CHAPTER 7

THE IDEAL HUMAN SOCIETY

Mutahhari has constructed a definite philosophy on various aspects of human life and activities in the society. Humans are not a product of an accident, but there is a wise plan behind human creation, says Mutahhari. The special characteristics and features that human beings possess bestow on them certain responsibilities to the society and to the creator. Mutahhari develops his views on these issues in a novel way, which is a combination of sociological and philosophical analysis with religious ones.

Human Being and Humanism

Humanism is an important element of Mutahhari's social thought. He portrays a new vision of human being on the basis of the Quranic verses, and projects an ideal human being constructed on the basis of Quran, traditions of the Prophet and of the Imams, and philosophical ideas of the modern period.

Among the various creatures in the world, human beings have a unique position. He/she is the most superior in the world. In the words of Mutahhari, “they are considered more supreme than the heavens and the earth and the angels and, at the same time, meaner than devils and beasts of burden. They are regarded as creatures who can conquer the world, who can acquire the mastery of the angels; yet so weak as to descend to ‘the lowest of the low’” (Mutahhari 1983b:11). The superior or inferior positions are conferred on them according to their choice and will, and are not imposed on them. Mutahhari interprets the Quranic verse, "Who hath made everything, which he hath created most good; and began the creation of man with clay; then ordained his progeny from germs of life, from worry water: then shaped him, and breathed from His spirit into him...." (Quran:32:7) quoted in Mutahhari 1983b:15), that humans are created from material constituents and God
provided them "soul from His spirit". Thus, he/she is the amalgam of material and divine elements (Mutahhari 1983b:15). This is exactly what Shariati says that humans are created from putrid clay and God provided him the spirit (Shariati 1979:78). When human beings inherently lean to the divine element, they become superior and exalted beings and when they are influenced by clay they becomes meaneer. Mutahhari views humans as a mixture of both angelic and earthly elements, both high and low (Mutahhari n.d.a:13). He quotes the words of Mawlavi, the famous Iranian philosopher, who says that, “human beings who are half angel and half donkey, the donkey half is inclined to the low and the other half inclined to the sublime; one must see which half wins the day, and which one conquers the other” (Mutahhari 1983b:14). It means that if the angelic element dominates the other the person becomes exalted as angel, sometimes more than it, and if the donkey part dominates, he/she becomes inferior as an animal, sometimes meaneer than it.

The exalted position of humanity is because of the divine element in them and also because they have been created as the vicegerents of God. The Quranic verse 2:30 is cited by Mutahhari to support this argument (n.d.d:11-12). The knowledge they have attained through the special favour of God is another factor. This privilege has helped them to reach a higher rank than even the angels. Mutahhari comments on this:

[human beings are shown] superior to the angels in their knowledge and God reproached the angels for what they did not know about humanity and while they supposed the human being to be a creature of wrath and lust they had ignored the other side of its character. The angels confessed their ignorance and begged for His forgiveness. Then God told the angels to prostrate themselves before His creature (Mutahhari 1983:18-19).
By pointing out to the command to prostrate before Adam, he comments:

[T]he greatest interpretation that can be given to this command in order to show the human being’s mission, freedom and option is that God makes it the vicegerent of and the successor to Himself (Mutahhari 1983:19).

After creating human being as His vicegerent, He provided them all the resources and facilities in the earth for their sustenance. But he/she has a great responsibility during his lifetime - obedience to God. Mutahhari writes that "God created human beings in order that they would worship Him alone and be obedient to Him as their major responsibility” (Mutahhari 1983b:17). However, though the purpose of the creation of humankind is worship to God, and God has this sole intention when He created him/her, humans have the opportunity to live according to his/her will and like. They have been granted many talents and abilities so that they may choose their own way- be either “thankful or unthankful to God” (Mutahhari n.d.a:14). Thus, a person can choose his/her path according to their will, God, though does insist to choose the right path, and does not force His will on them.

Mutahhari, after mentioning various aspects on the creation and status of human beings with the support of various Quranic verses, concludes his view as:

[T]he conclusion is drawn, therefore, that the Quran reveals a picture of the human being as a chosen creature of God, as His own Caliph on the earth and as a being half-heavenly and half-earthly, in whom has been implanted a God-knowing nature, freedom, trustworthiness, a sense of responsibility towards himself or herself as well as the world and the favour of hegemony over Nature, heaven and the earth. Human beings are
empowered with inclination towards good and evil. Their existence begins with weakness and disability and moves in the direction of strength, but it does not reach the state of tranquility except on the threshold of God and with a thought of Him. Their capacities are limitless, both in their ability to learn, and the application of their knowledge. They enjoy an instinctive greatness and dignity. Their motivations and stimuli are, in most cases, non-materialistic. Finally, they are quite free to use the bounties and blessings conferred upon them, but at the same time, they must carry out their duty towards God (Mutahhari 1983b: 19-20).

In short, Mutahhari finds all traits of modern concept of humanism in the Islamic concept of humanism. Islam considers human being as a superior being, with the spirit from God. Humanism is focused on the centrality of human being in the society. Islam also accords him/her the central position in the world, and unlike other beings, he/she is the only representative of God on earth. God's command to angels to prostrate before Adam and putting God's trust (amanat) on them again enhances their position and prestige. The discretion to choose one's own destiny by his/her actions - either thankful or unthankful according to the Quran-indicates to the individual freedom as enshrined in the modern philosophy.

**Faith: The Criterion of Human Nobility**

Mutahhari has a vision of an ideal human being, which is called the 'Perfect Human Being'. Among various creatures in the world, only human being can attain perfection because only he/she had been given the components necessary for it. He/she has been given intelligence, thinking power and ability to differentiate between right and wrong. Moreover, God has revealed the right path for his/his well being and prosperity, both in this
world and in the Hereafter. He/she should identify the right and wrong and should follow the right path of God. Only he/she has the ability to discern the truth, and this is the result of the divine element inside humanity. By using his/her unique position, he/she should reach the path of God, and then attain perfection.

The foremost condition for the perfection of human beings is *imān* or faith (Mutahhari n.d.a:59). God's vicegerent on the earth is the human being with 'faith'. In that sense the faithless human being is not the real human being, such a human being is 'tragic imperfect being' and 'meaner than the beasts of burden' (Mutahhari 1983b:22). Here faith means faith in God, angels, prophets, *Imams* and Resurrection' (Mutahhari n.d.a:59). That is, faith means belief in all the principles of Shi‘i Islam. In other words, Mutahhari believes that to attain perfection, a person should be a devout believer in Shi‘i Islam, at least should be a Muslim. Otherwise he/she cannot become an ideal human being. No good deeds and rituals can make the human being perfect without the foundation of faith. The words and acts without faith is nothing at all. The doctrine that “faith is the basic step towards piety, correct deeds and endeavours in the way of God points out to the importance of faith as the pillar of perfection of humanity” (Mutahhari 1983b:22). Mutahhari explains the matter clearly:

[I]f someone performs even all the good deeds possible in this world, enjoins the good and forbids the evil, and lives like an ascetic, and devotes his life to the service of mankind, but at the same time he does not understand God and Resurrection and the world of existence, he is undoubtedly blind here and will also be blind in hereafter (Mutahhari n.d.a:60).

Here blindness stands for spiritual blindness that prevents humans from discerning truth and having faith in it.
At another occasion, Mutahhari adds science to faith and considers both as the criteria for being human. Accordingly, the basic difference between humankind and other animate beings is faith and science, and humanity depends on faith and science (Mutahhari n.d.f:12,18). Here he criticizes the view of western scholars who believe that faith is obsolete and it should be replaced by science. Mutahhari does not find both are contradictory, but treat them complimentary to each other and are essential for the humanity in human being (Mutahhari n.d.f:18). According to him, faith and science have different functions and they altogether are the constituents for perfection in humanity. He says,

[S]cience gives us power and enlightenment, and faith gives love, hope and warmth. Science creates technology and faith creates purpose. Science provides us with momentum and faith with direction. Science is ability and faith is goodwill. Science shows us what there is while faith inspires us to what to do. Science is the external revolution and faith is the internal one. Science makes the world humane and faith elevates the human spirit. Science expands man horizontally and faith promotes him vertically. Science re-shapes nature, and faith moulds man. Both science and faith give power to mankind.... (Mutahhari n.d.f:21).

Since the combination of science and faith are the essential components for humanity, neither of them should be compromised. Their separation creates damages to humanity. Wherever there has been faith but no science, people's humanitarian efforts have been made in ways which have not always been adequate or even favourable, and even sometimes have caused fanaticism, prejudices and destructive clashes (Mutahhari n.d.f:26). But “wherever there has been science and no sign of faith...all the power of science has been used
to satisfy selfishness, egotism, expansionism, ambition, exploitation, subjugation, deception and deceitfulness” (Mutahhari n.d.f:27). He cautions the people about the new trend of irreligion and replacement of religious doctrines with scientific principles. Rather, science should have backed by faith. He writes,

[S]cience without faith is like a sword in the hand of a drunkard. It is like a light in the hand of a midnight thief enabling him to steal the best merchandise. This is why today's unbelieving learned man is not the slightest bit different from yesterday's unbelieving ignorant man in his nature and behaviour. What difference is there between today's Chruchills, Johnsons, Nicksons, Stalins and yesterdays’ Pharaohs, Ghengiz Khans and Attilas (Mutahhari n.d.f:25).

What can be concluded is that, for Mutahhari, what is civilizing, culturing and enlightening humankind is not science or technology or any other material advancements but only faith. Only faith can help them to discard the animal traits inherent in them and make them humans. Faith guides them towards how they should build themselves and their future for the service of the society. Mutahhari sums up the discussion on the importance of faith as:

[G]enerally speaking, faith shapes man and man shapes the world through his knowledge. Thus both man and the world would prosper should knowledge and faith be incorporated in human life (Mutahhari 1983b:43).

Free Will and Destiny

If human beings can shape their future and the course of their life, there arises a question: whether Islam provides free will to humanity or not. The Islamic tenet of destiny is a controversial issue among the scholars, and
many modern scholars believe that belief in predestination is the prelude to
the denial of free will. Many Muslim scholars also have the same opinion.
Nevertheless, Mutahhari differs from such scholars and tries for a
compromise between predestination and free will. Without rejecting
predestination, he puts forward free will of the humankind as the underlying
principle of Islam. In his view, in Islamic terminology, predestination is a
misnomer; the actual term is fate and destiny. He says that it is foolish to hold
that the doctrine of predestination has any relation to the belief in fate and
destiny or to criticize this belief on that account (Mutahhari 1361c/1982:35).
The Islamic tenet is *qaza* and *qadr*, which means fate and destiny, not
predestination.

Mutahhari believes that *qaza* and *qadr* does not constrain human
freedom. Divine decree is not directly imposed on events; rather it brings
them about only through the process of certain relevant causes. He supports
the principle of 'causation'. Here a person acquires freedom on the basis of
his/her wisdom and free will, at the same time he/she will have constraints
imposed by hereditary, historical and environmental factors (Mutahhari
1983b:46). But when these constraints put restrictions on his/her path, he/she
should not treat it as part of his/her destiny, but use his/her will and reason to
confront them and shape his/her future course. Mutahhari quotes a Quranic
verse to explain the will of humankind. It says, "Verily never / Will God
change the condition / Of a people until They change themselves (With their
own souls) (13:110). He explains the verse that no people can reach
prosperity from misfortune but through repelling from themselves the factors
which cause misfortune, and a prosperous community will not be rendered
backward by God except if they themselves cause their own delegation
(Mutahhari 2004:117). That is, a community or system is being changed not
by God unilaterally, but by certain causes incurred by the people. According
to him, fate and destiny or *qaza* and *qadar*, are based on, and the corollary of,
the belief in the principle of causation (Mutahhari 1361c/1982:38). Accordingly, all the events in the world are governed by a system of causation. The divine being does not influence the events directly. He necessitates the existence of a thing through its particular causes only. That is, everything is decreed by Allah simply means that the system of causation is subject to His will and Knowledge (Mutahhari 1361c/1982:34).

By quoting the Quranic verse, ‘Verily We created [M]an from a drop / Of mingled sperm, In order to try him: / So we gave (the gifts)./ Of Hearing and sight. We showed him the way: / Whether he be grateful / Or ungrateful (rests) On his will' (76:2-3), Mutahhari explains that human being have been given many talents by God and left them free to choose their way, whereas other creatures do not possess such discretionary powers. They must choose their own way and attain perfection through moderation and equilibrium (Mutahhari n.d.a:14). Here it is revealed that God intends to try humans in the Hereafter. But He is not unjust so that He showed them the right path but did not compel to accept that particular path. He gave them the intellectual power, the ability to understand right and wrong, and they can choose either of them according to their will and likes. Thus, God does not impose His decisions on humans in the form of destiny, but free them to pursue their course of life. He writes,

Human being has been created free. It means that he has been endowed with intellect, will and thinking power.... He always finds itself at crossroads, but is not in any way compelled to choose any one of them. Other roads are not closed to him. The choice depends upon his will and personal thinking. It is entirely up to him to choose a particular way (Mutahhari 1361c/1982:40-41).

In Mutahhari's ideology, the elements in destiny are revocable while
only few cannot be changed. Human being changes his destiny through certain factors. Giving a new dimension to the principle of causation, he believes that along with material causes, spiritual causes also can determine the destiny of the humanity. Prayer and charity are the two vital factors that can change the fortune of the individuals (Mutahhari 1361c/1982:44). The spiritual forces like the support of justice and equity and trust in Allah also can change the course of human life (Mutahhari 1361c/1982:45). How spiritual factors can change the destiny? Mutahhari does not give logical answer, but says that the answer can be found by deep philosophical contemplation, and the present occasion is not intended for it (Mutahhari 1361c/1982:46). In short, it can be concluded that Mutahhari believes in the free will and independence of the humankind. God's knowledge and will is attached to human actions and deeds only through a medium. And He has destined human beings to be free and to be the master of their destinies.

Discussion of human will and destiny, gives rise to new discussions - the freedom of thought and freedom of belief. The freedom of thought is the topic generally the secular scholars advocate and traditional clerics disdain from. But the traditional learning and membership in the Shi’i clerical order was not a constraint for Mutahhari to engage in such a discussion. Here he approaches many aspects of religion in a novel way and often he seems to be the forerunner of the modern Iranian religious reformers pioneered by Abdol Karim Soroush. Freedom means absence of obstacles in the way of progress. It is the absence of obstacles to the flowering of the natural potentials of the human individual (Mutahhari 1981c:64). Mutahhari gives much value to freedom and finds it essential for the progress of a society. To him, freedom is not merely a political concern, it is a religious matter and he believed that a Muslim should live freely and must be freedom-loving (Mutahhari 1985:41). Ensuring freedom for the people is an inevitable part of a justice-seeking society. "If the Islamic Republic Government", he says, "lays the foundation
on the basis of suppression (denial of legitimate freedom), it will definitely fail". (Mutahhari 1985b:52). Thus, even the existence of a government or state is dependent on the principle of freedom. Freedom means non-interference and non-restriction in the affairs of the people. It has the broad scope of freedom of thought, expression and belief. Mutahhari says that “each person's thought, speech and pen must be free and it is only in such circumstances that our Islamic Revolution will continue its march on the true path of victory'(Mutahhari 1985b:52).

Mutahhari was speaking about the post-revolutionary political condition of Iran where counter-revolutionary forces were very active and the government engaged in repressing them. Khomeini's ascendency to vali-e faqih disappointed many revolutionaries and there were many attempts of sabotage. But the government suppressed the insurgents by using force. The voice of the rebels reached on deaf ears of the government. It denied all kinds of freedom to the people, of speech, expression and writing. In such a condition, Mutahhari stood for intellectual freedom and believed that criticism will strengthen, not weaken the cause of the government and Islam. He says that:

recent experiences have shown that wherever society enjoyed intellectual freedom, even with bad intentions, it has not been harmful to Islam, rather it has eventually been to Islam's benefit. If, in our society, a free atmosphere of ideas and opinions prevails so that followers of different opinions are allowed to express their opinions freely, explain their views about economy, history, society, and man and if we, also, present our views and opinions in return, there would be a more healthy background which would enable Islam to grow in a more positive way (Mutahhari 1985b:52-53).
Mutahhari is the first major religious scholar who underlined the importance of healthy debates and dialogues on Iranian socio-political life. Later when scholars like Abdol Karim Soroush, Mohsin Kadivar, Mojtahed Shabasteri and Yusuf Eshkevari raised the same issue and asked for reform in political and intellectual realms, they were denounced by the Islamic government and sometimes expelled from the country. The thoughts and writings of these reformers created great clamour in the intellectual and political circles of Iran. Few know that the root of this reform movement reaches Murthaza Mutahhari. According to him, freedom of thought and belief are the vital aspect of human life and there should be no barrier in the way of the use of human intellect. To substantiate the argument that Islam gives utmost importance to thought and intellectual exercise, Mutahhari quotes the Quranic verse 16:78, which reads as, ‘It is He brought you / Forth from the wombs / Of your mothers when / Ye knew nothing’. Commenting on this verse Mutahhari writes that human being is born ignorant and has to become knowledgeable through thought and study. Islam cannot deny him/her the right to think, because it is a human necessity and essential need of his humanity. Islam has not only acknowledged the right to think, it has declared thought to be one of his/her duties. Reflection is an act of worship in Islam (Mutahhari 1412/1992:144).

Mutahhari is an exception among the traditional clergy. Generally, clerics believe that in Islam, there is no scope for intellectual freedom and a believer has to accept what the scriptures direct without questioning and arguments. They view that expressing doubts and freethinking will lead to blasphemy and the way will be open for going out of the pale of Islam. But Mutahhari holds a quite opposite view and says that Islam does not accept belief in its doctrine except through reflection and intellectual effort. According to him even in the case of tawhid, the foundation of Islam, a person should think independently and he should accept the principle only
after personal conviction (Mutahhari 1412/1992:145). About the merit of free
thinking, he says that ‘Islam acknowledges the freedom of expression and the
right to inquire and question. Islam encourages the spirit of inquiry,
questioning and research. The more the numbers of doubts that occur to an
inquiring mind, the closer does it ultimately get to the truth (Mutahhari
1412/1992:147). He upholds the value of thought by making it the criterion
for acceptance of a religious principle. He clearly differs from the views of
the traditional clergy by his assertion that even Islamic beliefs should have
based on rational thought. Beliefs not the outcome of rational thinking and
reflections are not acceptable in Islam. He says that:

[I]f a belief is founded on thought and reasoning, Islam accepts
it; otherwise, it does not accept it. It permits a belief that is
derived from freedom of thought. Islam never accepts such
beliefs that are based on tradition and imitation and which
emerge due to ignorance, absence of reflection and submission
to irrational ideas in the name of freedom of belief (Mutahhari

Even belief in God, which the scholars consider a matter beyond reasoning
and a part of revelation can be constructed on the basis of thought. He writes
that, “since Islam had confidence in its own logic, it did not warn people
against reflecting on the matters of theology. It is convinced that every human
being can attain essential knowledge about God, His existence and Attributes
through rational thought. The same is true of belief in prophethood and

Mutahhari dared to apply rational thinking and spirit of enquiry even to
the fundamentals of religion. Usually religious dogmas are considered beyond
the domain of rational thinking, and using reason in this sphere is treated as
heresy and the instigator a heretic. But his seminary background and
membership in the clerical organization was not an obstacle to him to advance his diverse ideas. His following words give a clear picture of his attitude:

[I]f people are denied freedom in matters where they should use their thinking with the fear that they would make a mistake, or if they are scared of punishment in hell if they think about some religious issue and if a doubt occurs to them, their minds will never develop and mature in respect of religious issues. A religion that requires people to reach its doctrinal truths through thought and intellection, necessarily grants them the freedom of thought. It does not frighten them from entertaining doubts and does not tell them that an attempt to reflect concerning a certain problem is a satanic insinuation that would lead one to hell (Mutahhari 1412/1992:57)

Mutahhari hereby proclaims that all the beliefs and principles of Islam could be put to independent thought and critical enquiry. At the same time, he was not skeptical about any of the principles of religion. In his view, reason and critical thinking can explain all the dogmas of Islam. He rules out any belief based on only imitations, traditions and customs. Here, Mutahhari was sowing the seeds of the religious reform that found their fruition in later years in the works of reformers like Soroush, Shabestari, Kadivar and Eshkevari.

**Insane-e Kamil: The Perfect Human Being**

The perfect human being (*Insane-e kamil*) is the ideal human being, who is superior and exalted. They are a role model to the people and by emulating them, the society can attain human perfection under Islamic principles (Mutahhari n.d.a:5). An understanding of the *Insane-e kamil* is necessary for a society because then only on ideal Islamic society can be established in the earth. He develops the idea of 'perfect human beng' from
the teachings of Quran and the traditions. What the Quran and the traditions consider as the requirements for a true believer are taken as the attributes of the *insane-e kamil*. In a close analysis, the 'perfect human being' is none other than a 'faithful Muslim'. A devout Muslim who practice all the injunctions and prohibitions prescribed by Islam and who apply the teachings of Islam to his social, economic and political life, can be called a perfect human being. However, he stipulates certain conditions. According to him, the prophet and Imam Ali are the best example for perfect human beings (Mutahhari n.d.a:6). In them, all the human values are developed harmoniously. Harmony in the development of values is mandatory for perfection. Unless there is equilibrium, it will create imbalance. He writes that:

> [A] child grows up and is sound in all his organs and limbs, and these develop harmoniously. But if he grows up cartoon-like, some parts of which develop to excess and others not growing at all or growing little, he cannot attain perfection. But a harmonious and all-round development may result in a perfect human being (Mutahhari n.d.a:14).

For Mutahhari, faith is the basic requirement not only for a perfect individual, but it is essential for all human beings. Faith means implicit belief in what Islam insisted humans to believe- God, Prophet, angels, *Imams* and Resurrection. In Islam, faith is the foundation of thought and belief and Islamic ideology is built on them. The perfection of a person in this world, and especially the hereafter, depends on his/her faith (Mutahhari n.d.a:59). After laying the foundations of the perfection, i.e., faith the first step for making a perfection is 'purification of the self from ailments, complexes, ignorance, deviations and metamorphoses' (Mutahhari n.d.a:11). Indulgence in vices is the cause for imperfection and such defects are to be cleared from one's life. Since there are divine as well as earthly elements in mankind unlike
angels, who are created with pure intelligence and thought, man is vulnerable to deviations and sins. But he/she should choose his/her own way, and by utilizing the talents and abilities given by God, he/she must attain perfection through equilibrium and moderation (Mutahhari n.d.a:13-14). Mutahhari compares the deviations in human beings with the low and high tide in the ocean that is caused by the attraction of the moon. Human beings also undergo such ebb and flow, and this attraction is sometimes to one direction to such an extent that all other values are forgotten (Mutahhari n.d.a:15).

Another component for perfection is devotion, which is communion with God. Not only prayer, hymns and worship at nights, but any act or job to support oneself and one's family and to serve society are devotion (Mutahhari n.d.a:16). But when people concentrate on any particular aspect of devotion and neglect other parts, this will definitely ruin the society. They should keep moderation and ensure the development of all levels in a harmonious way. The third value to be cultivated for perfection in human beings is service to the people (Mutahhari n.d.a:17). While emphasizing the service to the people as on exalted value, Mutahhari criticizes the modern idea of humanitarianism. He criticizes minimizing humanitarianism to the level of providing food, and clothes to the people. But it should be broadened to add human values to its fold. The essential condition for humanitarianism is that one should be concerned with the fate, of wellbeing and true happiness of all. He says that if people were provided with food and clothes alone, and not the human values, "we would be treating them like animals"(Mutahhari 1982d:28). This is an example for giving undue importance to a particular aspect of the value. Freedom is another prominent value necessary for perfection of humanity (Mutahhari 1982d:18). People give utmost importance to this value to attain prosperity and happiness.

After explaining the important components for a perfect human being, Mutahhari defines the term as:
Love, intellect, justice, freedom, service and devotion are all values. Who is a perfect human being? One who is an absolute devotee, or ascetic, or free-born, or in love, or intelligent? None of these is a perfect man. But if all these values are developed in him in a harmonious way, he may be considered perfect (Mutahhari 1982d:19).

In other words, if all human values are developed in an individual harmoniously, he/she is a perfect human being. This perfect being is the ideal human being.

**The Conception of the World**

Mutahhari has a clear concept of the worldview Islam has to provide. He has analyzed various aspects of human life, their interaction with society and several topics dealing with the social, cultural, spiritual and political spheres of human life. The contents of Mutahhari’s *Jahan bini-ye Islami* (An Introduction to the World-view of Islam), which consists of seven books dealing with various issues, give a broad outlook of the worldview of Islam. Along with it, he has a distinctive outlook of the world, particularly the goal of human life, attitude to the worldly life and position and role of man in this world. His another work *Sayr-e dar Nahj-al Balaghah* gives a new dimension to his world outlook.

According to the Islamic ideology, the material world and life in it are not the fitting goal of humanity’s highest aspirations. This is because, firstly, in the Islamic world outlook, this world is followed by the everlasting world of the hereafter where conditions of life would be determined by the deeds in the former stage. This argument is in contradiction with many materialist philosophies and non-Semitic religions that does not believe in the Hereafter. Materialism treats this world an end itself and does not believe in the life after
death. In the view of the Quran, the happiness of existence is not limited to worldly existence. While admitting the magnificence of this world to the proper degree, the Quran maintains the existence of another, far greater and more extensive; in comparison to which this world is almost nothing (Mutahhari 1982c:15). Thus, for a true human being it is incumbent on him to believe in the Hereafter and do the necessary acts for the happy and prosperous life in it.

The importance given to the Hereafter does not mean that Islam ignore the life in this world. The Quran gives due importance to the life in this world and in the Hereafter. In a sense, no felicity is attainable in the Hereafter, without a prosperous life in this world. By referring to the impatience of the holy men who long for death in order to attain eternal bliss, Mutahhari says that only the life in this world gives human beings an opportunity to work and attain spiritual development, and the long they live, the greater is the perfection they achieve (Mutahhari n.d.c:34). Thus, the worldly life is the station to work for the bliss in the next world. The good and bad deeds in the world will determine the fate of the life in the Hereafter. Contrary to the spirit of some traditions that there exist a conflict between this world and the Hereafter, he states that reconciliation between winning this and the next world is not only possible, but is a necessary aspect of Islam (Mutahhari 1354/1975:306). He writes,

[T]he enjoyment of the good things of the world does not require deprivation from the blessings of the Hereafter. That which deprives one of the rewards of the next world is a series of sins, not the enjoyment of a well and comfortable life and the availing of pure and legitimate facilities provided by God (Mutahhari 1354/1975:307).

Thus, Islam does not denounce the worldly life, but allows humanity to enjoy
the fruits of life without transgressing the limits. But at the same time, he should not be one-sided, must strive to attain the eternal bliss in the Hereafter.

Although Islam legitimizes the enjoyment of the facilities of this world, it does not permit to denounce and reject the world and also does not permit to treat the natural attachments and commitments to its resources and blessings forbidden. It also denounces 'worldliness' which means bondage and surrender to material and worldly affairs, which leads to spiritual stagnations and inertia, deprives the human spirit of its freedom of movement (Mutahhari 1354/1975:265). What Islam condemns is attachment and bondage to the world when taken it as the ultimate goal of life, because such bondage will retard the growth of human personality. Mutahhari says that, what is derived from the Quran is that desires and affections towards the world are not essentially bad, and neither has the Quran appointed any path to felicity entailing that our natural desires and attractions be crushed. What the Quran criticizes and reproaches is such an overwhelming affection the reality of which would mean being totally dependent on the material world and satisfied solely with it (Mutahhari 1982c: 12). What Islam rejects is the world as a goal and objective and not as a way or means. He stands for a congenial relationship between this world and the next world. For a true believer the Hereafter is the final destination and the worldly life is the station for preparation for the eternal and everlasting life in it. Absolute obedience to God and a righteous life according to his commands and injunctions is the only means for the bliss and ecstasy in the next world. Mutahhari’s conception of the world can be drawn from the following words:

[B]ut in Islam, the relation of man with nature resembles that of a farmer with the farm, of a merchant with the market, and of a devotee with the temple. For a farmer, land is not the goal but the means. His home is elsewhere but he uses the land to secure
livelihood and the means of comfort and happiness. He ploughs it, scatters seeds, weeds it, harvests it etc. The world is the farm of hereafter, and this land should not be taken by a farmer for his permanent home. For a merchant, a market is a place of works in which he uses his capital and efforts to gain profit, this is how man should view the world (Mutahhari n.d.a:75).

These words are self-explanatory and give a clear vision of Mutahhari's conception of the world.

To describe his view of the world, Mutahhari uses the traditional Islamic Philosophical term zuhd. Literally, zuhd means indifference and avoidance. Technically, it means renunciation of the world through abstinence from or indifference to things that are naturally objects of desire, in the course of one’s struggle for perfection and felicity (Mutahhari 1354/1975:211). The concern of the person who practice zuhd known as ‘zahid’ may be spiritual ideas like remembrance of God, the love of God and the desire to acquire his dearness, or moral ideals like honour, nobility, dignity or sensuous pleasures of the hereafter. Simplicity, contentment, abstention from pleasures and luxuries are his characteristics and the barest material elements are sufficient for his existence (Mutahhari 1354/1975:214). In short, zuhd is giving preference to spiritual, ethical and moral aspects of life than the material pleasures and enjoyments.

Mutahhari maintains that zuhd cannot be taken for asceticism or monasticism although there are certain similarities. The latter is retreat from people and society and seclusion for the purpose of worship. It requires withdrawal from people and negation of responsibility towards them. But, though based on simple lifestyle and abstention from luxuries and pleasures, zuhd operates in the midst of life and social relations and fulfils social responsibilities (Mutahhari 1354/1975:216-17). He identifies the differences
between the ascetic and zahid, and believes that these differences are due to the difference in their world outlooks. From the viewpoint of the ascetic or monk, this world and the Hereafter are separate and different from each other. To him, happiness in this world is incompatible with happiness in the next, and is contradictory. But in the outlook of the zahid, this world and the next are inter-related, and the former is the prelude to the latter. The world is a farm of which the Hereafter is the harvest (Mutahhari 1354/1975:222). He finds certain necessary conditions for a zahid. Altruism or preferring others to oneself and bearing hardship for the comfort and good of others, sympathy and willingness to share the sufferings of the deprived, and love of freedom are the three necessary ingredients for zuhd (Mutahhari 1354/1975:222-237). Sympathy and kindness to, and solidarity with the sufferings and hardships of the people are among the essentialities of the zahid. While others suffer, he should do his best to alleviate their miseries, and adopt a lifestyle similar to that of them (Mutahhari 1354/1975:226).

Thus, zuhd has been suggested as the capsule for the tumultuous life in the modern society. The logic of the custom is simple that the hardships and miseries in human life are due to the disparities in the acquisition or distribution of material resources. Moreover, this disparity and differences are part of creation, because there are differences in the talents and skills of the individuals. The only way to keep balance in the society is to practice zuhd, by accepting hardships, assisting the needy and deprived and detaching from the addictions and bondages to the worldly life. At the same time, he/she should not be an ascetic or monk, but fulfil his/her various responsibilities in the society as a human being.

**The Tawhidi Worldview or the Ideal Society**

Mutahhari has a vision of an ideal society in his philosophy. Here his ideas become more utopian. In a sense, it is a rereading of the traditional
Shi‘i belief of the rule of righteousness through Mahdi, the Hidden Imam. Mahdi will re-appear at the end of the time to restore justice and establish a righteous and egalitarian society. Mutahhari has a concept of unity of all Muslims of the world as a single society. Unity and goodwill of all Muslims of the world on the basis of the faith is the ideal he cherishes. Keeping in mind of the existence of various sects and groups among Muslims, he finds certain common threads of unity among them. The justification he offers is that all Muslims worship the unique God, believe in the prophethood of a single person, have Quran as a common Book, have Ka‘aba as the direction of prayer, performs the haj pilgrimage together and in the same way, their prayers and fast are similar, their making of a family, their dealings, their bringing up of children and the burial of their dead are all alike. All Muslims possess a universal perspective, have a common culture and share a common civilization. In the face of such a situation, the Muslims of different parts of the world have the opportunity to develop a common platform – Islamic unity (Mutahhari 1982b:4-5). He has given a clear picture of the society that is to be established in an Islamic community.

Mutahhari’s ideal society is known as tawhidi society. Though he does not use the exact term, he describes about a tawhidi worldview and explains of a society in which the features of tawhid could be enforced. Thus, it can be drawn that his ideal society is a tawhidi society. Tawhid means the ‘Oneness’ of God. There is no associate or partner for God. There is none like Him. God is unique in his essence attributes and acts (Mutahhari n.d.b:30). But this is from the theological side of the doctrine. Mutahhari attaches political significance to this purely theological principle and treats it as a tool to develop a new outlook of the world. According to him, Islamic conception of the world is monotheistic. It means that: the world is ‘mono-axis’ and ‘mono-orbit’, that means the world is from ‘Allah’ and returns to Allah. It is meant that:
The world view of *tauhid* means perceiving that the universe has appeared through a sagacious will and that the order of being is founded on goodness, generosity, and mercy, to convey existents to attainments worthy of them. The beings of the universe evolve in a harmonious system in one direction, toward one center. No being is created in vain, aimlessly. The universe is regulated through a series of definitive rules named the divine norms (*sunan ilahiya*). Man enjoys a special nobility and greatness among beings and has a special role and mission. He is responsible for his own evolution and upbringing and for the improvement of his society. The universe is the school for man, and God rewards every human being according to his right intention and right effort (Mutahhari 1985c:74).

Thus, belief in ‘Oneness’ of God is not only a theological affair. It implies human life, their individual behaviours, the social customs they have to follow and set a definite purpose for life. To attain that goal—the perfection of humanity—they have to follow the right path according to the dictates of his will. Mutahhari elaborates the point further:

> [T]he universe has not been created in vain, in jest. Wise aims are at work in the creation of the universe and man. Nothing inappropriate, devoid of wisdom and value, has been created. The existing order is the best and most perfect of possible orders. The universe rests on justice and truth. The order of the universe is based on causes and effects, and one must seek for every result in its unique cause and antecedents. One must expect a unique cause for every result and a unique result for every cause. A thing’s divinely decreed fate is identical with the
fate decreed for it by the sequence of causes leading to it (Mutahhari 1985c:75).

Thus, it is conceived that the human life in this world has an aim, and God is the creator and preserver of all the beings of the world. At the same time he does not impose His will and decisions, without a cause convincing to the mankind, and they have the right to choose their way. Oneness of God has another meaning that “[T]he self-existing truth being one, this world has only one source and one end. It has neither originated from various sources nor will it return to various sources. It has originated from one source and one truth. ... Everything will return to the same source and the same truth” (Mutahhari n.d.f: 87). He quotes two verses from the Quran to support this argument which say: Allah is the creator of everything’ (13:16) and “all things reach Allah at last’” (42:53).

Mutahhari sees four degrees for monotheism and says that an individual has to pass all these stages. The four degrees of tawhid are (1) unity of the essence, (2) unity of the attributes, (3) unity of the work of Allah, and (4) unity in worship for Him (Mutahhari n.d.f:85-92). The unity of essence means the negation of being any peer or like of Allah and the unity of His attributes means the negation of any kind of multiplicity or plurality within His essence (Mutahhari n.d.f:88). Unity of His work means to recognize that the world, with all its systems, ways, causes and effects is the work of Allah alone and has originated from His will. Nothing in the world is self-existing, everything depends on Him and He is the sustainer of the whole world (Mutahhari n.d.f:89). Out of the four degrees, the first three are theoretical tawhid, and the last - unity in worship - is its practical side. It means worship Allah alone. In other words, to be single-minded in respect of the worship of Allah (Mutahhari n.d.f:91). About this degree of tawhid, Mutahhari writes:
[T]auhid in practice, individual and social, consists in the individual’s growing unified through worship of God alone by means of rejection of all kinds of counterfeit worship (such as worship of carnal desires, money, or prestige) and in society’s growing unified through worship of God alone by means of rejection of taught, of discrimination, and of justice. So long as individual and society do not attain unity, they will not attain happiness. And except by worship of the Truth, they will not attain unity (Mutahhari 1985c:98-99).

Thus, worship of God alone and rejection of obedience to all other elements are the criterion for unity of humanity, and this unity is the road to happiness.

Shirk (polytheism), the opposite of tawhid, also has four levels. The negation and abstention from the elements of shirk is the pre-requisite for human prosperity. Mutahhari draws the distinction between tawhid and shirk as:

[M]an[human being] under the system of shirk is drawn every moment in a different direction, toward a different pole. He/she is a piece of straw floating on the sea; the waves wash him/her in a new direction every instant. But in the system of tawhid, he/she is like a ship equipped with navigational systems, making an orderly, harmonious journey under a benevolent captain (Mutahhari n.d.f: 99)

Thus, for a harmonious life in the world to attain ultimate prosperity and happiness in the Hereafter and establish a righteous society in this world, a tawhidi society is the base, and this is the perfect society. Mutahhari was optimistic of this society and considers it as a natural development. He says that:
on the basis of the theory of man’s primordial nature . . . it may be said that societies, cultures, and civilizations are moving towards homogeneity and unification, and ultimately would merge into one another. The future of human societies lies in a highly developed, single and universal society, in which all positive human values shall be realized (Mutahhari 1997:33).

Thus, Mutahhari’s conception is a universal Islamic, righteous and just society, which is part of the evolution of human life. He elaborates the details of his ideal society and insists that balance in human relationships is the fundamental feature of that society. His society is a just one, with no discrimination, no deprivation, no tyranny and no false gods. Although he is against discrimination, he does not deny disparity. It is an egalitarian society in which equality and brotherhood are the basic elements. It takes into consideration the natural differences of the individuals and does not deprive anyone of his acquired rights. It gives equal opportunities to all. It is a natural society, where the principle is “work according to one’s ability and entitlement according to one’s work” (Mutahhari n.d.f:99-100).

For the realization and actualization of his ideal and perfect society, Mutahhari identifies the Shi’i belief in the advent of Imam Mahdi, the twelfth Imam who disappeared from the world in 874 A.D. After explaining the features of the society - the idea of final victory of righteousness, peace and justice over those of evil, of oppression and tyranny, of the world-wide spread of Islam and the complete efflorescence of human values – he says that these will be brought by Imam Mahdi and it is the prediction of the Quran that good and pious will have absolute supremacy and the oppressors and tyrants will be collapsed (Mutahhari 1997:33, Mutahhari 1361a/1982:5-6). Mahdi will appear in the world and fight against tyranny, oppression and injustice and
will establish a righteous, just and egalitarian society where divine laws and rules will persist. Expectation of this ‘restorer of justice’ is the peculiar feature of Shi’ism, and Mutahhari calls it Intizar-e Buzurg or Big Expectation (Mutahhari 1361a/1982:58)

Expectation of the advent of Mahdi is a matter of hope for the oppressed and deprived. Mutahhari recognizes this aspect and he says that the appearance of Mahdi is Allah’s favour for the oppressed and it is a means of their coming to power and gaining succession in the world (Mutahhari 1361a/1982:65). But he warns that it never means sitting idle until everything is put into order and then benefiting from the subsequent blessings. Waiting for the Mahdi means hope of joining Mahdi on his re-appearance in the holy war and perhaps even attaining martyrdom (Mutahhari 1983:108-09). However, Mutahhari rules out the politicized interpretation given to belief in the return of Mahdi by Shariati, who views in it the imminent revolution of the oppressed masses and stressed on the restoration of justice and Islam.

Mutahhari believes in the positive aspect of humanity and believes that there is a bright future for human beings. The optimism about the future is the indication about the social system to be established by Mahdi. He identifies the salient features of the society as:

(a) final victory of righteousness virtue, peace, justice, freedom and truth over the forces of egoism, subjugation, tyranny deceit and fraud.
(b) establishment of a world government.
(c) reclaiming and the rehabilitation of the whole earth so that no area remains waste.
(d) attainment of full sagacity by man kind, adherence to ideology, and emancipation from animal impulses and undue social restrictions.
(e) equal distribution of wealth and property among all human beings.
(f) complete eradication of all vices like adultery, fornication, usury, use of intoxicants, treachery, theft, homicide and total disappearance of abnormal complexes, malice and ill-will.

(g) eradication of war and restoration of peace, friendship, co-operation and benevolence.

(h) complete coherence between humans and nature (Mutahhari 1361a/1982:60-61).

In short, a society filled with all the positive human values and devoid of all kinds of vices, malpractices and vices, is the scheme of Mutahhari. In human world, from the viewpoint of reason, such a society is more utopia and it cannot be actualized. However, it gives the people, especially the oppressed and the deprived, the patience to suffer hardships and to strive for the realization of the ideal society.

To summarise, Mutahhari’s treatment of humanism and the view of humanity hold a unique position in Islamic sociology. By pointing out to the teachings of the Quran, he is elevating human being to a position higher than the human beings are of the modern philosophy. While European humanism centers on the thought, acts, likes and felicity of man by relegating God and religion to the background, he recognizes all the positive values proposed by modern scholars, and add one more thing that human being has the chance to be the noblest creature and grow superior to the angels. Man can reach this superior status by obeying the commands of God. In other words, the human being in modern humanism can reach the highest position by being obedient to God while standing on the present platform. The only thing he has to perform is accepting iman (faith) and observes subsequent duties as a believer. Then he will become a perfect human being, and be part of a perfect tawhidi society.
Mutahhari’s argument of free will of human being and their discretionary power to choose the destiny of his like distinguishes him from other scholars. Generally, Muslim scholars keep the principle of fate and destiny untouched, and consider it beyond the realm of human contemplation. But Mutahhari surpasses other scholars by his argument that not only religious issues and principles can be subjected to reason and intellect, but goes further that beliefs not examined and tested by reason are not reckoned to be religious principles. Only Ali Shariati, among the Muslim intellectuals, holds a similar opinion. But unlike Shariati, Mutahhari is a traditional scholar, and he had many religious and social constraints before him. His eminence is raised when he tackles these barriers.