

## Reinventing The Role of Social Prophetic and Mass Consciousness Concept in Ali Syariati's Liberation Theology

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### **Abstract.**

*This research largely attempts to reconstruct Ali Syariati's thoughts on the concept of Social Prophetic and mass consciousness as the basis of social transformation. In addition, this research also seeks to find a dialectical relationship between intellectuals and mass consciousness in Syariati's thought. The author wants to show that intellectuals and mass consciousness are two important elements that allow the birth of social transformation. Through this research, the author also aims to present a new perspective offered by Syariati on social transformation as one of the topics of thought in liberation theology. This study uses critical epistemology, using hermeneutic and dialectical analysis methods. The primary data used by Syariati's lectures titled *On the Sociology of Islam and What is to be Done*. The results shows that the social transformation can occur by the role of intellectuals (rausyan fikr) who perform prophetic duties (social prophet). In a social revolution, intellectuals are tasked with transferring all the social problems faced into the masses as well as providing an ideological foundation as a movement paradigm. However, with their free will, the masses can choose whether to accept or reject the agitation carried out by these enlightened intellectuals. The orientation for social transformation is the ummah society.*

**Keywords:** Social Prophetic, Mass Consciousness, Ali Syariati

### **Abstrak.**

Penelitian ini secara garis besar berupaya merekonstruksi pemikiran Ali Syariati tentang konsep Nabi Sosial dan kesadaran massa sebagai basis transformasi sosial. Selain itu, penulis pula berupaya mencari hubungan dialektis antara dua konsep tersebut. Penulis ingin menunjukkan intelektual dan kesadaran massa merupakan dua unsur penting yang memungkinkan lahirnya transformasi sosial. Melalui penelitian ini pula, penulis hendak menunjukkan suatu perspektif baru yang ditawarkan oleh Syariati terkait transformasi sosial sebagai salah satu topik pemikiran dalam teologi pembebasan. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan epistemologi kritis, dengan menggunakan metode pengambilan data hermeneutika dan dialektika. Adapun data primer yang digunakan oleh tulisan ceramah Syariati berjudul *On the Sociology of Islam and What is to be Done*. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa transformasi sosial

dapat terjadi oleh peran kaum intelektual (*raushan fikr*) yang melakukan tugas-tugas kenabian (*social prophet*). Sehingga intelektual dapat dipahami sebagai nabi sosial (*social prophetic*). Dalam hal ini, intelektual yang berstatus sebagai nabi sosial, bertugas untuk mengalihkan segala permasalahan sosial yang dihadapi ke dalam diri massa sekaligus memberi landasan ideologis sebagai paradigma gerakan. Namun, dengan kehendak bebas yang dimilikinya, massa (*al-nas*) dapat memilih apakah ingin menerima maupun menolak agitasi yang dilakukan oleh intelektual tercerahkan tersebut. Bagi Syariati, orientasi bagi transformasi sosial ialah masyarakat *ummah*.

**Kata kunci:** Nabi Sosial, Kesadaran Massa, Ali Syariati

## Introduction

The discourse on the role of intellectuals and mass consciousness are two major topics which have been discussed for a long time amongst philosophers and social theorists. These discourses initially appeared amongst thinkers from Orthodox Marxism. This school of thought believes that the collapse of Capitalism and the emergence of Socialism are historical inevitabilities. In this context, Orthodox Marxism emphasizes their concern to basis-structure in understanding Marx's ideas. In other words, social transformation can occur if the phenomenon of class antagonism within the basis-structure occurs as well. This view is constructed by Karl Kautsky, a key figure in the school of Orthodox Marxism. According to Kautsky, social revolution is not rendered by proletariat consciousness, yet this transition from Capitalism to Socialism is caused by the contradiction of the economic base in Capitalism.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, Kautsky's interpretation on Marx is mostly influenced by Darwinism.<sup>2</sup> This positivistic-typical interpretation is then reacted negatively amongst thinkers in the school of neo-Marxism. In Islamic intellectual tradition, there is one figure who gives a critique about Kautsky's interpretation, namely Ali Syariati.

Ali Syariati is one of the great Islamic figures who carries the concept of liberation theology.<sup>3</sup> He is an Islamic figure who inspires the Islamic world with various ideas and ideas.<sup>4</sup> Syariati is an Islamic scholar and "an architect" of the Iranian revolution which is steeped in the idea of the role of intellectuals as the foundation of social transformation. Syariati's idea gave an impactful influence for Iranians back then. Furthermore, this is proven by the fact that he is the figure who ignited the flame of revolution amongst Iranian protesters. The concepts of the role of intellectuals and mass consciousness are critical responses toward Orthodox Marxism's scholars. During the Iranian revolution, this school of thought, Orthodox Marxism, which had transformed into Stalinism, also took

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<sup>1</sup> Franz-Magins Suseno, *Pemikiran Karl Marx: Dari Sosialisme Utopis Ke Perselisihan Revisionisme* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1999): p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Blackledge, "Karl Kautsky and Marxist Historiography" 70, no. 3 (2006): 337–59: p. 337 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40404839>.

<sup>3</sup> Adhimas Alifian Yuwono, "Relevansi Teologi Pembebasan Ali Syari'ati Dalam Mengatasi Kemiskinan Umat Islam Di Indonesia: Sebuah Pendekatan Reflektif," *MEDIA: Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi* 6, no. 1 (2025): p. 114

<sup>4</sup> Achmad Irwan Hamzani et al., "Tauhid as a Solution to Economic Injustice: Review of Ali Syariati's Thoughts," *International Journal of Research in Human Resource Management* 4, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.33545/26633213.2022.v4.i1a.84>.

place in the battle of ideological discourse.<sup>5</sup> In other words, Orthodox Marxism is one of ideologies which was interesting amongst young Iranian scholars back then. Additionally, the presence of official and orthodox *ulama* serves as the backdrop for the emergence of the concept of *Rausyan Fikr*, or enlightened intellectuals.

This research is a study on Islamic liberation theology, which exploring Ali Syariati's thoughts on the role of social prophetic and mass consciousness as the basis for social transformation. Similar to other Neo-Marxist scholars, Syariati opines that intellectuals are figures for creating consciousness amongst oppressed society in both cultural and political contexts. Syariati comments that the main criterion which should be possessed by an enlightened intellectual is understanding of a historical and cultural setting of their community. In one of his preachings, Syariati states that historical consciousness and social culture will lead enlightened intellectuals to construct consciousness toward society. Furthermore, he says that custom is a spirit for social system in the community. In Iran's context, *Syiah* is steeped in social culture in Iran so that it is important for enlightened intellectuals to have deep knowledge about *Syiah* as this, according to Syariati, is the only tool to fight against the regime of Shah back then.<sup>6</sup> For Syariati, intellectuals must show a quality to reinterpret the *Syiah*'s teachings into more revolutionary.

There are numerous studies about Ali Syariati's thought and technically this research is a development from those previous studies, which now tries to study the dialectical relation between *Rausyan Fikr* (social prophetic) and *al-Nas* as a basis for social transformation. Previous research about Syariati's thought only emphasizes the reinterpretation of *tauhid*, *Syiah*'s teachings, and the influence of Syariati's concepts on social revolution, for example from research done by Saffari<sup>7</sup>, Khanlarzadeh<sup>8</sup>, and Nugroho<sup>9</sup>. Meanwhile, other studies, including from Guerrero<sup>10</sup>, Javad Miri, and Hossein Roohani<sup>11</sup>, focus on other aspects of Syariati's thoughts. That research tries to contextualized Syariati's thought on many aspects, like technology and religious reformation. All aforementioned studies have not tried to explain the concept of *Rausyan Fikr* and *al-Nas* as well as to find the intersection between these two concepts in order to form a basis of social transformation in Syariati's thought. This research then tries to find the dialectical relation between *Rausyan Fikr* and *Al-Nas* concepts in the context of social transformation. The purpose of this research is to contribute to the discourse of liberation theology in Islam on the topic of social transformation.

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<sup>5</sup> Eko Supriyadi, *Sosialisme Islam Pemikiran Ali Syariati* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2003): p.14

<sup>6</sup> Mina Khanlarzadeh, "Theology of Revolution: In Ali Shari'ati and Walter Benjamin's Political Thought," *Religions* 11, no. 10 (2020): p. 8 <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11100504>.

<sup>7</sup> Siavash Saffari, "Tawhid Paradigm and an Inclusive Concept of Liberative Struggle," *Religions* 14, no. 9 (2023): p.1 <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14091088>.

<sup>8</sup> Khanlarzadeh, "Theology of Revolution: In Ali Shari'ati and Walter Benjamin's Political Thought.": p.1

<sup>9</sup> Anjar Nugroho, Tulus Warsito, and Surwandono, "Ali Shari'ati's Revolutionary Islamic Thought and Its Relevance to the Contemporary Socio-Political Transformation," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 7, no. 2 (2017): p. 252 <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v7i2.251-276>.

<sup>10</sup> Javier Gil Guerrero, "The Protestant Reformation as an Islamisation of Christianity in the Thought of Ziya Gökalp and Ali Shariati," *Religions* 15, no. 7 (July 1, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15070850>.

<sup>11</sup> Syied Javad Miri and Hossein Roohani, "Comparing Martin Heidegger's and Ali Shariati's Views of Technology," *Journal of Philosophical Investigations* 16, no. 39 (2022): p. 626 <https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2021.48484.3018>.

*Rausyan Fikr* (social prophetic) is a core concept in Ali Syariati's thought and this concept has been massively studied by scholars and enthusiasts of Ali Syariati's thought. However, in another concept, he also states about the importance of *al-Nas* (the masses) as the fuel of social transformation. At glance, both concepts seem contradictive in which on the one hand, in *Rausyan Fikr*, he states that the possibility of social transformation can increase if social prophets occur in the community, whereas on the other hand, in *al-Nas*, he asserts that the masses, with their freedom of will, can choose whether to initiate social change or remain trapped in social stagnation. Based on this premise, this study seeks to demonstrate the dialectical relationship between the concept of *Rausyan Fikr* and the consciousness of *al-Nas* in Ali Syariati's perspective. The author aims to show that these two elements serve as driving forces for social change and are intrinsically interconnected.

This is a qualitative research which uses critical epistemology as the approach to find data. This study seeks to identify the epistemological assumptions that shape Syariati's ideas on the concept of the social prophet and mass consciousness. The primary source used in this study is Ali Syariati's preaching texts that have been compiled into two books, *On the Sociology of Islam* and *What is to be done*. For the research findings, the writer will use hermeneutics and dialectics as the main methods to analyze them. Hermeneutics is a philosophical approach to decipher a text by relying on evidence of objectivity to achieve objective truth. Furthermore, this approach accentuates the way of understanding texts by using several methods. In this research, the method of hermeneutical interpretation will be grammatical and psychological interpretation. Grammatical interpretation is the way to interpret a text by using languages, sentences, and the intersection between one part of the text to another. Meanwhile, psychological interpretation emphasizes the use of historical and personal background of the writer in text interpretation.<sup>12</sup> For dialectics, it is a principle to find thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis in a phenomenon or issue. According to Hegel, thesis and anti-thesis can transform into *aufgehoben* or synthesis. The writer will use this principle to examine the relation between *Rausyan Fikr* and *al-Nas* in Ali Syariati's thought.

## Results

Ali Syariati is an Iranian scholar. He was born in 1933 and died in 1977 during the regime of Syah Pahlevi.<sup>13</sup> Syariati was born and raised in Iran in the 20th century, during a time when Iran was under the strong influence of Western colonialism and authoritarian monarchical regimes.<sup>14</sup> He was well-known as a figure who was actively opposing the regime of Syah Pahlevi.<sup>15</sup> Ali Syariati's concepts about revolutionary Islam are aimed to social transformation in Iran. Shariati are among the most influential thinkers of the 20th century in the Middle East.<sup>16</sup> Their ideas influenced their countries at critical moments.

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<sup>12</sup> Stanley E. Porter and Jason C. Robinson, *Hermeneutics an Introduction to Interpretive Theory* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2011): p. 32

<sup>13</sup> Adhimas Alifian Yuwono, "Relevansi Teologi Pembebasan Ali Syari'ati Dalam Mengatasi Kemiskinan Umat Islam Di Indonesia: Sebuah Pendekatan Reflektif," *MEDIA: Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi* 6, no. 1 (2025): p.118

<sup>14</sup> Hairil Anwar et al., "Konsep Pendidikan Menurut Perspektif Tokoh Ali Syari'ati," *Edu Society: Jurnal Pendidikan, Ilmu Sosial, Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 4, no. 3 (2024): p. 1631

<sup>15</sup> Nugroho, Warsito, and Surwandono, "Ali Shari'ati's Revolutionary Islamic Thought and Its Relevance to the Contemporary Socio-Political Transformation.": p. 252

<sup>16</sup> Gil Guerrero, "The Protestant Reformation as an Islamisation of Christianity in the Thought of Ziya Gökalp and Ali Shariati."

As a modern Muslim scholar who is familiar with Marxism and Existentialism, he strives to reinterpret the concept of *Tauhid* in *Syiah*.<sup>17</sup> In addition to criticizing the Pahlavi regime, Syariati's thoughts were also devoted to criticizing the intellectual circles of Orthodox Marxism that transformed into Stalinism.<sup>18</sup> Iranian youth were heavily influenced by the orthodox Marxist paradigm which presupposed that social revolutions were the result of contradictions in the economic base.

Syariati was strongly opposed to Western colonialism and imperialism, which he considered to have damaged Islamic identity and culture. He supported independence movements in the Islamic world.<sup>19</sup> But in the other side, He is also famous as a Muslim scholar who integrates the concept of Orthodox Marxism with *Syiah*'s tradition. Syariati is a typical scholar who is eclectic to certain thoughts or ideologies outside *Syiah*. This is why he produces numerous concepts, including *Rausyan Fikr*, *Red Shi'ism*, *Insan*, *Al-Nas*, *Ummah*, etc. as the part of his work to connect between Marxism, Existentialism, and Islam for example. Not only does Syariati's idea influence the discourse of modern Islam thought, his work also gives an influence to some intellectuals in Indonesia. His idea started to develop during *New Order* regime in Indonesia where many scholars reinterpreted or criticized it based on social context in Indonesia.

Azyumardi Azra classifies two types of intellectuals during the pre-Iranian revolution time, which are religious scholar and lay intellectual.<sup>20</sup> Religious scholars embrace *Syiah* as their main ideology or paradigm, so most of the time, they will interpret that doctrine. Meanwhile, lay intellectuals strive to combine *Syiah*'s ideology with Western thoughts. We can say that this group of intellectuals is beyond their counterparts from the religious party as they have more effort to reinterpret *Syiah*'s teachings as well as align them to some ideologies outside *Syiah*. Referring to Azra, Syariati can be identified as the second group (lay intellectuals). Most of his works focus on the intersection between *Syiah* and other ideologies, such as Marxism, Existentialism, and Post-colonial discourse. The last one, Post-colonial discourse, is used for fighting against the modernization policy cloaked in the discourse of Westernization by the Pahlavi regime. The integration of *Syiah* with various schools of thought has produced new interpretations of *Syiah*, transforming it into a revolutionary form of *Syiah*. This is evidenced by several key concepts such as *Red Shi'ism*, *Rausyan Fikr*, *Insan*, *Al-Nas*, and others.

In this regard, Ali Syariati's liberation theology differs from that of other Muslim reformist thinkers, such as Hassan Hanafi and Asghar Ali Engineer. Hassan Hanafi places greater emphasis on the project of renewing the *turats*, which include *ilm al-kalam* (Islamic theology). The liberation theology developed by Hassan Hanafi emphasizes renewal (*tajdid*) and understanding tradition (*turats*) in a modern context. He believes that *turats* needs to be renewed for the conditions of each era. Asghar Ali Engineer attempts to formulate ontologically the theology of liberation in Islam. However, Syariati's liberation theology emphasizes the practical aspect. This is evidenced by his

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<sup>17</sup> Saffari, "Tawhid Paradigm and an Inclusive Concept of Liberative Struggle.": p. 52

<sup>18</sup> Dian Topan Arif Pribadi, "Teologi Pembebasan Dr. Ali Syari'ati: Hibridisasi Misticisme Islam Dan Sosialisme Barat Dalam Konsep Sosialisme Religius," *Islamadina : Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 25, no. 1, (2024): p. 63, <https://doi.org/10.30595/islamadina.v0i0.15720>.

<sup>19</sup> Muhammad Fadhil Hadziq and Narul Hasyim Muzadi, "Pembaharuan Pemikiran Islam Di Timur Tengah Dan Asia Selatan Serta Pengaruhnya Terhadap Kemerdekaan Negara-Negara Islam," *Adabuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran* 4, no. 2 (April 23, 2025): 85–108, <https://doi.org/10.38073/adabuna.v4i2.2582>.

<sup>20</sup> Deden M. Ridwan et al., *Melawan Hegemoni Barat: Ali Syariati Dalam Sorotan Cendekiawan Indonesia* (Jakarta: Lentera, 1999): p. 47

ideas about intellectual responsibility and mass consciousness, which seek to convey a message to young intellectuals in the face of social revolution in Iran. Syariati's ideas were developed based on the political conditions in Iran, which were characterized by the authoritarianism of the Shah's regime and the emergence of orthodox Marxism, which began to influence young intellectuals.

### ***Rausyan Fikr* as The Social Prophet**

According to Ali Syariati, the term “social prophet” refers to a Persian phrase, *Rausyan Fikr*, meaning “an enlightened intellectual”. This term genealogically roots from an Arabic phrase, *Munawwar al-Fikr*.<sup>21</sup> If it is translated to English, it will be “intellectual” or “free thinker”.<sup>22</sup> It is important to understand that Syariati has a distinctive meaning for *Rausyan Fikr*. According to Farhang Rajaei, Syariati makes a clear difference between ordinary intellectuals and enlightened intellectuals (*Rausyan Fikr*).<sup>23</sup> An intellectual is defined generally as an individual who has knowledge or expertise in certain fields, yet they still do not know the essence of their education as a part of social responsibility. An enlightened individual, on the other hand, has stimulated his consciousness to be responsible to the community.<sup>24</sup>

Terminologically, *Rausyan Fikr* or enlightened intellectuals are a figure who can understand historic and cultural conditions of their society. Syariati states that this term refers to a scholar who has a noble mission to stimulate mass consciousness amongst individuals about certain social issues they encounter and this can be used as well as an ideological foundation for social movements. Syariati identifies the figure for *Rausyan Fikr* similar to a prophet whose duty is to guide (*ra'id*) communities. Although all prophets do not hold any academic degree, they still have awareness to be responsible for changing society. As a result, these figures can create numerous radical positive changes in their own communities. Syariati sees that *Rausyan Fikr* needs to do a similar task as all prophets where they have to transform their society towards a new form of expected social order.

In one of his preachings, he opines that there is a difference between ordinary intellectuals and enlightened intellectuals. Both terms have a distinctive meaning in Ali Syariati's thought. According to him, enlightened intellectuals (*Rausyan Fikr*) are academic individuals who are conscious towards their social responsibility.<sup>25</sup> From this, we can identify that not all people who hold an academic degree can be accounted for the role of enlightened intellectuals. They only have a status as an ordinary scholar, not as an enlightened intellectual. Meanwhile, a person can be acknowledged as an enlightened individual if he has historical consciousness and social responsibility towards society. In other terms, Syariati identifies these people (*Rausyan Fikr*) as social prophets. If we look

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<sup>21</sup> Nur Afifah et al., “Pemikiran / Pembaharuan Islam Iran: Ali Syariati,” *Tabyin: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 4, no. 1 (2022): p. 69 <http://e-joernal/stai-iu.ac.id/index.php/tabyin>.

<sup>22</sup> Supriyadi, *Sosialisme Islam Pemikiran Ali Syariati*: p. 14

<sup>23</sup> Dustin J. Byrd et al., *Ali Shariati and the Future of Social Theory: Religion, Revolution, and the Role of Intellectual* (Boston: Brill, 2018): p. 254

<sup>24</sup> Asrori and Miftachul Huda, “Rausyan Fikr: The Ideal Human Model In Ali Shari'ati's Perspective,” *Indonesian Journal of Religion and Religious Society* 1, no. 1 (2024): p. 64 <https://journal.zamronedu.co.id/index.php/addaqo/issue/archive>.

<sup>25</sup> Akhmad Roja and Badrus Zaman, “HUMANISTIK DAN TEOLOGI PEMBEBASAN ALI SYARIATI (TELAAH ATAS PEMIKIRAN ALI SYARIATI DAN KONTRIBUSINYA TERHADAP KAJIAN ISLAM KONTEMPORER),” *Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman* 20, no. 2 (2021): p. 91 <https://doi.org/10.24014/af.v20i2.11737>.

at history records, almost all prophets are not educated people and instead, most of them work as shepherds, sculptors, etc. Although almost of these prophets came from disadvantaged families, they can still guide their society to positive changes and even they can create a new civilization. Syariati says that the duty of prophet does not only teach community about divine messages and *tauhid* (beliefs), they should also lead their society to a good social transformation.

Syariati placed Prophet Muhammad Saw. in a unique position among other prophets. According to Syariati, the Prophet Muhammad was not only tasked with conveying the doctrine of monotheism to society and driving social change but also succeeded in a tangible way by establishing a new civilization in Arabia, a region that at the time lacked any semblance of civilization. Arab society at that time faced three major challenges: tribalism, the status of women, and an economic system leaning toward capitalism. The Arabs were known as a fragmented society, divided into numerous tribes. In other words, they were confined within the boundaries of tribal affiliations.<sup>26</sup> This was largely due to the strong sense of primordialism among the Arabs, which led them to elevate their own tribes above others. This mindset, in turn, fueled intertribal conflicts within Arab society.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to intertribal conflicts, the status of women in Arab society was deeply undervalued. Women were trapped within a patriarchal system, leaving them with no significant role in public life. They were excluded from fully contributing to social, political, and economic spheres. Furthermore, the Arab economy at the time was predominantly exploitative. Economic oligarchies began to emerge, replacing the tribal economic structure. This rise of trade-based oligarchies was driven by the greed prevalent among the Arabs of that era. According to Syariati, Prophet Muhammad Saw. was sent to initiate fundamental changes in both religious and social domains. In the realm of religious life, the Prophet called for the worship of Allah alone and the abandonment of idol worship. In social matters, he urged the Arab community to foster solidarity among themselves, combat patriarchal norms, and oppose exploitative economic practices.

Referring to Syariati, *Rausyan Fikr* is a person having appropriate knowledge for the conditions in their society, for both historic and cultural domains.<sup>28</sup> Different with other Marxis thinkers, he states that a social order basically always has a tradition that is steeped amongst individuals in the community. Some Marxis thinkers, especially in Orthodox Marxism, think that traditions and customs are superstructure orders which always evolve if the economic base of the society changes. Besides having appropriate insights, an enlightened intellectual must have leadership and organization skills to direct the masses towards social transformation. In other words, they must be a catalyst for the oppressed society. In his lecture, Syariati says that *Rausyan Fikr* is like a prophet for today's society. In the history of mankind, the figures of prophets have played a crucial role to transform stagnant social orders. This radical change is based on the occurrence of consciousness, led by a prophet, like tribal leader's roles (*ra'id*).

The emergence of awareness and a sense of responsibility in *Rausyan Fikr* (an enlightened intellectual) is caused by the direct infusion of knowledge from God, in the

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<sup>26</sup> Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam Dan Teologi Pembebasan* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2009): p. 42

<sup>27</sup> Azmi Putri Ayu Wardani and Ahmad Khudori Soleh, "The Evolution of Islamic Philosophy: Bridging Ancient Wisdom and Contemporary Thought," *Aqlania: Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi Islam* 15, no. 1 (2024): p. 60 <https://doi.org/10.55120/qolamuna.v9i02.1125>.

<sup>28</sup> Ali Syariati, *What Is to Be Done: The Enlightened Thinkers and an Islamic Renaissance* (Houston: The Institute for Research and Islamic Studies, 1986).

form of wisdom (*hikmah*). Wisdom allows humans to be aware of the social-political realities experienced by their society and to feel responsible for social change. In Syariati's view, wisdom is a type of human knowledge alongside other forms of knowledge. In human life, there are various kinds of knowledge, including scientific, social-humanities, and religious knowledge. These different types of knowledge are acquired through independent effort. For Syariati, these various disciplines serve merely as tools for *Rausyan Fikr* to understand and address the social issues of their society. Meanwhile, the emergence of a sense of responsibility in an intellectual is caused by the infusion of wisdom from Allah. Wisdom is a type of knowledge in the form of "divine light" that always gives rise to faith and responsibility in an intellectual.<sup>29</sup>

Syariati emphasizes the quality of historicity in *hikmah* or wisdom. In other words, enlightenment is directly and strongly tied to time, social environment, and certain historical conditions. This is the reason why people can be acknowledged as an enlightened intellectual in one place, but it cannot be in another place. Every place and time is based on different issues and needs. If an intellectual produce solution-oriented ideas to address certain issues, he can be called as an enlightened intellectual. However, if his ideas are not solution-oriented, he cannot be identified as an enlightened intellectual.

### **The Role of *Rausyan Fikr* in Social Transformation**

Social transformation refers to a process of changing the characteristic or social identity in certain period. In other means, social transformation contains three important domains, the difference of social occurrence as the actualization of social transformation, social characteristic or identity as an approach for observing social transformation, and social transformation itself as a radical and historic event. Social transformation or change can happen because of the alteration in elements, functioning as a base in keeping social equilibrium, for example, geographical, biological, economic, political, and cultural alterations. In sociological perspective, social transformation in its process can be classified with two types, evolution and revolution. In the context of evolution, social transformation is a change happening because of social efforts that want to adjust with new necessities, states, and conditions. Meanwhile, in terms of revolution, social transformation is a fast-paced social change, related to the foundations or core principles of societal life, namely social institutions.<sup>30</sup> Revolutionary change can occur either intentionally or unintentionally. In the context of this research, the author uses the term "social transformation" to refer to rapid social change (revolution).

The concept of *Rausyan Fikr* is the key core of Syariati's thought as he believes that enlightened intellectuals are social prophets that can make social transformation.<sup>31</sup> Syariati states that an ideal intellectual is those who has already been enlightened. The exposure of wisdom (*hikmah*), directly coming from the God (Allah) will guide them to unleash consciousness towards societal realities and responsibilities. In his lecture, Syariati opines that there are five missions which must be done by enlightened intellectuals in the socio-political and cultural setting of Iran. The missions, to be specific are establishing relation between intellectuals and society, diagnosing societal ills, constructing consciousness towards certain issues, analyzing cultural elements of society, and ideologizing the society.

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<sup>29</sup> Syariati: p.6

<sup>30</sup> Soerjono Soekanto and Budi Sulistyowati, *Sosiologi Suatu Pengantar* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2019): p.238

<sup>31</sup> Supriyadi, *Sosialisme Islam Pemikiran Ali Syariati*: p.159



Before constructing consciousness and ideologizing the society, an intellectual should at first establish relation with hegemonic society. In Syariati's view, the first compulsory action for an enlightened intellectual is to bridge between theory and practice.<sup>32</sup> With their appropriate knowledge, the intellectuals are expected to be able to encourage practices to positively change in society. Syariati tends to criticize exclusive attitudes amongst intellectuals, resulting in a substantial distance to society. In Syariati's social condition back then, society positioned intellectuals as a special social class. The placement of the position as a special social class in society causes intellectuals to increasingly distance themselves from the public. As a result, intellectuals become unaware of the real social issues faced by their society.

A good relationship with society will ease enlightened intellectuals to better diagnose the real issues faced by their community. Through this diagnosis, enlightened intellectuals are expected to identify the root causes of these problems. Like a Prophet, enlightened intellectuals are called to discover the underlying causes of the stagnation and deterioration of society and to seek solutions to these problems. These solutions should be rational, enabling society to free themselves from the influence of the *status quo*.<sup>33</sup>

After doing some comprehensive analysis through social phenomena, enlightened intellectuals can construct mass consciousness. Enlightened intellectuals are a social agent, acting as a social catalyst.<sup>34</sup> This aligns to Gramsci's view about social revolution in which it can possibly happen if the intellectuals realize their roles as social agents and involve in relations of production or social structure.<sup>35</sup> In his lecture, Syariati says that the responsibility and role of enlightened individuals today is similar to those of all prophets and sacred people in every religion, acting as a leader who encouraged structural and foundational changes in the past. In other words, enlightened individuals or *Rausyan Fikir* have a role like prophets for their adherents. Like prophets, enlightened intellectuals should always awaken consciousness towards society and lead them to positive and expected social transformation. Efforts to construct awareness are carried out by redirecting all the real problems experienced by society into the society itself. The social issues that occur must constantly be directed into the minds of every individual in society, so that they develop an awareness of these issues. This awareness will lead them to revolutionary actions.

Deep analysis through a certain societal issue must go hand in hand with deep analysis through the cultural context of society. Syariati apprehends that customs are the spirit of society and are the foundation of people's social life. We can see that Syariati's view has a similarity to Gramsci where he understands the cultural factor as the foundation of counter hegemony. Syariati defines cultures as a "general spirit" which is the basis of every aspect in social life. In the social setting, cultures determine knowledge institutions, characters, feelings, views, and traditions of certain society.<sup>36</sup> Besides embracing every aspect of life, cultures can give inspirations for societal changes. In his preaching, Syariati states that every region has their own culture. He exemplifies it with

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<sup>32</sup> Syariati, What Is to Be Done: The Enlighted Thinkers and an Islamic Renaissance: p. 3

<sup>33</sup> Syariati: p. 16-17

<sup>34</sup> Pandu Irawan Riyanto, "Agama Dan Perubahan Sosial Perspektif Ali Syariati," JAWI 4, no. 2 (2021): p. 83 <https://doi.org/10.24042/jw.v4i2.11479>.

<sup>35</sup> Roger Simon, Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction (London: Electric Book Company, 2001): p.17

<sup>36</sup> Syariati, What Is to Be Done: The Enlighted Thinkers and an Islamic Renaissance: p. 19

some prominent civilizations, including the Ancient Greek which has a philosophical custom, the Roman Empire which has an artistic and militaristic custom, the Indian with their spiritual custom and finally the Iranian with their *Syiah* Islam custom.<sup>37</sup>

Syariati sees *Syiah* Islam as a culture which has been firmly attached in Iranian people. In this context, Syariati benefits from this momentum to convey messages to intellectuals to learn more about *Syiah* Islam. Syariati regards the ideologization of *Syiah* Islam as a primary necessity for Iranian people. This is because Islam per se is a culture that has been strongly instilled in the soul of Iranian people and functionally, this culture can be used as an instrument of liberation from westernization. As it is already known, Iran in the Islamic pre-revolution era experienced westernization. During the regime of Reza Pahlevi to Muhammad Reza, western culture has inspired the way Iran was modernized back then.<sup>38</sup> The modernization program was the element of the “white revolution” ignited by the Syah governance after the collapse of Qajar’s reign.<sup>39</sup> Modernization was a policy imposed by the Reza Shah’ regime and it aimed to reform education, industries, and strengthen the military.<sup>40</sup> Both regimes massively applied the westernization through their policies and most of them were controversial as they were deviant from Islamic values, including from the prohibition of hijab to the obligation of the use of western clothes for men.

In Syariati’s perspective, social revolution possibly happens if a certain ideology becomes a primary inspiration for the masses. In other words, that ideology can be identified as a firm culture that has created the identity of Iranian people. The revolutionary quality in *Syiah* Islam must be shown to be a foundation of social actions. In other means, enlightened intellectuals should become an Islamologist. They have duties and responsibilities to reinterpret the *Syiah* Islam teachings to be more revolutionary. Based on this argument, it seems that Syariati accentuates more on the consciousness as the factor of societal changes rather than economic conditions like what Marx or his followers think.

In his lecture, Syariati firmly objects Marxist’s hypothesis saying that societal changes are the result of internal contradictions in the economic base. Syariati criticized young intellectuals in Iran back then as they exaggerated the idea of Marx’s economism. Syariati states that young Iranian intellectuals back then relied more on Marx’s view that the dialectical inevitability of societal structures driven by productive forces (the economic base) as the foundation for the emergence of social revolution. In *Communist Manifesto*, Marx says that history is a class struggle.<sup>41</sup> The class struggle is motivated by contradictions in the economic base. He opines that history is the development of productive powers from primitive society to classical slavery, feudalism, and ends in the capitalistic society. The capitalistic society is characterized as society which has a social

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<sup>37</sup> Syariati.: p. 18

<sup>38</sup> Prabaswari Prabaswari, “Pengaruh Budaya Strategis Pada Kepemimpinan Dan Revolusi Islam Iran,” *Jurnal ICMES* 5, no. 2 (2021): p. 27 <https://doi.org/10.35748/jurnalicmes.v5i2.107>.

<sup>39</sup> Fahrudin Fahrudin, “ISLAM DAN REVOLUSI: Posisi Dan Peran Ulama Dalam Revolusi Islam Iran,” *El-HAKAH (TERAKREDITASI)* 9, no. 1 (2008): p. 75 <https://doi.org/10.18860/el.v9i1.4667>.

<sup>40</sup> Wisnu Fachrudin Sumarno, “Sejarah Politik Republik Islam Iran Tahun 1905-1979,” *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 3, no. 2 (2020): p. 152 <https://doi.org/10.20414/sangkep.v3i2.1931>.

<sup>41</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Pluto Press, 2008): p. 33

structure that leads to class antagonism, so this structure is vulnerable to a collapse.<sup>42</sup> Syariati comments to this hypothesis in which Marx is too utopia when describing his ideas and this cannot be applied to the context of the Iranian society. This is because, according to Syariati, customs and cultures play more paramount factor than the economic base.

Before Syariati, the positivistic interpretation of Orthodox Marxism got quite serious responses from western Marxist intellectuals. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the movement of the working class beyond what was predicted by orthodox Marxist thinkers. The end of the capitalism crisis caused by the occurrence of consciousness amongst the labor class did not appear in the surface. Two of western Marxist thinkers who actively responded this understanding were Goerg Lukacs and Antonio Gramsci. In Lukacs' view, the understanding of Marx's thought by orthodox Marxists has undergone positivistic rigidification. In *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein (History and Class Consciousness)*, he opines that proletarian consciousness is the important factor for societal changes.<sup>43</sup> He refuses the Orthodox Marxism's view that societal changes is the inevitability of history.<sup>44</sup> In his work, he also emphasizes the urge of political parties as the guardian of class consciousness so the proletarian class is not trapped in momentary interests.<sup>45</sup>

As well as this, a sharp critique of the positivistic interpretations of orthodox Marxism also came from an Italian Neo-Marxist philosopher, Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci emphasized the crucial role of organic intellectuals as catalysts for the masses engaged in production relations. Gramsci distinguished between organic intellectuals and traditional intellectuals. Organic intellectuals are individuals actively involved in shaping ideas and raising awareness within society, while traditional intellectuals are those who remain detached from production relations or societal structures. The classification of intellectuals offered by Gramsci is very related to his theory of hegemony as well. He differentiates between domination and hegemony in the practical political power context. Hegemony is an intellectual and cultural governance focusing on public consensus.<sup>46</sup> Practical hegemony is often implemented within civil society.<sup>47</sup> Domination, on the other hand, refers to an oppressive practice by the government. In Gramsci's perspective, the practice of hegemony and domination undergone by the authority interrelate with each other.<sup>48</sup> In order to address both practices, counter hegemony is the best measurement

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<sup>42</sup> James Garvey and Jeremy Stangroom, *The Great Philosophers from Socrates to Foucault* (New York: Metro Books, 2007): p. 106

<sup>43</sup> Franz-Magnis Suseno, *Dalam Bayang-Bayang Lenin: Enam Pemikir Marxisme Dari Lenin Sampai Tan Malaka* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2003): p. 100

<sup>44</sup> Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Massachusetts: The Merlin Press, 1971): p. 46

<sup>45</sup> Suseno, *Dalam Bayang-Bayang Lenin: Enam Pemikir Marxisme Dari Lenin Sampai Tan Malaka*: p. 110

<sup>46</sup> Komang Adi Kurniawan Saputra, Aa Ketut Jayawarsa, and NiMade Intan Priliandani, "Antonio Gramsci Hegemonical Theory Critical Study: Accounting Fraud of Hindu-Bali," *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS* 27, no. 2 (2022): p. 5

<sup>47</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1992): p.245

<sup>48</sup> Christian May, Andreas Nölke, and Michael Schedelik, "Growth Models and Social Blocs: Taking Gramsci Seriously," *Competition and Change* 0, no. 0 2024: p. 7  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10245294241231992>.

involving organic intellectuals as catalysts for society.<sup>49</sup> Neo-Marxist intellectuals state that position of intellectuals and mass consciousness as key elements that enable the emergence of social revolution.

### **The Masses as The Most Determined Factor of Social Revolution**

In another lecture of Syariati, he says that the masses are another factor of the occurrence of social changes, apart from enlightened intellectuals. He refers the masses to *al-Nas* or in an Arabic term, it has a similar meaning to the word *insan* and *basyar*, meaning human beings or people. Three of those words can be found in some chapters in the Qur'an. Nonetheless, in Syariati's interpretation, all those words have distinctive and different meaning. In his lecture, he makes a clear distinction or limitation between the word *al-Nas*, *insan*, and *basyar*. With this distinction, he finally discovers that *al-Nas* has an active role as well to transform society in a better way, besides enlightened intellectuals.

In the Qur'an, the word *basyar* refers to a human being as a biological creature, similar to animals, trying to survive by eating, drinking, or having sex. In other words, we can say that this term defines humans as a static creature, only living as a biological being like other creatures on earth.<sup>50</sup> *Basyar* does still not have creativity in its existence.<sup>51</sup> The word *insan*, on the other hand, has a higher status of definition than *basyar*.<sup>52</sup> If one wants to be acknowledged as *insan*, he should be able to release himself from animal-like traits.<sup>53</sup> Syariati opines that *insan* is the stage of having existence and possessing three important dispositions, which are self-consciousness, volition, and creativity.<sup>54</sup> If a human has already had the aforementioned qualities, he has already transformed from *basyar* to *insan*.<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile, the word *al-Nas* refers to the masses who do not only have animalistic characteristics, but they also have intellectual and moral sides. Syariati finds this word in the Qur'an and interprets it originally. He states that the term *basyar* and *insan* always identifies a human as an individual, while *al-Nas* from the Qur'an refers to a group of people. This group of people, according to the Qur'an, is defined in a universal meaning, so it does not relate to a specific group in society. Because of this, in general, the word *al-Nas* can be translated to the masses. In sociological perspective, the masses are a group of individuals who do not have any significant difference in their classes or characters

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<sup>49</sup> Klara Scheurenbrand et al., "How Do Unsustainable Practices Remain Dominant? A Practice Theory Reinterpretation of Gramsci," *Sociology* 58, no. 1 (2024): p. 235 <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385231178643>.

<sup>50</sup> Rahmat Febrian, Khozin Khozin, and Zulfikar Yusuf, "Relevansi Konsep Humanisme Islam Ali Syariati Dengan Problematika Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia," *Ta'dibuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 1 (2022): p. 41 <https://doi.org/10.32832/tadibuna.v11i1.6004>.

<sup>51</sup> Rizki Mohammad Kalimi et al., "Manusia Dalam Pandangan Ali Syariati Dan Abdurrahman Wahid: Studi Filsafat Manusia," *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Ushuluddin* 2, no. 3 (2022): p. 574 <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpiu.v2i3.16876>.

<sup>52</sup> Muhammad Adres Prawira Negara and Muhlas Muhlas, "Prinsip-Prinsip Humanisme Menurut Ali Syari'ati," *Jurnal Riset Agama* 3, no. 2 (2023): p. 362 <https://doi.org/10.15575/jra.v3i2.19936>.

<sup>53</sup> Yudian Wahyudi, "Ali Shariati and Bint Al-Shati' on Free Will: A Comparison," *Islamic Studies* 9, no. 1 (1998): p. 38 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/9.1.35>.

<sup>54</sup> Wahyudi: p. 38

<sup>55</sup> Ahmad Zulkarnain, "Nilai-Nilai Moderasi Beragama Dalam Perspektif Filsafat Manusia Ali Syariati," *An-Nawa: Jurnal Studi Islam* 5, no. 2 (December 31, 2023): 210–27, <https://doi.org/10.37758/annawa.v5i2.770>.

that can potentially distance one group to another.<sup>56</sup> In Syariati's view, *al-Nas* or the masses are solely a group of individuals without any distinctive class or social form.<sup>57</sup>

In Syariati's view, Islam is a religion that recognizes the masses, or *al-Nas*, as the fundamental factor in social transformation. Progress or decline is determined by the active role of the masses. In his lectures, Syariati emphasized that it is neither great figures nor the objective laws of history that shape the development of history and society, but rather the consciousness of the masses themselves. For Syariati, Islam is a school of scientific sociology that clearly understands human consciousness as an active element in driving social change. The consciousness possessed by the masses leads them to the will to choose whether they want to move towards a better society or fall into stagnation. Therefore, through his interpretation of the term *al-Nas* found in the Quran, Syariati concludes that only society can change its own condition and quality, not external factors.

Syariati understands that Islam acknowledges the prophets or enlightened intellectuals as individuals who guide their people toward the path of truth and lead them toward change. However, the prophets are not the primary basis or main factor in social development. All social changes observed throughout history are solely determined by the consciousness and will of the masses. Syariati states that prophets, particularly the Prophet Muhammad Saw., are only tasked with speaking to the masses, delivering the message of truth to society, and showing the path of righteousness to the people.<sup>58</sup> Beyond that, it is the masses, or *al-Nas*, who determine their own destiny. The masses consist of individuals who possess free will as their primary characteristic (*insan*). With their free will, they can choose to accept or reject the truth brought by the Prophet Muhammad Saw. The progress or decline of a society, in the end, is determined by the masses themselves.

A strong belief in the role of the masses as a driving force for social transformation, coupled with the free will they possess, seemingly aligns Syariati's thought with the philosophy of Existentialism. In general, Existentialism is a philosophical movement that views humans as subjects capable of making their own choices. Existentialist thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Sartre, and Heidegger sought to highlight the unique characteristics of humans as beings who "sought to exist". Syariati was deeply familiar with the works of existentialist philosophers, a familiarity he gained during his studies in France. On several occasions, he even met with prominent existentialist thinker, Jean-Paul Sartre. However, Syariati's perspective on free will is more closely aligned with the views of Qadariyah and Mu'tazilah.

In his understanding about society, Syariati sees a similarity between Islam and sociology. Both the Quran and sociology view society as a living organism governed by inherent laws that can be scientifically proven. These laws are embedded within society and serve as structural elements that form the basis for stability within social systems, such as traditions, culture, organizational structures, legal systems, and economic frameworks. Through a deep interpretation of the Quran, Syariati believes not only do these laws provide a foundation for societal stability but they can also serve as a basis for social transformation. Therefore, it can be said that social change is fundamentally rooted in the culture of society.

Syariati sees that Islam has two important elements, which are *al-Nas* or the mass consciousness and inherent laws serving as the foundation of social structures. Inherently, society has certain laws that serve as a tool for social stabilization and transformation.

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<sup>56</sup> Ali Syariati, *On the Sociology of Islam* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1979): p. 49

<sup>57</sup> Syariati: p. 49

<sup>58</sup> Syariati: p. 47 – 48

These laws are embedded with society. Nevertheless, human beings with their consciousness and free will can intervene in those laws as well as utilize them for the social sake.<sup>59</sup> Thus, it is important to learn more about these laws as it is parallel to delve deeper into understanding about factors that can lead to social changes.

To intervene in the laws embedded within society, individuals should harness knowledge or science. Science is the instrument that helps to understand these inherent laws. In the social development context in Iran, people have a religion as a social institution strongly influencing the way people think and behave. From this, Syariati views that religion can be the instrument for the social revolution. Syariati suggests all intellectuals to learn the Iranian cultures. Hence, Syariati argues against the positivistic view, particularly in materialist thinkers. This school, including Marxism, believes that the mass consciousness is constrained by the laws of social development. The mass consciousness, according to positivism, does not have any important roles in the development of society.

## **Discussions**

### **Dialectical Relation between *Rausyan Fikr* and *al-Nas* as The Base of Social Transformation**

Social transformation is a conception that attracts debate among philosophers and social theorists.<sup>60</sup> Syariati opines that social changes are not only ignited by *Rausyan Fikr*, but they also come from *al-Nas*. In his lecture, he states that the masses or *al-Nas* has an active role in a social transformation. However, the social transformation also needs enlightened intellectuals as the mass catalyst. Enlightened intellectuals play in giving an ideological foundation and shift social problems onto the masses or *al-Nas*. The active factor of the masses is driven from their free will. With this trait, the masses can take for granted or refuse the agitation created by the intellectuals and accept or reject making changes. In other words, the concept of the mass consciousness is not the antithesis of Syariati's view about enlightened intellectuals in the social transformation domain, although he states it after the concept of *Rausyan Fikr*. Instead, it is more a refinement to the theory of *Rausyan Fikr*, so he then suggests that the two most active factors can make a social revolution and both have a dialectical relation within a social transformation.

Syariati explains the dialectical relation of the two elements of the social transformation by historically explaining how Rasulullah Saw. preached the pre-Islamic society in Arab. In this historical explanation, it is seen implicitly how Syariati acknowledges the dialectical relation between enlightened intellectuals and the mass consciousness in the social transformation process. In this description, Syariati mentions that Rasulullah Saw. is responsible for giving the message of truth or the divine message. Rasulullah Saw. plays as a giver of warnings and a messenger of good news to the masses. When he feels disturbed since no one listens to him, Allah or the God delivers him a message to not think much as his role is only to deliver the messages of truth.<sup>61</sup> The progression or regression of a people solely depends on them. The masses or *al-Nas* has

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<sup>59</sup> Syariati: p. 51

<sup>60</sup> Dalilun Nafilin and Kunzita Lazuardi, "Perubahan Sosial Dalam Islam: Studi Pemikiran Para Tokoh," *Spectrum: Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2025): p. 40

<sup>61</sup> Syariati: p. 48

free will that makes them be able to determine whether they want to accept or refuse the divine message delivered by Rasulullah Saw.

In Syariati's view, prophets are *Rausyan Fikr* or enlightened intellectuals. Syariati states that education is not the fundamental quality that makes individuals can be defined as enlightened intellectuals, yet the most important one is to have abundance of wisdom (*hikmah*) obtained by the blessing of the God. From this argument, Syariati analogizes enlightened intellectuals with the figure of prophets. Although most prophets are not educated, they have abundance of wisdom which is directly given from the God and makes them aware of the socio-historical context of their community. This is why most prophets are indigenous to their community so that it will be easier to negotiate with them and try to address some societal issues encountered by their community.<sup>62</sup> Interestingly, though they do not come from the educated class, they succeed in instilling consciousness to their community by driving their tendencies to be aware of social issues around them. Historically, we can see most prophets are successful in establishing new civilizations in their own community that were initially lack of cultures and wisdom.

As the *Rausyan Fikr*, prophets are the important factor for igniting social changes. Nevertheless, the struggle of prophets will not succeed without the willingness of the masses. The masses are a group of individuals that own free will. This quality makes them independently choose whether they accept the message of truth conveyed by the prophet or refuse it, resulting in social misery. In the context of the social transformation in Iran, enlightened intellectuals or *Rausyan Fikr* are only assigned to construct consciousness and inform the message of truth to the masses. Their role is solely to direct social problems to the consciousness of the masses and to give them an ideological foundation to deal with those issues. However, it all depends on the masses, whether they want to accept it or not.

Intellectuals are not the only party who holds a responsibility for driving the social change. Syariati sees the role of *al-Nas* or the masses in this process. Intellectuals are tasked with constructing consciousness and ideologizing the masses. *Shi'a* Islam can be a worldview for the masses. In the Islamic worldview, a Muslim always leans himself on the Qur'an, and the hadith is accompanied by the spirit of tawhid.<sup>63</sup> The masses, on the other hand, determine to choose whether they want to accept or refuse the agitation done by intellectuals. Similar to the Marxist thinkers, Syariati understands that the social transformation needs a clear objective. This clear objective is the establishment of the new social system and order. However, this is still different with Marx as the new type of social system do not consist of society ordered by a collective governance towards production tools or it is also different with the idea of Locke about the liberal society. It is more spiritual where the new society consists of individuals who embrace the same faith and goal struggled collectively or Syariati calls it as *ummah*.<sup>64</sup>

The word *ummah* is derived from the root word *amm* which means a path or an objective. According to this, the word *ummah* can be defined as the new social system where every individual is based on the same faith and pursued objective. They have the same ideology as well as goals that they want to pursue together. Besides, in terms of *ummah*, the economy is the core base of the society. This is because, according to

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<sup>62</sup> Syariati: p. 49

<sup>63</sup> Muhammad Sidik Abdul Karim, Munir, and Ayi Rahman, "Syahadah Sebagai Pandangan Hidup Perspektif Ali Syariati," *Al-Afkar, Journal For Islamic Studies* 6, no. 1 (2023): p.327

<sup>64</sup> Fariza Makmun and Faizal, "Konsepsi Masyarakat Ideal Menurut Al-Qur'an," *An-Najah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Sosial Agama* 3, no. 3 (2024): p. 145

Syariati's view, it is important to be successful in the physical world in order to obtain happiness in the spiritual life. In the context of *ummah*, justice and equality are two economic principles which are always upheld by the masses. Syariati exemplifies ideal *ummah* with the regime of Imam Ali. During the reign of Imam Ali, the salaries were distributed evenly to every social element, ranging from politicians, soldiers, to laborers. Imam Ali always embraces the idea of egalitarianism in undergoing his governance, especially in the economic domain.

Syariati views that within *ummah* (community), society is led by an ideal leader. According to Syariati, a leader in *ummah* is a theomorphic individual, someone who consistently possesses divine consciousness and has eradicated satanic dimensions within themselves. For Syariati, a leader in *ummah* is not shaped by their environment. Rather, a theomorphic individual shapes their surroundings. They remain free from external influences and create a new social order rooted in their divine awareness. Syariati likens the theomorphic individual to someone who can think like Socrates and Al-Hallaj. Such a person is capable of balancing worldly and divine aspects. All forms of philosophy and knowledge possessed by the theomorphic individual guide them toward a deep concern for humanity's fate. Syariati's perspective on an ideal society shares similarities with Al-Farabi's concept of the virtuous city (*madinah al-fadilah*). Al-Farabi envisions the ideal state as being led by a philosopher or prophet who maintains contact with the active intellect (*'aql mustafad*). In addition to governing the state, a prophet or philosopher must educate their society based on revelations received through their connection with the *active intellect*.<sup>65</sup>

## Conclusions

The concepts of *Rausyan Fikr* (enlightened intellectuals) and *al-Nas* consciousness, as formulated by Ali Shariati, stem from the socio-political and cultural realities of pre-revolutionary Iran. The presence of Marxist-Leninist ideologies and traditional clergy, who were often counter-revolutionary, provided the backdrop for the emergence of these ideas. Syariati asserted that social transformation must be actively pursued, rather than passively awaited, as was often understood by orthodox Marxist intellectuals. Moreover, for Syariati, social change required an ideological foundation. This ideology, he argued, must be a deeply rooted culture within the people of Iran. In the context of Iranian society, *Syiah* Islam served as the cultural core, a spirit that permeated every aspect of life. Therefore, enlightened intellectuals must be an Islamologist, someone well-versed in Islam, particularly *Syiah* Islam. Beyond understanding it, the enlightened intellectual is tasked with reinterpreting *Syiah* Islam, highlighting the revolutionary characteristics in its doctrines.

According to Syariati, social transformation possibly happens due to the consciousness of the masses. Intellectuals and the masses are two essential elements for facilitating social transformation within a society. With their free will, the masses can choose whether to accept or reject the agitation carried out by enlightened intellectuals. In social transformation, the role of enlightened intellectuals is to transfer social problems into the awareness of the masses and provide them with an ideological foundation as a paradigm for action. However, everything depends on the masses, whether they choose

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<sup>65</sup> Richo Bintang Mahendra, "ANALISIS KOMPARATIF PEMIKIRAN FILSAFAT POLITIK AL-FARABI DAN PLATON," *Refleksi Jurnal Filsafat Dan Pemikiran Islam* 20, no. 2 (2021): p. 127 <https://doi.org/10.14421/ref.2020.2002-01>.



to embrace the discourse offered by enlightened intellectuals or remain apathetic toward it, thereby falling into stagnation. In Syariati's view, the goal of social revolution is the creation of *ummah*, a new social order founded on shared beliefs or ideologies and a collective purpose to strive for. Economically, *ummah* upholds the principle of egalitarianism and is led by *khalifah* (leader) possessing a theomorphic character.

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