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## Analytical Study of Ahmad Kasravi's Claim of Prophethood based on Adler's Psychological Theory

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**Abstract:** *Ahmad Kasravi was among the thinkers with religious intellectualism tendencies, whose opinions on religion in contemporary Iranian history were among the most controversial ones. According to the Peyman monthly magazine, Kasravi initially expressed his views as a religious reformer and presented a rationalist-based ritual called "Pure Religion" in the guise of a prophet. Kasravi's personality traits are used to explain his approach in propagating the new religion. The present study aims to assess Kasravi's claim to be a prophet with an interdisciplinary approach utilizing Adler's psychological theory and Peyman magazine. Based on Adler's theory, pampering and suffering from anemia resulted in developing a special personality and creating a sense of inferiority in Kasravi. Kasravi's successes in historical studies led to a kind of compensation for his inferiority, superiority, and development of his creative self-approach. As this approach intensified and he criticized religious dissenters, an imaginary teleology developed in Kasravi's mind, leading to his claim to be prophet and presentation of a new religion.*

**Key words:** Religion, Psychological Theory, Ahmad Kasravi, Adler, Inferiority, Superiority, Imaginary teleology, Prophethood

### Introduction

Intellectualism and criticism of religious beliefs based on the concepts related to the European Enlightenment entered the intellectual system of Iranian intellectuals from the early Qajar period (1789-1925).<sup>1</sup> They believed that the need to separate

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<sup>1</sup> Gleave, 2004.

religion from politics, adapt religion to reason, especially modern sciences, and purify religion from superstitions was among the most critical factors for Iranians' progress. A large number of intellectuals expressed their opinions in this regard and spoke about the need for religious dissent. The conflict between Western-oriented intellectuals and religious traditionalists became one of the most serious intellectual challenges in contemporary Iran with significant consequences which reached their peak during the first Pahlavi period.<sup>2</sup> The need to weaken religious institutions was increasingly considered by the government due to Reza Shah's policies of conventionalism and new nation-building with an approach of archaism and modernism. Religious dissenters were supported in line with this policy. These people, who were often influenced by positivist methodology, aimed to rationalize and reconcile religion with themes such as democracy and rationality. It is worth noting that the religious intellectualism emerged from two different social origins, namely secular intellectuals and modernist clerics. Ahmad Kasravi (Ahmad Hokmabadi Tabrizi, 1890-1946)<sup>3</sup> was considered as a cleric for a while in his youth. Then, he joined the ranks of intellectuals after leaving that role. His approach to religion was initially regarded as critical, resulting in overthrowing all of the religions and designing a new one.

No study has been conducted on the title and Kasravi's psychological characteristics, except those regarding his religious approach. This study seeks to answer some questions applying Kasravi's articles in the *Peyman* magazine<sup>4</sup> and *Parcham* newspaper,<sup>5</sup> as well as Adler's psychological theory. In addition, the present study aims to evaluate the psychological components leading to Kasravi's approach in criticizing religious reformers and dissenters, as well as the effect of his personality on bringing a new religion.

### *Theoretical foundations*

Alfred Adler, who was among the greatest contemporary psychologists, initially followed Freud. After a while, he insisted on social issues and considered aggression to be the main motivation for human behavior. First, he introduced humans as aggressive beings. Then, he replaced aggression with authoritarianism and identified superiority to be the most genuine motivation for life. He considered superiority to be related to inferiority.<sup>6</sup> Based on Adler's theory, inferiority is among the most critical facts in human psychological life, which is mixed with human nature and is not regarded as

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<sup>2</sup> Ghods, 1991; Asadi & Hossein Talae, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Abrahamian, 1973; Ridgeon, 2006, 2016; Kia, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> "Promise" – a cultural and political magazine edited by Kasravi in the period 1933-1942.

<sup>5</sup> "Flag" – a political magazine published by Kasravi in the period 1942-1944. It was the official organ of the political party, "Azadegan", which was also established by Kasravi; See also Jaśkowski, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Siasi, 2000: 85.

a random phenomenon.<sup>7</sup> Adler believed in the impact of the inferiority complex on the development of individuals' personalities and social actions. According to Adler, the objective of each person's life is determined based on the feelings such as inferiority, inadequacy, and insecurity. He indicated that,

From the beginning, the child seeks to be noticed by others and attract the parents' attention. The first signs of this awakened tendency for self-recognition arise under the influence of inferiority, and the child aims to gain superiority over his/her surroundings.<sup>8</sup>

According to Adler, inferiority is observed in all of the humans from birth. He emphasized that being human means feeling inferior. Inferiority dominates human psychological life, leading to his/her struggle to end this feeling. In his words, inferiority, which dominates since birth, drives humans towards development.<sup>9</sup> Based on Adler's theory, inferiority originates from three sources including physical defects, pampering, and neglect, which give humans incorrect concepts of the world and make their way of life abnormal.<sup>10</sup> Adler was pampered by his mother for the first two years of his life. He could not play like other children and felt inferior due to rickets. According to Adler, most actions of a person are influenced by the compensation of inferiority complex when he/she suffers from this defect.<sup>11</sup> Superiority is among the aspects of compensation in Adler's theory. Adler found that people tend to compensate their weakness by strengthening the weak organ through training and development. He called this action the striving for superiority. At first, Adler focused more on the inferiority of an organ. Then, he expanded his theory to include all of the feelings related to inferiority.<sup>12</sup> In Adler's opinion, inferiority plays a critical role in achieving progress and taking steps towards perfection based on compensation when it is not excessive. In addition, the person can consider this sense of inferiority as the reason for his/her weaknesses and resort to rationalization. The main features of Adler's theory are summarized as the inferiority, superiority, lifestyle, birth order, self-consciousness, social interest, ideal, and self-creative. Like other psychiatrists who theorize about personality, Adler first focused his studies on the abnormality. Then, he generalized his results to all of the individuals, whether abnormal or normal, arguing that the difference between abnormality and normality is considered as quantitative, not qualitative.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Adler, 1991: 55.

<sup>8</sup> Adler, 2000: 55.

<sup>9</sup> Adler, 1991: 56.

<sup>10</sup> Siasi, 2000: 88.

<sup>11</sup> Karimi, 2006: 92

<sup>12</sup> Carver & Scheier, 2008: 25.

<sup>13</sup> Siasi, 2000: 83.

## **Kasravi's childhood and development of inferiority**

According to Adler, inferiority, which develops in childhood, originates from physical defects, pampering, and neglect. Studying Kasravi's biography reveals some of the factors leading to his inferiority. It is noteworthy that inferiority, which is not necessarily negative, leads to progress when it does not exceed a certain limit.<sup>14</sup> Apparently, pampering and physical defect developed inferiority in Kasravi. In fact, pampering was considered as the prominent feature of his childhood. According to Adler, pampered children become tyrannical and self-willed people with an undeveloped sense of social standing who expect society to adapt to their selfish preferences.<sup>15</sup> Kasravi, who benefitted from the attention and extreme support of his family as a child, writes that, "I was raised with a respect which few children could enjoy."<sup>16</sup> Kasravi's father was highly keen for his son to become a clergyman like his ancestors. In addition, his mother paid extreme attention to her child's upbringing so that she even prevented him from going to the streets and playing with his peers. Further, other family members paid a lot of attention to Kasravi. He claimed that, "My aunts considered me their father's successor and treated me protectively."<sup>17</sup> Such attention forced Kasravi to be pampered and develop a sense of inferiority, especially in the social sphere. Adler believed that spoiling makes children think that they are highly important and can order others. Accordingly, they become frustrated at school or other places where they are not the center of attention. Furthermore, they become impatient with others and not sociable because they fail to learn to be patient or consider the wishes of others. Pampered children cannot communicate with others. They are no longer the little prince of the house and are forced to endure inevitable failures as soon as they leave home.<sup>18</sup> Adler defined pampering as the most vital factor blocking psychological development, asserting that,

Pampering simulates a greenhouse heat which creates the atmosphere of an unnatural upbringing environment without the ability to give dare of life and develop the child's sense of solidarity.<sup>19</sup>

The result of the family's excessive attention and Kasravi's pampering is observed in his behavior with his peers and his lack of solidarity with other children. He could never get along with other children at school due to his superiority. He even temporarily dropped out of school due to his inability to adapt to its environment.

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<sup>14</sup> Siasi, 2000: 85.

<sup>15</sup> Siasi, 2000: 87; Karimi, 2006: 96.

<sup>16</sup> Kasravi, 1976: 6.

<sup>17</sup> Kasravi, 1976: 6.

<sup>18</sup> Adler, 2000: 34.

<sup>19</sup> Adler, 1991: 137.

Kasravi declared that he avoided going to school for a while because the children's mischief and strictness of the teachers were against his will.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, the contradictory environments of the family and outside world intensified Kasravi's inferiority in society.

Kasravi's physical defect was regarded as another influential factor in intensifying inferiority in his personality, resulting in affecting his future actions. According to Adler, physical weakness and ill health change a person's mood, leading to inferiority. Thus, ill health destructs the body structure, as well as mental and physical health. Such a person, who becomes nervous, irritable, and sensitive, confronts more with anxiety.<sup>21</sup> Kasravi contracted typhus in his early youth, leading to several days of anesthesia and a hemorrhage, as well as various physical and mental injuries for the rest of his life. He writes that,

Blood came from my nose until I fainted and fell. This immense bleeding is among the most influential events in my life, leading to anemia and weakness which are with me to this day. From the next day onwards, my eyesight became dim and I failed to distinguish anyone from ten paces away. After a while, my teeth began to crumble and my hair began to turn white. Then, I suffered from indigestion.<sup>22</sup>

Kasravi's physical weakness, which remained for a long time, affected his appearance and morals. Mohammad-Taqi Bahar (Malek osh-Sho'arā Bahār) maintains to this in a poem criticizing Kasravi's morals.<sup>23</sup>

According to Adler, the order of birth in the family plays a critical role in developing the individuals' personality. In his view, the first child learns a sense of responsibility quite early since he/she benefits from a special position and is mostly entrusted by his/her parents to take care of his/her younger brothers and sisters. First children often show conservative characteristics and can become advocates of discipline and tyranny.<sup>24</sup> Kasravi was the eldest child in the family and this issue affected his intellectual and personal approaches. The death of his father in childhood and his sense of responsibility towards his brothers and sisters even forced him to abandon his education for a while and start working.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Kasravi, 1943b: 303.

<sup>21</sup> Hurlock, 2012: 162.

<sup>22</sup> Kasravi, 1976: 42.

<sup>23</sup> Bahar, 2001: 527.

<sup>24</sup> Adler, 1991: 134-135.

<sup>25</sup> Kasravi, 1943d: 367-370.

## **Kasravi's efforts to seek superiority based on inferiority**

According to Adler's theory, inferiority is related to the effort to succeed and a force exists behind people's behavior to strive for success and superiority.<sup>26</sup> In addition, inferiority, as the driving force in behavior, is considered as the source of all of the human efforts.<sup>27</sup> Further, the need to overcome inferiority constantly puts pressure on people<sup>28</sup> to make a lot of effort to compensate for their shortcomings in order to achieve success. Inferiority does not turn into a complex and becomes a motivation for the success of normal people. The person's superiority may increase considerably and becomes a pathological disease, resulting in emerging a certain arrogant behavior in his/her relationships.<sup>29</sup> A person with a pathological inferiority suffers from an inferiority complex and seeks superiority abnormally.<sup>30</sup> Like other psychiatrists who theorize about personality, Adler first focused his studies on the abnormal persons. Then, he generalized his results to all of the individuals, whether abnormal or normal, maintaining that the difference between abnormality and normality is regarded as quantitative, not qualitative.<sup>31</sup> Ahmad Kasravi was considered as a normal individual, whose early actions were perceived as an effort to succeed and excel. The first reflection of Kasravi's efforts to achieve success and excellence are observed in his actions from the time he entered school. Kasravi felt superior to other children in school. He writes that, "I told the mullah to teach me two lessons a day since I was making rapid progress in my studies during the first year of school."<sup>32</sup> He finished the Quran during one year, which other students took seven years to complete.<sup>33</sup> He showed his superiority among students in his adolescence, completing two years of schooling during five months.<sup>34</sup> Seeking superiority was among prominent aspects of Kasravi's actions in the later periods of his life. This tendency intensified when he turned to historical studies. Compiling the Azeri language book led to his victory over the Iranian researchers and membership in the Orientalist societies of England and America.<sup>35</sup> Kasravi's attention to linguistics and his claim to create a third theory in this science<sup>36</sup> further fueled his idea of seeking superiority so that he asserted

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<sup>26</sup> Feist & Feist, 2009: 87.

<sup>27</sup> Tarkhan & Golpour, 2017: 72.

<sup>28</sup> Feist & Feist, 2009: 89.

<sup>29</sup> Adler, 2000: 57.

<sup>30</sup> Carver & Scheier, 2008: 460.

<sup>31</sup> Siasi, 2000: 83.

<sup>32</sup> Kasravi, 1976: 8.

<sup>33</sup> Kasravi, 1943b: 305.

<sup>34</sup> Kasravi, 1943e: 427.

<sup>35</sup> Kasravi, 1976: 246.

<sup>36</sup> Kasravi, 1977: 270.

bringing a new alphabetic language with the potential to become global and replace “Esperanto”.<sup>37</sup>

Kasravi’s criticism and retelling of the Orientalists’ faults in their scientific studies were regarded as the most critical factor in strengthening this psychological approach (seeking superiority) before claiming divine choice and presenting a new religion. Nafisi writes in this regard that, “Kasravi was considered as the first person to criticize the historical mistakes of Orientalists.”<sup>38</sup> In his first critique of the Iranologists, Kasravi initially raised objections to Edward Brown in his correction of the history of Tabaristan and indicated his errors.<sup>39</sup> Regarding his critical comments on Orientalists, he initially represented his objective to show the scientific weakness of most Orientalists and prove that they could obtain better results.<sup>40</sup> However, Kasravi continued his critical approach to finding errors in Iranologists to prove his superiority because Iranian researchers did not believe in his scientific ability for a long time and regarded his claims in this field to be unfounded with various excuses.<sup>41</sup> Kasravi’s efforts to point out the Iranologists’ faults were considered as scientific. However, it appears that his tendency for superiority and perfection affected this action. In fact, he regarded himself the most prominent writer in the East. He writes in this regard that,

My books are considered as the most well-known ones of Eastern writers in the European world. I was a member of five major scientific associations in Europe and America.<sup>42</sup>

Kasravi seriously sought scientific endeavors for success, which paved the way for his quest for superiority in religious fields. According to Adler, the power of effort is regarded as innate. However, its nature stems from inferiority and superiority.<sup>43</sup>

### **Imaginary teleology (claiming prophethood and presenting a universal religion)**

Imaginary teleology is among the methods to compensate for inferiority. First, the individual creates an image of him/herself which does not correspond to reality. In this component, the individual defines ideals for him/herself which are considered as imaginary. The imaginary beliefs guide the individual’s behavior and he/she feels that the world has assigned him/her a specific mission. This imaginary sense of mission guides the lifestyle of these individuals, gives integrity to their personalities,

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<sup>37</sup> Tabari, 1999: 3-52.

<sup>38</sup> Nafisi, 1955: 11.

<sup>39</sup> *Nobahar Newspaper*, 1922a: 188; 1022b: 202.

<sup>40</sup> Kasravi, 1944a: 8-9; Kasravi, 1940b: 171.

<sup>41</sup> Kasravi, 1926: 748.

<sup>42</sup> Kasravi, 1944b: 25.

<sup>43</sup> Feist & Feist, 2009: 89.

and makes their entire behavior purposeful when they become aware in this regard.<sup>44</sup> Success and family play a critical role in this image-building.<sup>45</sup> The imaginary teleology in Kasravi's psyche was reflected in his claim as a world reformer, prophetic claim, and presentation of a universal religion.

### *Kasravi as a global reformer*

The imaginary teleology in Kasravi's personality and psyche was initially presented in the form of a claim to reform the world. His claim to understand the main reason for the obstacles in the world and provide a solution for their elimination was among the effective components in developing imaginary teleology. Kasravi's reformist efforts with a global approach began by publishing the *Peyman* magazine during 1933. He introduced himself as a social and religious reformer by publishing this magazine. He regarded the mission of the *Peyman* magazine to be showing the way to salvation and prosperity of the world.<sup>46</sup> Kasravi argued that Iran was not his field of endeavor. In fact, he aimed to bring goodness, save the world from the dead end, and lead the humans to a straight highway. His opposition to racism is analyzed in this regard. In his opinion, the racial hatreds among Europeans stemmed from their philosophy.<sup>47</sup> Kasravi identified the lack of understanding of the human's nature and psyche as the most vital reason for the obstacles facing the West and Western philosophers. Unlike Westerners who observed progress only in scientific achievements, he believed that scientific progress is achieved alongside that in the religion of life. Western philosophers ignored this fact and observed progress only in one aspect.<sup>48</sup>

In his quest for superiority over other thinkers and philosophers in presenting a new perspective on improving the state of the world, Kasravi believed that his views were special and unique and that his thinking did not inspire from the thoughts of other thinkers.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, he claimed that no trace of being influenced by others' thoughts was observed throughout his writings and his thoughts were unique.

Based on Kasravi's writings, he was familiar with most of the currents in religious intellectualism and influenced by the ideas of people such as Seyyed Ahmad Khan (Indian philosopher and educationist), Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani, Sheikh Ibrahim Zanjani, Ahmad Amin (Egyptian historian and writer), and other religious thinkers, despite his claims. Kasravi's belief in the elimination of the political aspect of Islam, emphasis on the ordinary personality of the Prophet, and reference to conveying

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<sup>44</sup> Feist & Feist, 2009: 91.

<sup>45</sup> Meili & Robertoux, 2008: 132.

<sup>46</sup> Kasravi, 1942a: 435.

<sup>47</sup> Kasravi, 1934: 18.

<sup>48</sup> Kasravi, 1941b: 123.

<sup>49</sup> Kasravi, 1942c: 1.

the divine message as his sole duty were taken from the book *Principles of Democracy* by Sheikh Ibrahim Zanjani.<sup>50</sup> Kasravi's claim to replace religious sects with a single religion, continuity of the prophets' appearance, and denial of the finality of the Prophet were influenced by the ideas of Kazemzadeh Iranshahr.<sup>51</sup> In addition, his views on explaining the revelation, necessity of connecting religion with knowledge, and a faith based on reason were taken from the claims of Seyyed Ahmad Khan.<sup>52</sup> According to Adamiyat, Kasravi's approach in the book *Shi'ism* was influenced by the ideas of Aqa Khan Kermani.<sup>53</sup> However, it appears that Kasravi's familiarity with the ideas of thinkers from the Arab world, especially Ahmad Amin, affected his criticism of Shi'ism significantly. Examining Ahmad Amin's criticisms of Shi'ism (by publishing the book *Dhuha Al-Islam*) on issues such as the conflict between Shi'ism and democracy, its opposition to rationalism, Mahdism and emergence of Mahdist claimants during every era, and the like,<sup>54</sup> as well as Kasravi's claims in the book *Shi'ism* in the same principles show that he was greatly influenced by this Egyptian author in his criticism of Shi'ism. A large number of people affected Kasravi's intellectual ideas, despite his claim regarding his superiority. In fact, Kasravi put the others' ideas into his own intellectual system with his creative mind, presenting a new perspective. According to Natiq, Kasravi excelled at perception, synthesis, and conclusion.<sup>55</sup>

### ***Claiming divine choice (prophecy) and presenting a new religion***

Kasravi's studies reveals that he initially introduced himself as a defender of Islam and even showed the footprints of orientalists affiliated with colonialism in forming the anti-Islamic approach of Iranian intellectuals.<sup>56</sup> However, he was thinking from the beginning of claiming divine choice and presenting a new religion considering his creative personality and realization of imaginary teleology. Kasravi believed that his efforts fail due to the religious approach of Iranians when he started preaching his new religion from the beginning of his activities. Accordingly, he moved step by step in following his path. In this regard, he initially defined his mission as fighting against superstitions and deviant religions.<sup>57</sup> Then, he denied the existing religions and asked all of their supporters to join Islam as the most perfect religion. Finally, he proposed his new religion by criticizing Islam and its shortcomings in line with the requirements

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<sup>50</sup> Mollaei Tavani, 2016: 360.

<sup>51</sup> Iranshahr, 1926: 361.

<sup>52</sup> Mollaei Tavani, 2016: 324.

<sup>53</sup> Adamiyat, 1978: 11-210.

<sup>54</sup> Enayat, 1993: 83-84.

<sup>55</sup> Natiq, 1977: 304.

<sup>56</sup> Kasravi, 1933: 6 and 11.

<sup>57</sup> Kasravi, 1934: 18.

of the time. In order to justify his view that Islam cannot be the last religion, Kasravi declared that a religion should emerge in every era to eliminate the intellectual needs and obstacles of the time. In his opinion, Islam was appropriate and responsive to the obstacles and errors of the time of the Prophet. Idolatry and philosophizing are considered as great errors of that time and today, respectively.<sup>58</sup>

Some researchers maintain that Kasravi claimed prophethood (divine choice) during the final years of the *Peyman* magazine. However, reviewing all of the studies in this magazine reveals that his first efforts to confront Islam and present himself as a divine chosen one began during the first issue in the third year of the magazine. In fact, he exercised extreme caution and indirectly presented his view. In order to lay the groundwork for his new religion, Kasravi implicitly raised the intellectual premises of the necessity for a new religion by arguing that, “God does not leave the world with this disordered religious situation and the path to salvation has been opened to the world.” However, he asserted at the end of his work that, “The world does not need a new religion and it should be returned to its original form.”<sup>59</sup> In the next two issues, Kasravi pointed out the weakness and efforts to overthrow all of the religions, indicating that Islam has deviated from its path. He claimed a divine choice and the need for its coming for every era of the world. In his opinion, God selects other divine choices to reform the affairs of the world. Kasravi believed that the new religion should accompany religion and knowledge.<sup>60</sup> Some readers of the *Peyman* magazine noticed Kasravi’s religious claims from this time. Writing a letter to the office of the *Peyman* magazine, one of these people considered Kasravi’s claims to have begun in the third year and fifth issue of the magazine. He reacted to Kasravi’s claims and raised some questions, despite his interest in the *Peyman* magazine, while Kasravi evaded answering.<sup>61</sup> He indirectly expressed his views on the definition of religion and prophet from the third year of his magazine. A few years later, he addressed his position as a chosen one and prophet of a new religion after providing the intellectual foundations, maintaining that nothing remained of the original Islam and a new religion should emerge.<sup>62</sup>

In Kasravi’s fantasy of being selected by God to reform the world, he downplayed the traditional meanings of prophethood and its capabilities, which were accepted by most religions. He asserted that, “God only shakes his heart at various times, uncover his previous knowledge, and reveals the truths to him when he aims to make someone his prophet.”<sup>63</sup> He declared about his prophethood that a divine force moves him to put

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<sup>58</sup> Kasravi, 1936b: 353 and 356, 1943a: 68.

<sup>59</sup> Kasravi, 1935: 5-7.

<sup>60</sup> Kasravi, 1936a: 132 and 137.

<sup>61</sup> Kasravi, 1939a: 206-209.

<sup>62</sup> Kasravi, 1940c: 208.

<sup>63</sup> Kasravi, 1939b: 502-503.

religion in its true place and his efforts in this regard are beyond the power of ordinary humans due to God's support.<sup>64</sup> In order to show himself as a divinely chosen one, Kasravi maintained that his divine purpose has forced him not to speak a false word or act according to whim.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, he believed that his claims were without fault and he was always victorious in everything he wrote.<sup>66</sup>

During his efforts to present the new religion, Kasravi argued that he entered this field by the command of God.<sup>67</sup> Thus, he indicated that God motivates his chosen ones to strive for the reform of society with a force. Claiming such a thing, he wrote, that "In freeing the world from ignorance which is beyond the ability and thought of man, a hand drove me towards these works which I could not disobey and was forced to strive."<sup>68</sup> Kasravi asserted that his eight-year efforts to confront the numerous cults in Iran and fight against Greek philosophy, Sufism, Saboteurism, and Western materialist literature and philosophy with its solid foundations were impossible without God's grace and companionship, and anyone who claims in this regard is devoid of wisdom. In order to claim divine grace for himself, he declared that, "Hundreds of people cannot perform my work since these efforts are beyond the power of ordinary human beings."<sup>69</sup> Expressing the same claim, he writes in another place that, "It is impossible to rise to the guidance of the world and open the way to salvation for people except by the power of God, and those who are inspired do not seek to work except by a divine power."<sup>70</sup>

The imaginary idea of divine choice in Kasravi reached the point where he believed that his writings and messages in the *Peyman* magazine were written with the guidance and support of God. Therefore, his claim was higher and more valuable than any other philosopher who aimed to show a new way for human comfort at that time, and his words were considered new and the only way to human happiness. Thus, he advised a young man who was familiar with the thoughts of Western philosophers that "The vague and difficult words of Nietzsche, Bachner, and Schopenhauer are regarded as outdated and he should turn to studying *Peyman*."<sup>71</sup> The above-mentioned material indicates that Kasravi claimed a kind of revelation and mission from God. However, he aimed to reduce the meaning of revelation, despite its traditional definitions considering the religious context of the society in order to create less conflict with

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<sup>64</sup> Kasravi, 1939b: 503.

<sup>65</sup> Kasravi, 1942b: 489.

<sup>66</sup> Kasravi, 1940d: 290.

<sup>67</sup> Kasravi, 1940a: 486.

<sup>68</sup> Kasravi, 1940c: 204.

<sup>69</sup> Kasravi, 1940e: 416, 1940a: 486.

<sup>70</sup> Kasravi, 1940b: 177-178.

<sup>71</sup> Kasravi, 1937: 468.

the beliefs of the common people. Therefore, he always argued that his definitions of prophethood and revelation differed from that of Muslims.<sup>72</sup>

Following the Age of Enlightenment, Kasravi maintained that religion should be rational and everything other than that should be discarded.<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, he rejected the revelation and descent of its angel to the Prophet, as well as the miracles of some prophets indicated in the Quran, and attacked Shi'ism during November 1940.<sup>74</sup> Finally, Kasravi referred to his new religion, which he called "Pure Religion" in his book. From the beginning of his claim as a divine chosen one, he spoke of the capacity of his pure religion for globalization. He declared that,

A religion which is accepted by all of the people in the world is nothing except a pure one... There is not the slightest objection to such a religion due to its power to gather all of the wise and virtuous people on one way.<sup>75</sup>

Kasravi aimed not to place its teachings against the rationalists' views because he believed in rationalism and intended to make his religion universal. Thus, he believed that his path was connected to knowledge, God, and religion of life and no one could find fault in this regard.<sup>76</sup> He argued that such a religion which Voltaire and others sought should govern the world.<sup>77</sup> Kasravi aimed to unite freedom and democracy with religious beliefs in an ideal society by defining and linking religion to the achievements of the Enlightenment. However, he ignored that the foundation of Enlightenment thought began with rebellion against religious values. Therefore, his idea was never taken seriously by thinkers.<sup>78</sup> According to Kasravi, worship meant knowing God, being kind to others, and striving to improve the world. However, he believed in gratitude to God. Therefore, he wrote the hymn of the Lord's Prayer and forced his followers for its recitation.<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusions

Adler's theory of inferiority complex is employed to explain Ahmad Kasravi's claim about prophethood. Adler asserted that the tendency for success and superiority to compensate for inferiority affects the individuals' personalities. In his view, the person enters a compensatory process and seeks to achieve superiority whenever

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<sup>72</sup> Kasravi, 1943c: 341.

<sup>73</sup> Kasravi, 1936b: 346 and 348.

<sup>74</sup> Kasravi, 1940f.

<sup>75</sup> Kasravi, 1999: 75.

<sup>76</sup> Kasravi, 1943f: 72-73.

<sup>77</sup> Kasravi, 1941a: 38.

<sup>78</sup> Nahicheri, 1995: 74-75.

<sup>79</sup> Fazaee, 1984: 274; Chahardehi, 1987: 100.

he/she suffers from inferiority, whether physical, psychological, social, or non-social. Adler believed that superiority arises from inferiority or physical defects, spoiling by parents, and neglect. Kasravi suffered from inferiority in childhood based on pampering and physical defect, leading to an inferiority complex after failing to adapt to the social environment. Kasravi's efforts to excel over his peers in learning during childhood and adolescence are considered as a type of compensatory process. His efforts to achieve success in the context of historical studies revealed a new approach to his superiority. He obtained great fame in international circles by writing valuable works and criticizing the Iranologists' studies. According to Adler, the inferiority complex may become pathological, which results in turning to supercompensation and drawing imaginary mission by the individual. Kasravi's superiority-seeking approach forced him to draw an imaginary mission for himself after criticizing the views of religious intellectuals and existing religions. He maintained that God entrusted him with a mission to reform the world. Thus, he introduced himself as God's chosen one and bringer of a new religion called "Pure Religion". He aimed to define his religion in harmony with the modern era and its rationalist approach since he considered himself to have a global mission.

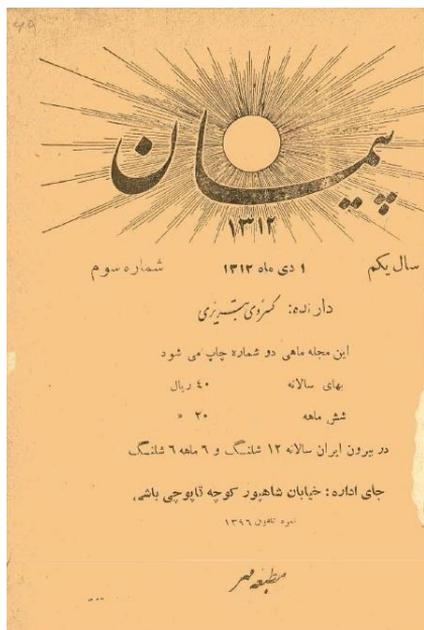


Fig. 1. *Peyman*, 1933, no 1(3).

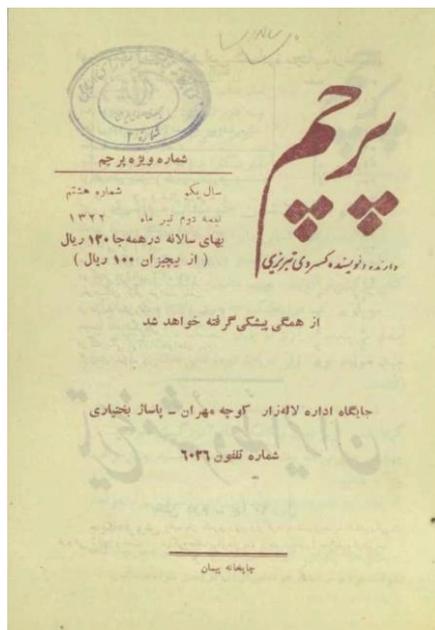


Fig. 2. *Parcham*, 1943, no 1(8).

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#### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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