Introduction
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Since his creation, the idea of religion has been all along with man. In fact the purport of the religious conscience has remained innate in him. There are evidences that since quadruped age man believed in something whether one may call it Fitches, Taboo, Totem, Manna, idol worship, animism etc. If not given a proper direction, the tendency of worship enshrined in the human nature can erupt like volcanic lava whenever and wherever it finds a somewhat soft place. Different views with regard to religion have been put forth by different scholars and thinkers. Some are of the opinion that religion is only the creation of psychological effects of man. Others are of the opinion that it is nothing but the projection of human wants. Some think it is the outcome of fear and doubt that haunts man frequently. Even the schools of thought got developed - some of them describing man 'a materialistic animal' and some call him a 'divine animal'. Thus in order to determine man's nature and status, the schools have tried to describe the human being with another adjective such as: creator of the ideal, rational, economic, a producer of tools, free, decision-maker, lacking in substance, hesitating, prejudiced, similar to God, natural, social, creator of culture, civilized, conscious, etc. All these definitions and descriptions have been conceived within their own intellectual and social backgrounds.

Ali Shariati is regarded as one of the influential scholars of modern Iran. Born in 1933 AD, he inherited traditional education from his father, who himself was an 'alim. Shariati got himself trained in modern education in Mashed and Sorbonne universities. From the early age he started writing to local dailies and journals and gradually grew as a powerful writer and orator. He made a commendable contribution to modern Islamic thought by authoring
the dozens of books (his speeches even got compiled in the form of booklets). The renowned among them are, *Jamia Shinasi Adyan* (Sociology of Religions), *Islam Shinasi* (Islamology), *Symai-e-Muhammad* (The Visage of Mohammad), *Az kuja aghaz kunaim* (Where from Begin), *Chi bayed herd* (What is To Be Done), *Hajj, Insan wa Islam* (Man and Islam), *Chehar zindan-e-insan* (Four Prisons of Man), *Fatima Fatima Ast* (Fatima is Fatima), *Intizari madhabi a'atiraz* (Awaiting the Religion of Protest), *Shahadat* (Martyrdom) *Ma va Iqbal* (We and Iqbal), etc. In his treatises Dr. Shariati emerged as a serious and sensitive scholar who views religion in a distinct way. He spoke and wrote amply on the subject and influenced considerably the development of thinking about religion in general and exerted tremendous impact on the modern Muslim youth of Iran in particular. He strongly believed that if the intellectual and new generation realized the truth of their faith, attempts towards social change would be successful. To him, understanding of a school of thought is not the same as having technical and detailed information about it. It is to have a feeling about the orientation of this school - to understand it as a whole and not just knowing parts or sections of it. It is to feel deeply towards a religion or an ideology, to find the spirit and meaning which is hidden in an idea. Shariati is more concerned with the impact, usage, and outcome of religious beliefs, instead of examining a belief from philosophical, scientific, logical and theological point of view. He impresses upon his readers to see whether a belief bestows a sense of responsibility, awareness, human values and a boost to push forward the humanity in the process of being to becoming or not.

Shariati has analyzed the role of almost all religions of the world. For his liberal thoughts on the religion, particularly Islam, his ideas have attracted sharp minds throughout literal and academic as well as religious institutions of the world. During the short span of his life, (1933-1977) he touched myriad of topics like Islam, philosophy of history, culture and civilization, art and literature, sociology of Islam, socialism, capitalism, conception of social
change, world movements and revolutions etc. He has particularly elaborated
the role of religion in shaping the destiny of societies. He differentiates
between what he calls, true religion and pseudo religion. According to him the
religion has played both the positive and negative role and it is an amazing
phenomenon which plays contradictory roles in the life of human beings. It
destroys and revitalizes, puts to sleep and awakens, enslaves and emancipates,
teaches docility and revolt. Shariati acclaims that the history of Islam itself is
the story of these contradictory roles of religion among various social classes.
It is the history of the war of Islam against Islam and even the war of the
Qur'an against the Qur'an.

Though lived a short span of time, Shariati made extensive elaboration
and discourses on religion, which form an outstanding contribution to the
understanding of religious phenomenon in general and Islam in particular.
Basically a sociologist he tried to approach the subject in a wider context to
highlight its vitality in the new milieu. Of course Shariati has remained a good
source of interest in both the east and the west for his valuable contribution to
Islamic thought vis-à-vis western patterns of sociology. Scholars have worked
amply on him particularly on the themes relating to his biography, role in the
Iranian revolution, his concept of modernity, social change, Shiaism, etc.
Allamah Jaffer Subhani, in his book _Shariati va Ruhanyiet_, (proceedings of a
seminar on Shariati in Iran) deals with Shariati's concept of 'true religion and
pseudo religion', _tashiyu Alavi and tashayiu Safavi_. The author has critically
analyzed the issues and has tried to defend the traditional Shiati ulama and has
put forth examples of radical type of Shiati ulama and their role and struggle
against the tyrannical regimes of the time. By and large the book is confined
within this very theme. Among other scholars Dr. Ali Rehnema of American
University at Paris, (_An Islamic Utopian-A Political biography of Shariati_),
and Dr. Puran Shariati Rizvi, (_A Portrait of Life!_), Dr. B.A.Dabla of Kashmir
University, (_Islam and Muslims, Shariati's Views_), Dr. Ahsanul Haq, of AMU,
short span of life never allowed him to find enough time to organise his ideas coherently and logically which is the first condition of a well-thought philosophical work. Besides V.G. Malushkov, K.A. Khromova, (Poiski Putei Reformatsii v Islame Opyt Irana, The Search for the Path of Reform in Iran's Experience, Moscow, 1991) contains several chapters analyzing Shariati's life and thought. All these works touch upon Ali Shariati in a general and brief manner and his review and understanding of religious phenomena is more or less ignored by them. The present work is an attempt at the exhaustive study of this subject. It is based on the analysis of the Ali Shariti's own writings and speeches, delivered on various occasions, which later on got published in the form of books and booklets. The study comprises the following chapters:

Chapter-I, Concept of Religion – An Analysis. It deals with conceptual framework of the religion. The hypothesis of the work is that religious tendency, in the very innate nature of man, is not out come of fear and doubt, the psychological pressure of man or a projection of human wants. Instead it is a liaison between the Creator and the creation. According to Shariati it is a process from 'being' to 'becoming', which never ends because the Creator is master of infinite power, knowledge and science. However the religion is only a means not the goal – a way and not the destination – a procedure that needs to be adopted and not a mechanism, which automatically reshapes a man into an ideal man. Monotheism being the highest and purest form of religion has been with man since the dawn of his existence and later there occurred a development in the belief in many gods as well as animism. How this concept confronts with the evolutionary development theory of religion is analysed in the chapter also.

The Chapter-II, Typology of Religions. It deals with the typology of religions. Shariati has identified three methods of typology i.e. compare and contrast the god or gods of every religion, founders, books nurtured luminaries of the
religions. Shariati has divided the religions into two major heads vis-à-vis Semitic and non-Semitic. Semitic religions consist of Ibrahimic lineage of prophets, while as non-Semitic consist of those other than Ibrahimic lineage of religions. In the present study we have identified Taoism, Confucianism from ancient China, Zoroastrianism from ancient Iran and Hinduism and Buddhism from India. Besides above, Aristotle and Plato of the Greece have also been discussed, whom Shariati has considered as pseudo-prophets as they too filled the gap of prophetship i.e. they propagated ethical values and gave the mysterious explanation of the universe during 5th and 6th century BC. All other religions, as Shariati says, are the sub-issues or offshoots of other major religions, whether Semitic or non-Semitic.

Chapter-III Ideological Foundations of Islam discusses the ideological foundations of Islam. The ideology based on worldview is elaborated along with details of materialistic world-view and tawhidic world-view. Factors responsible for materialistic worldview and the scope and dimensions of tawhidic ideology are elaborated with special reference to Shariati.

Chapter-IV Revolutionary Dimensions of Islam according to Shariati vis-à-vis Imamat, Ijtihad and Hajj. It deals with the revolutionary dimensions of Islam. Shariati has identified Imamat, Ijtihad and Hajj as main revolutionary dimensions of Islam. After prophethood the importance and role of Imamat according to him, is the great mission of guidance for the generations to come. The chapter discusses concepts of Ijtihad and Hajj vis-à-vis their socio-political role and highlights Ali Shariati’s deep concern with such issues of great social significance. It is followed by the conclusion of the work.