

Shari‘ati and the (Elusive) Quest for a Just Order

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Abstract

Ali Shariati was undoubtedly among the most important of the prerevolutionary Islamist thinker particularly insofar as he made Islam a politically respectable force for many young men and women in Iran's traditional middle classes. Shariati was novel for the time in terms of his education and intellectual influences. The clear attraction of ideology for Shariati is that he believes by means of it man is endowed with the capacity to transform the world around him. The current paper tries to explore the manner in which Shariati carried out his highly politicized reading of Islam, assigning centrality to the notion of a just order. Author argues that Shariati's quest for a just order is more important than the order itself.

Keywords: Shariati; Islam; Ideology; Just Order.

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Introduction

A large section of the international discourse on politics in the Middle East in the last quarter of the twentieth century revolved around what is generally referred to as political Islam, (less correctly) Islamism, and from the closing years of the twentieth century as post-Islamism. Scholars and academics have thrashed out the connotations of these terms threadbare, broadly agreeing that both political Islam as well as post-Islamism refer to a language of politics where even though the terminology is distinctively Islamic in its vintage, its preoccupation is not the faith itself. The preoccupation of political Islam as well as post-Islamism is, almost without exception, good governance, and the central agenda is almost invariably the establishment of a just order. (Bayat: 2007) While the pre-occupation

with good governance may be said to be a constant factor in political Islam, there are wide disparities in terms of what denotes good governance, and what constitutes a just order - ranging between the ideological positions of popular democracy of the Turkish AKP and the guided democracy of *Vilayat-e Faqih*, associated with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini; or between those of the Ikhwan al-Muslimeen in Egypt and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The diversity in the world of political Islam is manifested in the various political formulations, emerging as they did in different contexts of space and time. Or, as protagonists of intellectual history would prefer to put it, the texts produced were shaped by the contexts within which they were formulated. (Skinner: 2002) However, it is equally important to understand

that when ideas situated in a specific historical location are packed into a text, the terminology used for the packing can load values into ideas which may or may not have been originally intended. Hence, when such ideas are unpacked from such texts by others (of subsequent generations, or elsewhere, or both), they are frequently imputed with a new meaning, or at least subjected to a new reading suited to the context of the person who is reading it. The phenomenon of political Islam that developed in course of the twentieth century essentially denoted attempts at 'unpacking' such values that were considered Islamic in the specific situational contexts in which such 'unpacking' was being done.

In this essay I intend to explore the manner in which the popular Iranian public speaker 'Ali Shari'ati Mazinani (1933-77) carried out his highly politicised reading of Islam,

assigning centrality to the notion of a just order. I propose to argue that Shari'ati Islamised the notion of modern political legitimacy in the specific context of the petrolic despotism that characterised Pahlavi Iran, and that his reading of Islamic history also was heavily conditioned by this very context as well as his own social situation. Finally, I propose to contend that Shari'ati's concept of a just order was somewhat elusive because the idea of the need to struggle for the just (Islamic) order was more systematically formulated by him, rather than the mechanism of such an order. I would argue that this possibly indicates that for Shari'ati the quest for a just order is more important than the order itself, which could be indeterminate.

The Ground beneath his Feet

Iran 'Ali Shari'ati grew up in was a dynamic country, its economy was

being transformed by a massive state-led project of industrial development even as he came of age. The principal driving factor in the economy being the oil revenue, however, the industrial character of Iranian economy was modified by the fact that it was a *rentier* state (Katouzian: 1981). The Pahlavi political order was thus authoritarian in its disposition, exploitative by nature, and rested on a narrow social base of power. This had important consequences for the development of Iranian politics in the twentieth century.

The revenue generated by the fledgling petroleum sector had proven adequate for Reza Shah (r. 1925-41) to ignore the country's elected *Majlis*, freed from his need to be voted taxes by the legislature as early as the middle of the 1930s. The mechanism of checks and balances instituted during the

Mashruteh era was made to atrophy by the Shah, reducing the legislative checks on the executive. The untrammelled authority Reza Shah enjoyed by the 1930s was used to systematically undermine all organised political forces or social constituencies (such as the '*ulema*') that dared question either the agenda pursued by the Shah, or the way he did so, or both. It is not an exaggeration to say that had he not been deposed by Britain and the Soviets in 1941 because of his sympathy with Nazi Germany, Reza Shah would probably have ruled much longer, in absence of any substantial opposition. (Katouzian: 1981)

The signature programmes of the Pahlavi dynasty, industrialisation of the Iranian economy and the creation of a strong modern country, bore the imprint of the authoritarian Pahlavi political apparatus. The direction

and pace of industrialisation and modernisation of the country was guided by the Shah and his close coterie of advisers. While the transformation of Iranian economy was unmistakably impressive, its impact on Iranian society was no less staggering. Modernisation of the economy necessarily involved a massive dislocation of the traditional Iranian society: rapid urbanisation and the attendant breakdown of traditional support systems left behind a major human cost, about which the ruling class was largely unaware or indifferent. Thus, while traditional sociability was undermined by the rapid scale of transformation, there was no corresponding rise of new sociability (Mirsepassi: 2000; Chehabi: 1990).

Accordingly, any authentic discourse of opposition in Pahlavi Iran had necessarily to reflect the concern about this dislocation. In

course of the recrudescence of political thinking in Iran during the decade from the fall of Reza Shah and the rise of Mosaddeq, protagonists of the political right (Ayatollah Kashani), centre (Mosaddeq), and the left (the Tudeh party, Jalal Al-e Ahmad) alike tried to address the matter - each in their own manner. (Dabashi: 1993) The formative years for Shari'ati's own politics happened to be this very same period, and these larger societal concerns moulded his political thinking considerably.

The other signature trait of the Pahlavi modernisation agenda was its determination to secularise Iranian society. This involved not merely reducing the role that the *'ulema* had played in the state from the Safavid era, but also eliminate any public display of the individual's confessional allegiance - affecting non-Muslims as much as Muslims.

The drive towards secularisation certainly enjoyed considerable support from many of the upwardly mobile sections of Iranian society, fulfilling as it did the need to create a composite Iranian identity rising above sectarian identity. However, there were many others who were dismayed or discomfited by the manner in which there seemed to be a veritable assault not only on the display of one's religiosity, but also on the religion itself. The attack on Islamic values underwritten by Ithna 'Ashari Shi'ism in Iranian society rattled quite a lot of people, who could not make sense of the secularist values promoted by the Pahlavis, and appeared rudderless by the sustained attack on their sense of traditional morality (Akhavi: 1980).

There were those, however, who found little that was incompatible between the more positive values of the secular worldview, and those of

Islam - for both were motivated by the desire to improve the human condition. One of them was 'Ali Shari'ati's father, Muhammad Taqi Shari'ati. Trained in theology at the Mashhad seminary, with an eye to the eventual family seat as an 'alim at Mazinan near Mashhad in Khorasan, Muhammad Taqi decided against joining the traditional educational apparatus, and instead joined the secular educational system as a teacher of Arabic literature and religious sciences - first at Ibn Yamin and then at Ferdowsi High Schools, two of the more reputed schools at Mashhad in those days. (Rahnema, 1998:11)

Dismayed by the aggressiveness of Pahlavi attempts at secularising Iran, Muhammad Taqi set up the *Kanun-e Nashr-e Haqayeq-e Islami* (Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths), where he offered courses highlighting the continued relevance

of Islam in the modern world. His son 'Ali, who opted for this course as a boy in his mid-teens, presumably developed his conviction about the compatibility of Islam and modernity from those very days of his life, and built atop that conviction the edifice of his version of political Islam.

Making Politics Islamic: of Text and its Context

'Ali Shari'ati's political thinking can be said to have flown out of his political activism during his late teens, principally in connection with the *Nehzat-e Khodaparastan-e Sosialist* and then *Jami'yat-e Azadi-ye Mardom-e Iran*, both of which took a strong position in favour of Muhammad Mosaddeq in the heady days of the early 1950s. After Reza Shah was ousted by the Allies, and was replaced on the throne by his son Muhammad Reza Pahlavi at the behest of the British and the USSR,

the weakening of authoritarian control over the country had allowed an unprecedented degree of political to flourish in the country. The principal element of Iranian political discourse that surfaced around this time could be said to have revolved around the question of political legitimacy, with Mosaddeq raising the challenge about the extent of authority a Shah could exercise if he was subservient to the interests of foreign powers. Mosaddeq charged the Pahlavis with having acquiesced to foreign domination over the country's petroleum resources, in exchange for a share of the pickings which allowed the Shah to disregard the wishes and interests of his own people. Mosaddeq's challenge was eventually defeated by a coup in 1953 engineered by the CIA, mobilising those sections of the economy (including some elements of the *bazaar*) and a section of the

'ulema (led by Ayatollah Kashani) who are uncomfortable with Mosaddeq's alleged proximity with the leftist Tudeh – together they rallied behind the Shah. While the Shah had continued to enjoy the allegiance of those who had benefitted directly from the Pahlavi regime all through the years of crisis, like many other Iranians, Shari'ati favoured the nationalist assertion of Mosaddeq (Katouzian: 1991).

The defeat of Mosaddeq left a deep impression on Shari'ati. Ever since then, Shari'ati's political thinking exhibited three very distinctive features - a deep suspicion of the state, resentment towards capital, and a highly pronounced anticlericalism. While generations of Muslim thinkers have looked at the various legends of Islam from very different standpoints, with unfailing accuracy Shari'ati fished out and highlighted protagonists and incidents which

championed particularly those three traits, *mutatis mutandis*. Hence, in Shari'ati's reading of Islam considerable emphasis is laid on people like Abu Dharr, Horr and above all Imam Hossein who dared to stand against instituted political authority, its economically exploitative foundations and the deceptive intellectual order that lends it legitimacy.

Shari'ati's reading of the persona of the Prophet himself emphasised on the egalitarian nature of the challenge that Islam posed to the pre-Islamic order of Mecca. *Jahiliyyat* was the era of darkness not merely because of the strife it generated, but because of the political repression, economic exploitation and sectarianism that characterised it. Shari'ati's rationalisation of the story of the emergence of Shi'ism, and indeed the history of Islam itself, were similarly conditioned by his

suspicion of power, wealth and institutionalised religion. Shari'ati argued, the connection between *zor* (i.e. political power), *zar* (gold, i.e. wealth) and *tazveer* (deception in the name of faith) has historically proven to be so inextricable that even after the Prophet laid the foundations of a just order by promulgating Islam, people moved away from it by pledging allegiance to the Caliphate. The Caliphate, thus, was illegitimate not because it was Sunni in its inspiration, but because it subverted the just order by misleading the faithful. Mu'awiya as the figurehead of an evil complex of wealthy notables and exploitative men of commerce, who managed to win over many of the so-called men of God, either through fear or the lure of wealth. They made a common cause threatened by the egalitarian message of Islam, propounded by the Prophet, and

championed by Imams 'Ali, Hassan and then Hossein. ("Shahadat", Shari'ati: 2004b)

In assigning centrality to the principle of equality in his political thinking, Shari'ati was a very faithful representative of the stereotype associated with the segment of Iranian society he came from - upwardly mobile middle and lower middle class. The upwardly mobile middle and upper middle class in Pahlavi Iran, particularly those coming from the provincial towns (like Mashhad), stood at a great disadvantage vis-à-vis their counterparts from the metropolitan Tehran. Opportunities for economic and material advancement were much greater in the national capital than elsewhere, because the pivot of the country's economic modernisation happened to rest there. And even there, they were greatest for only those who were either close to the

Shah, or had an initial reserve or capital, or both. However, given the rapid proliferation of the western educational apparatus promoted by the state all over urban and small-town Iran, the number of educated youth from the middle and lower-middle classes, aspiring to a better standard of living, grew at a much faster rate than the economy could absorb (Menashri: 1992). When their aspirations were not fulfilled, many among such people found the appeal of socialism pretty strong. Regardless of whether such people subscribed to the “godless communism” of the Tudeh, or tried to harmonise Islam with the socialist worldview (viz. Shari'ati), their determination to rid the society of inequality tended to be pretty strong.

There was, however, an element of distinctiveness in Shari'ati's attempt to read Islam through a socialist prism. He argued that any

divide between man and man disrupted the foundational attribute of Creation – i.e. *tauhid* (unity). Just as any disharmony in nature is nothing but a temporary aberration, similarly any divide within human society is also an aberration, unnatural and hence reprehensible. Since Islam believes in the unity of all being (*wahdat al-wujud*) and that all beings are subsumed in God himself, any disharmony in any of the components of creation (viz. human society) is ipso facto unnatural and therefore illegitimate. The Prophet, thus, combated *Jahiliyyat* not because it stood opposed to the values of Islam, but because Islam stood opposed to the values that *Jahiliyyat* upheld – internal divide and disharmony in human society. The pre-Islamic order in Mecca was illegitimate because the aristocracy there created a society divided along the line of

wealth (*zar*), which was upheld by political repression (*zor*) and legitimised by resort to religious deception (*tazveer*) (Chatterjee: 2011, 88-92).

By contrast, Shari'ati posited the notion of the only order that the Shi'i considered to be legitimate - the *ummah*. Shari'ati contended that the *ummah* of Medina, under the Prophet and later Imam 'Ali, symbolized opposition to the creation or maintenance of economic, social and political hierarchies of previously accumulated wealth. The Islamic *ummah* considers every individual at his/her true worth, as a creation of God. In an order thus based on *dad-girasti* (equity), political oppression (*istibdad*) and economic exploitation (*istismar*) would neither have any place nor any need. The equitable character of the *ummah* made it an embodiment of '*adalat* (justice), thus fulfilling the principle purpose of

political life by providing for an orderly conduct of human sociability.(Shari'ati: 1971a) Shari'ati seemed to be implying that the *ummah* founded by the Prophet was legitimate not simply because of the agency of the Prophet, but because it was founded on the principle of '*adalat*, which the Prophet institutionalised. An order which was not just, was by definition one that was opposed to Islam. As Shari'ati tells us that one of his all-time favourite champions of Islam, Abu Dhar, used to say: "When poverty enters a home, religion exits through the window" (Shari'ati, 1981:43).

It follows that, for Shari'ati, an Islamic order was not necessarily that in which Islamic law was operational; an order was quintessentially Islamic only if it was just in its character. This essence of Islam Shari'ati meant to

encapsulate, inter alia, in his lectures in Mashhad and then Tehran, subsequently compiled as *Islamshenasi* i.e. Islamology or *Knowing Islam* - carrying the insinuation that Islam was something to be known (i.e. understood) rather than simply practised. (Shariati, 1971a, b, c) Shari'ati believed that the essence of Islam has often eluded Muslims down the ages, because they were made to seek its essence in its laws and rituals of religious practice. This, Shari'ati argued, was no mere misunderstanding - rather this was deliberately orchestrated deception (*istihmar*), carried out to bolster the forces of *istibdad* (despotism) and *istismar* (exploitation). Shari'ati contended pretty forcefully that such deception was the work of people who did not actually believe in Islam, but pretended to do so - or to give the Qur'anic terminology he used, the

Munafiqun (hypocrites). The *Munafiqun* deceived the people by means of three strategies Shari'ati identified: *takrar*, *tarjume* and *taqlid*. *Takrar* denoted rationalisation of inequity and injustice in the name of Islam; *tarjume* (translation, interpretation) denoted distorted meanings embedded in Islam, in order to mislead by making the people concentrate on the juridical aspect alone of Islam ("writing about menstruation, ejaculation [and] the rituals of going to the toilet"), getting them to ignore the social aspects of Islam; finally deception takes the form of adherence to a terrifying literalism, requiring blind emulation (*taqlid*) of previous practice, regardless of the changed contexts. In this respect, Shari'ati held responsible those among the 'ulema who had collaborated with holders of political power, "who destroyed Islam from within and

made it lifeless, directionless, and motionless” (Shari‘ati, 1989: 8).

In arguing against a literal reading of Islam, Shari‘ati was not quite intent on liberating Islam from the burden of carrying any definite meaning at all. Shari‘ati was in fact suggesting that Islam had many different meanings - viz. the theological, the juridical, the economic, the social, etc - each legitimate in its own right, and contributing the components of the larger whole of Islam. Each of these sorts of meanings varied across time- i.e. the social reading at one stage of societal evolution need not necessarily correspond to any other. Hence, if the role of women in Islam in the 20th century is to be cast in the manner of Fatemeh Masoumeh, the meanings of her action could acquire a different meaning from what it may have done at other periods of time (Chatterjee, 2011:161-66).

Ideas acquired meanings, Shari‘ati seems to be arguing, in the context in which they were found in motion. Islam, thus, despite having an intrinsic truth had no literal truth, rather only allegorical ones, which could change across time and space. Hence, the body of ideas constituting Islam did not carry any definitive meaning except for the purpose for which it was put to use in order to improve the human condition. As he once put it: “Is my understanding of this Islamic issue right? Or is it yours? Is he right? Or is that none of us is right? ... [But] one can easily determine who is right. If you see my interpretation ... has a positive impact on my life as an individual and on the society that believes in it, then it is correct.” (“Intezar: Mazhab-e Aitraz”, Shari‘ati, 2004 b, 244) In his reckoning, the improvement of the human condition seems to be the clearest maker of a

harmonious order (*tauhid*), and its opposite, *shirk*, disharmony. Since the manifestation of disharmony varies from one society to the next across the ages, the engagement with these questions would also vary from one society to the next, but the underlying purpose would remain the same – attainment of harmony. Shari'ati maintained that the whole of human history was basically the story of the struggle for the attainment of harmony, and it was only Islam that came nearest to its attainment by virtue of those Muslims who had perceived the essence of Islam, and struggled for it (Shari'ati, 1971a:48-49, 55-56).

Mazhab-e Aitraz: Shaping the Context

For all the talk about political legitimacy, Shari'ati had precious little to contribute on the structural dimension of a *just* order. His

approach to the issue of negotiating political dispensations was altogether different. Having once been a part of Mosaddeq's movement, disappointment with Mosaddeq's failure and disenchantment with his compatriots had turned Shari'ati away from institutional politics for the rest of his life. He was dismayed by the manner in which the Pahlavi regime in the post-Mosaddeq era managed to subvert the institutional logic of constitutionalism left behind by the *Mashruteh* era, and by the manner in which his compatriots fell in line with the changes. Accordingly, the possibilities of institutional politics almost never appeared again on the map of Shari'ati's political thinking. He refrained from even entering the debate regarding the nature of the state and its institutions that was then raging in Iran. He emphasized instead the human element and seemed to argue that whether a

government is good or bad depends on the intentions and conduct of the people who drive it forward, not the institutional parameters they work within. This fed into his general understanding of *tauhid*, implying that regardless of the *form* of government involved, the direction and intentions of the government would determine the character of governance. If the rulers promote justice and equity, the order promotes *tauhid*; if the rulers hinder these, they promote *shirk* ([lit. polytheism] deviation from *tauhid*).

Shari'ati, thus, was not talking about political order, rather about political morality, and its relation with political legitimacy. He overturned even descriptive categories like *ummah* (Muslim community) into normative ones, where any community inhabited by Muslims would not pass for *ummah*. He argued that *ummah* was not a real

order that exists or ever existed, but a standard of social and political order that Muslims have to attain. ("Ummat wa Imamah", Shari'ati, 2004a:390-91) The *ummah* that the Prophet had brought into being, and which the Imams had fought for and striven towards, created and indicated the benchmark towards which Muslims have to aspire to. Thus speaking of the order founded at Medina by the Prophet, Shari'ati did not speak of how that order functioned or what it looked like, rather what it signified – equity and justice. The order was Islamic not because it had the Messenger of God at its helm; rather the Messenger of God propounded the order *because* it stood for equity, justice and harmony.

In as much as the *ummah* was a normative rather than descriptive category, Shari'ati did not comment on its necessary structural indicators,

because so far as he was concerned there could be none – not even institutionalisation of Islamic law. Having the example of the virtual defenestration of rule of law under the Pahlavis, Shari'ati contended that historically all juridical frameworks have been susceptible to subversion by the triad of *zor-zar-tazveer*, because of the weaknesses of man. These weaknesses, which Shari'ati poetically described as the *chahar zandan-e Insaan*, (the four prisons of man) were the constitutional inadequacies of man, which make him corruptible (.i.e. easy to tempt) - a notion he 'unpacked' from the Qur'anic allegory of Adam being made of putrid clay. (Shari'ati, 2004c:125-46) But just as harmony is subverted in human society owing to the baser elements of the human condition (signified by clay), Shari'ati saw the possibilities of redemption as well in the other half

of the human condition. Unpacking the Qur'anic allegory further, he argued while the matter of which God constituted man was clay, the life was breathed into him by God himself, and to that extent the life force of man is *essentially* pure. It is for man to choose whether he would be tempted by the sordid matter that makes up this universe, or would seek out the good that gives the Creation its life force. (Shari'ati: 1987) A Muslim is one who wages this *jihad* (struggle) against his own baser elements to free himself from the captivity of his inherent corruptibility.

Shorn of the allegory, Shari'ati's normative understanding of Islam pivoted around the *mas'ouliyat* (accountability) that is required of a Muslim. As he had once put it: "[T]he object of the human individual is not *budan* (to be), it is *shudan* (to become)" ("Ummat wa

Imamat”, Shari‘ati 2004 a, 390). Hence, to be reckoned as a Muslim, Shari‘ati believed, one must aspire to attain the essence of Islam, which is ‘*adalat* (justice). A Muslim must be able and willing to stand up in opposition whenever injustice prevails - bearing evidence of his faith, similar to the manner in which Islam came into being through the mediation of the Prophet. And all the other heroes of Shi‘i Islam that Shari‘ati paid particular attention to (Imams ‘Ali and Hossein, Fatemeh Masoumeh, Abu Dharr etc.) were heroes precisely because they had chosen to make a stand in opposition to injustice. Islam, as Shari‘ati put it, was *essentially a mazhab-e aitraz* (a religion of protest), the foundation of which was an act of negation – the negation of injustice (“Intezar: Mazhab-e Aitraz”, Shari‘ati, 2004b:154).

The truly distinctive element in

Shari‘ati’s thinking, however, was that he did not consider the faith of Islam as the panacea for every evil; nor that the mere practice of Islam would suffice as a marker of probity. By highlighting the abundance of the *munafiqun* in the annals of Islam, who perpetuate disharmony in the name of the faith, Shari‘ati argued that it was the responsibility of every true Muslim to promote *istizhar* (exposure) of that evil. He exhorted them to follow the example of Imam Hussain, who embraced certain death at the battle of Karbala and by so doing bore witness (lit. *shahadat*) to the truth of Islam, which the Umayyads were violating. (“Shahadat”, Shari‘ati: 2004 b, 154) Arguing that the subversion of justice in the name of Islam was a sort of allegorical representation of the *ghaibat* (occultation) of Imam al-Montazer, Shari‘ati stressed that the idea of the return of the Twelfth

Imam was also an allegorical notion, not a literal assertion. He contended that the Shi'i notion of *intezar* did not denote the need for the faithful to passively wait for Imam al-Montazer to return. *Intezar* denoted waiting for a different order (indicating dissatisfaction with the present one). ("Intezar: Mazhab-e Aitraz", Shari'ati: 2004 b, 277-78) Such awaiting would come to an end only when Muslims take up the responsibility of bringing into being the conditions of harmony that would signify the return of the Vanished Imam – i.e. even the return of the Vanished Imam was a figurative assertion, rather than a literal one (Chatterjee, 2011:139-48).

Unpacking Shari'ati's ideas, it would seem that he believed that given the inherent corruptibility of man, no order (Islam included) could actually guarantee harmony and equity by virtue of the structures that

constitute it. A just order is a pretty elusive concept, because orders were only as just as the people who comprised them. The mere foundation of a just order does not guarantee its continuance precisely because human nature is corruptible. Thus for a just order to obtain, the people need be relentlessly vigilant in opposition to the elements of disharmony and injustice.

Conclusion

It is tempting to argue (and, there is reason to be tempted) that, Shari'ati's political thinking emphasised more on resistance to unjust order, rather than the mechanics of a just order, because at the height of his career as a public speaker (at the University of Mashhad and then at the Hosseiniyeh Ershad in Tehran) during 1967-73, there seemed no possibility that the Pahlavi regime would be coming to an end in the foreseeable future. Living in an era

when the Pahlavis seemed invincible, Shari'ati could have made his peace with the establishment, and worked on a discourse of Islam that steered clear of dangerous political overtones. And indeed, financially never very solvent, it would have been practical for Shari'ati to have done so. However, while Shari'ati was careful never to wear his politics on his sleeves because he needed his teaching positions first at Mashhad and then at Tehran, his entire allegorical discourse of Islam seemed to have been developing piecemeal to argue the case for resistance to unjust socio-political dispensations.

Prima facie, Shari'ati's critique seems to have conjured a Utopian vision of social order that was devised with Islamic idioms; a deeper inspection however reveals an attempt to underwrite the

principle of popular sovereignty. Going against the predominant quietist "reading" of Ithna 'Ashari Shi'ism, he made the case that the essence of Shi'ism, and indeed of Islam, lay in activism in defense of justice and equity. He moved with the normative assumption that in a just order, the government is entrusted with promotion of the interests of the state. Should the government abdicate that responsibility, then the people need assume the responsibility for removal of such a government – such responsibility being the essence of *jihad*. Dialectics (of good and evil, right and wrong), as Shari'ati was fond of saying, has no intrinsic motion.

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بدون شک علی شریعتی از مهم‌ترین ایدئولوگ‌های اسلامی پیش از انقلاب ایران بوده است، بخصوص تا آنجا که اسلام را یک نیروی سیاسی مورد احترام برای مردان و زنان جوان از طبقه متوسط سنتی در ایران نمود. شریعتی برای زمان خود از جهت تأثیر فکری و تعلیمی خود بدیع بود. جاذبه ایدئولوژی برای شریعتی در این بود که با آن انسان توان تعبیر عالم خود را پیدا می‌کند. این مقاله تلاش بر کاوش نحوه‌ای است که شریعتی خوانش سیاسی خود از اسلام را پیش برد. در این میان مقوله «نظم عادلانه» مورد توجه است. بحث اصلی این است که برای شریعتی «نظم عادلانه» مهمتر از خود «نظم» است.

واژگان کلیدی: شریعتی، اسلام، ایدئولوژی، نظم عادلانه.

۱. دانشیار، گروه تاریخ، دانشگاه کلکته، هند.