

Religion and National Identity in Martyr Mutahhari's View; an Analytical Review

Qodratullah Qorbani¹

Abstract: Martyr Ayatollah Morteza Mutahhari is one of the Contemporary Iranian thinkers and intellectuals who tried to give a new definition of national identity. He believes that although there are some cultural, historical, racial, social and other factors that share in human's identity, but the most significant factor is very religion and religious worldview that picture our tendencies to other aspects of life. In this case, Mutahhari thinks that for contemporary Muslim nations, like Iranians, the first factor of identity is the religion of Islam and the second is their geographical, national, cultural and racial factors. So, for Mutahhari, nationality is as the secondary but complementary factor for defining human identity. Regarding the role of Islam, Mutahhari's pays more attention to the Quranic teachings, and the way of acceptance of Islam by Iranians. He believes that according to the Quran, holding theistic belief and religious faith is as the authentic criterion of our identity not belonging to a geographical nation. Concerning Iranian national identity, he refers to pre-Islamic Iran and the time of entering Islam to Iran, and studies Iranians national identity directly towards their submission to Islam, specially Shi'a school. So, his point of view concerning the relation of Islam and Iran, and historical importance of Islam in shaping Iranian identity has its special place and significance. In this, it is tried to analyze Mutahhari's view concerning human identity and the role of religion in this case.

Keywords: Mutahhari; Religion; Identity; Nationality; Islam

1. Introduction

It seems contemporary history of Iran is the history of challenging to Iranian national identity, since in the end of the age of Qajar dynasty, Iranians' national identity was encountered to some important challenges and crises under the influences of western modern thoughts and growing of Nationalism (Sha'bani, 2006, pp. 242-243). Hence, one of the most significant issues of Iranian society and history was/is that how to preserve Iranian national identity in facing to the effects of other civilizations and cultures. In this regard, we can refer to some Iranian religious scholars, such as

¹ Associate Professor, PhD of Philosophy, Kharazmi University, Iran, Address: Tehran, Iran, Corresponding author: qorbani48@gmail.com.

Ayatollah Morteza Mutahhari who tried to focus on Iranian national identity by using a new approach. First I would like to give some information about him.

Ayatollah Morteza Mutahhari (1919-1979) is one of Iranian religious scholars, intellectuals, theologians and philosophers that has paid more effective role in religious and intellectual life of contemporary Iran. He has studied in Qom seminary and worked as professor of Islamic philosophy and wisdom at University of Tehran. He wrote about 50 books regarding Islam, Islamic worldview, Islamic philosophy and theology, mysticism, social sciences and related issues. He was one of the theorizers of Islamic revolution of Iran, and before Islamic revolution, has played an affective role in replying to political, philosophical, religious, historical, social and cultural problems that contemporary intellectuals of Iran have projected.

Mutahhari, as one of the intellectuals of contemporary Iran, was concerned with the question of relation between religion, nationality and national identity, and tried to review their plural aspects. Mutahhari, like some of other Iranian thinkers, had believed that the crisis regarding Iranian national identity was linked to three factors including Islam, Iran and the West (Mutahhari, 1993, A, pp. 18-22). Therefore, he has tried to recognize reciprocal effects of mentioned factors. In this case, Mutahhari's famous book, *Reciprocal Services of Iran and Islam* (Khadamate Motaqabele Islam va Iran), shows his fundamental concerning about national identity of Iranians during past centuries and contemporary age.

This paper first by paying attention to some aspects of national identity, in general, aims to study some virtues of Iranian national identity after Islam up to contemporary century by focusing on Mutahhari's thought. Hence, it tries to answer questions as follow:

1. What were the intellectual circumstances of Mutahhari's age concerning the category of Iranian national identity?
2. What virtues, for Mutahhari, does national identity have from individual and collective aspects?
3. What is Mutahhari's conception of Ideal national identity?

2. Identity and its Virtues

Identity literally means reality and nature of a thing, or it is the answer concerning questions about the essence of being. It philosophically means actualization of a

thing in external world (See: Melasevic, 2006, pp. 17-19; Karaji, 1996, pp. 265-266). From social aspect, identity is consisted of some social, cultural, psychological, biological and historical fundamental and common characteristics which indicate most virtues of a social group or people, and distinguish them from other facts or phenomena (See; Melasevic, 2006, pp. 21-22; Altaei, 1999, pp. 139). In order to better defining identity, it should pay attention to the meaning and role of the *Other* or *Otherness*. Since it is impossible to define identity unless the meaning and realms of the *Other* is clarified. In the other word, when identity of human is clarified and shaped that he/she is encountered with the *Other*, and this *Other* is consisted of other society, different intellectual approaches, and some new roles that make his/her identity. Therefore, it can be said that identity is not as a stable and unchangeable phenomenon but as a flux one that has plural aspects and is the result of constant historical process that is continually changing under influences of social situations. So, it is considered that there are factors like being flux, actualization, distinguishing and so on that share in the meaning of identity.

By considering some definitions of identity, if it can't be possible to determine the identity of a being, it means we are in a kind of identity crisis, and when recognizing the *Other* is impossible due to its unclear factors, we are encountered to the crisis of identity that can't be easily resolved.

There are three important theories concerning identity including Essentialism, Structuralism and Discourse theories. In essentialism, identities like essences and substances are unchangeable and stable. In this point of view, every identity has two aspects including internal and external, that the former is stable and fixed, and the latter is in flux and becoming. Adherents of structuralism believe that identity is a social fact which has social origin and based on human's circumstances. Discourse theories argue that identity is the result of discourses. They say social categories, also, are made and changed based on discourses. Therefore, social facts are born and formed through discourses, and since they are in flux, identities are in changing, flux and becoming. So, it can be said that every human is able to have more than one identity (Tajik, 2000, pp. 17-18).

3. National Identity

National identity is of some political, social, cultural and historical concerns of contemporary thinkers, especially after the growth of political systems in the 20th century, and has found its international conceptual form. National identity has

several meanings. It can be said that national identity is a kind of obligatory and dependency of our feelings to a national society or country. In this approach, most people of a community think that they have a common origin (Melasevic, 2006, p. 21-24; Yousefi, 2000, p. 26-27). In other definition, national identity includes of collections of material, environmental, cultural and psychological signs and virtues that cause to differentiate societies from each other. Hence, national identity is as the most significant factor for making relation between proper local identities and public meta-national ones (Hajiani, 2000, p. 197). So, it can be said that national identity includes of some positive approaches and tendencies towards some elements and factors that unify and integrate all common virtues of a political society like country (Hajiani, 2000, p. 197).

3.1. Some Aspects and Elements of National Identity

As it was said national identity has some constitutive elements including national, religious, social and humanly values. National values cover all cultural commonalities like land, language, national symbols, traditions and literature. Religious values consist of all religious commonalities and culture. Social values are related to social laws, rules and norms, and humanly values take into account to all humanly principles and laws without any social or geographical restrictions (Zahiri, 2002, p. 201).

National identity, in addition to its constitutive elements, has some social, political, historical, geographical, religious, cultural, linguistic and literary aspects. Every of these aspects have its proper role in the growth of national identity. Social aspects indicate a person's dependency and obligation to a social particular community that makes his/her realm of social identity. Historical aspects include of people's common awareness of their history and obligation to it so that links the people of a society and generation to each other (Zahiri, 2002, p. 201). National identity of a nation, while, is as the result of geographical circumstances of that nation, since geographical environment is considered as physical, objective, concrete and observable manifestations of national identity. Hence, when national identity, from political aspect, is shaped that those who live in a same physical land, and have common laws and norms, consider themselves as the members of an integrated political system and land (Mi'mar, 1998, p. 34). Albeit of unavoidable effects of mentioned factors, it seems religion is as the most important element and aspect for reshaping national identity. Hence, there are many close relations between religious

and national identity. Religious identity includes of believing in religion and its fundamental values, common and collective obligation to religious values, laws, norms, teachings and constitutions, and practical tendency to religious deeds and judgments (Roupsingeh, 2000, p. 125). Cultural aspect of national identity is as the most significant parts of a society that cause to cultural coherency. Since culture and cultural heritage of a nation is as its lively and creative totality which self-consciously or self-unconsciously effects that nation. Some criterions of cultural aspect include of public traditions and ceremonies, traditional values and norms, the styles of clothing, architectures and national or local arts (Varjavand, 1999, p. 77-76).

Therefore, paying attention to mentioned definitions, it is possible to enumerate some constitutional elements and aspects of national identity. Making coherency and national unity, national awareness and determining elements of political culture are some of them. Utilizing of symbolic potentialities like language, religion, history, common interests can be lead to national coherency. By considering effective role of national identity in culture, community, economics and so on, it, in addition to making coherency and legitimacy to political and social systems, is able to play a big role for preserving political life of a nation, and also, to determine the way of collective life and future aims of a nation.

3.2. Iranian National Identity

In the Middle East, Iran was/is as liking bridge among several cultures and civilizations like India, China, Egypt, Babylonian, Greece and Rome. Hence, Iran has been witnessed to military, political and religious developments that had/have played more effective roles in Iranian national identity and its changing. Extension of Islam in Iran and encountering of Iranian civilization to the modern western cultures had/have more effected Iranian national identity (See Yaghoubian, 2014, pp. 47-55; Sha'bani, 2006, pp. 154-156).

Iranian national identity, like other identities, has its essential elements. Some factors such as Persian language, the religion of Islam, historical geography, history, national culture and race can be enumerated, although some thinkers take into account Persian language as the fundamental base, since Farsi language, albeit its adoption and composition of other expressions was/is able to preserve its historical authenticity. Other thinkers pay attention to Iranians common history, and believe that it is as the fundamental base of Iranian national identity. There is another theory according to it common mentality, rationality and historical conscience is the most

significant element of Iranian national identity. Hence, in short, there were/are four viewpoints about contemporary Iranian national identity, as follow:

1. Tendency to Iranian nationalism opposite to Islamism and Arabism, and trying to purifying Persian language from Arabic terms for westernizing it (Bazegar, 2000, p. 139).
2. Supporting of Marxists teachings through Left groups and the Party of Toudeh. In this approach national identity and culture is depended on fundamental element of economics.¹
3. Supporting of common cultural viewpoint in which is emphasized on essential dependency between Islamism and Iranian culture. This point of view is adhered by some of religious Iranian intellectuals, like Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of Islamic Revolution.
4. Tendency to modernism that believes in complete imitation of western paradigms, and defines national identity through the process of westernizing (Tajik, 2000, p. 35).

By considering some Iranian national identity elements, it is possible to divide Iran's history into as follow stages:

1. The Ancient age;
2. From Islam to Safavid period;
3. From Safavid to Gajar dynasty;
4. From Gajar to Pahlavi Dynasty;
5. From Islamic Revolution up to now.

As it was mentioned, the reason for this division is that the definition and criterion of national identity was changed during these periods. In the first age, mythological elements of ancient religion of Zoroaster, Iranian geography and political system; and in the second period, Islamism were emphasized. In the Safavid period, by establishing national government, national identity was defined through Iranian and Shi'ei elements. By introducing western thoughts and occurring democratic and political movements, during Gajar period, Iranian identity was threatened through some fundamental crises. Pahlavi's age is the age of returning to Iranism opposite to Islamism. Islamic revolution up to now is the age of returning to religion and religious identity (See Mutahhari, 1993, pp. 22-23; Ranjbar, 2003, pp. 636-670).

¹ According to Marxist point of view, the word Toudeh is applied to workers and farmers.

Among mentioned periods, Gajar and Pahlavi's ages have a particular significant. The age of first Pahlavi that was as the result of political failures Democratic proponents and extension of modernism was connected to international nationalism in the third world. Therefore, Reza Khan Pahlavi and his political elites, by noticing to the place of religion in Iranian community, tried to redefine Iranian identity based on Iranian ancient teachings. This age witnessed to revive of national traditions and Iranian ancient culture through which some organizations like The Association of National Heritage, The Thousandth Anniversary of Ferdowsi, Establishing the Canon of Ancient Iran and Iran Academy were found which were not compatible to Iranian society virtues (Ranjbar, 2002, pp. 630-635).

The second period of Pahlavi was encountered to the most important contemporary problem which is Modernism. In fact, the new project of modernism, that is called White Revolution, was started in 1962. In this period, Iranian identity by its redefining and without paying attention to religious elements, was continued and stressed on ancient traditions as the essential elements of Iranian national identity.

Albeit of effective acts during second Pahlavi for getting a new definition of Iranian national identity, however, due to the crisis of contrary of Iranian tradition and modernism, Iranian national identity was subjected to many challenges. Then there were some thinkers who tried to resolve the problem of national identity by referring to religious tradition and emphasizing on its compatibility to other rational elements.

3.3. Mutahhari and the Problem of Iranian National Identity

Ayatollah Morteza Mutahhari was one of the most significant theorizers of Islamic revolution who was involved to the problem of Iranian national identity. He due to living and educating in Qom seminary and some academic centers and universities in Tehran, and contacting to some Muslim clergies, and learning Islamic sciences such as jurisprudence, The Quran interpretation, Islamic history, mysticism, ethics and narrations, and teaching Islamic philosophy in Tehran University, and participating in some intellectual associations, and studying the history of Islamic contemporary movements, and awareness of Iranian and Islamic history and civilization, and recognition most of contemporary movements like Marxism, secular intellectualism, religious dogmatism and Iranism, was one of the most effective Iranian contemporary thinkers that one of his essential concerns was the problem of Iranian national identity, and had tried to remove this problem.

Mutahhari, although was not expert in the issues of national identity, but his concerns of religiosity and trying to religious pathology in its most aspects, like religious knowledge or society, led him to pay attention to the problem of Iranian national identity and to give his points of view and solutions concerning matters like nation, nationality, individual and collective identity, Iranian identity, language and geography.

So, it should, in short, be said that, although Mutahhari was not the expert in national identity categories, but due to his especial attention to the relations between Iran, Islam and the West, and the necessity of answering to new fundamental questions, presented some new and significant point of views regarding Iranian national identity.

In fact, it was Mutahhari who had effective role in political and religious atmosphere of Iran's society, from 1940- to 1979, the time of Islamic revolution, in which there naturally were some questions regarding Iranian national identity, language, race and nationalism. There were three main approaches that were as the significant tendencies concerning national identity which include of Iranism, Islamism and the western modernism. The first had emphasized on returning to ancient Iran's values and virtues, the second to Islamic teachings, and the third to using the western culture and civilization.

Mutahhari, due to his knowledge of Iranian, Islamic and the western history and civilization, recognizes the origins of such theories and approaches. Hence he tries to criticize them in order to introduce his rational paradigm of individual and collective national identity of Iranians.

3.5. Critiques to Some Contemporary Viewpoints

Mutahhari in his famous book, *Reciprocal Services of Islam and Iran*, had discussed on many aspects of Iranian national identity. Here, he has criticized viewpoints of Dr. Abdol Hossein Zarrinkoub published in his famous book, *Two Century Silence* (Doo Qarn Sukout). Mutahhari, contrary to Dr. Zarrinkoub, believes that Iranians people had not remained silent in two first century of Islam, but their reaction towards Islam were extraordinary nobly and by thanksgiving, and he considers accepting Islam by Iranians as compatibility of Islamic spirit and Iranian's characteristics. In Mutahhari's word, Islam was as delicious food that was eaten by a hungry person or as wholesomeness water that was drunk by a thirsty one. Iranian

nature by its spatial, temporal and social conditions had attracted this delicious food and strengthened itself and was able to serve to other nations (Mutahhari, 1993, A, p. 66).

Mutahhari pays attention to viewpoints of those Orientalists, such as Sir John Malcolm (1769-1833), who maintains that Iran during two first centuries of early Islam was a part of Islamic Caliphate and had no independent state. This time was called the time of Iranian silence, weakness and maybe slavery. Mutahhari have criticized this point of view and said that it is right, if we ignore Iranian cultural and scientific developments, and pay attention to only the governing classes, like Abu Muslim Khorasani (718-755) and Hajjaj Ibn Yousef (661-714), but it is false, if we see other classes of Iranian people who had succeeded in many aspects of Islamic civilization and had shown Iranian role and honor among other Muslim nations (Hajjaj Ibn Yousef, pp. 671-672).

Mutahhari, in other place, has noticed the question of Zarrinkoub, who thinks that, the language of pre-Islam Iranian was the language of people who adequately participated of wisdom, science and culture, while this nation were speaking in 100 languages, when were encountered to Muslim Arabs, what did they heard that had kept them silence? (Ibn Yousef, p. 673) Zarrinkoub, himself answers some thinkers believe that Iranian Pahlavi language was kept silence before simplicity and new message that Islam introduced. This message was the Quran that Arab poets were led to silence due to its miraculous literature and deep meaning. In fact, those people of Iran who were interested in Islam as a new religion, thinks that they get a new life and ignore their past culture and language (Zarrinkoub, 1999, pp. 107-108).

Mutahhari, in order to reject Zarrinkoub's viewpoints, argues that there is no document indicates that Muslim caliphates have forced Iranians to leave their original language, but literal and spiritual aesthetics of the Quran and its global teachings have caused all Muslims to consider this heavenly gift for themselves and have been attracted by its language and maybe ignore the importance of their language (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 674). Therefore, Mutahhari, indicating viewpoints of Edwards Brown (1780-1848), thinks that there were some Muslim and Iranian people, like Salman Farsi, who were considered as the household of the Prophet Muhammad, and says some signs of these two first centuries are that there were some Iranian characteristics who as well as completing their scientific and cultural potentialities, had/have reached to a such sacred positions that all Muslim people have respected them (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 676), that some of these persons are as follow: Nafea, A'sem, Ibn Kasir, Muhammad Ibn Ismaeil Bokhari, Muslim Ibn

Hajjaj Nishabouri, Tavous Ibn Keysa, Abu Hanifeh, Leys Ibn Sa'd, Seybouyeh, Abu Hanifeh Dinavari and so on.

3.6. Mutahhari and Ideal Identity

Mutahhari, after criticizing some points of view concerning collective and national identity of Iranians, tries to give his understanding of ideal identity in its individual, collective and national aspects. Fulfilling this, we should first begin with the meaning of individual identity.

Individual identity, for Mutahhari, has meaning in the framework of religion and religious thought, that is, he considers human's real identity only within his/her religious evolutionary traveling towards the transcendent aims. Mutahhari due to speaking of the subject of Perfect Human, in most of his works, is going to picture most virtues of Perfect Human from Islamic perspective. Then he pays attention to the virtues of Perfect Human from other schools' approaches in order to study all aspects of Perfect human in many tendencies. Meantime, Mutahhari thinks that worldview and ideology are necessary requirements of human's religious identity (Mutahhari, 1988, pp. 114-119). He by noticing human's most aspects, believes that human, albeit having many common virtues with other animals, have a big distance from them, sine he/she is an existent composited of material and spiritual dimensions, that has some authentic and deep differences from them which they are as his/her essential dimensions, and are placed him/her in the special position in the whole system of being. Mutahhari considers these differences in three criteria:

1. Human perception and intuition of him/herself and the world;
2. His/her special attractions;
3. And the way and quality of attractions and their effects on human (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 16).

Such a human, in Mutahhari's point of view, has some transcendent virtues like moral goodness, beauty and loving aesthetics, sacredness and worshipping. He argues that human is able to form and change his/her future, namely, he/she has more effective, creative and extensive role for picturing his/her future destiny, while his/her role is freely and consciously, and he/she recognizes herself/himself and environment and also through his/her attention to the future can form his/her future freely by using reason and freewill (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 32).

Although Mutahhari accepts that some factors like natural and geographical, environment, inheritance, social and historical circumstances are as restrictor of human identity boundaries, but believes that this is human who can resist again these factors and can free himself/herself from their boundaries. Therefore, for Mutahhari, as far as due to social life human is under the effects of some social factors, but due to his/her intellect and freewill is able to preserve his/her authenticity and identity (Mutahhari, 1993, pp. 36-39).

In Mutahhari's point of view, there are some consciousnesses that cause to human development and evolution to happiness. Consciousness like theoretical, global, philosophical, classical, national, humanly, mystical and prophetic self-consciousness can shape human identity. Mutahhari, in this case, say: There are some commands like invitation to self-consciousness, to recognizing God and do not ignore Him that is considered in the top of religious teachings (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 55).

So, for Mutahhari, human's individual identity as a social existent and different from other beings, consists of his/her abilities, consciousness and perfections, that is, through noticing his/her intellect, freewill and struggling for reaching God, we can define human ideal identity in which religion and religious faith have the essential place.

Mutahhari seeks for collective identity in the framework of community and nation. Among theories concerning authenticity of individuals or community, he chose that theory in which emphasizes both on individuals and community, and according to it due to effect and reaction of its members is born a new social fact (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 29), and is also born a new social or collective spirit, consciousness, freewill and tendency that can conquer over individuals' spirit, consciousness and freewill (Ibid, p. 29). Mutahhari by indicating this verse of the Quran: *As such we have made the actions of each nation seem pleasing*, (Quran, 6/108), believes that this verse shows that a nation can find a united consciousness, criteria, and thought, and they are for themselves, since the Quran takes into account common destiny, and aims and consciousness or actions and obedience or disobedience for nations. In the other word, the Quran pays more attention to social and collective life, so far as according to the Quran not only individuals have their own fate and destiny but also communities are considered as live and conscious existents that have their own destiny (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 31). Hence, common understanding is one of the most important virtues of collective identity and seeking it for communities.

3.7. Mutahhari's Understanding of National Identity

Mutahhari thinks that there are some factors like nation, race, geography, language, traditions and cultures that play roles in shaping national identity. Hence, he tries to study the importance of their role.

3.7.1. Nationality and Common Understanding

Mutahhari believes that nationality is one of the essential and constitutive elements of national identity. He thinks that appearance of nationality is contemporary to the origination of nationalism, and says: "Origination the nationalism of nations is completely contemporaneous to the time that they have understood a kind of common pain or public lack, and in Iran, it was connected to the movement of Tanbaccoo sanction, hence it can be said when the feeling of nationality or collective consciousness is born among a nation that a common pain and willing is made" (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 33).

The nature of this common pain, in Mutahhari's viewpoint, is complaining against oppression, transgression and colonization, and seeking for justice and freedom, that is, the common cause of national pains and desires which led to appearance of nationality is very the feeling of oppression and seeking for justice (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 33). Because of this, there are some social movements that are originated from such common pains and desires and they seek for justice, rightness, freedom, government and other things that these requests are rooted in their religion and worldview.

So, for Mutahhari, common pain and desire is as the main constitutive cause of nationality, and that it can be as the factor for social integrity, coherency and identity. He adds that the nation who have been revived it can makes sense its language, traditions, race, culture and geographical circumstances (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 36). Therefore, Mutahhari says: "Nationality also is a contemporary problem for us as Iranians, although our nationality and land have not been attacked, but there are some contradictory and opposite tendencies concerning Iranian nationality" (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 18).

This contradiction, as Mutahhari maintains, is about Iranian nationality of pre-Islam and Islamic age of Iran, and the main question is that: Are Iranians as an ancient or Islam nation? Which nations, towards us, are compatriot or which are foreign?

Mutahhari, through projecting such questions and debates about the history of nationalism, tries to get his own definition of it, and says: "Nationalism or national

feeling consists of common feelings or consciousness and collective awareness among people who build a political unite or nation” (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 22). In fact, Mutahhari believes in national feeling and nationalism as collective consciousness that present among members of a community and cause their relations to their interests and history.

3.7.2. Language, Race, Traditions and Geography

Mutahhari thinks in addition to common understanding, there are some factors that are considered as constitutive elements of nationality and national identity that include of race, language, traditions and geography. He says if we refer to the historical past of nations, it can be cleared that language is not as constitutive element, but is as the result of nationality. In fact, for Mutahhari, although language has some roles in growing nationality, but their primary language is different from their completed language. So, it can be said the language of nations is changed and developed during their historical growth.

Mutahhari, by indicating historical and sociological researches, argues that all nations can get ideal conditions of life, if requirement of social circumstances are provided. In this case, he considers Islamic and Pre- Islam Arab who had developed or fallen based on social circumstances. Therefore, Mutahhari says: “Racial virtues are not stable and unchangeable but we can change their role under religious, moral and social situations” (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 23). So, racial factors can be as a factor for development or falling of a nation. Although, Mutahhari thinks that racial factors are the factor of social conflicts, separation and weakness rather than are used as the factor of social coherency and collective consciousness (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 23).

Mutahhari’s point of view, concerning traditions, is like his thought about language and race. Hence, for him, traditions are as the result of consciousness and freely acts of past nations, and are transferred only through collective consciousness and nationality from a generation to next one, and can be preserved. In fact, nationality and collective awareness is the precondition for transferring cultural traditions. So, national traditions are both as production of nationality and can be continued by it not as its base and foundation (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 24).

Mutahhari thinks that the effect of environmental and natural circumstances in nationality have been changed, so that, in the first stage of growth of human society the dependency of people on each other was because of natural and environmental factors or natural instincts. These factors in the primary societies were as essential factors in collective consciousness, but in developed communities, where are other

elements effect on social and epistemic relations among people, and are decreased the role of environmental and natural factors.

Therefore, Mutahhari through studying the role of constitutive elements of national identity, namely, language, race, traditions, culture and environmental circumstances, concludes that none of them can have fundamental and fixed role in forming national identity, and then they have no authenticity. It is only possible to say that they have temporal role in appearance of national awareness that its samples can be found in classical and religious movements. The conception of political independent, even today's, is not based on geographical boundaries, but is based on global and regional policies or national benefits in which some factors like language, race and traditions have no more roles (Mutahhari, 1993, pp. 26-27). So, in Mutahhari's word: "although factors such as language, race, traditions, historical and cultural backgrounds have some roles in appearance of a nation but have no essential and permanent role. Hence their roles have not authenticity and are secondary" (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 31). Based on this fact, Mutahhari concludes that these factors are not as main constitutive elements of national identity, since they have no fundamental and stable role but are as secondary factors for strengthening national identity.

3.8. Religion as the Most Significant Factor of National Identity

Considering Mutahhari's viewpoints and teachings of the Quran concerning constitutive elements of nationality, it can be concluded that for him in order to find the main base of national identity, we should pay attention to religion as the more authentic and important element. Mutahhari, for explaining this element, uses two approaches: first, he tries to explain viewpoint of Islam, based on the Quranic foundations, about nation and nationality, and second, concentrates on Iranians historical intentionality to Islam and the role of Islam in recognizing their identity. Fulfilling this, for reviewing Iranian national identity, he refers to pre-Islamic Iran and the time of entering Islam to Iran, and studies Iranians national identity directly towards their submission to Islam. Hence, here, his point of view concerning the relation of Islam and Iran, and historical importance of Islam in shaping Iranian identity has its special place.

3.8.1. The Relation between Iran and Islam

Mutahhari by considering the importance of Islamic revival movement, tries to define the word Nation in the Quran, and says: “the Nation, *Mellat*, in the Quran means the way and method that is introduced by a divine leader to people, in the Quran the word *Mellat* is meant the way and method of the Prophet Abraham. He believes the reason that a divine way was called as *Mellat* or Nation is that it has commanded and introduced by God” (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 36). Therefore, in the Quranic approach, the collection of thoughts and teachings and methods that people should do according to them are called Nation. So Nation or *Mellat* is the same as religion by this difference that one phenomenon is religion from one approach, and is Nation from another one. And in second approach, since it is commanded to the Prophet by God and the Prophet recites to people and they should obeyed it, which is called Nation (Ibid, p. 56). Mutahhari believes that in religious approach, the word Nation is synonym to the world School, since it means a collection of ways and methods.

This definition of Nation, for Mutahhari, is different from some of its scientific definitions in which some factors like language, history, traditions, race and geography have roles, since the base of Nation in the Quran is dealing based on a set of common beliefs and teachings for reaching to transcendent aims, and that, it is a background for taking people’s salvation.

Mutahhari pays attention to some verses of the Quran, in which God says: *And hold fast to the bond of Allah, together, and do not scatter. Remember the favor of Allah bestowed upon you when you were enemies, and how he united your hearts, so that by his favor you became brothers, and how he saved you from the pit of fire when you were on the brink of it, and so Allah makes plain to you his verses, in order that you will be guided* (Quran, 3/103). And the verse: *O’ people, we have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you might know one another. The noblest of you before Allah is the most righteous of you. Allah is the knower, the aware* (Quran, 49/13). By considering the context of such verses of the Quran, Mutahhari argues that according to Islam and the Quran some factors like language, history, geography, traditions and culture are not constitutive elements of Nations and national identity and have not essential roles in developing and falling of nations, but the essential base of Nation and nationality and common consciousness is very religious faith to God and controlling one’s desires (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 40). So, the foundation of human salvation is based on his/her believing in rightness and oppressed, from one hand, and on weakness and nullity of oppressive states from other hand. Islam says to its followers that these racial, linguistic,

geographical and so on differences among nations are not authentic and substantial. Totally and finally those people are noble and respected that proceed in the way of evolution of humanity (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 39).

Mutahhari by noticing Islamic criteria concerning nation and nationality, criticizes contemporary nationalism and considers it opposite to Islamic teachings, and as the big obstacle of scientific development of Muslim communities and the factor of conflict and separation among Islamic nations, although he does not ignore some positive results of national feelings and nationality of nations who are seeking for political independence of Muslim nations. Mutahhari believes, however, that appearance and propagation of nationalism was as the method by the western colonization for separating Muslim nations and preventing their political integrity and unity. He explains that as far as we follow a united religion, worldview and ideology such as Islam, we make a unique Islamic Nation in which nationality and racial have no more importance (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 52). Hence, Mutahhari thinks that separating nations based on race and language or blood has no authenticity, since most of nations have repeatedly composited with each other during the history so that it is difficult to speak about a pure race. Mutahhari concludes that by considering national and racial approaches whatever enters to a land is not called as national fact, but we should pay attention that this nation has accepted it freely or compulsorily. He also argues that in Islam nationality and racial has not meaning according to contemporary theories, since in Islam all nations and races are equal and their criterion of superiority is religious faith and divine piety (Mutahhari, 1993, pp. 66-67).

3.8.2. Islam and Iranian Identity in Historical Approach

The most significant event of the history of Iran, for Mutahhari, is entrance of Islam and its services to Iran. Islam by coming to Iran, through removing religious conflicts and contradictions, replaced instead of it a kind of religious unity and equality in which has appeared united thought, ideal and perfection. Islam has broken political and religious boundaries around Iran in order to flourish Iranian capacity, so that, study of history of Iran shows such scientific and cultural interests in Iranians that has placed them in the top of scientific, cultural and religious authorities (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 360).

So we can say that the services of Islam towards Iran includes of recognition of Iranians' identity to themselves, flourishing Iranian genius, removing dualistic religious extravagant and placing Iranians in the top of Muslim societies honors. In

Mutahhari's words: "Islam has shown both Iranians genius and abilities to themselves and to other nations, namely, Iranians have discovered themselves through Islam and then introduced it to the people of the world" (Mutahhari, 1993, p. 363).

Mutahhari maintains that in the end of Sassanid dynasty, Iranian identity, albeit of its historical and cultural richness, had been challenged by a big crisis that was removed through acceptance of Islam by Iranians and was bestowed a new identity having modern meanings.

The fundamental factor and cause of refunding Iranian identity, for Mutahhari, can be found in their tendency to Islam and Shi'a. He believes, this tendency has three basic causes: first; hopelessness of Iranians from Sassanid Government, second; non-efficacy of Zoroastrianism for taking Iranians spiritual requirements, and third; spiritual interests and factual greatness of Islam. Among mentioned causes, it seems the third one had more roles, that is, Islam as a religion of salvation has been compatible with Iranians' spiritual and moral characteristics (Mutahhari, 1993, pp. 355-365).

It's worth mentioning that Mutahhari, concerning the cause of Iranians tendency to Shi'a Islam, rejects the role of all nationalistic factors, and does not accept the theory that Iranians in order to resist against Arabs have innovated Shi'a for preserving their ancient religious teachings in the form or light of Shieism. In Mutahhari's viewpoint Iranians, among new Muslims, have respected the household of the Prophet more than them. Although most of Iranians have accepted Shi'a from Safavid period, this is clear, however, Iran was the more suitable place for Shi'a from other ones. Hence, for Mutahhari the reason for becoming Shi'a of Iranians is the same as their accepting Islam, since Iranians have seen their lost truths and meaning of life in Islam. Iranians, that naturally were/are smart and cultural people, not only have shown their love to Islam but also have given many services to it. Iranians have paid more attention to the meaning and spirit of Islam and the house hold of the Prophet of Islam. As a result of their more attention, Shi'a has increased in Iran more than other lands. Therefore, it can be said Iranians were/are who have fund the spirit and meaning of Islam nearby the household of the Prophet Muhammad and believed that they were/are the only people who can reply and are responsible for spiritual real requirements of Iranians (Ibid, p. 136). He also says that Iranians were under oppression and deprivation during past governments, have desired real justice and wanted it from those who do just without any prejudice, and they are only the house hold of the Prophet of Islam as the household of Islamic justice. Therefore, in Mutahhari's point of view, the real

cause of Iranians tendency to Islam and Shi'a is their searching for real justice and finding it in the house of the Prophet of Islam, since these families are that only ones who do justly without racial, bloody and ethnic considerations. So Mutahhari considers the basic elements of Iranian identity only in tendency to Islam and Islamic teachings, namely, when Iranians have been gotten their identity that Islam has penetrated to their hearts, and build them as transcendent human beings. Hence, in Mutahhari's language the first factor for Iranian identity is accepting of Islam, and the second is their services to it.

4. Conclusions

Among several tendencies concerning Iranian national identity, it seems Mutahhari's approach is mostly different from them. He as a religious scholar and thinker emphasizes both on two elements of Islam and Iran. Then for Mutahhari, identity has its special meanings and virtues. He, in this case, emphasizes on the role of religion as the most fundamental element of identity and argues that other factors have secondary roles.

Such viewpoint of Mutahhari is applicable to nationality, then some elements of nationality, such as language, race, culture, traditions and geography have not continual authenticity and have no more roles in constitution of nationality. Whatever is as the constitutive factor, but, of nationality is common understanding of humans that is concerned to oppression, justice and freedom.

In Mutahhari's viewpoint, finally, Iranians through accepting Islam not only preserved their past identity, but also through getting transcendent teachings of Islam and application of Iranian spirit and morality have enriched and flourished Islamic culture and civilization, and were able to improve their identity through strengthening religious identity.

References

- Abdullah Yusuf Ali. *The Holy Quran*.
- Altaei, Ali (1999). *Buhran Huviyat Qoumi Dar Iran/The Crisis of Racial Identity in Iran*. Tehran: Shedegan Press.
- Bazegar, Ibrahim (2000). Serat; Zabeteh Huviyat Dar Andisheh Imam Khomeini/Serat as The Rule of Identity in Imam Khomeini's thought. *National Studies Quarterly*, No. 4.
- Hajiani, Ibrahim (2000). Tahlyl Jame'e Shenakhti Huviyat Melli/Sociological Analysis of National Identity in Iran and Projecting some Hypotheses. *National Studies Quarterly*, No. 4.
- Karaji, Ali (1996). *Istelahat Falsafi va Tafavot Anha ba Yekdigar/Philosophical Expressions and Their Differences*. Tehran: Qom Seminary Press.
- Mea'mar, Rahmatullah (1998). *Sanjesh Derayesh Beh Huviyat Tarikhi/The Examination of Tendency to Historical Identity*. Tehran: Research Center of IRIB.
- Mutahhari, Morteza (1993). *Insan Dar Quran/Human in the Quran*. Tehran: Sadra Press, p. 16.
- Mutahhari, Morteza (1993). *Jame'h Va Tarikh/Society & History*. Tehran: Sadra Press.
- Mutahhari, Morteza (1993). *Khadamat Motaqabel Islam Va Iran/ Reciprocal Services of Islam and Iran*. Tehran: Sadra Press.
- Mutahhari, Morteza (1998). *Perfect Human*. Tehran: Sadra Press.
- Ranjbar, Maqsood (2003). Huviyat Melli Va Mashrou'eyat Siyasi in Iran Moa'ser/ National Identity and Political Legitimacy in Contemporary Iran. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 21. Tehran.
- Roupsingeh, Toumar (2000). *Modernizasioun Va Khoshounat/Modernization and Violence. Trans by Asghar Iftekhari*. Tehran: Safir Press.
- Sha'bani, Reza (2006). *Iranian Va Huviyat Melli/ Iranians and National Identity*. Tehran: IICT Press.
- Tajik, Muhammad Reza (2000). Farhang Va Huviyat Irani: Forsatha Va Chaleshha/ Iranian Culture and Identity: Opportunities and Challenges. *National Studies Quarterly*, No. 4.
- Varjavand, Parviz (1999). *Touse'eh Va Pishraft Bar Asas Huviyat Farhangi/Progress and Development Based on Cultural Identity*. Tehran: Sherkat Sahami Inteshar Press.
- Yousefi, Ali (2000). Farhang Va Huviyat Irani: Forsatha Va Chaleshha/ Iranian Culture and Identity: Opportunities and Challenges. *National Studies Quarterly*, No. 4.
- Zahiri, Ali Reza (2002). *Enqelab Islami Va Huviyat Melli/ Islamic Revolution and National Identity*. Iranian Association of Islamic Sciences Press.
- Zarrinkoub, Abdul Hossein (1999). *Doo Qarn Solout. Two Century Silence*. Tehran: Ittela'at Press.
- Yaghoubian, David (2014). *Ethnicity, Identity, and the Development of Nationalism in Iran*. Syracuse University Press.
- Malesevic, Sinisa (2006). *Identity as Ideology. Understanding Ethnicity and Nationalism*. Palgrave: Macmillan Press.