

RELIGIOUS SOCIALISM: THE CROSS-POLLINATION OF ISLAMIC SPIRITUALITY AND WESTERN SOCIALISM IN "LIBERATION THEOLOGY" OF DR. ALI SHARI'ATI'S THOUGHT

PENYERBUKAN SILANG ANTARA SPIRITUALITAS ISLAM DAN SOSIALISME BARAT DALAM PEMIKIRAN "TEOLOGI PEMBEBASAN" DR. ALI SHARI'ATI

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Abstract:

At the beginning of the XIX century, the world's people entered a new phase of life. But this era gave birth to a more complex and "expensive" social face. The industry is a main form that inundates the community's yard. The spirit of individualism creates a quasi-binary opposition. Strong-weak, rich-poor. One by one, various ideologies emerged as the antithesis of Capitalism, from socialism-communism to democratic socialism. Then came the new idea of the renaissance of religious socialism. Religious socialism has been born since the prophets were sent as caliphs on earth. Learning from the history of the struggle of the saints who sought to liberate the oppressed, religious socialism tries to pave the way for an alternative solution, the fourth path. Ali Shari'ati first used this paradigm when he strongly criticized the two great ideological empires, socialism and capitalism. According to Shari'ati, socialism in Islam can be functionalized into a central view of life philosophy of bringing people to make social changes. In terms of international politics, Ali Shari'ati's Religious Socialism was more closely associated with the political constructs that were taking place in Iran at the time. By using a qualitative approach and making his scattered works and thoughts and expert analysis related to his thoughts the sources in this article.

Keywords: *Ideology, Capitalism, Socialism, Islam, Revolution.*



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Abstrak:

Di awal abad ke-19, masyarakat dunia memasuki babak baru kehidupan. Namun era ini melahirkan wajah sosial yang lebih kompleks dan “mahal”. Industri merupakan bentuk utama yang menggenangi pekerjaan masyarakat. Semangat individualisme menciptakan kuasi-biner oposisi. Kuat-lemah, kaya-miskin. Satu persatu berbagai ideologi muncul sebagai antitesis Kapitalisme, mulai dari sosialisme-komunisme hingga sosialisme demokratik. Kemudian muncul ide baru tentang renaissance sosialisme religius. Sosialisme keagamaan telah lahir sejak para nabi diutus sebagai khalifah di muka bumi. Belajar dari sejarah perjuangan para wali yang berusaha membebaskan kaum tertindas, sosialisme religius mencoba membuka jalan bagi solusi alternatif, jalan keempat. Ali Syari'ati pertama kali menggunakan paradigma ini ketika mengkritik keras dua imperium ideologi besar, sosialisme dan kapitalisme. Menurut Syari'ati, sosialisme dalam Islam dapat difungsikan menjadi pandangan sentral falsafah hidup yang membawa manusia melakukan perubahan sosial. Dalam politik internasional, Sosialisme Keagamaan Ali Syari'ati lebih erat kaitannya dengan konstruksi politik yang sedang berlangsung di Iran saat itu. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan menjadikan karaya-karaya serta pemikirannya yang tersebar dan Analisa para ahli terkait pemikirannya menjadi sumber dalam artikel ini.

Kata kunci: *Ideologi, Kapitalisme, Sosialisme, Islam, Revolusi.*

A. Introduction

Talking about Ali Shari'ati in the context of Iranian politics is not an easy matter. He stood with the increasingly widespread acts of colonialization by using religious instruments as a justification, but on the other hand, he was fully involved and dissolved in his spiritual and intellectual journeys to produce fresh new ideas to change the tragic conditions that Iran was experiencing at that time. All the anxiety that Shari'ati feels is very easy for us to identify because it is in line with the concerns of all elements of society from various other parts of the world. The Third World – or in a colloquial language it is called the East – now stands as a theatrical stage presenting cultural repertoire drama performances with a set of settings and costumes made in the West in front of all European citizens. Through this cultural repertoire, the imagination of European society was formed with an assumption that the Western world is an advanced, sophisticated, and civilized culture, while the East is the opposite, lagging, backward, or even disgusting. This view gave birth to a construction of thought that later dichotomized between the Western and non-Western worlds. In one stroke, the West has mastered almost all elements, originality, and essence of the East, so that in the end the Eastern world has lost its own identity imperceptibly.



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Shari'ati saw this as an effect of the narrowness of Eastern thought and Liberality in responding to Western neo-Imperialism clad in Capitalism. Whether we realize it or not, capitalism has created a dependent social formation so that all historical details of the economic and political developments of underdeveloped countries are controlled exploitatively by advanced capitalist countries. Because of this exploitation, these small countries were forced to accept westernization and allow their original cultural adaptations to erode or even disappear from their own beliefs.

Concerning the above-mentioned unrest, in the Third World countries there is now a growing spirit of resistance which is mostly born from below, especially among ordinary people. With the support of fighters and intellectuals, this people's power moves organizationally vis a vis the great Western powers. This struggle never ends, despite the fact that it always takes casualties. Meanwhile, in the Islamic world, a mass movement emerged wrapped in the format "Political Islam" as a form of protest and the spirit of the Revival of Islam in international forums. This phenomenon was originally only in the form of thoughts and ideas raised by intellectuals without any realization, but in 1979 the Iranian Islamic Revolution awakened Western awareness that power bases backed by religious groups had risen.

This process of Western anti-Hegemonic interaction takes place systematically and simultaneously. Scholars and intellectuals who have been on opposite sides have begun to unify their opinion – apart from elements of *fiqhiyah* – that standing up against the *dhalim* is obligatory for every believing Muslim. And Shari'ati was one of the figures who dared to speak out loud and outspokenly against Western domination in the Third World, especially Islam.

The secular Western educational background he obtained did not bring up feelings of love and reciprocity towards the West. He even felt that with what he had obtained in the West he had to transform it for the people who were struggling to liberate their homeland from the clutches of misleading ideology. Even when his ideas clashed with the *fatwas* of the majority of Shia scholars, he never stopped speaking and fighting. Even when he had to get the title "Islamic Marxist" from these scholars.



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In general, Shari'ati's thought tended to be "left", even radical. He was indeed very interested in Karl Marx's concepts of Inter-class Exploitation. Because he believes this also happened in the early history of Islam, as happened to Qabil and Habil, Adam's two favorite sons. But if it is said that Shari'ati was "very Marxist", of course, this cannot be justified. Marxism in various conditions rejects the existence of God, but Shari'ati as a follower of the Twelve Imams Shia (Shia *Imamiyah*) firmly believes in God's role, influence, as well as "interference" in various human existences in the world. In the following period, Shari'ati instead carried out a "marriage" between the analysis of Marxism and the revolutionary ideology of Shia Islam. He first compared the teachings of Marx himself with early Islamic thoughts, especially those related to the spirit of anti-colonialism. The joining of these two rational and revolutionary thinking forces eventually gave birth to loud protests against monarchical and secular imperialism as well as the existence of the religious institution itself. This is what then led to sharp and strong opposition from the clergy. However, the process of Shari'ati's journey in shouting out his ideology of Islamic socialism is always interesting to study, especially when it is associated with the struggle of the Iranian people to overthrow the corrupt and dirty regime of the Shah.

Religious Socialism itself was born because, in each of his lectures, Shari'ati usually used the social theories of Marx, Feurbach, and Sartre which were then juxtaposed with Islamic concepts contained in the *Qur'anul Karim*, *Al-Hadith*, as well as the life history and opinions of *Ahlul-Bayt*, and companions such as Salman Al Farisi, Ibn Abbas, and Abu Dzar El Ghiffari. Shari'ati will systematically filter all existing theories to then form the basis for a plan to form a society that is "the best of the people".

In a different context, the concept of "socialism" used by Shari'ati is indeed interesting to study. The question that arose then was why Shari'ati did not use other paradigms that were quite common at that time, such as communism, liberalism, or even Islam itself. If we look at it from a historical point of view, maybe we can understand it. Because Ali Shari'ati lived in a country and era where all aspects of culture, customs, and thought were distorted and degenerated due to colonialism and tyrannical government. And of course, the thinking that developed a lot at that time as the antithesis was socialism. Furthermore, Shari'ati's education at the Sorbonne University in France exposed him to radical thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre,



Louis Massignon, Alexis Carrel, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Frantz Rafka,

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Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, and Frans Fanon, the figure who sparked the Algerian Revolution.

In this case, Shari'ati's suitability with the concept of Marxism was more because he agreed with Marx's thinking about the exploitation of those "colonized" (the ruled), in which Marx explained in detail the existence of the laws of historical (historical) determinism – not economic determinism- function as well as how the superstructure in any country, especially countries with dominant ideologies and their political organizations interact with the socio-economic infrastructure. Shari'ati, on the other hand, firmly rejected the spiritual emptiness of socialism. According to him, the main factor that made one of these great "ideological empires" collapses was the result of being away from the presence of God. Therefore, in each of his critical actions and lectures, Shari'ati always associated them with sociological, historical, philosophical, and theological elements of Islam. Most of these "religious" instruments were influenced by the revolutionary spirit of the Shia school of thought which they adhered to. To all of his students, Shari'ati mentioned that Shi'ah Ali or Red Shi'ah were originally from the Prophet Muhammad, not Shi'ah Safawi or Black Shi'ah belonging to the Shahs who always lied on behalf of *Ahlul-Bayt* and distorted religious teachings.

What then became even more interesting was that Ali Shari'ati was able to unequivocally formulate Islam and socialism in one line, without having to get caught up in the dysfunctions that he usually criticized. Shari'ati seems very apt at analyzing the problems that occur in the Third World – including the Islamic World – through the lens of socialism. It seems that this was indeed one of Shari'ati's efforts to Islamize Marxism, the ideology he had admired so far. During this period Shari'ati appeared in many roles. As a *mujahid*-intellectual, an ideologue with *Ulil Albab* characteristics, a humanist-religious thinker, and a socialist islamist.

B. Method

By using a qualitative approach and making his scattered works and thoughts and expert analysis related to his thoughts the sources in this article. In this short article, the author attempts to examine Ali Shari'ati's socialist thinking in an outline. Where it is sufficiently distinct from Western Socialism. However, there are many similarities that in the end this socialism is also equated with other Western Socialisms. Shari'ati's version of socialism has



indeed become his unique frame of mind in response to the "dirty" and authoritarian patterns of Shah Reza Pahlevi's government. On one occasion,

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however, he used it to criticize the Islamic clergy establishment and Iranian society's Shia religious system, which, according to Shari'ati, paid little attention to Islamic history and civilization studies. This is a unique revolutionary paradigm because it can simultaneously respond to and criticize the two major components that occurred in Iran's Islamic society at that time. And it is this socialism that has attracted and moved millions of young Iranians to take to the streets to demonstrate against the Shah.

C. Result and Discussion

1. Background and Intellectuality of Dr. Ali Shari'ati

a. The Roots of Family Religiosity Heritage

Ali Shari'ati was born in the village of Mazinan, Khorasan district, Iran, on November 24, 1933, into a family of respected religious scholars. As the first child of Muhammad Taqi Shari'ati and Zahra, Shari'ati received an abundant education and a strong intellectual tradition. Under the tutelage of his father, with an abundant library of approximately 2,000 book collections, Shari'ati's personality grew and developed.

Shari'ati's complexities had been prominent since he was a child. When he first entered the private Ibn Yamin school in 1941, he already exhibited two mutually reinforcing behaviors. He is a quiet figure, naughty, unruly, but diligent. He is a loner he has almost lost contact with the outside world.¹

He is also famous for being lazy when dealing with textbooks at school. During his school days, when all of his friends were playing, Shari'ati preferred to be alone while reading literary books such as Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*. This love of reading continued into his teens. Since his first year in high school, he has intensely devoured books on literature, poetry, philosophy, social studies, and religious studies. He studied a lot and got inspiration from the works of Saddeq-e Hedayat, a well-known Iranian novelist who is a nihilist; Akhavan-e Saless, a renowned Iranian contemporary poet; Nima Yousheej, the father of modern Iranian poetry; and Maurice Maeterlinck, a Belgian writer whose works combine mysticism with symbolism.

¹ Muhiddin M. Dahlan, "Membaca Haji Dengan Cara yang Tak Biasa", Foreword to Ali Shari'ati's book, *Menjadi Manusia Haji* (Yogyakarta: Mujadalah, 2003), p.6.



Shari'ati was well aware that his interest in philosophy arose from a line from Maeterlinck which reads: "when we blow out the candle, where does the candle flame go?".²

His father, Muhammad Taqi Shari'ati was a scholar who mastered the science of interpretation. Unlike other conventional clerics who prefer to live in urban centers such as Tehran, Qum, or Najaf, he remains in his hometown, Mazinan, Khurasan. Even there he took off his "kemullah" turban and founded the Center for the Spread of Islamic Truth (Markaz Nasyr Ar-haqa'iq Al-Islamiyah) in the 1940s. Then in the middle of the decade, he also formed a branch of a short-lived organization called Nehzat-I Khodaparastan-I Sosiyalist (God Worshipping Socialist Movement). Even in the early 1950s Taqi Shari'ati enthusiastically supported the National Front under the leadership of Muhammad Mossadeg and actively facilitated discussions that were routinely held at his house to dissect the ideas of modern thinkers –especially from Arab socialists – and including the thoughts of leading historians Iran, Akhmad Khasravi. It is not surprising then that throughout his life he was often called by the Mashhad scholars a "Sunni, Wahhabi, even a follower of Babism."³

From his father, Ali Shari'ati inherited the spirit of search and freedom. For Shari'ati, his father was The Real Rausyan Fekr, the truly enlightened and liberated intellectual. His father was a "true teacher" who became an invaluable "treasury".⁴

In 1955, at the age of 22, Shari'ati, who at that time was in the final year of Higher Education School, succeeded in translating the biography of Abu Dzar Al Ghiffary, written by Abdul Hamid Judar, from Arabic to Persian. His prowess in understanding various sciences made him quickly popular among Mashhad University students. However, the influence of his broad mind also affected Shari'ati's psychological condition. He was dragged into the dualism of belief which almost drove him crazy. In winter in a place called Estakhr-e Koohsangi, because he was too wrapped up in the idea of an existence without God, a lonely and isolated world, and an empty and dark life, he tried to commit suicide. That night was the culmination of his acute crisis of faith. Fortunately, he was quickly "rescued" by Jalaluddin Rumi through

² Ali Rahnama, "Pioneers of Islamic Revival", in Ali Shari'ati, *Islam Mazhab Pemikiran dan Aksi*, penterj. M.S Nasrulloh dan Afif Muhammad, (Jakarta: Penerbit Mizan, 1995), p. xiv.

³ Ervand Abrahamian, "Ali Shari'ati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution", in E. Burke III & Ira Lupidus (ed.), *Islam, Politics, and Social Movement*, (Berkeley: 1988), p. 289-290.

⁴ Azyumardi Azra, *op.cit.*, p. 77.



his magnum opus, *Mastnawi*. According to Shari'ati, if Western philosophy brings confusion and anxiety, then in Sufism it finds peace and joy. The spiritual repository of the eternal philosophies of the Eastern world left an indelible mystical impression on young Shari'ati. He would later mention mysticism, along with equality and freedom, as the three main historical guests and fundamental dimensions of the human ideal.⁵

At the end of 1955, Shari'ati enrolled at the newly inaugurated Faculty of Literature at Masyhad University. During college, even though he often faced administrative problems due to his official job as a full-time teacher, Shari'ati still received the highest grades in academic scores in every subject he took. It was also on this campus that he met Puran-e Syariat Razavi, who later married him.⁶

Because of his extraordinary academic achievements, Shari'ati finally won a scholarship to continue his studies abroad. In April 1959, he left for Paris to sit as a student at Sorbonne University. It was while in France that Shari'ati came into contact with enlightening new works and ideas, which greatly influenced his outlook on life and insights about the world. He studied various kinds of schools, both social and philosophical. He met and even had personal relationships with philosophers, scholars, and writers of the caliber of Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Henry Bergson, sociologists such as Ghorvitz, Jean Berck, and prominent orientalist Louise Massignon.⁷ As well as figures driving the Revolution such as Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, and Giap.

b. Abu Dzar al-Ghifari, the "Spiritual Father" of Dr. Ali Shari'ati

Abu Dzar al-Ghifari's real name is Jundad Ibn Junadah, he comes from one of the Bedouin Arab tribes named Ghifar. Abu Dzar was one of the first companions to embrace Islam. During his lifetime he was known as an ascetic and a loyal follower of Imam Ali and his family. When Rasulullah SAW was still alive, Abu Dzar was always by his side to always accompany and be a pillar in the preaching of Rasulullah SAW.

⁵ Ali Rahnama, "Pioneers of Islamic Revival" , in Ali Shari'ati, *Islam Mazhab Pemikiran dan Aksi*, trans. MS Nasrulloh and Afif Muhammad, (Jakarta: Penerbit Mizan, 1995), p. xvi.

⁶ Ali Shari'ati, *Kemuliaan Mati Syahid*, trans. Dede Azwar Nurmansyah, (Jakarta: Pustaka Zahra, 2003), p. 16.

⁷ Dr. Ghulam 'Abbas Tawasulli, "Sepintas Tentang Ali Syari'ati", Foreword in Ali Shari'ati, *Humanisme Antara Islam dan Mazhab Barat*, trans. Afif Muhammad, (Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah, 1996), p. 19.



For Shari'ati, the figure of Abu Dzar was the main figure who succeeded in "returning" him to Islam, after previously he had struggled with radical Marxist principles. Within Abu Dzar is stored a figure full of simple but has a great passion to uphold the banner of Islam above the structure of society. His life which was so destitute went on smoothly because of his sanctity from the "black" influence of corrupt Islamic leaders. Abu Dzar is often referred to by Shari'ati as one of the originators of Islamic Socialism, even in one of his writings Shari'ati refers to him as a "God Worshipping Socialist". It was this figure that later inspired Shari'ati to continue to explore transcendental and fundamental values in Islam, where he later found that a socialistic character actually existed and was deeply rooted in the life of Rasulullah SAW and his friends who were loyal to Islam. Shari'ati firmly believes that it was Islam that first introduced the socialist lifestyle (in Islamic language, *zuhud*), especially concerning populist leadership patterns.

One of Abu Dzar's words that always guided Shari'ati in reconstructing Shah's government was "the capital, wealth, gold and silver that you have hoarded must be distributed fairly among all Muslims. Everyone must get his share in other people's luck, in the Islamic economic and ethical system, in all the graces of life!". This remark became the basis for Shari'ati to shout about the need for wealth distribution for the weak and needy.⁸

According to Shari'ati, history has so far only sided with the circles of luxurious palaces, on the arenas of bloody battles, and the threshold of the magnificent temples of wars. History has never tried to trace the great people who are covered behind poverty and deprivation. History has never been willing to visit the old, rickety houses, the residences of slaves from African lands to the huts of people who have no name or throne, the tents of those who walked barefoot in the Arabian desert, to non-aristocrats, such as Abu Dzar, a man from the Ghifar tribe, Salman from the land of Iran who is homeless, and Bilal, a slave, who is sold at a low price. Whereas for Shari'ati it was these people who laid the main foundations of the Islamic empire.

⁸ Ali Shari'ati, *Abu Dzar Suara Parau Menentang Penindasan*, (Bandung: Mutahhari Paperbacks, 2002), p. 7.



Glory and splendor were indeed able to carve names like Genghis Khan, Caesar, and Napoleon, but it was not easy to give highlights to personalities like Jundad Ibn Junadah to become Abu Dzar al-Ghifari, Salman al-Farisi, Bilal bin Rabbah and Amar bin Yasir.

2. The Global Situation Faced by Dr. Ali Shari'ati

a. Factors Influencing the Spread of Shari'ati Socialism

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the various socio-political changes that occurred in the Eastern socialist countries a decade ago are now interpreted as the period of the end of the cold war, an ideological war after the end of the colonialism phase, where colonization was carried out in physical and open confrontation. openly. The world is entering a new era of ideological battles when the countries spreading Colonialism still want to continue their tight grip on the nations that have just declared their independence. The war eventually erupted between the Western Capitalist Imperialism Block led by the United States and the Communist Socialist Block led by the Russian Soviet Union, both of which aimed to instill their influence and ideology in the newly born (read: independent) southern countries. Thus, the Cold War was an ideological war designed to fight for hegemony over countries known as Third World or Southern World countries. For this reason, the collapse of the Soviet Union followed by its satellite countries, namely Eastern Europe, is often seen and celebrated as the end or failure of the penetration of socialism in the Western world. Furthermore, it is believed that the collapse of the Soviet Union will have an impact on ending the various trials and errors of transitional countries toward understanding Socialism in the Third World. In addition to having given birth to brave revolutionary leaders, countries that are experiencing a transitional phase towards Third World socialism have also given rise to various models of socialism and experiments of Third World versions of socialism. But with the sporadic collapse of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, their existence is also predicted to be threatened. The legacy of the Third World socialism model includes the ideology of Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara which gave birth to the Cuban Socialism model. The Latin American and South American socialist movements followed Cuba's footsteps, namely the Sandinista movement which gave birth to the figures of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, Camilo Torres in Columbia, and Salvador Allende in Chile. This is also the case in parts of the Asian continent, various models of socialism have emerged and been fought for, and have also given rise to great leaders and thinkers, such as Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, Mao Tse Tung in China, and Pol Pot in Cambodia. Arab



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socialism, Ba'athism, also appeared in the Middle East and was scattered in Syria and Iraq. Then on the African continent, Yulius Nyrere also appeared with Ulama as a model of socialism in Tanzania, Amilcar Cabral in Guinea Bisau, and Nkrumah in Ghana. Whereas in countries where the majority of the population is Muslim, the idea of socialism gets a touch of Islamic spirit and teachings, where Islam itself is a religion that places social justice as its main foundation, apart from providing wide space for its marriage with the ideology of socialism, it also has given rise to religious movements and practical theology that are more socialistic, such as the Pan-Islamism movement initiated by Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, which was a cultural anti-colonialism movement in the pre-World War II era, the Nasserism movement in Egypt, Muammar Qathafy's Libyan Socialism, Ben Bella in Algeria, and of course Frantz Fanon with his Algerian Revolution.

Shari'ati was born between two major conditions which would later influence his radical thinking. Namely the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of the tyrant Shah Reza Pahlevi with the support of the US and Britain. As a teenager, he was directly involved in the struggle of the clergy and youth against the authoritarian policies of the Shah of Iran. And as an adult, he saw for himself the extraordinary struggle of the Algerian people against the occupation of their land. The whole experience added to his enthusiasm to join in the struggle against the oppressors. France's liberal educational background makes it easier access to the ideas of socialism and Marxism to influence the mindset of students there. One who was interested in this teaching was Shari'ati. His interest is more due to the criticisms launched by this ideology which are very harsh against capitalism and imperialism. He fully agrees with Marx's opinion that in every civilization there is always class exploitation between groups. Especially in the series of Islamic history, these processes of oppression have always been the background for the birth of the struggles of the early pioneers of Islam.

Even though he tends to be a bit “Marxist”, the figure of Shari'ati never forgets his traditional side, Shia Islam. Under the tutelage of his father, Shari'ati always believed that Shia was the purest and most revolutionary teaching compared to other teachings. That's why he keeps trying to find common threads between Islam and socialism. According to him, the essence of socialism has existed since the revelation of Islam. He also accused Karl Marx had "adapted" his teachings from Islam. Thus, between Islam and socialism, a "siblings" relationship has been established, which so far has never been detected. One example of his belief that the originality of socialism comes from Islam, is by



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calling Abu Dzar Al-Ghifari the first socialist figure in the world. In Shari'ati's eyes, Abu Dzar was a prototype of a God-worshipping Socialist. Apart from that, according to Shari'ati, the lifestyle of Rasulullah and *Ahlul-Bayt* was already very socialistic, so this is what all Muslims should emulate.

On the other hand, he also felt disturbed by the leadership of the clergy which he considered "exaggerated". He also considers the clergy as representatives of the "oppressive class" against the freedom of other Muslims. The labels that Shari'ati gave to the established groups in Iran based on the theories of Karl Marx created very strong hostility from the clergy. The *Mullahs* saw Shari'ati as a Marxist who infiltrated Islam to destroy the main pillars of Islam. It seems that the title of a very Marxist Muslim or a very Islamic Marxist is too attached to him.

Meanwhile, the hereditary power of the Safavid Dynasty which was known as "black" and "dirty" also played a major role in shaping Shari'ati's revolutionary personality. He emphatically labeled the Safavid Dynasty as the dynasty most responsible for the collapse of the pure Shia religious traditions to be replaced according to their interests. This dynasty was also noted to have often perverted the meanings and sacred symbols of the Shiites so that they experienced a drastic devaluation transcendentally.

The beginning of the emergence of the Safavid Dynasty was when Raja Ahmad appointed Colonel Reza Khan who came from the Kosak brigade in the city of Qazvin, to manage the state of chaos after the agreement between Britain and Prime Minister Vossug Ed Dowleh.⁹ On February 21, 1921, Reza Khan and his troops succeeded in controlling the situation throughout Iran until they were finally appointed as Minister of War Affairs and KSAB. However, on October 28, 1923, Raja Ahmad re-appointed Reza Khan as the new Prime Minister to replace Seyed Ziaddin Tabatabai, in return for his services in destroying the Guilan Republic rebellion, chaos in Tabriz and Kurdistan's secession efforts.¹⁰

The new era began in Iran when Turkey under the leadership of Kemal Ataturk became a Republic. At the urging of the people, the Assembly finally convened on March 21, 1924, and decided to continue to defend the kingdom. However, a controversial event occurred when

⁹ Nasir Tamara, *Revolusi Iran*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Sinar Harapan, 1980), p. 43.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*



the Assembly suddenly overthrew Raja Ahmad from the Qajar Dynasty, henceforth appointing Reza Khan, who was finally titled Shah Reza on April 25, 1925. Since the beginning of his leadership, Shah Reza was known to be very cold-handed. Even though he is Muslim, he still worships the Zoroastrian and Mages religions that worship fire. Besides being known for his hatred of Shia clergy, Shah Reza was also very cruel. He liked to seize the lands of the nobility and feudal lords and then use them as private property.

But Shah Reza's power did not last long. On September 17, 1941, he was overthrown by the British and Russians and then exiled to South Africa where he died. Leadership then passed into the hands of his son named Mohammad Pahlavi on December 17, 1941,¹¹ he later became known as Shah Reza Pahlavi. Reza Pahlavi is known as a cold figure like his father, he received a strict upbringing from both his father and the teaching staff from France who accompanied him during school in Switzerland.

Under Reza Pahlavi, the Iranian royal system was divided into three major powers, namely Reza Pahlavi himself, his wife Farah Diba, and Princess Asraf, the twin sister of Reza Pahlavi. All three have their circles and networks of power that are closely related to each other, although they sometimes appear to conflict with one another. These three networks then formed the Pahlavi Foundation which initially functioned for social purposes helping the poor, providing scholarships, making pharmacies, and public publications. However, the Foundation, which received a lot of donations from abroad, never officially announced its financial situation. Almost all the families of the Pahlavi Dynasty became shareholders and had the right to distribute the money they earned without any control from Parliament and the Ministry of Finance.¹²

Since its inception, the Pahlavi Foundation has distributed varying amounts of money to the royal family. For example¹³ or Queen Farah Diba (33 million Toman), daughter Asraf (6 million Toman), Mohammad Reza, brother of Shah (5.5 million Toman), for other families not less than 15 million Toman and various Iranians (8 million Toman). When the situation was critical in late 1978 members of the royal family bravely transferred the assets of the National

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.



Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) abroad, amounting to nearly 1 billion dollars. This foundation also often asks for donations from rich people in Iran. A subtly forced request. If it is not fulfilled, the working relationship with the kingdom will be complicated. In the end, it was the Iranian people who had to pay for the donation. When Shah Reza left his country on January 16, 1978, his wealth was allegedly not less than 1 billion US dollars. [6] So it is not surprising that this royal family is believed to be one of the few richest families in the world because it has approximately 196 of the largest companies in Iran which are engaged in various fields. Besides being known for hoarding money, Reza Pahlavi was also known for often twisting the teachings of the Shiites for their benefit. ¹⁴

Even the clerics were ordered to shut up and not react to this deviation. They are only given the authority to regulate people's affairs which are small and simple. The activities of the clergy were always supervised by agents of the Shah, namely SAVAK. Anyone who is caught defecting will be sentenced to a long prison sentence or even killed sadistically. It is said that the number of SAVAK members is around 4,000 personnel equipped with sophisticated weaponry and 50,000 freelance informants who are deployed to various regions. The number SAVAK torture sites ¹⁵ there are many, but the most famous is the Evin prison. In January 1979 a house was found in downtown Tehran which was used as a place of torture. The two houses are connected to a 3-meter-high fort by a tunnel. Inside there are various tools for removing nails, there is also a bed made of plain iron equipped with electric cables to torture prisoners with electric currents. Meanwhile, in a small room, a 4-storey metal bed was also found, where a gas burner was installed at the bottom. Prisoners are placed at the very top, if they don't want to talk, confess, or provide valuable information, they will be moved to a lower section, which means it is hotter. ¹⁶

It was during this period that Shari'ati formulated what became known as religious socialism. Although he did not mention it explicitly, the frameworks of thought that he often used in criticizing the status quo were identical to the teachings of socialism that were imbued

¹⁴ Ali Shari'ati, *Tugas Cendekiawan Muslim*, trans. M. Amien Rais, (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2001), p. 164-165.

¹⁵ The victims of SAVAK can be grouped into four groups, namely student groups (cerdik/clever), religious groups (ulama/*Mullahs*), guerrilla groups, and those who do not want to join Shah's party, namely Rastakhiz.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.



with Islamic beliefs. Religious socialism itself is nothing new in the context of global politics. Previously, many Muslim figures vociferously voiced this flow. Call it Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, Asghar Ali Engineer, Muammar Qathafy, and Hassan Hanafy. Even though they both formulate this ideology, there is still diversity among them in understanding and "aligning" socialism with Islam in a comprehensive manner. Even between Shari'ati and Asghar Ali Engineer (who incidentally both share the Shiite Islamic wing), there are some fundamental differences in outlining this religious socialism. Apart from these differences of opinion, they simultaneously admit that the main essence of socialism exists and even comes from Islam, this is seen from the life history of the *anbiya* (prophets) especially Muhammad SAW who always prioritized justice, public interest, and equality of rights and obligations of society-wide.

Even though there is no evidence that the religious socialism initiated by Shari'ati adapted much from the figures mentioned above, the similarities in political and cultural backgrounds between them imply unintentional conformity in interpreting this religious socialism. For example, Iran's political condition is collapsing and awareness of cultural identity is diminishing, almost similar to the conditions experienced by Afghanistan, Libya, Egypt, and India. (countries of origin of the Socialist-Islamic thinkers above). The birth of the antithesis of Capitalism and neo-Imperialism which is called socialism gets very strong power from the religious or Islamic ornaments that accompany it. The full support of the majority of the Muslim people and the spirit of liberation echoed by this new understanding created unusual pressures both from within and outside the country. Especially in light of the arrogance of the United States and its allies, who control a large portion of the Third World's lands and resources. Religious Socialism then becomes a new alternative for the liberation efforts of poor, oppressed countries.

Regardless of the internal critics he often faces, especially the disapproval of the clergy regarding the "juxtaposition" of Islamic holy teachings with secular understandings from the West, religious socialism (often called Islamic Socialism) remains the choice of small countries. History does repeat itself, especially if we relate it to the efforts of the workers to rise in defending their rights to the class and those in power. Now *dhuafa* people all over the world simultaneously raise the flag of Islam - which they do their best to separate from its



contradictory elements - to stand firmly with the new socialism against the oppressive and ruling groups. World conditions have created enormous

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opportunities for religious socialism to emerge and rise. And Shari'ati believed in the power of this ideology, he firmly made this understanding his socio-political view.

Initially, Religious Socialism also received many reforms here and there, especially those related to the recognition of the existence of God. If religion is abstract enough to become a means of struggle, then socialism with religious overtones can become a very powerful paradigm for formulating steps against imperialism. The main structure that supports religious socialism generally has three pillars, namely: first, a social movement that fights for a social structural order that is just and humane. If we try to re-understand Islamic teachings, we can conclude that Islam is a very revolutionary religion because it always strives for structural transformation. That is why class movements in religion are not designed to lead the *musthad'afin* to establish a new form of dictatorship, but to carry out holistic transformations to create new, more egalitarian structures. Second, a humanistic movement that invites others to equal humanity, and is not based on primordialism in religion, ethnicity, race, or group. Because religion has never classified humans into their respective cultural identities. Besides that, this humanistic movement is also a movement of criticism against traditionalist tyrannical tendencies that have rationality and fatalism towards scriptural ritualistic movements. And the third is religiosity, namely the spirit of religion which is based on the spirit of ummah, liberation, and humanism, which focuses on worshiping its God with love and solitude. And that love is not only manifested vertically, it is also more important to spread horizontally both to the “right” and to the “left”. Just like one of the rituals in our prayer, greetings are to the left and right.

b. Modern Man Between Religion And Marxism

The world is currently on the verge of a modern catastrophe causing human degradation and destruction. In general, the decline indicators are divided into two sources, namely:

- 1) The social system
- 2) Ideological system.

These two social systems show themselves as contradictory systems that embrace or invite modern humans to join them. This will later become a disaster that ignores humans as beings with identities that come from outside the material world.

The two social systems, both capitalism, and communism, although they have different definitions and implementations, both describe humans as *homo economicus*



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(economic human), and the core difference between the two lies in which of the two will succeed in meeting the needs of the people.

Increasingly, more and more material needs are emerging offering a consumptive lifestyle, both qualitatively, and quantitatively, and diversification, along with this, the profits that are present on the tables of the owners of giant industries who continuously move are also increasing. with the same rhythm, namely turning humans into creatures who worship materialism which leads to destruction. Spectacular technology and modern mechanical equipment, which were originally thought to be able to release humans from the fatigue of physical work, have even accelerated the birth of new needs due to the dynamic development of increasingly sophisticated technological products. During the current world economic growth rate that is so fast, modern humans from time to time are trapped and immersed in extremely dire situations, the worst of which is the fact that humans are increasingly alien to themselves. There is no more space for increasing spiritual values, moral nobility, and sacred human values. What remains is a massive ambition to exploit natural resources, as well as consumptive greed which continues to increase and has made moral and ethical values increasingly neglected and leading to destruction.¹⁷

In general, Shari'ati described these modern calamities as more due to increasing physical and materialistic needs as a result of the weakness of human "fortresses" in the face of modernization. According to Shari'ati, the biggest disaster is a humanitarian disaster. Humanity is a species in the process of extinction. It is metamorphosing into a new form; and like a butterfly freed from a cocoon, it is in an unsafe situation as a result of its intelligence and endeavor.¹⁸ And worst of all, in the long history of this world humanity has been used to being a victim of modern times.¹⁹

Marxist philosophy is basically about the nature of Materialism. However, materialism is more focused on historical dialectics and social analysis. Where he was historically "interested" in economic theories that depend on the analysis of labor, profit, accumulation, and concentration of capital, as well as the theory of poverty. Which is based on the theoretical

¹⁷ Ali Shari'ati, *Humanisme Antara Islam dan Mazhab Barat*, op.cit, p. 57-58

¹⁸ Ali Shari'ati, *Kritik Islam Atas Marxisme Dan Sesat-Pikir Barat Lainnya*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), p. 83.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 83-84.



view of the exploitation of the haves against the have-nots.²⁰ According to Karl Marx, human history was formed based on four phases of production: production based on serfdom, feudalism, capitalist or bourgeois production, and finally socialist production.²¹ These transformational processes are always accompanied by "victims," namely inter-class oppression. Seeing all of this, Karl Marx argued that the ownership of the means of production together can suppress exploitation among members of society, with the absence of this exploitation means there will be no more oppression. And state power is thus no longer needed.

Therefore, Marx also offered a form of revolution carried out by the working class to completely overhaul the power of the bourgeoisie and at the same time bring them to positions in the government which he called the dictatorship of the proletariat. You can guess that Marx's offers and invitations are very promising, especially for those who for years have lived under the pressure of the productive forces of capital.

For Shari'ati talking about religion was indeed very difficult. Because according to him, the spirit of modernity has found it difficult to accept religion as a saving factor that arises from refinement and development. The "poison" of Marxism has penetrated too far into basic human thinking.²²

The anxiety felt by modern society, in general, was more because the presence of religion at that time did not provide peace of mind, spiritual reflection, and the best solutions for humanity. What exists is that religion is also dragged into the flow of mystification and sometimes even involved in the justification of materialism which is based on an economic orientation. The religion that Shari'ati regards as "chaotic" and a liar is, of course, the Protestant religion, a religion that is very close to power and builds its ideology on the Christian religion and the bourgeoisie.²³

The cause of this "hatred" was actually because Marx was "uncomfortable" and "disgusted" with the life of church clergymen whom he considered "holy" and to tying the people with false arguments of their own making, even though unbeknownst to many people the priests practiced corruption and collusion with the bourgeoisie.

²⁰ Mohammad Hatta, *Pengantar Ke Jalan Ekonomi Sosiologi*, (Jakarta: Fasco, 1957), hal. 152-156.

²¹ Deliar Noer, *Pemikiran Politik Di Negara Barat*, (Bandung: Mizan, 2000), p. 201.

²² Ali Shari'ati, *Humanisme Antara Islam dan Mazhab Barat*, op.cit., p. 81-82..

²³ *Ibid.*,



Karl Marx words that, "religion is self-awareness that exists in humans who are still unable to leave themselves, or have lost themselves for the umpteenth time" and then referred to religion as opium for the people (opium of the people), to then declare "war against religion is tantamount to war against nature, of which religion is its spiritual essence", assessed Shari'ati as a form of "philosophical confusion."²⁴

Islam as the last and perfect religion, on many occasions often attacks the owners of capital and tyrannical rulers. Terms such as "*dzalimun*" (those who act cruelly), "*al-mutrafun*" (rich and powerful), "*al-mustakbarun*" (arrogant and aggressive), "*al-mala'a*" (noble and public figure), "*fara'ina*" (kings who deify themselves), "*al-musthad'afun*" (those who are oppressed), and "*al-ardhalun*" (simple and weak) are frequently mentioned in the *Qur'an*. This is certainly a sign that Islam from the very beginning of its existence has been aware of this historical dialectic so that it firmly rejects "oppressive power" and is arbitrary and always voices the struggle to defend virtue for all people. Islam also calls for universal brotherhood, equality, social justice, human unity, and social health and good.²⁵

From this, it is clear that according to him, Marx's knowledge of religion was limited to what had been inherited by his Jewish father and then converted to Protestant Christianity. It is possible that Marx never received preaching about the basic teachings of Islam, namely about the delegation of human affairs to humans themselves (*al-tafwidh*), so that humans can live on earth by working hard and trying for their benefit.

Furthermore, in responding to the increasingly complicated position of modern humans who stand between two choices, religion and Marxism, Shari'ati explained his point of view in finding a "middle way" or "red line" between the two ideologies. This may be also related to the principles of religious socialism he initiated. According to him, Islam and Marxism there is an important relationship. Where both are ideologies that encompass all aspects of life, thought, philosophy, and human existence. This means that each of them has unique and separate knowledge about nature, in addition to unique moral values as well.²⁶ Regardless of

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

²⁵ Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam dan Teologi Pembebasan*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2003) p. 33-35.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 97.



the difference in "God", both of them make economic prosperity and social justice two important principles for the living system.

Shari'ati sees this condition as an "era" which is quite tough for humans. On the one hand, the power of technology is increasingly "fierce" with various consumptive choices, while on the other hand, humans are waiting for "enlightenment". Humans can make the wrong choice with just one wrong step. Therefore, Islam, which is quite complete, must be "returned to earth / down to earth" so that it is not too "heavenly" and that it is difficult for seekers of truth and peace to reach. It is time for Islam to emerge as the only winner in this competition - which doesn't need to be - so that the philosophy of "*rahmatan lil 'alamin*" as stated in the *Qur'anul Karim* is realized.

3. Ali Shari'ati's version of the Socialism Concept

a. Shari'ati's Criticism of Western Capitalism

Shari'ati was indeed not being subjective when he firmly stated that Islam was the most perfect ideology ²⁷. With various considerations, both sociological, theological, and even historical, Shari'ati dared to conclude that only Islam offers peace and prosperity for mankind throughout the world ²⁸ compared to the ideologies that are full of material orientation mentioned above. Because from his observations so far, all these Western ideologies have only made "productive ability" the starting point for human success. This is different from Islam which judges a person as "useful or not" seen on his ability to socialize and socialize with others, as well as the level of his relationship with God -which incidentally cannot be measured with the naked eye.

From this understanding, Shari'ati always gives a plus and minus assessment of Western ideologies – both those which are the antithesis of Capitalism, such as Marxism, existentialism, and humanism – which he has studied and even “followed”. Call it Marxism, but this teaching did have an impact on Shari'ati's understanding of the struggle between classes to secure the rights of the oppressed. Still, he considers Marxism to be very nil when it intersects with human nature (*fitrah*) to know God. Likewise, humanism is no different from the world of ancient

²⁷ Of course, the Islam he meant was the Shia Islam he adhered to.

²⁸ See the concept of "*Rahmatan lil 'alamin*" in the Qur'an.



Greek mythology, where this world is only interpreted as an arena for the battle of two natural forces, namely humans and their rulers. For Shari'ati, this humanism may be nothing more than an attempt by the West to cover up its depravity.

It is indeed quite difficult if humans try to criticize this capitalism, because politically, intellectually, and psychologically, humans live, move, and think within the framework of the capitalist system. Especially when viewed from the early period of the capitalist system's operation, it was only intended to play an economic role in the regulation of the production, profit, and investment. However, when this capitalism led to the existence of certain classes that benefited, the concept of capitalism eventually turned into an ideology that was widely adhered to. Especially when it turns out to give birth to new technologies that control humans as objects of the production framework. In the end, capitalism resulted in a rapid economic movement oriented to market interests which unexpectedly carried out frenzied exploitation of humans and nature.

According to Shari'ati, the first person responsible for the deconstruction of human thought is religion. Religion at that time offered a slogan of human liberation from the dominant will of heaven, the liberation of reason from the clutches of dogmatic religious doctrines, and the liberation of science from the shackles of theological axioms. These slogans are indeed very impressive, they offer mankind a truly "free" paradise in this world. However, without realizing it, the important task of making nations prosperous and at the same time making people productive was given to science and capital (technology and capital). This means that it is the same as returning to the past when world power was only held by one group, only this time the ruling group is more artificial.

Shari'ati saw that science, which had indeed been freed from its slavery to religion, was now being used for the interests of power and placed under the will of the authorities and then turned into something frozen and narrow-minded. Meanwhile, machines that were created as tools for humans to pave their way to becoming rulers of nature and freed from slavery to physical work, have now evolved into mechanical systems that shackle humans.

Capitalism, which Shari'ati calls one of the calamities of the modern world, has failed to return humans to their concept of freedom. Instead, he ordains himself as a dictatorial ruler who controls all aspects of human life until he falls into the most deplorable situation. And



only Islam, said Shari'ati, is capable of providing guarantees for human happiness compared to these other secular ideologies.

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b. Paradigm of the Revolutionary Movement and Marxism

Before we outline in general terms the design of Shari'ati's socialism, both in terms of the movement's paradigm approach and its relation to Marxism, we must first get to know Shari'ati's personality in Ervand Abrahamian's view. In his understanding, the figure of Shari'ati consists of "three" characters²⁹: first, is Shari'ati the sociologist who is interested in the dialectical relationship between theory and practice; between ideas and social forces; and between consciousness and human existence. Shari'ati has a high commitment to understanding the birth, growth, and bureaucracy, and finally the decay of revolutionary movements, especially radical religion. The second is Shari'ati as a fanatical Shia who believes that revolutionary Shia -unlike all other radical ideologies- will not submit to the iron law of bureaucratic development. This Shari'ati believes that on the plane of fundamental change, the whole ideology and society face the problem of rise, decay, and collapse. Is there a way out of decline and disintegration? The method, according to Shari'ati, is to carry out a continuous revitalization of the ideologues themselves. Third, is Shari'ati as an enthusiastic, articulate, and oratorical public speaker, who is very attractive to many people, especially young people. In this position, Shari'ati used a lot of jargon, simplification, generalization, and sharp religious syncretism against established institutions - in this case, the Shah Pahlavi regime and religious establishment controlled by the clergy.

In general, Shari'ati's political views are multi-faceted, so they can be interpreted in various ways (multi-interpretable) depending on the perspective of the individual or group that sees them. However, one can also see a sort of worldview (*weltanschauung*) that is quite consistent in his writings. Shari'ati's most prominent worldview concerns the relationship between religion and politics, which can be said to be the ideological basis of his movement. In this context, Shari'ati can be categorized as a political religious thinker (*politico religio thinker*).

The starting point of Shari'ati's thought departed from his great commitment and belief in the revolutionary Shia Islamic tradition. He views that the Iranian people should be proud of this legacy of tradition and make it a value system that encompasses the social order that

²⁹ Azyumardi Azra, *Pergolakan Politik Islam*, op.cit., p. 68.



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society will build. However, in its historical period, this tradition experienced a reduction, when it came into contact with the interests of the authorities and the clergy. Such a progressive tradition has metamorphosed into a sedative for people to run away from real-life problems on the one hand and the most effective instrument of legitimacy to perpetuate power on the other.

According to Shari'ati, Islam in its pure form – which has not yet been controlled by conservative forces – is a revolutionary ideology towards the liberation of the Third World from Western political, economic, and cultural colonialism. He felt the strong problems raised by colonialism and neo-colonialism which alienated people from their traditional roots. Therefore, according to Shari'ati, Third World countries, such as Iran, need two forms of revolution that are interrelated. First, the national revolution aims not only to end all forms of Western domination but also to revitalize the culture and national identity of the Third World countries concerned. Second, the social revolution to eliminate all forms of exploitation and poverty to create a just and "classless" society".³⁰

In Shari'ati's view, the Third World countries are currently plagued by a disease such as international imperialism. He also criticized Western imperialism and social inequality as the biggest enemies of society that must be eradicated in the long term. But for the short term, according to Shari'ati, two big enemies must be eradicated, namely first, vulgar Marxism, which incarnates mainly in the form of Stalinism, which is loved by many young intellectuals, and second, conservative Islam as understood by the clergy.

Shari'ati's attitude towards Marxism was also very complex. There is a high possibility that Shari'ati had a love-hate relationship with Marxism. However, a closer reading of his writings removes even more doubt that his main framework, his conceptions of history, culture, and program of political action, and his strategy of revolutionary propaganda, are all in the classical Marxist tradition. However, the paradox that is then seen is solely in the matter of translating ideals into strategy.

On the one hand, Shari'ati still uses the Marxist paradigm, framework, and analysis to explain the development of society. The opposition to and criticism of the political and

³⁰ Azyumardi Azra, "Akar-Akar Ideologi Revolusi Iran: Filsafat Pergerakan Ali Syari'ati", in Ridwan, M. Deden (ed.), *Melawan Hegemoni Barat, Ali Syari'ati dalam Sorotan Cendekiawan Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Lentera, 1999), p. 52.



religious establishment is almost entirely based on a Marxist approach and analysis. He stressed, people, will not be able to understand history and society without knowledge of Marxism. He refuted the opinion of some people, that Marx was just a pure materialist, who saw humans as creatures who were attracted to things that were purely material, not ideal and spiritual things. He even emphatically praised Marx, whom he considered far less "materialistic" than those who claimed to be "idealists" or those who saw themselves as "faithful and religious". Because of that, as seen in his works, we can understand why he was heavily influenced by Marxism, especially neo-Marxism, especially in his view of history as a dialectical process and of the oppressed masses with the political and religious establishment.

But on the other hand, Shari'ati also frontally criticized Marxism, which manifested itself in social or communist parties. This is considered a "betrayal" of the essence of Marxism itself. Then he straightened out the contradictions in looking at Marxism itself by dividing the life of Karl Marx into three separate and different phases.³¹ The first, young Marx as an atheistic philosopher, developed dialectical materialism; rejecting the existence of God, the soul, and the afterlife. This atheistic character extended beyond Europe; in fighting the reactionary church they condemn all forms of religion without qualification and exception. Second, the mature Marx, who was mainly a social scientist revealed how the rulers exploited those who were ruled (the ruled). In this capacity, Marx further explains how the laws of "historical determinism" – not "economic determinism" – function and how the superstructure in any country, especially the dominant ideology and political institutions, interacts with the economic infrastructure. The third is the old Marx who was a politician. In this phase, Marx and Marxism were transformed into revolutionary parties. This Marx often makes predictions that are politically appropriate but inconsistent with his social science methodology. This was later referred to by Shari'ati as "vulgar Marxism", which in the end obscured "Scientific Marxism".

Of the three stages of the life of Marx and Marxism, Shari'ati rejected the first and third. But accepts most of the ideas of the second Marx. In essence, he agrees with the paradigm that divides society based on ownership of the means of production. Furthermore, he also accepts the paradigm of forming a society based on a political-ideological superstructure. That's why

³¹ Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojehedin*, op.cit., p. 293-294.



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he then places religion into the category of the political-ideological superstructure because in practice, the authorities -whether political or religious- often make religion nothing more than just the "appeasement" of the oppressed masses by promising happiness in the afterlife. Furthermore, Shari'ati also adopted Marx's view that human history is the history of class struggles. But even so, he still does not accept the institutionalization and bureaucratization of the struggle through the communist or socialist parties. The reason is that this will only result in the disappearance of the paradigm of revolutionary ideology because with institutionalization it will continue to be subject to the "iron law" of the bureaucracy. It is in this connection that Shari'ati often criticizes the communist parties and movements in Europe which, according to her, do not accept the fact that in modern times the struggle does not take place primarily within the capitalist and labor circles, but between Western imperialism and the Third World.

Shari'ati as understood so far, had no objection to Marxism, at least that which Marx brought to adulthood. He is believed to have a special agenda to "Islamize Marxism" or the Marxification of Islam. Unlike the ulama in general who immediately accused the Marxists of being atheists and infidels, and because of that, they were wallowing in sin, Shari'ati on the other hand questioned the use of the term "infidel" itself. For him, Muslims actually -as the antithesis of infidels- with their belief in God does not practically have subjective truth. Real Muslims are those who besides believing in God, are also willing to take concrete action against oppression. With this logic, Shari'ati implicitly stated that the Marxists who emphasized revolutionary action also had the truth, and therefore could not be accused of being infidels. On this basis, Shari'ati often criticized the clergy whom she thought were trying to gain monopolistic control. Apart from making the scriptures not easily understood by the laity, they also stressed the importance for the people to apply taqlid to the clergy. This they did to uphold what Shari'ati called "spiritual despotism" (*istibdad-i ruhani*). In Shari'ati's eyes, even taqlid has been twisted in its meaning by the clergy.³²

To reform "despotism", according to Shari'ati, changes must be made. A change that must be oriented towards growing "revolutionary awareness" rather than creating "scholastic scholarship". Every individual has the right to directly-without having to go through the clergy-

³² Ali Shari'ati, *Islam Agama "Protes"*, (Bandung:Pustaka Hidayah, 1996), p. 40..



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review textual sources. In fact, according to him, a mujtahid can produce *ijtihad* regarding Islamic law without having to study the *Qur'an* first. In this way, reform can be functionalized to change religion from a negative religion to a positive religion.

This is also in line with his belief that Muslims can have direct contact with their God or the Imams without first asking for the help of the clergy. According to Shari'ati, every human being has direct contact with God, anytime and anywhere. In line with that, Sayyid Qutb said:

“In Islam, there is no clergy known, and there is no intermediary between the servant and the Creator. Every Muslim in every corner of the world and on the expanses of the sea can relate alone to his God, without priests, and without saints. A Muslim leader does not rely on "divine rights", nor on the role of mediator between God and humans, but the exercise of his power rests on Islamic society, as power itself rests on the ability to carry out the religion which everyone has the same right to understand and understand. carry it out if they understand it, and all are punished equally.”³³

If we measure it further, then in fact the position of religion is a very important instrument and can be used as opium or a very revolutionary ideology. Religion will become a "pseudo" opium for society, as Karl Marx said, only if it is always the groan of the oppressed (sigh of the oppressed), the heart of the human robot (heart of heartless would), and the soul of an empty state (the spirit of the oppressed, a spiritless situation).³⁴ However, in reality, religion is not always just a groan from the oppressed; religion can also be a sharp sword in their hands. Religion has not always become an opiate to avoid clashing with exploiters; religion can be a powerful source of motivation to overthrow the status quo. If religion is seriously considered as good and stands on one side with revolution, progress and change, then religion itself must be released from philosophical theological aspects – which develop to reach their peak until these philosophical aspects become the main part of religion instead of supporting the oppressed. instead, it supports oppressive groups. In other words, optimal theology of liberation is needed to develop a theology of liberation.

And still, according to Shari'ati, Marxism and Islam are two ideologies that cover many dimensions of human life and thought.³⁵ Both rely on the movement for political independence and integrity to organize a socially just society. Both of them also have a special cosmology, a

³³ Nurcholis Madjid, " Mito dalam Agama dan Budaya ", in *Islam Agama Peradaban, Membangun Makna dan Relevansi Doktrin Agama dalam Sejarah*, (Jakarta:Paramadina, 2000), p. 182.

³⁴ Asghar Ali Engineer, *op.cit.*, p. 29

³⁵ Ali Shari'ati, *Kritik Islam Atas Marxisme dan Sesat-Pikir Barat Lainnya*, *op.cit.*, p. 130.



special form of organization, a philosophy of history, special hopes for the future, and a specific way to spread these views. Both of them also have an interest in the personal and social life of humans on earth – which of course cannot be separated from the fundamental differences between the two such as spiritual orientation and the spirit that accompanies it.

According to Shari'ati, Islam and Marxism are opposite in terms of ontology and cosmology. In short, Marxism is based on materialism and derives its sociology, anthropology, ethics, and philosophy of life from materialism. In other words, the Marxist world is a materialist world. In contrast, Islamic cosmology rests on a belief in the Unseen (The *Ghaib*) which is defined as an unknown actuality, that exists beyond material and natural phenomena that can be perceived by the senses and can be absorbed intellectually, scientifically, and empirically. As well as being a higher order of nature and the center point of all movements, laws, and phenomena of this world.

Among all the ideologies in the world -regardless of whether they are religious or not - only Marxism has built a multifaceted plenary ideology, whereas Islam as a religion and a nation (ummah) is in stark contrast to Marxism in every dimension. Marxism, among all the new ideologies, is unique because it strives to underpin every aspect of human life – material and spiritual, philosophical and practical, individual and social – with its particular materialistic worldview. Meanwhile, among all historical religions, only Islam has so much breadth. Islam does not limit itself to commands regarding the relationship between humans and God, or the purification of the soul, but Islam presents itself as a teaching that covers various aspects of human life. Of all these differences, Shari'ati considered that Islam and Marxism could not be divided. First, all the elements and dimensions converge along the lines of their separate, opposed, worldviews. Adding an element or dimension to one of the two, or removing it, will only result in the collapse of the overall structure. Second, an ideology is a whole that is interconnected, has a single soul and essence, and a unique *raison d'etre*. Attempts to separate it into its constituent elements would have results such as killing it and then dissecting its corpse.³⁶ In other words, according to Shari'ati, because Marxism was founded on materialism and considered the origin of human essence to be dust, its humanism ended in reducing human status to object status. Whereas Islam, because it underlies its divine humanism with

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 160-161.



monotheism, at the scientific level, Islam describes man as soil, while at the level of existential analysis, Islam draws him from the dust towards God and absolute transcendental value.³⁷

Within the political spectrum, Shari'ati's thoughts were very, very influential on revolutionary efforts in Iran. The youth seemed to get a new "injection" in their movement. This religious socialism was then able to coexist peacefully with the dogmas of the clergy when thousands of masses took to the streets voicing antipathy reactions against Shah Reza Pahlevi. Even though later the winner was the domination of the clergy, religious socialism is still the ideology of progressive Iranian youth who are anti-establishment.

E. Conclusion

In the Iranian Revolution, Shari'ati's role was indeed invisible visually. He died in June exactly two years before the Revolution started. But even so, the presence of his thoughts has succeeded in attracting young Iranians to participate in the struggle to overthrow the tyranny of Shah Reza Pahlavi. Long before this Revolution took place, Shari'ati along with figures such as Sayyed Hosein Nasr, Murtadha Mutahhari, Mehdi Bazargan, and Imam Khomeini, had been trying to design a white revolution to overthrow the Shah. Even though they have different views, Shari'ati and the group of scholars still have the same mission to unite all Iranian people to take to the streets to demonstrate.

If we trace further the role and position of Ali Shari'ati in the 1979 Iranian Revolution, what we will find is precisely the strength of political ideas, socio-religious thinking, and the spirit of anti-imperialism that he never stopped teaching to the masses during his lifetime. students in Iran. With this teaching, the figure of Ali Shari'ati emerged as a spirit for the next student movement. However, post-Revolution, as Imam Khomeini emerged as the new leader, Shari'ati's teachings also experienced "silencing". These differences indeed stem from the perceptions, values, and beliefs of each party. Shari'ati considered that it was the mullahs who were responsible for the "softening" of the spirit of liberation of the Shiites in Iran, while the mullahs called Shari'ati a "Marxist in Islamic robes" who entered the bodies of Muslims in Iran to decompose and destroy the religious pillars of Islam. When religious groups emerged as the

³⁷ *Ibid.*



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newest holders of power, at that time all teachings including parties and figures with "left" views were suppressed and banned from living in Iran. Since then, critical figures such as Shari'ati have begun to lose their influence on the political and educational systems in Iran, and what has emerged is the model of government of the clergy, which Shari'ati used so much to oppose. There was indeed an assumption that Shari'ati's death in 1977 was the cause of a radical change to the pattern of government desired by the intellectual reformists who sparked the Revolution. If only Shari'ati were still alive, then with his great influence the possibility of the emergence of the concept of Vilayat-el Faqih (reign of the clergy) would be very small.

The figure of Shari'ati can never be separated from the influence of the religiosity of his family and the Shia Islamic tradition he adheres to. His father, Muhammad Taqi shari'ati, was a great cleric who preferred to go to his hometown to live in luxury in the city as a government cleric. Taqi Shari'ati lived with all his knowledge and honesty. It was in Mazinan (Shari'ati's hometown) that he, together with other thought and political reformers in Iran, gave birth to a group that was known to be very influential during the Mossadeg era, namely the Center for the Spread of Islamic Truth (Markaz Nasyr Ar-haqa'iq Al-Islamiyah) and Nehzat-I Khodaparastan-I Soshiyalist (God Worshipping Socialist Movement). From this condition, Shari'ati was born and saw firsthand what his father was fighting for. This was very impressive for his soul, Shari'ati called his father the real *Rausyan Fekr*, namely an enlightened intellectual.

In general, the very striking difference between the figure of a Shari'ati and other Shia figures (such as Imam Khomeini and Murtadha Mutahhari) is who has the right to lead the *ummah* during the revolution or after the victory. If Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Mutahhari put the clergy as the holders of the highest leadership in the body of the Muslim Ummah, then Shari'ati made the *Rausyan Fekr* group or intellectuals as the most appropriate line to be the leader as well as the vanguard of the struggle. Khomeini and Mutahhari made the words of the Prophet Muhammad SAW which stated that the ulama were the heirs of the anbiya (prophets) as the basis for their opinion, while Shari'ati did not use any proof at all as the basis for his argument. According to him, every Muslim must have the courage to wage jihad in the way of Allah if he wants to achieve a noble position before Allah and at the same time become the leader of the people, it's just that his rejection of the leadership of the clergy is based more on historical facts where the clergy usually can only be the footstool and shield of the authorities



to legitimize their interests use religious teachings. They are only silent and participate in guaranteeing the occurrence of depravity in the government

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which leads to the depletion of the spirit of change that was taught and exemplified by the Imams of *Ahlul-Bayt*. According to Shari'ati, the clergy did not play an important role in overhauling the structure of society, they were like madmen of honor and position and turned a blind eye to the cruelty of the Shah of Iran. This was the basis for Shari'ati's rejection of clerical leadership and advocating for the emergence of a network of enlightened young intellectuals.

Even so, Ali Shari'ati and several other Shia scholars still held a similar view of the leadership of Ali and *Ahlul-Bayt*. He considered that Ali was the one who had the right and most deserved to lead the people towards *al-Silm* (peace), *al-Salam* (prosperity), and *al-Salamah* (security and safety) after the death of Rasulullah SAW. However, the understanding of the doctrines of ancient Shia texts is always accompanied by the use of a scientific sociological analysis "knife" so that it tends to be tolerant even though it does not lose the "sharpness" of its criticism.

Ali Shari'ati within a period of 24 years (ie around 1953-1977) offered a spectacular new paradigm. Starting from his diligence in studying reformatory and revolutionary Western ideologies, as well as reviewing the fundamental teachings of Shia Islam, Shari'ati formulated "Religious Socialism" often called "Islamic Socialism" which has several dimensions from a holistic and critical point of view. Western socialism a la Marxism he "juxtaposed" with Shia ideas on an ongoing basis. The materialistic elements which were previously very strong in socialism were devalued radically and henceforth they were given religious ornaments which functioned as the spirit of their struggle. The two ideologies – which incidentally were both anti-establishment – fused and eventually carried out an oppositional function as well as a "threat to power" to the leadership of the Shah of Iran at that time.

Socialism was the ideology that Shari'ati learned while in Paris. In this ideology, he finds a "power" of change that other Western ideologies do not have. For Shari'ati this was a very honest ideology because it was indeed born in a global condition that was deteriorating as a result of capitalism and it was also a form of thinking about the social and cultural identity of a particular group. Socialism also often adorns struggle forms in the West against authoritarian rules, such as the revolution in Aljazair. According to Shari'ati, the framework of socialism which always emphasizes the need for equality, justice, and mutual welfare in society



to avoid the dirty practices of the bourgeoisie and bureaucrats, can become an "injection" and a new spirit to be transformed into the Iranian people's struggle

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against tyrannical Shah. According to him, this socialist paradigm could become a basis for thinking as well as an effective strategy to form and consolidate ranks to overthrow the Shah and create significant socio-political changes in Iran. Apart from that, he also used socialism as a tool for critical analysis of the diversity and stability of the Muslim community, as shown by his opinions on the Red Shia, the Qabil-Habil dialectic, the struggle of the *Rausyan Fekr*, and the leadership of the Muslim community.

Meanwhile, regarding the factors underlying Shari'ati's use of the religious label as a new ornament in his teachings of socialism, it is more due to Shari'ati's religious background. He is a very fanatical Shia follower. After observing, studying, and analyzing the basic Shia teachings, Shari'ati concluded that this was the most revolutionary and liberating spirit ideology the world had ever seen. According to Shari'ati, Shia always emphasizes reform and change (in Shari'ati's concept they call it "*Jihad*" and "*Hijrah*") to lead to civil society as happened at the time of the Prophet Muhammad. That's why the religious elements and spirituality of Shia Islam became the spirit and soul of his struggle. Where he made Islam washilah and civil society (Islamic Society) the ghoyah of the struggle and teachings of socialism. From the "marriage" of these two ideologies, Shari'ati tried to enforce Allah's law on earth. This is what differentiates Shari'ati-style socialism from Western Socialism, namely because of the wealth of spirituality it contains.

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