, while forbidding any kind of parasitical behavior, they suggest that the faithful should work righteously, gain righteously and, what is probably most important, ACT righteously.

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<sup>1</sup>Peace be upon Them.

## PART FOUR

### Work In Iran

So far, the Islamic and Quranic view towards the factor of work in human existence and also the stupendous achievements made by the faith's adherents during the religion's infancy have been presented. Indeed, it was the meteoric rise and expansion of Islam over such a short period of time that propelled those under its banner to greater movement, activity and general progress.

Now it is time to see how this extremely generative and influential school of thought was treated in Iran. How deep was Iranian understanding of religion and the Quran? Exactly what have been the effects, if any, of the action and creativity it may or may not have inspired within Iranians?

Apart from natural religious sentiment — especially within the Shi'ite sect — and the original and undeniable spurt of progression that Islam's acceptance triggered off, it is obvious that the growth and expansion of Islam in Iran has been more or less confined to the basically abstract and emotional aspects (ritual prayer and worship, pilgrimage, mourning, etc.) or the comparatively negative characteristics of religious piety (abstention from alcohol, fornication, theft, ritual impurity, etc.). When it comes to "deeds of righteousness" and positive productive activity, the consideration and inclination of the Iranian individual has been exceedingly weak. Indeed, the only real positive and appreciable show of initiative has been in the custom of religious alms-giving and donations. Even then, the real intention of the donator must be examined before any true merit can be attributed to his generosity. In fact, out of what were stated to be the three basic keys to prosperity, and eventually to heaven, only faith and piety have been touched upon — the former, in its abstract sense and the latter in its negative sense. The third key, work and deeds of "righteousness", seems to have been lost or forgotten. Subsequently, people have become like travellers who, having packed their bags, paid their hotel bills and hailed their taxis, simply sit down and refuse to move.

Day after day and night after night people stand before God in prayer and beseech Him to "Guide them to the right path". Yet, as soon as they finish their prayers, they either sleep or go about their business. All the good intentions are forgotten!

## Who Is to Blame?

Maybe now is the most appropriate time to discover whether the fault of man's basic idleness and inactivity lies with themselves or their religion...? As demonstrated, the Quran is quite adamant in its opinion. All of its motivation and emphasis is quite blatantly centered on the importance of work, toil, tenacity and activity. Subsequently, if Iranians are the way they are due to the nature and dictates of Islam, then most certainly this is the result of the initial misinterpretation, corruption and general adulteration which Iranians, acting under the effect of their own personal inclinations and characteristics, inflicted upon Islam in the first place!

It is with the greatest regret and indeed with the utmost courage that man must admit that the Iranian, regardless of time, place or social position, has always given work the cold shoulder — and even today runs away from its responsibilities.

## The Role of Work in Iran

Basically, the role of work in Iran has never really exceeded the level that it attained during the ages of servitude and agriculture. Apart from the inclination to imitate their Western counterparts and the superficial effects that their relationship with them has had in their individual and social lives, work and activity is still considered below the dignity of the more respected and financially comfortable individuals of Iranian society. This becomes obvious in basic formalities such as job selection where the basic and necessary qualities of the prospective candidate — such as work experience, general meritability, potential and sense of responsibility — are hardly ever taken into consideration. Instead, firstly his social standing and financial position are closely scrutinized, followed by his degree of sociability and *savoir-vivre*.

As social history has shown, those who make up the 'cream' of Iranian society have never had any great relish or inclination for work and activity. Be it the spiritual classes or the nobility, the landowners or the merchants, the teachers or the intellectuals — the Iranian upper strata has always been content to sit back in comfort while those in their service — the overseers, foremen, servants, apprentices, etc. — bear the brunt of all jobs and duties.

In fact, such basic qualities as punctuality, efficiency and even the simplest decision making have always been, and still are, regarded with the greatest disdain as virtues which are both pointless and outdated. On the other hand, even to this day, the Iranian's ever-revered pride and joy is his world-renowned gift for poetry and polemics, his almost religiously celebrated fame for wit, brilliance and discourse while his tendency towards extreme verbosity is second to none.

As mentioned before, this general lack of responsibility has not been confined to one certain section of society; the guilt must be shared by all. Firstly, the so-called 'learned' men and philosophers, responsible for producing and effecting all the long awaited plans of 'reform' that one hears about constantly, have never really played any role in the administration of national affairs. The apparently 'faithful' and 'pious' members of society have never had any real personal involvement with the immediate problems and needs of the people they claim so much to be 'concerned' about. The priests and theologians — the spiritual and religious guides who are responsible for the correct interpretation and protection of Islamic belief — have apparently forgotten what religion is really all about. Consequently, they have always concentrated their attention on the comparatively superficial aspects of worship such as prayer ablutions and the like; for them the hadith:

**Mohammad (PBUH):**

**If one has ended the day and hasn't thought of the welfare of his society or not made any attempt, he is not a Muslim.**

may never have existed. The students, the generation upon which the future of Iran is to have its foundations, always seem to have had some aversion towards the more vital and practical scientific subjects of the day and are content to specialize in the traditionally more pedantic fields such as grammar, logic and philosophy — or if they are very courageous — mathematics and astronomy. The merchants, likewise, having satisfied their most urgent and personal needs, hand over their books and accounts to their clerks, while the landowner's cultivation and development plans were always entrusted to the village chiefs or tenants.

The positioned Iranian, if reasonably good or pious, would undertake long, extended pilgrimages, leading a life of devotion which entails spending hours and hours tucked away in bed reading Saadi and Hafez. On the other hand, if he lacked piety, his excess of free-time would be devoted to other material pleasures such as gambling, alcohol and hashish — and more recently, the inclination towards the 'great, civilized West'!

In short, each individual group has successfully wriggled out of the responsibility of work and responsibility. By merely possessing name and status, man has contented itself with the most comfortable and inactive kinds of "activity" possible.

## Work – Past and Present

One hundred and twenty-three years before the Iranian Constitution, Seyyed Jamal-od-Din Asadabadi dispatched a letter to Haji Mastan Daghestani in which he had written:

“Our learned men of Iran are blessed with great skill and distinction in politics and the art of discourse. Unfortunately, they do not apply their knowledge in practice. If they used a mere one percent of the strength and skill for action instead of words, then from the point of view of power, prestige, opulence and advancement, Iran’s place on the field of the world’s greatest nations would be secured.”

Unfortunately, we today are only too aware of this fact, yet incessantly cover up for ourselves with futile excuses.

So, the Constitution came and brought about great external changes in Iran and its people. Subsequently, as relations with Europe and America became firmly established, Iran’s view and horizons “widened” considerably.

If the pre-Constitutional Iranian is considered, be he pious or atheist, educated or illiterate, it is obvious that all personal opinions concerning life and the world in general were very much as one. Basically, man upheld the general belief that all men are bound to a definite, pre-planned destiny, controlled by something generally known as ‘fate’. Furthermore, the poets talked incessantly of a world full of evil and trickery where each man was controlled and manipulated by powers simply beyond his control. Subsequently, each individual considered himself ineffective and uninstrumental in his own personal situation — be it one of prosperity or desperation.

Likewise, from the moment that Iranians supposedly became “intellectual” all “world-embracing”, all erstwhile notions of predestination and Divine intervention were abandoned. Instead, they looked towards foreign counterparts and their political ideals for dependence and inspiration, until there came a time when anything and everything that happened in Iran was immediately related to the great “abroad”. Subsequently, anything that was attempted for the good of Iranian people or Iran was considered futile and ineffective; apparently the only factor that really mattered in Iranian affairs was the ‘foreign’ one. As a result, not only did Iranians lose their sense of initiative and responsibility, but provided themselves with an excellent excuse for general indifference and inactivity.

In Europe, any particularly important event has usually brought about dramatic changes in work — with the accent usually on increased activity and production. For instance, when the capitalist and bourgeois governments were in power, it was then downtrodden working class which was always put under pressure and reminded of its position as the basic means of productivity. When the socialists and

communists came to power, offering special concessions and incentives to workers and introducing various 5 and 7 year plans with intent to raise both production and the standard of living, all social classes were invited and encouraged to work; the accent was on equality and co-operation more than ever before. As a result, general activity was dramatically speeded up and thus improved. Compare the two political extremes — communist Russia and Capitalist America. The peoples of both nations work like well-oiled and efficient machines; indeed so hard that things like tea-breaks and lunch-hours are almost completely forgotten. In viewing the Nazi and Fascist regimes that sprouted up before the Second World War, the picture becomes even more work-orientated. Under their rule, absolutely everyone’s belt was tightened. Rations, rest and relaxation were kept to a minimum; young and old were employed for the benefit of the country in vast projects of production and development, the likes of which had never been seen before. Their greatest national pride was the multiplication and expansion of factories and industrial concerns. If their activity in peace time was great, in time of war it was even greater. Even after the fighting ended and they stood defeated, the effort, hard work and determination with which they rebuilt their devastated lands and industries was, to say the least, stupefying — a prime example of a nation whose aims and ideals were based on work and unlimited activity.

However, when considering, the picture changes quite dramatically. It seems that any major political, social or economic event that has come to light, whether favorable or detrimental, is simply another excuse for laziness and Iranian’s now habitual escape from work and responsibility.

If Iranians happen to be wealthy, they participate in recreation and self-indulgence. Most of their time is spent in pursuit of futile pleasures and excesses. On the other hand, if Iranians are poor, their first instinct is to wail and weep over their misfortunes, use despair and poverty as an excuse for physical and spiritual stagnation and eventually brandish the begging bowl in search of help and sympathy. If despotism happens to be the order of the day and everyone is out for his own personal power and profit, then again the way is paved for exemption from duty and general irresponsibility in matters of work and industry. Yet again, if freedom and equality is the name of the game and everyone flocks to the support of the worker, the simple outcome is that the latter becomes extremely spoiled and unruly; once again work is given the cold shoulder.

In short, whether viewed as was done years ago when everything was referred to the Quran for documentary support, or today, now that Iranians are pure imitators of their Western counterparts and in their own eyes thoroughly ‘modern’, work is still the same. It can almost be likened to the unassuming lamb who is inevitably killed, cooked and eaten — be the occasion a wedding or a funeral!

## Prayer: A Means of Inactivity

Prayer, in all of its forms, is one of Man's basic human instincts. It is one of the most distinguished customs of all religions. In the Holy Quran, prayer has been most explicitly enjoined. In fact, abstention from this apparently simple and basic act is severely reprimanded and considered tantamount to infidelity and even polytheism. The Shi'ite sect, in particular, contains a multitude of the most beautiful and magnificent prayers handed down to man from the Prophet and the chaste Imams; their very existence is not only one of the greatest glories of the Shi'ite faith, but perhaps the most striking example of the authenticity of Shiism itself. It is with this in mind that heads are bowed in prayer; yet, unfortunately, people foster the unyielding opinion that prayer alone is sufficient, and that God, according to

أَنْ نَجِيبَ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَبَكَيْفَ السُّوءِ

Quran XXVII:62

Is not He (best) Who answereth. The wronged one when he crieth unto Him and removeth the evil.

will grant man every wish, whatever happens. Consequently, the natural tendency is then to think that since this provides man with an easier and more convenient solution to all problems and difficulties, it would be somewhat absurd to do things the hard way and ease one's pains and hardships from hard work and pure effort. So man takes what is assumed as the short-cut, and relies on prayer and prayer alone. However, this assumption ignores one basic point — if man's prayers are to be answered and his wishes granted, then it is only logical that the prayers of the Prophet and the Imams should be answered first in the same way. Yet, when looking at the military career of the Prophet and the various wars, such as Badr or A'had, that he fought against the infidels at what were more often than not innumerable odds, one sees that he planned his battles, arranged his troops, and along with his men handled his weapons with such brilliant courage and expertise, that it is almost impossible to believe that God or prayer was the sole factor in his victories.

The verse XXVII:62 is read and used as an excuse behind the sole recourse to prayer as opposed to work and activity; yet when such definite and explicit verses as these Quranic verses and others of their kind are read, man overlooks it without a second thought.

If man accepts the wealth of valid and reliable prayers handed down to him from the Ahl-e-Bait<sup>1</sup>, then he can also be sure of the authenticity of the Hadith which reads: "God will not heal the sick man who refuses to see a doctor and relies for a remedy on prayer and prayer alone."

<sup>1</sup>Prophet's family.

وَأَنْ لَيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى

Quran LIII:39

And that man hath only that for which he maketh effort.

وَلَا تَكِبُّ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا بِهَا وَلَا زُرُّ وَزَرَ أُخْرَى

Quran VI:164

Each soul only earneth only on its own account, nor doth any laden bear another's load.

لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ

Quran XIV:51

That Allah may repay each soul what it had earned.

وَلَوْلَا دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

Quran II:251

And if Allah had not repelled some men by the others the earth would have been corrupted.

## The Young Generation

As already stated, idleness and meaningless talk are not features which can be solely attributed to the elders and middle-aged members of the community. Among the younger generation and the so-called intellectuals of modern day society, "all talk and not enough action" seems to be the maxim by which most of its members abide. Moreover, verbosity and the pre-occupation with futile and completely unproductive pastimes are generally their most distinguishable characteristics.

For example, the favorite recreation of the 'modern Iranian' is his apparently simple 'daily constitutional'; although that is exactly how they describe it, it consists, in actual fact, or roaming the streets idly for hour after hour without any particular aim or plan in mind. Take one glimpse at the crowded streets of Tehran or any other provincial town. The picture is quite dramatic — thousands upon thousands of people, wandering endlessly with apparently nothing to do and nowhere to go. The whole affair is treated with an enthusiasm and seriousness which is quite fascinating to watch! The street is the common meeting place for all and sundry; surely no other country in the world can boast of such a phenomenon — at least not on the scale found in Iran. On the work scene, offices and business organizations are generally underworked, overstaffed and more often than not, completely devoid of centralization.



Those employees who do work (they are very much in the minority) are generally unorganized and inefficient. In most places, three or four people are entrusted with work that could probably be done by one individual in half the time. Meetings, councils and commissions which are set up merely provide a good opportunity for more idle-talk and long-windedness; serious discussion is discarded in favor of discourse which is both pointless and irrelevant and frequently sprinkled with distasteful jokes and witty repartee. These are the distinguishable and prominent features of the 'new generation' — all of which are impossible to deny.

Not surprisingly, Iranian women are much worse in this respect than the men. Years ago, even if most of their time was spent in futile and typically Iranian pastimes\*, they also found adequate time to complete their housework and everyday chores, plus the wants and needs of the family. In fact, it was customary for a newly married woman to be assigned a whole set of duties; since she was under the watchful eye of the bridegroom's family, they were usually accomplished with greatest care and efficiency. Today, however, things are quite different! The majority of young women believe their principal duty is to be 'chic' and 'civilized', the first steps towards which are, general negligence and slovenliness in work and domestic matters and indifference to husband, children and family duties.

The second step begins with the most exclusively feminine penchant for romantic novels, glossy magazines and films, the inclination towards fashion and beauty and finally with flirting, indiscriminate courtship and, eventually, sexual immodesty, adultery and unfaithfulness.

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\*backchatting, spending hours on end in the bath-house, etc.

## Our Militants

Now the topic will move on from the blatantly unproductive, apathetic and characterless elements of society, and turn to those more sensitive and respectable individuals who campaign for change, reform and liberation. However, if we take a closer look at their institutions and organizations, whether political, charitable or otherwise, one sees that the driving force behind them, like behind all others, is merely the intense desire to gain entry and acceptance into general society. They take part in various discussions and meetings. From the opening speech to the final conclusion, they make their presence felt quite forcefully. On matters with which they disagree, they waste no time in vehemently expressing their thoughts and opinions. Their verbal attacks and fiery protests often rock and shock the proceedings; they are never afraid of speaking their minds. When delegates and representatives are to be chosen for this and that, they are only too willing to offer their services; the ardour and zeal with which they volunteer is a joy to watch. However, when the meeting is over, all the discussions and negotiations which have been treated with such apparent enthusiasm are forgotten and any duties or instructions that may have been issued are very conveniently disregarded. Notes or reports of the meeting are rarely ever made. The whole gist of the discussions are usually forgotten. So on and so forth until the next meeting, when the same is repeated. As far as the actual meeting itself is concerned, any basic judgments and conclusions which are reached are usually done so by accident rather than through any serious deliberation, skill or sense of judgment on behalf of those participating. The general misguided presumption is that by simply gathering around a conference table and talking at great length in no particular direction, occasionally mentioning one or two relevant points, the affairs of the state and the country in general will right itself. If someone dares to stand up and declare that the first priority in the struggle for a better society is the education of the working man and that in all great national plans and programs, it is the people who must take charge or that the only way the country can be strong and capable of handling its own affairs is through sincere co-operation in all areas — be it business, cultural, charitable, religious or even recreational, then he instantly becomes the target for ridicule. The majority simply ignore him. Their only real wish is to talk politics — and foreign politics at that — while all consideration for internal issues disappears.

As already pointed out, Iranian cultural and educational institutions are no exception. It can be safely admitted that the schools and universities produce a great deal more social loafers than they do sensible, educated people.

## Imitation

Imitation, which is blatant inactivity and the constant and conscious avoidance of all kinds of mental and physical exertion, is a disease which



has, over a long period of time, grown to tremendous and frightening proportions. Nevertheless, no one seems to have noticed its hideousness or the detrimental and far-reaching effects it has. The existence of imitation simply means that initiative and all sense of research and discovery are all too willingly cast aside. In their place, dependence on others is substituted as an acceptable and sometimes even extollable ideal — again, without anyone realizing its basic erroneousness and the shame that it creates. If only people could open their minds to the reality of the matter, they would clearly see that imitation not only is the very basis of parasitism but also the source of man's unwilling subjection to humiliation, need and obligation. Furthermore, it is the major factor behind the gradual destruction of all human character and happiness.

Exactly, what difference does it make if one, having no work or profession, personally begs for food and clothes from his immediate neighbors or if all people, as a nation, having abandoned all their thoughts, initiative and self-reliance, beg from and depend upon the foreign counterparts for help in bettering our own life situation? Indeed, the second state is far, far worse!

The man who cannot act on his own initiative and refuses to make the necessary effort involved in securing his own wants or needs, or the man who will not rise in search of the solution to his problems and difficulties and shirks all personal responsibilities is like the merchant who does not abide by his part of the bargain, pocketing the first installment and then withholding the promised goods from the buyer. With imitation and dependence as his motto, he is a man comparable only with the very lowest of parasitic animals — like the fly who lives and feeds upon the cast-offs and excrement of others.

## Where Does the Fault Lie?

The above question is posed again so one must determine whether the fault lies — with Islam or Iran itself? Islam incites and encourages man to act and behave in a way completely opposite to that which man actually does. Thus, if Islam is responsible for general backwardness, misfortune and inactivity, it is, hence “*وانسى الله هوبه*”, due to the blatant corruption and adulteration that people have brought about in Islam as a result of interpreting it according to their own personal habits and idiosyncrasies. Just like the idol-worshippers of old, people come to follow and hold sacred that which suits them and which they have created. Secondly, it has been made quite clear that this tendency towards laziness and the evasion of work and activity has not been solely confined to those in society who uphold religious beliefs; the trend has been a general one.

## Quran XLV:23

**Hast thou seen him who maketh his desire his God, and Allah sendeth him astray purposely, and sealeth up his hearing and his heart and setteth on his sight a covering? Then who will lead him after Allah? Will ye not then heed?**

So we pose the question again — and ask, if it is the fault of Iranians then exactly from whom and where does it stem? No such situation can develop by pure chance or as a result of some freak joke on behalf of fate or nature. It is obvious that every visible effect has an initial cause — and in this case, it is an undeniable fact that the natural geographical and climatic conditions of Iran have played a basic and very important role.

For example, in some regions of Iran, there is such an overwhelming abundance of bounty and natural resources that hardwork is virtually obliterated; consequently, laziness and self-indulgence have become the order of the day. Previously, in places such as Gilan and Mazanderan, the very slightest amount of hard work and activity in an area which was naturally lush and productive meant overwhelming superfluity — be it of fish, timber or agricultural produce which was naturally provided without any need for irrigation, compost or manual labor. Everyone had complete and unrestricted access to anything he needed. Thus, inexpensiveness was rife and hard work was hardly a dominant factor in the area's material success. At the other end of the scale, when the vast desert area of Iran (the greater part of the country) is considered, one sees that the intense aridity and the difficulties which arise from it render any plans and programs fruitless. As a result, work and inactivity is simply not a viable proposition.

Having considered the two extremes, the areas of Iran where the weather is relatively moderate and which are in habitable and suitable for work and activity will be discussed. Here again, fresh obstacles are encountered. As seen, the main profession and greatest strength and pride of most Iranians has, throughout history, been in farming and agriculture. Unfortunately, however, Iranian agronomy has always been marred and aggravated by natural obstacles such as drought, plague and general insecurity — events which were to a great extent unforeseeable and totally beyond human control. On the other hand, had the droughts and plagues not occurred and had the amount of rainfall and other climatic conditions been favorable, then again the superfluity of produce would have been totally out of proportion. In time, the Iranian farmer and agriculturist came to believe that however hard-working or apathetic he was, or however extensive or limited his plans and policies were, he himself had very little effect on the final outcome of his efforts, and that his livelihood was almost totally in the hands of external factors. There have been innumerable times when the industrious,

perservering farmer has religiously dug and ploughed his land, given it adequate water and compost and tended it with the greatest of loving care — only to watch all his work and belongings perish under swarms of locusts or June-bugs. Likewise, there have been years when the farmer has sat idle and left his fields and gardens in the hands of God — and almost miraculously, the heat, rain and cold have all played their respective roles at the right time, and at the end of the year provided the farmer with a rich and bountiful harvest.

In the towns, cities and in the country as a whole, continual insecurity, weakness of government and administrative powers and the general mistrust of the establishment as a whole have usually been the strongest factors in the creation of spiritual despair and hopelessness — both of which lead to indifference and apathy in matters of work and activity. Even in the periods when chaos and anarchy had been quelled and security and centralization of sorts has been established, the ruling powers have been of a despotic nature; and thus a dark, choking and inauspicious shadow has fallen over the land. Naturally, the advent of totalitarianism and despotic, individual power also brings with it all kinds of corruption and injustice, thus blotting out any rights, prestige or dignity that man may feel he possesses. Eventually, the ordinary man sees that he is deprived of all rights and freedoms, ineffective and uninstrumental in his affairs and future, and surrounded by a society that is devoid of any economic or legal stability. His becomes a society where his fate is in the hands of others. The only viable way to survival is by finding access to the corridors of power, be it through servility, sycophancy or any other humiliating and soul-destroying means. As a result, all personal initiative and talent become choked, and it becomes painfully obvious that any struggle for social change and development becomes an absurd waste of time and effort. Subsequently, man's only aim is to please his masters and those above him. In this way, servility, self-depreciation and parasitism become widespread and customary. If a stable government, based on sincere co-operation plus a sense of responsibility among the people themselves were to exist in Iran — that is, if Iranians themselves created such conditions — then the people of Iran would finally gain a little self-respect and eventually, having realized their own value, would gradually become socialized! As a result, all of their repressed strengths and capabilities would once more become apparent and eventually, more developed. Then and only then, would they rely solely on work and initiative. Naturally, people should not make the same mistakes of modernists or the Old School and consider themselves ineffective or above reproach, nor pin the blame of their wretchedness on fate, freaks of nature, politics or the government.

What things or people are there in the world that can claim to not have enemies or hostile factors which work against them? Likewise, which great change or transformation is there which can take place without toil, trouble and personal sacrifice? All these natural or political factors

which seems to be acting against people can, if they really desire it, be maneuvered in such a way as to become the very cause of their activity, prosperity and success. Whatever takes place must be desired and initiated by them alone. People must, according to Quranic text<sup>1</sup> realize that they too are instrumental in their own affairs and destinies and that with sincere, correct faith and complete abstention from any kind of egotism and corruption, their aim must be one of work and activity. Only in this way can all the obstacles that block our path be conquered — be they natural, man-made, internal or external.

## What Can Be Done?

If one is in agreement with the above principles, then the question, 'What can be done?', must be answered. However, there is no easy answer and obviously no short cuts to a solution — unless, the Quranic term is cited again and therefore maintained that the only way out is through 'deeds of righteousness'. These are deeds which are morally correct, carried out with complete awareness and in accordance with the Truth and God. Moreover, they are deeds which most befit the situation and its requirements.

As an individual working within the confines of society, each Muslim must realize that it is his imperative duty to abstain from all kinds of apathy, indifference and idle-talk. Furthermore, he should pride himself only in his work and effort, keeping in mind that this is the only key to freedom and eventual redemption. For thousands of years recited poems and told tales of old have been recited. Now it is time for Muslims to do some hard work! It is time to realize exactly how valuable work is and learn to respect its place in human society. Whether one is young or old, rich or poor, educated or illiterate, merchant or laborer, judge or minister, he must work, and work, and work! If one is an adult, he should accept the responsibility of earning his own daily bread — and if necessary, that of his dependents. If one is young and still in school, he should strive to be the very best in the class. If one is a businessman or laborer, the high quality of his work should serve as an example to others. If one's job is in the office, his only care should be for his work; one's time should be spent usefully and efficiently. If one is financially well-off and leads an easy, tranquil existence, instead of wasting his life with corrupt and worldly entertainments and activities, his day should be spent in service, charity, research and production.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَتَّعِبُ مَا تَعْمَلُونَ  
مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ

Quran XIII:11

Lo Allah changeth not the condition of a folk until they (first) change that which is in their heart.

In short, it is imperative for everyone, regardless of his social status and position, to consider himself bound by duty to the greatest possible amount of work and physical, mental and material effort. Everyone must be aware that work and work alone opens the door to salvation and that without work, everything else is sheer absurdity. Hard work also has its own spiritual reward in the Hereafter. However, it is its social aspect which is presently more basic and urgent. After all, it is one of the major pre-requisites for prosperity and liberation in this world. In addition it must be understood that reclusion and individualism can only prove detrimental to the common aim. Any self-centeredness and wish to keep the wolf from one's door and one's door alone is just not good enough. It is vital that Muslims, by mutualizing their personal assets, interests and activities as far as possible and regardless of the type of activity, form and organize societies, unions, companies and social groups. In short, they must acquaint themselves with the rules and requirements of a shared, communal existence and society where, in order to facilitate advancement — whether cultural or political, welfare or religious — even sport or recreation — the thoughts, intentions, suggestions and assistance of each and everyone are joined together with the same goal in mind. Naturally, there will be hardships and setbacks but together and united, Muslims can overcome them and strive forward. Naturally, their united strength and chance of success will then multiply. In addition, by sharing and combining their assets, by socializing and becoming a part of life, Muslims may also become real **PEOPLE!**

## BY PROFESSOR MEHDI BAZARGAN

1. Love And Worship-Human Thermodynamics
2. Work In Islam
3. Believing In God And Contemporary Thoughts
4. Industrial Thermodynamics
5. Hygiene In Islam
6. Worshipping God Or The Self
7. Ali And Islam
8. The Call Of The Prophet (PBUH)
9. Religion In Europe
10. The Pros And Cons In Faith
11. The Causes Of The Decadence Of Muslims
12. The Effectiveness Of Society
13. The Unique, Universal Government
14. A Social And Universal Muslim
15. The Inevitable Victory
16. Prayer
17. Memories Of Hajj
18. The House Of People
19. Revelation
20. The Freedom Of India
21. The Human Being And God
22. Pragmatism And Islam
23. God In Society
24. Islam, The Dynamic Religion
25. Motives And Motivators
26. The Relationship Of Religion And Politics
27. Islam, The Dynamic And Productive School
28. Rain And Wind In The Quran
29. Atmospheric Phenomenons
30. Mission And Ideology
31. Effort And Reliance
32. Why We Oppose A Dictatorship
33. Defense In The Military Court
34. Is Marxism Scientific?
35. Mission And Evolution
36. Self-Action
37. The Completed Path
38. Loving Or Reasoning
39. Free-Will
40. A Search Of Erich Fromm's Theory