

THE LIBERATION THEOLOGY OF ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER AND ITS RELEVANCE TO ISLAMIC EDUCATION

OBJECTIVES

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Abstract: Islamic education has a "prophetic" mission as an agent of liberation. The liberation paradigm can be realized with praxis, namely between reflection and action, theory and practice, and faith and charity. Therefore, Islamic education must be able to bear human freedom and social spirit and be able to face challenges amid global life. Asghar Ali Engineer is a progressive Muslim from India trying to understand Islam through liberation theology. The relevance of the theology of the liberation of Asghar Ali Engineer with the aim of Islamic education, with the following formulations: first, education must be able to humanize humans (humanism). Second, Education must be able to liberate people (Liberation), Education at least able to free humanity from three things. Third, education that makes humans capable of realizing Rahmatan Lil Alamin Islam means that education must be able to restore separate human personality in the bondage of materialism dogma that denies human values and is able to restore humanity to its glorious degree, namely through the approach to God Almighty One.

Keywords: Liberation Theology, Asghar Ali Engineer, Islamic Education

INTRODUCTION

Asghar Ali Engineer in his theology of liberation said that between faith and charity (praxis) is like two sides of a coin that is totally inseparable. This indicates that evidence of one's faith lies in the extent to which he is capable of

implementing his individual piety at the level of society (social).¹ Praxis will never give birth to a mere movement of verbalism or activism because it is a synthesis of both. The reality that has happened so far in the Muslim community, especially education seems to be trapped at the pole of extreme verbalism. Verbalism here is defined as a word that does not have social and cultural relevance so that the enthusiasm for transformation towards society always finds a dead end.² In the end, this will have very crucial consequences in the role of Islamic education as the bearer of the prophetic mission, namely losing its momentum as an agent of liberation.

Another problem that exists at this time is that education is more oriented towards pragmatic, individualistic individuals who ignore the human aspect as part of social society so that it is not relevant to the nature of the goals of Islamic education, both general and final goals, namely: personality as the vicegerent of Allah. The ultimate goal of education is to form a human being who dies and will face his Lord is the ultimate goal of the process of Islamic education.³ Asghar Ali Engineer is a contemporary modernist thinker trying to understand Islam through the theology of liberation he initiated. According to Asghar Ali, Islam came with the spirit of liberation, but after the Prophet Muhammad died, Islam lost its vital role. One of them is seen in the theological concept. Islamic theology which was initially close to social and economic justice began to turn to problems of eschatology and worldly problems. Islamic theology then developed with scholastic and speculative methods.⁴

According to Asghar Ali Engineer, a transformative and critical worldview is needed. The aim of the coming of Islam was to try to free humanity from oppression, therefore he proposed the emergence of liberation theology.⁵ In

¹ Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam and Liberation Theology*, occur. Agung Prihantoro, (Yogyakarta: Student Library, 2009), p. 8.

² Paulo Freire, *Politics of Education, Culture, Power and Liberation*, (Yogyakarta: Student Library, 2009), p. 41.

³ Rahimin, *Tafsir Tarbawi: Study of Analysis and Application of Educational Verses*, (Yogyakarta: Nusa Media and STAIN Bengkulu Press, 2008), p. 9.

⁴ Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam and Liberation Theology...*, p. x.

⁵ The liberation theology carried by the Engineer is (1) establishment, whether religious or political establishment. (2) Liberation theology plays a role in defending oppressed groups and being deprived of their property rights and fighting for their groups with the provision of ideological weapons that are strong in resisting oppression. (3) Liberation theology does not only recognize one metaphysical concept of destiny but also humans are free to determine their own destiny. See Engineer, *Islam and Liberation Theology*, p. 1-2.

liberation theology initiated by Engineers there are five pillars of the liberation paradigm, namely:

According to Engineers, the theology of Islamic liberation is defined as freedom which focuses on aspects of reason or constructs of thinking in interpreting books (holy texts). The concept of freedom for the Engineer is the freedom to act and the freedom to choose. The choice is God's perogatif right as an infinite substance. The theology initiated by Engineer is basically the antithesis of classical theology. If classical theology tends to be abstract and ahistorical, then the theology of liberation is more concrete and historical. His concern is more about the problems that exist in the world, "now and here" (concrete reality).⁶ Engineers want to make improvements to the building of classical theology which focuses more on the aspect of individual piety, which ignores social piety.

- a. Independence (Independence/*Hurriyah*), which we understand is not just autonomy or independence of the region, but especially to the independence of humans/people/*ummah* as creatures of Allah SWT.
- b. Equality (solidarity-Brotherhood/*Musawwamah*), every human being basically has the same position and degree, without being distinguished based on religion, culture, social class, gender and so on.
- c. Social Justice, in the social justice paradigm that is stretched, is not just equality but rather the adequacy of conditions or basic means of life for humans.
- d. Popularism (Populist), not just the love of the Nation (Nationhood/*Ukhuwah Wathoniyah*), but further to love for humanity, especially those who are marginalized. The essence of popularism is the sovereignty and empowerment of the people.
- e. Tawheed (Waḥada/Yuwāḥidu), monotheism is not only interpreted as the unity of God but also as a unity of mankind that will not truly materialize without the creation of a Classless society.⁷

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Asgar Ali Engineer Biography

Asgar Ali Engineer, born in a city in India, in Rajasthan, a city near Udaipur on March 10, 1939, the Engineer was born to a family affiliated with the Shia Ismailiyah. His father, Sheikh Qurban Husain, was an Islamic scholar who served

⁶ Agus Nuryatno, *Islam, Theology of Liberation and Gender Equality; Study of the thinking of Asghar Ali Engineer*, Print. I, (Yogyakarta: UII Press, 2001), p. 91.

⁷ Francis Wahono Nitiprawiro, *Historical Liberation Theology, Method, Praxis and Its Contents*, (Yogyakarta: LKis, 2000), p. Xxvix.

the Bohra religious leader.⁸ In addition, he is known as a person who has a liberal attitude, open, and patient.⁹ This open-minded attitude makes it often involved in the discussion and as a religious experience with followers of other religions such as a Hindu Brahma because most of the communities where Engineer is born are Hindu. In a socio-religious environment that is how the Engineer is based.

Engineers in undergoing their education at the basic level and continued to state schools in several different places, including Hosangabad, Wardha, Dewas, and Indore. In addition to secular education, he also received religious education through informal channels from his own father who was also a prominent ulama in the fields of interpretation, hadith, usual fiqh and Arabic. Besides that, Engineers also master various languages such as English, Arabic, Urdu, Persian, Hindi, Gujarat, and Marathi.¹⁰ In addition to mastering various languages he was also very interested in the lessons of diversity taught by his father and he tried to study it so that by studying that knowledge he became an expert in the field of theology, *ushul* fiqh and hadith. He also studied comparative fiqh covering four schools, namely: Sunni, Shia, 'Asyariyah and Ismaili schools.

Besides that, he was also interested in modern studies. He studied in college and graduated as a civil engineering scholar. Engineer is known as a thinker who has great attention to social problems and liberation.¹¹ In 1980 Engineer founded an institute which focused on two fields, namely harmony between religion and women's studies. He completed his civilian degree from Indore. After working for 20 years as an Engineer at the Bombay Municipal Corporation, and triggered by his pain in witnessing various oppressions that took place, especially in the Shiite Bohra environment. Therefore he decided to resign and then involved himself in the Bohra reform movement. He began to become the main figure in this movement since 1972 when the resistance broke out in Udaipur. At that time, he wrote many articles in various prominent newspapers in India, such as The Times of India, Indian Express, Statesman, Telegraph, The Hindu and others. Then he was elected Secretary-General of the Dawoodi Bohra Community Center Council at his first conference in 1977, and he was re-elected for the next term of office. During

⁸ Bohra is a religion that is affiliated with the Ismaili Shiite sect, its followers adhere to Islamic law and believe in the concept of Islamic leadership

⁹ Agus Nuryatno, *Islam, Theology of Liberation and Gender Equality...*, p. 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹¹ Asghar Ali Engineer, "Rediscovering the Prophet's Prophetic Vision: About the Ideas of Liberation in the Scriptures", *Ulumul Qur'an Journal*, No.4 Vol. II, 1992, p. 64.

this management, he brought a lot of changes and even brought the name of the reform movement to other countries through his writings and rhetoric.

The engineer was a productive figure, besides a thinker, he was also an activist, he happened to be the leader of one of the security groups syi'ah Isma'iliyah based in Bombay. Through the religious authority he has, the Engineer strives to apply his critical ideas, so he must try to deal with the reaction of the older generation who tend to be conservative in maintaining stability. He attended various training in the field of Islamic theology, interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence, and hadith.¹² He gave lectures to a number of universities in various countries, such as USA, Canada, U.K., Switzerland, Thailand, Egypt, Hong Kong, and others. He received the title of Dr. Lit (Doctor of Literature), an honor from the University of Calcutta in 1993 for the services of publication and work in the fields of communal harmony and interfaith understanding.

As a leading thinker of liberation theology in the Islamic world, Engineer not only provides a theoretical framework in refreshing Muslim thought, but he also provides a theological foundation for activists who are fighting for liberation and humanization, liberation and humanity. The style of thinking of the Engineer was greatly influenced by the thought of his teacher named Maulana Abdul Kalam Azaid, he was an Islamic scholar, leader, and reformer in India with a large contribution of his thoughts in the form of Quranic commentaries.¹³

Asghar Ali Engineer is not only smart in spawning his many acclaimed works. Asghar besides being said to be a thinker, he also rhythmically as an activist. The responsibility he held was not small either as the leader of one of the Shi'a groups ah Ismā 'iliyahal - Musta' āliyyah al-yayyibah, Dāwudī Bohras (Guzare Dāwudī) based in Bombay, India.¹⁴

The Concept of Asghar Ali Engineer Thought

The theology of Islamic liberation is an effort to build the world by freeing society from all forms of oppression, injustice, tyranny and the status quo under the light of faith. Indirectly, the process of building the liberation praxis leads to the process of secularization. Although this theological spirit rests on the anthropocentric paradigm, it does not mean that it is detached from the transcendence of divine values. Making the anthropocentric spirit as the only

¹² Asghar Ali Engineer, *Women's Rights in Islam*, occur. Farid Wajidi and Cici Farkha Assegaf, (Yogyakarta: LSPPA, 2000), P. 17.

¹³ John Efendi, *Islam and Liberation*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1993), P. 6.

¹⁴ Idan Dandi, Asghar Ali Engineer Dan Pemikirannya Mengenai Teologi Perdamaian, *Jurnal Tamaddun*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Januari – Juni 2017.

community development paradigm, will have an impact on the loss of religiosity, resulting in an existential crisis, someone feels alien to his own existence.

In the theology of his liberation, the Engineer also does not intend to ignore things that are *ukhrawi* (faith) and only have an interest in the transcendental region and sich. However, more than that the theology of liberation initiated by Engineer is a combination of reflection and action, theory and practice, and faith and charity.¹⁵ Therefore, monotheism is not only interpreted as a unity of God, but also as a unity of mankind that will not truly materialize without the creation of a Classless society.¹⁶ So that the Engineer's statement appears that the people who partially exploit some other members who are weak and oppressed cannot be called an Islamic society even though they carry out Islamic rituals.¹⁷

Part of the main key to understanding the theology of liberation in Islam is through monotheism. Recognition of the oneness of God and *taqwa* is a fundamental instrument in realizing human nature which reminds to, first, the issue of divinity or faith (Divine), and second, the issue of humanity (Insaniyah) simultaneously. In religious behavior, the concept (*tawhid-taqwa*) must have significant implications, encouraging someone to carry out continuous understanding, provide aesthetic and religious-spiritual balance in life, and foster a commitment of religious followers in the process of dialogue between themselves and changes in social reality.¹⁸

Some of the facts above of course have been sufficient to prove the need for a reconstruction effort on the meaning of theology so that Islam does not lose its spirit as a revolutionary religion, Islam is not only transcendental to God but also constitutional. Therefore, the contextualization of theology is as important as its transcendent aspect. Engineer himself understands theology as follows: "the theology is a tool to explore and know God and His instructions and to explore and know the true purpose behind His instructions. Because God is creative theology must also be so. Theology grapples with a sacred will that always new ways manifest through grandeur and creation become stagnant and not creative. Truth seekers must always struggle with changing situations and understand the new ways of manifestation. Theology is meaningless if it is not tied to a specific

¹⁵ Agus Nuryatno, *Islam, Theology of Liberation and Gender Equality...*, P. 29.

¹⁶ Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam and Liberation Theology*, occur. Agung Prihantoro (Yogyakarta: Student Library, 2009), P. 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, P. 7.

¹⁸ Farid Essack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1999), p. 31.

situation and transcends it. It is this tension between earthing and transcendence that makes theology creative.¹⁹

From the context above, it appears that there has been a deconstruction of the meaning of theology. Unlike the classical theological discourse which tends to interpret theology as "metaphysical" as defined by theo and logos roots, liberation theology extends its scope in the historical-empirical field. That is the meaning of the contextualization of theology which extends the scope of meaning based on the reason that God alone cannot be the subject of knowledge, it is manifested through His word. Thus, theology also means the knowledge of words or the science of interpretation (Hermeneutics).

The main purpose of liberation theology is how religion can be more meaningful for marginalized and weak groups. For Engineers, religion will become opium when it is aligned with the power of the status quo, so religion does not bring change to people's lives. Conversely, religion can play a central role as a revolutionary praxis.²⁰

The characteristics of liberation theology in Islam were initiated by Engineers, as follows:

- a. His main concern is about the problems that exist in the world, now and here, and only later with the *ukhrawi* problem. This means that theology is oriented to struggle with practical and concrete reality. Not with metaphysical and abstract reality as happened in scholastic theology. This does not mean ignoring the afterlife problem.
- b. Fighting against all pro-status quo forces. This is because those who support the status quo are considered to have the same mentality of supporting establishment. Therefore, the theology of liberation is the antithesis of an established social order, both religious and political.
- c. Have a personality or become a marginal group and try to liberate this community group by giving it powerful ideological weapons through active participation. The way to emancipate these marginal groups is through participatory action projects through theological formulations that they can understand. The purpose of this project is ultimately to create a kind of critical mass in the form of the Frankfurt school.
- d. This theology does not only emphasize metaphysical goals that go beyond historical processes but also emphasizes the ability of humans to reach their life goals. This means that the purpose of life that is metaphysical must be taken through historical life in this world.

¹⁹ Agus Nuryatno, *Islam, Theology of Liberation and Gender Equality...*, p. 27.

²⁰ Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam and Liberation Theology...*, p. 3.

- e. This theology emphasizes more on the praxis problem than abstract-speculative thoughts. This means that the theology of liberation does not emphasize a lot of discourse that is volatile, but emphasizes a grounded discourse so that the project of public emancipation can be realized.

By looking at some of the characteristics of the theology of liberation above, it is clear that this theology departs from praxis so that it is not trapped in theological problems which tend to be less productive. Thus, it can be concluded that liberating theology seeks to make theology a critical reflection on the reality of historical praxis. His attention does not only interpret and interpret the world but also becomes part of the struggle to create a human order that is humane and just.²¹

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Relevance of The Theology of Liberation Asghar Ali Engineer With Islamic Education Objectives

Liberation theology formulated by the Engineer obtains inspiration from the Qur'an and the struggle of the prophets, especially the prophet Muhammad. In essence, the Qur'an is revealed by Allah SWT as a guide for all nature. Therefore, we must believe that it is eternal and is always relevant to the past and future. Each generation has the right to take care of the Qur'an and then integrate it with history and social reality in their own way according to the experiences and problems they face. Problems in the past and present are certainly different, thus getting clues and inspiration from the Qur'an.

According to Asghar Ali Engineer in interpreting and integrating the Qur'an, it cannot be separated from the verses of the Qur'an which are categorized into several topics:

1. Verses that address the issue of worship, which includes prayers, fasting, hajj, zakat, and other similar practices that address this issue. The Prophet Muhammad himself explained how to pray, pilgrimage, and things related to fasting. There is no reinterpretation and rethinking in understanding the verses relating to this problem. Worship must be understood according to

²¹ Agus Nuryatno, *Islam, Theology of Liberation and Gender Equality...*, p. 31-32.

what the Prophet explained. This is a concept of worship and ritual that has its own uniqueness among other religions. Every religion develops a spiritual system and prayer, worship, meditation and others. In addition to performing prayers, zakat, fasting, etc., according to the Engineer, it does not only contain the values of devotion but also contains social values. When we are satisfied, we can feel the suffering of poor people who usually lack eating.

2. Verses that address the issue of *mu'amalat* which include marriage, divorce, inheritance, business transactions, contracts, property, agriculture, and others. In understanding these verses rethinking is needed. Modernists argue that rethinking in understanding ayat *mu'amalat* is very necessary because of the emergence of various problems and challenges. In this case, Asghar takes the example of the verse polygamy. According to him, the concept that allows marriage to four women is inspired by an understanding that originates from the medieval spirit that prevailed at the Arabs at that time. Another thing that also needs to be rethought is the problem of divorce. Some hadiths that contradict the spirit of the verses of the Qur'an relating to the problem of divorce have been used to interpret these verses.
3. The category of verses related to metaphysical beliefs, such as the oneness of God, the last day, heaven, hell, angels and so on. This is what we call *aqidah*. These verses are a part that cannot accept any changes and includes fundamental teachings in Islam. Trust in the verses above is also part of the uniqueness of Islam and is a differentiator between Islam and other religions.
4. The categories of verses that pertain to general guidance and dissemination of what is considered good (in terms of the Qur'an are referred to as *ma'ruf*) and what is considered bad (*munkar*) as a rule that needs to be replaced. Of course the understanding of good and bad can be different from time to time and from one place to another. The difference in this matter will eventually lead to differences of opinion, therefore a kind of universal approach is used to determine good and bad, namely things that introduce how beautiful God's creation can be considered as universal goodness while those who affirm it are considered as universal crimes.
5. Verses that mention values, such as justice, equality, guidelines, the creation of social justice, etc. that are naturally eternal. There are no questions or

rethinking in this matter. Islamic theologians and jurists agree that these values are formulated in all theological formulations and Islamic law.²²

In understanding the verses relating to justice or values similar to that, the Engineer views that the interpreter must pay attention to the spirit that existed at that time. This is referred to as a dynamic element, a methodological element that is very important for understanding the verses of the Qur'an. A similar approach is also a requirement for understanding hadiths. Even the most authentic hadiths will not limit us in exploring the potential of new meanings from particular verses in the Qur'an. The Prophet Muhammad in response to a particular case still considered the social context of the community in his time, but he did not necessarily forbid what was not in accordance with Islamic principles. For example in interpreting the verse about slavery.

In the engineer's view, even though the Prophet personally exemplified the emancipation of slavery, he did not just abolish slavery. Perhaps it was Islam that first taught equality for all humans through the Quranic statement that all children of Adam must be respected, before the structure of slavery took root in the social structure at a time when the institution could not be completely eradicated, but that does not mean enslavement by pointing out the verses of the Qur'an and hadith.

Responding to this, the Engineer argues that there is another important element in understanding the Qur'an by putting normative verses on contextual verses. This is because that according to the Engineer the normative verses of the application are more enduring and fundamental than contextual verses. The consequence of normativity in the verses of the Qur'an is transcendent validity. However, Qur'an theology is not dogmatic or ignores empirical reality which tends to be dynamic. The Engineer also reminded that one must be careful in sorting contextually from normative ones, both those in al-Quran and hadith.²³

From some of the description above shows that Asghar Ali Engineer combines inspiration or main sources (Al-Qur'an and As-Sunnah) with history and social reality above Engineer as if to show that Islam has dynamic teachings that can be used as a reference source for constructing theology liberation. For this reason, we need to look at the historical context of Arab society before Islam was revealed, so that we know the mission brought by the prophet in broadcasting the religion of Islam. In socio-cultural terms, we can map that the Arab region before Islam came

²² Asghar Ali Engineer, *Today's Islam*, Print. I, (Yogyakarta: Student Library, 2004). p. 23.

²³ Asghar Ali Engineer. *Women's liberation*. (Yogyakarta: Lkis, 2003), p. 42-43.

in, there has been a struggle of three cultures which is very striking in the frame of Arab life. *First*, the nomad culture of the Badui tribe in the northern Arab region. The tribe's lifestyle is passion, hard, tenacious, but not disciplined. Some circles and historians say that the tribe is uncivilized and does not care about the law. Families and tribes that are under the protection of their tribal agreement are sacred institutions that both individuals and together must be protected.²⁴

Second, the culture of farmers originating from southern Arabia, such as the Sabaeen region, *Qatabanean*, and Yemen. In contrast to Bedouin culture, in this culture adheres to a belief in God. They develop worship and worship themselves which are usually associated with fertility. Worship is slowly developing from an abstract form to a concrete form, such as the worship of the moon and sun god. In this society, there has also been regularity of social life with the establishment of royal institutions.²⁵ *Third*, the merchant culture. If in Bedouin tribal culture the spirit of collectivity and ethnicity is very strong, then in the merchant culture what happens is the opposite, namely the nature of individualism. This trade culture developed strongly in Mecca because the area was barren and arid, it was also a storage area for traders. There is no idea about worship in this area.

The meeting of the three cultural styles has created a very serious tension. Tribal collectivism, for example, is impossible to develop in the merchant community, because it will destroy the structure of trade, while individualism that develops has obviously given birth to an individualistic economic system. One tribe that dominates the economic sector in Mecca is the Quraysh tribe. They are known to be very good at trading issues, good at manipulating credit, clever at speculation, and very interested in any investment that has the potential to lead from Aden to Gaza or Damascus. The Quraysh continued to rule Makkah until Islam arrived.

In the midst of this tribal rivalry, Muhammad sent his Islamic religion which brought the wind of change especially in the social order of the Arab community at that time. In the course of his da'wah to call for the teachings of Islam, the Prophet received so many fierce challenges from the citizens of the city of Mecca, especially from the oligarchs who controlled the life of the city. They were not only afraid of losing their traditional religion of polytheism, but they were also worried about the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, which emphasized social justice, which increasingly led to his condemnation of usury, and his insistence on zakat.

²⁴ Asghar Ali Engineer, *Origins of the Development of Islam*, occur. Imam Baehaqi, (Yogyakarta: Student Library, 1999), p. 24.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

Another fear felt by the people of Mecca is the Prophet's teachings about the day of the court or the final responsibility of human actions. Therefore, there must be moral coverage where severe punishment is provided for unbelievers and perpetrators of crime, while a large reward will be given to those who are righteous.²⁶

Still related to the social structure of Arab society, Engineer explained that Islam in the technical and social-revolutionary terms is a threat to oppressive structures. According to him, the basic purpose of Islam is universal brotherhood (universal brotherhood), equality (equality) and social justice (social justice). *First*, Islam emphasizes human unity (unity of mankind) which is affirmed in the verse Al-Qur'an:

*"O man, we created you from men and women. We make you nations and tribes so that you know each other. Really, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious. Indeed, Allah is Knower."*²⁷

This verse clearly refutes all the concepts of racial, ethnic, national, or family superiority, with one affirmation and appeal for the importance of godliness. Not only ritual piety but also social piety.²⁸ Based on this understanding, Engineers began to commit themselves to uphold gender equality and the struggle for equitable gender relations through their liberal, critical and emancipatory interpersonal models. Furthermore, the Engineer said that in a patriarchal society, women are often still considered the second class. For this reason, he wants to change that perception. *Second*, as mentioned in the verse above, Islam places great emphasis on justice in all aspects of life. This is the most revolutionary concept, not only for Arabs but for all humans. This means that the recognition of Islam for human equality and justice is far ahead of the United Nations declaration of human rights. The Prophet applied the above teachings by freeing a black slave named Bilal and then the Prophet appointed him a muezzin. This is an honor coveted by free Arabs.²⁹

Besides the very revolutionary teachings described above, the Prophet Muhammad also emphasized the need for an attitude of openness, tolerance, and respect for other religions. This has been mentioned in several verses of the

²⁶ Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam and Liberation Theology...*, p. 33.

²⁷ RI Ministry of Religion, *Alqur'an and Translation "Al-Hikmah"*, (Bandung, Diponegoro, 2006), p. 273.

²⁸ Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam and Liberation Theology...*, p. 33.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 47.

Qur'an.³⁰ According to the Engineer, the Qur'an does not consider a religion to be wrong, but its adherents use religion for its own sake. The Qur'an never teaches to not respect, let alone hate or hurt followers of other religions.³¹ Such are some of the liberating aspects carried out by the Prophet in order to carry out a liberation. According to Engineer, this liberating practice requires mastery of science, because it is science that opens the horizons of liberation and liberal behavior. In accordance with the Al-Qur'an letter which first came down Q.S Al Alaq: 1-5

*Read by (mentioning) the name of your God Who Created, He has created man from a lump of blood. Read, and your Lord is the most merciful, who teaches (man) with the intercession of the word. He taught man what he did not know.*³²

What needs to be noted here is that the Arabs did not know what a pen was, reading and writing were very rare. In this case the Al-Qur'an emphasizes the use of pens because with pen science is transformed from one place to another and from the next generation. The verse that was revealed to the Prophet began with the affirmation of the importance of science and its spread. In the other parts of the Qur'an, science is associated with nur (light). Thus, God guided the Arabs (those who later followed the Prophet) from darkness to the light of science. We can understand what the liberating consequences of this statement of science are for the Arab way of thinking. The warnings in the Qur'an delivered by the Prophet have a great liberating impact on the Arabs and other people.

The brief description above is enough to prove that the origin of Islam is inseparable from its partiality and concern for the marginalized. The reason why marginal people are attracted to Islam is that they believe Muhammad's mission will be able to free them from the injustice of the socio-economic structure.

Besides the Prophets as a source of inspiration for liberation theology, other Prophets were also considered to be the pioneers of change. Prophet Ibrahim, for example, was regarded as a warrior who fought against idols who degraded dignity and values as human beings. The Prophet Moses was regarded as the liberator of his people who was oppressed by King Fir'aun and even the Qur'an called him the king of oppressors (tyrannical) and arrogant (*mustakbir*). Prophet Moses was appointed by God as the leader of the oppressed against the arbitrariness of the

³⁰ Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, *Alqur'an and Translation "Al-Hikmah"*, (Bandung, Diponegoro, 2006).

³¹ Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam and Liberation Theology...*, p. 54-55.

³² Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, *Alqur'an and Translation "Al-Hikmah"*, (Bandung, Diponegoro, 2006).

pharaoh. While the prophet Isa struggled to free the Jewish people from legal formalism in his time.

Then, from among the companions of the Prophet who became a source of inspiration for the liberation by Engineer Umar Bin Khattab and Ali Bin Abi Talib. Engineers consider them to be fighters who seek to uphold social justice after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. They seek to intensively distribute wealth fairly to the community. Umar does not allow individual wealth in matters of land to avoid domination of wealth. Ali tried to distribute state tax (*Bait al-mal*) fairly. For both, Islam does not only mean a charity such as a prayer and fasting, but it is also a dynamic of social and cultural forces that cannot be separated from its daily attention to the problems of society. In the language of Engineer, the two companions of the prophet believed that Islam was a serious project to uphold social justice.³³

As for knowing more discursively about the discourse of liberation in Islam we will try to see the concept of the release of Ali Shariati, a Muslim scholar who was mentioned as an ideology of the Islamic revolution in Iran. Ali Syariati analyzed that in fact in humans there are values of true humanism that are divine as moral and religious cultural heritage. Humans are self-conscious creatures, can make choices and can create, so that throughout history humanity tries to realize the values of humanism, even though what it finds is bitterness and disasters when fighting evil power and oppression. In Ali Shariati's view, all of these world ideologies have failed to free humanity and instead created new forms of injustice and new oppression in different expressions and means. Therefore, to overcome this social problem a new path must be sought, a third road which according to Ali Shariati can be played by Islam.³⁴

In this context, the idea built by Ali Shariati and Engineer apparently also had conceptual closeness. Both of them consider the prophetic role important, especially the existence of the Prophet Muhammad in social reform. The Prophet was not just a teacher, but also a warrior and activist who was sent to free the people from ignorance and oppression.³⁵ From some of the opinions above, there are several conclusions which are important points in liberation theology. Liberation theology is basically a scientific discipline that discusses the nature and

³³ Agus Nuryatno, *Islam, Theology of Liberation and Gender Equality...*, p. 40-41

³⁴ Michael Amaladoss, *Asian liberation theology*, (Yogyakarta: pustaka mahasiswa and insit, 2000). p. 35.

³⁵ This was seen when Nabim freed the people of Makkah from social and economic injustice and inspired their followers to free themselves and other communities from oppression by the kingdoms of Romai and Sassanid.

relationship between God and humans and other creatures. As a transcendent relationship, the relationship is very sacred and is related to the foundation of belief. In some of the concepts of liberation mentioned above, it has indicated that there is an appreciation of human freedom as independent individuals in actualizing their rights in the structure of people's lives. Therefore, the existence of the status quo is very contrary to human freedom itself.

In liberation theology, there are at least five pillars of the liberation paradigm, namely:

1. Independence (Independence/Hurriyah), which we understand is not just autonomy or independence of the region, but especially to the independence of humans/people/ummah/as creatures of Allah SWT.
2. Equality (Equality/Brotherhood/Musawwamah), every human being basically has the same position and degree, without being distinguished based on religion, culture, social class, gender and so on.
3. Social Justice, in the social justice paradigm that is stretched, is not just equality but rather the adequacy of conditions or basic means of life for humans.
4. Popularism (Populist), not just the love of the Nation (Nationhood/Ukhuwah Wathoniyah), but further to love for humanity, especially those who are marginalized. The essence of popularism is the sovereignty and empowerment of the people.
5. Tauhid (Wahada/Yuwāḥidu), monotheism is not only interpreted as the unity of God but also as a unity of mankind that will not truly materialize without the creation of a Classless society.³⁶

The five paradigms, at least have been clear to us, that theology is not solely dealing with the problem of divinity, more than that the theology of liberation is able to produce a revolutionary movement in creating equality and justice, so that it is an obligation for humans to be able to save those oppressed and deprived of their rights, including students who are shackled by their independence in the education process.

Education that frees according to the Engineer is education that is able to establish a relationship reflecting with the community. Human relations and education are not linear, but reciprocal relationships. Because education has a reciprocal or dialectical relationship with the community, changes in society will undoubtedly bring changes to education, at least changes in society need to be responded to correctly if the world of education wants to remain relevant to the

³⁶ Francis Wahono Nitiprawiro, *Historical Liberation Theology, Method, Praxis and Its Contents*, (Yogyakarta: LKis, 2000), p. xxvix.

demands of a changing society. Likewise, conversely, changes in education must have consequences for changing society. To achieve a free education, there are two main principles that become the operational basis for renewing Islamic education. *First*, the renewal of Islamic education is essentially an effort to restore and lay the basic framework for building an Islamic education theory based on its pure reference source, namely the monotheism doctrine which emphasizes the principle of unity and integration. It is from this monotheistic foundation and paradigm that the theory of Islamic education is rebuilt as a system in a format that responds to the demands of the times and at the same time is able to encourage and direct the dynamics of social change in the Islamic community.

Second, in realizing the Islamic education renewal project based on and referring to the monotheistic paradigm, we need to look at the rules: *al-muhafadhah 'ala al-qadîmi shalih wa akhdzu bi al-jadîd al-ashlâh* (nurturing the old well and taking new ones better). This second principle rests on two theoretical assumptions as follows:

1. As long as Muslims remain faithful to the framework of "historical Islam", then Islam will never truly reach the level of necessity for renewal which urges that Islamic education can play an effective role as the bearer of prophetic mission that brings the ideals of liberation in the contemporary life of the Ummah Islam.
2. Renewal of Islamic education does not presuppose a rejection of the past (classical) Islamic education. Rather, the continuity of relations with the past (classical) Islamic educational legacy is one of the important prerequisites for building authentic and current Islamic education thinking, of course, as far as the legacy of the thinking of classical Islamic education is faced with an objective and rational attitude. Objective means making and treating it (classical thought) as something relevant and contextual in its own existence because it also means separating it from our present. While rationality means making it (classical thought) contextual and relevant to our present, by way of relating it to our present existence.

In a broader sense, the Engineer actually also wants a release for humans from everything that has confined their freedom, both in thinking and acting. For Engineers, theology should be interpreted as something dynamic. The emphasis is not on the aspects of sacredness and the sanctity of theology itself, but how the nature of dynamism is able to contextualize theology and its purpose, where with this process theology becomes able to adapt to reality. In this case the author concludes some of the objectives of the liberation theology. *First*, Humanism means theology aims to humanize humans. for the Engineer, the human being has free will in achieving life goals and reaching for his future, humans understand

themselves not as people who are helpless and determined by outsiders. God's will is understood as the peak of inspiration, innate and interiorized.³⁷

Second, in addition to humanism as explained above the liberation theology initiated by the Engineer also has the goal of liberation, meaning free. Evidenced by the enthusiasm of the community to do rethinking about religion so that people find a new thought that is in accordance with historical solidarity and social integration. This can be seen from his enthusiasm in learning to explore the histories of prophetic struggle in realizing liberation and creating justice. So that the practices of feudalism which are inherited from the classical period can be erased to create a classless social order.

Third, enthusiasm in reforming thought from exclusive theological thinking towards transformative theology. This was done by Engineers as an effort to carry out a reconstruction of the very rigid and exclusive meaning of theology. This attitude will eventually give birth to a diversity of fundamentalism so that the culture of *taklid* is inevitable. Engineer begins by criticizing classical theology, and formulates transformative theology, meaning that it not only touches on the transcendent area of sich but also eavesdrops on liberative values in Islam, so that it will achieve spiritual reality and Islam does not lose the mission his prophecy as a religion of liberation.

CONCLUSION

The essence of the purpose of Islamic education is both general purpose and ultimate goal, namely: The general purpose of Islamic education forms a personality as a vicegerent of Allah. This is relevant to the aim of Engineer's liberation theology, namely First, Humanism means theology aims to humanize humans. Second, Liberative means free, as evidenced by the people's enthusiasm for rethinking religion so that people find a new thought that is in accordance with historical solidarity and social integration. Third, enthusiasm in reforming thought from exclusive theological thinking towards transformative theology that has meaning not only touches on the transcendent area of sich but also engages in liberative values in Islam, so that it will attain spiritual realism and Islam does not lose its prophetic mission as a religion of liberation

³⁷ Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam and Liberation Theology...*, p. 15-19.

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