INVESTIGATING AND ANALYZING ABD AL-MAJID SHARAFI TUNESI'S THEORY

Hamed JALALI

PhD student, Muslims' contemporary thoughts, Al-Mustafa International University, Tehran campus, Tehran, Iran.

Email: Hamed3542@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Sharafi is a writer who deals with the criticism of the traditional approach to the Islamic knowledge types and tries coordinating them with the conditions of the present time. The reason for this issue is that the growth of the common Islamic knowledge types has happened at the same time with the later period of codification's emergence since the second half of the second century on. Based thereon, Islam's theory of multiplicity, the effects of hadith narrators on Islam, Islam's synchronization with modernity, Islam's keeping pace with human rights, institution building in Islam and recognition of the contemporary streams in the world of Islam have been investigated from the perspective of this author. Investigation and analysis of Sharafi's opinions showed that, in his mind, the Islamic thought is generally in need of synchronization which is also both legitimate and necessary for Islamic mindset. Sharafi realizes the problem of the jurisprudential principles' knowledge as lying in the idea that this knowledge is investigated without paying attention to the changes and evolutions that came about on the path of its formation. It is imagined in the light of such a discretion that there is a fixed and integrated Islam in the heart of history that remains persistent and fixed and has nothing to do with the history and time and Sharafi intends to challenge and synchronize this fixed and nonhistorical Islam in a continuous and long intellectual project.

Keywords: *Abd Al-Majid Sharafi Tunesi, synchronization of jurisprudence, institution building in Islam*

INTRODUCTION

It is not exaggerating if it is stated that the consistency or inconsistency of the religion and the modernity is the biggest intellectual concern of the today's mankind, especially the Muslim mankind. Has the period of religion-centeredness been expired in the modern era? Is science not contradictory to religion? Is there a way other than self-alienation against the modern west? These and some other questions have challenged the minds of many thinkers and they have provided different answers in response to such questions. Amongst the individuals who have answered to these questions with different theories, including "Al-Qerā'ah Al-Mostaqbaliyeh Li Al-Nass Al-Qurani", is Dr. Abd Al-Majid Sharafi Tunesi. Having passed seven decades of his life, Dr. Abd Al-Majid Sharafi Tunesi is amongst the enlightened Muslim minds of Tunisia. He is a professor of Islamic thought and civilization in Tunisia's university of literature and many works have been published from him. Amongst his important works are "Al-Islam Bain Al-Resāleh wa Al-Tarikh", "Tahdith Fikr Al-Islami" and "Al-Islam Wa Al-Hedāthah".

Like other analysts in the area of synchronization, Dr. Sharafi believes that the future will be possessed by a modern hermeneutic that can open the way for the emergence of numerous readings of the holy Quran with them satisfying the believers' needs of concepts that are coordinated with their novel material and cultural conditions. Although it is expected that not

all these readings are true and acceptable, the passage of time will per se screen them and retain the most superior reading enjoying internal coherence and power of persuasion and reasoning (mankind and white Islam, pp.38-39).

Abd Al-Majid Sharafi is the professor of the history of Islamic mindset and civilization in the literature faculty of "Manubeh" and "Tunisia". Amongst his most influential researchers are the two books of "Islam and Al-Hedātheh" and "Al-Tahdith Al-Fikr Al-Islami" and a twenty-volume project named "Al-Islam Wahedan Mota'addedā" has been conducted under his supervision. As one of the thinkers in the north of Africa and Tunisia, he has authored numerous works in the area of the Islamic thought. Since no work has been independently performed in Iran for the investigation of his artworks and it consequently seems necessary to do a research on this subject, the present study aims at investigating and analyzing his theory. Efforts will be made herein to reveal a new horizon of this contemporary thinker through fundamental exploration of his methodology based on a critical approach.

STUDY'S THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Multiplicity of Islam

The theory of unit and multiple Islam is one of the key thoughts and projects by Dr. Sharafi who believes that although Islam features a single truth, it has had various manifestations and it has been approached in various forms. As explicitly stated in the revelations, Islam has been a universal invitation from the beginning of its advent; however, despite this world-inclusiveness of its beliefs, it is appraised as being diverse and pluralist in the ethnic and/or national level in terms of the rites and rituals and traditions. The thing that can be stated in one word is that the preliminary principles and basics have been converted with the pass of time and geographical change or dislocation into new principles which are in the meanwhile not irrelevant to the preliminary basics.

A glance at the published titles of this collection is expressive of a different approach: Al-Islam Al-Sunni; Al-Islam Al-Foqahā; Al-Islam Al-Motakallemin; Al-Islam Al-Khareji; Al-Islam Al-Haraki (Bahth fi Adabiyāt Al-Ahzāb wa Al-Harakāt Al-Islamiyyeh); Al-Islam Al-Āsivi; Al-Islam Al-Falāsafeh; Al-Islam Al-Aswad (Jonub Al-Sahrā'a Al-Kobrā); Al-Islam Fi Al-Madineh; Al-Islam Al-Motasaffeveh; Al-Islam Al-Sha'abi; Al-Islam al-Arabi (Kiyaneh wa Khasā'eseh); Al-Islam Al-Mojaddedin; Al-Islam Al-Osūr Al-Inhitāt; Al-Islam Al-Ikrād (Nemuzaj Al-Islam Al-Aqalliyāt; Qerā'ah Fi Tadākhol Al-Dini Wa Al-Qabli wa Al-Qawmi); Al-Islam Al-Sāsseh; and, Al-Islam Al-Moslehin; Al-Islam Al-Badavi (Islam Al-Tawāreq Nomuzajan). The forthcoming sections will investigate some cases of them so as to clarify the angles of this theory.

1. Arabic Islam (Islam Al-Arabi)

Under the title of "Arabic Islam", Dr. Sharafi directs his addressees' attention to three supplementary processes upon encountering the topic "Arabic Islam" which are occasionally simultaneous, sometimes distant and yet separate in some other times. The first is the process of Islam's promulgation and the formation of this religion itself; the second is the blending of what is termed Arabic Islam with the residents of these communities and the combining of the Arabs themselves and their unification at least in the civilization centers in the periods after conquering

and the third is the process of the historical and cultural relationship between Islam and Arabization; although these two have been accompanying one another in the history of the Arabic regions, they have not had consistent tempos rather they have been separate in various places and times because Islam has not been always Arabic in the area of Arabic Islam in cultural and linguistic terms and Arabization has not been constantly Islamic. He also believes that Arabic Islam's properties cannot be perceived in the religions themselves rather the signs of Arabic Muslim's identity can be obtained in the distribution, structure and degrees of expression.

2. Heretics

In elaborating such a topic as heretics, Dr. Sharafi points out that Muslims have had various and different perceptions of the text [the holy Quran] since the advent of Islam based on their different understandings and comprehensions as well as the differences of the historical conditions under which they have grown. This is while every reading claims that it is only reconstructing the absolute meaning. It is through doing so that everyone with opposite understanding of the text and arranging the reality in another form incumbently stands face-to-face against the absolute truth.

3. Primitive Islam

The discussion on and investigation of the historical, social and cultural anthropology in primitive Islam forms the foundation of his thought and he elaborates the issue through investigating the example of Tawāreq, particularly Tawāreq-e-Haqār in the south of Algeria. Moreover, he makes efforts to present some manifestations of the original Tawāreq and their lineage and art of painting on rock and stone, their new history, matriarchal system, system of Sunna and regulations and characteristics and approaches of their Islam.

4. Black Continent's Islam

Sharafi realizes Islam as a religion that is great in terms of the numerosity of followers as well as in terms of its effect on the believers' life and approach towards the world of existence and their own selves inside this world. This religion is amongst the creeds that has powerfully returned to the political and social scene of the world and other regions that did not know anything about it. Therefore, it is not strange if Islam becomes the subject of investigation in various regions of the world and also if the notions and perspectives about it and the specifications of this religion and the source of its power for fighting with topics like modernism and blocking of the globalization path and efforts for halting its advance in the contemporary world become the subjects of many discussions and disputes.

5. Revolutionary Islam

Sharafi investigates the revolutionary Islam in Arabs as well as Islam's world. In this research, he relies on scrutinizing the essential principles and foundations of the Islamists' discourse which forms their thought and ideology; these principles are concentrated on elements showcasing the Islamists' perspective about Islam and express their understanding and perception of the truth of religion and quintessence of prophetic mission. In his mind, Islam has taken new dimensions amongst the Islamists and it has generally exited the area of belief, faith and sanctities and reached the areas of the material life. Islamists do not separate these two areas

based on their perceptions of the truth of Islam. Thus, in their ideas, Islam includes two essential inseparable dimensions: faith in God and purifying the worshipping for Him and establishment of the God's governance on earth and enforcement of the canonical rules therein.

6. Modernists' Islam

Dr. Sharafi realizes modernists' Islam as a novel manifestation of Islam which is being increasingly more wanted in the Islamic circles day in day out. Furthermore, he believes that the thoughts of the Islamic mindset modernists would open horizons of revision in regard of the needs of the today's Muslims; this is a method that is released from both dogmatic-orthodox framework and the special fields of the contemporary science both of which have become capable of identically imposing their own specific notions. He also states that there are few works on modernists' Islam in comparison to those about other kinds of Islam as found in the libraries and also in contrast to the massive volume of the heritage books and traditional researches.

Effects of Hedāthah on Islam

From the perspective of Sharafi, the results that can be obtained from the investigation of Islam's relationship with modernity as one of the mental concerns of the modernist Arab thinkers cannot respond to all the questions related to this issue and he does not claim that they can provide a mysterious key for the resolving of many problems imposed by this issue on the religious conscience which is being faced with the cognizance and historical invasion coming from the west and targeting the Arab communities.

One of the results underlined by Sharafi is that there are currently intellectual, Arabic and Islamic accomplishments in opposite to the traditional and inherited accomplishments meaning that the leading generation cannot substantiate except on the past thoughts; however, many things have been stored since one and a half centuries ago and they are useful for any sort of innovation and break through the tradition but, of course, they are not enough. Although the early thinkers could not substantiate on anything except the past traditional and imitated culture for the influence of the west on their position, the new Arab thinkers' recognition of the modern west is deepening and improving in all the grounds in such a way that the lingual and psychological barriers that barred the expediency-based interaction with the west during the colonialism era have been decreased (Islam and Hedātheh, p.211).

Islam's Synchronization with Modernity

1. Synchronization of the Principles of Jurisprudence and Modernity

By synchronization of the jurisprudential principles, Sharafi means revising and reforming of this principle-based system based on a return to the spirit of the Quranic addressing with its contents being the equality of the Muslims in divine addressing. He also directs our attentions to the historical nature of the system inherited by the Muslims and expresses that there is no way except the return to the history for bringing about revisions in this system (Al-Sharafi, 2003).

2. Synchronization of the Jurisprudence and Law

From the perspective of Dr. Sharafi, one of the issues that has been dealt with in the area of synchronizing Islam and modernity is the relationship between jurisprudence and law. In their new sense and in a general classification, regulations can be divided into two sets: necessary and prohibited. Wherever the law prefers to adopt a silent stance, the issue is related to the

legitimates. This is while there are five kinds of verdicts in jurisprudence: obligatory, forbidden, recommended, abominable and permissible or legitimate. The jurisprudence and the law differ in that the statutory provisions are changeable. A legal obligation may be forbidden and prohibited one day and vice versa whereas it is not so in jurisprudence. The verdicts expressed about the subjects are uniform and invariable and a halal [permissible thing] cannot become haram [forbidden] and vice versa within the framework of jurisprudence.

3. Legislation and Role of the Holy Quran

In the holy Quran, the canon has been recounted not as a divine law but as a method and way of conduct. So, the duty of the canon is specification of the way on which a believer should step hence canon is binding in this regard. The holy Quran has generally specified the movement path for the Muslims but it has preferred not to present further details in the area of the practical behavior for exercising conciseness. The thing that has been expressed in the holy Quran as verdicts is like a solution for the problems of the Muslim community in time and place and, due to the same reason, there are occasionally observed discrepancies between these verdicts. However, the holy Quran has adopted a silent position about a vast part of the life's manifestations in the then as well as in the forthcoming times and it has assigned Muslims to the finding of the solutions (Al-Sharafi, 2018, pp.69-72).

4. Method of Interaction with the Holy Quran's Text

Dr. Sharafi believes that our solution in approaching the holy Quran should be holistic because it is less likely to be found in the orders and prohibitions existent in the holy Quran because they have been rendered expedient by the conditions governing the Islamic society at the time of the invitation by the great prophet of Islam. The proper solution for overcoming this problem is approaching the holy Quran as a system in such a way that some ĀYĀT cannot be separated from some others. Furthermore, attentions should be always paid to an ĀYA's ultimate goal and one should remain bound thereto. We should also know that the conditions existent in the past Islamic community compelled Muslims to have certain perceptions of some ĀYĀT (Al-Sharafi, 2018, p.78).

Synchronization of Islam with Human Rights

Stating that the Muslim states should adopt a policy so as to be aligned with the global values, Sharafi summarizes the ways existent before the Islamic society in three cases (Sharafi, 2018, p.22).

1) An option ruling the preservation of the existent conditions: the current conditions delineate an abhorrent image of the Muslims in the minds of the world dwellers. This is while some religious classes in these same Islamic countries believe in the necessity of getting rid of the medieval mental sediments and activation of the women's role in the production cycle and believe that a country cannot progress while half of the society's workforce is idle.

2) The way taken by Kamal Ataturk in Turkey: he dismantled the canonical courts and replaced the family laws of Switzerland with all their details for the jurisprudential verdicts pertinent to the individual issues. This is while the traditional religious institution's discourse and the programs of the Islamist movements that are spread in every corner of the Islamic countries realize this solution as being contradictory to Islam.

3) The way manifested in Tunisia's audacious and enlightened stream: it is a stream that was commenced since 19th century and continued till early 20th century with awareness of the necessity for separating from the past time's inanition, laggardness and its dependent mentality being its essence.

Women in the Era of Modernism

Sharafi states that Muslim modernists who have explored such a subject as women based on their familiarity with the Islamic heritage and the western civilization's teachings believe in three essential value: the first is the pivotal value and, especially, the material and economic aspects thereof. This value has shouldered the interpretation of many of the positions and stances adopted by the modernists in defending the necessity of women's having of no Hijab and their entry into the public arenas and their mixed attending of the public places along with men and their possession of education right. This value has also caused the gravity center of the efforts in favor of the women to be displaced from the religious and jurisprudential factors towards the economic manufacturing factors.

The second is the fundamental value of the men and women's equality. Based on this value, modernists deal with the issue of polygamy and the men's right of arbitrary divorcement of the women and the differences in the inheritance between the heirs and heiresses as well as with the other manifestations of inequality in the civil rights and shouldering of the other duties.

The third is the axial value of the preservation of the essence. Based on this value, change should not be brought about hastily and we should not reconstruct ourselves in an uncalculated manner in match with the western patterns and disregard all the constraints. Based on this value, modernists are aware of the necessity of step-by-step reformation of the women's issues. Therefore, they are not the preachers of the westerns' thoughts rather western civilization is just a pattern for revision in the religion's system and Islamic heritage with an internal approach and through preservation of their primary essence (Al-Sharafi, 2009, pp.248-249).

Institution-Building in Islam

Dr. Sharafi expresses that Islam, like other religious and nonreligious invitations, distanced away from its goals following the transition from the institution-building stage. That is because a human or a divine invitation distances away from its goals or, at least, changes its goals and accomplishments following its embodiment (Al-Sharafi, 2018, pp.126-133).

Secularism

From Sharafi's viewpoint, Peter Berger has presented the most exact definition for secularism. According to him, secularism is a "process by which the subordinate parts and culture of the society exit the domination of the religious institutions and symbols".

From the perspective of the Tunisian thinker, Abd Al-Majid Sharafi, secularism is a very effective historical stream and the Islamic communities cannot avoid joining it though it is presently opposed in theoretical level. He believes that a glance at the contemporary Islamic communities is indicative of the idea that the social and economic life's organization is a function of the statutory provisions in all of these communities and even in the systems claiming "the practicing of the canon" and there is incumbently no way other than this (Sharafi, 2018, man and white Islam, pp.52-54).

Salafism

Dr. Abd Al-Majid Sharafi can be considered as one of the serious critics of Salafism in both the past and the present. After investigating the primary factors that have given rise to Salafism in his book of "Labināt", he deals in an analysis with the status quo of Salafism in the Islamic world. He believes that such an attitude has been born by the historical conditions before being caused by the Islam's expediencies. From the perspective of Abd Al-Majid Sharafi, the reformation stream headed by Sayed Jamal Al-Din Afghani, Sheikh Muhammad Abdeh and Muhammad Rashid Reza is to be considered as neo-Salafism. In Sharafi's opinion, the common point of Salafism and neo-Salafism is feeling nostalgia for the past and the golden era, including the period in which the prophet was alive and the period of Rashedin caliphs and the period of no uprising against the sultan. Sharafi believes that although our time's Salafism has taken a long leap for breaking the inanition in a way or another, it has remained on the surface which is called "miserable self-awareness of history" by some for it is in opposition to the belief in development. In other words, the sacred text has only one rendering as believed by this group and that is the rendering made by the first Islamic generations or what is reckoned to be belonging to them (Sharafi, 2018, man and the white Islam, pp.198-202).

Recognition of the Contemporary Stream in the World of Islam

In order to investigate the stance of Islam and the peripheral world, Sharafi enumerates various perspectives:

1) **Continuation of the traditional perspective:** in this viewpoint, the peripheral world can be divided into two sections: Dar Al-Islam and Dar Al-Kufr and Dar Al-Harb. The relationships between the states and nations falling in the Dar Al-Islam is based on religious brotherhood within the framework of the Islamic nation though the systems and governments are different from one another. However, the relations in Dar Al-Kufr are in their best form based on cease-fire which is continued till the right time comes for the Muslims' domination over the Kaffirs and disperse Islam in every corner of the land of disbelievers [Dar Al-Kufr]. In his evaluation of the abovementioned perspective, Sharafi believes that summarization of the criteria of relationship with others to faithfulness and unfaithfulness or monotheism and polytheism does not allow the reality of the opposite party to be revealed hence his or her strong points cannot be applied whether in the area of the material accomplishments or in the domain of the intellectual and spiritual accomplishments.

2) **Idealists:** the Islamic perspective has chosen an incorrect ideal since the third hegira century. In this ideal, emphasis is placed on the preservation of the general five (life, religion, intellect, properties and lineage), on the one hand, and on the sharing of the duties with men, on the other hand. In criticizing this perspective, Sharafi believes that this approach ignores the evolution of the historical conditions like the first approach. The proponents of this approach preserve the verdicts of Jihad as recorded in the ancient jurisprudential books without any pondering.

3) **Reformist movements:** this group has perceived the necessity for change and it has figured out that the civilizational weakness and looseness can result in too many crises in the Muslim's present and future times. Sharafi believes that this stream encountered a big barrier for finding a proper solution for the existent conditions and that is the formation of a cultural identity in the approach adopted by the reformists who were only familiar with the classical

Islamic sciences and were almost completely ignorant about the culture of their time and its new streams.

Having criticized the three aforementioned approaches, Sharafi posits another approach. He believes that the peripheral world can be impartially analyzed. As viewed by Dr. Sharafi, the peripheral world is not uniform rather it is a system of several worlds existent in this world of colonial powers and they should be counteracted through all the possible and legitimate ways. However, there are also organizations and populations that can be utilized or cooperated with. Sharafi is of the belief that this attribute is a fresh and novel feature of the peripheral world and it has enabled the human beings to get rid to a large extent of the various kinds of spontaneous associations within the framework of family, tribe, village, region and even their country and become linked subsequently based on their attitudes, belongings and interests to the other human systems. Sharafi believes that the approach he has offered features certain advantages, including better response to the issues of the new world such as religiosity under the today's conditions, different understanding of the religious phenomenon and the religion's special task in the contemporary world.

CONCLUSION

A glance at the efforts made by the contemporary reformist modernist discourse for the renovation of Islam or Islamization of modernity or modernization of Islam makes it clear that this approach is dominant over the book of Islam and Sharafi's modernity. In another important book titled "synchronization of the religious mindset" that was published in 1998, as well, he also nearly adopts the same approach with which he seeks fostering an enlightened plan endeavoring to renovate Islam and reconcile it with the time's expediencies. He also fosters general headline of this plan in the book "Islam between the truth and the historical manifestation" which was published in 2001.

Although the contemporary Islamic discourse sees no impediment for the opening of the closed door of exegesis in the novel texture of the religious mindset, the traditional exegetic approach is, as believed by Sharafi, incapable of adapting itself to and accompanying the current modernism's expediencies. The turning point of Sharafi's plan is the complete surpassing of the middle period's Islamic educational system and elevating of the favorable exegesis roof based on the new methodologies while remaining loyal to the gem of the Mohammedan prophetic mission.

He holds that "the period of Islam's advent has been the era of metamorphosis in various grounds; a period annunciating the good news that the savior will reappear and that he will open the closed doors and also that Muhammad Ibn Abdullah was the person who shouldered the duty of saving the mankind". As for the revelations, as well, Sharafi relies on this same social-psychological interpretation. He states that "the prophet's awareness and his long contemplations helped him reach this certitude that the God has appointed him for the preaching of his prophetic mission". In regard of the holy Quran's text, he believes that it is the reflection of the culture exercised during the seventh century with it possessing mythological tints for the reason that angels, genies and prophetic stories and others prove an accentuated presence in there.

Based on Sharafi's perspective, Islam's mission was consistent with the statuses in the time of its advent and it was even far ahead of its advent and the Muslims should also currently get adapted to the statuses of their time and give priority to its mission and not its historical limitations. In Sharafi's mind, going beyond the historical Islam is an ideal point wherein a long process of institution-building should be taken followed by the redefinition and reconstruction of the current shapes of jurisprudence, principles, interpretation, discourse, mysticism and other sciences that are still governing the Islamic intellect.

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