

Religion and Politics: Social Justice as the Quranic Aim

Sayed Aliakbar Rabinataj
Department of Theology
University of Mazandaran
Babolsar, Iran
sm.rabinataj@gmail.com

Rmezan Mahdavi Azadboni
Department of Theology
University of Mazandaran
Babolsar, Iran
dr.azadboni@yahoo.com

Abstract—The aim in this paper is to display that how and why Quranic teaching has direct bearing on social justice. According to Quranic understanding of man God as the creator of human beings is also regarded as the origin of human seemingly diversity which if not guided and directed could be a significant root for human suffering and calamity. Human seemingly diversity in itself is not the cause for human suffering, and one basic teaching in Quran is to not base our act upon this diversity. This is the idea of Tauhid which intend to unify human being. Of course Quranic unification is not to remove the diversity. This diversity is the necessary condition and qualification of human life without which mundane life could be impossible. The role of divine prophets consists in achieving this goal to promote social justice. One question here could be raised: what is social justice in Quranic teachings. The answer to the question is that Quran put forward merit based social justice. The conclusion is that Quran in its very nature displays teachings and concerns in order that just society be promoted.

Keywords: social, justice, man, Quran, diversity

I. INTRODUCTION

One way, as suggested by logician in logic, to get close and proper understanding of a phenomenon or thing is to discover its aim. Identifying the aim targeted at by anyone or anything is a proper method to reveal its nature. This method is applied in the present research in order to demonstrate the right feature of Islam as a world religion. The ethic-centric approach of the Qur'an makes its teachings valuable and relevant for all who are concerned with the fate and future of humanity. It offers the most reliable way of building a sustainable and peaceful world order. A fair and profound contemplation upon Quraan discloses that Islam is a revolutionary religion and Qur'an is a revolutionary book too. Nothing is left by Qur'an as it describes itself such :

تبیانا لكل شیء (1)

It means that Quran has for all human needs and problem a proper solution. In particular social aspect of human life is not neglected by Islamic teachings and Qur'an put a great emphasis on social activity. Most of the world's religions regard worship, piety and spirituality of a person in isolation of worldly activity but Quraan rejects the separation between worship, piety and spirituality from one hand and mundane activities in particular social activity. There are few words given by Qur'an regarding the purpose human creation: knowledge, moral development, worship and justice. The aim of this paper is to deal with the concept

of justice and its value according to Islamic teachings. Justice is the basis of human life and the cardinal principle along which human society operates. It encompasses all the aspects of human life and enables one to live in peace and harmony with other fellow beings. In many Islamic theological school of thought such as Mu'tazilite "adl" the justice of God constitutes one of the five dogmas of the system. (2) Islam lays great emphasis on justice because it facilitates the establishment of social order that enable humans to develop their humane qualities, live in peace and harmony and make this world worth living. Peaceful life is possible only when we would be just in our thinking and activities

لقد ارسلنا رسلنا بالبينات و انزلنا معهم الكتاب و الميزان ليقوم الناس بالقسط... (3)

Qur'an says :indeed we sent our messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and Balance that people may uphold justice.

II. THE VALUE OF JUSTICE

The Quran, the sacred scripture of Islam, considers justice to be a supreme virtue. It is a basic objective of Islam to the degree that it stands next in order of priority to belief in God's exclusive right to worship (*Tawheed*) and the truth of Muhammad's prophethood. God declares in the Quran:

"God commands justice and fair dealing..." (4)

ان الله يأمر بالعدل و الاحسان

And in another passage:

"O you who believe, be upright for God, and (be) bearers of witness with justice!..." (5)

يا ايها الذين امنوا كونوا قوامين لله شهداء بالقسط.....

Therefore, one may conclude that justice is an obligation of Islam and injustice is forbidden. The centrality of justice to the Quranic value system is displayed by the following verse:

"We sent Our Messengers with clear signs and sent down with them

the Book and the Measure in order to establish justice among the people...” (6)

The phrase ‘Our Messengers’ shows that justice has been the goal of all revelation and scriptures sent to humanity. The verse also shows that justice must be measured and implemented by the standards and guidelines set by revelation. Islam’s approach to justice is comprehensive and all-embracing. Any path that leads to justice is deemed to be in harmony with Islamic Law. God has demanded justice and, although He has not prescribed a specific route, has provided general guidelines, on how to achieve it. He has neither prescribed a fixed means by which it can be obtained, nor has He declared invalid any particular means or methods that can lead to justice. Therefore, all means, procedures, and methods that facilitate, refine, and advance the cause of justice, and do not violate the Islamic Law are valid.

III. THE MEANING OF JUSTICE

In the Islamic worldview, justice denotes placing things in their rightful place.(7) It also means giving others equal treatment. In Islam, justice is also a moral virtue and an attribute of human personality, as it is in the Western tradition. Justice is close to equality in the sense that it creates a state of equilibrium in the distribution of rights and duties, but they are not identical. Sometimes, justice is achieved through inequality, like in unequal distribution of wealth. Therefore, the meaning of justice can be given in two categories: formal justice that means equality of everyone before the law and disruptive justice that is understood as merit-centered feature. According to this meaning of justice, all people are not treated equally since some may deserve more right and due. Islam is the religion of justice but it is also the religion of work the fact that is regarded in Islamic tradition as highly valued worship. It is acknowledged in Islamic teachings that some people due to their involvement of attempts and efforts are deserved to more right and due. That is why Islam pays respect for the private property and ownership.

IV. SOCIAL JUSTICE AND RACISM

Racism is not allowed in Islam, for the Quran speaks of human equality in the following terms:

O mankind, we have created you from a male and a female and have made you into nations and tribes for you to know one another. Truly, the noblest of you with God is the most pious. Truly, God is All-Knowing, All-Aware. (8)

يا ايها الناس انا خلقناكم من ذكر و
انثى و جعلناكم شعوبا و قبائل
لتعارفوا ان اكرمكم عند الله اتقيكم
ان الله عليم خبير

Islam rejects certain individuals or nations being favored because of their wealth, power, or race. God created human

beings as equals who are to be distinguished from each other only on the basis of their faith and piety. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: **{O people! Your God is one and your forefather (Adam) is one. An Arab is not better than a non-Arab and a non-Arab is not better than an Arab, and a red (i.e. white tinged with red) person is not better than a black person and a black person is not better than a red person, except in piety.}**⁽⁹⁾

One of the major problems facing mankind today is racism. The developed world can send a man to the moon but cannot stop man from hating and fighting his fellow man. Ever since the days of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Islam has provided a vivid example of how racism can be ended. The annual pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Makkah shows the real Islamic brotherhood of all races and nations, when about two million Muslims from all over the world come to Makkah to perform the pilgrimage.

Islam is a religion of justice. God has said:

ان الله يأمركم ان تودوا الامانات الى
اهلها و اذا حكمتم بين الناس ان تحكموا
بالعدل.....

Truly God commands you to give back trusts to those to whom they are due, and when you judge between people, to judge with justice.... (10)

And He has said:

.....واقسطوا ان الله يحب المقسطين

...And act justly. Truly, God loves those who are just. (11)

We should even be just with those who we hate, as God has said:

.....و لا يجرمنكم شنئان قوم على الا تعدلوا
اعدلوا هو اقرب للتقوى.....

...And let not the hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety.... (12)

The Metaphysical Foundation of Social Justice

The meaning of justice and social justice is connected to how we identify human nature. The meaning of justice demonstrated in Islamic teachings presupposes the unity of the nature of all human being. Therefore ontological understanding of human nature determines our interpretation of justice. Social justice means equality in law or justice for all. In ancient times the concept of human inequality, which was prevalent everywhere, gave rise to social injustice in every society. For instance, the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, regarded certain classes of individuals as natural slaves. Although there were other thinkers who did not subscribe to this view, slavery continued to be widespread in Rome and Greece, and indeed throughout the entire world of antiquity. In modern times, the theory of evolution suggested by

Darwin has strengthened the concept of natural inequality therefore mankind was regarded as having achieved differing levels of development. With the advent of Islam, all such ideas based on an inherent inequality lost ground. In different was, and with great persistence Islam presented to the world the concept that, in spite of outward differences, all human beings are equal. All are entitled to equal social status and equal rights. No one is inferior or superior. It is identified in Qur'an as a highly value called Tawheed:

يا ايها الناس انا خلقناكم من ذكر و انثى و
جعلناكم شعوبا و قبائل لتعارفوا ان اكرمكم
عند الله اتقيكم ان الله عليم خبير

Men, we have created you from a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes that you might get to know one another. The noblest of you in Allah (God) `S Sight is the most righteous of you. Allah (God) is wise and all knowing. (13)

According to the above mentioned verse the differences of color and race found among human beings are for the purpose, not of discrimination, but of identification. Men in essence are equal. What really distinguishes one man from another is character. The truly honorable man is one who is God-fearing and who recognizes and fulfils the rights of God and his fellow men. Islamic teachings encourage justice due to the perspective according to which all human beings are born equal (14).

ان الله يأمر بالعدل و الاحسان....
The

Qur'an holds out the promise of reward for one's deeds. It also informs us that a complete record is constantly being made of human actions :(15)

فمن يعمل مثقال ذره خيرا يره* و من يعمل
مثقال ذره شرا يره

After death, everyone will find himself standing in God's court, where he will receive his just deserts. No perpetrator

of cruelty will escape God's punishment. That time every one will be divided in terms of vice and virtue. Whoever does an atom's weigh of good shall see it and whoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it too.

The kind of responsibility demonstrated in Qur'an, alerts man and causes him to put great attention in his dealings with others. One must avoids wrong doing to others in order to save him from the punishment. In absence of any concept of accountability, social justice is missed. Once we recognized that there is such a thing as accountability and responsibility, social justice becomes a principal necessary for every one including ourselves. In atheistic society where people do not believe in God, such accountability is not possible. Where there is no belief in God, human affairs are settled not on the base of this accountability. The power may be as the traditional criterion to settle human affairs.

REFERENCES

- [1] Qur'aan,16/89
- [2] The history in Muslim world,(1367) Honaal-faquor and Kalil Jar.p.120,translated by Abdol-hamid Ayaty.
- [3] Qur'aan,57/25
- [4] Qur'aan,16/9
- [5] Qur'aan,5/8
- [6] Qur'aan,57/25
- [7] المفردات،راغب اصفهاني
- [8] Qur'aan,49/13
- [9] Mosnad Ahmad,22278
- [10] Qur'aan,4/58
- [11] Qur'aan,49/9
- [12] Qur'aan,5/8
- [13] Qur'aan,49/13
- [14] Qur'aan,16/9
- [15] Qur'aan,9/7-8