

ISLAM AND MARXISM IN ALI SHARIATI'S THOUGHTS

Ahmad Nabil Amir^{1*} & Tasnim Abdul Rahman²

¹International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, Bukit Tunku
50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

²Faculty of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Sultan Zainal Abidin University,
Gong Badak Campus, Kuala Nerus 21300, Terengganu, Malaysia

*nabiller2002@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper discusses Ali Shariati's thinking and his intellectual background as an activist and catalyst for the rise and revolutionary consciousness of Iranian society that set in motion the Islamic revolution and its socio-political changes in 1979. The study is focused on his writings on Marxism. The method used in this study is a literature review with a conceptual and historical approach to text interpretation. The study's findings show the power of the dialectic formulated by Shariati in expressing the humanism and mysticism of Islam and its metaphysical views that reject the deviant views of atheism, communism, materialism and Marxism. His impressive political idealism emphasizes the moral and socio-religious strength of Islam in upholding the universal values of equality and principles of humanity and its spirit of liberation over the depravity and weakness of Marxist theory and its fundamental weakness in the moral and practical order.

Keywords: *Ali Shariati; Marxism; criticism; Islam*

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the background and influence of Ali Shariati's (1933-1977) thinking in the modern world, especially his criticism of Marxist philosophy and Western secular currents. It highlights the dialectical formulation

of his discursive philosophy and tradition and his dynamic political principles and aspirations that have sparked a massive wave of popular awakening and awareness. Most of his ideas were conveyed at Husayniyah-i Irsyad, the Center of Religious Studies in Tehran during the most creative period of his life, where he discussed and developed his theories on the sociocultural and historical history of Islam and organized meetings and lectures with a dense audience. In his lecture, he also threw out the idea of organic intellectuals or *raushanfikir* which has attracted nearly tens of thousands of people and inspired an aggressive and widespread revolution of thinking and intellectuals. This awareness is mobilized among thousands of its supporters and followers who have drawn far-reaching influence and impact in the political, religious, social, and economic struggle in Iran and colored its current of thought and intellectual awareness.

Ali Shariati is known as one of the main thinkers and heroes of the Iranian revolution, the architect and important driving force of the struggle of the Marhein, proletariat and intellectuals who have exerted a significant and revolutionary influence in the ideology and history of modern thought. Stimulated by the oppressive and repressive political situation, social chaos and oppression of the subordinate people oppressed by the tyrannical government apparatus, Shariati has made important history in the political revolution he triggered. The inflamed political violence detonated a wave of massive uprisings and mass protests that sparked the Iranian revolution in 1979. With his revolutionary struggles and resistance, he is considered the father of the Iranian Islamic revolution, its main ideologue and ideal intellectual baseman.

His thinking offers an alternative to philosophy and worldview that brings cultural, social, moral, religious sociology, history and ethics idealism that “clears up the twists and turns of Western philosophical development” (Nataatmadja, 1985), but with the baggage of history that comes into contact with the practical socio-culture and ideology of the East. The intellectual and thoughtful questions he dealt with highlight sustainable philosophy and social ideas in a philosophy of

thought that has “given birth to a new era in Islamic thought” and ushered in its modern history. Shariati's social ideals have given rise to a dynamic consciousness in the current of modernism in Iran. His struggle has laid a solid foundation on Islam's values and aspirations from a historical, sociological and humanist framework (Adress, 2023), which reveals the context of his struggle in spearheading the rise of the Third World and its liberation from colonial clutches. Shariati has inspired an integral understanding that compromises between reason and science, *fiqh* and *nash* and expresses *manhaj* and the value of thought and *ijtihad*.

According to Fazlur Rahman, Shariati was a modern thinker who aroused the spirit of the people to oppose foreign domination of his state. He sought to uphold Islam with new and appropriate methods based on historical sociological approaches to understanding the Qur'an. Meanwhile, Mongol Bayat concluded that the most enduring result of Shariati's struggle was his efforts to express a new, dynamic, and inspiring concept of Islam from a frozen concept to a formidable revolutionary political ideology (Saifullah, 2002: 70). Thus, this paper seeks to explore Shariati's ideals about the contestation of ideas, especially the clash between Islam and Marxism and its implications in historical development and social transformation. It highlights the impact of the philosophy and ideology of thought he initiated that has inspired political reform and revolution.

METHOD

This paper is based on a qualitative study using the literature research method with historical and biographical approaches. The primary and secondary sources of Shariati's works and other were analyzed descriptively, analytically and comparatively to formulate the final findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biography and Historical Background

Ali Shariati (born on November 23, 1933) was born in an important century that saw the rise of Islamic movements and consciousness around the world. Growing up in Kahak, Mazinan, one of the inland districts of Mashhad, Iran, in the northeast of Khurasan, he spent his primary and secondary education on the outskirts of Sabzevar, Mashhad located on the edge of the Kavir desert (Algar, 2001: 9). He was trained at *the Kanun-e Nashr-e Haqayeq-e Islami* (Islamic Truth Broadcasting Center) founded by his father in 1320, which taught logic and science and later began translating Arabic texts into Persian (Abedi, 1986). His father, Muhammad Taqi Shariati, was a well-known scholar and interpreter who had emigrated to the city since the age of 20. During his years of study at the Teacher Training School, Shariati came into contact with a group of young people who emerged from the lower economic class (*mustad'afin*). This acquaintance has led him to feel the effects of the hardships endured and the heavy burden of life in Iran, which triggered his political commitment to bring about change (*islah*).

Shariati was an Iranian intellectual and critic during the regime of Reza Shah Pahlavi. He developed a new perspective on Islamic history and sociology and delivered a series of valuable lectures in Tehran that laid the foundation for the Iranian revolution in 1979. He received his religious education from the beginning from his father before becoming a lecturer on campus. Later he studied at Mashhad University, where he earned degrees in Arabic and French. Shariati was active in politics as a student and was detained for eight months, at the age of 23 for her involvement with the *Nehzat-e Moqayemat-e Melli* (national resistance movement) on the side of the ousted Mosaddeq, against the Pahlavi regime (Ummah, 2020), which was backed by the United States. He a Ph.D in sociology from the Sorbonne University-Paris. In Paris, it joined the Iranian Student

Assembly, an external branch of the Iranian National Front, and mobilized student demonstrations and protests on the side of Algerian nationalist and revolutionary movements. Shariati also edited two journals: *Iran Azad*, the National Front newspaper in Europe, and *Nameh-i Pars*, the monthly magazine of the Iranian Student Assembly in France.

Shariati co-translated Che Guevara's *Guerilla Warfare*, and Jean-Paul Sartre's *What Is Poetry?* and began the translation of Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* and *Year Five of the Algerian Revolution* (Ervand Abrahamian 1989: 107). His travels to France have found him with Frantz Fanon, Gures Gurevich, Henry Bergson, Albert Camus, Louis Massignon, Jean-Paul Satre, French sociologists, and other Western scholars, engaged in intense dialogue (Azra 2002:210) and became rebel claimants from Iran.

Shariati was greatly influenced by his experience in Paris. Upon his return to Iran, he was imprisoned for six months in 1964. After his independence, he taught at Mashhad University, where his on-campus lectures and popularity seemed to threaten the government. He then left for Tehran, helping to establish the Husayniya-yi Irshad Institute (Center of Religious Studies) with Murtadha Mutahhari in 1969. In the following years, Shariati wrote and lectured on Islamic history and sociology and criticized the regime of the time, Marxism, and Iranian intellectuals, as well as conservative scholars. He was imprisoned again in 1972 for 18 months and later placed under house arrest.

After being imprisoned repeatedly for his subversive activism, Shariati was finally released by Shah Pahlevi on 20 May 1975 due to international protests and pressure with specific conditions that he could not teach, publish, or hold meetings, either publicly or privately. Shariati rejected all these conditions and chose to emigrate to England. However, it was not long before he was found a martyr under mysterious circumstances, which is believed to have been masterminded by Savak's intelligence agents on June 19, 1977. He was buried in Damascus, next to the tomb of Hazrat Zaynab (rad).

The teachings of Shariati are considered to have laid the foundation for the Iranian revolution which had a great influence on Iranian youth. His lectures attacked the tyranny of the Shah and the policy of indoctrination and modernization, which he said damaged Iranian religion and culture and detached society from the bonds of social and religious traditions leading to cultural isolation (Norfarahani, 2023). He called on the people to return to the revolutionary and true Shi'a. It believes that Shi'a Islam itself is a force for social justice and progress but has been corrupted through its institutions by the political apparatus.

His intellectual background formed the ideological foundation and understanding of revolutionary radicalism and protest and has given birth to impressive ideas in modern thought. The spark of his thinking has attracted the attention of many Western thinkers and philosophers to his intelligence, such as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), a French philosopher and developer of a Western existential theorist who said: "I have no religion, but if given a choice, I would (choose) to adhere to the Shariati religion". In his brief introduction to Shariati's work, *On the Sociology of Religion*, Hamid Algar writes of his humanist soul: "Consciousness, sensitivity, clarity of thought, consistency of spirit and strength of dhamir are great human qualities that he (Shariati) finds himself sharing with 'Ayn al-Qudat" (Algar, 1979).

Shariati's struggle expresses idealism and a fundamental spirit of change, in response to questions of socialism, democracy and secularism, which embraces its intrinsic and rational understanding, as formulated by Ahmad Wahib on the ideas of reform driven in Indonesia: "the ideas of socialism and democracy... must be accepted as the main theme of the struggle of Muslims as well as as a concrete formulation of the teachings... The Qur'an. He put forward this thought as the realization of an open mental attitude towards the peaks of human thought about social problems, wherever the ideas or ideas come from, just as Muslims have

opened their attitude to the work of Westerners in the field of natural problems (science and technology)." (Wahib, 1981: 82).

As an Islamic sociologist, Shariati was impressed by social values and mysticism according to which "mysticism, along with equality and independence, are the three principles of the ideal human being" (Shariati, 1992). This dimension of spirituality and social resistance has been formed since the Mashhad, where the young Shariati translated the book *Kashf al-Ghita'* and the biography of Abu Dhar by Abd al-Hamid Jawdah al-Sahhar. His biography of Abu Dhar portrays him as the prototype of a socialist warrior: a revolutionary who opposed poverty, capitalism, feudalism, racism and dictatorship, and who is considered a source of inspiration for all revolutionary movements around the world, especially in the Middle East (Dabashi, 2011: 53). His enthusiasm for political issues prompted him to join a pro-Mosaddeq dissident group, which led to his detention for 8 months.

In his work, he tries to unravel the problems of the ummah from a holistic view of Islamic ideology. According to his perspective, religion as an ideology is:

"a belief that is consciously chosen to answer the needs that arise and solve problems in society. Ideology is needed to direct a society or nation in achieving ideals and a vehicle for struggle. Ideology was chosen to fundamentally change and overhaul the status quo." (Shariati, Islamshinasi, Vol. 1, p. 47).

According to Shariati, the ideas he put forward were not thought out definitively and should be continued and criticized, as stated in his book: "who does not believe that what I say is already the final truth; what I propose now may be curated or perfected tomorrow" (Shariati, 2001: 10).

Shariati produced prolific works covering a wide range of themes and subjects such as history, sociology of religion, his criticism of Marxist ideology, philosophy, monotheism, biography, prophetic vision and its spiritual impact, religious and political relations, and so on. Shariati's vision of society and liberation theology is largely derived from the ideas and thoughts of Western

philosophers. This view is presented in his *magnum opus* such as *Man and Islam* (a compilation of series of Shariati lectures), *Fatima is Fatima* (a compilation of Shariati lectures on the roles and responsibilities of Muslim women according to the life of Fatima al-Zahra r.a.), *School of Thought and Action*, *Hajj Reflections on its Rituals*, *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies: An Islamic Critique* (which criticizes the sect and understanding of Marxism and its comparison with Islamic ideology as a philosophy of human liberation), and the *Sociology of Islam* which has its social bearing today, and in the history of humanity.

His writings have had an impact and influence on the development of philosophical ideas and thought that have triggered an unprecedented political revolution (Faizal et al., 2021). The radical reform ideology he outlined meant opposing the Shah's repressive autocratic regime and restricting people's freedoms, where, according to him, "in the age of ignorance, consciousness itself is a crime."

He defended human freedom and the glory of human beings (*karamah insan*) that overcame angels and emphasized the superiority of his two-dimensional nature on the mundane and ukhrawi sides that inspired balanced social action, as discussed in his book *Man and Islam*:

"the fruits of the prophet's training are Ali, Abuzar and Salman. These are among the very few two-dimensional human beings in the world. These were men of politics and war, who struggled for a better existence. They spent a lifetime on the battlefields, military training, scientific inquiry and discussion. They were also virtuous on par with the monks and theologians of the East. Today, with the information available on his meditation on God, Abuzar is the best guide to knowing the Qur'an. A look at the prophet's companions indicates that all were just, sensitive warriors, and constructive individuals who were concerned with building a better society and establishing justice."

This statement is reinforced in his other work *On the Sociology of Islam*;

"He is a man whose philosophical thought does not make inattentive to the fate of mankind, and whose involvement in politics does not lead to

demagoguery and fame-seeking. Science has not deprived him of the taste of faith, and faith has not paralyzed his power of thought and logical deduction".

In his writings on the philosophy and theology of divinity, Shariati describes the basic principles of monotheism as outlined in his work *The Hajj*: "Tawhid as a world view . . . means regarding the whole universe as a unity, instead of dividing it into this world and the here-after . . . spirit and body" (Shariati, 2000). According to him, the true awareness of monotheism has impressive implications and influences in forming a balanced outlook on life that connects worldly and ukhrawi, spirit and body in complete unity. The principle of monotheism embraces the fundamental meaning of unity and is the embodiment of the spirit of Islamic brotherhood that gives birth to a deep sense of social responsibility, and an authentic awareness of the supreme truth: "and as far as I know, in terms of practical and conceptual views, the most important pillars of Islamic doctrine that have awakened the consciousness of the ummah and made them feel aware, independent, honorable and able to shoulder social responsibilities are: tawhid, jihad, and hajj" (Shariati, 2000).

The Hajj is an extraordinary and revolutionary work that brings Shariati's arguments on hajj and formulates the legal idealism and the underlying sharia goals (*maqasid al-shari'ah*) and highlights a complete understanding of its *fiqh*, not only in terms of perfecting the pillars and conditions for achieving the hajj mabrur *wa sa'y masykur*, but the impression born from the hajj and its profound essence and significant impact on the ummah. In introducing this work, Shariati mentioned:

"What have I personally learned from Hajj – that made me so "dwarf" and Hajj so "big" in that sense? How far and what can I respond to from this experience? The following pages are the result of my small effort to answer this question. My purpose is not to inform the reader what to do when performing the hajj. This can be obtained by referring to the books of fiqh and worship. On the other hand, I would like to share with you my perception of the importance of Hajj. It should help you understand why it is obligatory

for Muslims to perform this task, or at least arouse your enthusiasm to think about Hajj."

He re-revealed the secrets of Hajj as revealed by al-Ghazali in *Ihya' Ulumuddin* and Malcolm X in his autobiographical account of the beauty of Islam that he witnessed while performing *wukuf* in Mina. *The Hajj* recorded the experience of the spirit of Shariati in the Holy Land which raised important themes around its philosophy, the symbolism of miqat, the allegorical (figurative) aspect of the Kaaba, tawaf, intention, traveler, bai'ah, *hajar al-aswad*, maqam Ibrahim, *sa'i*, the field of Arafah, *ayyam al-tasyriq*, Mina, the victim, the three idols, the devil, *'id al-adha*, the human friendship and the caliph of God, which he expressed as the ideal man.

The meaning is to interpret the idealism and philosophy of the *hajj* and explain the glory of the *haram* months, Zulhijjah and Zulqaedah, and reveal the spirit underlying its essence and *fadilat* and *maqasid* and emphasize the need to strengthen unity and work on the strength of the ummah in celebrating the diversity of ideas and madhhab.

The main theme he raised was about the unity of the *ummah*, as expressed in the first paragraph of the book's introduction:

"Every year, Muslims from all over the world are encouraged to participate in this great 'show' (*hajj*). Everyone is considered equal. There is no discrimination based on race, gender, or social status. According to the teachings of Islam, all are one and one is all. Someone who saves someone's life, has saved the life of all and someone who kills someone's soul, has killed all."

The importance of the intellect is a significant theme that Shariati strives for, which reveals the concept of organic intellectuals (*rausyanfikir*) (Norfarahani, 2020). The concept is related to the role of the brightest intellectuals as pioneering agents in the promotion of political awareness and leadership. This idea refers to a group of intellectuals and scholars in various fields of science (*mutafannin*) who

exert their power and ability to think about societal problems propose solutions and jump into the middle of the arena to explore and break the general deadlock.

According to him, this revolutionary consciousness cannot be mobilized from the masses because people are only stuck with their daily routines. Thus there must be an organic intellectual who can mobilize the strength to realize social change and aspirations, acting as a "social prophet" where: "in principle, the responsibility and the rule of contemporary enlightened souls of the world resembles that of the prophets and the founders of the great religions – revolutionary leaders who promoted fundamental structural changes in the past. Prophets are not in the same category as philosophers, scientists, technicians, or artists. The prophets often emerged from among the masses and were able to communicate with the masses to introduce new mottoes, project new vision, start new movements and beget new energies in the conscience of the people of their time and place" (Shariati, 1986: 5).

He expressed the importance of bringing idealism and suppressed voices, opposing tyranny and injustice, and driving significant change, as alluded to in his book *What is to be Done* (1986) about the 'enlightened soul' (*raushanfikir*). Where do we start?, Shariati writes: "What is an enlightened soul? In short, an enlightened soul is someone who is self-aware of the "human condition" of his time, his historical and social background, and his awareness is inevitable and gives him a sense of social responsibility."

His writings also highlight the vision of the struggle of the modernist figure and Islamic poet, the late Sir Muhammad Iqbal, the spiritual father and founder of the modern Islamic state of Pakistan, who inspired the struggle against colonial and tyrannical colonialism and oppression, and led the pursuit of liberation and enlightenment in the Islamic world:

"If one were to reconstruct the form of Islam which has been made to degenerate in the course of history, re-assemble it in such a way that the spirit could return to a total body, transform the present dazed elements into that spirit as if the trumpet of Israfil were to blow in the 20th century over a dead

society and awaken its movement, power, spirit and meaning, it is, then that exemplary Muslim personalities will be reconstructed and reborn like Muhammad Iqbal" (Shariati, 1991).

Iqbal's spirit of reform and awareness of monotheism and his true spirit have inspired and inspired the struggle of Shariati (Tariq, 2013: 335). In his book "*Iqbal: Manifestation of the Islamic Spirit*" Shariati formulates the thoughts and works of Muhammad Iqbal; about self-reconstruction, his views on the Eastern and Western worlds, his ideology and views of nature. He deeply explored the ideas and themes of his thoughts about the life of this world, destiny, humanity, and God. This book brings a different perspective on Muhammad Iqbal written by Sayyid Ali Khamenei (Iqbal: The Poet-Philosophist of the Islamic Revival) and Ali Shariati (Iqbal: The Manifestation of the Spirit of Islam) and the influence of his life and works on the Islamic world of the 20th century. In his research, Shariati shows how Iqbal, through his philosophical ideas, mystical poems, and political activism, has brought about a reconstruction of thought for the rise and renewal of Islam and provided an understanding of how to fulfill our religious life in the modern context.

His religious thinking is featured in his book *Religion vs Religion* which contains two lectures delivered by Shariati at the Husayniyah Center in Tehran on August 12 and 13, 1970, on religion that has two faces, the 'religion of revolution' and the 'religion of legitimacy'. The first is a religion that works to overcome differences in class and economic status, while the second is a religion that legitimizes and perpetuates those differences. It presents the most remarkable thesis, that throughout history, religions have been at war against religions and not supposedly against non-religions. Namely, monotheism, the religion of the belief that God is One, the religion brought by the Prophet Ibrahim called *din al-hanif*, the 'upright religion', has continuously, throughout history, had to fight against religions that deny the existence of One God or believe that there is no God (*kufir*, *kafir*, *mulhid*) or against religions that believe that there are many gods

(*shirk*, polytheism, multitheism), the latter is said to have branched out into idolatry.

In contrast to some socialists who draw religious lines as proponents of class divisions, and non-religious, who overcome these divisions, Shari'ati places the dividing lines within religion itself. From his point of view, it is thus not religion itself that needs to be rejected as the 'opium of the people,' but it is only one kind of religion, while 'religion as legitimacy,' is true and remains unscathed. This is where Shariati departs from Marxism.

Religion vs Religion, awakened religious and prophetic-like awareness, bringing thousands of youth back to religion and faith in God. Shariati clearly outlines and points out the distinguishing mark that distinguishes the divine-followed religion manifested throughout history in the 'priesthood functions' of, right and false, and the divine-derived religion and its 'prophetic functions' in distinguishing between right and falsehood and then calling the ummah to action. He formulated a religion that inspires effective, universal and humanist social action. In his analogy of the struggle between *haq* and *batil*, Shariati symbolically depicts it from the ritual of throwing the three *jamrahs* – which symbolizes the symbolic ritual of opposition and rejection of the three types of idols of the world: Pharaoh who symbolizes tyranny and oppression, Bal'am who symbolizes hypocrisy and Qarun who symbolizes capitalism – i.e. opposition to the "social trinity", from the oppression of Pharaoh (power). Bal'am (religion), and Qarun (wealth) are mentioned in the Qur'ān and the depravity of Qabil. Shariati explains the importance of throwing these idols with seven stones, seven times, which symbolizes the number of days of creation, seven heavens and seven days of the week: "It implies an eternal struggle that begins at the beginning of creation and continues to the hereafter; battlefields without a ceasefire; and the absence of a peaceful relationship (compromise) with any idols".

Tradition and Philosophy

"If religion does not work before death, it certainly will not work after it" - Ali Shariati.

In the traditional line of thought, conventional Islamic philosophers are more supportive of the reform philosophy put forward by Imam al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyah than exploring Shariati thought which is considered to be more "clearing up the twists and turns of the development of Western philosophy", and this is what Dr. Ir. Hidayat Nataatmadja responded to in his introduction to the book *Islamic Thought (Al-Fikr al-Islam fi Tatawwurihi)* by Muhammad Al-Bahiy:

"If we read the works of Ali Shariati, we immediately see that his thoughts have a Western image, although, of course, they carry the aspirations of Islam like other Islamic philosophers."... "I think, if Al-Bahiy had read the books by Ali Shariati or my books, he would have concluded that they are not Islamic philosophy. But many Muslims realize that there will be more people who understand the works of Ali Shariati better than the works of Al-Ghazali or Ibn Taymiyah" (Hidayat Nataatmadja, 1985: 4)

Perhaps because of this, Shariati is not highlighted as a pioneer of philosophy but as the ideologist of revolt (Azra, 2002: 70) like Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab and Shaykh Muhammad Abduh. Yet, with his genuine thinking and bold views, he exposed and displayed fresh concepts of Islamic sociology and outlined the phenomenal ideologies of thought that had pioneered the rise of science and philosophy and "gave birth to a new era in Islamic thought."

Shariati's thought was heavily influenced by his studies of Western philosophy and ideology. His work is thick with socialist ideas that influence his thought which contains all the ideological links incorporated from the philosophies of Hegel, Khomeini, and Marxism, which are formulated in the packaging of religious languages and their secularization processes.

The consequences of this impressive analysis are far-reaching, right from his title as the architect of Iran's Islamic Revolution, in his attempt to bridge the two forces that have rocked the world since the Second World War, socialist ideology and, Islamic fundamentalism. The line drawn by Shariati binds these two

movements together: true Islam, according to Shariati, is true socialism, and true socialism is true Islam. This is the kind of slogan where thousands of people have been prepared to die and for that thousands of people have died and that is the Shariati impact on Iran and the Muslim world in general.

Criticism of Marxism

Conventional wisdom about the Iranian Revolution that erupted in 1979 often forgets the contributions of Ali Shariati, the revolution's main ideologue. Shariati draws inspiration from outside as well as from within Islam: from Western sociology – especially Marxist sociology – apart from Muslim theology; from Third World theorists – especially Frantz Fanon – and also from the earliest Shi'a martyrs. Shariati devoted her life to synthesizing modern socialism with traditional Shi'a and adapting the revolutionary theories of Marx, Fanon and other Iranian thinkers to her contemporary environment in Iran (Ervand Abrahamian, 1982).

The issues he handles cover a wide range of concerns. As a sociologist, he is interested in the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, between ideas with social forces, and between human consciousness and existence. He was also committed to understanding the birth and growth of bureaucratization, and hence the eventual decay of revolutionary movements, especially radical religions. He was accused of being an "Islamic Marxist" who brought a foreign ideology that refuted the prevailing doctrine and the authority of the conservatives (Abrahamian, 1982). Shariati's works were heavily influenced by the political ideology of Third-worldism that she encountered as a student in Paris – the idea that revolution and class struggle would create a just and classless society.

In his book *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies: An Islamic Critique* (1996), Shariati provides his criticism and commentary on the traditions and philosophies of the West and the East as a whole. He highlights the ideas of capitalism, existentialism and Marxism and their comparison with the spiritual-

humanistic ideas and moral values of the religious outlook and the meaningful essence of humanity. His emphasis is on the roots of Marxism in materialism, the affairs of production, and other important aspects of religion, bourgeois liberalism and existentialism and its opposition to Islam, which shows the richness of his analysis of Islamic philosophy and the breadth of its spiritual dimension.

He criticizes the dogmatic Marxist ideology, following the framework of the deterministic "dialectic of materialism", which opposes religion to create its socialist and communist agenda and the transition of the global order, and its inability to delve into mystical and spiritual matters. His interpretation is supported by a universal Islamic insight that refutes Marx's orthodoxy (its materialist-historical theory) by supporting his progressive spirit and socialist ideas to answer socio-political challenges in the context of a society in which "man becomes an economic beast" without binding moral values. He also expounds the ideas and currents that emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries from the theories of communism and Marxism-Leninism that deny the spiritual dimension of human beings, based on the Islamic concept of development and its modern socio-economic outlook.

Shariati attacked Iran's economic system, especially its welfare policy, which allowed the capitalists and the super-rich to unload their wealth and then hand over their crumbs as gifts to the poor. It argues that welfare should be replaced by a just social system, based on a different economic policy, which is based on Islam "The Islamic economic system should not allow [the capitalists] to accumulate wealth" (Dabashi, 2006: 142).

In modern Iranian society, the social norm rejects the oppression that often results from the government's pro-capitalist attitude, instead fighting for the ideology of Marhaenism that breathes Marxism and is adapted to the culture of Iranian society. The main ideas in Shariati's thought thrown out in his lectures in the 1950s, 60s and 70s at the University of Mashhad and Husainiyah-I Irsyad, Tehran is not much different from Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: "The

philosopher only interprets the world, in various ways; the point is to change it" (Kanaaneh, 2021: 45).

While Shariati bases his arguments mostly on Marxist tools and analysis, he attempts to align it (and other Western philosophies) with Islam and to emphasize the metaphysical basis of his worldview. He formulated his theory of tawhid to merge Existential-Marxism and Islam as an ideology of total action and a living worldview that he believed in, rather than the static religion of the clerics (Kanaaneh, 2021: 45). Shariati emphasized that to defeat capitalism and imperialism, one must become an organic intellectual and attract society to its side. He appealed to those who yearn for change to uphold a socialist, revolutionary ideology that would liberate Muslims along with the entire human race. Shariati defends that the Shia faith should be renewed and transformed into a comprehensive revolutionary religion (Kanaaneh, 2021: 46).

In his substantive discussion of liberation theology, Shariati has provided meaningful enlightenment on his philosophy of religion and social interpretation in which she interprets the Qur'an and Islam in a modern and socialist sense, describing the prophets as the leaders of the weak and oppressed around the world. His emphasis on Marx's dialectical materialism and the basis of capitalism is drawn from his classical arguments and discursive traditions, as expressed in his book *Islamology*:

"It is not enough to say we must return to Islam. We must determine which Islam: Islam that is nuanced by Abu Dzarr or Islam nuanced by Marwan the ruler. Both are called Islamic, but there are striking differences between them. One is the Islam of the caliphs, the palace and the government. The other is the Islam of the marhein, the oppressed, and the poor".

Shariati's strong egalitarian tendencies and his constant critique of class inequality made him a socialist thinker and a leftist ideologue where according to him: "there is no too strict barrier between the two groups of the lower and the upper. The composition of each group can change, no matter how small, but the interaction between them still occurs" (Azra, 2002: 236). Shariati even

emphasized that Marxism has borrowed many of its principles from Islam and not the other way around. For example, he often points out that ascetic revolution is not something that modern Muslims learn from Marxists, 'it is Marxists who have learned it from Islam' (Dabashi, 2006: 141).

However, for him, socialism is not only a mode of production but a way of life. He was critical of state socialism that worshipped figures, parties, and states and proposed "humanist socialism". According to him, the legitimacy of the state comes from public rationality and the collective will of the people. For him, freedom and social justice must be complemented by modern spirituality. Its trinity of freedom, equality, and spirituality is a new contribution to the idea of "alternative modernity" and the face of post-modern civilization.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Shariati's thoughts on Marxism highlight the mystical and spiritual aspects of Islam traced from the framework of religious thought, his deep knowledge of philosophy, and the foundations of Eastern mysticism, as well as the height of Western social science understanding. As an Iranian philosopher and activist, his thinking reflects many revolutionary aspects of the Islamic school of thought and tradition and its opposition to Marxism. This is formulated in the context of the discussion of monotheism and the religious-humanistic concept that it introduced to uphold the purity of Islamic beliefs and ideologies and its cultural and civilizational heritage. His legacy of thought contributed to the deconstruction of Marxist thought and the materialistic ideology of the West and the establishment of its sect and dialectical philosophy. He succeeded in developing a dynamic socio-religious understanding of spiritual and humanistic values and rejecting the decadent and misguided forms of materialism of Marxist teachings. He advocated a third way between two depraved extremes, Marxism-Stalinism admired by Iranian intellectuals and young people and conservative Islam understood by mullahs, in which Shariati thought found basic commonalities with

other contemporary reformisms including Islamic liberalism and its historical dialectic. His insights have a message for the contemporary Muslim world that is relevant to today's developments and its relationship to the understanding and values of humanism and modernity in Eastern and Western traditions.

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