

# THE CONCEPT OF JIHĀD IN QUṬB AND SHARI'ATI

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## Khulasah

Makalah ini membandingkan pemikiran dua tokoh Islam semasa iaitu Sayyid Quṭb (m. 1966) dan 'Ali Shari'ati (1977) tentang konsep jihad. Kajian ini akan cuba mengetengahkan konsep ini dalam konteks kehidupan dan penulisan kedua-dua tokoh ini. Kedua-dua tokoh Quṭb dan Shari'ati telah membentuk pandangan bahawa Islam adalah jalan perubahan sosial dan mengetengahkannya sebagai alternatif kepada Kapitalisme dan Komunisme. Kedua-dua tokoh berkongsi pandangan dalam melihat Islam sebagai suatu gerakan politik. Mereka menolak faham nasionalisme sekular yang berpengaruh sekitar tahun 1960an, dan pada masa yang sama mereka juga mengkritik aliran tradisional Sunni ataupun Shi'ah yang mengesampingkan jihad politik. Mereka menentang arus yang menyokong matlamat gerakan nasionalis ketika itu dan pada masa yang sama cuba memikat generasi baru dari kalangan remaja Muslim dan meminggirkan ulama. Quṭb dan Shari'ati telah menggerakkan semula Islam sebagai kayu ukur politik bagi segala tindakan umat

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Islam. Makalah ini juga turut mengupas konsep asas seperti konsep Islam dan *Jāhiliyyah* menurut Quṭb dan konsep *tawḥīd* dan *shirk* menurut Shari'ati dalam usaha mengetengahkan faham jihad kedua tokoh.

**Katakunci:** Jihād, Mesir, Iran, Quṭb, Shari'ati, Sunni, Shi'ah, *jāhiliyyah*, *Tawḥīd*, Qur'an

### Abstract

This article will compare the concept of jihād of two contemporary Islamic radical figures, the Egyptian Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966) and the Iranian 'Ali Shari'ati (1977). It will place the concept within the context of the life and works of these two Islamic thinkers. Both Quṭb and Shari'ati shaped the view of Islam as an instrument of social change, and presented it as an alternative to Capitalism and Communism. They both shared the vision of Islam as a political movement, and while they opposed the secular nationalism that had dominated the 1960s, they also rejected the traditional Sunni or Shi'ite view that relegated political jihad to a secondary concern. They broke away from the established order that espoused the nationalist goals of the time, attracted a new generation of Muslim youth, and alienated the ulema. Quṭb and Shari'ati reactivated Islam as the political standard for Muslim behaviour. The essay will also contrast key concepts such as Islam and *Jāhiliyyah* in Quṭb and *tawḥīd* and *shirk* in Shari'ati in order to demonstrate the dialectical character of their concept of jihād.

**Keywords:** Jihād, Egypt, Iran, Quṭb, Shari'ati, Sunni, Shi'ite, *jāhiliyyah*, *Tawḥīd*, Qur'an

## Introduction

This essay will compare the concept of jihad of two contemporary Islamic radical figures, the Egyptian Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966) and the Iranian Ali Shari'ati (1977). Previously we have compared their views on jihad and *fiṭrah*<sup>2</sup>, but here we focus on their concept of struggle, placing it in a biographical context. Globally, they shaped the Islamic identity of the Muslim youth, including South Africa where there was a need for an Islamic perspective to struggle against Apartheid<sup>3</sup>. They both shaped the view of Islam as an instrument of social change, and presented it as an alternative to Capitalism and Communism. The immediate effects of Shari'ati and Quṭb were felt in their own countries. Quṭb's activist role in Egypt is not less important than that of Ḥasan al-Bannā's, the founder of the Ikhwān al-Muslimīn (the Muslim Brotherhood), and Shari'ati's role is not less important than that of Khomeini's, the leader of the Islamic revolution in Iran.

Both Quṭb and Shari'ati shared the vision of Islam as a political movement, and while they opposed the secular nationalism that had dominated the 1960s, they also rejected the traditional Sunni or Shi'ite view that relegated political jihad to a secondary concern. Both of them broke away from the established order, and attracted a new generation of Muslim youth, but alienated the middle class and the ulema. The 1960s was a period of nationalist ideology that gripped the Muslim countries, and was shaped by home-grown elites who had fought to break the stranglehold of European colonization and who led their countries to independence in the aftermath of the Second World War. The nationalist sentiments among Egyptians and Iranians had fragmented the historic land of Islam into nation states

<sup>2</sup> Mohamed, Yasien (1996), 'Jihād and Fiṭrah in the Thought of Quṭb and Shari'ati', in *Journal for Islamic Studies*, Rand Afrikaans University, Mellville, pp. 3-26.

<sup>3</sup> Rice, D.C. (1987), *Islamic Fundamentalism as a major Religiopolitical Movement, and its impact on South Africa*, University of Cape Town, unpublished MA thesis, pp. 438-471.

that pursued the agenda of Arab nationalism or Iranian nationalism. The nationalists took control of the modern media and put it in the service of their own secular ideals; consequently excluding the ulema who were accustomed to the traditional religious forms of expression. Quṭb and Shari'ati rejected the nationalist goals and reactivated Islam as the political standard for Muslim behaviour.

### Sayyid Quṭb

Sayyid Quṭb was born in Upper Egypt in 1906, and later became a devout student of the literary giant Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād, who influenced Quṭb profoundly, and encouraged him to emerge himself in Western literature. Quṭb was confused by this mass of secular literature, but later, when he undertook a serious study of the Qur'an, albeit from a literary perspective, he rediscovered his true identity, and returned to his religious roots. This was a turning point in his life. He did, however, not regret his study of the Western human sciences, which enabled him to develop a critical appraisal of the intellectual *jāhiliyyah* (ignorance or barbarism) of the time. His *Taṣwīr al-fannī fī al-Qur'ān* was originally undertaken with literary intent to examine the Qur'an, but it had a profound impact on his understanding of the Qur'an as a revealed book. In 1984 his *al-'Adālah al-Ijtimā'iyyah fī'l Islām* was published. This was his first major Islamic book, which he started writing before his study in America. No clear view of *jāhiliyyah* was expressed in this book, but in the same year, his criticism of *jāhiliyyah* emerged in his edited journal, *al-fikr al-jadīd*. Here began his first articulations of *jāhiliyyah*, which he elaborated on in his last, but most influential work, *Ma'ālīm fī Ṭarīq* (Milestones). In Milestones he provided a clear method of removing *jāhiliyyah* in all its forms, starting with the political *jāhiliyyah*. When al-'Aqqād saw Quṭb moving in the Islamic direction, he stopped his moral support, and Quṭb eventually parted

company with him<sup>4</sup>.

It is wrong to explain Qutb's *jāhiliyyah* purely in political terms. Indeed, he did condemn Western systems of governments, but before he directed his militant jihad to the regime change of *jāhiliyyah* systems, he already had a critical view of the Western literary *jāhiliyyah*, even before he went to America. However, he became more alive to the moral *jāhiliyyah* of Western society when he stayed in America. Thus, his negative attitude to *jāhiliyyah* in the West was not only political, but also moral and intellectual. He was disgusted not only by Western immorality while in America, but also by the empty theories and philosophies which he read before his visit to America. He was even more disgusted by the Arab Muslims in America who became so engulfed by American culture, and who compromised on their Islamic principles. He took a firm stand not to follow this path. Thus, his critical attitude towards Muslims at a social level was transferred to Muslims who made such compromises at a political level. Thus, Qutb's critique of Western immorality, secular modernity, and Muslim hypocrisy, have all combined to shape his anger at the West and the Muslim regimes that collaborated with them.

*Jāhiliyyah* was for him a comprehensive concept, social, political, moral and intellectual. The jihād against *jāhiliyyah* also takes on all of these forms, but towards the end of his life, when he wrote *Milestones*, he was convinced that the social, intellectual and moral expressions of *jāhiliyyah* could only be transformed by changing the political *jāhiliyyah* of his time, and this meant regime change. By changing the superstructure of society; by changing the *jāhiliyyah* political systems, starting with Egypt, the whole society will change to an Islamic society. Like al-Bannā, Qutb also held the view that man-made ideologies will corrupt the spiritual life of humanity. These *jāhiliyyah* ideologies, especially, Capitalism and Communism, had to be replaced by a political system

<sup>4</sup> Ushama, Thameem (2005), "Sayyid Qutb: Life, Mission and Political Thought" in *Contemporary Islamic Political Thought: A Study of Eleven Islamic Thinkers*. Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, p. 233-234.

based on the rule of *Sharī'ah*.

Quṭb divided Egyptian society into two: the Capitalists who lived in luxury, and exploited the labour of the majority of the people, and the poor workers who have been exploited. Thus he called upon the liberation of the poor and the labourers from exploitation from colonialism and feudalism. Capitalism is tied up with European nationalism and exploitation and presents a challenge to Islam. Socialism is also not the alternative, although it provides minimum standards of living, employment, housing, social justice. Socialism conflicts with the concept of *tawhīd*. Marxism neglects human spiritual needs and explains history purely in material terms: "Marxism is completely ignorant of the human soul, its nature and history... It ascribes all incentives to the feeding of material human wants and to struggle for material gain. It describes all historical events as due solely to change in the means of production"<sup>5</sup>. Islam must inevitably clash with Marxism; Islam establishes belief in God, but Marxism denies God; Islam harmonizes between the the material and spiritual needs of man, but Marxism only concerns itself with man's material needs<sup>6</sup>.

For Quṭb, the Islamic society asserts *tawhīd*, and opposes all false gods. It grants the individual free will and asserts only the sovereignty of God. The *Jāhiliyyah* society is a society of shirk (polytheism) and rejects God as the sovereign, and submits to false gods, the worship of man, tyrants, ideologies. Communism, for example, denies God, surrenders to the will of the party, and cares only for man's material needs. This is an example of a *jāhiliyyah* government that derives its laws from a human source, not from a revealed law or *Sharī'ah*. Muslim countries that are ruled by man-made laws are also *jāhiliyyah*; they are the product of the soul of desires<sup>7</sup>.

There are two other points in his personal life that needs

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Quṭb, Sayyid (1989), *Milestones* (trans. M.M. Siddique), International Federation of Student Organization, pp. 241- 247.

to be mentioned so that we can have a more comprehensive view of the factors that shaped his thought, especially his negative view of the West and of the contemporary Egyptian regime. The one point is the jubilant response of Americans when they heard of the death of Ḥasan al-Bannā. While he was in hospital in America, he could not understand the reason for the American jubilation, and then he discovered that they were happy because the main Muslim terrorist had died. Quṭb states: "Ḥasan al-Bannā was assassinated in 1949, my attention turned with severity to what American and European newspapers had observed and commented out of malicious joy and candid jubilation shown by them in dissolving the society, torturing its members and the killing of its General Guide"<sup>8</sup>. Due to al-'Aqqād's influence, Quṭb was not really interested in the Muslim Brotherhood, and he had not even met Ḥasan al-Bannā, but the American elation about al-Bannā's death stirred his interest toward the Brotherhood and their objectives.

Another factor in his life that shaped his view of *jāhiliyyah* and jihād was his imprisonment and severe torture by the regime of Gamāl Abdal Nāṣir. The Ikhwān at first supported Naṣr when he assumed power in 1952, and saw in Naṣr's Egypt an opportunity to build a society without divisions, guaranteed by the implementation of an Islamic order. But Naṣr's nationalist agenda conflicted with the Islamic agenda of the Ikhwān, and led to bloodshed. After the attempt on Naṣr's life, which was blamed on the Ikhwān, the organization was dissolved, and their members were jailed, exiled or hanged. Those who were in exile spread the message of the Ikhwān to other countries; but followers of Quṭb have reassessed his thought, and adapted it for their own conditions, some have taken on a radical stance and others a more moderate position<sup>9</sup>. After his severe torture in prison, Quṭb wrote *Milestones*, his

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Ushama, Thameem (2005), *Sayyid Quṭb: Life, Mission and Political Thought*, p. 235.

<sup>9</sup> Kepel, Gilles (2006), *Jihād: The Trail of Political Islam*, London and New York: I. B. Taurus, p. 30.

most influential work where he explained the concept of *jāhiliyyah* and jihād. This is the work that inspired modern Muslim militant movements such as Jamā'at al-Takfīr wa al-Hijrah (pronouncing unbelief upon Infidels and Emigration to Islam) and the Egyptian al-Jihād. Some scholars regard Quṭb as 'The Philosopher of Islamic Terror'<sup>10</sup>. Bouramand makes the point that AbduSallām Farāj, theoretician of the Egyptian Islamic Jihād, was fond of quoting Quṭb 'to justify terror'<sup>11</sup>. Others, however, hold that his call for militant jihad was not directed at innocent civilians but corrupt Muslim governments<sup>12</sup>.

For Quṭb, the post-independence history of the Muslim states had no inherent value, and called it *jāhiliyyah* (ignorance or barbarism), which traditionally refers to the pre-Islamic Arabs who worshipped stone idols, but for Quṭb, it is also applicable to his contemporaries who worshipped the metaphorical idols of nationalism and socialism. Instead of the rule of God they have instituted the rule of man. Muslims ought to reject such unIslamic rulers<sup>13</sup>. Quṭb insisted that a society that accepts such rulers and such customs is living in a state of uncouth ignorance or *jāhiliyyah*. Bonner's interpretation of Quṭb is that the so-called Muslims who are living in ignorance are also infidels and should therefore be opposed, and jihād against them is obligatory on each Muslim (*fard 'ayn*)<sup>14</sup>. This is an extreme view of Quṭb. Our view is that Quṭb's jihād was directed at jihād against unjust rulers who were imposing unislamic rule, and therefore he was calling for regime change and not violent methods of jihād against whole Muslim societies.

<sup>10</sup> Berman, Paul, (2003), 'The Philosopher of Islamic Terror', *The New York Times*, 1-11, 23rd March, p.1.

<sup>11</sup> Boroumand, Landan, and Roya Boroumand (2002), 'Terror, Islam and Democracy' in *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1-20, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Mohamed, Yasien (2007), 'Muslim Fundamentalism: The Case of Sayyid Quṭb', an unpublished paper presented at the conference *Defining fundamentalism and religious conservatism in South Africa*. Department of Religion and Theology, University of the Western Cape, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Bronner, Michael (2006), *Jihād in Islamic History*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, p. 162.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



His *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* (In the Shade of the Qur'an) and his *Milestones*, written in the 1960s called for a new Qur'anic generation to replace the contemporary paganism of nationalism and socialism just as the Prophet and his companions had built a Quranic generation on the ruins of Arab paganism<sup>15</sup>. Before his release in prison, *Milestones* had been published in 1964. It consisted of some of the letters Quṭb had sent from prison and key sections from *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, and represented a concise, but powerful, summary of his ideas<sup>16</sup>.

The antithesis of *jāhiliyyah* was Islam, which he defined in accordance with two concepts he borrowed from Mawdūdī, *'Ubūdiyyah* (servitude to God alone) and *Hākimiyyah* (divine sovereignty). Only God is sovereign, and only He is worthy of worship. The idea of divine rule is based on an interpretation of the Qur'an, traditionally translated as divine judgement, but for Quṭb it meant the government of God. Thus, *Jāhiliyyah*, refers to all those regimes that do not conform to divine law; in Quṭb's time it refers to the Capitalist and Communist regimes. The jihād against such regimes will lead to their removal; hence removing the obstacles to a just and free society based on the principles of *tawhīd*. Quṭb died before he could elaborate on these concepts, but there have been followers who have interpreted him in a more militant way to refer to whole societies living in a state of metaphorical paganism. If Quṭb's jihād is directed at regime change and not whole societies, then the Western stigma attached to Quṭb as the father of modern Islamic terrorism is unfounded. He is however the father of present-day Islamic resistance throughout the Middle-East.

As mentioned, there were many factors, including Naṣr's repression that provided the context for the crafting of Quṭb's *jāhiliyyah*. This modern barbarism must be removed as the Prophet removed the original *jāhiliyyah*, and must be

<sup>15</sup> Kepel (2006), op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>16</sup> Quṭb, Sayyid (2000), *Social Justice in Islam*. trans. J. B. Hardy and H. Algar. New York: Islamic Publications International, reprint, Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, p. 9.

replaced by the Islamic state. This is a radical departure from the traditional view, and even the view of the original members of the Ikhwān. What it meant is that Egyptian society as a whole is not Muslim, and that certain members who are impure are no longer Muslim by virtue of their impiety. This places them in the category of takfīr, which means that they have to be excommunicated from the society. This appears to be a neo-kharijite view, but the majority of ulema over the centuries were cautious not to apply this as it would imply dissension and discord within the community. Quṭb died before he could explain what exactly he meant by *jāhiliyyah*.

Kepel identified three readings of *jāhiliyyah* that emerged among the followers: They pronounced takfīr on the whole society except for their members; they confined it to the rulers of the state who did not rule according to the divine text; lastly, the rupture with *jāhiliyyah* society meant a spiritual not material rupture. The third view was held by those Ikhwān who lived outside Egypt. They saw Ḥusayn al-Hudhaibī, successor to al-Bannā, as their leader, and focussed on preaching, not condemning. The younger brothers tended to take a hard-line, but the maturer members were against the harsh radicalism and preferred political compromise<sup>17</sup>.

By 1967, the Arab nation states were defeated by Israel, and Quṭb's ideas were given new life, and further inspired by the non-Arab ideologues such as Mawdūdī in India and Shari'ati in Iran.

As noted above, crucial to the understanding of jihād is Quṭb's innovative concept of *jāhiliyyah*. In addition, his later view that jihad is not merely defensive, but also aggressive, is especially noteworthy for an understanding of his concept of jihād. This more aggressive view of jihad is not present in his *Social Justice in Islam*, but in his *Milestones*<sup>18</sup>.

Quṭb's basic point of departure in *Milestones* is that all

<sup>17</sup> Kepel (2006), op cit., p. 31

<sup>18</sup> Quṭb, Sayyid (1980), *Ma'ālim fi Tarīq*. Trans. Quṭb, Milestones, (tr. M.M. Siddique) 1989, IFSO. Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, p. 62-91.

systems, Capitalism or Communism have failed. He holds that Islam is in the hearts of believers and that it has been abandoned by the rulers and elites. We have recreated the pre-islamic *jāhiliyyah*; so we should fight this new ignorance which has poisoned the governments of Muslim countries<sup>19</sup>. Islam and *jāhiliyyah* cannot coexist. For Islam to surpass *jāhiliyyah* we have to purify it of the *jāhiliyyah* customs and traditions that have crept into Islam, and that have made it impossible for people to see that Islam is the way to cure humanity of its ills. We have to return to the unique Qur'anic generation; the first generation that knew only the Qur'an. This new generation should be the concrete manifestation of Islamic belief (*'aqīdah*), embedded within the human soul, and it is this generation that is able to challenge the human elements of *jāhiliyyah*<sup>20</sup>.

The traditional view of jihad such as the expansion of territory or defending its borders did not seem to concern him much; nor the view that the greater jihād (struggle against the lower self) is superior to the lesser, armed struggle jihād<sup>21</sup>. For him, jihad is against all systems of anti-God or anti-sharī'ah governments, whether they are in Muslim countries or non-Muslim countries. The armed-struggle jihād cannot be separated from the inner jihād; the inner jihād, although important for piety, cannot take the place of armed struggle jihād, which is integral to it<sup>22</sup>.

Qutb was not an apologist for jihād, and as mentioned, proclaimed that Islam was not merely defensive, but also offensive. However, although offensive, it is not coercive in its goals; but a means by which God's message can be heard and by which peace can be established. For this to happen, the superstructures that impede the freedom of this message, have to be removed. Jihād and proclamation

<sup>19</sup> Cook, David (2005), *Understanding Jihad*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 103.

<sup>20</sup> Qutb, Sayyid (1980), *op.cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>21</sup> Schleifer, A. (1983), 'Understanding Jihād: Definition and Methodology', in *Islamic Quarterly*, 28, p. 117-131 and Schleifer, A. (1984), 'Jihād: Modern Apologists, Modern Apologetics', in *Islamic Quarterly*, 28, p. 25-46.

<sup>22</sup> Qutb, Sayyid (1980), *op.cit.*, p. 62-91 and Cook, David (2005), *op.cit.*, p. 106.

are linked together:

Jihād is necessary for proclamation, since its goals are to announce the liberation of man in a manner that will confront the present reality with equivalent means in every aspect, and it does not suffice with hypothetical and theoretical proclamations, whether the Islamic lands are safe or threatened by neighbours<sup>23</sup>.

Peace is defined as when the religion belongs to God alone, and no other Lords are competing with Allah. Jihād is not modern war, it is within the very temperament of Islam, which has given it a true role<sup>24</sup>.

It is this *jāhiliyyah* that impedes the Islamic movement from establishing the Law of God. It should therefore be removed, even by means of violent jihād. Quṭb states:

It is the right of Islam to move first, for Islam is not the belief of a single group, nor the system of the state, but a divine way and a global system. Thus it has the right to move [ahead] and to destroy impediments, whether systems or statues, that fetters human freedom of choice. It does not attack individuals, compelling them to embrace its creed, but attacks systems and statues to liberate individuals from the corrupt influences that corrode innate human nature and restricts human freedom of choice<sup>25</sup>.

By its very nature, Islam is global and aggressive; either the world hears Islam, and has the freedom to accept or reject it, or it does not. Anti-God constitutions will not allow humanity that choice, only an Islamic state with divine law

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<sup>23</sup> Quṭb, Sayyid (1980), *op.cit.*, p. 62-91.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Quṭb, Sayyid (1980), *op.cit.*, p. 89.

will. A case is made for the aggressive nature of jihād, but it is directed at freedom of choice for humanity. After all, there is no compulsion in religion.

For Quṭb there are only two systems, *Nizām al-Jāhili* (the system of ignorance) or *Nizām al-Islām* (the system of Islam). These two systems cannot coexist, and so where a system of ignorance exists, it should be removed, and we should fight against it as we are in the Home of hostility (*Dārul Ḥarb*).

This Islamic homeland is a refuge for anyone who accepts the Islamic Shari'ah to be the Law of the State, as is the case with the dhimmis. Any place where the Islamic Shar'iah is not enforced, and where Islam is not dominant, becomes the Home of Hostility (*dār al-ḥarb*) for Islam, the Muslim and the dhimmi. A Muslim will remain prepared to fight against it<sup>26</sup>.

Quṭb states in uncompromising terms that Islam represents the command of God which cannot coexist with the system of *jāhiliyyah*, which represents the command of man. A Muslim's duty is therefore to remove *jāhiliyyah* from the leadership of man. 'The tree of Islam has been sown and nurtured by the wisdom of God, while the tree of *jāhiliyyah* is the product of the soul of human desires'<sup>27</sup>. The struggle against *jāhiliyyah* is imposed on Islam, and Islam has the right to remove all political obstacles that prevent it from addressing human reason and intuition.

Thus, Islam conforms to human nature; and it is able to challenge *jāhiliyyah* without undergoing transformation itself. Even Muslims who practice the way of *jāhiliyyah* cannot be regarded as true Muslims; and should be returned to Islam because they impede the Islamic movement from establishing the Law of God in the form of an Islamic State<sup>28</sup>.

There is a conflict between truth and falsehood, and

<sup>26</sup> Quṭb, Sayyid (1989), *op.cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241, 247.

<sup>28</sup> Mohamed, Yasien (1996), *op.cit.*, p. 19.

Islam and *jāhiliyyah*, they cannot live together. The need to remove the system of *jāhiliyyah* and establish God's rule makes jihad imperative. Good and evil are dialectical elements in society; through Islamic struggle, evil will be conquered, and good, which is harmonious with *fiṭrah* or innate human nature, will prevail.

In sum, Quṭb had an absolute view of the problems facing the Muslim world, arguing that these problems stemmed from the fact that Muslim societies were no longer ruled by Muslim norms and laws (the *shari'ah*) and had become apostate by their imitation of foreign laws. Since (true) Muslims were visibly in the minority, they must concentrate upon (re)making society Muslim, and return to the Qur'anic generation. His *Milestones* was the basis for the charges against him; it was his final testament for which he was prepared to die. It captures his militancy towards Western systems of government, especially in Muslim countries. Peace and free choice are only possible with divine law. Every other law, every other system, is *jāhiliyyah*, and must be defeated. The word of God should prevail and be dominant. This was for Quṭb the very temperament of Islam, which became a mark of his own personality and temperament.

### **Ali Shari'ati**

Ali Shari'ati was born in 1933 in North Eastern Iran, and was educated in Mashhad, He did his doctorate in Persian philology in Paris, and was influenced by the writings of Louis Masignon, Franz Fanon and Jean-Paul Satre. Shari'ati moved to Tehran in the late 60s and based himself at the Husainia Irshad, which was established in 1965, and was dedicated to the principles of Imam Ḥusayn.

The Marxist radical groups in Iran gripped the imagination of the students, many of whom had studied abroad, mostly in the United States. Student radicalism drew upon two sources: Marxism and socialist Shi'ism. The former did not filter through to the masses of Iran, because

their intellectuals were more steeped in the bookish culture of the proletariat rather than having any real contact with the grassroots Persian society. Aware of this shortcoming, a few Marxist intellectuals projected the messianic expectations of the communists onto revolutionary Shi'ism. Shari'ati was a representative of this movement. Socialist Shi'ites saw the martyrdom of Imam Ḥussayn at the hands of the Ummayyad Caliph as a source of inspiration for the oppressed masses of Iran. This movement found expression in the People's Mujāhidīn<sup>29</sup>. The secular middle class could not identify with the violent radicalism of this movement<sup>30</sup>.

The students were generally distrustful of the ulema, and Khomeini who used the terminology of *Mustad'afīn* (disinherited) by Shari'ati, was able to win over the support of the Shi'ite socialist students. The political connotations of Shi'ism changed, and under the pretext of Imam Ḥusayn's martyrdom at Karbala, the struggle against the Shah became a modern incarnation. The dominant Shi'ite tradition was to forgo activism in favour of passivism, and the ashura ritual became characterised by grief and lamentation, not activism and resistance to injustice. For Shari'ati, the Shi'ite doctrine of Imamate became identified with the idea of leadership in the liberation struggle against imperial domination. In Alid Shi'ism he found the strong emphasis on justice as exemplified in the revolt of 'Alī and his sons against the tyranny of the Ummayyads. The true martyrs are the members of the family of the Imams, descendants of the Prophet's cousin, 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib, who died at the behest of oppressive and illegitimate rulers. In particular, 'Alī's son, ḥusayn, killed in 680 at Karbala, is greatly revered as

<sup>29</sup> This was the Sazman-i-Mujāhidīn-i-khalq-i Khalqi-Īrān (Organization of the Jihad-fighters of the Iranian People), which was formed in the mid-1960s, and were inspired by Ahmad Reza'i, whose book, *The Movement of Husain*, held that *tawhīd* does not only imply the worship of One God, but the elimination of class distinctions. Also, Imam Ḥussain was a revolutionary who gave his life in order to form a classless society, free of Capitalism, despotism and imperialism. The organization was also inspired by Shari'ati's ideas, but their main inspiration comes from Reza'i.

<sup>30</sup> Kepel (2006), *op. cit.*, 108.

the martyr of martyrs<sup>31</sup> .

For Shari'ati, this kind of struggle has been hidden by the Safavid Shi'ism who promoted the idea of the infallibility of the twelve Imams. People were conditioned not to expect it from the leaders in the absence of the Imams, and were therefore brainwashed to obey the oppressive governments and religious leaders who co-operated with them. His critique was that Safavid Shi'ism de-politicised Islam and made religion the opium of the people. In this respect he is in agreement with Khomeini, but he differs with him with regard to the role of the mujtahid. For Shari'ati, a sincere uneducated man may be more Islamic in his way of living than a learned jurist. Shari'ati saw the work of Husaini Irshad as an alternative to the Islamic seminaries, and he even blamed the conservative ulema for the success of imperialism<sup>32</sup> .

Shari'ati blamed the ulema for perpetuating the submission to injustice with their focus on the twelfth Imam who will correct the injustices when he returns to this world. This created a psychological sense of acceptance of the corrupt status quo on the grounds that only the infallible Imams are capable of ruling justly, and that it is better to bear the current sufferings for a better life in the future. They had no desire for political power which they regarded as impure, and would rather wait for the return of the hidden imam who will replace the injustices of the world with light and justice. Shari'ati wanted to inspire people towards jihad and martyrdom by redirecting the theological focus towards the example of Husayn's struggle and sacrifice.

Like Qutb, who had a dialectic view of struggle between Islam and *jāhiliyyah*, Shari'ati also espoused a dialectic view of jihād as a struggle of *tawhīd* (monotheism) against shirk (polytheism). Shari'ati condemned Western society for their shirk, and also Iranian society for imitating them. The ideal Muslim society is a society of *tawhīd*, a classless society

<sup>31</sup> Bronner, Michael (2006), *op.cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>32</sup> Kepel (2006), *op. cit.*, p. 111 and Mortimer, Edward (1982), *Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam*. London: Faber and Faber, p. 337-339.



characterised by integration. Unlike Qutb, Shari'ati did not call for a society ruled by Shari'ah, nor did he rely on traditional Islamic sources, but more on foreign ideological thought. Notwithstanding his critique of Marxism for its materialistic world-view and for divesting man of free will<sup>33</sup>, he betrays the influence of Marxist dialectical thought in his view of jihād. Shari'ati perceived human society divided into two types; the society of *tawhīd*, which is characterised by a world-view of unity, and the society of *shirk* which is characterised by a world-view of disunity and contradiction. For him, human salvation is the summation of a dialectic-an inner ceaseless struggle which goes on at all levels of individual and social life until the final triumph of the principle of *tawhīd*, which unites the conflicting separate parts of human existence, brings nature and society within an integrating sketch of the universe, and restores absolute equality as the primeval state of social life. History is a struggle between various opposites, truth and falsehood, monotheism and polytheism, oppressed and oppressor. He states: "History ... is dominated by a dialectical contradiction, a constant warfare between two hostile and contradictory elements that began with the creation of humanity"<sup>34</sup>. Also, the opposing poles of God and Satan exist in human nature and human fate; this creates within him a "dialectical, ineluctable, and evolutionary movement, and a constant struggle between two opposing poles in man's essence and his life"<sup>35</sup>. He uses the Biblical story of Cain and Abel as a metaphorical framework to depict the two opposing forces engaged in struggle throughout history. The monotheistic world-view which was once the view of Adam, became transformed into a contradictory world vision, reflecting a dual class society; Cain representing evil (the oppressor) and Abel (the oppressed) representing good<sup>36</sup>. Cain is the

<sup>33</sup> Shari'ati, Ali (1980), *Marxism and other Western Fallacies* (tr. R. Campbell). Berkeley: Mizan Press, p. 87-91.

<sup>34</sup> Shari'ati, Ali (1979), *On the Sociology of Islam*, tr. H. Algar. Berkeley: Mizan Press, p. 89.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Shari'ati, Ali (1981), *Man and Islam*. Houston: FILINC, p. 18-19.

owner, landlord, usurper, and Abel is the dispossessed, the peasant, the exploited<sup>37</sup>. Although we note the influence of historical determinism here; he did not follow it blindly and integrated his view of struggle into his world view of *tawhīd*.

In 1973 the Husainia Irshad was forcibly closed by the government troops, and after a period of imprisonment, he was allowed to leave Iran, and go to London, where he died at the age of 44. His sudden and unexpected death was presumed to be the work of Savak, but another view is that he died of a heart attack. One wonders, if he had to be alive, what role he would have played in post-1979 Iran. He did not live to see the revolution but his influence on it was tremendous, perhaps equal to Khomeini's. His impact on the youth was particularly great, and as an orator and man of charisma, he was able to restore confidence in the Western educated youth about Islamic struggle which is not obscurantist, but a genuine effort towards liberation and enlightenment.

The Muslim revivalists saw Islam as an alternative ideology to Capitalism and Socialism; so, they embraced the modern tools of technology and the media to serve the interest of the Islamic state; however, Shari'ati was more interested in the struggle for the removal of an unjust regime, and did not propose an Islamic state, but the utopia of a classless society based on *tawhīd*. It is therefore not surprising that the Iranian ulema who were keen on an Islamic state were critical of him. The socialist inclined Mujahidin al Khalq found inspiration in Shari'ati, and Khomeini condemned the socialist movement, but not Shar'iati.

Shari'ati died two years before the Islamic revolution; but his impact on Iranians was felt both during his life, but also posthumously, moving them towards a heroic destruction of one of the most hideous tyrannies in modern times. His lectures at the Husainia Irshad moved people to activism and jihād against the tyranny of the oppressive

<sup>37</sup> Shari'ati, Ali (1988), *Hajj*. Tehran: Foundation of Be.a.dhat Publication, p. xviii

regime. He was fearless in his speech. We could gather this from anecdotal evidence from a friend who attended one of his lectures where he received a death-threat, which did not deter him; instead, it inspired him to give one of the most powerful speeches on martyrdom. His courage inspired millions of modern Iranians to regain confidence in Islam as a vibrant religion for our times.

Qutb and Shari'ati saw Islam as an alternative ideology to Capitalism and Socialism; thus their response, like all Islamic revivalists, was a response to European modernity, and they found in Islam, an alternative modernity; an Islamic modernity that can challenge the current human modernities, by embracing the modern tools of technology and the media to serve the interest of the divine system. Shari'ati was more interested in the struggle for the removal of an unjust regime, but did not propose a new regime based on the shari'ah; but only provided a utopia of a classless society based on *tawhīd*. The details of who should assume political leadership, and how the society were to be governed was left to Khomeini to work out. Although the ulema of his time were critical of the Sorbonne graduate, and the socialist inclined Mujahidin al-Khalq who found inspiration in him, Khomeini condemned the socialist movement but not Shar' iati.

Ayyatollah Mutahari who collaborated with Shari'ati in their lectures at the Husainia Irshad in Tehran, broke away from him at one point on account of ideological differences. Mutahari's critique of Marxism appears to be partly a critique of Shari'ati who sought to Islamize a foreign political philosophy. There is no mention of Shari'ati's name with reference to his critique in his writings, but it can be assumed that the criticism was directed at Shari'ati. For example, Mutahari is critical of those Muslim scholars who justify historical materialism, and who associate the Qur'anic word *al-Naṣṣ* with the proletariat as if the Qur'an was addressing this class of society only<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> Mutahari, Murtada (1986), *Social and Historical Change: An Islamic Perspective* (tr. R. Campbell). Berkley: Mizan Press, pp. 96-98; Enayat, H. (1982), *Modern*

To conclude, we have examined the impact of Quṭb and Shari'ati on their respective countries, and placed their concept of jihād within their ideological frameworks of dialectical struggle. They were both a catalyst for change; Imam Khomeini mustered support among the religious masses, and Shari'ati gained the support of students and intellectuals. Both of them awakened the people to their oppressive conditions. Shari'ati died young, and did not live to see the fruit of his efforts. Khomeini lived long and became the leader of the Islamic revolution. They have demonstrated the role of jihād as an instrument of liberation and social change. Both espoused an innovative dialectic conception of jihād that is directed at unjust political authority, which they refer to *jāhiliyyah* (Quṭb) or *shirk* (Shari'ati). They were critical of the traditional ulema who depoliticised Islam, and who collaborated with the despots of the day. They held the view that the new government should rule by the principle of *tawhīd* (Shari'ati) or *Shari'ah* (Quṭb), but it was not their view that it be ruled by the ulema or the mujtahids.

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*Islamic Political Thought*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, p. 115; Mohamed, Yasien (1996), *op.cit.*, p. 13.