



THE WAY FORWARD WITH SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ISLAMIC ECONOMICS

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ABSTRACT

In this conceptual paper, the authors attempt to revive a critical yet fortuitously overlooked idea of justice (*al-adl*) in the Islamic academic debates. Given its direct and far-reaching effect on the realization of the *Maqasid Shariah*, the present work begins with evidences of specific emphasis on social justice in the Holy *Quran* as well as the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) highlighting the relationships between *al-adl*, *al-haqq* (truth) and *al-qist* (equity). Followed by, key literary works by both the past and contemporary Muslim scholars passionate about the subject matter of justice in general. Ultimately, the paper involves a 3R; recollect, refine and restore approach to bridging the theoretical views of social justice to its rightful implementation in forms of economic policies in Malaysia. The underlying short run goal of this research is to motivate others with similar interests to continue seeking solutions within the *Turath*. The longshot being the added knowledge and better appreciation of the understanding of justice as central to a moral economy, progressing to improved decision making and effective action plans.

Keywords: Economics, Justice, *Shariah*, Theory, Practice

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CONCEPTUAL MEANING OF JUSTICE IN ISLAM

The Islamic discourse on justice starts with the complete acceptance of is Allah as the Supreme Law- Giver and the Qur'an as containing those laws. This is clearly mentioned in His Book:

"And We have sent down to you the Book (this Quran) in truth, confirming the Scripture that came before it and as Mohayminan (trustworthy in highness and a witness) over it (old Scriptures). So judge among them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging away from the truth that has come to you. To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way." (5:48)

Justice, (*adl*) is part of the metaphysical rationale for creation:

"God created the heavens and earth for a purpose: to reward each soul (i.e. provide just recompense) according to its deeds. They will not be wronged." (45: 22)





“Mankind alone is responsible for whatever justice or injustice is in the world.” (10: 44)

Divine justice is more than a quid pro quo exchange, at least with regard to merit or desert-based principles, for:

“God doubles any good deed and gives a tremendous reward of His own.” (4: 40)

Quranic evidences on command for establishing justice as part of observing the faith of Islam. The starting point for any type of justice is rooted in one’s spiritual quest, as testified below:

“There is no god but He: that is the witness of Allah His angels and those endued with knowledge standing firm on justice. There is no god but He the Exalted in Power the Wise:(3:18)

One’s relationship with Him is expected to manifest in their dealings with the rest of His creation. A verse routinely cited in Friday sermons follows:

“Allah commands justice the doing of good and liberality to kith and kin and He forbids all shameful deeds and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you that ye may receive admonition.” (16:90)

“O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Allah as witnesses to fair dealing and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to Piety: and fear Allah for Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.” (5:8)

Qur’anic justice must be seen in the context of the age of ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*) in which it was first revealed. The Holy Qur’an made pagan Arabs who were prone to violence aware that the essence of morality comes from moral responsibility, not tribal loyalty and preservation, devoting two hundred verses to antecessors of those who are guilty of injustice and oppression.

M. Shafi (2000), highlights that justice and equity may be treated as two sides to a coin due to their close reflection of Allah (S.W.T)’s attributes of Al-’Adl (The Just One) and Al-Muqsit (The Upholder of Equity).

According to Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi (1934), truth, justice and equity permeate all aspects in Islam. They appear in the Qur’an are *Al-Haqq* (227 times), *Al-Adl* (15 times) and *Al-Qist* (13 times) respectively. The foremost themes in the Quran refer to secondary terms of justice as *sidq* (truth) and *ihsān* (virtue or beneficence). The antonyms of *adl* are ‘*jawr*’. Expressed in slightly different shades of meaning such as *zulm* (wrongdoing), *tughyan* (tyranny), *mayl* (inclination) and *inhiraf* (deviation). Moreover, the Quranic reference to justice can also be inferred from the fact that mankind is endowed with a universal and objective moral nature or *fiṭra* (incipient or dispositional moral and spiritual awareness). It is *fiṭra* that forms the objective basis for the equal treatment of all human beings, linking natural law, human nature, and the divine command to build a just society.

Literally the word *adl*’ is an abstract noun, derived from the verb *adalāh* which means to straighten, amend or modify, run away, depart or defect from one wrong path to the other right path, be equal, alike or match and balance of counter-balance or in a state of equilibrium (Khadduri, 2001). At this point, it is rather useful to expand on the implications of the above forms the term *adl* can assume. Ibn Manzur, a lexicographer, states that the thing that is established in the mind as being straightforward is the meaning of justice. Hence, in the conceptual sense, the notion of *adl* as right is equivalent to the ideas of fairness and equitableness, precisely expressed in the term of *istiḡama*.





The idea of justice was of particular interest to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), as he found widespread inequality and oppression in the society he grew up. The Prophet himself valued virtues honored by his followers, for instance courage, honor and liberty, epitomized in the word *'muruwwa'* consisting of everything to be taken as praiseworthy. In the Traditions, he sought to explain the meaning of the abstract maxims of justice to indicate what the scale of justice ought to be. Since the Prophet dealt with essentially practical questions, the theologians and scholars found the Traditions precedents on the strength of which they formulated the theories of justice. Islam demands that justice to be upheld in all aspects of our lives, including our economic activities (Khadduri, 2001).

Besides the Holy Qur'an being replete with cues on the utmost importance of establishing justice, evidences from the tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) also affirms the pledge made with some of the clans of Makkah, aimed at protecting anyone regardless of their religious identity. Yet in another tradition, the Prophet (PBUH) related to God's message as saying, "I do not reject the supplications of the oppressed, even if it is from one who rejects faith."¹

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet (S.A.W) asked his companions, "Do you know who the bankrupt is?" They answered, "the bankrupt is one with no money." He said, "In my Ummah, the bankrupt is that man who would appear on the day of judgment; he had offered payer; paid zakat; observed fast; but would have abused somebody, he would have falsely accused someone, unlawfully taken someone else's property; murdered someone; hit someone. All his virtues would be given to his victims. If his virtues are finished before his wicked deeds are finished, then the sins of the victims would be given and he would be thrown into Hell." This Hadith unmistakably reflects the importance of being mindful of all our acts towards others. The Prophet (S.A.W) has warned us against injustice by equating an insolvent to one who violates the rights of another.

The following are selective hadith on social justice as shared by Sheikh Omar Suleiman in his lecture on The Gravity of Social Justice:

On the authority of Abu Dharr al-Ghifari (may Allah be pleased with him) from the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) (is that among the sayings he relates from his Lord (may He be glorified) is that He said: O My servants, I have forbidden oppression for Myself and have made it forbidden amongst you, so do not oppress one another.

Umm Salamah said the prophet never left his home except that he looked up to the sky and said, الله "O Allah! I seek refuge in You from leading others astray or being led astray, or against slipping or being caused to slip; or doing injustice or being done injustice to; or doing wrong or having wrong done to me." The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) (feared injustice so much he would make this du'a every time he left the house. He (صلى الله عليه وسلم) (used to be so afraid of injustice - where does this leave us?

Regardless of the variation between these scales, justice appear to retain some common elements, and thus broadly speaking, may be classified into two categories. Positive justice is to be found in societies which assume that men are capable of determining their individual or collective interest and know which they need or may aspire. However, a product of interaction between expectations and existing conditions, it is admittedly imperfect and men always endeavor to refine it in a continuing process of social change. On the contrary, Divine or Revelations Justice, presupposes that men are weak, and therefore are incapable of rising above personal failings. In such a society, a superhuman authority is invoked to provide either the sources or basic principles of the public order under which a certain standard of justice is

¹ Sahih Ibn Hibban:No. 361





instituted. The idea that fallible human beings can determine what their collective interests are and lay down an impartial common justice is scarcely acceptable. Nevertheless, divine justice coincides with reason and may well fall in the category of natural justice, similar to that of Aristotle and, later both the Muslim and Christian scholars who focused their primary concern on the concept of justice in relations to God's Will and the destiny of man.

HISTORICAL VIEWS OF MUSLIM SCHOLARS ON JUSTICE

Traditionally, the Islamic legal system did not require any lawyers, as litigants in person who pleaded their own case. Justice Rahman (1998) states: "In disputes between Muslims, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) administered justice according to the Holy Quran but his decisions also became precedents for the future." However, disagreements centered on which line possessed the capacity to rule justly and which procedures for rule should hold sway. Notwithstanding its claims for continuity, the model of the caliphate does not seem to provide specific guidelines for a theory of just sovereign.

During the brief period in the eighth century when the Abbasid favoured, the *Mu'tazilah* argued that divine justice is beyond human grasp but can be best approximated through the exercise of reason and free will. Their emphasis on reason and unity not only brought them into more conflicts with powerful opponents, but also set the terms of debate alive. As Islam spread into new territories and its contacts with classical Western thought increased, Islamic thinkers had to consider the practical applications of justice in law and politics (Rosen, 2000).

All leading jurists throughout Muslim history, held justice to be an indispensable. Abu Yusuf (d.182H/798G) indicated to Caliph Harun al-Rashid (d. 193H/809G) that rendering justice to those wronged and eradicating injustice accelerates development. Al-Mawardi (d.450H/1058G) argued that there is nothing that destroys the world and the conscience of the people faster than injustice."² Abu Bakr al-Turtushi (d. 520H/1127G) considered justice as the very foundation of polity, the "foundation of foundation" in his words, the highest virtue, with which a Ruler must be clothed.

To Ibn Taymiyyah (d.728H/1328G) justice to be an essential outcome of belief in One God (*Tawheed*). Hence, according to him, "justice towards everything and everyone is imperative for everyone and injustice is prohibited to everything and everyone. Injustice is absolutely not permissible irrespective of whether it is to a Muslim or a non-Muslim or even to an unjust person." He asserted that: "God upholds a just State even if it is unbelieving, but does not uphold one that is unjust even if it is believing." He developed the concept of *Siyasah Syariah* as a supplement to the Revelational Law and proposed *maslaha* or public interest. He tried to maintain the realism of induction and sought to serve the general interest of believers, which is the ultimate end of the Law. In short, unless prophetic justice is backed by a feeling of public responsibility to urge rulers to put justice into practice, injustice rather than justice is presumed to likely prevail.

Ibn Khaldun (d.732H/1332G) and his predecessors realized the relevance of justice and fair play in human dealings towards specialization of labor in the long run. He elaborated these ideas in his most celebrated work, *Muqaddimah* (1377). According to Khaldun, it is justice provides for an equitable distribution outcome and an enabling environment for solidarity.

Al-Raghib al-Isfahani (AH502/1108-1109), an eleventh-century Muslim scholar of Qur'anic exegesis and the Arabic language in his work of integrating philosophical knowledge into a Quranic framework, produced a theory of justice as an attempt at *ijtihad*. He defined justice as acting justly with others. In the context of potential, it is an innate human

² The Islamic Vision of Development in the Light of Maqasid l-Shariah (2008) by Umer Chapra





desire for equality, and in the pursuit of justice, man tried to be virtuous. However, outwardly just actions do not necessarily make one a just human being, but rather must be pre-intended.³

Subsequently, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897) and his student Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) saw no reason to choose between reason and revelation from the exposure to the secular legal system of the French colonial government which generated conflicts among the Muslim scholars who were accustomed to the Islamic justice system. They noted that by adopting western ideas of rational thinking and promoting individual freedom, Muslim societies could regain its strength from the widespread social injustice and corruption among the reaming despotic Muslim rulers and the destructiveness of Western colonialism. From Afghani's point of view, social justice is the fulfillment of the highest quality of being human and requires the adoption of virtues of self-restraint (*al-haya*), trust (*al-amanah*) and truth (*al-siddiq*) that can contribute to righteousness (Keddie, 1972).⁴

Rashid Rida (1865-1935) a political theorist, believed that the purpose of reason is to understand the Quran. He argued for the preservation caliphate as he was convinced of the role of a caliph to modernize the *Shariah* without diluting it. Hassan al-Banna (1906 -1949) was the founder of the most important reform movement of the era, the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*). He was also a respected writer on Islamic Jurisprudence who tried to show the strength of Islamic principles through his writings.

To Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi (1903 - 1979) however, justice is the 'only' purpose of Islam. That is to say, the promulgation of Islam and establishment of justice is one and the same. According to him, the proper kind of justice existed when man accept the position that he was not an autonomous being who can do anything he likes or serves his interest. He therefore has to act as trustee and execute the will of Allah. When they have been placed in the position of rulers, they will not impose their own will on the people, or treat them like slaves.

Syed Qutb (1906 – 1966) through his publication, *Al-'adalah al-ijtima'iyah fil 'I-Islam* (1946), later translated to English language by John B. Hardie in 1953 and titled as Social Justice in Islam, describes mainly three foundations upon which Islam establishes justice; freedom of conscience, human equality and mutual responsibility. It is both timely and thought provoking to critically review each in terms of its nature and objective. To Qutb's mind, a complete social justice not only cannot be assured or its efficiency and permanence guaranteed, unless it arises from an inner conviction of the spirit. For such to materialize, he maintained, justice must be called for by the society and claimed by the individuals. In other words, there has to be a belief that social justice will serve the highest purposes of mankind. He offered comparative views on the freedom of conscience to enable the readers to better relate to the Islamic views on freedom of human conscience, one that liberates us from servitude to any other than Allah (S.W.T). Once this is filled with the knowledge that it can of itself gain complete access to Allah, it cannot be disturbed by feelings of fear of its livelihood. There is no reason for any man to be oppressed by anxiety about his livelihood, for his provision is clearly in the hands of Allah. Human equality follows as a natural desire by all. The rich and poor strive to safeguard the intrinsic value of equality in Islam without exercising preferential treatment due to differences in gender, class or any other factors resembling superiority of one against another. Similarly, Islam embraces human equality in a broad spectrum, rather than confining it to realms of political rights like the West. The final basis of instituting justice in Islam rests in mutual responsibility in the society. Coincidentally, the next view also coheres with a similar line of reasoning.

Fazlur Rahman (1995) in his discussion on Islam and the Problem of Economic Justice, says that monotheism and social justice are two sides of the same coin, in the Quran. In light

³ Raghīb al-Isfahānī, *al-Dhārī ah ila makarim al-shariah* (Cairo: Darl al-Wafa. 1987), 350

⁴ Michael J. Austin. *Social Justice and Social Work. Rediscovering the Core Value of the Profession.* SAGE





of the consideration of the unalterable conduct (sunnah) of God, he goes on to explain why it is more correct to say that Islam is a doctrine centrally concerned with the moral and material well-being of individuals and societies. He refers to the verse below to support his claim that social justice reform thrust constituted the very heart of the Islamic movements.

“It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces Towards east or West; but it is righteousness- to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the Allah fearing”. (2:177)

In his earlier work, titled the Major Themes in Quran (1980), Rahman provides ample Quranic evidences reflecting the relevance of socio-economic justice to the daily lives of every Muslim. He devotes an entire chapter in describing the importance of earning wealth, spending it in the cause of Allah, the notion of *taqwa*, and the ultimate purpose of the *Shariah* to establish an egalitarian social order.

The renowned Islamic economist, Khurshid Ahmad (1979, 1994) clarified that achieving human well-being and justice in all aspects of life is key to economic development.

Khadduri (2001) in his, *The Islamic Conception of Justice*, studies the experiences of Islam with justice and how its’ leaders and thinkers grappled with the problem of establishing a standard definition of justice and determining it in accordance with an order of ideals and values that would set the conscience of the public at rest. Essentially a relative concept, whenever a man asserts that which he considers his just claim, were it be valid, it must be relevant to an established public order under which a certain scale of justice is acknowledged.

Syukri Salleh (2013) quotes Khurshid’s argumentative synthesis (1994:26) as below:

“Development means moral, spiritual and material development of the individual and society leading to maximum socioeconomic well-being with the establishment of a just order resulting in the ultimate good of mankind, here and hereafter.”

Clearly, Khurshid saw justice as an important ingredient to man’s role as *khalifah* in Islam. So much so that he related the relevance of justice to the maximization human well-being through the different aspects of societal development. Taha J. Alawany (2005) writes that as a faith and a way of life, Islam includes among its most important objectives, the realization of justice as an Islamic ideal under all circumstances and times. Justice is to be imparted without any fear or favour and also has to be free from any subjective element. What Islam suggests is the impulsive attitude of mind and a just disposal of disputes. It is clear from the discussions above that, in Islam doing justice with God, with His creations, including oneself and imparting justice between litigants is considered to be a noble act of carrying out the trust from Allah (S.W.T); it is in fact an act of worship (*ibadah*). On the contrary, the western idea of imparting all kinds of justice is merely the carrying out of worldly acts, having nothing to do with the hereafter of the man.

The general thematic analysis of justice in Islam leans towards Rawls’ proposition of Justice as Fairness. The key similarities are the equality of rights and individual freedom, especially of the needy. M. Zafrullah Khan in his *Islam and Human Rights* (1967/1999) elaborates how rights from the *Shariah* point of view is compatible with human nature and to a large extent that of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948. M H Kamal (1999) discusses the evidences for the concepts of freedom and justice in





the Qur'an and Sunna, in his reviews of the interpretations of the earlier schools of law. He also looked at more recent contributions by Muslim jurists who have advanced fresh interpretations of freedom, equality and justice in the light of the changing realities of contemporary Muslim societies.

In meeting the expenditures of social security and welfare programmes, Islam has made certain institutional provisions such as *zakat* and *waqaf*. Similar to John Rawls' 'difference principle', Islam considers the natural inequalities of men as natural advantages. One significant difference between the two approaches is that the effectiveness of Western theories is driven by egoistic motives or economic considerations while an Islamic society is required to look beyond such considerations, and actively work for altruistic pleasure as a measure of spiritual advancement. Justice in Islam is neither a hypothetical situation, nor is it confined to mere ideals. Rendering of justice is considered a form of worship (*ibadah*) in Islam which makes it both inviting and indispensable for Muslims.

CONTEMPORARY WORKS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

According to Sminov (1996), a devoted Arab Muslim lawyer focussed on the theoretical side of justice, the right (*haqq*) to have equal opportunity, to avoid exploitation, to receive a true evaluation of one's labour, and to satisfy the natural and social needs of each individual in harmony (*fi-al-tidal*) without injury to the rights, public affairs, or common values of others defines social justice. In a similar vein of thought, the author recognizes the idea of justice as a natural concept common to all human beings to which modern-day civilization gives its final exactness.

Ever since men began living in society, thinkers and philosophers aimed at defining the goal of human beings to attain in order to lead a good life. An individual, according to Plato, is insufficient by himself. Such insufficiency can be overcome only when he joins with others to meet mutual needs. Society is thus a relationship of mutual co-operation and exchange (Aristotle, Al-Farabi). In this relationship, everybody expects that 'justice' should be done to ensure one's due. Therefore, justice is the supreme value of the society. A societal condition is said to be just or a good or happy one, where everybody is ensured of his due. On the other hand, an unjust or unhappy society is that where a sense of injustice or 'feeling of deprivation' exists. Thus, justice is a guarantee for happiness and injustice becomes the cause of unhappiness. Justice and happiness are, therefore, inextricably interwoven. Good life or happiness, the universal quest of mankind, can only be achieved, said Aristotle, in a society that is based on justice.

Nazir Khan, the President of Yaqeen Canada and the Director of Research Strategy at Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, elegantly cites, Harvey (2017) as noting, "If the basic idea of the *khalifa* within the Qur'an is the human steward charged with a duty to live according to the moral scale that God has set within creation, then in the social sphere this implies upholding justice, establishing His law, and rectifying worldly corruption."⁵

Another verse fundamental to social justice and universally accepted by Muslims when dealing with diverse ethnic groups is this:

"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 (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)"(49:13)

⁵ The Qur'an and the Just Society (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2017), pg. 83





It is consistent with earlier reminders emphasising its believers to be just to all irrespective of their faith or a lack of it.

“Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error; whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things”. (2:256)

“If it had been the Lord's Will they would all have believed all who are on earth! Wilt thou then compel mankind against their will to believe!”(10:99)

To bring justice and fairness into the realm of practice, efforts to discuss about public policies must be given utmost attention. Both Mahyudi (2015b) and Mahyudi (2021) are preliminary attempts to connect the agenda of Islamic moral economy with the economic agent operative; ‘universal man’ to be more specific. Apart from introducing a shariah-based public policy to develop the Islamic man as suggested in Mahyudi (2015b), a more piece-meal approach could be seen as being more realistic to be implemented. Applying that piece-meal approach, Mahyudi (2021) shows some basic possibilities on how to use the ‘universal man’ concept in designing public policies that are more suited to the context of the economic problems at hand. With the injection of relevant creativity by the policymakers, justice and fairness could have higher chances to be enjoyed by the whole economy.

Whilst individual actions of charity and kindness are praiseworthy, in order to effect real change, the *ummah* must essentially work collectively on a larger scale to address systemic injustices and institutional policies targeted at rectifying social inequities sustainably.

Epistemological Imperative to Exercise Justice

There is a bright future for Islamic economics science. This could be argued from the development of the science of economics itself. The gap on ethics that is left wide open by mainstream neoclassical economic thought invites other heterodox schools of thought to participate and contribute to the future of economics as a credible knowledge discipline (Stiglitz, 2010; Putnam, 2012; Mirakhor, 2014; and Mahyudi, 2015a). The rising concern on income inequality and the larger issue of distributive justice presents a great opportunity for Islamic economics to engage with present day economic thoughts; both orthodox and heterodox alike.

In order to engage on a more solid footing, the science of Islamic economics must be framed within its contemporary mold. According to Catellan (2018, p.1), contemporary Islamic economics, which has been steadily progressing since 1960s onwards, refers to that “collective enterprise of research achievements whose distinctive object consists in the provision of answers to human economic problems through solutions that are grounded in Islamic religion”. Hence, the epistemological basis of a true science becomes central in the future trajectory of Islamic economics discipline development.

On this epistemological imperative, Bakar (2010, p. 430) avers that “Central to the subject matter of economics is man and his constructed social reality of which economic life is just one though a very important aspect. The conception of man and the conception of human social reality are therefore extremely important to a science of economics especially one that is claiming to be truly well-founded, scientific and all-encompassing”. Interestingly, this critical point coincides with the motivation behind Mahyudi’s (2016) call for a fresh epistemological approach in Islamic economics methodology. Unfortunately, Mahyudi (2016, p. 124) asserts that in coming up with Islamic economics own concept of the economic agent, early Islamic





economists have committed honest mistakes; “first, they have given too much focus on the individual person’s positive aspect of his innate being. Second, they have undermined the interplay of social dynamics in influencing actual expressed preferences”. To improve on its epistemological quality, Islamic economics must address these mistakes.

As part of that process of epistemological improvement, Mahyudi and Abdul Aziz (2017) introduces the ‘universal man’ concept. In it, the position of justice and fairness as the economic agent’s cardinal virtue is argued to be superior to *homo economicus*’ rationality and *homo Islamicus*’ *taqwa* (God-consciousness). Almost all economic operative works and decides under the ‘spell’ of justice and fairness so much so that societal, cultural, moral and legal measures are taken up when there appear to be alleged cases of unfair treatment by any parties. Even institutions, including economic ones, are built upon the universally embraced principle of justice. Al-Attas (2015, p. 24; emphasis added) summarizes this practical behaviour of man in this insightful view:

“Looking back into their historical past on the debates and deliberations about the origin and nature of justice, modern scholars and thinkers sum up in evidence that *all human institutions*, i.e., the state, its constitution, its laws, its contract under seal, its treatise and agreements, its organization and operations, involve justice. This means, according to them, that justice is something political or *something natural*.”

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

There are boundless more past incidences in the Islamic history to demonstrate the all-encompassing nature of social justice, for contemporary Muslims to refer to if and when needed. Islam as the way of life (*Adeen*) provides a complete guideline and is solution-oriented belief system suited for all times and space. What remains a challenge is for a proper understanding, recognition, appreciation, internalization and application of social justice in the broadest sense.

Through reflection, human beings are able to discover the laws God has established on the psychological, social and cosmic planes and, having grasped these realities, to legislate the laws needed to order life’s affairs, to establish a community devoted to truth and justice, and to construct an enlightened civilization. Our inborn moral awareness leads us to strive for justice, promote human rights and treat one another with integrity and equity, for it is in these ways that human beings’ best interests are served. Our God-given moral compass works together with the tools of knowledge to enable us to understand the messages conveyed by the written revelation, which is our source and authoritative point of reference; it also assists us in making practical distinctions between cases of altruism and selfishness, righteousness and evil.

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

There is an urgent need to revitalize the concept of justice as a virtue for the sake of peace and happiness. While Western philosophy defines justice as ‘giving to each what is due’, Islamic philosophy, acknowledges justice as equity, and views it as an overflowing stream that sweeps away inequities. Islamic justice is not to be conceived in purely legalistic terms but has an ethical spirit that allows for spontaneous acts of kindness from the heart. Islam is fundamentally a faith of activism, rooted on behavior that enjoins good and forbids evil.





“Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah. If only the People of the Book had faith, it were best for them: among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors.” (3:110)

“The Believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. On them will Allah pour His mercy: for Allah is Exalted in power, Wise.” (9:71)

Prior to the 15th century, economics was normally discussed as a branch of ethics whereby the philosopher or theologian generally functioned as an economist because this was required to explicate the moral law. We can call this period ‘the preacher as an economist.’ In the 19th century however, the emphasis was between distributive and corrective justice, with the Utilitarian theories to dominating, and calling for the complete divorce of ethics from economics and more importantly for a scientific basis. In essence, while Utilitarianism failed to fully appreciate the distinctiveness of persons, whereas the Libertarianism to recognize the interconnectedness of persons engaged in a common social life.

As a functionally operative and effectual rule, social justice envisaged by Islam is capable of managing human relations on a moral and legal level based on compassion, respect leading to societal peace and harmony. In order to study the association between justice and economics, we need to begin at identifying with the manner in which their relationship has been treated in history.

Now the concept of justice remains a comprehensive theme central to the Islamic ideology, simply short of conviction to emerge as a collection of principles in Islam. This then becomes our duty and commitment to educate, remind and establish social justice in all spheres of life for everyone to receive their dues as commanded by the sources of revealed knowledge in Islam.

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