

Justice

What is Justice?

Justice contains two varying meanings. The extensive meaning of justice is “to put everything in its place,” or in other words, being in balance and equilibrium. This meaning or sense of justice rules over the entire created universe – in the galaxies, within an atom, in the structure of a human being's existence and in all plants and animals. This is what the famous tradition of the Holy Prophet refers to when he says:

“It is by means of justice that all of the heavens and the earth exist.”

For example, if the powers of attraction and repulsion of the earth lose their sense of balance and one of these two is removed or destroyed, the earth will be drawn towards the sun, set on fire and destroyed or it will leave its orbit and wander in the endless space of the universe until it is destroyed.

Another meaning of justice is “following individual rights.” The opposite of justice, then, is oppression in the sense of taking the rights of some and giving them exclusively to others or to take away someone's rights and give them to another, or to discriminate in the sense that some people are given their rights and others are not.

It is clear that the second meaning is a particular one and the first one is general. It should be noted that both meanings are truthful in relation to God, even though the second meaning will be more emphasized here.

The meaning of God's Justice is to neither remove the rights of a person nor give the rights of one to another or to discriminate between people. He is Just in all senses of the word and the reasons or proof of His Justice will be mentioned in the next lesson.

Oppression whether it is by way of taking away a person's rights or by way of giving the rights of one to another, or by waste and discrimination, does not exist in the pure Essence of God. He never punishes a person who does good and He never encourages a person who does evil. No one will be held

responsible for the sins of another. He does not burn the wet and dry together.

If everyone is in error in a community except for one person, God separates the accounts of that one person from that of others and does not punish that person along with the sinners.

And the fact that the Ash'arites said, *"Even if God sends all of the prophets to hell and all of the criminals and sinners to heaven, it is not oppression,"* is vain babble and baseless. The intellect, which is never polluted with superstition and discrimination, will not listen to these ugly words.

The Difference between Justice and Equality

Another important point which should be pointed out in this lesson is that sometimes justice is confused with equality so that the meaning of justice becomes "equality should be maintained," when this is not so.

Equality is not a condition for justice. Rather, rights and priorities must be considered. As an example, justice in a classroom of students is not that they all receive equal grades and justice between two workers is not that they receive equal wages. Rather, justice is that each student should be graded according to his knowledge and ability and each worker be judged according to his work and activity.

In the world of nature also, justice in the extensive sense means just this. The heart of a whale, which weighs one ton, cannot be compared to the heart of a sparrow, which is perhaps not more than one gram in weight. If they were equal in size, there would be no justice. Similarly, if the roots of a very tall tree were equal in size to the roots of a small plant, this is not justice but is equivalent to oppression. Justice is that every creature receives its rights in proportion to its abilities and needs. In other words, justice is not equality but equity.

The Proof or Reason for the Creator's Justice

1. Goodness and Evil

We have learned – and it seems that this issue is necessary – that our intellect distinguishes between good and evil to a certain extent. (This is that very thing which scholars speak about in ethical terms: "Goodness" and "Evil.")

For instance, we know that justice and goodness are good and oppression and stinginess are evil. Before religion even mentioned these things, it was clear to us. However, there are other issues which exist which our intelligence is not sufficient to understand and we must seek guidance from Divine Leaders and the Prophets.

Thus, if a group of Muslims like the Ash'arites, deny intellectual goodness and evil and the way of distinguishing between good and evil, then they are completely wrong.

For, if our intellect does not have the ability to choose between good and evil, how would we know whether God would send His message through false prophets or not? However, the moment we say God would lie, we know that God's Promises are always true and that He is always truthful. He would never encourage deceit and never give miracles into the hands of a deceitful person. It is here that we can rely upon what religion and the Divine Law says.

Thus, we can conclude that the belief in intellectual good and evil is from religion. (Note this with care). Now, let us return to the proof of Divine Justice. In order to understand this, we must know:

2. The Sources of Oppression

The source of oppression is one of the following things:

- **Ignorance:** It sometimes happens that an oppressive person does not, in truth, know what he is doing. He does not know that he is destroying someone's rights and he is not aware of what he is doing.
- **Need:** Sometimes a person is tempted to commit a satanic act in order to attain something that another has, whereas if he were self-sufficient, he would have no need to commit oppression.
- **Inability:** Sometimes a person is not willing to have the rights of another curtailed but he does not have the power or ability to do anything about it. So, unwillingly, he commits oppression.
- **Selfishness, Bearing Grudges and Seeking Revenge:** Sometimes none of the above-stated qualities exist; however, selfishness or a sense of seeking revenge or bearing a grudge makes that person commit oppression against another. Sometimes, the spirit of exclusiveness and monopolization causes injustice to others.

Note that none of these ugly qualities and deficiencies exist in God, for He is The All-Knowing, The Needless, The All-Powerful and The Most Kind. It makes no sense for God to commit oppression. He is a Being who is Endless, Perfect and Unlimited. Only Goodness, Justice and Mercy can stem from such a Being.

If he punishes those who commit evil, in reality, it is the result of their deeds which causes this, just like a person who, as a result of the use of narcotics or alcohol, is afflicted with an incurable disease. The Holy Qur'an says:

"You receive but the recompense of what you have earned." (Surah Yunus, 10:52).

3. The Qur'an and the Justice of the Creator

It is important to note that the Holy Qur'an greatly emphasizes God's Justice:

"Verily God will not deal unjustly with man in aught: it is man that wrongs his own soul." (Surah

Yunus, 10:44).

And in another place, it says:

“God is never unjust in the least degree.” (Surah An-Nisa, 4:40).

And,

“We shall set up scales of justice for the Day of Judgement so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least.” (Surah Al-Anbiya, 21:47).

Note, what is meant by “balance” in the above verse, is the method of weighing good and evil, not like scales of this world.

4. Invitation to Justice and Equity

The qualities of the human being must be like a ray of God’s qualities and in human society, God’s qualities are widespread. According to this principle, to the same extent that the Holy Qur’an stresses the Justice of the Creator, He has also stressed justice and equity in human society and the individuality of individuals.

The Holy Qur’an says that oppression and injustice will destroy society and that the fate of oppressors is of the most painful kind. In addition to mentioning the fate of past tribes, the Holy Qur’an has often repeated this truth for people to see the result of oppression and corruption and what punishment will be given. The Holy Qur’an clearly states as a principle:

“God commands justice, the doing of good and kindness to family members and He Forbids all shameful deeds and injustice and rebellion....” (Surah An-Nahl, 16:90).

It should be noted that committing oppression is an ugly act, to accept oppression and suffer suppression is also wrong according to Islam and the Holy Qur’an:

“Deal not unjustly and you shall not be dealt with unjustly.” (Surah Baqarah, 2:279).

In general, submission to inequity encourages oppression, increase suppression and aids oppressors.

The Philosophy of Natural Calamities

When unexpected catastrophes such as hurricanes, earthquakes and other natural calamities occurred, people, from the earliest times to the present, used it to prove that God’s Justice did not exist. Sometimes, they not only negated justice but used these calamities as a means of proving the nonexistence of God.

Relative Judgement and Limited Knowledge

Normally, all of us, in our judgements, stress the relation things have with us. For instance, we say, such and such is near us or far from us. Or such and such a person is strong or weak, that is, in comparison to our physical ability or spiritual situation.

In issues relating to good and evil and calamities and natural catastrophes, people's judgement is usually the same. For instance, if rain falls in a region, we have nothing to do with what the total effect of the rain was. We only think about our own environment, home or pasture areas, or, at the most, our own city. If it was a positive event, we say that it was God's Blessing and if negative, we call it a negative event, even if the rain had positive effects in other parts of the city.

When they destroy a building in order to build a new one, and we only share in its dust, we say that it was a bad event even if in the future a hospital will be built there which everyone can make use of.

In our normal judgements, we consider a snake bite to be a calamity without recognizing the fact that this very bite and poison is an effective means of defence for this animal and disregarding the fact that sometimes from this very poison, a life-giving medicine is produced which saves the lives of thousands of people.

Thus, so as not to be misled, we must look at our limitations in judgement. We must not only look at things in relation to ourselves but rather consider all sides of the issue and judge from all points of view.

In principle, events in the world are all linked together like a chain. The hurricane which hits our city today and a heavy downpour of rain which brings floods is one of these long links which is completely related to other links and is related also with an event which took place in the past and will take place in the future. The conclusion or result is that putting one's finger on only a small part of an issue and judging it accordingly is not to have used one's intellect and logic properly.

That which is worthy of creation (that which creation deserves) is complete goodness but if something, from one point of view, is evil, overall goodness still prevails. A surgical operation is discomforting, from one point of view, and from another, beneficial. Thus, goodness is relative.

Let us look at the occurrence of an earthquake. It is true that in one area, destruction occurs but if we consider its relation to other issues, we can change our opinion. Does an earthquake relate to the temperatures and pressure within the earth or does it relate to the attractions of the moon which continuously draws the earth towards itself or does it relate to both? Scientists have differing views.

But whatever the reasons, the effects upon another thing must be considered. That is, we must know what effect the temperature inside the earth has in creating oil resources, which is the most important energy material in our age and also the creation of coal, etc. Thus, goodness is relative.

If the reason is the ebb and flow of the tides stemming from the pull of the moon, then the effects the oceans has upon life within the water and its creatures and often, watering a dry coastline in places where sweet water meets the oceans should also be considered. This is also a relative good.

It is here that we understand what relative judgements and limited information we have when we look at issues like this. The Holy Qur'an tells us:

“Of knowledge, it is only a little that is communicated to you.”(Surah Al-Isra, 17:85).

Undesirable Events and Warnings

We have all seen people who when drowned in blessings, fall under the influence of pride and selfishness and in this state or condition, many of the important human issues and duties are forgotten.

And, also, we have all seen that at the time of the calmness of the oceans of life and complete restfulness, a state of sleep and heedlessness affects a person – were such a state to continue, it would bring great misfortune to that person.

Without doubt, some of the undesirable events of life are in order to end that state of pride and to do away with this sleep and heedlessness.

You have most certainly heard that experienced drivers complain about roads which are flat, level and lacking any twists or turns, ups or downs and they describe these attractive qualities as dangerous ones. Why? Because the monotony of this road causes a driver to fall asleep and it is here that danger comes to him. It has even been seen that some countries have created artificial ups and downs or variations on roads to prevent such a danger.

The path or way of life of a human being is also the same. If life does not have any ups and downs, and if undesirable events never occur, a state of forgetfulness of God and sleep will come and prevent a person from undertaking his or her duties and responsibilities.

We are not suggesting that human beings must create undesirable events for themselves or welcome misfortunes. Rather, we say that one must pay attention to prevent oneself from pride and from forgetfulness because these are enemies and barriers to wellbeing and happiness. We repeat, this is the philosophy of a part of these undesirable events, not all of them because they have other aspects, as well, which, with the Will of God, will be mentioned in further lessons. The Holy Qur'an tells us:

“When the suffering reached them from us, why then did they not learn humility?” (Surah Al-Anaam, 6:43).

The Philosophy of Difficulties in Life

We have said that a group of the materialists have coercively made use of the issue of unpredictable occurrences of calamities and difficulties which occur in the life of human beings as an excuse to deny the justice of God! Now we will continue the discussion of the previous lesson.

Nurtured Through Facing Difficulties

We again repeat that we should not create difficulties for ourselves, but, at the same time, it often happens that difficulties increase our willpower just as iron is strengthened when placed in hot smelting pots. In the smelting pot of difficulties, we become experienced and more persevering.

War is basically not good but sometimes a difficult and long war causes the abilities of a nation to blossom and transforms dispersion into unity and progress. A famous Arab historian says:

“The blossoming of civilization has appeared throughout history in various parts of the world. It followed a country being attacked by a powerful foreign country, being awakened and mobilizing their forces.”

Of course, reactions to difficulties are not uniform among all people and all societies. One group falls into despair, weakness and pessimism and reaches a negative conclusion but there are individuals who have the right attitude when faced by these difficulties and are stimulated and mobilized by them. But because in such situations, many people judge by what appears on the surface, they only see the bitterness and difficulties and ignore the positive and constructive effects.

If you study the life of geniuses of the world, you will see that almost all of them suffered difficulties and great misfortunes. There are fewer people who are raised in comfort and luxury who have shown themselves to be geniuses and who have arisen to a high position. A good commander of an army is a person who has seen a difficult and long battle. Economic geniuses are people who have fallen into difficulties in the economic market. Great politicians are those who have passed through hard and difficult political struggles. In summary, we can say that the difficulties and anguishes which human beings bear, improves them.

The Holy Qur'an says:

“It may be that you dislike a thing and God brings about through it a great deal of good.” (Surah An-Nisa, 4: 19).

Turning Back to God through Facing Difficulties

In the previous discussion, we have seen that our being has a goal or purpose. Our eyes are for a purpose; our ears are for a purpose; our hearts, brain and nerves each have been created for a purpose.

Even our finger tips have a philosophy behind them. Thus, how is it possible that our total being be without a purpose?

One should look at one's sins and transgressions in this light as well. In facing difficulties in following God's Commands, one becomes familiar with one's ugly and evil deeds and will turn back to God. It is here that a part of the difficulties and unforeseen events are, in reality, Divine blessings. The Holy Qur'an says:

“Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of (the need) that the hands of men have earned, that (God) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from evil).” (Surah Ar-Room, 30:41).

Hence, it is far from logic and intellectual reasoning to consider painful events as confirmations of evil or to interpret them as calamities that are considered to be in opposition to Divine Justice. Indeed painful events may lead us to become better human beings.

Value of Life through Facing Difficulties

Perhaps it is difficult for some people to understand that if life were only filled with blessings, it would lose its value.

It has been proven today that if you place an object in the middle of a room and you give it a strong, uniform light from all directions and the object and the room are both completely smooth, we will not be able to see the object due to lack of contrast between light and shadow. When shadows are placed next to light, the dimension of the form is made clear.

The value of the gifts of life as well as the weak and strong shadows of difficulties cannot be seen. If throughout life, there was no such thing as sickness, the pleasure of health would never be sensed. The dawn that brings relief following a night of high fever brings about the realization of what a jewel good health is.

In general, a uniform kind of life, even the most comfortable kind of life is tiresome, spiritless and deathlike. It has often been seen that individuals, because of a comfortable life, empty of any kind of difficulties, find it so boring that they attempt to commit suicide or else they continuously complain about their life.

You will find no architect with taste who will design the walls of a large room to be totally smooth and uniform. Rather, he carves the rooms and adds texture.

Why is the world of nature so beautiful? Why is the view of jungles which fill the sides of mountains and streams with twist and turns among the small and large trees so interesting and attractive? One reason is the lack of uniformity.

The order of light and darkness and the coming and going of day and night which the Holy Qur'an emphasizes in various verses, has a great effect upon ending any kind of a tiresome life for human beings. Why? Because if the sun were continuously in one place in the sky and uniformly gave light to the earth, if its position never changed and night would never come, in a short period of time, all human beings would get tired.

It is because of this that we must accept that at least most of the problems caused by unforeseen events give a spirit to life, making it sweet and bearable. It gives more value and meaning to the blessings we have and gives the human being the possibility to benefit from the gifts to the greatest extent possible.

Difficulties Brought About by Human Beings

Many people fall into error in their judgment of the causes and effects of unforeseen events when the oppression which takes place through the hands of oppressors are considered to be signs of the injustice of the Creator of the world. Additionally, the disorder in the work of humanity is considered to be the fault of disorder in the structure of creation.

Just as they sometimes ask: Why do some earthquakes strikes cities and cause little damage but in the rural areas, many people are taken as sacrifices and many lose their lives in the fallen shelters of their homes? What kind of justice is this? If calamity is to be divided, why is it not divided up equally? Why is the edge of sorrowful catastrophe always falling upon the deprived people? Why is it that deprived people suffer the most with contagious diseases?

These are all beside the fact and do not relate to the system of creation and justice of God. These are the results of oppression, exploitation and colonialism of human beings in relation to one another.

If it were not for the fact that rural people are abased and poverty-stricken due to the oppression of the cities and they were able to build better and stronger homes for themselves like those in the cities, earthquakes would not have such an effect upon them.

But when their houses are built of mud or stones or wood and very little stucco or cement is used in the building of their homes, even a strong wind or a slight earthquake hurts them. But what does this have to do with God?

This criticism should be made against the unbalanced situation and erroneous system of society. We must arise and end these injustices to society. We must wage war against abasement and poverty and give the deprived their rights so that such phenomena do not appear.

If all groups of society have sufficient nourishment, health care and treatment, they will be able to face diseases and sickness with greater strength and perseverance.

But when an erroneous and false social system rules a society in the form of colonialism, one person is

given so many possibilities that even their cats and dogs have veterinary doctors and medication. Meanwhile, many humans do not have even the most basic necessities of life and health care for their children. Such unpleasant events are plentiful and have been seen by all.

Instead of complaining about God in such situations, we should reproach ourselves. We have to tell oppression not to be oppressive! And we have to tell the oppressed not to bear oppression!

We must make efforts so that all individuals of a society have at least the minimum amount of healthcare facilities, food, housing, educational and cultural possibilities.

In summary, we should not place the blame for our sins on creation. When did God ever impose a system like this upon us? Where has He ever recommended this? Of course, He created us free because our being free is the key to our development and progress. But it is we who misuse our freedom and oppress each other and this oppression then shows itself as imbalance in society. Unfortunately, this error has come to affect a great many people. The Holy Qur'an says:

“Verily God will not deal unjustly with man in aught: it is man that wrongs his own soul.” (Surah Yunus, 10:44).

And now we end the discussion of signs of catastrophes here even though there is still a great deal which could be said, but this brief discussion is sufficient for us in this short study.

God's Justice and Eternal Punishment

We know that the Holy Qur'an directly speaks of the eternal punishment to be given to the kufar. That is, it speaks about eternity.

“God has promised the hypocrites, men and women., and the kafirs, the fire of hell; therein shall they dwell; sufficient is it for them; for them is the curse of God, and an enduring punishment.” (Surah At-Tawba, 9:68).

The Qur'an also promises the believing men and the believing women gardens in Paradise forever. It speaks about eternal reward.

“God has promised to believers, men and women, gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein and beautiful mansions in gardens of everlasting bliss. But the greatest bliss is the good pleasure of God: that is the supreme felicity.” (Surah At-Tawba, 9:72).

The question then arises: How can one accept that in one's lifetime of eighty or one hundred years, one commits evil deeds and then for eternity – millions of years – one is punished? How can this be reconciled with God's justice?

Of course, this question does not arise about eternal reward because the ocean of God's Mercy is very great and so, His eternal reward shows greater virtue and mercy.

Should a balance not exist between punishment and reward?

In order to reach a final answer to this question, several points need to be noted:

Punishments on the Day of Resurrection do not resemble punishments in this world. For instance, a person is found guilty of aggression and plunder and he spends some time in prison whereas the punishment on the Day of Judgment takes into consideration the efforts of one's deeds and the particularities of a person's acts. In clearer terms, the difficulties which one will bear in the other world will be the direct result of one's deeds. The Holy Qur'an explains this very clearly where it says,

"Then on that Day, not a soul will be wronged in the least and you shall but be repaid the needs of your past deeds." (Surah Ya Sin, 36: 54).

With one simple example, we can visualize this truth that a person who goes after narcotics and alcoholic drinks and no matter how much one explains that these things will ruin him, sicken his heart and destroy his nerves, he does not listen. He spends several weeks or months drowned in these killing pleasures. Gradually, he develops ulcers, heart or nerve disease and then he spends tens of years until the end of his life suffering because of this and he groans night and day.

Can one object here as to why a person who only drank or did drugs for several weeks or months have to suffer for ten of years?

It is reality stated in response that this is the result of his own actions. Even if he were to live longer than the Prophet Noah and were to live for tens of thousands of years and we were to continuously see him in pain and anguish, we would say that this is something he brought upon himself with his deeds.

Punishment on the Day of Judgment is similar. Thus, no one can object to the justice of the situation.

Some people assume that the time limit of the punishment must be the same extent as the sin. However, this is an erroneous belief because the relation between a sin and punishment is not a temporal one; it depends upon the result and quality of the sin.

For instance, it is possible that a person can kill an innocent person in one second, but according to the laws of some countries, he is given life imprisonment. Here we see that the time of the sin was one quick second whereas the punishment is for tens of years. No one considers this to be oppressive. Why? Because the question here is not one of days or weeks or months or years, it depends upon the kind of crime and the effect of the crime.

Eternity in hell and eternal punishment only belongs to those people who have closed all doors to salvation for themselves and they have drowned themselves in corruption, recklessness, *kufr* and

hypocrisy so that the darkness of sin takes over their entire being and, as a result, that person takes on the colour of sin and *kufir*.

The Holy Qur'an says:

“Nay, those who seek gain in evil and are girt round by their sins– they are companions of the fire: therein shall they abide (for ever).” (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:81).

These kinds of individuals have completely cut off their connection with God and have closed all doors to their salvation and well-being.

These kinds of individuals are like birds that purposefully break their own wings and pull out their own feathers, hence, are obliged to walk forever upon the earth and are deprived of flying through the skies.

The three points given above clarifies the issue that eternal punishment which belongs to a particular group of hypocrites or *kuffar* does not oppose the principle of justice. This is the ominous result of their deeds themselves. The Divine Prophets had previously told them that their deeds would have these results.

It is clear that if individuals are ignorant and the invitation of the Prophets is not known to them and if they commit evil deeds out of ignorance, they will not receive such a difficult punishment.

It is also necessary to point out that the ocean of Divine Mercy is so great and extensive that a large group of transgressors are given God's Mercy; some by means of intercession; some by means of forgiveness and some because of small, good deeds which they performed. God, by His greatness, gives great reward for those small, good deeds. And another group, after they have been punished for a time in hell and have been purified, will return to Paradise due to Divine Mercy.

The only group remaining is the one which has enmity towards the truth and commit oppression, corruption and hypocrisy so that their whole being is covered in oppression, *kufir* and faithlessness.

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