THE ROLE OF ALLAMA TABATABAI IN REVIVAL OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIETY

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
Article History Published Online: _Published_ **Keywords**: **Quran, Islamic Social Thought**, **Allama Tabatabai, Tafsir, Philosophy of Society,** *hikmat al 'amalī,* **Principle of** *taskhīr***, Social animal**	The philosophy of Society (*Hikmat al Madanī*) in Islamic civilization was founded by the second teacher, Abu Nasr al-Fārābī (259-339 AH), but unfortunately did not continue after him and did not grow and develop. Prominent philosophers after Fārābī, such as Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Mullā Sadrā, and Mulla Hādī Sabzevārī, have only elaborated the theoretical Philosophy and have not paid attention to the social issues of Practical Philosophy *(Hikmat e 'Amalī).* In the last century, Allama Tabātabaī (1281-1360 AH), inspired by Quranic verses, has revived this abandoned part of Islamic Philosophy. He revived and reconstructed the 'Philosophy of Society in his works in a detailed and systematic way. He was inspired by the Qur'anic verses related to *taskhīr (*literally the conquest, but in essence meaning exploration and employing the laws of Nature and the society). He proposed the principle that man is by nature inclined to employ resources (الانسان مستخدم بالطبع), in contrast to the well-known old dictum that man is by nature 'social'' (الانسان مدنى بالطبع).

Introduction

Allāma Muhammad Hussain Tabātabāī (1281-0 136 AH) was without any doubt, one of the most prominent and influential *mufassir (*Commentator of the Quran) and philosopher of 20th century, in the Islamic world. His original contribution in interpretation of the Qur'an, by applying the methodology of interpreting the verses of the Qur'an with reference to other verses, and not with reference to external sources, just as science, reason, traditional method or *hadīth*, as can be seen in his monumental 20 volume work, al-Mīzan', has made him very distinguished *mufassir of this Age.* However, another distinguishing contribution of Allāma Tabātabāī lies in his original approach in Islamic Philosophy, which is evident in the two philosophical works *Nihāyatul* Hikmah and *Bidāyatul Hikma.* In addition to this, his greatness also lies in the revival of Social Philosophy after centuries of stagnation. These are his unique contributions that have made him one of the most distinguished Islamic thinker and scholar of recent times. **(Tabātabāī, Sayed Muhammad Husain, 1396, pp 9-36)**

The Philosophy of Society is a branch of Philosophy that reflect on the nature, necessity and characteristics of the human social life. It discusses the way of the formation of society, its constituent elements, and the goals and objectives of collective life. It also deals with the components of society, such as social groups, institutions and organizations. It explores the implications and consequences of human social life, albeit by deductive, general, argumentative, and analytical methods, and not by inductive,

quantitative, observational, and empirical methods, as is employed in Sociology. That is the main difference between the Social Philosophy and the Sociology. For example, in Social Philosophy, in explaining the necessity and emergence of the human social life or the state, the factors mentioned are: the need to prevent individuals from harming each other and the need to apply fair laws in the protection of Individual rights and survival. When we discuss about social group, community and society and its function in general, and in deductive way, we are dealing with the Social Philosophy, which is a kind of Philosophy while Sociology, which is a kind of Science. This is also called Philosophy of Society, Philosophy of Culture, Practical or Applied Philosophy (*hikmate 'amalī) and Civic wisdom (Hikmate Madanī*) by the Muslim Philosophers . **(See: Taghizadeh Davari, Mahmoud, 2016, pp. 9-14)**

In the beginning the Philosophy of Society had an idealistic character, dealt with limited issues like utopia, emergence of State, and the institutions of economics, education, art, and law. However, in the recent centuries, with the changing nature of modern society from traditional to industrial, the scope of the Philosophy of Society has broadened and it deals with almost all areas of modern human social life, including gender, identity, ethnicity, work, politics, alienation, mass media, the family, religiosity, justice, discrimination, exploitation, colonialism, the environment, and many other topics. Social philosophers today are

trying to analyze trends; contribute to the social life of modern men, to help improve their living conditions by giving them the necessary knowledge to make constructive and liberating changes.

Therefore, this branch of Philosophy seeks to highlight the benefits of collective life for human beings, strengthen their will, determination, and effort, to change the unhealthy conditions of their environment and to employ natural resources for their benefits. The Social Philosophy helps in emergence of educated and well-informed communities, lead them towards a modern and authoritative approach for re-structuring social condition in order to have a society with free and desirable life and with minimal social harm.

The Background

Socrates and his eminent disciple, Plato, as well as Plato's distinguished disciple Aristotle, are generally considered as the founders of the Philosophy of Society (*'Ilme Madanī*)). The social views of these philosophers about the origins of the formation of city and city life, the necessity of government and their view about Philosopher-ruler, social justice, just laws and their proper implementation, and the like, can be seen in the famous works left by them. In his book 'the Republic', Plato described the Ideal City, whose members, belong to inter-connected and inter-dependent classes, like interdependent organs in one body. With their

collective work, they provide means for sustenance of life and survival of the 'city'. **(See: Plato, 1984, Book II, pp. 73-75)**

Aristotle, called 'the first teacher' by the Muslim Philosophers, also saw 'city' as a whole in the two books 'Politics' and the 'Nikomakhocian Ethics'. He considered the city (society) as a 'whole', and the individuals as its components who have identities but are absorbed in that collective whole (the society. **(Aristotle, 1371, First Book, p. 115/1**)

Muslim Philosophers such as Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Khwāja Nasīruddīn Tūsī and Ibn Khaldūn, have dealt with the Philosophy of Society and the human social life, each in his own way. Some of them like Fārābī, have deat with this subject in detail and others like Ibn Sīnā, in nutshell,. **(See Taghīzadeh Davari, 1989, A Survey of the Social Thought of Muslims, Vol. 1)**

However, we should point out that though the Philosophy of Society was founded in Muslim history, by Abu Nasr al-Fārābī (359-330 AH) in the last decades of the third century and the first half of the fourth century AH, but unfortunately, was not expanded by the later philosophers. Even such prominent later philosophers such as Sadruddīn Shīrāzī (Mullā Sadrā) and Mullā Hādi Sabzevārī and others, remained completely silent about this subject. It was only Allāma Tabātabāī who revived study of the social life in his philosophical discussions. Later on, in our times, these discussions

were expanded by his students Murtazā Mutahharī, Abdullāh Javādī Amoli and Mohammad Taqī Mesbah Yazdi (and in other ways, it was followed and developed by Mohammad Reza Hakimi.

Philosophy of Society in the Works of Tabātabāī:

Allāma Muhammad Husain Tabātabāī has dealt with issues related to human social life in his following works: in Tafsir *al-Mīzān*, his (Commentary on the Qur'an): at following places: vol. 4 (while dealing with the verse 213 of *Surah Al-Baqarah)*; vol. 4, (under the verse 200 of Surah Āle-'Imrān); in vol. 18 (while explaining verse 32 of Sūrah Zukhruf). Tabātabāī has also discussed this subject in his book, 'the Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism', vol. 2, sixth chapter. In his treatise 'Man in the World', a brief reference has been made to some other factors of emergence of the social life. Finally, in the book "the Qur'an in Islam", the third part, Tabātabāī has dealt with the question 'what is the meaning of social nature of man'. Of these, the most detailed discussion is seen in the Tafsīr *al-Mizān*, Volume 4, under the verse 200 of Surah Ale-'Imrān, and also in the book 'Principles of Philosophy' (Vol. 2). In Volume 4, the topic is dealt from the Philosophical and Kalāmī (theological) angle; while in the book Principles of Philosophy, his discussion is purely philosophical, without reference to the Qur'anic verses and *hadith* texts. Allāma Tabātabāī has devoted fifteen chapters under the title "The Discussion about the Relations in the Islamic Society, in Volume 4 of *Tafsir al-Mīzān*, under verse 200 of *Surah Āle-'Imrān*. Following is a summary of each chapter in nutshell:

In the 1st chapter, entitled "Man and Society Tabātabāī has dealt with the nature of Man and how he is a social anima. He says that proving that man is a social species does not require much discussion and reasoning. Archaeological evidences from the oldest periods of the past, make it evident that humans lived collectively and have ruled over the earth. **(Tabatabai, vol. 4, p. 92)** Thus, Man is by nature 'social'. Tabātabāī then quotes four Qur'anic verses to prove this viewpoint: verse 13 of *Sūrah al-Hujurāt*; Verse 32 of *Sūrah al-Zukhruf;*, Verse 195 of *Surah Āl-'Imrān*; and verse 54 of *Surah al-Furqān*.

The 2nd chapter is entitled "Man and his Evolution in Society. At the beginning of this chapter, Tabātabāī has said: just as human mental and spiritual perfections did not existed in complete form at the beginning of creation, but gradually developed and evolved, in the same manner, the material and spiritual perfections of human society has evolved gradually and over time. In contrast to Plato, Aristotle, Fārābī, and Ibn Khaldūn, who consider the need to have food, clothing, and housing as the main factors that led to the emergence of society, Allāma Tabātabāī believes that the urge for sex and procreation that led man towards formation of 'family', which was the nucleus of society. Tabātabāī believes in the primacy of family as the foundation of social life. He says:

> What is evident in our contemplation about man is that
> the first form of human social life is the family formed

through marriage, because the natural and instinctive urge of sex, makes man and women needing each other. It is the strongest factor in the formation of social life because this urge cannot be satisfied with less than two persons, , unlike other factors such as hunger for food etc, which can be satisfied by one person also). **(Ibid., P. 93)**

He then says that from this need for another person, emerges another human characteristic, which we call *taskhīre mutaqābil* or mutual conquering or inter-dependence. It means one person exercises his power and dominance over other in one respect, but is dependent in another aspect. Thus they are mutually 'employed' and mutually conquered. But the person who is more powerful becomes dominant. For fulfilling his needs, he/she employs others. This manifested itself in the dominance in house, in tribe, in community or in a nation. Naturally one who is more powerful gains dominance and supremacy over others. This trend results in the most powerful and learned person becoming the leader of the nation (thus, the state emerges).

Tabātabāī points out the role of prophets of God in strengthening social life and in developing social consciousness of man. He says that although this social nature of man and his social mode of living (in a family or community), has never separated from man at any point in time in history, but he was derived by his instinct to

live as family, tribe or group, but not fully aware of it. Quoting verse 19 from the Qur'anic *Sūrah Yūnus*; verse 213 of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* and verses 13 of *Sūrah al-Shūra,* he points out that the Qur'an has declared that the prophets of God were the first to make man fully aware of this special feature and to present this social nature of human life as a bounty of God. They laid emphasis on unity and avoiding divisions, which is essential for a harmonious social life. **(Ibid., pp. 92-94**)

  The 3ʳᵈ chapter is entitled "Importance of Society and the Social Life in Islam. Allāma Tabātabāī explains the concept and writes;

> "Islam is the only religion whose foundation is based clearly on society and social life and has not left any aspect of social life unanswered." **(Ibid., P. 94)**

Explaining the idea, he compared the vast social dimensions of Islamic law with those of other previously revealed religions. Then he explores the realm of history and refers to by great states such as the Roman and Iranian empires, which ruled without paying enough attention and regard to the social life of their citizens, and the evil consequences followed. He even considers the writings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle as mere theorizing without implementation these ideas in their societies. But Islam has not only presented an elaborate social system, but also implemented it. Tabātabāī points out to the widespread and profound influence of Islamic law in the depths of the lives of Muslims and says:

"So the first call that rang in the ears of the humans, was calling them towards social life. Such was the importance of social life that it was emphasised independently, without being overshadowed by any other topic. This was also the call given by the Prophet of Islam. He invited people to implement this guidance of the Qur'an and live a chaste and harmonious happy collective life." **(ibid., P. 95)**

In order to validate his viewpoint, Tabātabāī cites Qur'anic verses 153 of *Sūrah An'am*: 105 of *Āle-'Imrān*, and 159 of *Sūrah An'am*, which calls people to join the community and unite with each other. He also quotes verse 104 of *Sūrah Āle-'Imrān*, which declares that the foundation of the Islamic society rests on the unity of Muslims. It is a prerequisite for gaining the material and spiritual benefits in their lives.

The 4th Chapter is entitled 'the Authenticity of Relationship of Individual and Society in Islam.' In this Chapter, Allāma Tabātabāī proves that in Islam both , the individual' and the 'Society' have authenticity; 'individualism' and 'collectivism', both are valid to some extent. Neither the Individual is real (without society), not society without the individual. The authenticity of the individual and the authenticity of the society is just an idea; these ideas are actualized in relation with each other. Tabātabāī proves this, both in terms of the Philosophy and the Qur'anic guidance. Tabātabāī is

the first *mufassir* and interpreter of the Qur'an who has pointed out that the Qur'an believes in the 'life and death of 'societies, just as individuals have life and death.

Availing the philosophical idea of unity in multiplicity and plurality in unity Tabātabāī applies it on the society, just as it is applied on individuals. In the beginning of this Chapter, he refers to the unity of human 'body, in spite of multiplicity of organs. He concludes that 'the whole' (the human body) may have properties that are not present in every single component; they appear only in the case of a coalition and the union of components. The 'whole' (body) can have no life without individual organs, nor organs will possess life, except in a 'whole' (body). Such is relationship of 'society' and individuals also. He says:

> "This real relationship between 'individuals' and 'society' results in appears of its own unique life and properties in 'society which are trans-individual. "

He goes on to cite verse 54 of *Surah al-Furqān* and 195 *of Surah Āle-'Imrān*, to prove that 'individuals', the 'society and their relationship, are real and authentic. Then he says: "The Qur'an considers that nations, have their own existence, life, books, consciousness, understanding, action, obedience and sin, just as the individuals have. This point is proved by the verses 34 of *Sūrah A'rāf;* 28 of *Sūrah Jāthiyah;* 108 of *Sūrah An'ām;* 66 of *Surah Mā'idah;* 113 of *Sūrah Āle-'Imrān;* 5 of *Sūrah Ghāfir;* and verse no. 47 of *Surah*

Yūnus. He goes on to say: "thus we find that the Qur'an pays attention to the history of nations as much as to the stories of individuals. Tabātabāī points out that before revelation of the Qur'an, the historians were only concerned about the chronicles of kings and individual, and historiography was limited to recording the life and events of kings and nobles. Historians did not ad any idea of dealing with 'nations', as a whole. The Qur'an gave a new direction to the historians.

After proving through rational arguments and citing of the Quranic verses that 'society' has its own life, Tabātabāī points out to the superior power of the society and concludes:

> "in the case of clash, the power and properties of the society are more powerful and long-lasting than the power and properties of individuals, and overwhelm them. This is proved by observation and experience. Both in active and passive properties, to influence and get influenced, society is more powerful and long-lasting than individuals. The collective effort and 'the Collective Will' in the case of protests, social uprisings, and revolution, overwhelm the individual choices and Will, leaving no choice for individuals but to follow the whole society, and to align with it. Sometimes people will is paralysed and they blindly follow the group. Thus, hoping that moral training of individuals will be

effective without changing the society, is a vain notion "because when confronted with collective morals and attitudes, change of individuals will never achieve the desired result except to a small extent that is negligible "**(Ibid., P. 97).**

He goes on to say: "This is the reason for the importance Islam attaches to the reform of society, to the extent that it cannot be found in other religions and civilizations. All precepts of Islam, even acts of worship, *Jihād*, *zakāh* (charity), *salāt* or *namāz* (prayer), *saum* or *Roza (*fasting), *amr bi ma'rūf w Nahī mn al munkar (*enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil) have social dimensions and are based on the fact that society is stronger than the individual and, of course, the society is more influential on the individual than one individual on the other.

The 4th Chapter is entitled "Relevance and Feasibility of Islamic Social System and the Quaranic teachings". In this long Chapter he answers the question that if Islamic social teachings are practical and permanently relevant, and can be basis of formation of the human society and culture, then why, after a short time, has Islamic social thought stopped evolving and the present civilization of the West has overtaken the Muslim civilization? Does it prove that Islamic social system is not implementable, and even if implemented, does not have capacity to continue due to its conflict

with changing situations and are incompatibility with the temper of modern man?

In response, Tabātabāī says that, firstly, if a systems does not conform to the wishes and circumstances of the modern man, it is not a reason for its invalidity, but may have stagnated , due to external factors and lagged behind. The same Islam had spread throughout the word and produced a brilliant society and civilization, at the time when the Christian world was in the primitive barbaric state. Thus, current backwardness of Muslims is not rooted in the nature of Islam, but is due to external environment and conditions.

Then Tabātabāī points out major differences between Islamic and Western perspective. He says: there are fundamental differences of perspective between Islamic and the Modern Western civilization. While the motto in Islamic perspective is to follow what is 'right' even if it has only afew followers, , the motto of the present Western civilization, to follow the will of the majority. These two mottos differentiate the goals and objectives of the two civilizations. While the goal of Islamic society is to follow what is 'right' and seek 'true rational happiness'(which implies bringing man to moderation and perfection in the requirements of physical and spiritual powers), the goal of Western civilization to optimize physical happiness and material prosperity, whether they accord with what is 'right' or not. Moral and spiritual considerations have

no meaning in this perspective. The social system and teachings of Islam are based on 'what is morally 'right 'and 'spiritually conducive accordingly, Islam has legislated on the basis of 'truth and to bring man to true happiness. As opposed to this, the social laws of the Western societies are based on satisfying instincts and desires of the majority (in the sense of habit and temperament) and to guarantee the material and physical pleasures of this majority. These important differences in the two perspectives should not be neglected.

Tabātabāī, then makes a critique of the Western civilization and questions its moral and achievements for humanity. According to him, the superiority of a society in numbers compared to other societies and its greater use of material resources and reserves is not a criterion for the real happiness of that society because the real human happiness is attained in the shadow of satisfaction of both, soul and body and combining material prosperity with spiritual perfection. It cannot be attained by immersion in worldly pleasures and negligence of spiritual perfection. According to Islam such progress is not progression but regression (in humanity).

Allāma Tabātabāī goes on to criticize the modern Western thinkers, saying: "The majority of thinkers who have discussed with us people of the East, lack spiritual perspective and all-round collective good of humanity, and appear to be inclined to material individualistic approach. They are concerned only about their

interest and profiteering , and do not appear to be concerned for other humanbeings. Our Eastern perspective is fundamentally different. We are concerned about moral 'right', and spiritual perfection of man. We are not individualistic or only concerned about our individual profits and pleasures, but we look at ourselves as a part of an Islamic society. We consider our interests as part of the interests of our society and consider the good of the society as our own good and what is harmful to society as evil. In fact, we consider ourselves part of our whole society and give priority to the interests of the whole society over our individual interests.

  In the end of this Chapter, Allāma Tabātabāī makes a scathing criticism of imperialistic history and tendency of the modern Westerm societies. He points to the crimes and tyranny that Western civilization has inflicted on other weak nations, under the slogan of upholding independence, promoting democracy, maintaining peace, repelling international threats, defending the international order, Human Rights and the like. He says: such societies can never be described as healthy and prosperous societies by human yardstick. The present-day Western societies have in fact enslaved other societies and dominated their property, lives, and honour, so that even the primitive barbarians did not have such cruelty of heart**. (ibid., Pp. 98-97.)**

The 6ᵗʰ Chapter is entitled "the Constituents of Islamic Society and Factors for its Continuance'. It is said that Tabātabāī first delineated the common goal between the members of a society as a connecting factor between them, and considered the difference between a religious society and a non-religious society in respect of goals (spiritual and material). Then he discussed the role of 'Law' as controlling factor against violating some people the rights of others, and monopolizing the benefit of the society. Subsequently, he refers to the Islamic State as the guarantor of the administration of the 'fair law'.

At the same time, he emphasizes the role of the members of the society and their proper training, in the realization of a just society and the proper implementation of fair laws and says:

> "Islam has founded its laws on the basis of moral and human considerations. The religious sanction guarantees that individuals follow the laws in public and private spheres, in openness and in the solitude, even when no one is witnessing. Its goal is preventing people transgressing, and sinning and disrupting social order. The sanctity given by religion is more effective guarantee for individuals to follow them and maintain public order than most efficient police or any other military force can maintain public order.(**Ibid., pp. 107-112)**

At the end, he points to the constructive role of the *Touhīdī* (monotheistic) society, which believes in God, After-life, resurrection, reckoning, and in nurturing moral individuals and a healthy society. Repeatedly Tabātabāī points out to the deficiencies of the materialistic Western civilization which pursues only goals of sensate momentary pleasures and gaining plenty.

Chapter 7 is entitled "The Two Logics: the Logic of Emotion and the Logic of Rationality." In this chapter, Allāma Tabātabāī seeks to explain the characteristics, and consequences of each of the two-the emotional and the rational approach. The first seeks momentary pleasure, material interests and the second seeks durable reasonable interests, both material and non-material. Emotional Logic is concerned only with this-worldly gains, Rational Logic seeks gain in this world and in the After-life. Emotional Logic is 'individual oriented; Rational Logic is both individual and society oriented. Pursuing emotional logic only brings the material benefit of the individua , may be at the expense of loss to the society, while following rational logic, in addition to individual benefit, also brings benefit for the whole society and what is the common good. Thus, Rational Logic guarantees interest of the individual and society, both, in this-world as well as in the After-world.. Verses 52 and 121 of *Sūrah Tawbah* have been cited in this regard

Subsequently, Tabātabāī explains the rational logic of Islam: "The logic of Islam is based on following the truth and seeking rewards

from God Almighty, and setting goals and objectives to focus on After-world, without forgetting 'This-World." In describing the impact and positive role of Islamic education on individuals, he referred to the early history of Islam and says:

> "People looked at the presence of the Messenger of God and confessed their crimes in the pre-Islamic era, and repented to God They followed the limits set by Islamic Law and the religious and fulfilled social duties that were prescribed for them to purify their souls and attract God's pleasure and be cleansed from the rust of sins and the sediments of ugliness. This shows the profound and constructive influence of religious teachings on individuals. **(Ibid., pp 113-114)**

The 8th Chapter is entitled "Meaning of seeking reward from God and turning one's back to other than Him. In this Chapter, Allāma Tabātabāī answers the doubt: "that turning focus to other-worldly reward, as the main goal of life may lead to this worldly stagnation and backwardness; undermining importance of this life, may weaken society and make it decay. Ultimately it may lead to monasticism (and the suppression of the natural desires of man). It is asked: does such a thing not lead to contradiction with the developmental social goals of Islam?

In response, he says that such an illusion is due to ignorance of the divine wisdom and secrets that the Qur'anic teachings contain.

Islam is a religion that has based its legislation on nature (of man and the world). As this-world and the Hereafter, both are part of the creation of One God, the natural scheme does not shun the worldly life because of *ākhirah*, or *akhira* because of *dunyā*. Therefore, a Muslim, who believes in *Touhīd* (monotheism) and After-life, works both for the success in this world and salvation in the Hereafter. Adherence to Islam, enables him achieve both goals-this worldly success and the Other-worldly salvation. On this account, the members of the Islamic society are happy and successful, both in this world and in the Hereafter. Their goal is to please God, this ensures both.

In reinforcing this view and refuting the above doubt, Tabātabāī refers the reader to the study of the Prophet's life and traditions in which the emphasis is placed on the satisfaction of human physical needs as well as spiritual and spiritual needs. However, this perspective should not be confused with the material 'this-worldy' perspective. Here focus is on *Touhīd* and belief in God, worldly duties are also carried as acting upon the Divine direction, while in the latter, sole gaol is worldly success and momentary pleasure. It is clear that these are two different perspectives that result in two types of education and two types of human beings. **(Ibid., pp. 114-116)**

The 9th Chapter is entitled "What is the meaning of Freedom in Islam? Allāma Tabātabāī points out, although the use of the word

'freedom' has become common in recent times, after the European civil movement, its meaning and concept has long been present in the minds of the ancients. He says:

> The thirst for Freedom originates from the very nature of man. That is result and essence of man's existential distinction-i.e. Free-Will. Freedom implies exercising this 'Free-Will.

However, 'exercising 'freedom' by men has its limits. Man is a social being whose nature leads him to live in a community. Here he has to tamper his 'will' and 'action' in a way that it does not encroach or clash with the will and action of others. So all have to accept limitations imposed by the 'law' and morality. Every person must be humble before the law and limit his will and action according to the law and morality. This is not against the principle of the primordial freedom, but a mean to safeguard it.

However, the common social laws In the materialistic societies which have been legislated to make individuals enjoy more and more and satisfy their carnal desires, have left people free to overlook religious beliefs and precepts. Freedom has this meaning in the Western perspective. But Islam has legislated on the basis of *Touhīd* and moral virtue and has delineated the path of individual and social behaviour, accordingly. This perspective is opposed to freedom in the above-mentioned Western sense. Islam advises man to be free from servitude of all, other than God. He should set

himself free and not fall under the burden of slavery and subjugation, of others or his own carnal desires, just as is the case in today's so-called civilized societies. There is a difference between 'freedom' and 'permissiveness'. Tabātabāī cites the Qur'anic evidence for his above-mentioned view, citing verse 32 of *Sūrah A'rāf*: 29 *Sūrah al-Baqarah* and verse no. 13 of *Surah al-Jāthīya.*

   Finally, discussing the verse no. 256 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, *Lā ikrāha fid dīn* (there is no compulsion in religion*)*, Tabātabāī reject the notion on the basis of this verse that Islam support freedom of belief and the choice of religion. Tabātabāī considers it not in consonance with the Touhīdī view of the religion. He says:

> Did you know that *Touhīd* (monotheism) is the foundation of all Islamic laws, and on this account, how is it possible to prescribe freedom of beliefs (which implies believing or rejecting *Touhīd* or Oneness of God". ..."Of course, the issue of freedom of expression is separate from the issue of freedom of beliefs, and the two should not be confused." (**Ibid., pp. 116-117**)

   The 10th Chapter is entitled "The Ways for Evolution and in the Islamic Society". At the beginning of this chapter, Allāma Tabātabāī says that the Islamic tradition is a comprehensive tradition satisfying all just needs of life.   The Islamic Society is based on 'truth', 'purity' and 'goodness'. Then what is meaning of the evolution of such a (perfect) society. Responding to this query, he

says: this question is posed by the followers of Dialectical Materialism(Marxists); there is a sophistry and deliberate confusion here. Tabātabāī points out: "The branches of knowledge are of two kinds. First category is of sciences, like Physics which are designed to strive for betterment and development of the human society by discovering laws and leading to new technology. They have an evolutionary character, always change and become more perfect. But there is another kind of knowledge which explains worldview and the concept of man, goal of life, and what is good and what is evil, (religion consists of this). They may become more comprehensive and perfect, but essentially do not change. What is a reality today, does not become an illusion tomorrow, what is 'good' today, and does not become 'evil' tomorrow. Logical propositions, like 'man exists', or 'man is part of this world' or 'man consists of different components', these are permanent truths and cannot change with the passage of time. But the sciences concerned with man's social life constantly change and evolve. Human social life is constantly changing and evolving, and Islam does not oppose it. He then cites changes in the way society is governed as another example of such evolutionary developments. He refers to the change in political systems and forms- from authoritarian monarchy to democracy, from feudalism to communism, as examples.

At the end of the discussion,, he refers to this question that if there is a general all-inclusive process of evolution, and nothing is immune from transformation; it may encompass moral values and religious beliefs also. The rule and principle that do not have capacity to change with the evolution of societies, are thrown in the dustbin of history.

In answer to this question, he points out that these questions are based on the theory of the relativity of human values and beliefs. According to this view, 'truth', 'falsehood', 'good' and 'evil' everything is relative and nothing absolute or inherent. Same is the case with theoretical beliefs-just as belief in God and After-life and the practical general principles, such as 'society is good for human beings' and 'justice is good for man' all are relative and subject to change in different times, places and situations. But, if the principle of change is all-inclusive, it will include this notion and claim (that everything is relative and subject to change) also. In this case, principle of general change must itself undergo change. (This exhibits weakness and false nature of this notion of all-inclusiveness of change) **(Ibid., pp. 120,118)**

The 11th Chapter is entitled 'Can Islamic law ensure the2 Human Happiness in This=Worldly Life? This Chapter, in fact, deals with the question: can Islam answer human problems in the complex present Age, while it was revealed in an age when the society, culture and politics was quite simple. In other words, human

affairs in all spheres, especially in the technical, industrial, , social, cultural and political relations, have become quite complex , and how can an old religion meet all the diverse and extensive needs of modern society? These two are contradictory, so how they can meet?

In response to this question, Tabātbāī says that the difference between old and new, traditional and modern societies make no difference in respect of the constant and permanent inherent general needs of human beings, which arise out of his instincts or the higher 'human nature. Man's need for food, clothing, housing, and cohabitation has been constant in all ages and in all societies, although the form of food, clothing, housing, and the type of cohabitation have changed over time. Transformation of form does not imply change in the inherent need. Likewise, man's fundamental beliefs about the origin and end of existence, about God, and After-ife have always been constant, despite the evolution of social structure over time. The general laws and systems of life that Islam stipulated, which are in accordance with human nature, are eternal and do not change with time. Minor rulings and regulations related to today's modern societies, such as financial, criminal, disciplinary, transportation, defence and communication laws, and the like, which can evolve over time, have been made subject to the *ijtihād* and inference of experts and the Islamic ruler. Thus, no problem arises which cannot be solved.

Generally speaking, the fixed and permanent principles and teachings pertain to the fundamental beliefs and values, while changing details relate to the legislative, criminal, economic, political forms and such matters (**ibid, pp. 120-121)** This, in fact, shows the dynamism and flexibility of Islam with the changing time and place, which is also the secret of its permanence.

In the 12th Chapter, Allāma Tabātabāī deals with the issue of politics and government in Islam. The title of the chapter is 'Who is in charge of the government in the Islamic society and what are his qualifications.' In response to the above question, Tabātabāī says: the right to rule over Islamic society belongs to the Messenger of God (the Prophet), and obedience to him is obligatory according to the clear text of the Qur'an. He cites Verse 12 of *Sūra Taghābun*; 105 9th of *Sūra al-Nisā*, verse 6 of *Sūra al-Ahzāb* and 31 of *Sūra Āle 'Imrān*, which clearly prove that the Prophet has supreme and absolute authority in the Islamic society. However Tabātabāī points out: but the Prophet, like all others, is subject to the Laws legislated by God, he is not above 'law'.

Tabātabāī makes the point that to implement Islamic system is the responsibility of all members of the society. He points out that the Qur'anic verses related to worship, *jihād*, criminal laws (punishments), *qisās (*retribution*)*, and the like are addressed to the general public and not to the Prophet. For example, the Holy Quran says about prayer, *aqīmus salāt (You* establish the prayer (*Nisa / 77);

or says, "spend in the way of God"; or says: "but if you do not believe, you will be rewarded for what you did, and you will be rewarded for what you did. The Qur'an says: there should be a group among you who enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil (Āle 'Imrān / 104). These verses points to the social responsibility of all people to shoulder social, economic and political responsibilities, and implement Islamic law and systems.

The affairs of the society are the responsibility of the citizens and the members of the society. The Prophet and the non-prophet are equal in respect of God's Law; they are all responsible for observing the implementation of the divine commandments in society. Though the Prophet coveys these laws, morally and spiritually train people, and is entitled to the leadership and command obedience, but is subject to the Law of God. A Propher is not like a monarch that is master of everything from the throne, to the wealth, life and honour of his subjects and that he can seize them as he pleases. In history, Pharaohs, Roman emperors and Iranian monarchs are historical examples of such authoritarian rule.

Then Tabātabāī goes on to describe differences between ideal Islamic society and the ideal non-Islamic societies. The first feature is in respect of Class-discrimination. The class difference in wealth, power, and status that are evident in non-Islamic societies and is the source of social corruption and tyranny goes back to their social structure. Ideal Islamic society is in which no class takes

precedence over the other, and none has any superiority, pride, or more dignity over others. Although distinctions exist due to differences in talent, but they do not result in superiority. The only criterion of respect and superiority of individuals in the Islamic society is the superiority in the piety and godliness that the Qur'an has referred to in verse 13 of *Sūrah Al-Hujurat*. Therefore, in the real Islamic society, like the society of the time of the Prophet, the ruler, and the subject, officer and the subordinate, the free and the slave, men, and women, rich and poor, all are equal before the Law of Islam. The second feature of a perfect Islamic society is that there is no privileged group; the administrators and the rulers are not distinct from other individuals and groups in society. Each member of society has the right to criticize; in fact is responsible for *amr bi ma'rūf (* to command 'good') and *nahī min al-munkar (* (forbid from evil).

Tabātabāī seems to suggest that in the post-Prophet and post-*Masūmīn* period of *ghaibate kubra*, following the Prophet's *sunnah* people have the right and responsibility to choose and appoint the chief (ruler) which will work on the basis of *shūra (consultation)*. The verse of *Sūra al-Ahzāb* and other verses which describe the Prophet's authority, prove this point.

The 13th Chapter is entitled: The Common Faith is the Foundation of the Muslim Nation and not Geographical Boundaries. Firstly, Allāma Tabātabāī states that Islam abolished

racial and geographical boundaries and negated them as foundation of unity of nation. He admits that ''racism and Nationalism was result of necessity of having some common bond to constitute identity and unity. He says:

> "Undoubtedly, it is necessary that human instincts invite men to find a common bond and want to be strengthened by unity and integrity, to fulfil common goals"

He then refers to the destructive role of tribalism, racism, and territorialism (Nationalism) in fragmenting a single human society and creating a spirit of conflict and its evil results in the history of human beings. He goes on to say that these negative consequences are the reason why Islam rejects such foundations of nationhood (*ummah*). The foundation of the Muslim *ummah* is based on the commonality of Faith in one God, and not on the consideration of gender, ethnicity, homeland and race. 'Faith' is the main criterion. Even in matters such as marriage, sexual relations, and inheritance the criterion is the principle of sharing in 'faith in One God and belief, and not the caste or the homeland.

In the end, he concludes that Islamic community is formed in such a dynamic fashion that it may survive and flourish in all circumstances- in victory and defeat, whether it is a ruler or a subject, it is in majority or minority, is developed or undeveloped , is strong or weak. In confirming this view, Tabātabāī refers to the

verses of *Taqiyyah*: 106; *Āle-'Imrān* verse 28 and 102. **(Ibid., pp. 125-126)**

The title of the 14th Chapter is 'Islam in all its aspects is a Social Religion'. Allāma Tabātabāī says that the Qur'anic evidence for this view is O' those who Believe! Be steadfast, and keep interconnected (having social relations), and be fearful of God, so that you may gain success; God is All-Knowing, All-Wise. "(Verse 200 of *Surah Āle 'Imrān*).

While explaining the topic, Tabātabāī says: , the social nature of Islam is reflected in all its rules and regulations. Islam emphasizes, motivates and stimulates Muslims towards community life and strong social integration. A researcher should keep in mind: that the *shari'ah* of Islam has based its rules on the basis of community-life. For example, the duty of *jihād* in defence of faith, honour and land of Muslims is a collective responsibility. Likewise other acts of worship as *saum* (the duty of fasting), *Hajj* and completing them with two community festivals *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*, all are community events. In this regard, the obligatory nature of congregational Friday prayers and recommendation of congregational form, for the daily prayers is also important. Some precepts of the *sharī'a* makes collective form obligatory; and others makes it recommendatory, (as the congregational form of Daily Prayers which is not obligatory, but emphasised and Muslims are

asked to follow the *sunnah* and tradition of the Prophet. This proves social direction of the religion of Islam.

But the biggest factor social cohesion og the human society, envisaged by Islam, is the 'unity of religion'. Tabatabāī says:

> " the third aspects of promoting social cohesion is that the Qur'an invites all people to follow a uniform religion and system of life, in all sphere of life, worship, trade, and politics, to moral behaviour. Islam calls on all people to follow the religion which accords with the human nature, claiming that this religion is the ultimate Truth. This is the basis for the broad unity and social cohesion of the human society, towards which Islam calls mankind-to follow the 'Truth' and what is right.

Subsequently, Tabātabāī refers to the inner (intellectual-temperamental) and external (society and environment) factors of differences among men, and deals with them in detail. He says:

> "Apart from precepts, Islam calls all to follow one religion, and system of life. God says: 'follow this path which is the straight path of nature, and do not follow the wrong paths; they divide you from the path of God. God advises you to avoid division (*An'am* / 153). This verse of the Qur'an refers to the point that following one

true religion protects people from division and disintegration, and keeps them united."

Tabātabāī further says: "Quranic verses indicate the necessity of society following one religion and one code and remain united. In cases of differences or quarrels, they should ask 'competent persons' (*ahle zikr*) to solve their problems.

Quranic verses, such as verse 59 of *Sūrah al-Nisā* ', instruct Muslims to refer to the Messenger of God (ie, the Sunnah and the way of the Messenger of God), who is the final authority, if there is a dispute over an issue. At the end of this section, Tabātabāī says: say: "This is the picture of social thinking in Islam.

In continuation of his discussion in this chapter, Tabātabāī refers to the importance of individual freedom and individual rights, in spite of this emphasis on the importance of the society. He says: Though the religion of Islam basically emphasizes the implementation of the Divine system, but also accepts the intellectual freedom of the people." It is obligatory for people to independently think about the principles of belief, and exert their free judgement within the framework of Islam *for ijtihād* and inferences. If they have some ambiguity or doubt, should consult the Book of God (the Qur'an) the tradition and sayings of the Prophets and his successors. Tabātabāī says:

" The freedom of thought which we are referring is this kind of freedom which is based and within the framework of the Scripture and Prophet's tradition, not unbridled freedom of speculation and inference, because such a thing leads to a difference that will destroy the foundations of society.

He called such a method, the best possible way to manage society's affairs in promoting 'unity of belief and way of living, and at the same time, preserving the principle of personal and freedom of thought. imposing beliefs on the population, putting the hearts and minds under lock, and killing people's intellectual talents by force, pressure, flogging, using swords, excommunication, exile, and severance as the means of imposing religion or Faith is not acceptable at all. He says:

The sacred realm of the true religion cannot sanction these reprehensible means. These improper methods of intellectual repression were used by the medieval Church, but proved counterproductive.

At the end, Tabātabāī expresses his regret at the state of the Muslim societies and says:

It is a matter of regret that we have deprived ourselves many of the great blessings of this balanced approach; either inclining towards unbridled freedom of inference which leads to sectarianism and disunity or

towards depriving free thinking which results in stagnation of the society. Ecclesiastical ways of medieval Christian Church prevailed, our hearts lost love for each other,, become stagnated and divided in sects. (Ibid., Pp. 126-131)"

Finally, Chapter 15 entitled "The Religion of Truth Will Eventually Prevail in the World" is the culmination of Allāma Tabātabāī's comprehensive analytical description Social Perspective of Islam.

At the outset, he says: "The human race, with its inherent nature seeks to reach perfection and true happiness. It implies success and happiness in the individual, physical and mental spheres as well as and in the social sphere and to attain pleasure and enjoyment in the worldly and otherworldly life." Islam which is religion of *Touhīd*, ensures such all-round success and happiness. The deviations that occur in man's movement towards attaining perfection are errors in application, not in the principles; he seeks the perfection but may fail in the recognition of the true perfection.

He then citing several Quranic sūras such as *Sūrah Rūm*, verses 41-30; *al-Māida*, verse 54; *al-Anbīya*, verse 105; *Tāha*, verse 132, and says: "This is declared that Islam, will manifest itself in full perfection and rule the world, ultimately. This is part of Isla's Social Perspective.

Tabātabāī says: one should not pay heed to such doubts that Islam has appeared in the past and its era has expired. Of course, it produced a great civilization, leaving its traces that the present civilization has benefited from, but that stage has passed centuries ago.   What is the point of re-emergence and most perfect manifestation? In addition, such a religion is not accepted by the Modern Age, and no historical evidence can be given that a past civilization, re-emerged?.

In response to such doubts, Tabātabāī says: Islam , as a moderate, balanced, realistic and perfect way of life is in accord with the inherent nature of man which has presented a balanced and perfect system. The goal and perfection of the human being is by its nature and instinct, to move towards perfection and balance. Man's definite experiences in history, tells us that it has always sought such a system which may be perfect, but also practical. " He adds: No precedence may be demanded, because the great happenings in history have all been unprecedented and appear at a particular point in time and then continue. The laws of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, as well as Brahma, Buddha, and Manichaeism, and even material schools such as Democracy and Communism, and the like, appeared in various human societies, with no precedent.

Yes, social traditions in their emergence and strength in society, require decisive will and great efforts from strong willed

individuals, great souls who have an iron will, that nothing prevents them from achieving their goals. In this regard we should not be despaired. (According to the promise of various Qur'anic verses, Islam will one day appear in its entirety and will realize all its human and social goals and reign over the world.. (Ibid., Pp. 133-131)

Conclusion

Allāma Tabātabāī should be considered a reviver of social theology and philosophy of society in contemporary Islamic societies. He tried to prove the authenticity of society along with the authenticity of the individual through philosophical analysis, and by drawing inferences from the Qur'anic verses, like a Philosopher and Theologian. He highlighted the overwhelming role of society in shaping individuals. So often it is seen that mediocre, not so intelligent and talented persons, who got healthy atmosphere and a push from society, bloomed into great personalities. With the help of the encouragement of social organizations, they have grown well and have innovated and invented, and have achieved a very high level of scientific, technical excellence with big achievements. On the other hand, it is also observed that intelligent and talented people, even geniuses, were destroyed and wasted by association with deviant groups and in bad company. Their innate talents and abilities became dormant

and were wasted. This shows the effect of environment and social milieu.

These and similar examples prove he force of 'society as a trans-individual reality which imposes its will on each individual and may bring them to their knees. This transcendental force is the social reality that emerges in Allāma Tabātabāī's words from the relationship and interaction of human beings. Though generally it is true that the society makes individuals, but there are some extra-ordinary individual who appear now and then, and they can make and re-make society. They have strength to stand firm against , pressures and all kinds of cultural, social and political forces of their Age and not only do not kneel before them, but also bring them to their knees. They change and rebuild their societies and give a new direction to history.

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