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Oppression

[The Role of Justice in Society](#)

A Study of the history of revolutions shows important factors worthy of reflecting upon, on which the basis of uprisings and revolutions around the world and between various nations were built. That factor is no other than justice. Many times this word awakened the souls of those whose lives were filled with deprivation, whose rights and honor were encroached upon. The oppressed revolted against the organs of evil, and endeavored to achieve the precious gems of freedom and justice by eradicating the unjust beasts. In most cases the oppressed were willing to sacrifice their lives in the hope of wiping our oppression.

It is unfortunate to say the great majority of revolutions and uprisings were unable to reach their sacred goals, nor did the revolutionaries achieve their hopes of eradicating pain from their lives.

The secret behind their failure becomes apparent with a little reflection on an important issue. That is to say that a society which loses track of the natural course of development and becomes accustomed to failure and backwardness, will be unable to bear a just system and will be unable to tolerate just order. Establishing justice is only possible in appropriate atmospheres, without which justice has no chance of appearing on the horizons of life.

A just law is a basic requirement for any social structure. A just law guarantees the rights of all classes and individuals in accordance with the welfare of the public, accompanied by behavioral implementation of its various codes.

Justice is a natural law observed in all corners of the universe. Allah, the Almighty, decreed the outline of the world to be dependent on justice, so that it cannot be violated in any possible manner. The astonishing and precise harmonies which exist between the different organs of our bodies are amongst most obvious manifestations of the accurate law of justice in this universe. By observing ourselves we can initiate the understanding of the rest of the universe thereof.

The balance which rules the universe is compulsory in the meaning that it is instinctive. Because man was given the freedom of will and thought, it becomes his duty to establish the pillars of justice in his society. It is true that in some instances, the reasoning power in man needs legislative guidance, but at times it can also do without it: for men realize many facts independently. In some cases, reason can pass judgment as to the goodness or incorrectness of an affair.

Justice enjoys a sensitive position in man's life, for it is a source of all noble traits. In other words, justice is a motive behind excellent conduct. It also is an element that creates harmony and serenity between human societies. In fact, justice is an essential step towards uniting societies in the path of righteousness.

Plato, the famous Greek philosopher, said:

“If justice finds its way into man's spirit, the bright rays will light all his spiritual powers; because all noble traits and human morals arise from the spring of justice. It grants man the ability to best perform his personal works, which is the ultimate happiness of man and the peak of his closeness to the Almighty Creator.”

It is safe enough to say that justice is the basic element in organized social life. With justice a new chapter of life is opened, societies find new spirit in them, and it lights the human life with glory and beauty. A society where life enjoys the beauty of justice finds the necessities of life, and therefore overcomes all its problems.

The Destructive Flames of Oppression

The role of oppression in destroying societies, ruining behavior, and violating social security is undisputable. Even the individuals who aren't adherent to religion cannot deny this fact. Oppression causes dissension and the devastation of public relations in society. Practicing evil and arrogant powers closes the pages in history of powerful governments and destroys their civilizations.

There are great morals in the lives of the oppressors. For example, Muhammad ibn Abdul Malik enjoyed a special place among the Abbaside caliphates. This minister had an iron oven made, the inside of which was covered with sharp reeds. When a political prisoner was brought to him, he would put the innocent person inside it and light the flames until the soul of that person departed his body.

When al-Mutawakil reached the office of caliph, he ordered Ibn Malik to be placed in his own prison. Near his death the latter wrote poetry to the affect that in this world he who does something shall be punished for it. When al-Mutawakil read the poetry he ordered him freed, but by the time that the royal decree reached the prison, Ibn Malik was dead in a terrible condition in his own oven. [1](#)

Indeed, those who claim that life is just a day to day struggle for survival, constantly attempt to destroy the weak with the pressure of deprivation; hoping by doing so to strengthen their power and protect their

position. They will commit any crime no matter how inhuman in order to satisfy themselves. But as the days pass, the flames of anger rage in the hearts of the oppressed, who inflict great calamities on the lives of the tyrant.

Oppression, however, is not limited to certain positions or classes. Any person in any position who intentionally or unintentionally attempts to exploit life of others for his own sake, or tries to go beyond the limits of the laws of reason or legislation can be classified as an oppressor.

Unfortunately, today oppression has reached its peak; the flames of oppression and injustice rage through various classes of societies and threaten the structure of human civilizations with sure destruction. The agents of oppression abuse the rights of human societies and rob them of their resources and wealth with every available means, while the statute of justice appears helpless.

The Role of Religion in Fighting Oppression and the Oppressors

The Holy Qur'an announced the inevitable severe punishment of oppressors when Allah the Almighty said:

“And (as for) these towns, We destroyed them when they acted unjustly and We have appointed a time for their destruction.” (The Holy Qur'an, 18:59).

The leaders of religion have all believed in the continuity of human society, therefore they made the establishment of justice their main goal in life. Whenever they noticed disarray in human development, they endeavored to change such disarray by revolting against the oppressors misconduct. In many cases, the leaders were able to overpower and eradicate the oppressors.

According to the Holy Qur'an, the conduct of the leaders of religion is an important factor in awakening people against oppression:

“Certainly We sent Our apostles with clear arguments. and sent down with them the book and the balance that men may conduct themselves with equity.” (The Holy Qur'an, 57: 25)

Since the ultimate goal of Islam is collective justice, it commands all its adherents to implement justice and equality fully amongst them and others regardless of titles or personal considerations. It also prohibits oppression and depriving any group of people of their rights.

“O you who believe! Be upright for Allah bears Witness With justice and let not hatred Of a people incite you not to act equitable; act equitably, that is nearer to piety.” (The Holy Qur'an, 5: 8)

“And that when you judge between people you judge with justice..” (The Holy Qur'an, 4:58)

Islam gives special importance to justice in that it disqualifies unjust individuals from occupying the

position of judge, even if he enjoys all other qualifications. Islam has also made it the duty of the parents to observe justice between their children, so as to condition them to accepting this vital trait and refuse oppression and enmity.

Besides, one of the bases for bringing up children is to be just in all circumstances when dealing with them, for when they witness oppression being applied in the father/mother relationship they can not be expected to be just or fair in their conduct with others. If children are exposed to oppression it grows into their natures, thus they become destructive elements in society. The acquired unfairness will eventually affect their societies, or further move their parents.

The Messenger of Allah (S) brought the attention of his followers to this important point when he said:

“Be just to your children with gifts if you would like them to be just to you in kindness.”[2](#)

Professor Bertrand Russell said:

“The human spirit is like a stream, constantly expanding. And, the purpose of an adequate upbringing is to make external pressure appear in the form of thought, habits and affection, not in the form of torture or punishment. The idea needed here is the matter that we have to gradually implement in the minds and habits of children.

“The correct method of teaching children justice is possible when children associate with others. The competition which takes place among children over toys which can be used by only one person at a time (bicycles) can bring us hope of teaching them justice. It is amazing how children abandon their selfishness when the oldest child displays justice by offering his toy to other children. At first I did not believe that justice was a natural or instinctive human feelings, I was surprised to find that the sense of justice can easily be brought about in children

When training children, it is essential to implement truthful justice. In other words, not to prefer any child over another. If you love one more than the others, be mindful not to let your preference adversely influence the distribution of happiness and felicity between them.

“It is a generally accepted practice to grant children toys of the same quality”.

Any attempt to invalidate children’s want of justice, in any manner, is a mistaken one. On Education The Messenger of Allah (S) said: “Fear Allah and be just between your children as you like them to be kind to you”.[3](#)

Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) wrote the following advice to Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr when he appointed him as the governor of Egypt: “The Divine ambassadors are the true establishers of justice in society. They are the ones who have planned the course of human perfection for mankind.” Imam Husayn (a.s.) also manifested the true meaning of justice and human belief when he rose against oppression. The pages of history still shine on the story of this man’s life as it will be forever.

[1.](#) Muruj adh-Dhahab v.4, p. 88

[2.](#) Nahj al -Fasahah p. 66

[3.](#) Nahj al-Fasahah

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