



The Relation between Liberty and Justice in Ali Shariati' Political Thought

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Abstract:

Ethical tenets and political systems are one of the most controversial terminologies in philosophy of ethics and political thought. That is why thinkers based upon their intellectual standpoint have reached different inferences and definitions and elaborated various aspects of it accordingly. Shariati similar to his preceding thinkers made the creation of ethical political system one of his primary goals and in attaining that goal made great efforts and suffered many difficulties so as to be able to express what he was thought. He was trying to promote a desired political system in conflation with religion and logic. The main question is that what the relation between liberty and justice in his desired political system is like? Shariati perceives his desired system in the correlation between these two concepts. In fact he regards justice as a breeding ground for freedom and portrays this correlation as a mutual one.

Keywords: Freedom, Justice, Desired Government

Introduction

Definition of a desired political system from Shariati' point of view

A desired political system from the point of view of Shariati has a specific meaning and on different occasions of his teaching tenure, He came up with different definitions. At the outset he explains what the ideal is. Utopia is an ideal society where everybody entertains in his/her mind or yearns for. Utopia is inculcated in a religious mind. In many old books,

cities named jalbelgha and jabelsa have been referred to as utopia that have been formed in the imagination of general public. Cities that have all the necessary elements such as people, government, faith, social class, social institutions, culture, children, etc that exist in other societies. Essentially the existence of exaggerated or imaginative societies does not necessarily mean that human being is always moving from the present circumstances towards a better or more desired one. Whether

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an imaginative society or scientific or platon-ic utopia or even classless society of Karl Marx, are all in pursuit of an ideal society. All cults or school of thoughts whether mystical or material imagine a society that is perfect in any form or fashion.

On the contrary' Shariati has tried to distance himself from these idealistic and imaginative societies. He is in favour of a system which stems from divine instructions. A social system that is in full consistency with freedom and equality, democratic values, mysticism, salvation and divine values. The type of social texture that Shariati pursues is a kind of social composition where there is a small gap between upper class and under privileged and at the same time sociological composition is devoid of any tendency towards life of luxury, lavish and extravagance. A society where primitivism does not exist and new generation is cognizant of new value systems(Shariati M.A. 20:72).

It is clear that he is the designer of a new divine system. A system free from in-fringence, transgression and inhuman aggressions. A system based on three pillars, freedom, equality and divinity. Faith is a solid foundation is this society. A society where economic monopolization, exclusive sovereignty and suppression don't exist.

Shariati calls this society Ummah. It is worth noting that he excerpts this word from his own religion and present it to his own liking. In contrast to other languages or cultures which refer to this concept as society, nation, race, ethnicity, tribe and so forth, Ummah is indicative of a progressive spirit and dynamic, committed and ideological social paradigm. Ummah etymology boils down to the letter "um" which signifies path and momentum. Therefore what it means is

basically a group of people bound by the same faith and goal who move forward in harmony to reach a commonly defined objective (Shariati M.A. 16:103).

Criterion of Justice

Since justice is one of the most sublime adjectives of human race, It has always been one of the most important concepts of social science. Obviously the concept of justice has always been the subject of many discussions amongst sociologists and thinkers across the globe. Plato as a western thinker has elaborated concisely on the concept of justice in his book. He believes the justice is a concept that only those who are brought up in a philosophical atmosphere can have access to and get to the bottom of. It cannot be achieved simply by means of feeling or experience. Social justice exists when every individual does what he or she is capable of or has a talent for and no one interferes in the internal affairs of others (Plato, 1981,38).

Justice is one of the most noticeable concerns of Shariati. He places an accent on the word "equality" compared to "justice" and put forth a description of his own deterioration which is rather interesting to note. Not only does Shariati refuse and criticize Marxism in narrowing down social gaps and inequalities, but also he comes up with a theory named "Qest" which roughly means equality in English. He believes the equality and justice are inseparable from politics and it effectively legitimizes the political system.

One could say that the center of mass in Shariati's political thinking is the question of justice. Justice is of no marginal importance in his mindset. Conversely, one of his primary concerns is the question of justice in politics and legitimate governance. In general,

the efforts of all human and inhuman schools have been focused upon realization of justice and equality and confronting despotic and aristocratic ruling and also bringing about a revolutionary leadership as an alternative (Shariati,1981: 232-234). As such justice is not merely a marginal concept in his writings. It's the center of his political and social thinking. It can be categorically said that the main concentration of his mindset has been on the subject of class struggle, equality and social justice. The originality and importance of justice in his thinking is so stark that even he considers justice a characteristic of a desired and ideal political system to the point that even a government without justice is described as soulless by him. As a matter of fact he believes that justice is a foundation upon which the whole universe is based. He categorizes justice as manifestation of one of the god's characteristics. He defines social justice as a system that entails human rights and racial equality coupled with divine teachings and spirituality (Shariati M.A 16:235). Due to him many people believed in monotheism as a religious - philosophical hypothesis, but i know it as a worldview (Ibid, 35-36).

In a divine approach, universe, history and human being are one and the same. Global unity, history and human being are all founded on the basis of divinity. Independence of human being against all these social sphere of powers and unique inter human relations in all aspects with common sense and prevailing will is the prerequisite of divine perceptiveness. Based on what has already been mentioned, Shariati attaches utmost importance to social justice. There are some self-evident elements in his mindset without which the whole political system becomes meaningless and contradictory. He considers those the foundation for establishing social justice in the society and believes

that paying attention to these elements by the ruler is a necessity in achieving a desired political system.

Criterion of Freedom

Shariati has spoken about freedom on several occasions. He is of the view that freedom is a prerequisite to the elevation of the spirit and glorification of human soul. He is against despotism and repression. Given the fact that he never experienced a genuine freedom of expression and freedom of thought in his life time, he was preoccupied with this notion and described freedom as a crucified messiah in his era. He suffered a lot and was put behind bars multiple times. In a spiritual approach, unity of nations, history and human race come to being on the basis of spirituality and as a result social classes take shape in a manner that borders on social justice. There is no sign of impoverishment, there is no sign of disenfranchisement, there is no sign of ostracism. Because justice is no longer a manmade phenomenon, it is a divine one.

Human being is a human whose awareness creates will and determination. Self-determination gives rise to freedom. In this continuity of cause and effect, undoubtedly history, nature, society, physics and sociology are affected by.

In a spiritual society, human being detaches itself from short term enjoyments and immerses into genuine concepts which lead towards betterment of the world and pure salvation and happiness. A genuine prosperity comes from within. It stems from mentality and belief not from materialism. That's the main problem of today's society (Ibid, 19).

Beyond doubt, human intellect is incapable of mastering all concepts that are affiliated to spirituality and accordingly due to lack of total comprehension of concepts aforementioned, not only it deprives human

being of its humanity and resolution, but even talking about freedom and consequent responsibilities becomes absolutely preposterous. Determinism means total negation of human will. Negation of human and obviously refusal of freedom and responsibility (Ibid, 22).

Human being flourishes by freedom, and history is a pathetic transitional phase towards destiny. From one prison to another. Each time he or she shouts happily not knowing the fact that it's just a vicious cycle (Ibid, 14).

The beginning of Shariati's path to freedom

Shariati defines freedom as one of existential aspects of human being. Something that lets human being out of prevailing determinism and get liberated.

he believes that the precedence of human existence is based upon his character. Meaning that contrary to all the other creatures whose character takes precedence over their existence and has been predetermined earlier, human being is the only creature that is supposed to characterize himself and this intrinsic self-determination in and of itself is a propeller of many anxieties and agitations. His definition of a true human being is as follows: a genuine human being possesses free will. A free will towards a sublime and lofty objective, we shall begin our sentence by saying that, being a true human being is a matter of choice (Shariati M.A 26:47).

In order to have a better understanding. We must first know what ((deterioration)) means in social science. Although eating forbidden fruit is indicative of insubordination of god's order and sheer deterioration of humankind, but from a different perspective, one can state that it is demonstrative a human

free will to choose freely. Surely without free will, human being would never be able to shoulder the responsibility of becoming god's manifestation on earth (Shariati M.A 13: 13).

Humankind can misdeed or rebel naturally and any effort to deny it will lead to distort the human truth. In absence of humankind, human values will be vanished. Shariati in his loneliness is separated from his God, who waits for humans. Although all choices are intended to humans, but he is not independent. World is full of signs to help his sprite under this heavy responsibility (Ibid, 17).

The relation between liberty and justice from Shariati's perspective

Liberty is an objective similar to justice. Over the course of history, it has been proven that the more people become aware and knowledgeable. The more they criticize the status quo and tend to get out of the predicament they are entangled in. Human life has a normal trend and is in a constraint. Something which is called a natural prison by Shariati. This is the first prison he defined. Second one is history. Each one of us has a history which is reflected in our language. Third prison is the prison of society. All human societies particularly Indian and European have always been class-based and exploited societies in struggle with slavery, feudalism, and capitalism. Human being has always been in search of freedom and justice. They no longer want to be under the reign of systems that minorities rule such as monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy or even clergy-centered theocracy.

The only system that Shariati is in favour of is a democratic one. The providence and god's will in history has always been for the people to rule. People have the final say. The

government must originate from the people. It should derive its legitimacy from the will of the people. It's not the other way round. Anything other than the rule of the people over people equals dictatorship. In the case of other preferred alternative one should see whether it allows people to have freedom of choice and thought or not?(Shariati M.A 23:75)

Freedom for Shariati means even the right to elect your dissident. What Shariati is talking about should not only be downgraded to political and social freedom. Since we are even deprived of all the above. We have adjusted our expectations in the same fashion. The most important thing is the freedom of choice. Something that has been bestowed upon us by god almighty and no one has the authority to take it from us. Shariati perceives freedom in a broad sense. He considers capitalism as an enemy to freedom. Capitalism limits human ability and intellectuality to think outside the box. Human mind gets dogmatically focused on consumption and production and that impedes human being from spiritual elevation. Shariati is also critical of a society where there can be found freedom of the press and political parties and everything we uphold, but not for all in an even-handed manner (Shariati M.A 25:378).

Human being is imperfect under exploitation. It is imperfect under depravation and illiteracy. It is imperfect if deprived of all the blessings that have been bestowed upon by omnipotent. But when it comes to freedom, if deprived, it can no longer be called even human. What makes human being distinct from the nature is free will. Nothing is more precious than freedom of choice. If someone takes it away from you. Nothing more precious can be replaced by it(Ibid, 359).

Shariati believes in human nobility and wants freedom for all. He wants the people to

have even relative access to freedom and more tangibly, a room for maneuver as the saying goes. This can only be attained through brotherhood and unity. A genuine democracy should be for underclass and underprivileged not for upper-class minority. There has to be possibilities for poor people to have the same standards and freedom as the rich does. Furthermore, he makes a mention of the interconnection between justice and spirituality and at the same time slams practical instances of afro-mentioned in strongest possible terms. That's a dualism. A one-sided approach. He insinuates that people always see one side of the coin and when they see the other side, they stage a revolution and bring about regime change. Once the new system is in place, they exclusively stay focused on the other side of the coin(Shariati M.A 1:112-114).

Considering what has already been mentioned, in a concise fashion, one could say that Shariati thinks in a triangle which is composed of mysticism, freedom and equality (Ibid, 123). Mysticism is reflected in his spiritual viewpoint towards the universe and human being, equality is reflected in his justice-oriented viewpoint and freedom is reflected in his democratic, anti-despotic and anti-hegemonic viewpoint.

Shariati was a meaningful freedom-loving thinker. He was after a kind of sociopolitical system where one does not go through alienation, where humanity is imbedded in the sociopolitical attitudes and interactions. Total collapse of all the walls and prisons that have prevented human-being from thriving. Prisons such as historical, social, natural and self-made determinism.

Struggle between Despotism and Freedom

Shariati is regarded as leftist by some of the non-local neoliberals. A leftist who views

justice superior to freedom. He has had an intention to struggle with freedom under the name of justice. This view implies that Shariati neither knew western history nor had a knowledge over his own society. According to this view toward Shariati, civil rights advocates of woman, worker and minorities in the west have always been affiliates of socialist and classic liberals and conservatives cap freedom to the limits of parliamentary freedom. While passage of his time proven that view wrong. That is not the case (Rahmani, 1997: 32).

What Shariati says is that in a society, freedom can not materialize without minimum level of justice and standard of living. Because when someone is in pursuit of providing for himself to be able to make a living, he or he does not have the time and opportunity to think well. As such the conflation of freedom and justice is necessary if a genuine freedom is the desired outcome.

Political Freedom

Political freedom means that the government should not curb sense of initiative and the individual liberty for choosing how to live for the benefit of its own. It should not imprison people, deprive or condemn people. Fighting against tyranny and ruthless government means liberalism, means democracy and freedom. It means that the power of the people should be the priority. People should be in power. Fighting against tyranny means liberalization of human being in the first place (Shariati M.A 24:18).

Freedom and Character

Shariati believes in the presence of freedom of the political system in a nationalist-religious context in the society. He believes

that individual character and civil liberty can only exist in a desired political system. Because a thriving society is composed of thriving individuals. Flourishing and creative people form a flourishing social texture. Therefore the basis for a creating a free society is to have new ideas and sense of initiative.

Under the shadow of a collective national based on a belief(whether religious or non-religious) and cultural geographical condition, we can reach civil right. Civil right brings about additional social prowess for the country and under this shadow the right of the people will be observed.

Religious Freedom and Minorities

With respect to religious minorities, Shariati considers promotion of one's belief and practice of rituals as a basic human right. Therefore religious minorities and those who uphold different faith can have a fair share of all social benefits and equal privileges in the society and enjoy all kind of possibilities that suit a decent person. Based on his Islamic viewpoints, minorities should not be forced to put an end to their religious practice and activities. He has always believed that the right of minorities must be respected and warned that religious differences should not alienate us with justice and equity.

Freedom of Expression

Undoubtedly freedom should be within the limits of the law. Theories and modelizations are also defined within the framework of the law. He believes that the freedom of the people must be enshrined in the law otherwise there would be a clash between the constitution of the country and human rights. In the distribution of power, he was also concerned

about the possibility of turning a parliamentary democracy into a democracy for upper class and as a consequence, underprivileged class will be deprived of freedom and justice at the end of the day. He believed that freedom should not be sacrificed for the good of the better living standard. He considers freedom of expression one of the most significant pillars of freedom and justice.

Justice and Equality within the framework of Freedom in a Desired Political system

By freedom what it means is that whether in Shariati's desired political system, people equally enjoy freedom or some have more access to it. To answer this question, first we need to examine the relation between the concept of freedom and equality or in other words between freedom and justice. There are two theories to examine. Some do believe that between freedom and equality, one must only be chosen. Because by choosing one of them, the other one will be sacrificed so to speak. The second theory not only does not draw any incongruity between freedom and equality, but also consider these two interdependent. David Held, in his book named "Models of Democracy" by bringing up the relation between freedom and equality criticizes theories that consider equality a threatening element to freedom. Robert Dahl believes that contrary to predictions made by likes of Alexis de Tocqueville and others, the main threatening elements of freedom do not rest on the aspiration of the general public for achieving equality (majorities equate all social differences and end all political tendencies). There has always been tensions between freedom and equalities but equality in general is not the enemy of justice. As a matter of fact, the most modern challenge posed to freedom is inequality or a particular definition of freedom.

In general those who advocate positive or radical freedom believe that political and more importantly economic inequality pose a threat to freedom. They consider freedom without equality and justice a hollow terminology. Shariati is also in favour of freedom in a radical sense. He regards inequality as a danger to the freedom and because he wants the people to enjoy freedom, he rises in defense of economic equality and private ownership (Mehrabi, 2002: 149-150). Therefore he is all for a desired political system that incorporates equality so as to create freedom.

Conclusion

Shariati is one of the thinkers who believed in relation between justice and freedom in societies, and made efforts to express this relationship. He believed justice paves the way for freedom, and both are necessary to governing, so mankind can receive their highest desires in such society. According to Shariati, justice and freedom will cause development and human growth in a perfect government, otherwise it will be a dictatorship. He says freedom is an ideal matter which belongs to the history of mankind just as justice; by humankind's awareness he wants to criticize the current situation to get free of captivity that he feels. Justice will setup the situation for freedom of speech, educating, and political freedom to have a desired government. At the end we can conclude that justice will lead to freedom and can be the base for it.

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