
CONCEPT OF JUSTICE IN ISLAMIC REVELATION AND IN PROPHETIC TRADITION

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ABSTRACT

The Arabic word for justice is ‘adl’ which is an abstract noun. The word ‘adl’ is derived from the word ‘adala’ which means to strengthen, to amend, to run away from one wrong path to the other right one, to be equal, to balance or counter-balance, to be in a state of equilibrium. The Messenger of God has been endowed with a profound sense of justice. The Prophet Muhammad had grown up in such a society where there was widespread inequity and oppression. In Islam, justice is enshrined in the Revelation and Divine Wisdom which the Prophet of Islam communicated to his people. Justice in Islam signifies placing things in their rightful place. Establishing justice is the goal of every religion and the mission of every Prophet. The foremost emphasis of Islam is to uphold justice and remove cruelty and evil. In this paper, I have tried to explore the concept of justice embodied in the Revelation and the Traditions of the Prophet.

Keywords: *Justice, Revelation, Traditions, Prophet, Religion.*

INTRODUCTION

Justice as a moral value has been discussing and debating by political thinkers since the earliest times. However, the concept of justice has been completely transformed with the dawn of modernism, particularly under the influence of the principles of democracy and socialism and subsequently, the traditional view of justice has given space to the concept of social justice.

Greeks Perspective of Justice:

The Greeks were profoundly interested in the concept of justice. Generally, they looked upon justice as ‘virtue in action.’ For them “justice is the virtue of the soul and injustice is the vice of the soul (Bhandari, 2002, p. 5). According to Plato an ideal State is based on justice. Plato’s ideal State is impossible without the realization of justice. For him, each citizen has to perform the function of which he is the most capable and does not interfere in others functions. Therefore, the State naturally progresses towards peace and prosperity. The State has to be run by the standards of application, administration and evaluation. The philosophers are obliged to play the role of rulers since the philosophers are blessed with wisdom. Since the Warriors are blessed with courage they have to play the role of protecting one’s country from external aggression. The workers share the appetitive part of the soul. A harmonious interaction of wisdom, courage and self-control lead to justice. Therefore, with the performance of functions by each class we can establish a just society or State. Plato holds:

Well then, tell me, I said, whether I am right or not, you remember the original principle which we were always laying down at the foundation of the state, that one man should practice one thing only, the thing to which his nature was best adapted; now justice is this principle or a part of it. Yes, we often said that one man should do one thing only” (Plato, pp. 147-148).

Aristotle on the other hand, defined justice as what is lawful and fair. He holds that a lawless person is unjust and a law-abiding person is just (Ross, 2003, p. 98). For Aristotle:

The State should confer political power, privilege and status in proportion to ‘value received’, i.e. in proportion to the contribution men make to the total purpose for which the state exists, the good life, which entails the exercise of all the distinctly human virtues. Such a distribution would be

‘just’ in a complete sense... he puts good birth and ownership of property on the list, and the moral qualities of justice and courage; a high level of culture and education too will be a token of merit in one who is to take part in the working of a state which aims at securing the good life. Men are not equal in these respects, and any state which ignores this fact and thinks in terms of absolute equality must be one of the wrong types, a ‘deviation’. The upper groups will always be superior in education and ability (Sinclair, pp. 193-194).

Aristotle held that democracy is the worst form of government, as it regards all human beings to be equal. According to him, aristocracy is the best form of government, for it is such a system in which a few wise rulers blessed with virtue and wisdom, are entitled to rule.

Islamic Perspective:

The fundamental textual sources of the concept of justice in Islam are the *Qur’an* and the Traditions of the Prophet. The *Qur’an* is a Revelation and is believed to be the words of Allah, transmitted to the Prophet. The Traditions are the Prophet’s own words and promulgated as the *Sunnah*, subsequently came to be known as the *Hadith*. God discloses Himself through Revelations, communicated to the Prophet in which His justice is embodied.

The principal emphasis of Islam is to uphold justice and remove cruelty and evil from society. The Prophet of Islam has laid great emphasis upon religious values. He was also a social reformer and as a social reformer, his decision dispenses patterns on the basis of which the issues that were to arise in subsequent generations were resolved. He was profoundly interested in the idea of justice and dealt with the problem of his time with uprightness, balance and fairness. Prophet Muhammad put maximum emphasis on religious and moral values. The Holy Book of Islam and the Traditions of the Prophet warn the believers against prejudice, bigotry, oppression, biasness, partiality, sectarianism and directed them to the fulfillment of their religious obligations. There are two hundred admonitions in the *Qur’an* against injustice expressed in such words as *Zulm*, *Ithm*, *dalal* etc. The Prophet explicates the significance of justice as pronounced in the *Qur’an*. He dealt with practical questions and the theologians and scholars found in the Traditions precedents on the basis of which they

formulated their theories of justice. There is no specific measurement mentioned in the *Qur'an* which indicates the constituent elements of justice or how justice can be realized on Earth.

Moreover, justice is also the attribute of Allah, and the *Qur'an* strictly commands us to stand firmly for justice, even if it is against to our own interest or the interest of those who are near and dear to us. God asks believers to maintain justice. In this context a verse of the *Qur'an* illustrates:

O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: For Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do. (*Qur'an*, 4:135).

Islam discusses the economic theory of justice under the influence of its universal philosophy. The economic theory of justice in Islam is the most important part of social justice. The fundamental aim of economic justice is the welfare of the individual as well as the welfare of the society as a whole. Injury neither to the individual nor to the society is the fundamental teachings of economic justice in Islam. Islam exhorted the Muslim community to get rid of all money and spend it entirely in the way of Allah. Legislation and exhortation are the two things, which together are the groundwork of all Islamic theory.

“Islam has always laid one duty upon property, and that is the payment of the poor-tax, this is the one ground on which a ruler may use force against his subject, if they withhold this tax, and similarly it is the one thing which he can impose on them by legal right, because his powers cover such imposition. Further, Islam has given to ruler the right of exacting in addition to the poor-tax as much as will prevent hardship and do away with penury and preserves the well being of the Muslim community. Thus, when there is need of the poor-tax, a right whose use depend on the communal welfare and on the justice of the ruler” (Hanif, 1999, p 188).

Placing things in their rightful place and equal treatment of all human beings is the standard of Islamic justice. In Islam justice is explicated as a moral virtue and an attribute of human personality. In this regard a Saheeh Muslim Hadith says:

“There are seven categories of people whom God will shelter under His shade on the Day when there will be no shade except His. [One is] the just leader.”(*Saheeh Muslim*).

Another Hadith says: “O My slaves, I have forbidden injustice for Myself and forbade it also for you. So avoid being unjust to one another.” (*Saheeh Muslim*). Thus, justice in Islam signifies a moral virtue and fair treatment to all human beings.

Justice as a supreme virtue is viewed by the Holy book of Islam. The Prophet of Islam is of the view that justice has been the goal of all revelation and scriptures sent to human beings. One of the verses of the *Qur'an* brings out that the measurement and implementation of justice must be according to the standard and guidelines set by the revelation. The approach of justice that is adopted by Islam is comprehensive and all-embracing. A path is in harmonious with Islamic law which leads to justice. Allah asks for justice, although He has not prescribed a specific rule, but He has prescribed a general guideline of how to achieve justice, neither has He prescribed a fixed means by which justice can be obtained, nor He has declared any particular means that is invalid. So, all means, procedures, or methods that cause justice and do not violate the Islamic laws are valid. All the Muslims are commanded by Allah to be just to the entire humankind without consideration of their race, religion, color and creed, language, etc.

The *Qur'an* also led great emphasis on the fair and just treatment of orphans. The *Qur'an* prohibited mankind not to approach the property of orphans but commanded us to protect the property of orphans till they attain the age of maturity. The *Qur'an* in this way illustrates:

And come not nigh to the orphan's property, except to improve it, until he attains the age of full strength; give measure and weight with (full) justice; --no burden do We place on any soul, but that which it can bear; -- whenever ye speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned; and fulfill the Covenant of Allah: Thus doth He command you that ye may remember (Qur'an, 6:152).

The above-mentioned verse of the *Qur'an* emphasizes on the just dealings in measuring, weighing, selling, buying etc.

Gender Justice:

Although the problem of gender justice is not a new problem but the secular societies claim that the phrase has been invented a little less than a century ago. The advocacy of Islam for gender justice has been since the revelation of the *Qur'an*. Some of the verses of the *Qur'an* are the direct evidence which categorically emphasize the gender justice. The most famous of which is Surah al-Ahzab:

“Surely those who submit [to God], men and women, those who believe, men and women, those who obey, men and women, those who are truthful, men and women, those who are patient, men and women, those who are modest, men and women, those who are charitable, men and women, those who fast, men and women, those who guard their modesty, men and women, and those who remember their Creator, men and women—God has prepared for them forgiveness and great reward”
(Abdullah, & Hamid, 2016, p. 21)

The above mention verse of the *Qur'an* clearly indicates that those people who are committed to Islam, regardless of their gender are given the same quantity of forgiveness and reward. God wants to make sure in mentioning both men and women so that it could be properly understood that like men, women also have the same share in same reward. Off course, this might not be surprising that the women were treated unequally prior to the advent of Islam. They were devoid of their basic rights, inheritance and also they were not allowed to perform civic duties. The *Qur'an* holds: “And of him He made two sexes, male and female” (Quran, 75:39). In terms of employment, the *Qur'an* says: “Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female: Ye are members, one of another” (Ibid, 3:195). The *Qur'an* illustrates further in terms of civic duties: “The Believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another: They forbid what is evil: They observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey Allah and His Apostle” (Qur'an, 9:7). From these verses of the Qur'an, it can be said that both men and women are entitled to enjoin good and forbid evil. Both the genders are entitled to serve and participate in the governance and in the national building; none of them can be excluded. Both men and women have equal rights to make decisions and vision and goals of the nations in which they live. The Qur'an explicitly holds that like men, women also must have equal access to education in Islam.

In the *Jahiliya* period, the practice of female infanticide was prevalent; however, with the advent of Islam, it was absolutely banned. *Akikah* was a tradition that was celebrated at the birth of a baby boy but it was not celebrated at the birth of a baby girl, however after the arrival of Islam; it was also carried out for the women's infant. The religion of Islam also gives rights to women in choosing her spouse. The dowry which is now considered as women's legacy but prior to the advent of Islam it was treated as the property of husband.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have briefly elaborated concept of justice in the context of Islamic Revelation and Traditions. The absolute sources for the measurement of whether justice is real or not are the Sacred Book of Islam i.e. *Qur'an* and the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Justice derived from the Holy *Qur'an* and the Traditions of the Prophet is absolute, precise, complete and perfect. Justice derived from the *Qur'an* is called Revelational justice or a justice of God, and justice derived from the Traditions or *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad is called Traditional justice. The Islamic concept of justice is the only source by which we can achieve true happiness in this materialistic world and in the life hereafter. Real justice should seek support from religious doctrines and must be genuine and sacrosanct. The religious approach gives a powerful, sound and time tested approach to real justice. Aristotelian and Platonic justice is somewhat complementary to each other, however, both are differing in certain respects from each other. Aristotle's justice emphasized on a system of rights, whereas Plato's justice gives more importance to duties. The responsibility took by men to feed their families, but now Islam has granted mandate also to women to participate in those responsibilities. In Islam, women and men were given equal rights and responsibilities.

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