

# Women's Social Participation According to Ayatollah Mutahhari's Theory of Justice

Sareh Larijany<sup>1</sup>

Received: 13 October 2021 / Accepted: 12 December 2022

## Abstract

This article investigates Ayatollah Murtada Mutahhari's understanding of the principle of justice and its impact on women's social participation. Mutahhari (1919-1979) is one of the foremost thinkers of contemporary Iran who proposed a new theoretical foundation for the study of women's rights based on rational-philosophical principles. Treating justice and natural rights as meta-jurisprudential principles, he supported women's public life. Although many studies have been conducted on Mutahhari's views about women's rights, which have made significant contributions to the study of Mutahhari's thought in terms of describing and examining his arguments, my research has certain distinguishing features. In particular, I consider Mutahhari's philosophical methodology of writing on gender-related issues, specifically his approach to the principle of justice in his *ijtihad* methodology because I believe his ideas are significant outcomes of his rational methodology of *ijtihad*. In addition, most studies on Mutahhari's position on women's issues tend to focus on his views about women's familial rights, while his contribution to women's public life is ignored. This study reveals that by adopting Mutahhari's views of the principle of justice and its position on Islamic jurisprudence, different understandings of women's social participation could be developed.

**Keywords:** Justice, Mutahhari, women, social participation, public life.

## 1. Introduction

Ayatollah Murtada Mutahhari was without doubt an influential clerical figure of contemporary Iran. His goal was to present a comprehensive theoretical framework for Islamic ideology, which would allow him to deal with other schools of thought and modern issues such as women's rights on the same ground.

In pre-revolutionary Iran, the debate surrounding the question of women and their social participation illustrates the struggle between diverse perspectives, which may be interpreted as stemming from the conflict between Western secularism and religion. On the one hand, there were Westernized women, with

---

1. PhD in Theology and Religious Studies, School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK. Email: [sxa210@alumni.bham.ac.uk](mailto:sxa210@alumni.bham.ac.uk)

a mostly Western education who, according to Keddie, were Western in dress, culture, and politics, and often followed secular ideologies. On the other hand, there were traditional religious women who ideologically and practically followed religious authorities in various matters (Keddie 2000, 408).

Mutahhari was among Shia scholars who objectively engaged in women's issues and the challenges they face in the modern world. Regardless of Mutahhari's position, the value of his argument is partly due to his rational approach. He was eager to demonstrate the reason and rationale behind every rule and bent his efforts to revealing their intellectual ground to the reader, whereas most Shia clerics were interested in nothing more than juridical and legal discussions. In other words, he changed the traditional style of discussion from specialized jurisprudence to that of rational and philosophical argument. His discussions are largely based on two factors; justice and the theory of natural rights. In *Nizam-i huquq-i zan dar Islam (The system of women's rights in Islam)*, Mutahhari clarifies his approach and notes:

Thus, our discussion has a completely philosophical orientation: it is associated with the philosophy of rights and linked with a principle called the principle of justice; indeed, this is one of the vital pillars of Islamic theology and jurisprudence. (Mutahhari 2002, 124)

As a result of his rational-philosophical methodology of *ijtihad*, he brought out some new ideas that were different from common *fatwas* such as his attitudes to women's face veiling (*hijab*) and their social activities. Mutahhari's view of *hijab* saved women from seclusion and paved the way for their presence in the wider society in many different fields. Furthermore, his influence on allowing women into public life should not be ignored.

This article aims to analyze Mutahhari's theory of justice and its impact on women's social participation. This is based on library research and textual analysis. I focus on one question: how can women's social rights in Islam be explained according to Ayatollah Mutahhari's theory of justice? This article engages in Mutahhari's corpus of writings and brings it to bear on the issue of justice in relation to women's public rights.

## **2. The Place of Justice in *Fiqh* in Mutahhari's View**

Justice is one of the five pillars of Shi'a *kalam*. It is the second fundamental principle of Shi'a Islamic belief (alongside monotheism, prophethood, imamate, and resurrection). Justice assumes such prominence in Islam that a wide range of Quranic verses and *hadiths* is dedicated to the concept. According to Mutahhari, the foundation of justice in Islamic thought should be sought in the Qur'an, which describes different aspects of justice and oppression (Mutahhari 2005, 35).

The concept of justice in the Islamic world has been scrutinized in the two realms of theology (*kalam*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) (Mutahhari 2005, 30). In

the preface to *Divine Justice*, Mutahhari classifies justice into two major types of “divine justice” and “human justice.” Divine justice is a central theological concept in Shi’a Islam and the starting point of Mutahhari’s reflection. According to Mutahhari, divine justice appears as justice in legislation (*‘adl-i tashri‘i*) and justice in creation (*‘adl-i takwini*); that is, God is just both in legislation and in creation, and He does not commit any act of injustice (Mutahhari 2005, 33-38). This attitude is rooted in the theological theory of the rationality of good and evil (*husn wa qubh-i ‘aqli*) supported in Shi’a and Mu‘tazilah theologies, which assume “justice” is essentially good, and its goodness can be known through reason, without resorting to revelation. Accepting the role of reason in identifying truths and falsities, as well as good and evil, paved the way for authorizing the principle of justice as a reliable common basis for juridical understanding, and commentators of different persuasions have shown how justice can be applied in extracting religious verdicts. The root cause of this variety is uncertainty about whether justice is a criterion for assessing religious laws, or *shari‘a* laws should be seen as the basis for justice. In other words, the question is: does the concept of justice have an independent existence outside the Islamic juridical framework or must it be defined and implemented within the Islamic juridical system?

Some renowned Muslim jurists such as Muhammad Husayn Na’ini (1860-1936) maintain that “equality” (*musawat*) is the most important principle of Islamic laws, particularly in the socio-political realm. To him, justice and equality constitute the essence of all Islamic rules. Na’ini praises Western societies for their emphasis on freedom and equality, blaming the Iranian society for closing its eyes to these most central principles of the religion of Islam (Na’ini 2009, 84-91). However, another prominent jurist, Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri (1843-1909), who advocated the establishment of the “house of Justice” (*‘idalat-khana*) in Iran, believes that equality has to be defined within the Islamic juridical framework, implying that differences acknowledged in Islamic laws, including gender differences, should be taken into account (Hushangi 2016).

In terms of jurisprudence, the situation is quite complicated. As Mohaghegh Damad points out, although Shi’a jurists confirm that ethical features are real, and human reason is able to distinguish between good and bad deedse.g., human reason can understand that justice is good and oppression is bad (without the knowledge provided by revelation) Shi’a jurists believe that there are still many instances of justice and oppression that could be recognized only through divine revelation (Mohaghegh Damad 2018, 231-32). Therefore, it is not clear whether justice is a criterion for assessing religious laws, or vice versa.

In the following excerpt, Mutahhari clearly introduces a new understanding of how Shi’a *fiqh* should operate. He states that

The principle of justice is one of Islam's axes of measurement. Justice pertains to the domain of rulings' *ratio legis* rather than their effects. The significant point is that, from the Islamic perspective, justice is a criterion for [evaluating] religion, but religion is not a criterion for [evaluating] justice. (Mutahhari 2012, 52)

In defining what Mutahhari means by "criterion," it is best to explore his other writings, in which he declares that "It is not the case that whatever religion dictates is just; rather, that which is just is dictated by religion. This is what is meant by saying that justice is an evaluation criterion measurement in religion" (Mutahhari 1998, 203).

What distinguishes Mutahhari's view from the views of other jurists here is that he sees the Islamic jurisprudential principles on a vertical line, as it were, placing justice above other principles, which implies that jurists' understanding of the primary religious sources has to conform with the principle of justice; otherwise, it is iniquitous (Mutahhari 2002, 124). Therefore, justice is a *meta-jurisprudential principle*, which no ruling can contradict. It follows that justice, in itself, requires no elaboration by *shari'a* because it is intuitive, and human reason may independently perceive it. Accordingly, Mohaghegh Damad asserts that "justice is not a jurisprudential principle; rather, it is outside of the framework of jurisprudence" (Mohaghegh Damad 2009, 377). Therefore, for Mutahhari, justice is not a by-product of Shi'a *fiqh*, but an overarching principle of *ijtihad*. Followers of traditional *usul-i fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), on the other hand, argue that using the four sources of *fiqh* for issuing *fatwas* will lead to a just statement and that justice as such is not to be taken as a criterion or source for issuing jurisprudential decrees. It is this focus on the principle of justice that clearly distinguishes Mutahhari's views in many discussions of women's rights. Perhaps, this is mainly why Mutahhari holds that many prevalent *fatwas* in various Islamic fields, particularly concerning women's rights, are unfair and in contrast to the principle of justice.

## 2.1. Definition of Justice

Due to the high value of justice in Islamic thought, numerous works were produced by Muslim scholars investigating the definition and different aspects of this concept, particularly the issue of "divine justice." Justice has been defined in various frameworks, ranging from legal definition to jurisprudential and philosophical ones. For instance, Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari (d. 1998), defines justice as "the behavior which is in compliance with the law." To him, this is the most comprehensive definition of justice, which encompasses all just behaviors and phenomena. According to him, there are laws governing human social well-being, which are legislated to improve human life. Therefore, behaving in accordance with these laws is justice, and violating them is injustice (Ja'fari 2006, 254-55).

Taking Ja'fari's definition of justice into account, some questions may arise: Does the concept of justice have no definition outside the realm of social life? What is the place of individual justice in Ja'fari's thought? How should (social) laws be evaluated? Is justice above all laws and a criterion for assessing them or are social laws superior to justice? Ja'fari's notion of justice could be labelled as "legal justice" and may not be accurate enough to define the concept of justice. As Mutahhari also argues, there are some unjust laws obedience to which constitutes injustice and oppression, while defying them is justice (Mutahhari 1998, 219).

Furthermore, justice has been described by jurists as a subjective disposition (*al-malaka al-nafsaniyya*), which recommends the obligatory (*wajib*) and warns against the forbidden (*haram*) (Tabatabai Hakim 1967, 332). As a result, al-Shaykh al-Ansari, in his *Treaties of Justice*, asserts that a just person is one who does not commit a major (*kabira*) sin and does not commit minor (*saghira*) sins repeatedly (Qurbaniyan 2002, 28). Mulla Ahmad al-Naraqi (d. 1829), in his ethical work *Mi'raj al-sa'ada*, asserts that justice is submission to reason to the extent that one does not do anything unless it is prescribed by reason. Consequently, a just person is one who avoids both extremes of excess (*ifrat*) and deficiency (*tafrit*) and acts moderately. In fact, justice creates harmony between the extremes (Naraqi 1999, 80). Then, he states that "divine *shari'a* is the criterion based on which excess and deficiency could be recognized" (Naraqi 1999, 46). 'Allama Tabataba'i argues that justice means "granting every possessor of right his or her due" (Tabataba'i 1985, 371). Mutahhari confirms Tabataba'i's definition of justice; however, inspired by Imam 'Ali's statement (N.437 in *Nahj al-balagha*), he asserts that "justice means putting things in their own place" (Mutahhari 2016, 19).

As explained above, Mutahhari classifies justice into two major types of "divine justice" and "human justice." In his view, divine justice encompasses justice in legislation (*'adl-i tashri'i*) and justice in creation (*'adl-i takwini*). Mutahhari supports his argument by addressing some Quranic verses concerning different kinds of justice. With respect to *'adl-i takwini* (justice in creation), the Qur'an perceives justice as the foundation of the creation: "And heaven He raised it up and set the balance [justice]" (Q 55:7).<sup>2</sup>

Justice in legislation means that religion and religious rules are based on justice. In other words, social justice is a branch of justice, which clearly has been highlighted in the Qur'an, where one of the most important missions of the Prophets is considered the establishment of social justice (Mutahhari 2014, 19). The Qur'an says, "Indeed, We send our Messengers with the clear signs and we send down with them the Book and the Balance so that men might uphold *justice*..." (Q 57:25).

---

2. Another relevant verse is Q 3:18.

Mutahhari divides human justice, in turn, into two kinds: individual (*fardi*) and public (*guruhi*). He believes that a large number of Quranic verses on justice refer to public justice, which includes the realms of family, society, politics, and judiciary. However, it seems that by “individual justice” he mainly refers to ethical justice; that is, an ethical person who acts justly. To support his understanding, he refers to the Qur’an, which says:

... as shall be judged by two men of equity among you. (Q 5:95)

... And call in to witness two men of equity from among yourselves. (Q 65:2)

However, the significance of Mutahhari lies in his attempt to make a bridge between divine justice and social justice. From his standpoint, the issue of “divine justice” is inevitably connected with the concept of social justice. Individual justice is the basis of social justice, and divine justice is the basis of individual justice (Mutahhari 2016), 35-38). He asserts that “undoubtedly, social justice cannot mean anything contrary to individual justice” (Mutahhari 1998, 268), and therefore, piety (*taqwa*) and spirituality can reinforce individual and social justice:

The law itself is nothing more than a sheet of blackened paper; it is people who must be the objective embodiment of the law. The important thing is then abiding by the law, which requires sacrificing one’s interests. This is not possible without faith in divine reward for justice and faith in divine punishment for injustice. For implementation of justice, two things are necessary: first, an awakening of common sense in the public to preserve their rights and not transgress the law. The other is the faith of those in power (Mutahhari 1998, 270).

For a better understanding of how Mutahhari develops his idea of justice, the following points need to be considered:

1. Mutahhari provides a rights-based definition of justice. Although he confirms the dominant Islamic definition of justice as putting everything in its rightful place, he defines it more precisely as “the merit and right granted to people in accordance with their nature and their earned actions and deeds; the opposite being oppression and prejudice” (Mutahhari 1994, 226). Therefore, Mutahhari connects his discussion of justice to his discussion of rights.

2. Mutahhari argues that we should clearly know what Islam means by justice when it asks Muslims to be just and to not oppress each other. Do justice and human rights possess a reality outside of the framework of religious laws or could they only be defined within the realm of religion? As mentioned above, Mutahhari emphasizes that justice is independent of religion. The following statement displays his stance:

Islamic laws follow the rationality of good (*husn*) and evil (*qubh*). Rights and justice are real, and Islam confirms their reality. Based on this attitude, we can define Islamic social philosophy. (Mutahhari 2016, 50)

3. Every human being possesses certain rights, and these rights have been granted to them by creation (nature). On this point, the Qur'an says, "It is He Who created for you all that is in the earth" (Q 2:29) and "We have established you in the earth and there appointed for you livelihood; little thanks you show" (Q 7:10). Mutahhari seems to attempt to devise his theory of natural rights in terms of the "principle of purposivism" (final cause or ultimate purpose for being [*'illat-i gha'i*]) by making a link between the human being and nature, or between the human being and the blessings of the world. From his standpoint, in the Islamic worldview, humankind is the most important component of creation, all things have been created for humans, and everything came into existence to benefit them. Therefore, although human beings have certain responsibilities toward creatures, they have undeniable natural rights as well (Mutahhari 1994, 202).

4. From Mutahhari's standpoint, there is a harmony between natural laws and *shari'a* laws. However, he claims that natural laws are prior to religious laws (or positive laws of the state) and since both types of laws come from God, religious laws should be in accordance with, not contrary to, the laws of creation. Accordingly, a proper understanding of *shari'a* will not contradict natural laws. To clarify the point, Mutahhari gives the example of a new-born baby and its need for breastfeeding. The question is whether anyone can deny the relationship between a baby and its mother's breast milk and whether this milk is the baby's right, and if it is, who granted this right to it. Mutahhari responds in the affirmative: breastfeeding is the baby's right, and the world of creation assigned this right to the baby (Mutahhari 2016, 55). On the other hand, *shari'a* responds to the natural right of the baby by making an obligation for mothers to feed their kids.

5. So far, we saw that Mutahhari, just like other thinkers such as 'Allama Tabataba'i, defines justice as "granting every possessor of rights his or her due." On this definition, the principles of justice and natural rights are closely intertwined. Moreover, we noted that all human beings possess certain natural rights. In the next step, it should be clarified how these rights can be recognized and utilized. Mutahhari puts forward his theory of correlation between rights and obligations. In this stage, he emphasizes that rights and obligations are attached to each other, in the sense that rights can be achieved only if we discharge our duties and responsibilities. He explains that there is a significant difference between human beings and other creatures. By virtue of creation, every creature has received an instinct (*ghariza*) of its own, which is the only condition for it to be eligible for its natural rights. Accordingly, Mutahhari asserts that "being children of the earth is enough for them to have certain

[natural] rights” (Mutahhari 2016, 58). However, concerning human beings, Mutahhari’s view touches upon two key central factors: human reason (*‘aql*) and will (*iradi*). With respect to the human instinct, humankind has certain natural rights, such as a baby’s need for breastfeeding, regardless of any kinds of obligation (the right to this milk entails no duties or obligations). However, there are some other types of natural rights to which one could be entitled only if one discharged their duties and fulfilled their obligations involving both reason and will. For instance, all humans have the right to food and nutrition; hence, they need to cultivate the earth in order to use its resources. In other words, humans have to carry out their duties toward nature and revitalize the earth in order to obtain their natural rights in return.

Mutahhari tries to explain the relationship between rights and responsibilities by drawing on a hadith from Imam Ali who states, “No one has a right unless he is responsible for a right and no one is responsible for a right unless, for him and to his benefit, there is a right” (letter 53) (Sharif al-Radi 2011, 450). This hadith portrays the correlation between rights and responsibilities, indicating that the possessor of a right has an obligation alongside with it. This may be the main reason why the Prophet said, “Those who put the burden [of their responsibility] on other people’s shoulders are deprived of God’s mercy” (Kulayni 1995, 72). Mutahhari holds that this hadith refers to people who benefit from public rights while they do not perform their own duties toward society (Mutahhari 2016, 58-59).

The above points summarize Mutahhari’s position: the concept of justice represents a reality that exists outside of the realm of religion. In addition, human beings possess certain natural rights, which have been assigned to them by creation. Since the law of creation is prior to that of religion, these rights have to be recognized and applied to all. These rights are obtained by performing one’s duties, indicating that humans, by virtue of the elements of reason and will, need to fulfil their obligations in order to achieve their rights. This idea demonstrates the correlation between rights and duties in Mutahhari’s definition of justice and in his rational and philosophical approach.

## **2.2. Mutahhari’s Theory of Social Justice Pertaining to Women’s Social Rights**

In discussing social justice, the main question regarding the two principles of natural rights and justice is: can natural rights be used as sources of social rights? It seems that Mutahhari tries to explain the social rights of human beings in general and those of women in particular based on justice and natural rights. In other words, he seeks to arrive at the philosophy of individuals’ social rights with respect to the scheme and order of creation.

Regarding social justice, he mentions a hadith from Prophet Muhammad stating “a society can survive if it is just and moderate even though its people are infidels, and if oppression, cruelty, injustice, and discrimination exist in a



society, that society will collapse even if its people are Muslims” (Mutahhari 2016, 71). This hadith also illustrates the place of justice as a meta-jurisprudential and meta-religious principle as discussed above. One important point in Mutahhari’s view of justice, which directly bears upon his remarks concerning women's social activities, is how he defines social justice. Does he define justice as full-fledged equality? Does any difference in society amount to injustice and to violation of social justice? Does justice demand that individuals should have no precedence over each other? In answering the above questions, Mutahhari states that justice does not demand that all differences and distinctions should be erased. Rather, it demands that one should observe the natural merits and capabilities; that is, the rights of individuals must be observed.

Let us take the next step at this point and raise the question: What did Mutahhari mean by the observance of rights? In other words, what are the criteria and standards of individuals’ merits? To further clarify the point, he compares a society to the body of a living organism, It seems that Mutahhari was influenced by his teacher ‘Allama Tabataba’i from whom he took this concept, as this analogy can be found in Tabatabai’s writings as well (Tabatabai 1988, 442). In Mutahhari’s view, as a body consists of limbs and organs, each performing its own particular function, a society also consists of groups of individuals, and all tasks required of a society are shared among individual members as jobs. A human body may be in the state of health or illness. It is born into the world and begins to grow, and so does a society. Any problem in one limb of the body causes discomforts in other limbs as if there is a kind of sympathy among the organs and limbs. A sound society enjoys a social spirit. The difference between a society and a living organism lies in the fact that the limbs of a body have their own fixed places and functions that never change. However, members of a society have their own minds, power of differentiation, autonomy, free will, and choice. In explaining human merits, Mutahhari asserts that early philosophers (*hukama*) thought of humankind as being social by nature, though he does not mention the names of those philosophers. This implies that human beings have been bestowed with certain capabilities (potentialities) that can only be actualized in the context of social life. However, he believes that the social nature of mankind does not contradict the idea that human social life is based upon convention and selection and that humans, by their own reason and free will, chose to live a social life (Mutahhari 2016, 88-91).

With respect to above point, individuals in society have no certain or fixed positions; rather, they are exposed to a wide range of activities, tasks, and functions that enable them to make a choice and obtain the positions they desire with effort and by using their own free will, freedom of choice, and preferences. No doubt, social positions are subject to change. The main question is how different kinds of social activities are to be distributed among individuals, and

what the criterion for this division of labor is. In fact, there is just one way to do this: there should be no coercion at all. All individuals should be left free, and the arena of life should take on the form of not one contest (*musabiqi*), but many contests in which all men and women can have the right and opportunity to participate and obtain jobs or positions in line with their preferences, capacities, merits, and to the extent of their efforts (Mutahhari 2016, 92).

Thus, in various respects, society should be like an arena for contests, and the notion of contest demands that there should be freedom in society. According to him, there are two elements in any contest: 1) an activity that is the object of the contest, and 2) a prize or a reward set for the winner in the contest. The activity that is set as the object of the contest can be knowledge, virtue, piety, and anything that is deemed useful for human beings and social life. The prize consists in the rights conferred on the person for his/her outstanding activity, capability, and competency. It is at this point that one can come to understand the relationship between right (*haqq*) and duty (*taklif*) in Mutahhari's thought. Concerning these two concepts, he observes,

If we fully understand the principle of concomitancy of right and duty in Islam, we can understand that when we claim that life is a form of contest, it means the contest of doing duties and responsibilities. And by the prize or reward, we mean enjoying social rights. (Mutahhari 2016, 95)

To support his claim, he refers to the Qur'anic verse: "and that a man shall have to his account only as he has labored" (Q 53:39). Therefore, Mutahhari talks about a just society with equal opportunities for all, not equal treatment of everybody; hence, he adopts a distributive understanding of justice. Society should provide equal opportunities for its members, and if it does not, it cannot be called a just society. As Mutahhari puts it, the only way to have a just social contest is by letting individuals be free to gain advantage over their rivals. When people are free, due to the fact that they are not equal in their talents and capabilities and that they differ in terms of the extent of their efforts, differences and distinctions naturally arise. There is a good case in point: if the same mark is given to all students who take one and the same exam, this will be gross injustice (Mutahhari 2016, 96).

One can conclude from what was previously said that justice entails equality as far as equal rights of individuals are concerned. That is, participants in social contest should be discriminated only by virtue of what is relevant to their talents, achievements, and hard work. However, regarding the conditions of social contest, everyone has to benefit from equal opportunities or chance to take part in the contest.

On this account, a just society is one in which, firstly, there is the possibility of holding a contest for all individuals, and secondly, all people are equal in the eyes of law so that even competent people of lower social classes have the opportunity to acquire higher education, become scientists, and even be

appointed as ministers. There is a kind of similarity between Mutahhari's approach to social justice and Aristotle's view of distributive justice. Distributive justice involves dividing benefits, goods, and honors among the members of a community (in a political group). The general principle is that "equal persons must have equal shares and unequals, unequal shares" (Winthrop 1978, 1204). Therefore, distributive justice is a proportion. Aristotle makes a distinction between distributive and commutative justice. Commutative justice is the principle that each person should be given that to which he or she is entitled... (Koslowski 2001, 184).

There is a distinction between Mutahhari's view and the Aristotelian perspective as there is an egalitarian notion in Mutahhari's idea of justice. In terms of social justice, he makes no distinction between members of society or genders. However, from Aristotle's point of view, there are some people who are superior and fit to rule from birth, while there are others who are inferior and have to be ruled from birth (Aristotle 2016, 12).

One might claim that Mutahhari's philosophy appears to be rather idealistic and to have certain presuppositions built upon the mobility and freedom of diverse human beings because their ability to be exposed to such things depends upon their means. The impoverished, or those who live in contexts where there are strict class or caste systems, do not have such freedoms. For example, sometimes women's social participation is circumscribed by societal, cultural, and family expectations, by norms of sexuality and gender, and by religious constructions of femininity that prevent women from participating and obtaining social positions in line with their preference, capacity, merits, and the extent of their efforts. Therefore, in reality, in many cases, what Mutahhari describes as the natural rights of women is not obtained due to various problems. However, we should bear in mind that Mutahhari investigates the concept of social justice from a theoretical and philosophical perspective. He makes an effort to display the direction of society toward the implementation of social justice based on just social contests, which allow individuals to be free to gain advantage over their rivals. In other words, Mutahhari seeks to arrive at the conclusion that justice and equality require that all discriminations or inequalities in society, which have their roots in false traditions and habits or force and oppression, have to be obliterated, while those differences that have originated from competency, capacity, hard work, and activities have to be preserved. In addition, he argues that the conditions for taking part in social contests, i.e., enjoying social facilities, should be provided equally for all members of society (Mutahhari 2016, 105). Thus, from his perspective a just society provides equal opportunities for its members. However, Mutahhari does not stop at theoretical and philosophical levels, but rather engages in social constraints as well. In other words, he has a theory of a political system explaining the responsibilities of authorities toward people with different socio-economic backgrounds.

### 3. Conclusion

This article explained how Mutahhari's understanding of the principle of justice, and subsequently social justice, paves the way for women's social participation and public life. To summarize Mutahhari's view of justice to the idea of women's participation in social activities, the following points are worth mentioning. Women, like men, should act freely in acquiring knowledge, and society needs to prepare the ground for women to do this, as it should for men. In *The question of hijab*, Mutahhari emphasizes that Islamic precepts do not prohibit women from active participation in society, nor do they deny them basic rights to education or seeking knowledge. In some cases, it is even obligatory for both men and women to seek knowledge. In other words, Islamic rulings of gender segregation do not require that a woman should be imprisoned at home, nor do they say that a woman has no right to leave her home or to do a particular job that is of social or economic nature (Mutahhari 2009, 84). In seeking employment in society, women, like man, should be free to choose the job they desire. On the other hand, the society in which they live should provide the conditions for fulfilling this objective. In fact, there is an important responsibility for society to undertake: providing favorable conditions for women to make a choice between professions and to choose the one that is more appropriate and suitable for them. In other words, social conditions should be such that women can have chances of participating in certain high-level social activities like occupying a high position in social, political, and religious activities.

### References

- The Holy Qur'an.
- Aristotle. 2016. *Politics*. London: FB&C Limited.
- Hushangi, Hamid. 2007. "Ara'-i 'Allama Na'ini wa Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri" (The Perspectives of 'Allama Na'ini and Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri). *Zamaneh* 59.
- Ja'fari, Mohammad Taqi. 2006. *Tarjumi wa tafsir-i Nahj al-balagha* (Translation and interpretation of Nahj al-balagha). Vol. 3. Tehran: Haydari.
- Keddie, Nikki. 2000. "Women in Iran since 1979." *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (summer): 405-38.
- Koslowski, Peter. 2001. *Principles of Ethical Economy*. London: Kluwer Academic.
- Kulayni, Muhammad b. Ya'qub. 1995. *Usul al-kafi*. Vol. 5. Tehran: Daftar-i Mutali'at-i Tarikh wa Ma'arif-i Islami.
- Mohaghegh Damad, Seyyed Mostafa. 2009. "'Idalat dar ilahiyat-i Islami'" (Justice in Islamic theology). In *An Introduction to theory of justice in Islam* (Daramadi bar nazariy-i ilahiat dar Islam), edited by A. A. AliKhani, 377-405. Tehran: Pazuhishgah-i Mutali'at-i Farhangi wa Ijtima'i.
- Mohaghegh Damad, Seyyed Mostafa. 2018. *Tahawwulat-i ijthadi-yi Shi'a, maktab-i*

- Akhund-i Khurasani* (Developments in Shi'a ijtehad, Akhund Khurasani's school). Vol. 1. Tehran: Nashr-i 'Ulum-i Islami.
- Mutahhari, Murtada. 1994. *Islam wa muqtadiyat-i zaman* (Islam and the demands of time). Vol. 1. Tehran: Sadra.
- Mutahhari, Murtada. 1994. *Sayri dar siri-yi a'immi-yi athar* (An overview of the Imams' tradition). Tehran: Sadra.
- Mutahhari, Murtada. 1998. *Yaddashtha-yi Ustad Mutahhari* (Notes). Vol. 6. Tehran: Sadra.
- Mutahhari, Murtada. 2002. *Nizam-i huquq-i zan dar Islam* (The system of women's rights in Islam). Tehran: Sadra.
- Mutahhari, Murtada. 2005. *'Adl-i ilahi* (Divine justice). Tehran: Sadra.
- Mutahhari, Murtada. 2009. *Mas'ali-yi hijab* (The question of hijab). Tehran: Sadra.
- Mutahhari, Murtada. 2012. *Yaddashtha-yi Ustad Mutahhari* (Notes). Vol. 1. Tehran: Sadra.
- Mutahhari, Murtada. 2014. *Hadaf az zindigi* (The purpose of life). Tehran: Sadra.
- Mutahhari, Murtada. 2016. *Bist guftar* (Twenty discourses). Tehran: Sadra.
- Na'ini, Muhammad Husayn. 2009. *Tanbih al-umma wa-tanzih al-milla* (Admonition of the Islamic nation and purification of the Islamic religion). Qom: Bustan-i Kitab.
- Naraqi, Mulla Ahmad. 1999. *Mi'raj al-sa'ada*. Qom: Hijrat.
- Qurbanniya, Nasser. 2002. *'Idalat-i huquqi* (Legal justice). Tehran: Mu'assisi-yi Frhangi-yi Danish wa Andishi-yi Mu'asir.
- Sharif al-Radi, Muhammad b. al-Husayn b. Musa, al-. 2011. *Nahj al-balagha*. Beirut: Al-Majma' al-'Alami li-Ahl al-Bayt.
- Tabataba'i al-Hakim, Sayyid Muhsin. 1967. *Mustamsik al-'urwat al-wuthqa*. Vol. 7. Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi.
- Tabataba'i, Muhammad Husayn. 1985. *Al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an* (al-Mizan, an Exegesis of the Qur'an). Vol. 1. Tehran: Word Organaization for Islamic services.
- Tabataba'i, Muhammad Husayn. 1988. *Al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an* (al-Mizan, an Exegesis of the Qur'an). Vol. 2. Tehran, Raja'.
- Winthrop, Delba. 1978. "Aristotle and Theories of Justice." *The American Political Science Review* 72, no. 4 (December): 1201-16.

