



## A Study of Martyr Muṭahharī's View to the Course of History

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### ABSTRACT

According to the teachings of the Abrahamic religions in general and Islam in particular, history is ultimately described as an evolved issue. Nonetheless, if this is accepted, the question arises as to whether the evolution of history occurs over time or all at once. This article examines the works of Martyr Muṭahharī, the Iranian revolutionary philosopher and scholar, with a descriptive-analytical method and tries to answer this question from his point of view. In the first part, the foundations of Martyr Muṭahharī's view to the evolution of the course of history are explained. Then, while expressing the components of realism in the interpretation of history, some problems that are raised against the evolution of history are answered from his point of view. These include human's right-seeking nature, human's utilitarianism, and the legacy of the prophets. Muṭahharī has taken a philosophical approach to commenting on the course of history, which seems to be more relevant to the question of the evolution of history. Emphasizing the legitimacy of the history process and ruling the principle of causality on historical events, he communicates between the past, the present, and the future of history, and thus provides a meaningful basis for historical continuity.

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## **1. Introduction**

Addressing the important and fundamental issue of modern Islamic civilization and presenting a theoretical plan about it, regardless of the future perspective and presenting a model and purpose, would be a futile and incomplete issue. This new civilization, if it has a clear pattern ahead, can direct its path and steps by setting it as a criterion and always measure its position with that criterion. Belief in Mahdism and Savior's (re)appearance due to the many concepts of civilization can be considered as a perspective of modern Islamic civilization. In other words, Messianism and Mahdism have the capacity to map the future of Islamic civilization, and in general, it can be said that the place of Mahdawī teachings in modern Islamic civilization is the place of drawing the future. However, this issue may be studied from two different perspectives: the characteristics of civilization and the philosophy of history (Alwīrī, 2013: 18). Most of the discussions about the relationship between Islamic civilization and Mahdism should be focused on the first view, namely, the characteristics of Mahdism civilization. In the meantime, the study of the position of Mahdism and Messianism in general in the design of Islamic civilization from the perspective of the philosophy of history is an important issue and has not been considered as it should have. While the discussion of the future of the world is one of the main topics in the philosophy of history, unfortunately in the field of Islamic education in general and Shī'a education in particular, less attention is paid to the philosophy of history and the various topics mentioned in the philosophy of history has been less discussed. One of the most common views on the philosophy of history indicates that history is moving towards a specific end, and the doctrine of Mahdism indicates one of the views on the fate of history (Rashad, 2004: 26). In other words, the idea of Messianism, in general, is closely related to the concept of the end of history and in fact describes the complete end and transcendent goal of history. On the other hand, the schools that have discussed the historical philosophy, whether Western, Eastern, old, or new, have also mostly discussed the end of history or the last man as well as the future world. They have mentioned a man and a world realized at the perfection point of history. Therefore, it is possible to establish a close connection between Messianism and the topics of philosophy of history, and determine the correct position of the discussion of Messianism and Mahdism under the topics of philosophy of history. According to Mahdism and Messianism, one should look at the evolution of history. This article tries to describe and expand the view of Martyr Muṭahharī in the discussion of Messianism and Mahdism and its relationship with the evolution of history.

## **2. Theoretical philosophy of history and the evolution of history**

The idea of evolution is one of the most challenging topics in the theoretical philosophy of history, which is based on historical movement. The philosopher of history in the theoretical philosophy of history seeks to understand the meaning and purpose of history, the stimulus and mechanism of the movement of history, and the beginning and end of history (Nawdharī, 2000: 24). According to William Dory, the theoretical or essential philosophy of history seeks to discover the meaning and concept of the general process of historical phenomena in order to achieve the general nature of the historical process. In this view, the theoretical philosophy of history goes beyond the rationality of conventional research (Edwards, 1996: 2).

In the eighteenth century, an evolutionary view to history and nature had a divine and religious orientation, but since then it has taken the secular approach. In the secular approach to evolution, everything is explained in terms of tangible and worldly matter and affairs. Believers in historical materialism such as Hegel and Marx also consider history to have an evolutionary movement. The criterion of evolution in the view of the believers of historical materialism is the material dimension of man (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 1: 251; to see more, q.v. Marx and Engels, 1974: 62-98).

Historical evolutionists disagree about the quiddity of evolution. However, evolution means the advancement of natural sciences and human domination on nature and this is the most popular definition of evolution. Others see an integrated society as one that has advanced in industry and technology. In the third theory, evolution and progress mean domination on other societies and human beings. The fourth theory considers evolution as material well-being in health and nutrition. Others see a complete society as one that has order, security, freedom, justice, equality, and brotherhood. In other words, it is an integrated society with social and political ideals. A small group also define evolution as progress in morality and spirituality as well as progress in bio-psychological abilities. If

evolutionists form a pyramid, at the base of the pyramid are those who believe in the continual advancement of knowledge and the natural sciences, and at the peak are those who anticipate improvement in other areas, ultimately bringing about improvements in physical, spiritual, and mental abilities of human (Miṣbāh, 1989: 163).

### **3. Islam and the evolution of history**

According to most Islamic thinkers, however, the movement of history is towards worship and the rule of values. If it were otherwise, this movement would be absurd. According to 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī, this movement and evolution takes place according to the law of public guidance. According to the public guidance rule, which is valid in all kinds of creations, mankind is equipped with a power, i.e., revelation and prophecy. This power guides him towards the perfection of humanity and happiness. It is therefore clear that if this perfection and happiness does not happen for social man, the principle of equipment will be canceled (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995: 149).

In the meantime, Muṭahharī has another view to this concept. In his view, evolutionary movement is in the nature and essence of history and the necessity of its essence, and the nature of history is not a purely material nature, but includes all human dimensions (Muṭahharī, 2011: 36)

Therefore, according to thinkers such as 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Muṭahharī, a perfect connection has been established between the final perfection of human beings and the Mahdawī Reappearance era, emphasizing the flourishing of human values.

'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī notes that as a matter of necessity, the future of the world will include a day when human society will be full of justice and coexist with peace and tranquility, and human beings will be immersed in virtue and perfection. Of course, the establishment of such a situation will be in the hands of man himself and the leader of such societies will be the savior of the human world; in the narrations, he is introduced as Imām Mahdī (a) (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995: 308).

Muṭahharī also writes that in terms of human values, man gradually approaches the stages of his perfection, that is, the stage of the ideal man and the ideal society, until finally the rule of justice, that is, the complete rule of human values, which in Islamic interpretations is interpreted as the rule of Imām Mahdī will be established and there will be no trace of the rule of false, animalistic, and selfish forces (Muṭahharī, 2011: 41). Of course, it is necessary to mention that not all Islamic thinkers accept the evolution of history and do not consider it generally defensible. The following is the view of this group of experts.

### **4. Two hypotheses about the quality of (re)appearance**

In spite of all the bitter historical facts, the monotheistic religions firmly announce a happy ending in this worldly life. The idea of Messianism in monotheistic religions has always been safe and hopeful for human beings. The followers of monotheistic religions, especially Muslims, have never believed in the presumption of extinction of the human race or the ultimate rule of oppression, despite the observance of filth and injustice. This disbelief in the bitter end of history in monotheistic religions stems from religious beliefs and scriptures, and is therefore one of the definitive principles of most religions. The Holy Qur'ān also mentions the issue in some cases, e.g., "Certainly We wrote in the Psalms, after the Torah: 'Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth'" (Qur'ān 21: 105).

Due to the news in the religious texts, we have no doubt that history will witness the final victory of the righteous over the wrongdoers. However, we face the question on the way to explain the quality of the occurrence of this great event.

With a philosophical view to Mahdīsm, Muṭahharī considers the (re)appearance not as an exceptional event in history, but as a natural result of the process of human history. In his view, the ultimate victory of the Ahl al-Ḥaqq is a "human reality." That is, it documents the way human beings function, and of course not only the human beings of the age of (re)appearance, but all human beings throughout history are included in this view. According to this view, history is always evolving. Of course, this evolutionary view of the course of history is not specific to Muṭahharī, and some other thinkers, even Western thinkers, look at history with an evolutionary view (Edwards, 1996: 25; Stanford, 2005: 48). However, the salient feature of Muṭahharī's view is that he not only considers the end of history as evolving, but also introduces the path of history as an evolutionary path to the expansion of truth. From this perspective, the (re)appearance is not an accident, but the result of a

“historical process.” The promised (re)appearance and eventual victory of the Ahl al-Ḥaqq is not an exception in history, but of the law. Throughout history, man, consciously or unconsciously, has been preparing for the promised (re)appearance and sovereignty of truth and justice. In this view, there is a rational relationship between the promised future and our past and present. We are already building the future, and our will and the way we think and act today contribute to the occurrence of (re)appearance.

On the contrary, we can mention other thinkers who do not consider the evolution of history defensible. ‘Allāma Ja’farī, for example, in the sixteenth volume of his book (*Translation and interpretation of Nahj al-Balāghah*), believes that what can be achieved from the totality of human history and the natural, cerebral, and psychological existence of human beings, is that human movement on the historical evolutionary path is a vague, inexplicable, and unprovable issue. The reason is that what we all observe is the spread of human thoughts, possessions in nature, and penetration to some of its important levels. These have been achieved from a scientific view, especially in the last two centuries, and have been very significant. However, can this expansion and influence, which has trampled on all human values and greatness, be called evolution? It would be unreasonable optimism if a man throws himself out of the paradise of emotions, feelings, reason, conscience, and sacrifices in the progressive way of his fellow, and then sits on the top of the mountains of deadly weapons, with his severe natural swelling and unimaginable selfishness, and says: “I am evolved!” (Ja’farī, 1986: 132).

‘Allāma Ja’farī goes on to cite evidence: “Human behavior throughout history is contrary to the claim of evolution” (Ja’farī, 1986: 150). Miṣbāḥ in his book “*Society and History from the Qur’ān’s point of view*,” considers the presumption of evolutionary course of human history unprovable. He believes that even if we accept that the course of societies or history has been evolutionary so far, this means that the past of societies or history has had an evolutionary direction but it does not mean that the future of societies or history will be evolutionary. In his view, evolution, assuming it has been realized so far, is a “desire,” i.e., the directional past of a particular phenomenon, rather than a law, i.e., a repetitive and unchangeable order at all times and places (Miṣbāḥ, 1989: 167-168). Before him, the same position was taken by Abdolkarim Surūsh in his book “*philosophy of history*” (Surūsh, 1979: 43).

In the following lines, based on Muṭahharī’s ideas, the theoretical foundations of the orientation of history towards the (re)appearance and evolution of history are described. Then, a view that makes history dark and introduces it as full of black events as if the direction of history is the expansion of oppression and ignorance rather than the expansion of justice and knowledge is examined. The question is also answered that if man has an effective role in the process of Savior’s (re)appearance, what are the possibilities of man in advancing history towards perfection?

## 5. Theoretical foundations of the evolution of history

As we have seen, according to Muṭahharī, the promised (re)appearance and eventual victory of the Ahl al-Ḥaqq should not be considered as an “incident” that is not related to other events in history. Rather, the promised advent is the result of the continuous course of history. Muṭahharī notes, “The evolution of humanity has been and is towards freedom from the bondage of material nature, economic conditions, and individual and group interests and towards being purposeful, professional, governing, and having more originality of faith and ideology.” (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 24: 429)

Proving Muṭahharī’s view requires that we see the promised (re)appearance and rule of right and justice in the context of the historical process and analyze the future in relation to the past and present, and also believe that the victory of Ahl Ḥaqq is a rule rather than an exception. For this purpose, his principles in this field must first be explained.

### 5.1 Ruling the principle of general causation

The general causality principle and the system of cause and effect governs the natural world and all its events and happenings. Every event acquires the necessity and possibility of its existence, as well as its form, temporal and spatial characteristics, and other features, from the first causes. Muṭahharī mentions this fact with the interpretation of “concurrent system” and writes:

Usually when we question one of the phenomena, we only pay attention to the phenomenon itself. We do not consider that where the phenomenon in the system of universe is and what its status is.

However, every phenomenon, whether good or bad, is the result of a series of specific causes and depends on certain conditions. A fire never occurs without connection to other factors and events, and it is not possible to prevent it from occurring apart from a series of causes and factors, whether material or spiritual. No event in the world is “isolated” and “independent” of other events. All parts of the world are connected and interconnected. This connection encompasses all parts of the world and creates a general and all-encompassing relationship. The principle of the dependence of things on each other, in other words, the principle of the real unity of the world or the unity of the body, is a principle on which divine wisdom heavily relies. (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 1: 132)

Based on this, it can be concluded that every historical event occurs under certain circumstances and every special situation is within certain events. No event in history is separate from other events. Elsewhere, Muṭahharī emphasizes that there is an inseparable link between the past, the present, and the future, between every being and its pre-existing causes (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 1: 383). According to the principle of general causality, a series of historical events are connected to each other like the beads in a chain. Each incident is related to the incident before and after it. Certainly, the (re)appearance of the promised Savior (a) and the human's attainment of evolution that occurs in the context of history is no exception to this rule. The (re)appearance of a savior should also be seen as a consequence of a long chain of historical events. History is an interconnected trend and has an evolving direction, and according to divine laws, the formation of the Mahdawī evolved society is its target.

## **5.2 Divine dimension of history**

According to narrative sources, rational analyses, and historical and empirical observations, we believe that fixed laws and unchanging divine rules determine the orderliness of the universe. These rules and traditions, which are based on the will of God and in fact force the principle of causality onto the phenomena, cause any action to provoke a reaction. That is, we consider the world to have consciousness and will, and we believe that it is not indifferent to events and happenings. It can be said that the world system, based on the best creation, is such that it supports the flow of truth, which is in line with the truth of the world. In the Holy Qur'ān, it is stated in this regard, “Allāh indeed defends those who have faith. Indeed Allāh does not like any ingrate traitor” (Qur'ān 22: 38).

According to Muṭahharī, if a person steps towards his perfection and goodness, in other words, towards the satisfaction of the truth and towards the closeness to the truth, he has a method in harmony with the world and the world has a reaction that agrees with him. That is, the world approves him and guarantees his survival. In contrast, if he moves to the opposite direction, he becomes like an inconsistent organ in the body. Hence, when one organ is out of harmony with others, the general nature of the body will inevitably remove that organ (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 15: 205). Accordingly, and from a divine worldview, the world is a living and intelligent unit. So, good and bad are universally important. Man's good and bad deeds are met with reactions from the world that may come to him in the course of his life (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 1: 405). According to him, the world is made in such a way that if the believer strives in the way of his belief and faith, the causal system of the world will rise up to support him. Hundreds of thousands of times the force he uses to achieve his goal is the reserve force in the world that is used to help him in such situations (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 1: 414). Based on this view, the world is not indifferent to the good and evil of man; it rises to the support of the good and the right-seekers and destroys the wrong (Muṭahharī, 2009, vol. 3: 52). The fact is that the system of the universe, of which the law of history is a part, is based on right and justice, and consequently defends the right, and can be the most important guarantee of the evolution of history. It appears from the verses of the Qur'ān that the evolutionary course of history and the continuity of the flow of truth and the permanence of religion is itself one of the immutable divine laws and rules. According to the Qur'ān, the continuation of the flow of truth is not a possible thing but a necessity. Here are some verses of the Qur'ān that refer to this point:

“O you who have faith! Should any of you desert his religion, Allāh will soon bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, [who will be] humble towards the faithful, stern towards the faithless, waging jihād in the way of Allāh, not fearing the blame of any blamer. That is Allāh's grace which He grants to whomever He wishes, and Allāh is all-bounteous, all-knowing.” (Qur'ān 5: 54, cf. Qur'ān 6:88-89, Qur'ān 4: 133, Qur'ān 9: 32-33, Qur'ān 61: 8-9, Qur'ān 2: 106, Qur'ān 40: 51)

### 5.3 Analyzing the falsehood

Analyzing the wrong itself confirms the permanence of truth and the evolution of history in order to establish and expand the truth. Muṭahharī writes in the analysis of right and wrong: “In divine wisdom, originality in existence is with truth; it is with good; it is with goodness, perfection and beauty” (Muṭahharī, 2009, vol. 3: 411). He also believes in the book of “Divine Justice” in which good and evil are like existence and non-existence. That is, good is basically the same as being and bad is the same as not being. Wherever there is a discussion of evil, there is definitely a lack and non-existence. “Evil” is either itself a type of non-existence or an existence that requires a kind of non-existence (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 1: 151). It can be concluded that falsehood, which is in fact of the nature of non-existence and absence, has its own decline and negation within itself, so it is unstable. It has no support in this world. For this reason, it is weak, groundless, and therefore has no real continuity and is temporary. Falsehood is the manifestation of plurality; it never leads to unity, and the unity of the falsehood is also just in appearance. Wrongdoers in motivation and action are all focused on “self,” and falsehood is the manifestation of egoisms and selfishness. For this reason, the wrongdoers are divergent, so they do not continue throughout history. Though wrongdoers are present throughout history but they are such that they do not form an interconnected chain. Rumī has brought this meaning in the poem beautifully:

“Lives of wolves and dogs are separated  
The unity belongs to God’s lions.”

Many verses of the Qur’ān refer to the characteristics of falsehood and its people, e.g., “And say, ‘The truth has come, and falsehood has vanished. Indeed, falsehood is bound to vanish’” (Qur’ān 17: 81, cf. Qur’ān 21: 18, Qur’ān 34: 49, Qur’ān 6: 45, Qur’ān 7: 72, Qur’ān 8: 7, Qur’ān 14: 26).

Considering the characteristics mentioned for falsehood in the verses, it can be concluded that basically, falsehood does not have the ability to oppose truth and permanence, and the assumption of false domination over history is not compatible with the reality of the universe.

### 5.4 Analyzing the truth

Unlike falsehood, which is the same as non-existence, truth is the same as existence. It is original and is rooted in the origin of existence and relies on it, so it is stable and lasting. The people of truth are approved by the system of the world due to their compatibility with the system of the world, which is based on truth and goodness, and they are supported through the divine laws governing the world. They have a real unity with each other because of their connection to the origin of the universe, even though they have a temporal and spatial dimension. That is why the prophets, the flag bearers of the people of truth, all support and believe in each other, follow each other, and do not disagree with each other because they are related to the origin of unity. The plurality of the people of truth is outward and their inwardness signifies their unity. That is why right has a continuous existence. Throughout history, the people of truth have formed a really interconnected chain. It is based on these characteristics that we can speak with certainty about the continuity of the truth and its evolution in history. Verse 24 of Chapter Ibrahim indicates the stability and permanence of the truth: “Have you not regarded how Allāh has drawn a parable? A good word is like a good tree: its roots are steady and its branches are in the sky.” (Qur’ān 14:24)

The following verses refer to the sequence and connection of the prophets, which is due to their similarity and connection with each other, and emphasize the continuity of the tradition of the previous prophets: “And mention in the Book Abraham. Indeed he was a truthful one, a prophet” (Qur’ān 19: 41, cf. Qur’ān 19: 51, 54, 56, Qur’ān 38: 41 and 48, Qur’ān 6: 90, Qur’ān 23: 44).

Also, in verse 17 of Surah Ra’d, the relationship between right and wrong is well shown:

He sends down water from the sky whereat the valleys are flooded to [the extent of] their capacity, and the flood carries along a swelling scum. And from what they smelt in the fire for the purpose of [making] ornaments or wares, [there arises] a similar scum. That is how Allāh compares the truth and falsehood. As for the scum, it leaves as dross, and that which profits the people remains in the earth. That is how Allāh draws comparisons. (Qur’ān 13:17)

Muṭahharī emphasizes the following points in this verse:

1. The originality of the right and the ostentation of the falsehood
2. Independence of right and parasitism of falsehood

3. The apparent victory of falsehood and the ultimate victory of truth (Muṭahharī, 2009, vol. 3: 437-448)

It is on this basis that he sees the appearance of a savior as the result of a process and not an accident. In his view, the advent of the Promised Mahdī (a) is one of the links between the struggle of the righteous and the wrongdoers, which leads to the final victory of the righteous. A person's participation in this happiness depends on the fact that the person is practically in the group of the people of truth (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 24: 56).

According to what was said, it can be conceived that the Ahl al-Ḥaqq have really formed an interconnected stream and have been moving towards the destination which is the promised reappearance of Imām Mahdī (a) and the formation of a monotheistic society. The people of truth, in spite of all the hardships and difficulties, have carried the flag of righteousness and justice step by step and have always passed it down to the future generations. This current is original and will be sustained by the rules and laws of the divine right and relying on human resources. However, the falsehood forms only a current in appearance. In the case of the falsehood, we do not see a real chain. For this reason, we cannot really speak of the "continuity" of the false.

The real and permanent residents of the ship of history are the people of truth, who are moving towards the promised destination, and the people of falsehood appear temporarily in history, and since they do not comply with the laws governing history, they leave it after a while and disappear.

## **6. Components of realism in the interpretation of history**

Despite what has been mentioned as the theoretical foundations of human historical evolution, some bitter historical facts are undeniable. It is as if many people of truth have not been as successful as they should have been in their uprising to establish truth and justice, and most of the governments are those of the people of falsehood, and therefore the people of falsehood have obstructed the spread and realization of truth and justice.

Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that the notion of "the historical evolution of man and the continual victory of the Ahl al-Ḥaqq" is not harmed. For this reason, it is necessary to make a correct interpretation of the failures of the people of truth in history. In order to present such an interpretation, one must be realistic in recognizing the current that governs societies, avoid distorting the history, and interpret bitter events in the context of history. Muṭahharī also attributed the final victory to the efforts of all the righteous throughout history (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 15: 271-272).

### **6.1 The correct interpretation of failures**

The failures of the Ahl al-Ḥaqq throughout history makes one doubt in the historical evolution of man. The Qur'ān also sometimes informs about the defeats of the prophets: "Those who defy Allāh's signs and kill the prophets unjustly, and kill those who call for justice from among the people, inform them of a painful punishment" (Qur'ān 3: 21).

However, in other verses, God introduces the prophets as the victors of the field: "Certainly Our decree has gone beforehand in favour of Our servants, the apostles, that they will indeed receive [Allāh's] help, and indeed Our hosts will be the victors" (Qur'ān 37: 171-173).

The sum of this defeat and victory depends on providing a correct interpretation of defeat and victory. Since the conflict between truth and false is based on belief and faith, the result of the struggle then must be sought and interpreted in the same field. If we consider the battle of right and wrong as a battle of faith and belief, then we should not measure defeat and victory by apparent and material criteria. The people of truth suffered crimes, deprivations, and oppressions from the people of falsehood, but they did not fall the flag of belief in monotheism, and failed the people of falsehood in their evils, and extended the flow of truth. Victory and defeat must be watched over time. The victor of field is not the one who dominates the bodies but the victor of the field is the one who conquers the hearts and continues on his way.

In this regard, Muṭahharī believes that the victory of the prophets is not meant by military victory. According to him, if we consider the struggle of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī (a) with the armies of Yazīd and Ibn Ziyād from the military aspect, that is, in appearance and form, Imām Ḥusayn (a) was defeated and they won. However, if we consider the nature of the theorem, the result is different. Yazīd's government was a symbol of a movement that wanted to destroy Islamic thought. Imām (a) fought to

revive Islamic thought, in which case we must see whether Imām (a) achieved his goal or not. Was he able to revive an idea in the world or not? We see that he could. For 1300 years, this movement has achieved a new victory every year. That is, every year ‘Ashūrā is ‘Ashūrā, and the meaning of “All days are ‘Ashūrā” is that every day in the name of Imām Ḥusayn (a), the oppression and falsehood are fought and truth and justice are revived. This is victory and what victory is higher than this? Yazīds and Ibn Zīyāds go, while Ḥusayns, ‘Abāses, and Zaynabs remain as an idea not a person, i.e., as an authority and ruler of their society (Muṭahharī, 2009, vol. 3: 434-435).

### **6.2 Realism in recognizing the movement governing societies**

Another issue that is considered by many to be inconsistent with the belief in the triumph of Ahl al-Ḥaqq and historical development is that by observing societies we see that the rule has often been that of oppressive rulers. That is, those who have always beaten the false drum and put the people of truth under pressure. Muṭahharī invites those who consider the rule of societies false to a realistic approach. He believes that the rulers of society should not always be considered the true representative of the society:

The Qur’ān says to broaden your horizons and avoid knowing the society via judgements based on appearance. If you want to study the history of a hundred years ago, do not go to Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh with those love affairs and oppressions and say that the situation has been like this for a century. Do not take this as a symbol of knowing all people. You do not consider Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh to be the mirror of the whole people. If so, how do you justify Mīrzāyi Shīrāzī’s fatwa banning tobacco and its enormous effects? (Muṭahharī, 2009, vol. 3: 446-7)

Elsewhere, he emphasizes that history is full of different classes of people, artisans of history, literates of history, poets of history, scholars of history, philosophers of history, clerics of history, and you should read their history. The majority is definitely the people of truth (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 15: 1029). The fact that the evil force resorts to hypocrisy in order to maintain its rule and clings to moral and human values indicates that the dominant spiritual force is the force of truth.

### **6.3 Avoid denigrating history**

It is not easy for those who are concerned with moral values to accept the evolution of man, because in history, the trampling of moral values has been repeated many times. Muṭahharī’s answer to this category is not to deny the beauties of history and not to see only its ugliness. One of the drawbacks he points out to historical materialist theorists is that they only read the black pages of history. Although Muṭahharī’s words targets materialist historians, the addressee of these words may be all those who look only at the dark events of history, “Those who follow this philosophy commit the greatest betrayals of humanity in historiography. They try to show the pages of history dark, equate history with ‘dark,’ and always show those dark parts and cover the light sides” (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 15: 1019).

However, due to the ugliness of some human beings, the face of history has become tainted with darkness. However, the bright spots of history, the efforts and sacrifices of the people of truth are not few. Throughout history, many enlightened personalities have defended moral values. The Holy Qur’ān says, “How many a prophet there has been with whom a multitude of godly men fought. They did not falter for what befell them in the way of Allāh, neither did they weaken, nor did they abase themselves; and Allāh loves the steadfast” (Qur’ān 3: 146).

### **6.4 Interpretation of bitter events in the text of history**

One of the mental and psychological barriers to accepting the evolution of history is the non-historical view to events. Many incidents are so ugly and unwanted that if we examine these events independently and apart from subsequent events, we will see history as dark. However, a realistic view and a correct analysis of events dictate that we see them in the context of history and observe the events alongside their far and near consequences. Let us see events not as a point in history, but as part of the “path” of history. In Muṭahharī’s view, there is always disorder in the world, and there is an order after the disorder, then this order becomes disorder, but the disorder is at a higher level, not at a lower level. Then that disorder becomes an order, again at a higher level than the first order. Then that order becomes a disorder, a disorder again on a higher level. That is, this disorder after that order is superior even to that order itself. Therefore, it is said that the movement of human society is a spiral movement, i.e., a circular movement at a height. While the human society revolves, it does not rotate



on a horizontal plane, but it rotates upwards. The orders are changed to the disorders, but the disorders that are at a higher level. So we go to both disorder and order at the same time. We, who are looking forward to seeing the advent of Imām Mahdī (a), are going to be in disorder at the same time, because we have to go from order to disorder, and we are also going to witness order, because the disorder is at a higher level (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 18: 179).

Ugly events in the historical dimension, with the help of the pure nature of human beings and divine victory, provoke a reaction that will ultimately benefit the people of truth. The meaning of the expression “Goodness is in what happens!” and also the meaning of the narration “Everyday this religion is supported by a mischief man” (Bukhārī, 1980, vol. 13: 57; Dārimī, nd, vol. 2: 24) should be sought in the light of the good system of creation and with regard to a law-seeking and truth-orienting history. Then, it is not odd if in the verses of the Qur’ān such as “Indeed your Lord is in ambush” (Qur’ān 89: 14) and “Then they plotted [against Jesus], and Allāh also devised, and Allāh is the best of devisers” (Qur’ān 3: 54), we define *mirsād* (ambush) and *makr* (devise) as the divine laws. We said that according to divine rules and laws, the world system is not indifferent to right and wrong and provides an appropriate answer for the evils, an answer that will ultimately benefit the truth.

### **6.5 The final victory, the result of the historical efforts of Ahl al-Ḥaqq**

The Qur’ānic words on the ultimate victory of the people of right (Ahl al-Ḥaqq), the (re)appearance of the Savior, and the formation of the Mahdawī community indicate that all people of right have contributed to this victory throughout history. If the verses of the Qur’ān speak of the rule of the righteous, the victory of the pious, and the victory of Ḥizbullāh and the soldiers of God, it should be noted that the Qur’ān pays attention to their so-called “legal personality” and it can be concluded that the ultimate victory of Ahl al-Ḥaqq belongs to all the righteous, believers, the pious and everyone who has historically been part of Ḥizbullāh and the soldiers of God. That is, the Ahl al-Ḥaqq are victorious in all circumstances, “Certainly We wrote in the Psalms, after the Torah: ‘Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth’” (Qur’ān 21: 105, cf. Qur’ān 24: 55, Qur’ān 7: 128, Qur’ān 5: 56, Qur’ān 37: 173).

Influenced by the same Qur’ānic concept, Muṭahharī also considers the reappearance of the Promised Mahdī (a) a part of the struggle between the right and false people, leading to the final victory of the rightful. In his view, a person’s participation in this happiness depends on the fact that that person is practically among the people of right (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 24: 437-438).

## **7. The Role of man in the evolution of history**

If we believe that history is shaped by human thought and action, we have to answer the following questions. How can a definite future be foreseen, given human free will? Does announcing a certain future with certain characteristics not contradict human freedom and choice in the destiny of history? Does believing in a definite destiny for history not distort the belief in the active role of man in shaping history and determining his own destiny? Despite the belief in the legitimacy of history, does the field of human freedom and authority not become limited? It is also worthwhile to discuss the possibilities that the man has in stepping on the path of evolution where he can play his worthy role. Assessing the role of man in the evolutionary course of history depends on answering these questions.

## **8. The relation between the regularity of history and human’s free will**

Some consider human authority and freedom for granted and deny the legitimacy of society and history and that history has a definite destination. Others, by observing the discipline of social and historical developments, have denied human freedom and authority. However, neither of these two views is compatible with the teachings of the Qur’ān. It was earlier pointed out that history is an evolving trend and the evolution of history is not of the type of accident but of the type of rule. The movement of history is governed by the principle of causality. This principle revolves around the existence of unchangeable divine rules and fixed laws. The point that should not be neglected is that human free will is one of the divine laws. This point makes the legitimacy of society and history comparable to human freedom and free will. The fact is that the events that advance history are human events, and it is correct to consider these events as an effect. In this case, human’s free will is the cause of those events. Man implements the divine laws through conscious and voluntary actions.

According to Muṭahharī, the laws that govern destinies are, in fact, a series of reactions to actions. Certain social actions lead to certain reactions. Thus, although history is governed by a series of definite and unchallenged events, the role of man, his freedom, and his authority are not neglected (Muṭahharī, 2008, vol. 24: 410). In other words, it can be said that divine laws are implemented via man's authority. The fact that society is law-abiding and that history is evolving and has a definite destination does not limit the human free will. The evolving history and its inevitable destination is due to two factors that must be considered together. First, history is lawful and has a divine dimension according to which good is original and continues and the laws of the universe are inherently protective of goodness. Secondly, history has a human dimension, which means that according to the "human right-oriented nature," the flow of history will be towards the enforcement of law. It can be concluded that the legitimacy of society and history does not destroy its human dimension; rather, history is fundamentally free-willed and evolving because of the presence of an autonomous human being. Man, whose nature has been formed on the basis of truth-seeking and perfectionism, advances history on the path of evolution.

Ṣadr emphasizes that the way society is and the course of history should be a reflection of how the inside of man is. In his view, the creator of the movement of history is the inner content of man, that is, his thought and will, and the structure of society at the superstructure level with all its connections and organizations, ideas, and characteristics is based on the human inner content. This is the infrastructure, and by changing it, the superstructure of society changes. Obviously, as long as this foundation is strong, the superstructure of society will remain strong. Accordingly, the relationship between the inner content of man and the social and historical superstructure of society is a cause-and-effect relationship (Ṣadr, 1989: 194).

There are many verses in the Qur'ān that emphasize the legitimacy of society and history on the one hand, and validate the active role of man on the other hand, and consider these two to be fully gatherable, "Indeed Allāh does not change a people's lot, unless they change what is in their souls" (Qur'ān 13: 11, cf. Qur'ān 8: 53, Qur'ān 7: 96, Qur'ān 47: 7, Qur'ān 29: 69, Qur'ān 21: 11, Qur'ān 38: 58-59, Qur'ān 30: 41, Qur'ān 18: 59).

## **9. Human possibilities of historical evolution**

Man has some possibilities that enable him to choose the evolving direction on a historical scale. These facilities and capabilities are themselves part of the divine laws that facilitate the achievement of the individual and human society to evolution. Therefore, they should be considered the divine grace to human, some of which are mentioned below.

### **9.1 The right-seeking and perfectionist nature of man**

We refer to spiritual values that are rooted in human nature as "human values." Man is not an intermediate vessel whose personality is merely made by the social environment. Man should be considered as a seed which, although not actually a seedling, is potentially so. Therefore, it must have a path and destination in advance, which in case of "breeding" will be in this path and will reach a destination compatible with its existential structure. Muṭahharī writes on this,

Islam considers for human beings an inherent tendency to believe in honesty, trustworthiness, and justice. According to the Qur'ān, man is a Ḥanīf, a truth-seeker. That is, there is an instinctual desire for perfection, goodness, and right in him. At the same time, he has freedom and authority; therefore, he may deviate from his path and oppress and lie. The Qur'ān accepts these as temporary flows (Muṭahharī, 2009, vol. 3: 427).

Due to having authority, human beings can be on the path of growth of human values on the one hand, and can ignore the rules of reason, leave the control of their lives to animal dimensions, and neglect the growth of human values. In human society, those who have been able to impose spiritual values on themselves will be among the righteous, and the human beings whose life is full of material and animal dimensions will be in the group of the wrongdoers (of course, we emphasize that human beings should be seen in a wide range from truth-seeking to false-seeking, and we should avoid the unrealistic lines that may, by geographical, civilizational, and even religious criteria, divide human beings into two categories of truth and false easily and superficially).

Based on the ideological conflict between the truth and the false, the extent of the insight and stability of the rightful, and the misguidance and cruelty of the wrongdoers, the divine laws are formed for the victory of the rightful on a historical scale. The reason is that moving in the path of spiritual values and adhering to moral values is a genuine thing, and deviations, oppression, betrayal, and evils are imposed on the true character of human beings.

The fact that a sinner tries within himself to justify a bad deed and a false group resorts to hypocrisy in society and pretends having spiritual values shows that the main force within the individual and in the context of society belongs to human values. It is this force that prevents falling for the evil and leads history on an evolving path. From the point of view of human nature and existential structure, every human being will be a potential force for the flow of truth due to his perfectionist, idealistic, and value-seeking nature.

### **9.2 Human's utilitarianism**

Humans seek their own benefit. Human's utilitarianism is rooted in the innate sense of "essence protection." This feature has a purifying role in human life, according to which only those human phenomena can survive that provide benefits to humans.

Utilitarianism, in addition to the power of human initiative and creativity, causes a change in his life. Benefit includes both material and spiritual matters. A material thing, such as a tool of work, remains in the realm of human life as long as it is efficient. And a spiritual thing, such as a scientific hypothesis, lasts as long as it can explain what or how matters are of human interest.

Although human utilitarianism is not a complete reason for achieving evolution, it can be mentioned as a background and a factor that is effective in this direction. The Holy Qur'ān refers to this point in verse 17 of Surah Ra'd, which was mentioned earlier. Muṭahharī writes about this verse, "Survival belongs to benefit and usefulness, and the non-benefits and uselessnesses are doomed and erasable" (Muṭahharī, 2009: 438).

### **9.3 The legacy of the prophets**

An important achievement of the continuous presence of prophets in a long period of human life is the constant reminding of moral and spiritual values, which is the most important support for human evolution. Most scientific centers have been formed in the past with religious motives. Even today, the most important component of the identity of human societies is religion, which is still the origin of moral values and inspires the cohesion and unity of human beings. Explaining the role of prophets in historical evolution and emphasizing the impact of the teachings of the prophets in the three fields of presenting education, establishing covenants, and offering freedom from social captivity, Muṭahharī emphasizes that the words of Marx and his followers that religion, government, and wealth have been three different figures of the ruling class against the deprived is nonsense and in contrast to the historical facts. In addition to Muṭahharī, others have also criticized this view of Marx and considered it to be against historical facts (e.g., Goldstein, 2009; Lewis, 1975; Yunger, 1970).

In his view, the only way to accept such a philosophy of history is to ignore historical facts. On the other hand, he considers Nietzsche's theory in this field to be untrue and incorrect (Muṭahharī, 1998, vol. 2: 172-174). Nietzsche believed that the prophets and the Sharī'a had risen up against the only progressive and evolving class of history, namely the oppressors and the rich, and had therefore caused history to stagnate and decline (Nietzsche, 1980: 214; Sinclair, 2004: 3). Of course, many criticisms have been made to Nietzsche's view and many thinkers have criticized his views.

### **Conclusion**

Muṭahharī has taken a philosophical approach to commenting on the course of history, which seems to be more relevant to the question of the evolution of history. Emphasizing the legitimacy of the history process and ruling the principle of causality on historical events, he relates the past, the present, and the future of history and thus provides a meaningful basis for historical continuity.

Emphasis on the divine dimension of history and analysis of right and wrong are, in his view, the most important elements that clarify the evolutionary orientation of history. Muṭahharī's wide-ranging view to historical movements and events prevents him from falling into the trap of pessimism caused by partial and transitory disorders. Muṭahharī's method of relying on macro-components and avoiding

detail is based on the fact that the investigation of minor events does not have the ability to provide an assessment of the whole process of history. In addition to Muṭahharī, others have also criticized this view of Marx and considered it to be against historical facts (Goldstein, 2009: 49).

In Muṭahharī's view, the legitimacy of society and the regular nature of history are not in conflict with the principle of human authority and role in the course of history; therefore, in his view, history has a human nature. On this basis, it can be said that history is the process of supporting the truth-seeking human beings by the divine laws, or in other words, history is the path for the truth-seeking human beings to step on the path of the divine laws.

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