**Justice in Islam**

BY N I K H AT S AT T A R 2021-07-09

THE world is rife with crimes against humanity; not only the more obvious ones such as genocide, ethnic cleansing, torture, bombing of innocent non-combatants and the use of chemical weapons, but also the more insidious racism, exploitation of the poor, adulteration, abuse of young and vulnerable children in religious schools and theft in the name of development.

Add to this the increasing danger to individual safety, repression of free thought and expression in the name of patriotism and religion and the use of legislation to suppress criticism of the state, and one has all the makings of an order where a few world powers and a handful of individuals control the lives, honour and property of a large population.

It is increasingly an unjust and unfair world, and not because God made it so.

The Quran`s concept of justice begins with the creation of the world; `... and He has set up the balance (of Justice)` (55:7).

The idea of balance, indeed, is woven within the entire Islamic code of life, wherein Muslims are required to live, worship and act in a balanced way. Similarly, justice is one of God`s qualities: the Quran says God `is never unjust in the least degree` (4:40). The Prophet (PBUH) quoted God as saying: `O My Servants, I have forbidden injustice upon Myself and have made it forbidden amongst you, so do not commit injustice` (Sahih Muslim 2577).

According to Al Raghib Al Isfahani, an lith-century scholar of Quranic exegesis, the concept of justice in Islam is one that deals with both the quality of the soul and the quality of society. It is of three types: justice to God; justice to others and justice to oneself. The first is related to fulfilling the human`s commitment to God during the primordial phase; that of worshipping only Him and no one else. It is indeed in the nature of humans to believe in one God and, consequently, in the hereafter.

Justice towards God is also the direct consequence of being just to the self and to others.

Several words are used in the Quran for the idea of justice. According to Isfahani, justice to the self is `adl`and justice towards society is `qist`. `Adl`carries within it meanings of balance, as in generosity being the balance between being miserly and extravagant.

`Qist` means the adoption of principles of equity and equality in a socioeconomic sense. This is what constitutes social justice that makes for a righteous, moral and just socie t y in which all humans are treated equally, regardless of wealth, social status, gender etc. Those who are disadvantagedor vulnerable in any way are treated in a manner that could, over time, bring them at par with others in a dignified way.

Additionally, the Quran asks people to be just to other species and the environment.

The legal form of Islamic justice deals with all fairly, such that even if one`s closest relative commits a crime, one is bound morally to give evidence. One of the most important verses on justice is: `O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for God can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily God is well-acquainted with all that you do` (4:135). Note that one will be answerable to God for being unjust if one decides to stay away and be neutral, knowing the path of justice.

The third type is being fair and just to one`s inner self: making efforts to purify the soul from deceits, temptations, corrup-tion and base desires. Indulging in a sin deliberately is doing an injustice (zulm) to oneself. If one is unjust to either oneself, and/ or to others, this would be the same as doing an injustice to God. Also, being just to others and to oneself would be asif one was being just to God.

The Quran`s code of justice is built on humans dealing with each other on the basis of fairness and equity. It calls for not merely the justice that is provided through legal means in a court, but also that quality that must be the foundation of the character of a true Muslim. Building a just character within oneself is essential if one is to be just to others.

Such a character would ensure that one subjects oneself to accountability against a strict moral scale in which being just to God, oneself and others is of prime importance.

He or she would treat one`s neighbour, cotraveller, co-citizen and co-inhabitant of the same global system with consideration, kindness and compassion.

Many of us might ask ourselves: how just are we to ourselves, to each other and to God? m The writer is an individual contributor with an interest in religion.

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