

## CHAPTER 4

### MUSLIM INTELLECTUALS IN IRAN ON ISLAMIC POLITICAL THEORY AND MODERNITY

#### 4 .0 Introduction

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (28 June 1712 – 2 July 1778), the major Swiss political thinker has mentioned Islam in his major writing *The Social Contract* as the best political ideology and the best religion- based governance, capable of connecting strong governance with democracy. He believes that in Islam

Mahomet held very sane views, and linked his political system well together (Rousseau, 1968, p. 109)

Which is a guarantee for the rationality of governance? He believed that in an Islamic government,

as long as the form of his government continued under the caliphs who succeeded, that government was indeed one, and so far good (Rousseau, 1968, p. 109).

He believed that the social and political arena of the Islamic nations are correct and on the same line. Therefore, the country was governed properly, rationally and efficiently which is the result of a combination of a strong republic with Islamic ruling. In his view, Islamic governance is socially acceptable, democratic and global. He believed that the reason behind the maladies of the Islamic nations in the past couple of hundreds of years is nothing but the distance the Islamic governments have taken from the 'real Islam'. This resulted in the separation of the republic from Islam, as well as politics and religion.

Today one of the challenges in the political arena is to combine faith and politics. This can be a global issue or even solution as we can see the scandals and the thirst for legitimacy and morals among the politicians around the world and the fact that

faith can fill this gap very properly. Islam contains certain elements which are compatible with democratic principles. The most important of these are freedom, equality, consultation and public consent (Jahanbakhsh, 2004, p. 38) .

Along with the rise of Iran's contemporary times that is after the Persian Constitutional Revolution democracy has been a matter of controversy. This question has always been in new thinkers' mind whether democracy, as a new rule of government, is compatible with religion or not. If we consider democracy to be built around the bases of:

1. Right to choose leaders,
2. Existence of social freedoms,
3. Pluralism,
4. Majority's rule,
5. Distribution of powers

The history of the term "religious intellectuality" goes back to the Persian Constitutional Revolution between 1905 and 1911. After that, intellectuals such as Murteza Mutahhari (February 3, 1920 – May 1, 1979) and Ali Shariati (November 23, 1933 – 1977) were the leaders of this intellectual movement. The aim of this movement was therefore adjusting the Islamic *Sharia* with the necessities of the modern life. Their idea was to improve the situation and the quality of living of Muslims based on the Islamic rules and they played roles in the events of the 1979 Iranian revolution against the Shah. There are many thinkers who see it a contradiction to combine democracy with faith and many believe that power without faith is ultimately corrupt. Therefore, they trying to adapt the two together. In this part, the aim is to discuss the ideology of

three of such intellectuals in the course of the revolution and the view of Iranian Islamic thinkers about democracy in Iranian system of government. The three intellectuals under study here are Murteza Mutahhari, Ali Shariati and Abdolkarim Soroush, (Hosein Haj Faraj Dabbagh) (1945- ). Mutahhari was a cleric but the latter two are considered to be non cleric Islamologists. The main topic of interest in this chapter is democracy. The ideas of these three respected thinkers are basically same and that is adopting a modern look for Islamic rules. But still there is one difference; Shariati and Soroush try to modernize religion, whereas Mutahhari tried to give a religious form to modernity. They were common in one idea: their emphasis on democracy in a model for government has been as strong as their emphasis on the role of religion in this model. Their model was and is a democratic, Islamic state. Then there are many religious laws which emphasis on the necessity of the rules named above.

#### **4.1 Ali Shariati**

##### **4.1.1 Biography of Ali Shariati**

Ali Shariati, a renowned figure was born on November 23, 1933 in Khorasan province. From the very beginning, the strongest influence Ali found was from his father. Ali Shariati was exposed to a studious environment, where religious activities of the older Shariati's center for the propagation of Islamic Truths formed a continued intellectual stimulation (Rahnema, 2000, p. 13). During his high school days, he was restricted to abide the normal curriculum set upon him. Through his father, he studied Arabic and the religious sciences. Meanwhile, he also studied French where he managed to gain some knowledge of the language before he started his education at the university (Rahnema, 2000, pp. 13-18).

During his years at the Teacher's Training College in Mashhad, Shariati managed to get in touch with young people that were from the less privileged economic classes of the society. During that encounter, he had a close look at poverty and hardship that existed in Iran during that period. In the meantime, he was exposed to many areas of the Western philosophical and political thought. He progressed to the extent that he could explain and offer solutions in handling problems of Muslim societies through staunch traditional Islamic principles. He also understood the points of view of modern sociology and philosophy and this was proved through his articles from the time he served in a Mashhad daily newspaper, Khorasan. He projected his growing eclecticism and acquaintance through ideas of modern Islamic and the role of extra-Islamic thinkers such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Iqbal, Sigmund Freud and Alexis Carrel (Rahnema, 2000, pp. 61-68). 1952 was a milestone year for him as he was appointed as a high-school teacher and soon after, he established Islamic Students' Association. This was the main reason behind his arrest after a demonstration in 1953. Starting in 1953, the year in which Mohammad Mossadeq's democratically elected government was overthrown in a coup, partly planned by the CIA and their allied Iranians, he joined the National Resistance Movement. He graduated in 1955 from the University of Mashhad. In 1957, he was arrested for the second time and this time by the Secret Police of the Shah and that was followed by a wave of arrests of the members of the National Resistance Movement.

Despite his struggles, Ali Shariati successfully obtained a scholarship for France, where he continued his graduate studies at the University of Paris. There he was considered a brilliant student and was elected best student in letters in 1958. He worked towards earning his doctorate in the field of sociology, leaving Paris even without being able to complete his education in 1964. Within this phase in Paris, Shariati attempted to

collaborate with the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) in 1959. Soon after, in the following year, he began to read Frantz Fanon and translated an anthology of his work into Persian, since he had mastered the language at a young age. Shariati platformed Fanon's thought into the Iranian revolutionary émigrée circles. However, the circle saw an end when he was arrested in Paris following a demonstration in honor of Patrice Lumumba, on January 17, 1961.

Moving on, in 1962, he decided to further his education in the field of sociology and history of religions, where he followed the courses conducted by renowned Islamic scholar Louis Massignon, Jacques Berque and the sociologist Georges Gurvitch. Through this process, he got to know the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, the very same year, and soon it was published in Iran through Jalal Al-e Ahmad's book *Gharbzadegi* (or Occidentosis). Following this move, he decided to return to Iran in 1964. It was not a pleasant move for him as he was arrested and sentenced by the Imperial Iranian authorities for the involvement in subversive political activities, while he was in France. However this phase ended as he was released after a few weeks, where he opted for the profession of teaching at the University of Mashhad.

This helped Shariati as he was then granted to leave the country for England. However it was a pretty tragic state as he died three weeks later in Southampton hospital in 1978. Till today the cause of his death has remained unclear for obvious reason. Nevertheless, there have been speculations from various sources stating that SAVAK's involvement as the cause of his death as he strongly belonged to the anti-Shah activities.

#### 4.1.2 Ali Shariati and Democracy

Ali Shariati was one of the prominent establishers of modernism in religion and was as well one of the most well-known thinkers of the 1970s. One of his contributions was to turn Islam into an ideology namely, an Islamic ideology. He believed that society needs revolution not reforms and he even believed that “democracy is the most Islamic form of governance” (Shariati, 1979b, p. 48). He believed that democracy is based on the vote of the majority and considered people as its most important donors of legitimacy and he wrote:

*Shura, Ijma, and Bay'a* are the same as democracy, an Islamic principle explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an (Shari'ati, 1968, p. 631).

He, like most of the thinkers of all of the underdeveloped nations in 1960s and 1970, preferred revolutionary acts rather than democratic elections to choose leaders. He wanted a government based on Shiite imams' beliefs and believed that Shiite ideology can be the basis of a full-fledged party.

He believed that Islamic leadership is actually further divided into two different time frames: one is the spiritual and lingering leadership of the imams which is eternal and the second which is limited in time is the leadership of the Islamic clerics which is constrained by time (Shari'ati, 1968, p. 110). He stated that there are two types of government: one is dictatorship in which the leader is chosen because of prior privileges, such as blood line and church authority, and the other one is in the form of democracy in which the leaders are chosen by the vote of majority. In this form of government, which has been in use since the time of ancient Greece, people, in Greek Demos, have the right to choose and to change their leaders.

Shariati considered this model of governance as the preferred model in the era of the 18th century along with the rise of the personal freedoms, liberalism and human

rights. He believed that democracy was equivalent to the caliphate during the Islamic times and that democracy has been clearly mentioned in the Quran. In his view, allegiance is the ultimate show of democracy in Islamic culture. He considered democratic revolutions as one of the most important features of sociology of the Asian, African and other developing nations (Shari'ati, 1968, p. 111).

He believed that it is very crucial for developing and newly independent nations to go toward democratic revolutions, to choose their own leaders, and in order to develop, they need to fight the superstitions and if they choose their governance system based on two cannons of leadership and development, they will not select those leaders who want to change the culture and the backbone of their societies. If you consider the government, as the old Greeks did, as the guardian of people and constitution, then democracy is the best option to choose leaders, since the ruling of the leader is actually limited to maintaining the pace of development and not 'leadership' in its real, contextual meaning. It is apparent that those chosen by people (the majority) are those who are actually from people, that is, people choose those leaders who are willing to maintain their culture and vital elements of their society as a whole. As it is expected, those who believe in rapid changes and revolutionary acts via elections are going to be deserted, since people won't like to choose leaders who are not committed to maintaining the culture and society of their respective countries.

Thus he believed that the government which is voted more strongly will probably keep the votes to itself, since people tend to choose leaders who wish to maintain the situation of the society in the time-frame in which they are chosen. Therefore, if this is to be the most important role of a government, democracy, and elections by people is the best way of choosing leaders to rule a country since its goal is not to revolutionize the country's traditions and cultures, but to maintain and improve it.

But this is an ideal model, which may not be quite applicable to countries with many languages and beliefs. For this situation, there are two criteria to start with: either we maintain the different beliefs and cultures, or we destroy the majority of them in order to confirm development and this would necessary to oppress a huge number of people since everyone wants to worship the way they want. Thus he realized that on many occasions, democracy is not a guarantee for pioneering and revolutionizing ideologies since the majority may not choose them to gain power. On the other hand, he did not suggest democracy for Iran, although he knew that it is indeed compatible with Islam. As Michael J. Sandel suggests, “The worst enemy of democracy is democracy itself” (Shari’ati, 1968, p. 111).

He believed that a group of privileged politicians would always buy votes. Thus, they will never allow a fully fledged democracy in such countries as Iran. On the other hand, he believed this is not what exactly happens in the elections held in developed countries. He believed that in developed nations, they do not rig the elections by writing fake ballots, but what they do is to spend millions of dollars to penetrate into the hearts of people, thus giving democracy and liberalism its real meaning.

He believed that money and authority is what exactly puts the ideas (votes) in people’s hearts and leave them alone to voice the ‘predefined ideas’ freely. He further divides democratic governments under two categories: free democracies and controlled democracies or more exactly (Engaged democracy). He believed that in free democracies, governments are elected freely by the people and it is therefore committed to do as the voters wish and they need to follow as they dictate.

On the other hand, in an Engaged democracy, a government comes to power by a progressive revolutionary ideology, promising a pioneering society in all aspects: culturally, politically, artistically, economically etc, and it does not solely respect each

and every one of the voters' ideas, but it tries to confirm the pioneering revolution in the promised manner. Therefore it has a certain ideology to achieve this. Such a democracy has an ideology to which it is seriously committed and believes that the ideology in practice is the only way to salvation for a nation, and commits itself to oppress those elements in a society which are against the move:

Leadership in such a government is not there to maintain the traditions and ideologies as they existed before the revolution, but it is committed to maintain and improve the situation of 'revolution' and its goals (Shari'ati, 1968, p. 126).

Thus, Islam is a controlled 'democracy' or Engaged democracy in which the Prophet is committed to revolutionize the society and change the vote of the elements which oppose this revolution. He opposed the idea of an elected leadership of an underdeveloped nation, since the leaders who are chosen under such situations are not guaranteed to be the best 'revolutionaries' who are really deserving the right to rule and their leadership does not guarantee the goals of the 'revolution' as promised. As discussed before, in such a society and with such an election, this type of leadership is not committed to the goals for which it is 'voted' but it is rather looking forward to its own ideology and power. It is here that he proposes that in such societies one must ignore democracy because people are not ready to choose a competent leader yet (Shari'ati, 1968, p. 128).

He believed that a revolution is a very fast process whereas the changes in the minds and hearts of a nation comes in a very slow process and may take up to generations. This leads to a smooth transition to democracies. This turned out to be a different story. He believed that leaders in young revolutions would not leave the fate of the revolution to a handful of people who are not yet accustomed to democracy. Consider that he is now talking about a very primitive and underdeveloped society in

which the votes are rather 'ethnic' or 'tribal', in other words, a tribe or an ethnic minority would choose a certain option, regardless of the votes of the individuals, as they are not considered to exist, outside the tribal ideology. He firmly believed that democracy in a young revolution is a killer to the revolution itself:

Democracy in a young revolution is a threat to the totality of the revolution. In this perspective, the strong leadership of a revolution needs to hold the control of the revolution until it is firm. Until the spoilers of the revolution are spoiled, social unrest and other dangers are oppressed, brains are washed, social relationships are destroyed, the society has found its way to success, and until the number of votes are 'truly' equal to the number of 'herds', the leadership needs to hold on to power and need not give way to expert politicians, as this is the beginning of the end of the revolution (Shari'ati, 1968, p. 134) .

Hence he opposes the form of Western democracies explaining that there is no such ideology to lead the people and hence no commitment to salvation in such democracies. He also believed that for a democracy to be implemented properly in a society; (1) there should be a 'democratically' chosen leader for *ever*, and (2) a huge distance between elections (Shari'ati, 1982, p. 74).

He believed that a full-fledged democracy cannot be 'exported' to all societies just as culture and traditions cannot, and specially in underdeveloped nations; it is a source of confusion and corruption, explaining that people in such underdeveloped societies are more considered to be 'herds of animals' and therefore their vote has the same value in the eyes of politicians as the ideas of animals, which has to be overcome by the leadership of a wise Imam, for several generations to prepare the nation for a freer democracy.

He believed that in Iran, during the absence of the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam in the Shiite ideology, there is a need for a leader, who is chosen democratically, and who commits himself and his rules to the rules of Islam and Shiite ideology until the 12<sup>th</sup> imam is back on earth. At the same time he is not committed to fulfill the expectations of every

one of the voters (Shari'ati, 1972, pp. 266-268). He therefore has to have several great characteristics, firstly to be very knowledgeable of the Islamic rules as his role is one of extraordinary responsibilities. In this reasoning, Shariati believes that the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam wants his followers to refer to his fellows on earth in case of conflict or doubt. This ideology is in fact the backbone of what was in the following years theorized and introduced to *Shiite Fiqh* as the Guardianship of the Jurist or in Persian, *Velayate Faghih* (Shari'ati, 1972, pp. 268,282,284).

## **4.2 Abdolkarim Soroush**

### **4.2.1 Soroush on Religion and democracy**

Abdolkarim Soroush (Hosein Haj Faraj Dabbagh,) was born in 1945 in Teheran, is an Iranian thinker, reformer, Rumi scholar and a former assistant professor at the Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, in Tehran. In his ideology, politics and science are man-made but at the same time he believes that the existence of religious influence is necessary in politics of an Islamic society. He constrains the religious government to the votes, and does not recognize a solely clerical religion. His reasoning is that focusing too much on the clerical and organized part of the religion will interrupt his concentration on more important discussion in the field and paralyzes his view of religion (Soroush, 1994a p. 353). He believes that religion is unable to involve in politics directly and more secular products of humanity such as anthropology should have greater influence on politics. He criticizes the silence on the discussions of politically-motivated Islamic thinkers such as Al-Farabi (aka as Alfarabius 872–951) (Soroush, 1996, p. 2).

His other argument is about the definition of religion itself as he believes that if we do not have a precise definition of religion, then talking about the religious politics

is absurd. He sees religion as a personal possession and believes that a religious politics is initially materialization of religious rules and then the depiction of good deeds. Therefore, he concludes that being a Muslim is just a simple belief in the religion, and thus good deeds are a by-product of this belief (Soroush, 1994a p. 355). He believes that a good deed based on religion is mysticism:

A religious government is based more on people's understanding and experience of religion rather than on the good deeds of its people." (Soroush, 1996, p. 3) Therefore he emphasizes that "An Islamic regime is not based on clerical influence, but it's rather as a result of the people's belief." (Soroush, 1994a p. 355) And "The Islamic regime is created to allow people to worship as they wish, based on their religious experience" (Soroush, 1994a pp. 355-356) Then he comes to this conclusion that "In a religious government, everyone is free to choose the way of worship, on the other hand, in a clerical government, the clergy will use all its power to prevent people from whatever way other than his own path (Soroush, 1994a p. 356).

He has a strong opinion on the topic of clerical interference in the matters of society. He believes that in a real Islamic state, the government is surely not authorized to dictate the states of religion to its people, whereas he believes that in a clerical form of governance, it is the clerical authority which has the power to dictate his ideology to its people. In this view, belief is solely a matter of choice and should not be dictated and it is exclusively based on the love of God and therefore useless to be dictated. He believes that the role of a religious government is to prevent commitment of sin, especially in public and nothing more than that. His goal in arguing this sort of things is a relentless endeavor to transform the society and the politics to a democratic one. For this cause, he poses two questions for the leader (Soroush, 1996, p. 4):

1. Where does the right to govern come from, for the leader?
2. What is the form of government?

The answer to the 1st question needs the answer to the second. He believes that the right to govern is obtained from the form of the government. Because it cannot be a

God-installed right, then government in a clerical view is controversial: “In an Islamic (clerical) government, the right to govern is said to be from the side of God.” (Soroush, 1994a p. 357) His preferred role of people in government is for them to have the right to choose whoever they think is suitable to rule them. After this, all are obliged to follow his rules since he is the one who has the power to guardianship of the Islamic society. This fining process is obtained in the polls and the leader is responsible for the rules to be followed as stated in the *Sharia*, and he has the power to dictate the rules, even though people reject or fail to follow it.

On the other hand, no one is infallible, not even the Islamic leader, therefore, in the Islamic republic, there is a body called the Assembly of Experts of the Leadership which has the power to supervise, elect and remove one from the leadership of the country. He criticizes this structure and states that “the Assembly of Experts of the Leadership are indeed legitimized by the leader himself now, if there comes a case in which the leader is criticized by the members of the assembly, and at the same time the members are delegitimized by the leader, then who is to have the last say?” (Soroush, 1994a p. 377). He believes that the assembly has to be legitimized by other than the leader himself, since this causes a controversy in legitimization of the people who are installed in a body who is supposed to criticize their own legitimizer.

By having this in mind, he uses another argument to further push the limit: if people have the right to remove the leader, then they necessarily have to have the right to choose one: “If we accept that removing the supervising is the right of people, then installing is the other end of the same thing” (Soroush, 1996, p. 4). He adds:

The right to supervise necessarily changes the equation, this will add to the share of power which is given to people, which is a depiction of a democratic country. Such a democratic rule has no contradiction with Islam. But of course, such a ruling is very different from an Islamic government which is centered on the supreme leader and a clergy.” (Soroush, 1996, p. 5)“If you accept the supervisory

role of people in a government, then other necessities of the same idea will also be considered: being human-based and independent (Soroush, 1996, p. 5).

He is very opinionated on this limitation of power in an Islamic government and constraints it to what most other governments, whether religious or secular, are. This is also depicted in his later arguments about religion and its relationship with politics. He believes the rule of the leader in an Islamic country is not more than 'guidance' and it does not go further than observing the society as in the Islamic view the clergy are not supposed to be involved in government or the law making process of the country. Such a rule by the clergy should not go beyond superficial aspects of personal lives.

In a democratic government, the government is obliged to prepare its people for a free religious experimentation and selection. This preparation needs to be in a certain way. This is the way which defines how a democratic country functions and whether the country is functioning in a democratic way. He asks a question in order to define the role of a democratic, and at the same time Islamic government: is the role a necessity to provide people with their material needs or is the role of a government to provide people for their religious and non-material lives: He answers:

People have material need: food, shelter, immunity, well-being, health, regulation and so on. The second step is the non-material needs including religion, art, beauty and alike. For a human to proceed from the first to the second type of needs, he needs to fulfill his material needs first. Having a good relationship with God is only accessible after the need for food and shelter is fulfilled." Then he concludes that "The rule of the government has to be limited to this fulfillment of the material needs of its people in the first place. When a government does this successfully, it has indeed helped the religion of its people (Soroush, 1994a p. 370).

As mentioned before, by this belief there is not much difference between the functions of an Islamic and non-Islamic government. The only difference is that now it is the society of the religious people and this fulfillment of needs will indirectly help them to have a better religion. It is the same law and legislation otherwise.

If we are to consider any difference between Islamic and non-Islamic rulings, it is a matter of their final destination, not the path. They both have to fulfill the needs of their people to let them choose the way they want. But one is doing this to help the people's religion (Soroush, 1994a p. 375).

Needless to say, a religion-based government only finds its meaning in the suitable society; in which most of the people recognize the way of ruling.

### **4.3 Murteza Mutahhari**

**4.3.1 Democracy in the thought of Murteza Mutahhari** (February 3, 1920 – May 1, 1979, an Iranian scholar, cleric, University lecturer, and politician). He was one of the first clerics who discussed religion and democracy and the relationship between them. He considered them to be compatible and believed that democracy is the outlook of the government whereas the Islamic rule is its contest, and people freely choose the government which implements Islamic laws. He believed that there is a real relationship between Islam and politics. He criticized those who believed that there is something unclear about Islamic rule and said:

Those who think Islamic rule is not clear or democratic, actually think that whoever has an ideology to rule people, is not democratic (Mutahhari, 1988a, p. 44).

He believed there are a number of criteria for a democratic government:

1. The right to choose: He believed that the right to choose is very different from the content of the government they are voting for. Therefore, they can choose Islam or any other ideology and this does not affect the democratic process which needs to be there (Mutahhari, 1988a, pp. 80-81).
2. Freedom: He believed that democracy needs freedom, as it is recommended in Islam. The idea of freedom in the West is the human freedom to choose whatever they wish whereas in the Islamic context it means the freedom to choose 'what is good':

In Western democracy, the ‘animal’ characteristics of human are freed, whereas in Islam, that part of humanity is oppressed and the human part is freed (Mutahhari, 1988a, pp. 78-79) .

He believed that limiting freedom is not only a good thing for individuals, but it is a good for humanity:

it is impossible to understand and to believe in Islam without accepting the nature of humanity that Islam has in mind (Mutahhari, 1988a, pp. 79-82) .

He believed that the freedom which is implemented in the West is not really human, but it is ‘humanistic’ and real human freedom is in Islam:

Freedom in the West is the freedom of ‘animal’ side of humans, whereas the real freedom of humans is implemented in Islam (Mutahhari, 1988a, pp. 100-105).

3. Rule of Law: It is very important in a democratic system of governance and thus has no controversy with Islam. Nothing can be outside the Islamic rule and law. What differentiates Islamic law from secular laws is the implementation of Islamic cannons in it (Mutahhari, 1988a, p. 83).

#### **4.3.2 Mutahhari’s Idea about the Compatibility between Islamic Republic and Democracy:**

There is no clash between Islam and democracy in the Islamic Republic. Democracy does not necessarily mean having no ideology, there is no conflict between Islamic rule and national interests (Mutahhari, 1988a, p. 86).

Therefore he criticizes those who say it is not possible to have a national, Islamic rule at the same time:

Islam is a religion and at the same time an ideology to control a country. It suggests that Islamic governments take up to Islamic laws (Mutahhari, 1988a, p. 83).

Therefore he believes that Islamic rule can be implemented in the country to be used as a ruling law since it is a good way of living for its followers. He then explains that the Islamic republic is indeed an Islamic and at the same time a democratic government. In it, people are the real authority to choose their leaders. In Islam, there is

an emphasis on dialogue between the Prophet and his followers; this is a sign of respect of Islam on the role of people in government. The leaders in an Islamic government are committed to follow the rules of Islam, otherwise it is not an Islamic government. Therefore, Islamic democracy is the exact opposite of Western democracy:

Secular democracy is corrupt, whether Western or Eastern. Islamic democracy is accepted (Khomeini 1961, p. 238).

#### **4.3.3 Guardianship of the Jurist in Motahhari's Opinion**

He believed in overall control of the Jurist in a society. In his opinion, the Jurist's rule is not in executive positions, but rather on overall supervision. The role of the Jurist in an Islamic government is not ruling, but rather, it is supervision. In an Islamic country in which people have accepted Islamic law, the role of a leader is to be an 'ideologue', not a boss. He should supervise to make sure that the Islamic rule is indeed implemented properly (Mutahhari, 1988a, pp. 85-86).

Anyhow, he believed in a deep and wide range of authorities for the Jurist: "People elect their leader, this is the essence of democracy" (Mutahhari, 1988a, p. 86).

He strongly believed that having an ideology does not mean excluding democracy: "All countries have political parties and they necessarily follow a certain set of beliefs and ideologies" (Mutahhari, 1988a, pp. 80-81).

He explains that the leadership of the Islamic republic is actually a 'symbol' of democracy:

The leader is not installed. He is elected. This is exactly the essence of democracy. If he were to be installed, then that is against democracy (Mutahhari, 1988a, p. 86)

Therefore, he emphasized on the Godly and people oriented characters of the leader. He considers the Islamic statehood to be impossible in case of losing acceptance in the public. He believed that the difference starts from the point that people can only choose the 'best' candidate among the jurists, not anyone they wish (Qurbani, 2005, p. 291). He emphasized the people's role to the extent that he believed:

Even if people do not accept the leader due to lack of information, no one can obligate them to accept the leader (Mutahhari, 1986, p. 207).

He answers to the question of a clash between Islamic rule and democracy by saying:

In an Islamic state, the leader is not the executor of the laws, but he is rather an ideologue who has the role of supervision in the proper implementation of Islamic laws, not executing them (Mutahhari, 1982a, p. 86).

He also believed that there is no real difference between democracy and leadership in the Islamic Republic, the guardianship of the jurist is an ideological guardianship, which is 'elected' by the people. This is indeed the essence of democracy (Mutahhari, 1982a, p. 86).

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

The Iranian religious reformists have always had two major roles in Iran: (1) socio-political influence, (2) producing thoughts. Their aim has always been radical in introducing modern ideologies and updating the religion based on the teachings of the modern world, including ideas such as human rights, equality, liberty and resistance against dictators. But their most important aim has been to reform religion and make it more compatible with the modern values.

Most of these intellectuals tried in one way or the other to reduce the distance between religion and modern identity; whereas Ali Shariati had a negative view toward the modern world and rejected all the modern values altogether. He did not consider

democracy as an ideal model of governance and believed that in this form of government the very values of the establishment of the ideology-freedom and election to be named-are not fulfilled and therefore it is a malfunctioning form of government. He recommended a 'guided' democracy (Democratic Engage) based on the Shiite ideology in which the ultimate aim is to fulfill the ideology and maximize the theology. His most important contribution was to theorize the Islamic ideology upon a Marxist view of economy and believed in a form of 'Islamized' democracy, freedom and equality. he divided Islam and *Shiism* into two kinds: One, Alavi Shiism (also called red *Shiism*), going back to Imam Ali, the *Shias'* first Imam, and cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. This, in Shariati's view, represented true, genuine and pure Islam.

The other, Safavid Shiism, referred to the religion that the ruling class uses to oppress and repress the masses, and in which the clerics, who have forfeited Alavi Shiism, play a greedy, self-serving and corrupt role. For that reason, Shariati rejected a special role for the clergy in society (Shari'ati, 1971, pp. 258-274). He was therefore looking for an Islamic Protestantism<sup>2</sup> in which his role model put a step forward to revive and refresh the Islamic 'civilization'. He believed the position of the Islamic leadership is one comparable to that of the imam and believed that this position is neither elected nor given to anyone (Shari'ati, 1968, pp. 122-123). Therefore the way to assign a leader is to 'find' him rather than to choose or elect him(Shari'ati, 1968, pp. 125-126).This 'finding' is the responsibility of the assembly of experts on the matter

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<sup>2</sup> The second resurgence and revival of "Islamic Protestantism" took place in the 1960s. Dr. Ali Shariati, a lay progressive reformist intellectual educated in Sorbonne, took the initiative for a radical reform in Islamic thought in Iran. For Shariati, "Islamic Protestantism" was less about theological and more about social reforms. The core component of his argument was that if you want to liberate the religious public, you need first to liberate the religion itself.

and the leader therefore is not responsible to people, but he is assigned to guide people to ultimate salvation(Shari'ati, 1976b, pp. 14-15).

On the other hand, in the eyes of AbdolKarim Soroush, the humanist values are the main resource of religious thoughts and teachings and not the other way around. That is, democracy and liberty is not a value extracted from religion, but the religion itself is extracted from human values and understanding. In other words, what Shariati considered 'Islamic democracy', Soroush considers 'Democratic Islam'(Soroush, 1994a p. 3). His endeavor is not to Islamize anything, but he tries to make Islamic theories compatible with modern values. In his ideology, science, equality, liberty, reality etc cannot be 'Islamized' and they have to be understood as they are. His Islamic view is not based upon Islamic values such as "*Shura*" but it is rather based on secular values such as human rights and democracy. This is against Shariati's view, in which he considers *Shura* as the soul of democracy and believes that it exists within the religious text. He differentiates between religious democracy and democratic religion and writes: "it is not because of the religious government that people are religious, but it is rather because of the religious people that religious governments come to power(Soroush, 1994b, p. 10). He believes that liberty and democracy and government itself are essentially non-religious and it is based on the era in which they are studied that a religious government may be compliant with democracy or not (Soroush, 1996, p. 11).

He believes that if the religious people take the power in a democratic government, the government will be religious too, but the other way around is necessarily failed. In this view, he is actually emphasizing on a religious belief without physical deeds, as an Islamic country without the proper Islamic ruling is not a complete Islamic utopia. He intends to remove the *Fiqh* from the face of government in an Islamic country although it is the backbone of religious governance.

In this ideology, the supervisory positions in the Islamic country leaves no space for the governance of a jurist and limits the Islamic government to providing necessary materials for the believers to worship freely. Such an interpretation of Islamic rule is nothing but a superficially modified secularism with an essence of Islamic rule. Such a ruling is neither religiously legitimate nor it emphasizes on correct implementation of the Islamic rules. Thus it has nothing much different from a secular view point of government, with an Islamic paint on the surface.

Morteza Motahari, believed in some sort of revival too. He believed that all the modern day values have somehow existed in the religious text and could be therefore compatible with religion. He legitimizes the core values of the modern day world by giving to them a religious root. He believed that in order to purify religion we have to have a flexible, juristically driven evolution, but not changing the religion itself.

He believed that democracy is achievable in the context of a religious rule and this right should be given to people to choose the form of government they want in this frame. He believed the first step in establishing a religious government is to accept the choice of people. Thus, governments cannot oblige people to follow them, even because of religious considerations or alike. By considering all these differences in view, these thinkers have all one concern: protecting and developing religion.