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Research Article

Islāmic Approach to Social Justice: An Analytical Study

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Abstract. Islām is the religion of peace and justice. The Islāmic Shari‘ah is principally based upon the benefit of the beings. Hence it is against class conflict and establishes fraternity and brotherhood in the ranks of the Ummah. As such, the Law of Islām holds that initially and essentially, all beneficial actions are legitimate, and all harmful ones are illegitimate. Justice is the fundamental principle existing in every commandment of the Shari‘ah. That is why every rule of the Shari‘ah bears witness to this generalisation when it considers human nature and its general weaknesses and basic needs. Justice is central to all the teachings and legal commandments of Islām. This paper explores the meaning of social justice. It analyses the fundamental ideals of Islām that can be considered to promote social justice, especially in societies governed by the legal system of Islām. It offers a conceptual framework primarily in light of the teachings of the Qur‘ān. It also discusses the peculiar characteristics of the Shari‘ah in light of the Islāmic Concept of the relationship between God, man, and the universe and the concept of divine justice manifest at all levels of the universe.

Keywords: Justice, Islām, Shari‘Ah, Law, Human Rights

INTRODUCTION

Justice is central to all the teachings of Islām. The Islāmic social justice system is based upon three fundamental principles: freedom of conscience, equality of human beings, and mutual sharing. These three elements can be explained by the three basic principles of *Tawhīd* (Affirmation of the Oneness of Allāh), Unity of mankind, and Unity of Universe—the three-dimensional relationship between God, Man, and Universe. From the religious point of view, justice means that God has given moral absolutes to govern human relationships and structures, which are embodied in human rights, respect, equity, impartiality, and advocacy. These five principles can be termed the components of religious-based social justice.

Islām's teachings serve as the foundation of the Islāmic approach to social justice, which attempts to instill fairness, equity, and compassion in society. The idea that everyone is created equal in God's eyes, regardless of social standing, race, or economic circumstances, is at the core of the Islāmic worldview. Islāmic teachings strongly emphasise resolving inequality, defending human rights, and fostering a sense of community. The Islāmic approach to social justice is built on the fundamental ideas and principles of the Unity of God, man, and the universe.

Ismā'il Rājī (Fārūqī, 1921: 268,70) says that the Holy Qur'ān teaches that mankind is one nation. Therefore, all human beings irrespective of caste, colour or race etc., are entitled to know the Truth; and no censorship or restriction may be imposed by anyone.¹ There is no distinction between man and man on the basis of nation or tribe:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
تَتَّقِيكُمْ (Al-Qur'ān, Al-Hujurāt 49:13)

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other. Verily, the most honoured of you in the sight of Allāh is (he who is) the most righteous of you.

Ra'isuddīn Khān says (Khān, 1992: 169): "In Islām, the difference between man and man is not based on race, colour or sex but on merit, quality and righteousness."² Originally, every human being is honoured as one among the sons of Ādam:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ (Al-Qur'ān, Al-Isrā' 17:70)

"And indeed We have honoured the Sons of Adam"

Thus, all human beings are same in the Sight of Allāh and there is no discrimination against any person, group or nation; He being Just, has provided every

¹ Fārūqī, Ismā'il R. and Lois Lamāyā. *The Cultural Atlas of Islām*, (Macmillan Pub. Co., 1921) pp. 268, 70.

² Sherānī, Ra'isuddīn Khān, *Muhammad -The Greatest Law-Giver and an Epitome of Justice and Compassion*, in "Essays on Islām", (Hamdard Foundation Karachi, 1992) p. 169.

human being with equal opportunity to attain felicity in this world and in the world hereafter:

وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

(Al-Qur'ān, Al-Isrā' 17:70)

And We have carried them on a land and sea, and have provided them with At-Tayyibāt (lawful good things), and have preferred them above many of those whom We have created with a marked preferment.

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۚ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ (Al-Qur'ān, Al-Kahf 18:29)

And say” “The truth is from your Lord.” Then whosoever wills, let him believe; and whosoever wills, let him disbelieve.

Islām strongly emphasises the inherent worth and dignity of every human being. The Holy Qur'ān emphasises the fundamental equality of all humans by asserting that all humans were created from a single soul. Within the Islāmic paradigm, social justice and fair treatment are based on this equality. Islāmic *Shari'ah* strongly emphasizes the significance of fairness and equity.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad's life and teachings serve as a role model for social justice in Islām. He is an excellent example of social justice because he cares for the underprivileged, emphasises helping widows and orphans, and attention to labourers' and workers' rights. Islām opposes all forms of exploitation, including economic exploitation, oppression, and the unfair treatment of weaker individuals or groups.

Islām encourages kindness, compassion, and empathy toward others. These characteristics are essential for promoting a fair and peaceful society where people care for one another. The divine attributes *Rahmān* (the Compassionate) and *Rahīm* (the Merciful) imply that Allāh is Oft-Forgiving, protecting His creatures, and in the words of 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī ('Alī, 1413H: 19) “preserving them, guiding them, and leading them to clear light and higher life.”³ The word *Rahmān* expresses Allāh's love to man therefore, Allāh's relation to man is the relation *par excellence* of love, sympathy, concern, solicitude, compassion, and mercy (Daryābādī, 1994: 2).⁴ Both words, *Rahmān* and *Rahīm*, are derived from *Rahmah*, 'which signifies tenderness, requiring the exercise of beneficence and thus comprising the idea of love and mercy.' While the *Rahmān* denotes Allāh's general tenderness towards all His creatures, *Rahīm* denotes His tenderness towards His worshippers.⁵

Definitions and Meanings

Justice means fairness, equity, the quality of being just, and the exercise of authority to maintain right. Doing justice to someone means treating someone fairly or appropriately; show due appreciation. Doing oneself justice means doing it to the

³ 'Alī, Abdullāh Yūsuf, *English Translation of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'ān* (Madīnah Munawwarah, 1413H.) Ex. n. 19.

⁴ Daryābādī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1 (Mu'assisah al-Ṣaḥāfa wa al-Nashr, 1994) p.2

⁵ Ibid, p. 3.

best of one's ability. Poetical justice means nature's retribution, as shown in a poem or other piece of writing (Trumble, 1996: 96).⁶

Arabic has three synonyms for justice: *al-'Adl*, *al-Qist*, and *al-Inṣāf*. All three words, according to *al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ*, have the same meaning (Muṣṭafā, 1960: 588, 743).⁷

Al-Qist means *al-'Adl* (Muṣṭafā, 1960: 73).⁸ It also means *Al-Inṣāf*, which in turn means giving somebody his due and taking away from him what does not belong to him (Muṣṭafā, 1960: 588).⁹ *Anṣafa al-Shay'a* or *Intaṣafa* means 'Adala, i.e.,' he did justice.' *Intaṣafa fulānan*: 'Āmalahū bi al-'Adl means 'he treated him with justice.' *Anṣafa fulānan min fulānin*: *Istanfā lahū haqqahū minhu*, meaning to make somebody render to the other his due. *Rajulun naṣf*, *Imra'atun naṣf*, *Rijālun naṣf*: *min awsāṭin al-nās* meaning moderate people (Muṣṭafā, 1960: 926,27).¹⁰ It also implies equity, and in ethics, it amounts to impartiality, objectivity, and integrity; in short, a complete ethical code of the activity of the man of learning (Quraishī, 1995: 132).¹¹

One of the derivatives of *al-'Adl* is *al-I'tidāl* meaning moderation. '*Addal al-mikyāl wa al-mizān* means 'he did justice in measuring and weighing.' '*I'tadala* means 'he brought about equilibrium (between two conditions).' Another related word is *Waṣṭ*, defined as middle (Kerānwī, 1990: 772)¹² and 'justly balanced,' sober, free of all extravagances, and intermediate (Alī, 1413H: 143).¹³ Furthermore, in ḥadīth, it is related to '*Adl* (Zamān and Zamān, 1983: 717,18).¹⁴ It also means the best thing (Shafī, 1991: 390).¹⁵ It implies that there is a relation between '*Adl* and *Ihsān*. In ḥadīth, *Ihsān* has been used to include worshipping Allāh as though one is seeing Him, and while one sees Him not, yet truly, He sees him (Nawawiyy, 1984: 30).¹⁶

Ihsān has a great religious significance, and giving it a single meaning is inadequate. It has, therefore, variously interpreted as: "right action," "goodness," "charity," and "sincerity." Its root (HSN) also means "to master or to be proficient at (Nawawiyy, 1984: 30)."¹⁷

Thus '*Adl* comes out to be a good and commendable action or quality based upon the sincerity to Allāh and all His servants. When applied to governance, *al-'Adl* means the justice of the ruler between people. *Al-'Adl* also means *al-I'tidāl* referring

⁶ Trumble, Judy Pearsall and Bill, *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁷ Muṣṭafā Ibrāhīm, *al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ* (Matba' Miṣr, 1960) pp. 588, 743

⁸ Ibid., p. 743

⁹ Ibid., p. 588

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 926, 27

¹¹ Quraishi, H.U., Lent J. Van, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Glossary and Index to Technical Terms* (Brill, 1995) p.132

¹² Kerānwī, Waḥīd al-Zamān, *al-Qāmūs al-Jadīd*, (Idārah Islāmiyyāt, 1990) p.772

¹³ 'Alī, Abdullāh Yūsuf, *English Translation of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'ān* (Madīnah Munawwarah, 1413H.) Ex. Note. 143

¹⁴ Badī'al-Zamān and Waḥīd al-Zamān, *Ja'izah al-Sha'wudhī Sharḥ al-Tirmidhī*, vol.1 (I'tiqād Publishig House, 1883) pp. 717-18

¹⁵ Shafī, Muftī Muḥammad, *Ma'ārif al-Qur'ān*, vol. 5 (Maktabah Deoband, 1991) p.390

¹⁶ Nawawī, Imām, *al-Arba'in al-Nawawiyyah*, Eng. Tr. Denys Johnson-Davies and Ezzeddin Ibrahim, vol.2 (International Islamic Federation of Students Organisations, 1984) p.30

¹⁷ Ibidem

to moderate, between two extremes. Because of this, some *Mufasssirūn* say that 'Adl is when one's inner intention and outer actions are same (Shafi, 1991: 389).¹⁸ To Ibn 'Arabi *al'Adl* means equity (Shafi, 1991: 389).¹⁹ 'Adl has then many aspects:

One, 'Adl between man's self and his God, means a man should always obey Allāh's commandments.

Two, that man should do justice to himself by avoiding all such actions and things that may destroy his life, spiritual and physical. Here *al-'Adl* and *al-Ṣabr* (patience) are related to each other.

Three, one should do 'Adl between himself and the rest of the Creation. In this, he should not cause any harm to others and should behave towards the whole Creation with love and sincerity (Shafi, 1991: 389).²⁰ Imām Rāzī says *al-'Adl* means *I'tidal* (moderation) of belief, action, and morality (Shafi, 1991: 389).²¹

Imām Qurtabī says that *al-'Adl* means doing all *ḥasanah* (commendable and excellent) actions and refraining from all *sayyi'ah* (bad) things (Shafi, 1991: 390).²² In Mu'tazillī doctrine *al-'Adl* means the Justice of God and constitutes one of the five fundamental Mu'tazillī dogmas (Quraishi, 1995: 5).²³ In public Law, 'Adl is one of the principal conditions for carrying out public functions, and in private Law, it is a principal condition of a witness for bringing evidence (Quraishī, 1995: 5).²⁴ An 'Ādil is one who is just. In Law, it is a person of good morals. In the olden days, the notaries in the judicial administration were called 'Udūl (singular: 'Ādil) (Quraishi, 1995: 5).²⁵

The Opposite of 'Adl is *Zulm* which means misplacing a thing (Wortabet, n.d.: 247).²⁶ *ḡalamā: ḡalman wa ḡulman wa maḡlimatan* means 'to misuse,' 'to act wrongly.' *ḡalamahū:* 'to wrong,' 'to act tyrannically, towards somebody.' With other derivatives, it becomes 'to misplace,' 'to deprive somebody of his rights; *ḡālim* means an oppressor, a tyrant, and *ḡulmatun* means obscurity, darkness (Hava, 1990: 246, 47).²⁷ Thus all wrongdoings are *Zulm*.

From the religious point of view, justice means that God has given moral absolutes to govern human relationships and structures, which are embodied in human rights, respect, equity, impartiality, and advocacy. These five principles can be termed the components of religious-based social justice (Cox, 2000: 87).²⁸

¹⁸ Shafi, op.cit., p.389

¹⁹ Idem

²⁰ Idem

²¹ Ibid, p.390

²² Idem

²³ Quraishī, op.cit., p.5

²⁴ Idem. However, in Islamic *Sharī'ah* there is no such division of private law and public law.

²⁵ Idem

²⁶ Wortabet, John and Peter Harwey, *Wortabet's Pocket Dictionary* (Maktabah Lebanon, n.d.) p.247

²⁷ Hava, J.G., *al-Farā'id al-Durriyyah fī al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah wa al-Injiliziyyah* (Cosmo Publications, 1990) p.446-47

²⁸ Cox, F. Brian, *Reconciliation Based Seminar, The Gandhian Edition*, (Santa Barbara, 2000) p.87

Human Rights

Fundamental human rights save humanity from oppression and suppression and ensure justice for all. The fundamental rights of each social member play a conspicuous role in building peace and happiness in a society. Most of the time, chaos, restlessness, and inquietude appear in the community due to the absence of fulfilling the fundamental rights of social members. Islām, therefore, attached too much importance to fulfilling the fundamental rights of social members (Hassan 2023:3).²⁹

The scope of human rights includes:

- Freedom of religion
- Freedom of thought, expression, and speech
- Freedom of life
- Freedom of ownership and use of blessings of life
- Freedom from terror, torture, and abuse
- Freedom to develop human potential
- Freedom of movement
- Freedom to enjoy social services (Jafari, 1999: xxiii, 247).³⁰

Respect

Respect means guarding the dignity of all people in our attitudes, words, actions, and structures. At the heart of injustice is a lack of respect for people, property, or the environment (Cox, 2000: 87).³¹

Equity

Equity means equality of opportunity but cannot guarantee equality of outcome (Cox, 2000: 87).³² Three things are opposite to equity and, therefore, betray the standard of justice: Oppression, exploitation, and tyranny. Oppression means an inequitable distribution of burden/suffering; exploitation means an inequitable distribution of resources and opportunity, and tyranny means an inequitable distribution of Power (Cox, 2000: 87).³³

Impartiality

²⁹ Mahmudul Hassan (2023) "Ensuring Peace in Society: An Islamic Perspective", *al-Afkar, Journal For Islamic Studies*, 6(2), p.3. doi: 10.31943/afkarjournal.v6i2.444

³⁰ Jafari, Ayatullah Ustad Muhammad Taqi, *Universal Human Rights*, Eng. Tr. Translation and publication Department Culture and Relations, (Tehran, 1999) pp. xxiii, 247

³¹ Cox, F. Brian, loc.cit.

³² Idem. Equity or equality of opportunity is different from similarity which is being used by modern feminists and orientalist as a slogan in their campaign to project Islam as perpetrator of injustice against women. Islam recognizes both man and woman as human beings and gives them freedom to enjoy equal opportunities to play their respective roles in this world and, more importantly to strive for approaching God for their salvation in the Hereafter.

³³ Idem

The opposite of impartiality is favouritism which involves showing partiality towards a person, group, or nation. It assumes discrimination against another person, group, or nation (Cox, 2000: 87).³⁴

Advocacy

It involves protecting the most vulnerable elements of society by moving from practicing justice to actively promoting justice for them (Cox, 2000: 87).³⁵ In Islām, 'Adl (justice) assumes a central place. It is one of the fundamental principles of Islāmic thought and practice. The following principle held by the Muslims unanimously testifies to this:

And we love the people who are Just and trustworthy and hate those who are unjust and betray their trust (al-Taḥāwī, 1993: 546).³⁶

The Islāmic social justice system is based upon three fundamental principles: freedom of conscience, equality of human beings, and mutual sharing (Quṭb, 1981: 97).³⁷ These three elements can be explained by the three basic principles of *Tawḥīd* (Affirmation of the Oneness of God), Unity of humankind, and Unity of the Universe—the three-dimensional relationship between God, Man, and Universe.

Tawḥīd

God is One, the infinitely Merciful and absolutely Just. He is Justice in Himself. He is the source of all good; all blessings and bounties come from Him. He has power over all things. The Qur'ān testifies:

الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ

(Al-Qur'ān, Al-Hashr 59:23)

“(He is Allah, than whom there is no other God)—The Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, Peace, the Keeper, the Keeper of Faith, the Guardian, the Majestic, the Compeller, the Superb. (59:23)

وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ (Al-Mu'minūn 23:88)

He Protecteth, while against Him there is no protection.

تَبْرَكَ الَّذِي فِي يَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ، وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (Al-Qur'ān, Al-Mulk 67:1)

Blessed be He in whose hands is Dominion and He over all things hath Power.

Explaining the above *Āyah*, 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī writes: "...We recognize and proclaim

in His beneficence to us; for all increase and happiness is through Him, "in His hands" — in the hands of Him who also holds Dominion or Power. In our human affairs, we sometimes see the separation of Dominion or Power from Goodness or

³⁴ Idem

³⁵ Idem

³⁶ Taḥāwī, Imām, *Aqīdah al-Taḥāwiyyah* (Berut, 1993) p.546

³⁷ Quṭb, Sayyid, *Islam Main 'Adl Ijtimā'i*, Urdu Tr. Najātullāh Ṣiddiqī (Markazī Maktabah Islāmī, 1981) p. 97

Beneficence: in the divine nature, we recognize that there is no separation or antithesis (Alī, 1413H: 5554).³⁸

Allāh is the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds (Qur'ān, 1:2). Therefore, He cares for all the worlds He has created (Alī, 1413H: 20).³⁹ He guides (Qur'ān, 24:35) His creatures, protects them, preserves them, and leads them to clear light and higher life.

Thus, all Praise is due to Him (Qur'ān, 1:1). Moreover, it is the demand of justice that He alone must be praised. At the same time, the quality of thanksgiving is inborn in man to the highest degree compared to other creatures. That implies 'Adl (justice) is the original proof in favour of *Tawhīd* (Iṣlāhī, 1990: 50, 51).⁴⁰ That is why shirk, which accepts anything other than the True God deserving of man's gratitude and worship, has been termed in the Qur'ān as *Ẓulm' Aẓīm* (greatest injustice):

إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ (Al-Qur'ān, Luqmān 31:13)

False worship is indeed the highest wrongdoing.

The concept of *Tawhīd* is an axiomatic precognition in man, and his latent faculties are enough to teach him the distinction between good and evil, between *Tawhīd* and *Shirk* (Iṣlāhī, 1990: 92).⁴¹ That is why Allāh, in order to justify his 'Adl, punishes those who are unmindful of Him and reminds us of the primordial covenant He has taken from all:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ ۗ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ۗ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ ۗ شَهِدْنَا ۗ أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ ۗ أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِّنْ بَعْدِهِمْ ۗ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبِطِلُونَ

(Al-Qur'ān, Al-A'rāf 7:172-73)

When thy Lord drew forth from the children of Adam—from their loins—their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): "Am I not your Lord (Who cherishes and sustains you)?" – They said: "Yea! We do testify!" (This), lest Ye should say on the day of Judgment: "Of this, we were never mindful": Or lest ye should say: "Our fathers before us took false gods, but we are (their) descendants after them: wilt thou then destroy us because of the deeds of men who followed falsehood.

In the light of this covenant "there is, therefore, no excuse for any individual to say, either (1) that he was unmindful, or (2) that he should not be punished for the sins of his fathers, because his punishment (if any) comes from his personal responsibility and is for his own rejection of faith and the higher spiritual influences (Alī, 1413H: 1148)."⁴²

³⁸ Alī, A.Y., op.cit., Ex. Note, 5554

³⁹ Ibid, Ex. Note, 20

⁴⁰ Iṣlāhī, Amīn Aḥsan, *Ḥaqīqati Tawhīd*, (Markazi Maktabah Islāmī, 1990) pp. 50,51

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 92

⁴² Alī, A. Y. op.cit., Ex. Note 1148

Shirk is, therefore, against man's nature and conscience. It makes him a slave of enslaved people, and thus injustice takes place (Quṭb, 1981: 97).⁴⁶

Allāh has no special relationship with any people. His 'Adl demands that there should be no discrimination among people. Even His messengers cannot escape His wrath if (at all) they commit any injustice:

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَغُلَّ ۚ وَمَنْ يَغُلْ يَأْتِ بِمَا غَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ ثُمَّ تُوْفِي كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

(Al-Qur'ān, Ālu-Imran 3:161)

No prophet could (ever) act dishonestly; if any person acts dishonestly, he shall, on the day of judgment, restore what he misappropriated; then shall every soul receive its due whatever it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly.

Allāh's Tawhīd demands that He is the Supreme Sovereign. Thus, Allāh is the Highest authority; in Him rests the authority of legislation:

إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۚ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ۚ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ

(Al-Qur'ān, Yūsuf 12:40)

The Command is for none but Allāh: He hath commanded that ye worship none but Him: that is the right religion.

اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ

(Al-Qur'ān, Al-A'raf 7:3)

Follow (O men!) the revelation given unto you from your Lord, and follow not, as friends or protectors, other than Him.

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

(Al-Qur'ān, Al-Mā'idah 5:44)

And whosoever does not judge by what Allāh has revealed, such are the Kāfirūn (i.e., disbelievers—of a lesser degree as they do not act on Allāh's Laws).

Allāh's Tawhīd and His Hākimiyyah (Sovereignty) are inseparable. Belief in the Unity and Sovereignty of Allāh is the foundation of the social and moral systems of Islām. Thus, He is the real Law-giver, and His Law cares for all. Allāh has laid down the absolute rules that govern the universe.

يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ

(Al-Qur'ān, Al-Sajdah 32:5)

He rules (all) affairs from the heavens to the earth.

The rules governing man's life constitute the *Sharī'ah*. He has also set up the Balance—the absolute standard of justice. The Qur'ān testifies:

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.97

وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا

الْمِيزَانَ (Al-Qur'ān, Al-Rahmān 55:7-9)

And the firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance (of Justice), in order that ye may not transgress (due) Balance. So, establish weight with justice and fall not short in the Balance.

'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī, taking these *Ayāt* both literally and figuratively, writes: "A man should be honest and straight in every daily matter, such as weighing out things which he is selling: and he should be straight, just and honest, in all the highest dealings, not only with other people but with himself and in his obedience to Allāh's Law. Not many do either the one or the other when they have an opportunity for deceit. Justice is the central virtue, and the avoidance of both excess and defect in conduct keeps the human world balanced just as the heavenly world is balanced by mathematical order (Alī, 1413H: 5178)."⁴⁷

The *Shari'ah* frequently called the Balance in the Holy Qur'ān, is the foundation on which the Absolute Justice of God is based. Allāh's Oneness demands that divine guidance must be for all; it must be the property of humanity. That is what Islām claims: the Truth is one just as God is one — all the Messengers of Allāh proclaimed the same Truth. Hence after mentioning about many Messengers like Mūsa, Harūn, Ibrāhīm, Lūt, Ishāq, Ya'qūb, Nūh, Dāwūd, Sulaymān, Ayyūb, Ismā'il, Dhul Kifl, Dhunnūn, Zakariyyā and 'Isā, He says:

إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ (Al-Qur'ān, Al-'Anbiyā 21:92)

Verily, this Ummah of yours is a single Ummah, and I am your Lord and Cherisher. Therefore serve Me (and no other).

Unity of Mankind

This indicates that humanity is one nation. Thus, the whole discussion leads us to the inference that all human beings irrespective of caste, colour, race, etc., are entitled to know the Truth; and anyone may impose no censorship or restriction (al-Fārūqī, 1921: 268,70).⁴⁸ This fact is well unveiled by the Holy Qur'ān when Allāh makes no distinction between man and man on the basis of nation and/or tribe:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ

أَتْقَاكُمْ ۗ (Al-Qur'ān, Al-Hujurāt 49:13)

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allāh is (he who is) the most righteous of you.

⁴⁷ Ibid, Ex. n. 5178

⁴⁸ Fārūqī al, Ismā'il R. and Lois Lamāyā. *The Cultural Atlas of Islām*, (Macmillan Pub. Co., 1921) pp. 268, 70.

"In Islām, the difference between man and man is not based on race, colour or sex but on merit, quality, and righteousness (Sherānī, 1992: 169)."⁴⁹ Initially, every human being is honoured as one among the sons of Ādam:

(Al-Qur'ān, Al-Isrā' 17:70) **وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ**

And indeed We have honoured the Sons of Adam.

Thus, all human beings are same in the Sight of Allāh and there is no discrimination against any person, group or nation; He being Just, has provided every human being with equal opportunity to attain salvation in this world and in the world hereafter:

وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

(Al-Qur'ān, Al-Isrā' 17:70)

And We have carried them on a land and sea, and have provided them with At-Tayyibāt (lawful good things), and have preferred them above many of those whom We have created with a marked preferment.

(Al-Qur'ān, Al-Kahf 18:29) **وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ**

And say "The truth is from your Lord." Then whosoever wills, let him believe; and whosoever wills, let him disbelieve.

Unity of the Universe

The Creation points to the unity of purpose and design ('Alī, 1413H:167).⁵⁰ Everything in the Universe belongs to Allāh (3:109), and He alone has the Power to command (7:54). He governs the Universe, and the whole Creation is devoutly obedient to Him (30:26) He has laid down absolute rules (Law) that govern the Universe. This Law is termed *Firatullāh* or *Qānūn al-Fiṭrat* or Allāh's *Sunnah* (Divine norm) and works on the principle of cause and effect. Therefore, there is no change or turning off in this Law:

(Al-Qur'ān, Fātir 35:43) **فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا لَكَ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَحْوِيلًا**

So no change will you find in Allāh's Sunnah (way of dealing), and no turning off will you find in Allāh's Sunnah (way of dealing).

The whole system of the universe is in His Hands:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمْسِكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَنْ تَزُولَا ۚ وَلَئِن زَالَتَا إِنْ أَمْسَكَهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِهِ ۗ

(Al-Qur'ān, Fātir 35:41)

⁴⁹ Sherānī, Rāisuddīn Khān, "Muḥammad-The Greatest Law-Giver and an Epitome of Justice and Compassion", in *Essays on Islām*, (Hamdard Foundation Karachi, 1992) p. 169

⁵⁰ A.Y. Ali, op.cit., Ex. n. 167

"Verily! Allāh grasps the heavens and the earth lest they should move away from their places, and if they were to move away from their places, there is not one that could grasp them after Him.

It is also in a *ḥadīth* narrated by Abū Hurayrah that he heard Allāh's Messenger saying:

"(On the Day of Resurrection) Allāh will grasp the whole planet of the earth (by His Hand), and roll all the heavens up with His Right Hand, and then He will say, "I and the Kind; where are the kings of the earth? (Bukhārī, 336)"⁵¹

Allāh runs the affairs of the universe with justice and compassion. In the vast diversity, we find that the design of the universe is the same; its purpose is also one—it leads us to Allāh, which is the purpose behind the creation. Thus, man and the universe walk hand in glove on the same path so far as the design and purpose of their creation is concerned. The following Qur'ānic *Ayāh* very beautifully describes the unity of design and purpose behind the creation of the universe and its correlation with that of man:

أَمَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً ۖ فَأَنْبَتْنَا بِهِ ۖ حَدَائِقَ ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ ۚ
 مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُنْبِتُوا شَجَرَهَا ۗ ءِإِلَهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ ۗ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ أَمَّنْ جَعَلَ الْأَرْضَ
 قَرَارًا وَجَعَلَ خِلَالَهَا أَنْهَارًا وَجَعَلَ لَهَا رَوَاسِي وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ حَاجِزًا ۗ ءِإِلَهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ ۗ بَلْ
 أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ
 الْأَرْضِ ءِإِلَهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ ۗ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ أَمَّنْ يَهْدِيكُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَنْ يُرْسِلِ
 الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ ۗ ءِإِلَهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ ۗ تَعَلَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ۗ أَمَّنْ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ
 يُعِيدُهُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ ءِإِلَهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ ۗ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ
 (Al-Qur'ān, Al-Naml 27:60-64)

One who has created the heavens and the earth, and who sends you down rain from the sky? Yea, with it, We cause to grow well-planted orchards full of beauty and delight: it is not in your Power to cause the growth of the trees in them. (Can there be another) god besides Allāh? Nay, they are a people who swerve from justice. Or, who has made the earth firm to live in; made rivers in its midst; set thereon mountains immovable; and made a separating bar between the two seas (can thereby another) god besides Allāh? Nay, most of them know not. Or, who listens to the distressed when he calls on Him, and who relieves his suffering and makes you (Mankind) inheritors of the earth? (Can there be another) god besides Allāh? Little it is that ye heed! Or, who guides you through the depths of darkness on land and sea, and who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His Mercy? (Can there be another) god besides Allāh? — High is Allāh above what they associate with Him! Or, who originates Creation, then

⁵¹ Bukhārī, Muḥammad bin Ismā'īl al, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith No. 336

repeats it, and who gives you sustenance from heaven and earth? (Can there be another god besides Allāh? Say, "Bring forth your argument, if ye are telling the truth!

The above *Āyah* makes us understand that "The order, beauty, and grandeur of the Universe are appealed to. They show a unity of design and purpose. How can unjust, ignorant, foolish, heedless, false men think of a multiplicity of gods, or any god, besides the One True God? (Alī, 1413H: 3293)"⁵²

The *Āyāt* mentioned above show that the whole universe is witness to Allāh's *Tawhīd* and *Hākimiyyah* (Sovereignty); therefore, those who fail to understand this universal reality and worship artificial gods are unjust. Also, those who say that the universe has no purpose and none governs it commit grave injustice to the universe itself as every creation points to but one Reality — The Oneness of the Creator, unity of creation, and unity of man as the supreme being in the whole creation.

Allāh governs the whole Universe on the pattern of justice. Since He is Most Gracious, Most Compassionate, and Merciful, and He watches over all things in the universe (Qur'ān, 67:19), His Law is also the Law of Justice.

CONCLUSION

The Islāmic perspective on social justice is firmly based on the ideals of fairness, compassion, and equality. It demands the equitable distribution of wealth, upholding of human rights, and putting an end to exploitation. Muslims are urged to actively participate in the creation of a just and equitable society by charitable deeds, moral business conduct, and advocacy for the disadvantaged. In the words of 'Abdullāh Y'Alī ('Alī, 1413H: 2127): "Justice is a comprehensive term, and may include all the virtues of cold philosophy. But religion asks for something warmer and more human, 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 in worldly language "have no claim" on you; and of course a fortiori the fulfilling of the claims of those whose claims are recognized in social life. Similarly, the opposites are to be avoided; everything that is recognized as shameful, and everything that is really unjust, and any inward rebellion against Allāh's Law or our own conscience in its most sensitive form."⁵³

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⁵² A. Y. Alī, op.cit., Ex. Note. 3293

⁵³ A. Y. 'Alī, op. cit., Ex. n. 2127.

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