INTRODUCTION

There had been a gradual evolution in the views of the Shi'i 'ulama' regarding their rights of leadership of the community including politics. Recently some 'ulama' particularly Ayatollah Khomeini tried to develop the theory of possibility of a government other than that of Imam of the Age, or to be more precise the government of the successors of Imam of the Age. It is this development in the history of modern Shi'i thought that the present thesis intends to study. However, there is no doubt about the fact that the socio-political circumstances played a significant role in the evolution of such theories particularly the continuous process of modernization of the Iranian society by the Pahlavi government and its policy of eliminating the power and influence of the clergy in the society.

The emergence of Reza Shah during the 1920s heralded a new era of secularization and modernization in Iran. Reza Shah was determined to modernize the country and secularize the institutions of the government. In this process, the religious institutions and the clergy came under direct attack. He assigned a limited role to religion which was confined to personal status. He replaced the religious laws with Western civil code and introduced such laws as to undermine the traditional religious educational system. He decreed European dress for the Iranians and banned the veiling of women. This process of
modernization and secularization was violently implemented by the Shah. The rule of Reza Shah created a strong dissatisfaction in the clergy. The repressive measures of the Shah, however, did not allow the traditional opposition of the clergy to emerge on the surface until the end of his reign.

The new Shah who assumed power in 1941 followed the modernization policies of his father. But the beginning of his rule as the new monarch of Iran coincided with the emergence of clergy's traditional opposition. What were of the utmost concern for the clergy were the continued state policy of curbing the independence of religious institutions thereby curbing the power of clergy, the continued process of secularization and modernization: cultural, intellectual and economic invasion of the Imperialist powers Mohammad Reza Shah's programme of reform in the form of White Revolution antagonised the clergy to the extent of confrontation. The process of modernization by the Shah represented a relentless drive towards the centralization of power also and thus the monarchy despite claims of democracy, nationalism and reform headed towards totalitarianism and despotism. However, the 'ulama's attitude towards the monarchy have always been changing, the study of which is one of the purposes of the thesis.

The clergy's traditional attitude of hostility towards the state increased tremendously during the period between 1941-79,
particularly after the death of Ayatollah Borourdi, the highest marja' e taqlid ("source of imitation") in 1961, who generally followed the attitude of traditional quietism towards the political affairs. The period between 1961 and 1979 was the period of direct confrontation between the clergy and the state. During this period the institution of 'ulama' underwent a rigorous process of politicization not only practically they threw themselves into the political affairs of the country, but theoretically also they started re-interpretation of their religious tradition in order to make them suitable for their struggle against the Shah and modernization policies of the government. Two personalities figure as the most important ones who attempted to politicise the religious precepts. Dr. 'Ali Shari'ati and Ayatollah Rohollah Khomeini; the former cannot be considered an 'alim in technical sense of the term but nevertheless he had made excessive use of religious terminology and concepts. Ayatollah Khomeini, on the other hand, belongs to the clergy class. He was not only the most important leader of the revolution but also the most important theoretician of the revolution through his concept of velayat-e-faqih. Therefore they are studied in this dissertation in detail.

While there exists a number of general works regarding the Iranian revolution only a few works have appeared which deal with the development of the Shi'i thought during the period. Sharough
Akhavi's *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: The Clergy State Relation in the Pahlavi Period* is by far one of the best studies in this regard. Although the thrust of the book is to describe the educational reform of the government and the clerical responses to it but it is a historical analysis of the dynamics and complexities of religion and politics in the twentieth century Iran. Another important work in this regard is M.J. Fischer's *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution*. Fischer is an anthropologist. The theme of his book is to study religious and political life of Iran with Qom as its Centre which was the mainstay of the Shi'i 'ulama's' religio-political activities. Unlike Akhavi who concentrated on the Iranian madrasa, Fischer has taken into account the changes that took place in the attitude of 'ulama' towards the state. He emphasises the social bases of Shi'ism and the hold of clergy on the masses. He also emphasises the populist Shi'ism as utilized by the clergy as their base against their enemies.

Ervand Abrahamian's book *Iran Between the Two Revolutions* deals with the socio-political movements of the twentieth century Iran. Although the basic objective of the book is to study the leftist movements, it provides information about 'ulama's attitude towards the leftist movement. It also provides information about the rightist Islamic groups especially *Fedaiyan-e Islam*. Shaul Bakhash's *The Reign of the Ayatollahs* is a recent work which is largely based on original sources. It provides material on the constitutional
debate of 1979. It also deals with Khomeini's thesis of revolution.

N.R. Keddie in her *Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution* has collected some good articles. The book begins with an article by W.M. Watt dealing with the religio-political origins of Shi'ism. J.R. Cole's article "Imami Jurisprudence and the Role of the 'ulama': Mortaza Ansari on Emulating the Supreme Exemplar", deals with the nineteenth century development of the theory of *marja'iyyat-e taglid*. Azar Tabari's "The Role of the clergy in Modern Iranian Politics" deals with the basic objectives behind the clergy's turning towards the evolution of a revolutionary political religion. Yann Richard's "Ayatollah Kashani: Precursor of the Islamic Republic" is based upon original and first hand information. He tries to correlate Kashani's oppositional movement with that of Khomeini and highlights the anti-imperialist and anti-westernization character of the Iranian 'ulama'. Gregory Rose's article is an analysis of Ayatollah Khomeini's concept of *velayat-e faqih*. Sharough Akhavi's article highlights 'Ali Shariati's contribution to the development of a revolutionary Shi'i ideology. There are two other editions of the collected works on the same subject. *Shi'ism, Resistance and Revolution* edited by Martine Kramer and *Shi'ism and Social Protest* edited by J.R.I. Cole and N.R. Keddie. They have studied the Shi'i movements in the
todays world, especially in the Middle East countries. Both the works, in general, try to assess the role of Shi'ism as an activist and oppositional ideology in different countries and its influence on the domestic politics. Mongol Bayat's article "Mahmud Taleqani and the Iranian Revolution in Martine Kramer's Shi'ism, Resistance and Revolution is perhaps the first important attempt to describe the thoughts of Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleqani who distinguishes himself in so many ways amongst the clerical class on account of his broad vision, progressive thinking and a powerful personality, perhaps no less significant than Kashani on Khomeini in the modern Iranian history.

There are a few other edited works which primarily study the general phenomenon of Islamic revival in the Muslim world and contain articles on Shi'ism in Iran. Some of these edited works are: Said Amir Arjomand's From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam, J. Esposito's Voices of Resurgent Islam, and Olivier Carre's Islam and the State in the World Today, W.R. Roff's, Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning, Ali Bannazizi and Myron Weiner's, The State, Religion and Ethnic Politics: Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan etc. Besides these there are some articles which exclusively deal with Khomeini's political theory and concept of velayat-e faqih. For example, Hamid Enayat's "Khumayni's Concept of the Guardianship of Juriscinsult" in J.P. Piscatori (ed.),

However, the works mentioned above do not give a comprehensive presentation of the development of Shi'i thought in contemporary Iran. Most of these works have not taken into account the developments in the basic concepts of Shi'i Islam during this period. Although they mention the increasing role of the clergy in politics but they do not highlight gradual development in the Shi'i political theory.

The dissertation is divided into seven chapters. The first two chapters Historical Background" and Origins of Shi'ism in Iran" try to show the gradual development of Shi'i political theory and the attitude of 'ulama' vis-a-vis the state upto the 20th century. The development of political theology during the medieval period is substantiated by quotations from the writings of medieval theologians. Remarkable changes in the political attitude of the 'ulama' took place during the Safavid period which is dealt with
in this chapter having in view the evolution of the theory of imamate. The 'ulama's position as successors of the Imams is also dealt with the 'ulama's role during the Constitutional movement (1905-11) has also been analysed. Their theoretical formulation regarding the constitution and the state, their attitude towards modernization, secularization, tyranny, despotism and monarchy. As their ideas influenced the modern Iranian thought these are dealt with in some detail.

The next chapter "Development of Shi'i Thought in Contemporary Iran: 1941-61" deals with the development of Shi'i thought in general, the attitude and responses of the different quarters of the clergy vis-a-vis modernization and the monarchy. It highlights the mixed reaction of the 'ulama' towards various political social and intellectual developments in Iran during the period. The main sources of 'ulama's concern and their reaction have been examined.

The fourth chapter "Development of Shi'i Thought in Contemporary Iran: 1961-79" discusses the oppositional ideas of the clergy against the so-called white revolution of the Shah. It discusses various responses of the clergy to different modernization measures and tries to show how the clergy gradually developed a 'revolutionary' Shi'i ideology. The reform movement of the clergy led by Ayatollah Mortoza Motahhari and the basic ideas of these reformists have been discussed on the basis of their original
writings. The role of clergy in politics and their attitude towards the government have been studied in the light of earlier theoretical developments in this regard.

Chapter five "Dr. 'Ali Shari'ati: Radical Shi'ism" is exclusively devoted to the study of 'Ali Shari'ati. Keeping in view the large number of his works and the variety of subjects he had touched upon I have tried to concentrate on his main ideas regarding the reinterpretation of traditional Shi'i doctrines.

The last two chapters are exclusively devoted to describe the politico-religious ideas of Ayatollah Khomeini. The first "Ayatollah Khomeini Religion and Politics" discusses his political theory while the second "Ayatollah Khomeini: The Concept of Velayat-e Faqih" describes his theory of the government and 'ulama'. Both these chapters are based upon original writings of Khomeini. Efforts have been made to discuss his ideas in comparison and in continuance with the previous thoughts. It is also attempted to point out the influences on his thoughts.