

عدالت اجتماعی در نهج البلاغه

قربان علمی^۱

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چکیده

مقاله حاضر به بررسی عدالت اجتماعی در گفته‌ها و اعمال علی بن ابی طالب (ع) می‌پردازد. عدالت و حقیقت مادر همه ارزش‌های اجتماعی تلقی می‌شود. پس از حضرت محمد (ص)، امام علی (ع) بهترین نمونه اخلاق، از جمله عدالت بود. او برای عدالت زندگی کرد و بر این باور بود که هر کس باید از حق امنیت در زندگی برخوردار باشد. به نظر وی، عدالت قرار دادن هر چیزی در محل مناسب خود است. بنا به نظر امام علی (ع) ارتباطی عمیق بین عدالت و حقیقت وجود دارد. نقطه مقابل عدالت ظلم و ستم بوده و ستمگر دشمن خدا است. عدالت یکی از چهار ستون "ایمان" است. عدالت اجتماعی یکی از مهم‌ترین جنبه‌های عدالت است. عدالت اجتماعی به معنای دادن حق شایسته هر فرد در توزیع منافع در جامعه و برآوردن نیازهای اساسی افراد است. عدالت اجتماعی شامل چند عنصر است که مهم‌ترین آنها عبارتند از: (۱) کرامت انسان و اهمیت جامعه، (۲) برابری و توزیع عادلانه ثروت، (۳) مقابله با ظلم و حفاظت از ضعیف در برابر قوی، (۴) تامین امنیت اجتماعی و (۵) رعایت حقوق اجتماعی انسان. همه این عناصر در گفتار و کردار امام علی (ع) مورد بررسی قرار گرفته است. به نظر او اعتدال و عدالت اصل راهنمای زندگی انسان است.

کلید واژه‌ها: امام علی (ع)، عدالت، عدالت اجتماعی، نهج البلاغه، اسلام

Social Justice in Nahj al-Balagha

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Abstract

The present paper deals with justice in general, but with Social justice according to the words and deeds of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. The search for justice and truth is considered as the mother of all social values. After the Prophet Mohamed, Imam Ali was the best example to great morals and ethics, including justice. He lived for justice and was very firm in his belief that everyone should have a right to live in security. According to him, Justice is the proper placement of things in their places. Imam 'Ali's writings explicitly make the connection between Justice and Truth in the sense of the proper ordering of things. Opposite of justice is oppression and oppressor one is the enemy of Allah. Justice is one of the four pillars of "faith". Social justice is one of the most important aspects of justice. "Social justice means giving each individual what he/she deserves in the distribution of financial benefits in the society, and providing equally for basic needs. Social justice includes several elements that the most important of them are as follows: (1) *The dignity of the human being and the importance of the community*, (2) equality and equitable distribution of wealth, (3) standing against oppression and protection of the weak against the strong, (4) provision of social security and (5) observation of man's social rights. All these elements have been dealt with in the words and deeds of Imam Ali and adopting moderation and justice is the guiding principle of his life.

Keywords: Imam Ali, Justice, Social Justice, Nahj al-Balagha, Islam

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Introduction

"Justice" and its synonyms are the most sacrosanct words which enjoy highest sanctity and special elegance of meaning in all the human societies. One can hardly come across a person who would like to introduce himself as the supporter of oppression and antagonist of justice. The most tyrant persons and governments proclaim to be true and just in order to deceive the people. They want to cover the ugliness of their aggressive tyrant deeds under the beautiful mantle of justice and truth. (Elmi, 2004, 87)

The search for justice and truth is considered as the mother of all social values. The precept of virtue of right and justice is an evident rational dictum. Inclination and ambition for them are considered as a part of man's lofty temperament. So is the precept of vices of oppression and fallacy an evident rational dictum, and dislike for them is also a part of human nature. (Elmi, 88) There is hardly any society which does not talk of truthfulness, justice and rational laws. Nor there is any regime which does not claim to uphold the people's rights and welfare.

To have a better society, we all need to attain justice in a better way. Even in its simplest sense any religion or even any human who aims to have a better future, and aims to improve the living standards of all men at large needs to be just and establish social justice in such a minute way, that irrespective of which age is it, all men and women are treated in the same way. Nothing, not even the slightest difference should create any level of difference that might later create different levels of complexity.

In discussing justice or social justice in human society, the ancient philosophers attempt to highlight its importance in creating harmonious society. Plato for instance had a view that justice is a human virtue that makes a person self-consistent and good while socially it is a social consciousness that makes a society internally harmonious and good. He believes that “When the faculty of justice develops in man, all the other faculties and powers of the soul are illuminated in it, and these faculties and powers all acquire light from each other. This is the condition in which the human soul moves and acts in the best and the most meritorious manner possible, gaining affinity and rapprochement with the source of creation” (Naraghi, 1988. Vol. I. p. 111). Aristotle’s concept of justice was on the other hand, rooted in equality and the just distribution of wealth within the community. This equality as Aristotle argued must be based on merit and the level of contribution one made in his socially life. Those making the greatest contribution to their society would have the greatest share of monetary rewards, honors and political office (Aristotle, 1946).

Islam is an institution of justice. It is a straight path and the Muslim fraternity is the nation which practices moderation and justice. The Islamic system is based on justice. Justice in Islam requires absolute justice, regardless of differences in color, sex, race and belief. It united all humankind into one faith in God (the oneness of Allah). This means that solidarity, love, co-operation, and mutual understanding among human beings on the basis of faith in God what Islam sought to achieve through its teachings. Islamic justice in human social affairs also meant justice and equality in rights and punishment. Therefore, the individual, the

group, the party, the nation are governed by one law with one goal, that the activity of the individual and the activity of the group may proceed freely and all can work together without conflict, directing their lives to God, the Creator of life. There is no favoring of one party at the expense of another, no favoring of the individual at the expense of the community, for each has rights and each has duties in accordance with the nature of justice and equality prescribed in Islam (Qutb, 1952: 27-28). Humans, as part of God's creation, whose lives constituted part of the lives of other creations in this universe, must co-operate with their fellow humans in their communities in the same way that they co-operated with other creatures of God.

One of the major objectives of the Islam is to establish social justice among all the members of the nation. Al-Quran says: "He (Allah) placed therein firm hills rising above it, and blessed it and measured therein its sustenance in four days, alike for (all) who ask" (41: 10). Allah has placed in the earth sustenance and provisions for all to cater their needs. However, on account of various reasons, the distribution of these provisions does not remain fair among all the human beings, thus making some lucky ones very rich who possess wealth more than their needs and making many others very poor who possess nothing or too little to meet their very basic necessities of life. Islam meets this challenge of disproportionate division of wealth by making it obligatory on the rich to surrender a part of their wealth for helping the poor and unfortunate members of the community. Al-Quran says: "Establish worship, pay Zakat and bow your heads with those who bow (in worship)"- (2: 43). The Holy

Book again says “Ye will not attain unto piety until ye spend of that which ye love. And whatsoever ye spend, Allah is aware thereof” (3:92). It further pronounces: “And in whose wealth there is a right acknowledged, for the beggar and the destitute” (70: 24-25).

Social justice in Islam includes all aspects of human life, based on faith in God. This is, of course, in accordance with the nature of Islam as a religion of unity between worship and social relations, belief and behavior, spiritual and material things, economic and spiritual values, this world and the afterlife, and earth and heaven.

The importance of justice is manifested in being one of God's names in Islam. It is considered among the most important values underlined by the Quran and repeated in a number of its verses. God has required justice to be a necessary part of the behavior of every Muslim. It covers every aspect in life and has to be practiced with every person in the world, including rivals and enemies. (for instance See: *an-Nisa: 58 and al-Ma'idah: 8*).

The Qur'an and *Hadith* are replete with references to justice and such terms as *al-'adl* (Justice), *al-qist* (Just Portion) and *al-mizan* (Balance or Scale) appear often in various contexts in these sacred sources of Islam. The latter term, meaning “balance,” has many meanings, but is especially related to the aspect of justice that concerns balance, that is, putting things in their rightful place and of the measure of good and evil acts which are also related to justice and injustice. Needless to say, numerous commentators of the Qur'an and *Hadith* have dealt over the centuries with the

meaning of these and other terms associated with justice. But in early Islam it was left most of all to ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib to expound, on the basis of the Word of God and the teachings of the Prophet, the meaning of justice in its deepest metaphysical sense as well as in its social applications. His words and letters collected by Sayyid Sharif al-Radi in the 4th/10th century in a single volume entitled *Nahj al-Balagha* (“The Path of Eloquence”) are, after the Qur’an and *Hadith*, the most inspired and influential writings on justice in the annals of Islamic history. The present paper deals with justice in general, but with Social justice according to the words and deeds of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib. He lived for justice and was very firm in his belief that everyone should have a right to live in security; that there should be food and shelter and clothing for all. He considered humanity as one family where there should be tolerance for all irrespective of race, creed and colour, wealth or adversity. His humane attitude was more apparent when he was dispensing justice. He had stringent ideas of duties and responsibilities. Even the poorest and most insignificant of suitors always found him just and prompt while dispensing justice. He was quick to forgive an offender to him, as he was slow to resent an injury - a humane attitude which many of his contemporaries were prone to misinterpret as weakness (*Nahjul Balagha and the Inter-Religious Understanding*, 1997, p. 174).

The book *Nahj al- Balagha* is a sacred scripture in the sense that it contains nothing ignoring spiritualism, Tawhid, Day of Judgment and Divine reward and punishment. But at the same time it is a secular and humanistic document in the sense it shows respect to all religions and recognizes the human rights of all,

belonging to believers), securing liberty, freedom and just rights. Only in case of their evil deeds and betrayals they are to be punished and that too for the sake of serving the cause of justice and for achieving the virtuous ends of righteousness, for sticking to agreement and mutual understanding, for enjoying rights, keeping in view the fulfillment of obligations and for upholding the religion of humanity for the survival of mankind in a peaceful, exploitation-free, co-operative and harmonious social climate (Ibid, pp. 172-3)

Social Justice in Nahj al-Balagha

Meaning of Justice

Justice is mentioned in the Qur'an on numerous occasions. It is the goal of Islamic law, as it is the goal for Islamic society in general. But Islamic justice, as envisioned by Islamic legal scholars and the Holy Prophet, is a broader concept than justice articulated in the English language. (Qadri, 1968, p. 1) As one scholar summarized:

Justice is Allah's attribute, and to stand firm for justice, even if it is detrimental to our own interests as we conceive them, or the interests of those who are near and dear to us, is to be a witness to Allah. According to the Latin saying, "Let justice be done though heaven should fall." However, Islamic justice is something higher than the formal justice of Roman law or any other human law. It is even more penetrating than the subtler justice found in the speculations of the Greek philosophers. It searches out the innermost motives, because we are to act as in the presence of Allah to whom all things, acts and motives are known. (Doi,

2008, p. 26). Also he says "justice is a comprehensive term, and may include all the virtues of good behavior ... Islam asks for something warmer and more human, namely the doing of good deeds even where perhaps they are not strictly demanded by justice, such as returning good for ill, or obliging those who 'have no claim' on you; and of course the fulfilling of the claims of those whose claims are recognized in social life." (Ibid, p. 24)

Conceptions of justice make sense only when placed in their appropriate social contexts. Islamic societies can sustain the practices within which notions of justice find their proper home.

According to Islamic texts, there are wholly four meanings or usages for the word justice:

Justice means "to be balance" (Motahari. 1361, p. 46.), as Qur'an says: "And the heaven, He raised it high, and He made the Balance." (55: 7.) The second meaning of justice is "equality and negation of discrimination"; (Ibid, p. 48.) "Justice is disposition to give to each person, including oneself, what that person deserves and to treat no one in a way incompatible with their deserts." (Ibid.) When Imam Ali was asked: Which of the two is better; justice or generosity? He answered: Justice puts things in their places while generosity takes them out from their directions; justice is the general caretaker while generosity is a particular benefit. Consequently, justice is superior and more distinguished of the two. (Nahj al-Balagha, saying, 437)

Regarding justice, Imam Ali (AS) says: "In order to dispense with the improper and unjustified activities, we must be just, as justice is the general caretaker. "Keep yourself light and overtake (the forward ones). Your last ones are being awaited by the first ones (who have proceeded)".

Thus, Hazrat Ali (AS) proves the transitory nature of life. If mankind will act upon this advice, no blood-shed will take place on this planet. (See: Nahjul Balagha and the Inter-Religious Understanding, 1997, pp. 186-7)

In other case, justice is understood first and foremost in terms of legality-to be just is to do what the Law requires of you. (Miller, David. Principles of social justice, p. 112.)

For an individual to be "adl (just) is, as the term implies, to be balanced, to engage in acts that are framed by an awareness, born of the pursuit of reason over passion, of the harm that may be done to the ties that bind individuals to one another and all believers into a single community. (The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World. Vol. 2, p. 388.) The Qur'an (6:152) thus enjoins one to "be just, even if it should be to a near kinsman" and demonstrates practical application when, for example, it recommends that contracts be written down in order to avoid subsequent doubt. It is, therefore, possible to see in the Qur'an and Mohammed's own actions an implicit theory of justice that informs later interpretations and applications.

Central to the prophetic conception of justice are three features: relationships among men and toward God are reciprocal in nature, and justice exists here this reciprocity guides all interaction; justice is both a process and a result of equating otherwise dissimilar entities; and because relationships are highly contextual, justice is to be grasped through its multifarious enactments rather than as a single abstract principle (Ibid, p. 388).

Imam 'Ali's writings explicitly make the connection between Justice and Truth in the sense of the proper ordering of things.

Defining Justice, he states: Justice puts things in their places. (Cleary, 1995, p. 64). Elsewhere, he defines “intelligence” in terms of the ability to “put things in their proper places.” (*ibid.*, p. 44) Justice is thereby an attribute of intelligence.

The importance of Justice

All ethical virtues originate from the quality of justice just as all vices emanate from injustice, which is the quality opposed to it. The quality of justice saves the human being from the danger of deviation towards extremes, whether in personal or social matters, and enables him to attain enduring felicity and bliss. Of course, it should be noted that this quality could be successfully exercised only if the individual knows what the Golden Mean is, and can distinguish it from excess when he confronts it. Such discernment is impossible to attain except through the Divine law, which contain elaborate instructions relating to all the things needed by human beings to attain happiness and felicity in this world and the next (Naraghi, 1374, p. 55).

Imam Ali (PBUH) in a letter to Malik, his Governor-designate to Egypt said: "Do justice to Allah and do justice to the people even though it may be against your own interest, that of your near ones or of your subjects, when you have an inclination. If you do not do so, you would be oppressing. When a person oppresses the creature of Allah, then Allah becomes his enemy on behalf of the people, and when Allah is the enemy of a person, He tramples upon the latter's pleas and prayers, and he would remain in the position of being at war with Allah until he gives it up and repents. Nothing is more inductive of reversion of the bounty of Allah or the hastening of His retribution than continuance in oppression, because

Allah hears the prayers of the oppressed and is on the look out for the oppressors".

'The most coveted way for you should be that which is the most equitable for righteousness, the most universal by way of justice and the most comprehensive with regard to the agreement of the subjects, because the disagreement of the common people sweeps away the agreement of the chief ones. The disagreement of the chief ones can be disregarded in view of the agreement of the common people. No one among the subjects is more burdensome on the ruler during ease of life, less helpful in distress, more hateful of equitable treatment, more sticky in asking for favours, less thankful at the time of granting, less appreciative of reasons at the time of refusal and weaker in endurance at the time of hardships of life than these chiefs. It is the common people of the community who are the pillars of religion, power of the Muslims and defense against the enemies. Your leanings should, therefore, be towards them and your inclination with them. (Letter No. 53; Nahjul Balagha, 1981, p.531.)

"The most judicious way to deal with people is justice, a most central hunger of mankind. People have given their life and limb and liberty for this. But it must be tempered with respect for truth, to get to it must forever remain an object of dispassionate inquiry and belief" (Letter No.53)

Justice” as one of the four pillars of faith

In a key passage among his Sayings, Imam ‘Ali includes “justice” as one of the four pillars of “faith”². In that passage, he discusses the basis of “justice” in the following terms:

2. The four pillars of faith are patience, certitude, justice and struggle.

Justice is also based on four disciplines: Immersion in understanding, penetration of knowledge, brightness in judgment and firm establishment of thoughtfulness. For one who understands knows with penetrating knowledge, and one who knows with penetrating knowledge proceeds judiciously from the start. And one who is thoughtful has not been negligent of his trust and lives a benign life among the people. (Cleary, 1995, p. 66 and 67; Saying No. 31 from the Collected Sayings of the Imam included in the *Nahj al-Balagha*)

According to Imam ‘Ali, “Justice puts things in their places”, and therefore the proper placement of oneself in relation to God is an essential requirement for the accomplishment of Justice. In one passage, Imam ‘Ali notes: For those who put in order what is between them and God, God will put in order what is between them and other people. And for those who put in order their task for the Hereafter, God puts in order their business in this world. And those who have caution from themselves have protection from God. (Cleary, 1995, p. 71).

Various kinds of Justice

Justice is of three kinds:

1. The justice between the human being and God; that is, the penalties and rewards that God bestows on man in relation to his acts and deeds. In other words, for whatever acts he commits, good or evil, God gives an appropriate reward or punishment him. If it were otherwise, it would imply injustice and violation of rights on God's behalf and unfair treatment of His creatures-characteristics that God does not have.

2. Justice between the living and the dead. This is the kind of justice that commands that the living should remember the dead with kindness, pay their debts, act according to their wills, pray for them, give alms seeking their forgiveness from God, and perform charitable acts in their memory.

3. The justice amongst human beings: which means that everyone must honour individual and social rights of others and act according to the sacred laws of Islam. This is called social justice. (Elmi, 2004, pp. 92-93)

Social Justice

Social justice is one of the most important aspects of justice in Islam. "Social justice means giving each individual what he/she deserves in the distribution of financial benefits in the society, and providing equally for basic needs. It is also the egalitarianism in opportunities, i.e. each person has a chance to climb up the social ladder" (Zubairu, 2011, p.197). Social justice is critical for the development of a moral and justice society, and for this reason is greatly emphasized in Islam, as evidenced by the verses of the Holy Quran (for instance See: *an-Nisa: 58 and al-Ma'idah: 9*).

We can argue that the Islamic notion of social justice is all embracing: it takes account of the material as well as the spiritual dimensions of man's well-being. The following principles can be enumerated as the foundations of the Islamic theory of social justice: absolute freedom of conscience; complete equality of all men; and *the* permanent mutual responsibility of society. The individual is the supreme example of social justice. The

individual, according to Islam, has to place his trust in Divine and not human authority; Divine authority is indivisible. Therefore, man has nothing to fear in this life; he should not allow anxiety to run his life; neither should he be sacred of transient matters in life. Yet, in spite of all this encouragement, there is an important aspect in man's life: the material need for food and shelter. According to Islam, "the empty belly cannot appreciate high-sounding phrases. Or else he is compelled to ask for charity, and all his self-esteem leaves him lost, forever." (Qutb, 1953, p.19.) Therefore, social justice cannot prevail in a society if the material foundations of society are not sound and if the minority exploits the majority. One way then of insuring the material well-being of the members of society is through mutual responsibility. The individual must care about the community, which should, in turn, be responsible for feeding the poor and destitute members. That is why, Islam has instituted the *zakat* as an individual as well as a social responsibility in order to combat poverty. (The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World. Vol.2. p. 394) Although Islam respects the individual property, justice is not always concerned to serve the interests of the individual. The individual is in a way steward of property on behalf of society. And therefore, property in the widest sense is a right, which can belong only to society, which in turn receives it as a trust from God who is the only true owner of anything. Thus, although the individual has the right to possess property, the community's interest is supreme. According to Qur'anic statement, the wealth in the society is like the blood in the body (59:7). As the blood must flow throughout the body,

so the wealth must flow throughout the society. Communal property is a distinguishing mark of Islam, and therefore communal wealth "cannot be restricted to individuals, a wealth of which the Messenger enumerated three aspects, water, herbage, and fire." (Qutb, 1953, p. 109) One honest way of gaining money is through work. Therefore, Islam is against monopoly, usury, corruption, wastefulness, and dishonest commercial practices. *Above all* Islam stands against luxury-loving people. Luxury is both an individual as well as a social disease.

The Islamic image of social justice contains two general principles; each one of them has its own lines and peculiarity. The first of them is the principle of general mutual responsibility; the other is the principle of social balance. Just social values are realized within the Islamic concept of mutual responsibility and balance, and it is in them that the Islamic ideal of social justice is found... The steps which Islam took in the course of creating the most excellent human society during its glorious historical experiment, were plain and clear with regard to its concern for the principal component of its economy.' (Sadr, 1981, pp. 34-35.)

Justice, therefore, demands that we have to be honest not only to our own selves, but also with everyone else, our enemies and friends alike. In fact, all those around us deserve justice.

The Verses of the holy Qur'an (4: 135; 11: 3; 28: 77) command mankind to be generous and just, for "Allah loveth not corruptors". Imam Ali said: "Blessed be he who humbles himself, whose livelihood is pure, whose habits are virtuous, who spends his savings (in the name of Allah), who prevents his tongue from speaking rot, who keeps people safe from his evil,

who is pleased with the (Prophet's) Sunnah and who keeps himself away from innovation (in religion)." (Nahjul Balagha, Saying No. 122)

Further, describing the fate of such persons, he said:

"O creatures of Allah! Remember that those fearing Him and pious ones passed away from this world after having led a respectable and fruitful life, and they are going to be well rewarded in the next world (when compared with worldly people, they enjoyed equal opportunities of gathering fruits of this world and utilize them to the best of their abilities, and at the same time (they) kept away from all wicked and vicious ways of life). They did not jeopardize their salvation like worldly minded persons. They led a more contented, more respectable and happier life than those who lived wickedly."

They enjoyed the fruits of their labor and had more gratifying sober and healthy experiences of the pleasure of life than the rich and the wicked wealthy. They regaled and enjoyed the pleasure, the facilities and the bliss of this world as much as tyrants and vicious people desired to enjoy. Yet, upon leaving this world, they carried with them all that which will be of true use to them in the next world. While living in this world, they enjoyed the happiness of relinquishing its evil ways. They made themselves sure that in the life to come they will be recipients of His Grace and Blessings; their requests will not be turned down, and the favours reserved for them in Heaven, will not be lessened or reduced. (Nahj al- Balagha, 1981, letter 27) We can say that after the Prophet Mohamed, Imam Ali was the best example to great morals and ethics, including justice.

Some well-wishers of Imam Ali approached him and

suggested to him to show special favours to the leading heads of the tribe of Quraysh and other influential people by granting them higher share for unless he gave preferential treatment to them as against the slaves and the non-Arabs he would not be able to gain their support and they would rebel against him and would go towards Mu'awiya's side.

Imam Ali said: "Should I spend the wealth and property of the Public Treasury in bribing the people in return for gaining their support? The fact is that if I gain the support of someone through money he will turn against me if he is offered a higher amount from the other party. Therefore, we should always safeguard the principle of justice and never think of attracting the people either through money or intimidation and threats. I shall never do that no matter if someone remains with me or goes against me". This was the method adopted by the Holy Imam. He was not prepared to gain the favor of the people by doing the least injustice. (Biharul Anwar, vol. XVI, p. 108)

Imam Ali used to instruct the tax-collector thus: "In whatever zone you go, you should arrange your stay near the bank of a river but do not stay with anyone in any event because your becoming his guest will influence your official duty to collect the tax". (See. Letter 25)

Elements of Social Justice of Islam

Social justice according to Islamic conception includes several elements, that the most important of them are as follows: (1) *The dignity of the human being and the importance of the community*, (2) equality and equitable distribution of wealth, (3) standing

against oppression and protection of the weak against the strong, (4) provision of social security and (5) observation of man's social rights. All these elements have been dealt with in detail at proper places in this book. Let us briefly discuss them here.

(1)The dignity of the human being and the importance of the community

Two more concepts in Islamic teachings relate to the overarching theme of Islamic justice: the concept of human dignity and the concept of the community of believers, or the *ummah*. Islam recognizes specific rights that are due to all, such as the right to life, equality, freedom, expression and justice. In Islam, the individual is regarded as the most important unit of the cosmos because humans are the only creatures on earth that God endowed with a mind and therefore the only creatures susceptible to the choice of Islam. Mankind is God's deputy on earth. Islam declares man to be the heir and successor of Allah (3:30). Obviously, Allah's successor cannot be an abject or a weak entity. This succession is the highest and loftiest evidence of men's glory and stature. The holy Quran declares that man has been granted special divine favors by bestowing on him nobility and superiority. It says: *"And surely We have honored the children of Adam, and We carry them in the land and the sea, and We have given them of the good things, and We have made them to excel by mi appropriate excellence over most of those whom We have carried."* (17: 70)

At another place the Prophet (S.A.) is said to have addressed people as the members of Allah's family. A tradition of Prophet

says: "All men are members of Allah's family." Allah loves most he who is most helpful to others."(Al-Suyuti, 1401, vol. 2 p. 268) The word "*nas*" or "people" is the most comprehensive and the widest term inclusive whether Muslims or otherwise and irrespective of race, language, creed or faith. A school of thought, which recognizes human beings as the successor of Allah *and member of his family would provide him with the best rights and privileges and the highest status.*

Human dignity is the outcome of a just society and just law. Respect for one another is a vital theme of justice in the Sharia. A human being is to be treated with the respect due to God's greatest creation and the viceroy of God himself on Earth. Thus the, principle of equality – that all should be treated with equal respect, despite differences such as race, wealth, class, and gender – emerges under the concept of dignity. As Imam Ali about human dignity says:“The Learned is he who knows his worth. It is enough for a man to remain ignorant if he knows not his worth.” (Sermon 103)

(2) Equality and equitable distribution of wealth

Justice fundamentally requires us to treat people as equals. The equality of all human beings is stressed both in the scripture and the tradition, (Qur'an, 49:9) and has always been seen as an undeniable principle in Islamic law, throughout the history of Islam. All human beings are equal before the law, regardless of their sex, color, or nationality. (Qur'an, 4:1; 15:45-47; 26:106; 66:21, 50:13; 59:10; 33:5.) The only sources of distinction among them are virtue and knowledge (Qur'an, 49:13; 4:123-

124). Muhammad (Pbuh) is reported to have said: "O man! God hath taken away from you the arrogance of heathen days and the ancient pride in ancestry; an Arab hath no other precedence over a barbarian [non-Arab] than by virtue of the fear of God; ye are all the progeny of Adam and Adam himself is of earth." (Browne, 1902, I, 213) In Tradition, the second source of Islamic law, the Prophet said, "People are all equal as the teeth of a comb." (Al-Sarakhsi, 1406 H., vol. 5, p.23)

Justice requires if a rule is applied to everyone, it must be applied equally to everyone: two people who commit the same crime deserve the] same punishment, and so on. (Al-Kulayni, 1367, p. 292; Tusi, 1365, p. 146) If people are to be treated as equals, they should be made as equal as possible in resources, or welfare, or opportunity for welfare, or capacities, or something else again.

All human beings are alike, so they have nobility which should not be degraded. Every individual has specific sanctity which must not be violated by others. "O ye who have believed, let not one people mock another... "(Qur'an, 49:11) "Do not spy into one another's affairs, and do not indulge in backbiting against one another." (Qur'an, 49:12)

Regarding the equality of human beings, Imam Ali says, "Habituate your heart to mercy for the subjects and to affection and kindness for them. Do not stand over them like greedy beasts who feel it is enough to devour them, since they are of two kinds, either your brother in religion or one like you in creation." (Letter 53)

Another example of equality under the law was the case of a

man who brought suit against 'Ali ibn Abi-Talib, the fourth Caliph. The Caliph obliged by appearing in court and sitting with his opponent in front of the judge. The case was ruled in favor of the man and against the Caliph of all Muslims.

Furthermore, Imam Ali says: "Unjustifiable and undeserving donations may enhance the status of a man among his worldly surroundings but he is sadly humiliated in the eyes of Allah. One who spends his wealth in evil ways and on wrong persons, is deprived, by the Lord, of the gratitude of those over whom he had spent; these undeserving beneficiaries usually turn against him and at the time of distress and need he finds them as his worst enemies, censuring his actions and blaming him for his lavish grants". (Sermon 129)

(3) Standing against oppression and protection of the weak against the strong

One of the manifestations of human dignity and honor in Islam is evident in its standing against oppression. Not only does Islam consider tyranny and oppression as a great contempt to humanity and does not tolerate it, but also considers toleration of tyranny as banned and toleration of cruelty as an insult to the status of mankind (2:270; 3:191; 5:72)

"... See then what the end of the unjust was," (10:39)

In this regard, Imam Ali says: "Be an enemy of the oppressor and helper of the oppressed." (Letter 47)

Because oppression is very dangerous and has evil consequences, Allah has forbidden men to cooperate with the iniquitous or to associate with them. He has said: "And do not

incline towards those who are unjust, lest the fire touches you, and you have no guardians besides Allah, then you shall not be helped" (11:113).

Islam pays special attention to weaker sections of society, for stronger sections not only get what is rightfully their due, but also grab what belongs to weaker sections. Islamic law has taken care of all the weaker sections of society; and has entitled them to claim their rights from the rulers and Upper classes. In a way Islam does not recognize any upper classes and is opposed to amassing of property and hoarding riches unproportionate to one's work and Labor.

"O you who believe! Most surely many of the learned persons and the monks eat away the property of men falsely, and turn (them) from Allah's way: and (as for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah's way, announce so them a painful chastisement ..." (9:34-35)

Imam Ali says that he often heard the Prophet (S.A.) saying: "That a nation or a government cannot achieve salvation where the right of depressed, destitute and suppressed are not guarded and where mighty and powerful persons are not forced to accede the rights." (Nahjul balaghah, trans. Jafery, p. 256.)

With a view to prevent any possibility of oppression and exploitation, he prohibits giving of lands on permanent lease with all proprietary and ownership rights (jaagirs) and water supply and other sources of public utility to anybody, because such possessions will enable privileged persons to oppress others and derive undue benefits. (Ibid, p. 257.)

(4) Provision of social security

Islamic economic system guarantees basic human needs to all the citizens of the Islamic state. Islam enjoins upon the well-to-do to fulfil the needs of the poor and the destitute. According to Al-Quran, the poor and the needy have share in the wealth of the rich. The Quran says: And in whose wealth there is a right acknowledged for the poor beggar and the destitute”-(70: 24-25).

To the question as to how much wealth should be spent by the rich for the cause of the poor, the Qur’an replies: “... And they ask thee how much they are to spend; say: “What is beyond your needs”-(2:219). Thus the revealed book of Islam expects from the rich to spend all their surplus wealth for their poor brothers if the circumstances so demand. Abu Zarr Ghaffari, a close companion of the Prophet, who is considered a great champion of the cause of social justice, holds the view that it is unlawful to keep any surplus wealth after meeting one’s personal needs and so the same must be spent on satisfying the needs of the deprived of members of the Muslim Ummah (community). In his view, so long as there is even one poor person who is unable to meet his basic needs of life, surplus wealth of the rich must be collected by the state and spent on poor. It is reported that he was expelled from Syria by Governor Muawwiya for preaching such views and later on even caliph Usman asked him to stop propagating such views or to leave Madinah and he preferred the latter option.

According to some Muslim jurists, the Islamic state should provide social security cover to all its citizens and undertake especially to provide basic necessities of life to all those poor, destitute, deprived of, disabled and unemployed citizens who

themselves are not able to provide for them and their families. If the Islamic state fails to do so it has no right to demand allegiance from its citizens. Regarding the provision of social security, Imam Ali says:

"Treat the people with respect. Be kind and considerate with them. Meet them cheerfully. Be fair, just and impartial in your dealings so that even the influential persons may not dare take undue advantage of your leniency and the commoners and the poor people may not be disappointed in your justice and fair dealings". (Letter 27)

In one of his sermons, Imam Ali says that as a caliph and ruler, he promises safety and security for life, property, honour, social status and religious freedom to non-Muslims, and that they should not be mal-treated and looked down upon. He told that as long as they do not try to betray and injure the cause of the state of Islam, they should not be molested, and should be allowed to practise their religion and trade, freely and openly. (Nahjul Balagha and the Inter-Religious Understanding, 1997, p. 174)

(5) Observation of Man's Social Rights

It is clear and definite that man does not have the ability to individually repulse harm and acquire advantage and to gain his prosperity, he reluctantly and naturally submits himself to social life. The social rights of individuals will often face a serious and perpetual danger. Islam has paid special attention to the maintenance of the social rights of human beings. Islam, through various statements, emphasizes on the observation of man's social rights: "And help one another in goodness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression ..." (5:2)

Observing the rights of fellow men is surely considered as goodness and piety: "And as for him who tears lo stand in the presence of his lord and forbids the soul from low desires, then surely the garden that is- the abode." (79:40- 41)

In the Quranic verse the ultimate objective of sending down the Divine Books has been introduced as a means to raise the people to conduct themselves with equality and justice (see: 17:24; 5:8; 42:15; 5:8; 6:153; 2: 190).

To strengthen the foundation of the observance of social rights, the Holy Qur'an has a valuable logic which consists of thinking of the brotherhood of the believers as stated in the following Quranic verse: "The believers are hut brethren ..." (49: 10). A brother does well to his brother, displays devotion and shows toleration and forgiveness, but he does not think of evil planning, doing injustice, and committing treason.

Imam Ali (A.S.), in a letter to Malik al-'Ashtar writes, "*Do justice for Allah and do justice towards the people, as against yourself, your near ones and those of your subjects for whom van have a liking, because if you do not do so you will he oppressive, and when a person oppresses the creatures of Allah then, instead of His creatures, Allah becomes in opponent... Allah hears the prayer of the oppressed and is on the look out for the oppressors; The way most coveted by yon should be that which is the most equitable for the right, the most universal by way of justice, "The most pleasant thing for the rulers is the establishment of justice in their areas and the manifestation of the love of their subjects."* (Letter 53)

If we go back to the wows of the spiritual leaders of Islam, we

may see how they disapproved all acts of injustice and rejected all theorizations that sought to deprive man of his rights. Amir al-Mu'minin's regard for judiciary and legal procedure made him to appear in the court of Qazi (Judge) Shurayh as a complainant. When the Qazi offered him a seat of honour, he reproached him for being discriminate. He accepted the judgment against him, though his claim right. The opposite party was a Christian, who was so impressed him 'Ali's submission to the court that he confessed he had no claim on disputed properly, and ... (Nahj al Balagha. trans, Jafery. introduction, p. 6.)

The pronouncement of Imam Ali on the importance of administering justice and of avoiding oppressive actions is very interesting. (Sermon, 228). In this very sermon the Holy Imam further says. "I bear Allah as my witness that I prefer to pass sleepless nights over the sharp thorns of prickly plants or to suffer from the worst form of injury and insult than to meet my Lord and the Holy Prophet on the Day of Judgement as a tyrant who has persecuted any person or as a usurper who has wrongfully seized the property of somebody else. Why should I tyrannize or exploit somebody to provide comfort and ease for my body which will shortly be destroyed and decayed and which will lie in the grave for a long period. By Allah, if all the seven continents with all that they contain are offered to me as remuneration or bribe for depriving an ant of the husk of a grain of barley carried by it, I will never do it. This world to me is even more worthless than the small bit of a leaf chewed by a locust. Ali has no interest with mortal luxuries, wealth, ease and comforts of this world. I seek His Protection and Help from negligence of my duty and from being wicked and vicious".

The Nature of the Relation between the Ruler and Those Who Are Ruled

According to the Quranic teachings, the ruler has the right to be loyal to those he rules (5:56). Also the ruler has the right to have the obedience of those he rules (4:59.) The ruler must prefer the welfare of the group to the welfare of the individuals. (33: 6;9:120; 24:62) The ruler must listen and take their advice, and council; he must order lawful things, and forbid unlawful things (9:71). The ruler must be an excellent example to those he rules (33:2 1).

As for the subjects: They have the right to have mercy, to be lenient to, to be pardoned and to be concerned for (9:128). To have a clear political stance: "...SO *when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah: surely Allah loves those who trust*" (3:158). they have the right to be consulted: "... *and take counsel with them in the affair...*" (3:158).

A good ruler is only when the people ruled by him, have appreciation and good words for his deeds and dealings. A tyrant, authoritarian or militant ruler is a bad and oppressive ruler. Thus, Hazrat Ali made people's judgment as the measure for the performance of a ruler. A ruler should be particular about performing virtuous deeds and should abstain from unjust and inhuman dealings, preaching human values and ethical codes. Regarding the rights of the subjects, Imam Ali advised Malik al-Ashtar, thus: "*Habituate your heart to mercy for the subjects and to affection and kindness for them. Do not stand over them like greedy beasts who feel it is enough to devour them, since they are of two kinds, either your brother in religion or one like you in creation. They will commit slips and encounter mistakes. They may act wrongly, willfully or by neglect. So, extend to them your*

forgiveness and pardon, in the same way as you would like Allah to extend his forgiveness and pardon to you, because you are over them and your responsible Commander (Imam) is over you while Allah is over him who has appointed you. "(letter 53)

Imam Ali used to supervise the duties of the government officials himself, and appointed regular and secret reporters for that purpose. The people were free to bring to the Holy Imam complaints against the government officials. One of such complaints was about a government official in Persia (Iran). The nature of the complaint was that the government official was discriminating between his relatives and the general public and allotted a larger share from the Public Treasury to his relatives. The Holy Imam warned him and wrote to him. "There should be no difference whatsoever between your relations and the rest of the Muslims". (Sharh Nahjul Balagha, by Muhammad Abduh, vol. III, p. 76).

Observation of Non-Muslims' Rights

Islam takes special care of non-Muslims in the matter of their legal rights; it accords full freedom in the matters of faith, economic activity, property, social security and the preservation of their culture and traditions.

According to Qur'an, Muslims are commanded to observe the conditions of their pacts and treaties made with non-Muslims and never to violate them. (5: I. 16:91; 33:15; 9:4&7; 17:34; 23:8&9; 70:32) Ali (A.S.) includes non-Muslims also among common men paying taxes or tribute (Nahjul Balaghah trans. Jafery. pp. 257-258)

Ali, in a Letter to Malik, writes: "Remember Malik, that

among your subjects there are two kinds of people: those who have the same religion as yours ... and (those who have other religions than yours and yet they are human beings like you. Men of either category suffer from the same weaknesses and disabilities that human flesh is heir to ..." (letter 53)

The rights of non-Muslims living in a Muslim state are covered by the above instructions, whose lives are to be protected and whose bloodshed is prohibited. The verses of al-'Anfal: 58 and al-Nisa': 90-94 encourage Muslims to accept any offer of peace-making by non-Muslims with the Divine promise that if they intend to deceive, God will protect Muslims. They are accorded all the rights granted to Muslim citizens, that is, right to education and dissemination of knowledge, freedom of thought, right to property, business, agriculture, industry and honorable living. They are treated equally in social matters and are respected.

Islam ordains that we should be just not only to its followers but also to the enemies even in times of war. Imam Ali after sustaining a fatal wound at the hands of his assassin advised his two worthy sons, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn besides giving other instructions, not to indulge in mass killing but to kill only the wretched killer, Ibn Muljam. He further said: "He (the assassin) struck once on me and therefore you should also give him one stroke". (See: Letter, 47) This is a unique example of justice which Imam Ali upheld even at the moment when he was lying in a pool of blood.

Adopting moderation and justice is the guiding principle of a Muslim's life. Among other things, which should be given importance to are undue praise and undue criticism, which leave

a harmful effect on individuals and the society as a whole. Imam Ali says: "If you exceed the limit in praising somebody you will be a sycophant and if you belittle the worth of a deserving person, you are narrow-minded or jealous as you cannot bear to praise others". (See: Saying 347)

Conclusion

The search for justice and truth is considered as the mother of all social values. Islam is an institution of justice. It is a straight path and the Muslim fraternity is the nation which practices moderation and justice. The Islamic system is based on justice and one of the major objectives of it is to establish social justice among all the members of the nation. Social justice in Islam includes all aspects of human life, based on faith in God. We can say that after the Prophet Mohamed, Imam Ali was the best example to great morals and ethics, including justice. He lived for justice and was very firm in his belief that everyone should have a right to live in security; that there should be food and shelter and clothing for all. He considered humanity as one family where there should be tolerance for all irrespective of race, creed and colour, wealth or adversity. *Nahj al-Balagha* is, after the Qur'an and *Hadith*, the most inspired and influential writings on justice in the annals of Islamic history.

According to Imam Ali says, Justice is putting things in their places", and therefore the proper placement of oneself in relation to God is an essential requirement for the accomplishment of Justice. Justice is thereby an attribute of intelligence. Imam 'Ali's writings explicitly make the connection between Justice

and Truth in the sense of the proper ordering of things. Concerning the importance of Justice, he says "Do justice to Allah and do justice to the people even though it may be against your own interest". In a key passage among his Sayings, Imam 'Ali includes "justice" as one of the four pillars of "faith". Social justice is one of the most important aspects of justice in Islam. Social justice means giving each individual what he/she deserves in the distribution of financial benefits in the society, and providing equally for basic needs. It includes several elements, that the most important of them are as follows: (1) *The dignity of the human being and the importance of the community*, (2) equality and equitable distribution of wealth, (3) standing against oppression and protection of the weak against the strong, (4) provision of social security and (5) observation of man's social rights. All these elements have been dealt with in detail at proper places in this book. Let us briefly discuss them here.

Two more concepts in Islamic teachings relate to the overarching theme of Islamic justice: the concept of human dignity and the concept of the community of believers, or the *ummah*. Concerning the *dignity of the human being and the importance of the community*, Imam Ali says, Human dignity is the outcome of a just society and just law. Respect for one another is a vital theme of justice in the Sharia. A human being is to be treated with the respect due to God's greatest creation and the viceroy of God himself on Earth. Thus the principle of equality emerges under the concept of dignity. As Imam Ali, about human dignity says: "the Learned is one who knows his worth. It is enough for a man to remain ignorant if he knows not his worth."

Concerning the necessity of standing against oppression and protection of the weak against the strong, he says "Be an enemy of the oppressor and helper of the oppressed." Because oppression is very dangerous and has evil consequences, Allah has forbidden men to cooperate with the iniquitous or to associate with them.

A good ruler is only when the people ruled by him, have appreciation and good words for his deeds and dealings. Thus, Hazrat Ali made people's judgment as the measure for the performance of a ruler. A ruler should be particular about performing virtuous deeds and should abstain from unjust and inhuman dealings, preaching human values and ethical codes. Islam takes special care of non-Muslims in the matter of their legal rights; it accords full freedom in the matters of faith, economic activity, property, social security and the preservation of their culture and traditions.

Finally, adopting moderation and justice is the guiding principle of a Muslim's life. Among other things, which should be given importance to, are undue praise and undue criticism, which leave a harmful effect on individuals and the society as a whole.

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