

"THE PROPHET OF ISLAM (PEACE BE UPON HIM) AS UPHOLDER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE"

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The Prophet of Islam (Peace be upon him) enjoys a unique position in the whole history of humanity as an upholder and champion of social justice. His advent was the genesis of a new era of the dignity, equality, fraternity, liberty and freedom of man. The principles of equity and justice for all were put into practice. A holy war was waged against ignorance, poverty, disease and immorality, declaring the social security and justice as the key note of economic policy. Whole humanity was declared as the progeny of God, and service to His children was declared to be the highest virtue. Men were given the idea of the survival of those who do good to others in the following Qur'anic words:

(And as for that which does good to men, it remains in the earth or and those who are of use to mankind, remain and flourish in this world).

Thus man was taught the lesson of selflessness and service to humanity as against selfishness, and foundations were laid for the establishment of a society free from exploitation. In order to make man conscious of his most dignified and high position in this universe a spirit of research and inquiry was infused in him so that he may be able to conquer the forces of nature for the cause of humanity. Allama Iqbal has very rightly pointed out that the birth of Islam was the birth of inductive intellect.²

In short we may declare with full confidence in the light of sound evidence that all the four aspects of social justice namely -- social justice as such, economic justice, legal justice and political justice were not only explained and highlighted by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), but also were put into practice and a society was established on these principles.

R.W. Baldwin defines social justice as follows: "Jointly with economic growth, social justice has become the favourite theme of political platforms, almost summary definition of the accepted goal of modern society. Yet justice itself is essentially a quality of the behaviour of one man to another, that is of man in society so that all justice is social justice...

Sometimes the term may be used to distinguish moral or natural justice from the legal justice of the laws enforced by particular states. More often, however, it is probably meant to describe justice in the broad fields of social and economic policy, as contrasted with the justice in personal and private affairs which the law

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courts of all ages and countries have traditionally administered.³

Baldwin declares man selfish and says:

"Justice accepts that men are selfish, but stipulates that one self is as important as another, and therefore regulates their conflicting interests.⁴"

The Holy Qur'an in a number of verses, and the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) in his Ahadith (traditions) do not accept this concept of the selfishness of man, rather they give the concept of dignity and innocence of man by birth. God reveals:

- i) "Certainly We created man in the best make.⁵"
- ii) "And surely We have honoured the children of Adam.⁶"
- iii) "Then his Lord chose him, so He turned to him and guided him.⁷"

The Prophet (peace be upon him) declared: "that every new born baby is endowed with good nature ...⁸"

So the great Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) gave the idea of starting work on man, who is basically good natured and dignified and declared this principle as the basic ingredient of social justice.

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) paved the way for setting up an international fraternity. He gave the message of God in the words:

"O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you.⁹"

Diversity of languages and colours has been declared as one of the sign of the Creator, which should lead to His realisation.¹⁰

In fact the prophet (peace be upon him) came to liberate humanity from the shackles of the destructive prejudices and jealousies of caste, colour, race, language and territory, etc. He declared the policy of Islam in his farewell address by saying:

"O people! verily your Lord is one and your father is one. There is no superiority for an Arab to a non - Arab, or a non Arab to an Arab, for a white to a black and for a black to a white, except in piety. Verily the noblest amongst you with Allah is the most dutiful (and responsible) of you.¹¹"

In the light of these principles of social justice, fundamental human rights were extended to all. Equal opportunities were given to all citizens, and many other revolutionary steps, hitherto unknown to the world, were taken.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Islam recognises the principle of economic justice and does not recognise the idea of economic equality, which is in fact inpracticable.

The following verses of the Holy Qur'an explain the significance of this principle:

- i) We have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of the world, and raised some of them above others in rank that some of them may take labour from others and the mercy of thy Lord is better than (the wealth) they amass. ¹²"
- ii) "And Allah has favoured some of you above others in provision. ¹³"
- iii) "And covet not the thing in which Allah has made some of you excel others. ¹⁴"
- iv) His are the treasures of the heavens and the earth. He amplifies and straitens subsistence for whom He pleases. ¹⁵"

God assures sustenance for all and enjoins justice and equity.

- i) "And there is no animal in the earth but on Allah is the sustenance of it... ¹⁶"
- ii) "Say, my Lord enjoins justice (and equity) ¹⁷"
- iii) "Certainly We sent our messengers with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the measure, so that men may conduct themselves with equity. ¹⁸"

A few other salient features of economic justice put into actual practice by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are as follows:

Dignity and worth of labour and equal opportunity for all

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

(No one has ever taken better food than that taken by the labour of one's own hands. And Daud, the Prophet of Allah earned his livelihood by his own hands)...²⁰"

(All the Prophets sent by Allah, without any exception, have been tending sheep and goats.)

Circulation of Wealth

Allah revealed in this regard:...²¹"

(So that it be not taken by turns by the rich amongst you).

God also revealed:

"And those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in Allah's way, announce to them a painful chastisement.²²"

Moderation and Balance

The Holy Qur'an guides us by saying:

"And they who, when they spend are neither extravagant nor parsimonious and just mean is ever between these.²³"

Discrimination Between the Fair, Lawful and Unfair and Foul Means

- * Prohibition and eradication of all types of economic exploitation.
- * Healthy economic cooperation.

Social Security and Establishment of a Social Welfare Society

Innumerable examples could be quoted from the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and from the state and society set up by him in connection with the material manifestation of these noble and useful principles of Economic Justice.

LEGAL JUSTICE

Political thinkers usually say:

"There is no better test of the excellence of a government than the efficiency of its judicial system." Professor H. J. Laski says: when we know how a nation state dispenses justice, we know with some exactness the moral character to which it can pretend.²⁴"

It is beyond the shadow of any doubt that the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) set up highest standard of legal justice. A few glimpses from the Holy Qur'an and from the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) are given below:

Allah reveals in the Holy Qur'an:

- i) And when you speak be just though it be (against) a relative.²⁵
- ii) "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. And if you distort or turn away from (truth) Surely Allah is ever aware of what you do²⁶"

Thus neither self interest, nor ties of kinship and love nor consideration of fear, favour, or compassion should make one swerve an inch from the truth and equity.

Equality before law is to be maintained at all costs. There should be no discrimination between the rich and the poor, high and low, and friend and foe.

You have to be just even to your enemies. Allah enjoins upon the believers by saying:

"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 the observance of duty.²⁷"

Setting up a practical example of the maintenance of high standard of justice, when a case of a respectable lady came before the Prophet (peace be upon him), he declared:

"What destroyed people before you was that when a person of rank among them committed a theft they let him go, but when a weak one among them committed it they inflicted the prescribed punishment on him. I swear by God if Fatimah daughter of Muhammad (peace be upon him) (i.e. my own daughter) steals, I would definitely have her hand cut off.²⁸"

The magnitude of the respect for the fundamental human rights and human life could be judged from the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

"That who ever kills a person, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he had killed all men. And whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved the lives of all human beings.²⁹"

POLITICAL JUSTICE

Our Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) gave the principles of the sovereignty of God, vicegerency of man, mutual consultation and paved the way for the establishment of moral and spiritual democracy.

He declared the message of God:

"Say: O Allah, 'Owner of the Kingdom, You give the kingdom to whom You please, and take it away from whom You wish, and You exalt whom You please and abase whom Thou please. In Thine hand is the good. Surely You are possessor of power over all things.'³⁰"

These salient features of the Prophetic social justice have been serving as a beacon light for the good Muslims of all ages.

Allama Iqbal high lighted the significance of this aspect of Islam in a letter to Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah thus:

"The atheistic socialism of Jawahar Lal is not likely to receive much response from the Muslims. The question therefore is: how to solve the problem of Muslim poverty?... Happily there is a solution in the enforcement of the law of Islam and its further development in the light of modern ideas. After a long and careful study of Islamic Law I have come to the conclusion that if this system of Law is properly understood and applied, at last the right to subsistence is secured to everybody. This has been my honest conviction for many years and I still believe to be the only way to solve the problem of bread for Muslims as well as to secure a peaceful India...."

For Islam the acceptance of social democracy in some suitable form and consistent with the legal principles of Islam is not a revolution but a return to the original purity of Islam." 31

Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah realizing the utmost significance of the above concept, declared as follows:

"The adoption of Western economic theory and practice will not help us in achieving our goal of creating a happy and contented people. We must work our destiny in our own way and present to the world an economic system based on true Islamic concept of equality of manhood and social justice. We will thereby be fulfilling our mission as Muslims and giving to humanity the message of Peace which alone can save it and secure the welfare, happiness and prosperity of mankind. 32"

This brief article is perhaps sufficient to prove that the Upholder of social justice, the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) and his teachings are the only hope for the troubled humanity of today.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

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15. Ibid., 42 (Al-Shura): 12.
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27. Ibid., 5 (Al-Maidah): 8.
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29. Al-Qur'an, 5 (Al-Maidah): 32.
30. Ibid., 3 (Al-i-Imran): 25.
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32. Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, SPEECHES (as Governor-General of Pakistan, 1947-8)p. 154.

ما نقص مال من صدقة

عن أبي كبشة عمر بن سعد الأنماري رضي الله عنه أنه سمع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: «ثلاثة أقسم عليهن وأحدثكم حديثاً فاحفظوه ما نقص مال عبد من صدقة،

ولا ظلم عبد مظلمة صبر عليها إلا زاده الله عزاً،

ولا فتح عبد باب مسألة إلا فتح الله عليه باب فقر، أو كلمة نحوها.

وأحدثكم حديثاً فاحفظوه، قال: إنما الدنيا لأربعة نفر:

عبد رزقه الله مالاً وعلماً، فهو يتقى فيه ربه، ويصل فيه رحمه، ويعلم لله فيه حقاً، فهذا بأفضل المنازل.

وعبد رزقه الله علماً، ولم يرزقه مالاً، فهو صادق النية، يقول لو أن لي مالا لعليت بعمل فلان، فهو بنيته فأجرهما سواء.

وعبد رزقه الله مالاً، ولم يرزقه علماً، فهو يخبط في ماله بغير علم، لا يتقى فيه ربه، ولا يصل فيه رحمه، ولا يعلم لله فيه حقاً، فهذا بأخبث المنازل.

وعبد لم يرزقه الله مالاً ولا علماً، فهو يقول: لو أن لي مالا لعلمت فيه بعمل فلان، فهو نيته، فوزهما سواء.

رواه الترمذي وقال: حديث حسن صحيح.