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Implementation of Sharia Based Social Justice in Islamic Republic of Iran: A Critical Study

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ABSTRACT

The paper is an attempt to find out the achievements, shortcomings, challenges and solutions devised by the Iranian revolutionaries during implementation of social justice based on the principles of Islamic Sharia, promised by them during the mass movement which toppled Shah of Iran and established Islamic Republic of Iran. The methodological approach adopted for the study was qualitative in nature. Data was collected by going through the goals set in the constitution, plans devised by the concerned government agencies, information published by the government on the outcomes, reports issued by the credible national and international agencies especially those of United Nations. The views of the critics as well as the government officials were also explored by going through their critiques and claims. Data such collected was critically analysed and cross verified to get true picture on the matter. Study transpired that Iranian government adopted multidimensional approach for the uplift of downtrodden segments of society and quite successfully enabled their upward mobility. Speedy development of infrastructure for the rural and poor urban areas have provided educational and health facilities to most of the populace which has increased literacy rate, alleviated poverty and raised their living standard quite reasonably. However a lot of work is still needed for which apparently the leadership has a realisation as well as will. The study is quite significant for those who are in search of alternate to the dominating hegemonic prevailing economic system. The Islamic movements vying for establishment of governance system based on Islamic principles in their countries have many lessons to avoid pitfalls, forecast challenges and prepare themselves intellectually and strategically.

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Keywords: *Social justice, Islamic Sharia, challenges, multidimensional approach, infrastructure, downtrodden, Islamic Movements, realisation, intellectual preparation*

1. Introduction:

Implementation of social justice in human society has been dreamt by philosophers, sociologists and thinkers throughout human history since time immemorial. Plato (428-348 B.C.) vowed for equality in society through justice; Aristotle (384-322 B.C) considered it as a real bond of men in states; Augustine (354-430 A.C.) termed kingdoms without justice as giant robberies and according to Cervantes (1547-1616) even the band of thieves cannot live together without justice.[1] Hindu mythology presented the theory of Chaturvarnya for the establishment of harmony in the society. It divided society into four classes; religious leaders (Brahmins), fighters (Kshatriyas), traders (Vaishyas), and workers (Shudras) with specific roles.[2] Social justice in Greek political thought, stood for the performance of the duties according to the nature of men as per Plato's view, whereas Aristotle classified justice into two types, i.e. *universal justice* and *particular justice.* The universal justice meant the obedience of laws. The particular justice consisted of two types, i.e. distributive justice and corrective justice. Distributive justice meant the merit based distribution and rejection of democratic as well as oligarchic criteria of justice, whereas corrective justice was to address the implementation flaws.[3] According to Cicero (Roman-Greek tradition) men were born for justice, hence the right was based upon nature rather than man's opinion.[4] Contemporarily, Social justice is considered as the fair and equitable distribution of power, resources, and obligations in any society.[5] According to the United Nations, every human being on this planet deserved equal rights and opportunities, economically as well as politically and socially.[6]

According to Quran all the messengers of Allah were deputed to establish Justice among mankind and the test for the Muslims is to help the messengers in this assignment with all the might at their disposal.[7] Muslims have been categorically ordered to administer justice without fear and favour.[8] Basic elements of social justice in Islam are: the absolute freedom of conscience; equality of all men; appointments on merit and equity based economic system. Everybody is free to hold the beliefs as per his own conscience and any compulsion in this matter is prohibited.[9] All the humans (male and female) have been created from one soul, and nations and tribes are made only to know one another. Noblest among them in the eyes of their creator is, (he who is) the best in conduct.[10] Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) declared that all the humans were equal and there was no preference based on the colour, creed or ethnicity except the righteous conduct.[11] Quran command that the responsibilities must be given as per the abilities and in a just manner.[12] Although unequal distribution of wealth is accepted in Islam as natural and part of Divine Scheme of world order, however, concentration of wealth in few hands is discouraged.[13]

Continuous failure of the contemporary hegemonic dominating capitalistic economic system in: equitable distribution of resources, stoppage of concentration of wealth in few

hands and poverty alleviation, especially in the Muslim world, in spite of abundant resources have necessitated an urgent need to look for the alternates. Today when humanity is longing for a world order based on justice and equity there are many who look forward to see the encouraging result of Iranian experience implementing Islamic system of social justice. As majority of Muslims view the implementation of such system as a solution of their problems, therefore, in-depth understanding of the challenges encountered, solutions devised by Islamic Republic of Iran during the implementation of such a system would contribute considerably in the present stock of knowledge on the issue. It will also help the Muslim Economists and religious scholars to come forward and respond to the specific challenges for the building of a model society based on Sharia based social justice which others would emulate.

The study is quite significant because the building of a society based on Sharia principles is a dream and aspiration of more than a billion inhabitants of this globe, and cherished goal of dozens of social movements in the Muslim world. Last half century has witnessed a continuous rhetoric from these movements that Islamic social justice is the only answer to all the aspirations of the humanity and a durable solution of all the fighting among the nations of contemporary world. Islamic Revolution as a result of mass movement established Islamic Republic in Iran in 1979. The republic based its constitution on the revolutionaries' version of Islamic social justice. The government run by experts of Islamic Sharia has been governing Iran from last more than 40 years. However, there is strong perception, spread by international opinion makers, that Iranian experiment is a failure and the people who claimed that "Islam is the solution" were now admitting their fallacy not verbally but through their actions, as they were reverting to the principles of secularism and capitalistic economic system to satisfy the masses in their countries.

A critical study of the Iranian experiment thus is quite useful for ascertaining the truthfulness of the "failure of Islamists thesis" as well as the angles of strength and loopholes in the implementation of Sharia based social justice in Islamic Republic of Iran. It is also a stock taking for the activists of the movements' world over striving for this cherished dream. The methodological approach adopted for the current research contain the components of Historical, Descriptive, Comparative and Analytical methodology. It is therefore qualitative in nature. Data was collected by going through the goals set in the constitution, plans devised by the concerned government agencies, information published by the government on the outcomes, reports issued by the credible national and international agencies especially those of United Nations to get a true picture on the matter. The views of the critics as well as the government officials were also explored by going through their critiques and claims. Finally, after analysing them critically the outcome was presented in the concluding remarks.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Seventh decade of 20th century was a time in world history when Modernization and Secularization was talk of the town. Culturally speaking, religion as well as its related ideologies were almost marginalized. Most of the prevalent theories of the West denied and had side-lined any role of religion in a society's public affairs. Marxists approach was completely materialistic and refused to accept any role of religion toward social interaction in the society. In that scholarly scenario, the Iranian Revolution with religious roots was a surprise to all contemporary revolution theories.[14] As an historical fact society based on the social justice has been dream of all the generation of human beings. As for as Islam is concerned according to the Holy Quran all the prophets were deputed to establish justice among the inhabitants of earth, based on the divine principles.[15]

Iranian Revolution was said to be a revolution on behalf the downtrodden (***mostazafin***)' framed in a Marxist–Islamist mind-set. Its goal was to uplift them and ensure an equitable distribution of national resources.[16] Imam Khomeini, the ideologue and the supreme leader of the Islamic revolution of Iran, was of the opinion that all the scholars of Islam rather the whole Muslim Ummah was duty bound to struggle wholeheartedly for establishment of just human society.[17] On the occasion of the formal declaration of the Islamic Republic of Iran on April 1, 1979, Khomeini announced that it was the day on which the battlement of tyrannical government crumbled and the government of the oppressed was established.[18] He repeatedly asserted that the establishment of the Islamic Republic was part of a holy war against the capitalist class on behalf of the poor. Khomeini called on state officials to prioritize the needs of the barefoot, the shanty town squatters, and the *mostazafin*, over the preferences of those who own property and who have accumulated wealth. Ayatollah Beheshti pledged that in a society organized on the basis of Islamic principles; stomachs must be full and no one sleeps hungry; the sick receive medical care and no one is left without a doctor and proper medication; everyone has shelter and a place to stay, and there are no homeless people". Ayatollah Morteza Motahhari, described "social justice" as the main priority of the Islamic state.[19] Even today this goal has been the most referred commitment by the Iranian leaders. Ali Khamenei, Supreme leader of Iran recently reiterated that the 1979 revolution was to install an Islamic government based on four core values: justice, independence, self-sufficiency, and Islamic piety. For him, Islam and justice were two sides of the same coin hence have to be the two most important ingredients of Iranian society and the government.[20]

These revolutionary aspirations were transformed into objectives and inscribed into the 175 clauses of the Republic's constitution. The constitution pledged to eliminate poverty, illiteracy, slums and unemployment. It also vowed to provide the population with free education, accessible medical care, decent housing, pensions, disability pay and unemployment insurance.[21] The constitution makes the government duty bound to direct all of its resources to achieve the goals; provision of free education for everyone; elimination of all forms of despotism and autocracy; thwart all attempts to monopolize power; ensuring political and social freedoms within the framework of the law; the

abolition of all forms of discrimination in the material and the intellectual spheres; and providing legal protection for all, as well as the equality of all before the law.[22]

Policies adopted by the Iranian government to implement these pro-poor measures asked for in the constitution and pleaded by its leadership have produced mixed results. Literature review on the topic reveals that Islamic Republic of Iran devised multidimensional policies to achieve this object. However there are many conflicting views about the deliverance of Islamic Republic on the socio-economic front during last four decades. Remarkable progress is claimed by certain circles while others depict it a miserable failure.[23]

Just after the Revolution the Islamic Republic initiated a number of policies aiming creation of an equitable society, such as an extensive poverty eradication program through bringing, health services, safe drinking water electricity, and educational facilities to millions of poor masses in the previously neglected urban and rural areas along with a generous system of subsidies for basic goods. These efforts were further augmented with the creation of a number of autonomous public foundations (*bonyads*) to facilitate public service delivery to the poor. Combined results of these measure studied by a leading economist from Harvard, led him to say that the 1979 revolution as a whole has been a very successful anti-poverty endeavour in substantially reducing Pahlavi era poverty rates.[24] Government's redistributive efforts as well as provision of employment facilities to the left-overs of the society through the para-governmental organizations, directly under the control of Supreme Leader, though objected by many for absence of transparency, contributed remarkably for the uplift of poor.[25] Vast infrastructure development, increased access to education especially for women, and health care facilities to the rural and poor urban segment of society, produced encouraging results.[26] Distinguished international political analyst, Haris, has acknowledged that in its 40 years lifespan Islamic Republic has made an impressive head way toward creation of full-fledged welfare state as promised. He founded these remarks on his two illuminating case studies on the work of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (IKRC) and Iranian Primary Health Care (PHC). Based on extensive fieldwork, these studies transpired that the IKRC targeted marginalized social groups in a very systematic way and successfully provided "financial aid and health insurance to low-income families, interest-free loans for housing, scholarships for young Iranians, and stipends for the elderly poor in rural areas". He found that the Iran's PHC system of rural clinics which provided access to prenatal health care and family planning initiatives radically shaped Iran's demography in unexpected ways, and as a result by 2010 the PHC's system of village clinics succeeded to cover as much as 95% of Iran's rural populace.[27]

Critics of the Iranian government contest official data and opine that Islamic economy could not deliver what was expected. Two prominent sociologists and political scientists having deep insight in Iranian affairs, Olivier Roy and Asef Bayat in their critique "*The Failure of Political Islam"* and "*The Coming of a Post-Islamist Society",* respectively, painted quite a bleak picture of the deliverance of Islamic Republic of Iran long back in mid 1990s. According to them the pathetic situation was the result of economic mismanagement and lack of economic security.[28] They claimed that the slogan of Islamic

economy was mere a rhetoric. Policies adopted were just an imitation of third world state socialism during 1980s and later on an economic liberalism based on speculation rather than production-oriented.[29] They termed it as an indication of failure of Islamists in building of their much admired society based on Islamic social justice in spite of getting complete hold of political power.[30] According to Asef Bayat all claims of Islamic social Justice were just a rhetoric and on the ground there was insignificant improvement in the economic conditions of the poor. [31] In a same tone, Jahangir Amuzegar, an ex-minister of Pahlavi regime claimed in 2007 that after nearly three decades of "Islamic" rule, millions of Iranians were still living below the poverty line and the gap between rich and poor actually widened because of gross economic mismanagement.[32] Another scholar challenged the government figures and claimed that based on official data from the Statistical Centre of Iran, the poverty was as high in 2012 as it was in 1984, i.e. 30 percent of the population.[33] Khomeini had promised his country social justice and the rule of the oppressed. Many were led to believe that there was a plan for this with the revolutionaries, however, according to Professor Salehi-Isfahani there wasn't. Three decades of populism, won the Islamic Republic the fealty of the rural underclass, but at the cost of rendering the educated middle class ineffective, unmoored, and nearly irrelevant to the country's economy. It is one of the failures of the government.[34] A latest booklet, *The Second Step Statement of Revolution*, published by the Cultural Centre Consulate General of The I. R. Of Iran Lahore, shows that the supreme leader of Iran had himself recently observed that in spite of many successes in different fields of Islamic Republic of Iran, he was not satisfied with the output of the social justice implementation program in Iran.[35] He stressed that doubling of efforts toward this goal was urgently needed.[36]

3. FINDINGS

The social justice framework adopted by Iranian government was multidimensional i.e. constitutional guarantees, resources distribution through public funding and empowerment of the improvised through easy access to health, education and living facilities. Few of the policy decisions and salient actions taken by the Iranian government in this regard were as under:

1. Iranian Constitution bounds the government to direct all of its resources to achieve the goals; provision of free education for everyone; elimination of all forms of despotism and autocracy; thwart all attempts to monopolize power; ensuring political and social freedoms within the framework of the law; the abolition of all forms of discrimination in the material and the intellectual spheres; and providing legal protection for all, as well as the equality of all before the law.[37] The constitution made it binding on the government to: furnish all citizens with equal and appropriate opportunities; provide them with work and satisfy their essential needs.[38]

2. Ayatollah Khomeini set up a Revolutionary Council just before the final days of the Revolution to corral the various groups of revolutionaries around the country into a coherent state-building apparatus. Just after revolution a wide range of revolutionary organizations were either created or recognized *ex post facto* and given authority in social sector also. The large amount of property and assets that belonged to the Pahlavi monarchy turned into the Foundation for the Oppressed, which was supposed to manage the assets as a trust for the benefit of those who 'made' the Revolution. A state-mandated freeze was imposed on property prices in Tehran from 1980 to 1982 and the Islamic Housing Foundation was entrusted to provide interest-free loans and develop new properties for the homeless. One volunteer aid organization centred in Iran's large bazaars during the revolution became the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, which was mandated with alleviation of poverty in urban and rural areas.[39] Jihad-e Sazandegi was officially established on May 17, 1979, with a mandate to wage "war" against rural deprivation, which in practice translated into a mission to provide basic infrastructure for all of the country's 70,000 villages.[40]
3. Soon after revolution the principles of Islamic economics were introduced along with abolishment of interest banking.[41]A new bank was established with initial deposit of 1.2 billion Riyals for interest free loans to the needy.[42]
4. Measures aimed at creating a more equitable society included an extensive anti-poverty program bringing electricity, safe drinking water, health services, and schools to millions of poor households in urban and rural areas, as well as a generous system of subsidies for basic goods.[43]
5. On conclusion of Iran-Iraq war the government prioritised social rather than military expenditures and dramatically expanded the budget of Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture, Labor, Housing, Welfare and Social Security. The military which consumed as much as 18 percent of the gross domestic product in the last years of the shah was consuming as little as 4 percent in 2009.[44]
6. In 1985, the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME) decided to implement the primary health care program. The goals of PHC were justice and access improvement in rural areas.[45]
7. Soon after the 1979 Iranian Revolution the family planning program was dismantled. However, on ending of war with Iraq in 1988 when the government began to prepare its first national development plan, the Plan and Budget Organization alerted top government leaders that the nation's dwindling resources could not both support the high cost of reconstruction and provide the social and welfare services stipulated by the new constitution. For finding the solution the religious leaders, public health experts and politicians, debated exhaustively the Islamic merits of family size in, the parliament, public seminars, newspapers, television and Friday sermons involving all of the stakeholders. As a result, a consensus was reached that limiting family size was 'pro-family' and 'pro-Islamic'. Official Family Planning Program was inaugurated in December 1989 with three major goals: to encourage families to delay the first pregnancy and to space out subsequent births; to discourage pregnancy for women younger than 18 and older than 35; and to limit family size to three children.[46]

8. Above pro-poor policies continued uninterruptedly during 1990s and early 2000s. After coming to power, Ahmadinejad turned to some more striking idealistic actions. The formation of Mehr Reza fund, distribution of equity share, implementation of Mehr housing plan, and payment of direct subsidies were few of these policies.[47]
9. **Mehr Reza Fund**: Mehr Reza Fund was established on May 16th, 2006. To meet the new requirements of the "Money and Credit Council" the board of trustees of the "Mehr Reza Fund" renamed it in March 2015 as "Omid Entrepreneurship Fund"(OEF). OEF was supposed to collect people's small assets and integrate them with government credits along-with identifying qualified young people and empowering and helping them in establishing small-scale, low-capital, and intensive-labor businesses with an emphasis on entrepreneurship activities, regional needs, and IT-based activities. It had created more than 700,000 job opportunities and, thereby, contributed a lot in the enhancement of small-scale entrepreneurship.[48]
10. **Equity Shares:** In November 2006, the council of ministers ratified regulations for the expansion of cooperative sector share on the basis of the distribution of "equity share." The disabled, female-headed families, supervised children, the heads of unemployed families, seasonal and simple workers, veterans of Iraq–Iran War with no job and income and disables were of the goals of this plan. It was decided to grant these shares with 50 percent discount within a 10-year instalment to the low strata of the society.[49]
11. **Mehr Housing Plan:** Mehr Housing Plan was adopted in May 2008. Its implementation was assigned to Islamic Revolution Housing Foundation.[50] Based on land acquisition rights for small housing units with an average area of 75 m2, the plan aimed to reduce the impact of land costs, and to fit with the limited financial capacity of low-income and middle-income households. All applicants who did not own dwellings organized themselves into housing cooperatives. These cooperatives presented specific projects to the Housing and Urban Ministry. The government offered loans of US$1000 for each housing unit. On delivery these units, the loan was repaid over a 15-year time. By February 2013, more than 388,538 Mehr Housing projects were implemented and nearly two million residential units were constructed.[51]
12. **Justice Shares:** Ahmadinejad inherited a privatization program that was launched during Rafsanjani's presidency. After winning the office he won the approval of the Supreme Leader to modify this program in order to make it more equitable. The modified law set aside 40 percent of the shares of privatized firms for distribution among low income households at highly discounted prices. These shares were termed ***"justice shares.*** In the first phase of this process, these shares were distributed to 4.6 million eligible individuals valuing about $2.3 billion.[52]

Some of the results of above multidimensional efforts are:

1. **Infrastructure Development:** By 2004, 95 % of rural households had electricity and 80 % clean water, as compared to 37.0% and 31.0% in 1984. Schooling was extended to nearly all rural areas by 2005.[53]
2. **Literacy:** By1996 the literacy rate in Iran jumped to 93 percent among the young generation (age between 6 and 24 years) compared to just 50.5 in 1976.[54] By 2009 the overall illiteracy rate among the post-revolutionary generations reduced to 15 percent from 53 percent in 1970s. Among women it fell from 65 percent to 20 percent during this period. [55] According to the data compiled by the government agencies, the literacy rate of girls by 2011 reached 94.46 and 90.88, in primary and secondary education respectively. [56]

3. **Health**: Rural health and family planning program of Iran was acknowledged as a most successful program and model for the other developing countries which brought basic family health to most rural families by 2005.[57] A 2004 field study claimed huge decline in infant mortality rate because of improvement in basic health facilities throughout Iran. Data showed that the mortality rate in 1974 for 1000 live births was 120 for rural areas and 62 for urban areas, however this disparity reduced considerably by 2000 to 30 and 28 for rural areas and urban areas respectively.[58] The first official target of the family planning program reflected in the government's first five-year development plan, was to reduce the total fertility rate to 4.0 births per woman by 2011. However by 2000, the rate was already down to half the stated goal, at 2.0 births per woman.[59]
4. **Poverty Alleviation:** Overall Iranian social welfare policy consists of two separate forms of welfare that target different strata within Iranian society. Social Security Organization (SSO) and the Civil Service Retirement Organization (CSRO) oversee the beneficiaries of the Iranian middle and working classes with subsidised goods, medical services, and energy. Around 27 million people benefit from these organisations. The second form of welfare is the 'Martyrs Welfare State'. It consists of parallel state organizations such as the Basij, the Bonyads and most importantly the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee. These institutions contribute to '6-7 million beneficiaries and dependents among the poor families.[60] In spite of failure in decreasing inequality among different sectors of society, poverty has substantially declined since the Islamic Revolution. Between 1980 and 2007 Iran's Human Development Index (HDI) rose by 1.23 per cent annually from 0.561 to 0.782 in 2009.[61]
5. **Equity in Wealth Distribution:** Data obtained from Central Bank of Iran for the 1969–2012 period shows that the Gini index of inequality had an upward trend during the 1969–1975 period; it rose from 0.44 to 0.50. From the 1976 to 1980 period, the Gini index declined to 0.4, but it rose again to 0.45 in the 1983 and returned to 0.4 in

1984. Despite slight fluctuation, the Gini Coefficient was relatively stable from the 1984 to 2012 period.[62]

6. **Improvement in Quality of Life:** A number of field investigations and observations indicate that provision of basic infrastructure has a remarkable impact on the countryside. It has speeded up the process of integration of urban areas and the countryside as never before.[63]

4. Discussion

Islamic Revolution of Iran is one of very unique happenings of the last quarter of 20th century. Its effects on the field of social sciences are innumerable because it challenged many of the well-established assumptions of the field. Long before 1970s it had been declared that secularisation, modernisations and westernisation was the future of humanity and all the nations on this earth were to follow, sooner or later, happily or reluctantly, the path of development treaded to this destination by the western developed nations i.e. urbanisation, industrialisation, secularisation, modernisation and westernisation. Secularism and liberalism was the talk of the town and religion was to be content with every body's personal and private matter having no role in public sphere. Rulers of Iran were considered the manifestation of western ideal, beloved leaders of the nation, having full control within Iran and guarantor of stability without in the Middle East. Social movement theorists were not having a remote idea of any revolutionary movement in Iran because of quite a high GDP of Iran and absence of often considered left leaned revolutionaries' strong currents. Religious leaders were considered as obstructionists and living in the past having no touch with the ground realities just boasting but incapable to pose any danger to the Shah of Iran.

Suddenly the scenario changed and within two years the most stable island of prosperity and fort of modernisation collapsed under the pressure of mass movement led by clergy exiled from his own country by Shah few years back. Although people from all ideological colour i.e. Leftists, centrists, conservatives as well as Liberals and Islamists, participated enthusiastically in the movement but the leading role was played by the religious scholars, Bazaar merchants, students of universities and institutions of religious learnings. All were unanimous to denounce autocrat Shah of Iran and vie for a system based on social justice and equitable share in the national resources for all the men and women of Iran. Leadership of the revolution was with the Men of religion.

Just after the revolution (March 1979) Iranian public approved overwhelmingly through public referendum (98.2% approval) future of country as an Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). Keep in mind that this was the nation for which the westernised rulers have spent more than 50 years on social engineering to modernise on European lines. There were differences among the revolutionaries about the future direction of the country and in some cases these differences ended up in armed skirmishes but finally religious faction prevailed. It was

decided to draw constitution of IRI based on the principles of Quran and Sunnah. After hectic debates constitution for the country was prepared and approved. The declared mission of the Constitution was to create conditions conducive to the development of man in accordance with the noble and universal values of Islam. The Constitution declared to guarantee the rejection of all forms of intellectual and social tyranny and economic monopoly. New constitution described its aim, to entrust the destinies of the people to the people themselves and to break completely with the system of oppression. It was decided that the basic aim of the Iranian economic policies will be fulfilment of the material needs of all the citizens of the state in the course of his overall growth and development.

Leaders of the revolution were well aware of the challenges ahead in the light of historical Iranian experience as well as worldwide hegemonic powers' attitude of extension of their influence in the developing countries' through economic measures, military interventions and other similar means. Few years back these power managed to rollback a popular revolution in Iran through the collaboration of their secret agencies and local agents. Therefore the revolutionaries' declared in the constitution that the Iranian state will be duty bound for complete elimination of imperialism and the prevention of foreign influence. Iranian leadership actively pursued their main goals of revolution: implementation of Islamic system of governance in the country; uplift of the poor; making country strong economically as well as militarily and warding off the influence of world hegemonic powers on Iranian internal and external policies. They were not shy of condemnation of the policies of world powers who have interfered in the past or was trying to do so now.

Islamic Movements world over had been claiming since 1970s that "Islam was the Solution". Now was the time to deliver. In near past there was no precedent of any such Islamic government who could be emulated. Iranian experiment of a "Jurist's Governance", a supreme body of "Guardian Council" to oversee the parliament and an "Assembly of Experts" to advise on legislative matters was an innovative step to facilitate legislation and governance on Islamic principles.

Within few months of revolution, for uplift of the poor as promised during the revolution, IRI initiated a crusade on the underdeveloped rural areas for the provision of basic infrastructure such as roads, schools, health centres, electric supply and drinking water. Knowing well that usually the bureaucratic attitude unduly delays the projects, they formed new parallel volunteer as well as formal organisations for the implementation of infrastructure networks as well as provision of financial and material aid to the needy. In May 1979 Iranian government announced Reconstruction Crusade (Jihad-e Sazandegi) for the creation of basic rural infrastructure in the minimum possible time. Young revolutionaries numbering tens of thousands were called to participate in this Jihad. Mandate of Jihad was to wage "war" against rural deprivation through provision of basic infrastructure for all of the country's 70,000 villages. This was very unconventional initiative but proved very useful for proper use of revolutionaries' energies in a positive and constructive manner. Another important step in this direction was the establishment of

large para-governmental organisations directly under the supervision of the office of the Supreme Leader outside of bureaucratic review. The assets of 51 of the largest Iranian industry tycoons who had illegally profited from the Shah regime were confiscated through promulgation of a law in July 1979 and the same were handed over to these organisations. They were mandated the use of these assets to facilitate social mobility of improvised individuals of the society in line with the constitutional requirement of establishment of society based on fair distribution of resources.

Iran was subjected to Iraqi invasion just one and half year of the revolution when Iranian military was in a very deplorable condition. However, in spite of this eight year (1980-88) long war IRI continued its Reconstruction-Crusade for the uplift of its poor although these efforts were hampered considerably. A system of broad consultation and unhindered parliamentary elections in spite of difficult conditions helped IRI to maintain its credibility among Iranian masses. IRI developed quite an affective mechanism of problem solving among the governing institutions.

It has been observed that in spite of insistence not to imitate the West and find the solutions of emerging problems from the repository of Islamic fundamentals, Iranian scholars have shown quite a flexibility to debate the challenging issues and patience to devise workable solutions. Two glaring examples to support above opinion are; amendment in the initial policy of land confiscation of dubious owners and its distributions among the landless poor; and the Iranian Family Planning Program which was scratched in 1979 and again after debating widely in late 1980s restarted with new guidelines said to be in line with Islamic principles.

Different competing strategies have been adopted to create a balance between implementation of social welfare programmes and to ensure sustainable economic growth during the terms of Conservatives' Reformists' Principalists' and Moderates Presidents. They all claimed that the end goal of their policies was creation of society based on social justice enshrined in the constitution. Policies adopted during 1980s were thoroughly debated and restructured after the end of Iran-Iraq war by President Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989-1997) and his team. Pragmatic approach was adopted to recoup the opportunities lost and damages inflicted during the war as well as for ending of the isolation of Iran. His diagnosis was that too much state interference hampered the country's economic growth hence opted economic liberalisation. State-dominated economy was opened to domestic and foreign private sector investment. Reformative President Muhammad Khatami (1997-2005) continued the economic liberalisation and privatization of state-owned industries as initiated by previous regime. He emphasized, the rule of law, respect for basic rights, and tolerance for diverse views and opening to the outside world. His successor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013) was champion of rights of little man and promised to bring a part of oil revenue on the poor's dining table. He distributed considerable largesse to the poor and lower middle class through different schemes. Hassan Rouhani (2013-2021)

emphasised moderation and sensible sustainable economic policies. His Rouhanicare program benefitted millions of poor and lower middle class families. Present president Ebrahim Raisi (2021-2026) who won recent elections is a reputed hardliner. He has promised to build four million housing units in next four years. Overall all the governments including Supreme Leader have remained vocal advocate of poor's uplift' however' with different strategies. Resultantly this competition among the political elites ended up in a reasonable progress on this front in spite of innumerable international pressure especially from the western powers.

Although Sharia based social justice is an ideal, worth to achieve and the results of Iranian efforts toward this goal is just a small beginning, the direction seems to be reasonably right. Even the critic of the Iranian regime admit that the top-most religious scholars who monitor the country's policies observance of Islamic principles have not adopted the extravangeous life style. They admit that they are far behind the goal line set by Islam. It is one aspect of the matter. On the other side they have stood-fast not to bow to the extra-ordinary pressures from the world policemen who use all of available methods to defeat the challengers. In spite of all the difficulties i.e. imposed wars, naked threats and severe economic sanctions Iran has achieved remarkable success in poverty alleviation, in achieving almost 100% literacy rate not only among men but women also. Compared with the era of shah this is a big increase but the story did not end here. Iran stands ahead of its oil rich neighbour Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Turkey in poverty alleviation.

5. CONCLUSION

Findings of this study transpire that the creation of a just society based on any ideology other than the dominating capitalist economic system is an uphill task. USSR tried for this but failed miserably. Ground situation of this contemporary world is that most of the countries are under the influence of western capitalist hegemony. The international financial institutions such as The World Bank Group who has been entrusted the task of working with developing countries to reduce poverty and increase shared prosperity and the International Momentary Fund (IMF) tasked to stabilize the international monetary system and act as a monitor of the world's currencies are considered by many as watch guard of capitalism. Majority of developing countries are under heavy debts of these institution hence have no choice except towing their line not only in economic but in political decisions also. The backbone of capitalist economic development model is interest, whereas, Islamic teachings don't condone dealings based on interest. Keeping in view this scenario Iranian revolutionaries' determination to build their economy on Islamic principles was a challenge for them and challenge to the international economic system also. This was in addition to the removal of their favourite Shah from the throne who was blamed by the revolutionaries as a stooge of capitalists who was sucking the blood of the downtrodden masses for the fulfilment of his master's unbridled lust of power and pleasure. They had promised the masses that the country's resources will be put equitably on the

service of Iranian people without any fear and favour strictly following the guidelines provided by Islamic Sharia.

Soon after the revolution Iranian leadership started building the country on their vision declared during the revolutionary struggle. On the political side it was the referendum for getting approval of the masses for an establishment of Islamic Republic in Iran (IRI) followed by preparation of new constitution for IRI. On the economic front interest based financial dealings were banned, a bank to issue interest free loans was established. Revolutionaries were not confident of needed speedy deliverance from the formal bureaucratic channels which were remnants' of previous regime and in a very bad position due to disruption of previous two years. Decision was made to devise a parallel implementation system they can trust. For this purpose they put the confiscated assets of Pahlavi family and of its related business tycoons' on the disposal of newly formed para-governmental organisations, who were tasked to work for uplift of poor masses. Thousands of young revolutionaries were organised under the banner of "Jehad for Construction" and were sent to rural Iran for the development of basic infrastructure for quick uplift of rural areas. Both of the above steps along with other supportive arrangements equipped the villagers to further their education, bringing up healthy generation and quick links with the markets for their agricultural goods using newly constructed roads. These efforts have been augmented by different regimes one after the other but in their own style. Financial grants, subsidized housing, equity and just shares, helping poor through different foundations such as IKRC and public social department have brought quite a significant progress toward enabling masses for self-development materially and morally. However it is the fact that revolutionaries were having the abstract ideal of establishment of Islamic social justice but were not having any solid plan and perhaps nor the realisation of the difficulties and obstructions on the way. However it seems that there was a will which enabled them to move toward the goal slow and steadily.

Most outstanding achievements of IRI were preserving of independence in its internal and external policies; development of resistance economy to counter and minimise the effects of international sanctions; healthy competition among successive ruling elite toward creation of sustainable social justice and realisation along with public admission of highest authorities that yet they have to do a lot to achieve an ideal society based on Islamic social justice. Elimination of illiteracy, alleviation of poverty, affordable health facilities and an elaborative welfare system are the foundations on which further progress toward the goal can be achieved. Most wanting to achieve this goal is building of consensus among the top echelon on the policies; transparency in the governance; inclusive institution building; observance of meritocracy; freedom of thought and space for all sectors of society to play their role within constitutional limits.

As for as lessons for other Islamic movements are concerned, Iranian revolution has set a good example for building on own value system. Others can learn from their shortcomings

and achievements. A lot of intellectual and political work is needed for this. Ideal social justice based on Sharia is a worthy goal. It requires elaborative efforts collectively by all the society members. However, if there is a will and continuous efforts by qualified leadership supported by masses at large it can establish an exemplary society. If it happens it will be a blessing and disguise for whole of humanity and an environment of competition among different worldviews for maximum collective welfare of their populace.

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