

Good News

And give good news to those who do good (to others)

-Holy Quran 22:37

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Justice – a Quranic Perspective

By Ebrahim Mohamed

‘Surely God enjoins justice (*adl*) and the doing of good (*ihsaan*) (to others) and the giving to the kindred and He forbids indecency (*fahshaa*) and evil (*munkar*) and rebellion (*bahgyi*) - He admonishes you that you may be mindful.’

This is the 90th verse taken from chapter 16 of the Holy Quran entitled *The Bee*. It is traditionally recited across the world in the Friday sermons. As we look into its meaning and significance in the light of the dire human condition that have plagued the world since the beginning of time, we will see why.

Immediately we see that the verse not only deals with the important subject of ‘justice’ but it deals comprehensively with the different degrees of ‘goodness’ that should accompany it. We also see how Divine Wisdom juxtaposes the degrees of justice with the corresponding opposite degrees of *injustices* or *evil* we come across in the world and which we are exhorted to avoid.

The lowest form of justice is that which is called '*adl*' or 'justice' in its very clinical, raw form that entails returning good for good or the proportionate punishment for a misdemeanour committed or for breaking the law. It is thus the very basic form of the 'rule of law' a nation puts in place, supposedly, for the benefit of all its citizens. But, from what we see happening in the world the 'rule of law' or 'so called justice' is often biased in favour of those in power to the disadvantage of others who see it as a form of injustice. To illustrate the point I am making, 'apartheid' in South Africa was nothing but sheer legislated injustice. To the white minority rulers it was justice but to the non-white majority it was a form of political injustice of the worst kind. In the end it failed miserably and the entire oppressive system collapsed. Similarly, in Pakistan, governed by Muslims, we come across the worst kind of 'legalised' religious injustice where corrupt man-made laws give the state the power to prosecute certain minority groups for their beliefs despite the fact that such behaviour flies directly in the face of 'freedom of religion' and 'justice' that are entrenched in the Holy Quran. Thus we will find several examples in the world today of 'legislated' injustices shamelessly perpetrated by nations across the globe, Muslim and non-Muslim.

Therefore, to counter the intrusion of such despicable man-made laws that are made to appear as a form of justice but in reality are a form of gross injustice, the Quranic definition of 'justice' is that which embraces *ihsaan* or absolute 'goodness'. *Ihsaan* refers to such 'goodness' that is primarily meant for the upliftment of all human

beings regardless of religion, race, creed or colour whether male or female and which guarantees the observance and protection of their human rights. *Adl* or ‘justice’ devoid of *ihsaan* or ‘goodness’, we therefore conclude, is not ‘true’ justice according to the rules laid down in the Holy Quran.

However, performance of *ihsaan* –goodness to mankind - should be done without the desire of receiving any benefit in return. So when one is in a position of authority and is offered a bribe or asked to do someone a personal favour for a favour in return, you should flatly refuse to do so; for this goes against the very spirit of *ihsaan* – the goodness - associated with ‘justice’. In fact such behaviour always results in an injustice being performed to those whose well-being has been placed in the hands of the perpetrator. How many examples of this kind of ‘injustices’ are we not exposed to daily?

But there is yet a higher degree of goodness associated in the execution of true justice expected of us according to the Holy Quran; and that is that a person should do good to all people as if they are his own flesh and blood. This is what the Holy Quran means by ‘and the giving to the kindred’ like a mother to her children.

In juxtaposition to the justice and the degrees of goodness associated with it, as depicted in the Holy Quran, the verse then deals with the degrees of ‘injustices’ or ‘evil’ that are strictly forbidden. These are indecencies, evil, and large scale rebellion or oppression. All of these evil behaviours, whether small or big, are expressly prohibited by Almighty God according to this verse of the Holy

Quran. Rather the Holy Quran exhorts us to act in the following manner when executing justice:

‘O you who believe, be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably. Be just; that is nearer to observance of duty. And keep your duty to Allah. Surely Allah is Aware of what you do.’ – 5:8

I am told that the Law Faculty of the world renowned Harvard University in the United States was so impressed with this verse that they put it up at the entrance of the faculty for all to read as they enter.

The Holy Quran goes further and commands:

‘O you who believe, be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah, even though it be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives – whether he be rich or poor, Allah has a better right over them both. So follow not (your) low desires, lest you deviate. And if you distort or turn away from (truth), surely Allah is ever Aware of what you do.’ – 4:135

‘Allah forbids you not from showing kindness to and dealing justly with those who fight you not for religion nor drives you from your homes. Surely Allah loves the doers of justice.’ – 60:8

Above all the Holy Quran prescribes excellent guidelines extremely useful in religious and racial diverse societies. For example the Holy Quran says:

‘And serve Allah, and associate naught with Him, and be good to the parents and to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the neighbour of your kind and the foreign neighbour, and the

companion in a journey and the (homeless refugee, asylum seeker or homeless) wayfarer and those whom your right hand possess (such as the prisoners of war or these days contract workers).

Surely Allah loves not such as are proud, boastful.’- 4:36

Nevertheless, despite the fact that these high standards of justice are unsurpassed, Muslims are regrettably the worst at implementing it. Thus Muslim countries’ human rights performance is still very much at an all time low. A prominent professor Hossein Askari developed an algorithm based on a set of indices that objectively measures how close nations across the world are to the teachings and principles of the Holy Quran. His findings reveal that there are many non-Muslim countries that better reflect Quranic based human rights laws and practices in their legislature than do countries that profess Islam. He argues that Islam was hijacked almost immediately after the death of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by oppressive and corrupt rulers supported by pliant clerics that upended the fundamental teachings of the Holy Quran in order to gain absolute power and live in opulence as they subjugated their people.

Muslims need to heed the clarion call of the great reformer of the age Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to turn their attention to the Quran and implement its teachings. In the true spirit of the Quran Mirza Saheb taught love and compassion for all of humanity, regardless of race, colour, religion or creed. His words in a world still driven by racial and religious prejudices and bigotry are like a refreshing fountain in a scorching desert. He writes and I quote:

‘Be kind and merciful to humanity, for all are His creatures. Do not oppress them with your tongue, or with your hands, or in any other way. Always work for the good of mankind. Never unduly assert yourselves with pride over others, even those who are placed under you. Never use abusive language to anyone even though he abuses you. Be humble in spirit, kind and gentle, and forgiving, sympathetic towards all and wish them well so that you should be accepted (by God)...’ - *Noah’s Ark*

‘Our God has not withheld His bounty from any people. The powers and faculties which He bestowed on the ancient peoples of India have also been bestowed on the Arabs, the Persians, the Syrians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Europeans and the Americans. For all of them, the earth of God serves as a floor, and for all of them His sun, moon, and stars give light, and also perform other functions. All of them derive a benefit from the air, water, fire, earth and other things created by God, and all of them use the produce of the earth, its corn and its herbs, its flowers and its fruits. These liberal ways of God teach us that we also should do good to all mankind, and should not be narrow-minded, nor limit our sympathy (to certain peoples only).’ - *Message of Peace*

