

Social Justice in Islam

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The purpose of our discussion on social justice is to mention those verses of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions through which the Holy Qur'an and our infallible Imams have given lessons of equality of mankind in the eyes of the law and of preservation of their rights. They have also forbidden undue discrimination, cruelties and exploitation. Apart from this we have cited the examples of just distribution of wealth, Islamic brotherhood and fraternity set by the Holy Prophet of Islam and his Holy Ahlul Bayt (peace be on them).

Justice in All Islamic Laws

Islam is an institution of justice and moderation. It is a straight path and the Muslim fraternity is the nation which practices moderation and justice. The Islamic system is based on justice. If there are tears for the oppressed then there are swords for the oppressors. If it gives importance to preservation of physical health, it also stresses on our spiritual enlightenment and moral upliftment. If it ordains the offering of prayers, it also orders paying zakat (religious tax). If it asks us to love and respect the pious people, it also insists on hatred against the enemies of Allah. If it lays stress on acquiring knowledge it also considers the performance of noble deeds as compulsory. If it commands us to have faith and trust in Allah, it also advises us to make efforts to achieve our objects. If it allows acquisition of personal wealth and property, it also forbids taking undue advantage of ownership and damaging the interest of other people. If it recommends excluding an offender it also insists on enforcement of punitive laws and making no remissions in punishments.

When Imam Ali was told by the people about the piety and devotion of a person offering his prayers, he asked about the intention and the character of a person. Hence it means that if a person is a devout worshipper of Allah, we should judge him by his views and behavior.

Social Justice and Divine Outlook on the Universe

In a society unless the high sounding slogans take strength from their roots they do not go ahead of slogan mongering. The slogan of social justice is raised by every government but you will not find even a slight tinge of social justice there. The reason is that such slogans are not based on sincerity.

In Islam equality and freedom have a solid base, for example,

- (i) The entire universe is under the care of the All Wise Allah and there is no irregularity in it. Being a part of this world, I cannot do what I like and that too with selfish motives.
- (ii) Our ways of doing things and deeds and even our mode of thinking are under surveillance of our Lord, who knows everything about us without our awareness. After all we shall have to present ourselves before Him for the accountability of our deeds.
- (iii) All of us have been raised from dust and we shall be reduced to dust. There is no difference among the particles of dust; hence why should there be any difference between some body else and me?
- (iv) Everybody is the servant of Allah and to treat everyone with love and affection becomes the source of Allah's pleasure and the best man is he who is the best well-wisher of others.
- (v) Allah's creatures cannot exceed the limits and the unlawful rights which the Creator has set for them.
- (vi) We are all the offspring of the same parents.

This description and outlook on the world and man is the most potent basis of accepting the principles of justice and equity, but corrupt environment and avarice pull down its foundation.

Seeking Justice is a Natural Thing

Allah has endowed man with the knowledge of right and wrong things and their resultant results. The Holy Qur'an says: And We inspired the soul with knowledge of evil and piety. Those who purify their souls will certainly have ever lasting happiness and those who corrupt their soul will certainly be deprived of happiness. (Surah ash-Shams, 91:8-10)

Take an example of a child who kept his apple with you. After a while he comes back and he finds that you have eaten a small portion of it. He becomes displeased and looks at you with an accusing eye as if he is saying that you are guilty of a breach of trust. This is certain that even a child knows about injustice even though he may not tell you so with his tongue. Therefore, misappropriation is an evil which is teacher need not teach a child. It is but natural that man considers misappropriation as a bad thing.

Similarly justice is a thing which man considers by himself considers it a good thing and its

proof is that the oppressor himself justifies his action by saying that he has not been unjust! Sometimes several people commit theft jointly but when the question of distribution of the booty comes they talk of making a just and equitable distribution. Such a thing does happen and the fact that consciously or subconsciously they mean equitable distribution. And if anyone of the group wants to take the lion's share, the other partners become annoyed. Its has been a general rule that whenever a person is killed while safeguarding his rights and upholding the cause of social justice or takes a firm stand against the tyrants he is praised by the people in general. It is in human nature that man supports the cause of injustice and wages war against injustice.

Just Laws Originate From Holy Prophet's Conduct

There is hardly any society which does not talk of truthfulness, justice and rational laws. Nor there is any regime which does not claim to uphold the people's rights and welfare. In this connection we deal with the following pertinent questions:

- (i) Is there any law which can claim to be hundred per cent just, so that nobody is deprived of his rights?
- (ii) Is there any law maker who has never been impartial and who has not been influenced by personal prejudices?
- (iii) On what standard can a certain law be determined as just?
- (iv) What stratum do the law makers come from and for which group of society do they want to protect the rights?
- (v) If the law-makers are free from any political, tribal, zonal or racial bias, then on what standard will they enact just and fair laws for all the people and for all the time to come?

From the above-mentioned questions we arrive at the conclusion that social justice and just laws are only possible through Divine Laws conveyed to the mankind by the Prophets of Allah.

Justice is the Basic Condition

In Islam all important establishments and installations remain under the control of just people, whose reputation has been good and who are able and pious. In the matter of administration of justice, right from the qazi (magistrate) to the ordinary clerk and the witnesses, all should be particular in upholding justice. In all congregational prayers including Friday prayers the man who leads the prayers must be just and honest. It is necessary that the mujtahid (jurist) whom we follow, the President, the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister and the man pronouncing the formula of divorce are all just and honest. In the matter of giving news only the just and honest men should be relied upon. In short Islam has laid great emphasis on justice and it is the basis on which all problems of the society, be it personal, social or economical are decided.

The Importance of Justice in Traditions

The Holy Prophet of Islam said: "A moment of justice is better than seventy years of worship in which you keep fasts and pass the nights in offering prayers and worship to Allah". (Jami'us Sa'adat, vol. II, p. 223)

The Holy Prophet further said: "The deed of justice performed by a leader for one day for his people is better than the deeds of the man who spends fifty or hundred years amongst his family members in the worship of Allah".

Imam Ja'far Sadiq said: "The supplication of a just leader is never refused". (Nizamul Islam as-Siyasi, p. 71)

Imam Ali said: "Justice is the essence of the people's welfare as well as the adherence to the Divine path".

He further said: "Justice is life and cruelty is the death of society". (Qisarul Jumal).

Hence, those who submit themselves before oppression are in fact as good as dead bodies.

Importance of Justice

Imam Musa Kazim in the commentary of the verse: He sends down water from the sky and enlivens the earth that was dead(Surah ar-Rum, 30:24) says: "The earth comes back to life by administering justice and enforcing divine laws of punishment". (Qisarul Jumal)

Establishment of Justice is the Object of the Prophets

One of the duties and responsibilities of the Prophets of Allah that the Holy Qur'an has mentioned is the instituting of social justice. We, therefore, give below a short list of the achievements and accomplishments of the Holy Prophets:

- (i) Inviting the People Towards Allah Inviting the people to worship Allah and preventing them from obeying the despots and tyrants and to remain aloof from them. The Holy Qur'an says: To every nation We sent a Messenger (saying): 'Worship Allah and shun the Devil'.

(Surah an-Nahl, 16:36)

(ii) **Giving Warnings and Bearing Good News** The Holy Qur'an says: We have sent you (Muhammad) for a genuine purpose to proclaim glad tidings and warnings. You will not be blamed for the dwellers of blazing Hell. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:119)

(iii) **Teaching and Imparting Instructions** The Almighty Allah sent the Prophets towards the people so that they might give them training and tell them those things which they needed. The Holy Qur'an says: It is He who has sent to the illiterates a Messenger from among their own people who recites to them His revelations, and purifies them. He will teach the Book to them and others who have not yet joined, and He will give them wisdom. Before this they had been in plain error. (Surah al-Jumu'ah, 62:2)

(iv) **Opposing Oppressive Laws** To eradicate all sorts of social taboos and customs as well as tribal prejudices and savagery based on superstitious ideas. The Holy Qur'an says: He (the Messenger) enjoins them to do good and forbids them to do all that is unlawful, makes lawful for them all that is pure and unlawful that is filthy, removes their burdens and entanglements in which they are involved. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:157)

(v) **Exposing the Futility of False and Evil Things** To expose the wrong ways of the false gods and despotic rulers and disgrace them. The Holy Qur'an says: Thus, do We explain our revelations so that the sinful ways can be plainly discerned. (Surah al-An'am, 6:55)

(vi) **Establishing a Society Based on Justice** The Prophets founded a society in which the people should establish justice and treat others without any consideration of caste, creed, political or economic differences. The Prophets' main function was to inculcate in the people's heart a firm belief in Allah and the Day of Judgement and to create in the individual and the society such moral standard and Divine thinking as would arouse in them the spirit of justice and equity towards their fellow beings. The Holy Qur'an says: We sent Our Messengers with clear evidence (to support their truthfulness), and sent with them the Book and the Balance (criteria of right and wrong) so that people would maintain justice. We sent down iron, in which is a vital war material and which benefits the people, so that Allah would know who would help Him though unseen, and His Messengers. (Surah al-Hadid, 57:25)

Since a just society depends on spiritual as well as material power, the above-mentioned verse points out to both the powers that is the Book and the Balance. And each one of them is necessary for establishing justice. The mentioning of iron in the verse points to material strength so that the transgressor may note that if they violate justice they will be crushed with an iron hand. Thus, one of the main duties of the Holy Prophets was to establish social justice.

Imam Ali's Argument on Equity

When the people objected to Imam Ali's equitable distribution of wealth he replied:

(i) If the wealth had belonged to me even then I would have distributed it equally among the people but this wealth belongs to Allah and is meant for distribution among the people and therefore everybody has his right in it.

(ii) To distribute wealth among those who do not deserve it amounts to squandering the wealth. The Holy Qur'an also says.

Do not squander your wealth wastefully. The squanderers are indeed Satan's brothers and Satan is ungrateful to his Lord. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:27)

(iii) The inequitable and unjust distribution of wealth results in the formation of a group of greedy persons who surround the people and extract money from them through flattery and undue praise and thus makes them ashamed in the eyes of the law of Divine Justice.

Furthermore, Imam Ali says: "Unjustifiable and undeserving donations may enhance the status of a man among his worldly surroundings but he is sadly humiliated in the eyes of Allah. One who spends his wealth in evil ways and on wrong persons, is deprived, by the Lord, of the gratitude of those over whom he had spent; these undeserving beneficiaries usually turn against him and at the time of distress and need he finds them as his worst enemies, censuring his actions and blaming him for his lavish grants". (Sermon—129, p. 322, Peak of Eloquence)

Confiscation of Property

As and when the days passed by after the time of the Holy Prophet, people started drifting away from Islamic social justice to the extent that Caliph Uthman lavishly gave his kith and kin wealth from the public property. It was this discrimination and favouritism that aroused the anger of the people who put him to death, and thereafter swore allegiance to Imam Ali.

When the regime of the Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali commenced, he revolutionized the entire system, eradicated all irregularities so as to bring the affairs of the State on an even keel. As such the properties unlawfully acquired were confiscated and unjust appointments and dismissals were cancelled. Imam Ali declared: "By Allah! If I had known of

this sort of public wealth, even if it was spent in paying the dower of the women or for purchasing slave girls, I would have confiscated it too". (Vide: Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)

No Distinction Between an Arab and a Non-Arab

Two women came to take their shares from Baytul Mal (Public Treasury). One of them was an Arab and the other one was a non-Arab. Imam Ali gave them equal share as usual. Those people who had not as yet comprehended the essence of Islam did not tolerate this justice and raised an objection against the Imam's action. They complained of treating an Arab and a non-Arab on equal footing. At this the Holy Imam said: "I did not find any difference between the two". (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. XI, p. 81)

Owing to his strict observance of equity and his treatment of people of various classes of society without any distinction, selfish people and transgressors became critical of the policies and the administration of justice initiated by Imam Ali but all their crooked tactics and criticisms could not deviate him from the path of monotheism and Divine Justice. He was one of those few blessed souls who did not mind in the last such baseless criticisms. **The Holy Qur'an says:** Believers, any one of you turns back on his faith (should remember) that Allah could verily bring (in your place) another people whom He would love as they would love Him, gentle with believers, unbending with infidels, who would strive in the way of Allah unafraid of blame by any slanderer. (Surah al-Ma'ida, 5:54)

Counting the Dead

In the Age of Ignorance the larger the tribe was the greater was its dignity among the people. Once a dispute on the counting of the members of a tribe became so serious that they insisted on counting their dead ones also so that they could prove the largeness of their tribe. Hence, the following verse of the Holy Qur'an was revealed.

The avarice of plenitude keeps you occupied till you reach the grave. (Surah at-Takathur, 102-1—2)

From this it is meant that the abundance of wealth and manpower has blinded you to the extent that you are going to count the dead ones by going to their graves and are feeling proud of it.

Imam Ali after reciting the above surah condemned that sort of attitude. (See: Sermon—225, Peak of Eloquence)

In another similar gathering where every one was bragging of his own tribe, race and pedigree, the turn of Salman Farsi came. People thought that since he had not come from a noteworthy tribe he would feel some humiliation but Salman Farsi had received the training from the Holy Prophet of Islam. Without undergoing any feeling of inferiority he boldly declared "You people should have no concern with my family background. What I know about myself is that I was far away from the right guidance, but under the auspices of the Holy Prophet I sought guidance and this is the only praiseworthy thing for me and nothing else". (Safinatul Bihar, vol. II, p. 348). By giving this ideological reply he quietened them and proved to them that according to Islamic ideology and in the eyes of Allah all are equal and such boastful claims have no worth.

Advice to Buy the People for Gaining Their Favour

Some well-wishers of Imam Ali approached him and suggested to him to show special favours to the leading heads of the tribe of Quraysh and other influential people by granting them higher share for unless he gave preferential treatment to them as against the slaves and the non-Arabs he would not be able to gain their support and they would rebel against him and would go towards Mu'awiya's side.

Imam Ali said: "Should I spend the wealth and property of the Public Treasury in bribing the people in return for gaining their support? The fact is that if I gain the support of someone through money he will turn against me if he is offered a higher amount from the other party. Therefore, we should always safeguard the principle of justice and never think of attracting the people either through money or intimidation and threats. I shall never do that no matter if someone remains with me or goes against me". This was the method adopted by the Holy Imam. He was not prepared to gain the favor of the people by doing the least injustice. (Biharul Anwar, vol. XVI, p. 108)139

Example of the Feeling of Fraternity

A citizen of Balkh says: "I was present before Imam Ali Riza. The time for dinner came. The dining-cloth was spread and meals were served. The Holy Imam invited all his white and black-skinned servants and without any hesitation seated himself amongst them. Some people suggested a separate dining-cloth for the servants. At this the Holy Imam said: "We all have One Lord. We all belong to common parents. On the Day of Judgement we all shall

be treated equally for our virtues and sins. Then why should there be discrimination here?" The day when I see that everybody in whatever condition he may be, associates with other people without any consideration of superiority will be the day of attaining our cultural revolution. In the same way if every Muslim without considering himself superior to others, mingles with common people rekindles in himself the spirit of Islamic instructions, then whoever associates with us will ultimately join us and become our co-religionist. (al-Kafi, vol. VIII, p. 230).

Brotherhood in Islam

It is for centuries that the black people have been undergoing hardships and oppressions. Their bath-rooms, coffeehouses, hospitals, schools and cemeteries are all separate.

Islam has very strongly censured this sort of discrimination among various classes of people. The Holy Qur'an says: Men, We have created you all male and female and have made you nations and tribes so that you would recognize each other. The most honorable among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious of you. (Surah al-Hujurat, 49:13)

Among the signs of His existence is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the differences of languages and complexions. (Surah ar-Rum, 30:22)

The Holy Prophet on the occasion of his farewell pilgrimage (hujjatul wida) said to a large gathering: "You Muslims are equal to one another no matter if you belong to one or the other tribe, race or language". (Safinatul Bihar, vol. II, p. 348)

The Holy Prophet used to award positions of dignity to the slaves and solemnized intermarriages between the whiteskinned and the black-skinned couples so much so that he wedded his first cousin, Zaynab, the daughter of his father's sister to a black-skinned slave so that the evil of superiority amongst the believers might be nipped in the bud.

False Criticism: The Almighty Allah has rejected the superiority of the Quraysh who considered themselves superior to all others. The Holy Qur'an says: Then move onward from the place (Arafat) when all the People go. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:199)

The above verse was revealed when on the occasion of the Hajj, the people of Quraysh considered themselves superior to others by being the custodian of the Holy Ka'ba and for this reason, while performing the rites of the Hajj, they did not go to 'Arafat and instead went to Muzdalifa. They said that since they belonged to the Holy House of Allah (Ka'ba) they would not go to another place. Then they were asked to give up their feeling of superiority, and that they should go to the same place where others were going.

There is a Difference Between Adopting a Principle and Trading

The influential people looked down upon the followers of Prophet Nuh and insulted them. They made a proposal to him that if he abandoned associating with poor people they would keep his company. But since Prophet Nuh always upheld the cause of the poor and the downtrodden people he turned down their proposal. According to the Holy Qur'an, he said to them: No one except Allah has to give me my reward. I do not drive away those who have faith (in my teachings), they will all receive mercy from their Lord. (Surah Hud, 11:29)

The matter which is of paramount importance to us is to uphold social justice and protect our ideology. We should only invite people to this concept and not that we should ignore one aspect of it and give up justice and equity so as to build up the strength of our supporters. This sort of thinking is like business and blind-following and does not mean protection of ideology and worship of Allah.

Even a Single Loaf is Equally Distributed

"Some commodities were brought before Imam Ali and people came to take their share. In order that people should maintain discipline he kept the people at a distance by means of ropes and himself distributed the whole of it to the representatives of the various tribes. Afterwards, he found one loaf that was left in a container. He then ordered it to be divided into seven equal parts and like the other property gave one piece to each of the tribes". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XLI, p. 136)

Do Not Compromise on Principle

A theft occurred in the house of a Muslim in Madina. Two persons were charged with theft. One was a Muslim and the other a Jew. Both of them were brought before the Holy Prophet. The Muslims became worried that if the Muslim was proved guilty of the charge they will be humiliated before the neighboring Jews. Thus the people came to the Holy Prophet that the honor of the Muslims was at stake and hence it was desirable that the Muslim might be acquitted of the charge. But the Holy Prophet considered an unjust decision a disgrace for Islam. The people further argued that since the Jews had perpetrated cruelties on them, it was of no significance if one of their men was unjustly punished for the crime. The Holy

Prophet said: "Justice and honest decision have nothing to do with past sufferings". At last the Holy Prophet examined the case impartially and against the wishes of the Muslims set the Jew free. This example of justice humiliated the Muslims of that time but in reality it immortalized the justice and high ideals of Islam. We should therefore, adhere to our principles and should not make innovations in them for the sake of pleasing others.

An Unjust Hope

A group of people passing by the assembly of the Holy Prophet saw with him some indigent persons like Ammar and Bilal. They said to the Holy Prophet: "Have you contented yourself on such unknown persons? If you only get rid of them we will soon join you and keep your company". The author of Tafsirul Manar after narrating this event says that caliph Umar showed his inclination towards the proposal of the proud people of Quraysh and said to the Holy Prophet: "You may remove these poor people from you for a few days just to test these proud people and to know if there is any sincerity in their suggestions. Then the following verse was revealed warning the Holy Prophet".

Do not turn away those who implore their Lord morning and evening, seeking His countenance. (Surah al-An'am, 6:52)

At the end of this verse, the Almighty Allah further says: "If you drive them away you will only be unjust"

Do Not Underestimate the Judicial Decision

Two young boys wrote two different writings and came to Imam Hasan for a decision. An ordinary man will take such a simple problem very lightly, because firstly the point at issue is the piece of writing and secondly the dispute is between two boys but in any case the matter had to be decided. Therefore, Imam Ali advised his son Imam Hasan to pay attention to the decision as whatever decision you make you will be answerable before the Divine Justice on the Day of Judgement. (Majma'ul Bayan, vol. III, p. 64)

When the Guest is Removed

A man happened to be the guest of Imam Ali. After a time he put before the Holy Imam the ease of his dispute with another person. The Holy Imam told the man, "Up till now you were my guest, but since you have become a party in a dispute with another man you should leave this place, because the Holy Prophet advised me not to make any one of the disputants as your guest unless the other one is also with you because hospitality is one thing and making a just and impartial decision is another thing. Hospitality is based on sympathy and decision of a case is based on Divine law. "

Therefore, in principle one should not involve himself in sentimental and psychological matters so that there may not be the least doubt that he would be influenced by them in the administration of justice. (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. XVIII, p. 158)

Imam Ali used to instruct the tax-collector thus: "In whatever zone you go, you should arrange your stay near the bank of a river but do not stay with anyone in any event because your becoming his guest will influence your official duty to collect the tax". (See. Letter—25, Peak of Eloquence, ISP 1984)

The Holy Qur'an Condemns Partiality

As and when the Qur'anic verses were revealed people gradually got attracted to them. The Holy Prophet himself and some other followers used to preach Islam and invite the people towards Islam. Once a preaching function was held in which many famous people participated. When a preacher was addressing the people to the call of Allah and to embrace Islam a blind man appeared and started talking continuously. This interrupted the preaching work, on account of which the speaker got much annoyed. He did not want that the blind man coming over there and if he had come at all, he should have at least kept quiet, though the speaker's friendly or unfriendly gestures of the face could not affect the blind man owing to his blindness. Surah 'Abasa refers to this very incident and warns the speaker who had knit his brows, because possibly the blind man had a better understanding and sense of accepting the truth than other wellknown people. The Holy Qur'an says: He frowned and turned away, because a blind man came to him. And what made you think that he will not grow in virtue. (Surah 'Abasa, 80.1—3)

Another Example of Imam Ali's Justice

'Aqil, the brother of Imam Ali, with his children came to the Imam. Their faces were pale due to starvation. He, therefore, demanded a larger share for him from the Public Treasury. It is a natural thing that a man gets affected by seeing the plight of his brother's children. But Imam Ali rejected his brother's request and by bringing a red-hot iron near him said: "Just as you are afraid of the torment of this hot iron, similarly I am afraid of the torment of the

Day of Judgement". (Sermon—221, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)148

Nobody Does That Sort of Thing

Normally the well-known people themselves go to buy their requirement from the market or send somebody else to buy for them. Such a person tells the shopkeeper that the thing is required for a man of distinction so that he may give him a better quality goods at a lower price. It is just possible that bribe is given or wrong advantage of one's official position is taken in this regard. By this a situation is created that all well-to-do people take the best of stuff from the market at a cheaper rate and leave a low quality goods for the common people to buy at a higher price. It was only Imam Ali who took care to buy his requirements from a shopkeeper who did not know him or if he sent somebody else to make purchases nobody knew for whom the goods were being purchased.

Another Example of Taking Precaution

Once Imam Ali was distributing shares from the Public Treasury when his grandson happened to come and took away a thing. On such an occasion a father would normally ignore such a thing but it was Imam Ali who got perturbed and chased the child and took back the thing from him. The people told him that after all the child also had his share in it. At this the Holy Imam replied, "No, not his, only his father's share is there and that too equal to that of any other man. It is up to him to give his son whatever share he deemed fit to give". (Hayat Imam Hasan, Baqir Sharif Qarashi, vol. I. p. 388)

Surely such a strict precaution was concerned with the Public Treasury only, but the Holy Imam was so generous in giving away his personal wealth that even Mu'awiya once said that if Ali had two rooms, one full of haystack and the other of gold it makes no difference to him to give away any of the two.

Undue Criticism Against Imam Ali

Talha and Zubayr believed in giving special treatment to the companions of the Holy Prophet. Therefore, they used to criticize Imam Ali for his dealing with the Public Treasury as well as other matters. Once they objected to the Holy Imam saying: "Why do you not consult us? "

Imam Ali after telling his promptness, ability, justice and modus operandi said: "By Allah, I never craved for rulership or caliphate for its sake only. All of you invited me to accept it and I accepted. And when I accepted it and became a ruler I started to rule according to the dictates of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah (traditions) of the Holy Prophet. In following the commandments of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet, I never needed either your help nor that of anybody's else. If I feel ever in need of advice, I shall most certainly consult you as well as other Muslim brethren.

So far as your complaints about equal distribution of wealth are concerned, I want to tell you that here too I am strictly following the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet. This theory of equal distribution of the wealth was revealed to the Holy Prophet by the Merciful Allah and he had taught us, you know this and so do I. So, what Allah had commanded should be accepted by you and as well as by me. Therefore, you and your friends are not justified in blaming me for this". (Sermon—210, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)149

Settling Dispute with Justice

"Treat the people with respect. Be kind and considerate with them. Meet them cheerfully. Be fair, just and impartial in your dealings so that even the influential persons may not dare take undue advantage of your leniency and the commoners and the poor people may not be disappointed in your justice and fair dealings". (Letter—27, Peak of Eloquence)

It is narrated that whenever the Holy Prophet talked with his companions he used to glance over to them equally in a just manner without ignoring anyone of them. (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. VIII, p 499)

In this regard Islam takes special care so much so that it emphasizes that if in a feast the host starts the washing of the hands of his guest from the right side before the meals begin the reverse process should be adopted i.e. washing should be done from the left side after the meals have been taken so that the man, who washed his hands first before the meals, should be the last one after finishing his meals. Such a great care and attention would never be found in any other code of ethics.

Using the Paper Economically

Imam Ali in one of his circulars to his officials wrote as follows: "Sharpen the tip of your pen. Do not leave much space between the lines. Avoid writing in an ornamental style and observe brevity so as to save paper. The paper belongs to the Public Treasury and the

Public Treasury cannot afford any wasteful expenditure". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XLI, p. 105)

The pronouncement of Imam Ali on the importance of administering justice and of avoiding oppressive actions is very interesting. (Vide. Sermon—228, Peak of Eloquence). In this very sermon the Holy Imam further says. "I bear Allah as my witness that I prefer to pass sleepless nights over the sharp thorns of prickly plants or to suffer from the worst form of injury and insult than to meet my Lord and the Holy Prophet on the Day of Judgement as a tyrant who has persecuted any person or as a usurper who has wrongfully seized the property of somebody else. Why should I tyrannize or exploit somebody to provide comfort and ease for my body which will shortly be destroyed and decayed and which will lie in the grave for a long period. By Allah, if all the seven continents with all that they contain are offered to me as a remuneration or bribe for depriving an ant of the husk of a grain of barley carried by it, I will never do it. This world to me is even more worthless than the small bit of a leaf chewed by a locust. Ali has no interest with mortal luxuries, wealth, ease and comforts of this world. I seek His Protection and Help from negligence of my duty and from being wicked and vicious".

Asking for a Larger Share

Once Talha and Zubayr came to Imam Ali and said: "Umar used to allocate to us a greater share than other people". The Holy Imam at once understood what they meant by saying that thing and asked: "What share did the Holy Prophet allocate to you people?" They kept quiet. The Holy Imam then said to them: "Did the Holy Prophet of Islam, not allocate the shares to the people equally?" They replied: "Yes, he did". The Holy Imam said: "Should I follow the tradition of the Holy Prophet or should I adopt the policy of Umar?" They said, "True, you should do according to the ways of the Holy Prophet". At this the Holy Imam said: "Then why do you want to have more?" They replied: "We are one of the first who embraced Islam and we are closely related to the Holy Prophet. Besides, we often bore tribulations and sufferings with him". Imam Ali said: "Then I am more deserving than you taking into consideration the things you have enumerated. I embraced Islam before you people. I am the first cousin of the Holy Prophet as well as his son-in-law. And in the battlefields it was I who unsheathed my sword more than anybody else. By Allah ! Despite all these distinct merits and besides being the head of the Islamic State, my own share is just equal to that of the laborer who is working just over therein front of us". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XLI)

Misuse of One's Position is Forbidden

Imam Ali in his capital at Kufa addressing the people said. "O people of Kufa! If ever you see some change in me and in my appearances in your town that is to say my dress, my food, my horse, and slave have changed and I have ensured for myself a prosperous and easy life during the period of my caliphate, then you should know that I have misappropriated your rights taking undue advantage of my position". During the time the Holy Imam gave bread and meat to others, he himself ate plain bread without meat". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XLI, p. 137)

An Example of Equality in Islam

The Holy Prophet used to associate with the people in so simple a dress that whenever a stranger happened to go to the Masjid, he was unable to recognize the Holy Prophet. He would glance over the faces of the people for a long time and then ask as to who amongst them was the Holy Prophet of Allah. The Holy Prophet used to sit among his companions in a circle in such a way that there was no distinguishable position for anyone. Of course that kind of simplicity, modesty and frankness are the traits of the Prophets of Allah.

No Nepotism

A woman belonging to the famous tribe of Makhzum committed theft. The Holy Prophet intended to punish her in accordance with the Divine law. The relatives of the woman felt disgraced for themselves for letting the woman be punished for the crime. They then tried to influence the Holy Prophet so that the sentence for theft might not be passed. They selected Usama, who was a close companion of the Holy Prophet to recommend her case so that the punishment might be condoned by the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet became displeased and said to Usama: "Do you want yourself to be responsible for not upholding the sanctity of the Divine law? The cause of misfortune and ruination of the followers of earlier Prophets was that when the aristocrats committed sins the Divine law was not enforced upon them but it was only done in the case of common people! By Allah! Even if my own daughter Fatima commits any theft, I shall chop off her hand also". (Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim quoted by Ruhuddin al-Islami)

Corporal Punishment

Islam besides ordaining the wearing of civilized dress and enjoining people to do good and restraining them from evil so as to make the Islamic society virtuous has also recommended corporal punishment for the sinners.

Though corporal punishment is the source of personal disgrace yet if certain people openly flout the Divine commandments and set a bad example for others, they should certainly be whipped before the general public. Besides that awarding punishment in accordance with the Divine laws is in itself worship, if personal vengeance is not involved in it. We read in a narration that once a woman was found guilty of a major sin and she was brought before Imam Ali. The Holy Imam after making proper investigations decreed that the woman should be punished in accordance with Divine commandments. Qambar who was one of the devoted followers of the Holy Imam was ordered to enforce the sentence of punishment but out of anger he whipped her with three extra lashes. When the Holy Imam came to know of it, he took the lash from Qambar's hand and by making him lie down whipped him three times. Indeed, it is that framework of Islamic justice in which the punisher, who was so close with the Holy Imam for so long a period, could not be spared for doing excesses.

Suggestion Made to Imam Ali

At long last, however, the reign of the Islamic State came into the hands of Imam Ali, its rightful owner. When he assumed the reins of the government, certain Muslims who had not been imbued with the true spirit of Islam and who thought like professional politicians and the so called experts in the field of statesmanship, approached the Holy Imam and advised him thus: "It is just the beginning of your rule. Hence, it is very necessary to consolidate your government. It is advisable that you should grant money from the Public Treasury to the rich and affluent persons, tribal heads and your favorites so that they may be prevented from indulging in subversive activities and they may also be rightly rewarded for their non-interference".

In reply to these time-servers and soulless politicians, Imam Ali said: "Do you expect me to strengthen the foundation of my just government through oppression and injustice? Can anybody attain the goal of monotheism with his polytheistic policy? I accepted the responsibility of running the affairs of the State for eradicating such injustices and illegal collection of taxes and now you expect me to be involved in those evil activities which I should, being duty bound, root out from the society ". (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. XI, p. 80) 154

Equity in Distribution of Public Treasury

Imam Ja'far Sadiq said: "Muslims are the worthy sons of Islam and I do not discriminate between them in the matter of distributing shares from the Public Treasury. These open merits and good qualities for example priority in embracing Islam, superiority in knowledge, piety, and jihad etc. are the concerns of the Day of Judgement and not of the Public Treasury". (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. XI, p. 81)

It seems what the Holy Imam said was in reply to the people's wrong thinking and expectations according to which they were waiting for special regard on account of the good qualities which they possessed. They thought that they would get a greater share from the Public Treasury in his statement removed their misconceptions and rejected their false hopes.

Indeed, if we give the pious and the virtuous people a large share from the Public Treasury we shall be committing double errors: Firstly we have underrated the value of merits; and secondly we have made the sincerity of the meritorious people dubious, since we have diverted their attention towards worldly gains, and obviously if we assess the inner qualities and spiritual perfection through giving a greater or smaller share from the Public Treasury, it means that we have done an irreparable harm to merit and perfection and to those who tread that path.

Strong Criticism by Imam Ali

Imam Ali used to supervise the duties of the government officials himself, and appointed regular and secret reporters for that purpose. The people were free to bring to the Holy Imam complaints against the government officials. One of such complaints was about a government official in Persia (Iran). The nature of the complaint was that the government official was discriminating between his relatives and the general public and allotted a larger share from the Public Treasury to his relatives. The Holy Imam warned him and wrote to him. "There should be no difference whatsoever between your relations and the rest of the Muslims". (Sharh Nahjul Balagha, by Muhammad Abduh, vol. III, p. 76).

Imam Ali's Admonition to Umar

Imam Ali used to admonish Caliph Umar. He said to him: "Be very-careful about the following three basic problems:

- (i) You should not adopt any discrimination between the criminals when you award them punishments.
- (ii) Make just decision according to Divine law both when you are angry or in a happy mood.
- (iii) Do not be partial to any family in giving shares from the Public Treasury. (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. XVIII, p. 156)

The gist of these counsels is that in enforcing the Divine laws one should not be influenced by his personal disposition of anger and pleasure and should not be partial because of personal relationship, family or tribal affiliations.

Imam Ali Walks out of the Court

In the days of the caliphate of Umar, a man filed a suit against Imam Ali and both the parties were summoned by the court. The Qazi (judge) who should have been impartial in talking to, even in looking at, and taking the names of both the parties showed distinction in taking the name of the Holy Imam and the other person. He addressed Imam Ali by calling his name with due respect and regard with his patronymic appellation, and the other man with his usual name. At this the Holy Imam became displeased and walked out of the court-room after saying to the judge: "The judge, should not discriminate between the two parties of the law suit. You made distinction in calling out my name with more respect. That is not the way of administering justice in the Islamic way". (Vide: The Voice of Human Justice, by George Jordac, ISP, 1982)

This incident points out to the fact that even a man of the caliber of Imam Ali was brought to an ordinary court of law against an ordinary citizen and that no special time or place for the hearing of the case. This also signifies the importance of justice and equity in Islam.

Obstinacy in Discussions and Actions

From the careful study of the Holy Qur'an we find that there is an aspect of justice pervading all affairs and in all the laws and commandments, moderation and impartiality. We quote hereunder some instances:

- (i) When Islam wants to prohibit drinking of liquor it first points out to its apparent benefits which accrue from its distillation and sale and its advantages from the medical point of view. But later it points out that its harmful effects far exceed its benefits. In this respect the Holy Qur'an says: Muhammad, they ask you about wine and gambling. Tell them that there is great sin in them. Although they have benefits for men, the sin therein is far greater than the benefits. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:219)
- (ii) In spite of all the characteristic qualities that are found in Islamic ideology, the Holy Qur'an does not at all neglect the past Scriptures. The Holy Qur'an says: He has sent the Book (Qur'an) to you (Muhammad) in all Truth. It confirms the Bible. He revealed the Torah (Taurat) and the Gospel (Injil) as a guide for the people and now He has revealed the Furqan (criterion of discerning right from wrong). (Surah Ale Imran, 3:3)
- (iii) The Holy Qur'an does not consider the people of the formerly revealed Books that is, the Jews and Christians altogether dishonest but says that there are some among them who are so honest that they return to their owners the property in whatever quantity it is kept in their custody, while there are some dishonest and mean persons who misappropriate even one single coin if it is kept in trust with them. The Holy Qur'an says: There are some among the people of the Scripture who return the treasure entrusted to them, yet there are some who do not return even a dinar until you demand and insist, because they say: 'We cannot be blamed for usurping the rights of the heathens'. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:75)

This declaration of the Holy Prophet about those who had not accepted his invitation to Islam, was a glaring example of justice and equity.

It has been the method of Islam that the moral code was always observed in matters where discussions and debate exceed the limit of justness and quest for finding the truth and when the disputes were likely to take an unreasonable stand, one should withdraw oneself from the discussion even though one may happen to be on the right.

Justice Towards Polytheists and Infidels

Islam ordains that we should be just not only to its followers but also to the enemies even in times of war.

If the enemies kill you, you people should also kill them because that is the only punishment for the infidels. At this moment killing is the only just action otherwise it will amount to cowardice and timidity. But it should be borne in mind that you should not attack them first; rather, just as they attack you, you should also do similarly. The Holy Qur'an says: And fight those (who fight you) where so ever you find them and expel them from the place from

where they expelled you. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:191)

Do not kill anyone whom Allah has forbidden you to kill without a just cause. Whoever is killed unjustly, We have given the heir of that person the right to demand satisfaction or to forgive. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:33)

This verse points out to the custom of the Age of Ignorance that whenever a man of a certain family was killed his entire family rose in vengeance and unless several people of the other family were killed the matter was not settled. But against this wild fanaticism, the Holy Qur'an ordains justice, and says not to exceed the limits of retaliation and vengeance. It allowed only to kill one person who was the actual killer or to demand the blood money.

Imam Ali after sustaining a fatal wound at the hands of his assassin advised his two worthy sons, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn besides giving other instructions, not to indulge in mass killing but to kill only the wretched killer, Ibn Muljam. He further said: "He (the assassin) struck once on me and therefore you should also give him one stroke". (See: Letter—47, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)

This is a unique example of justice which Imam Ali upheld even at the moment when he was lying in a pool of blood.

Islam sanctified a particular area of land as a Sanctuary and within its bounds fighting is prohibited so much so that even hunting of animals and uprooting of the grass from the earth are not permitted. The Holy Qur'an says: Do not fight them in the vicinity of Ka'ba unless they start to fight; then fight them for it is the recompense that the disbelievers deserve. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:191)

It is because of their disrespect of a sacred month that you are also allowed to retaliate against them in a sacred month. If anyone transgresses against you, you also may retaliate against them to an equal extent. Have fear of Allah and know that He supports the pious. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:194)

Allah does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with those who have not fought against you about the religion or expelled you from your homes. Allah does not love the unjust people. (Surah al-Mumtahanah, 60:8)

If you want retaliation, let it be equal to that which you faced. But if you exercise patience it will be better for you. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:126)

Believers, be steadfast for the cause of Allah and be just in bearing witness. Let not a group's hostility to you cause you to deviate from justice. Be just, for it is closer to piety. Have fear of Allah, He is Aware of what you do. (Surah al-Maidah, 5:8)

There are several verses of the Holy Qur'an in this behalf, but before we wind up this discussion we mention another verse with some elaboration: Do not accuse anyone, who claims himself to be a Muslim, of disbelief just for worldly gain. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:94)

In connection with this verse we briefly mention the following incident: The Holy Prophet sent some people to find out the condition of the Jews of Khaybar so that the Muslims might be prepared beforehand to deal with them. One of the Jews hid his property in a mountain and then came out to welcome the Muslims, and informed them that he had embraced Islam. But the Muslims made haste and said that he was only pretending to save his life and property and there and then killed him. At this the Qur'anic verse was revealed, ordaining that if someone says that he has embraced Islam they should not say that he is not a Muslim and should not kill him and loot his property. They should shun such hasty decisions. At the same time they should not hastily believe an enemy who pretends to be Muslim, without making proper investigation, and as such they should neither be in haste to kill him nor easily believe what he says. In short we should adopt the path of truth which defends social justice that is, we should adopt the path of thorough investigation. Our principle of social justice means that while we are fighting against our opponents we should behave with justice and love towards those who are harmless, and we should harshly treat those who are wicked and oppressive and punish them as they deserve.

Blood-money and Retaliation Ensure Justice

The Holy Qur'an says: Believers, in case of murder, the death penalty is the sanctioned retaliation, a free man for a free man, a slave for a slave and a female for a female. However, if the convicted person receives pardon from the aggrieved party, the prescribed rules of compensation must be followed accordingly. This is a concession and a kindness from your Lord. He who transgresses against it shall suffer painful punishment. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:178)

The literal meaning of the word qisas (retaliation) is "following suit". Since the heir of the man who is killed by someone, treat him in the same way, that is they follow his action by killing him. The term qisas means death penalty. In the Age of ignorance, (before the advent of Islam) it was a custom with the Arabs that whenever a man was killed by someone, the

family men of the murdered man used to massacre the whole family of the murderer. It was therefore to abolish this ghastly practice that the Holy Qur'an ordained death penalty, that is, man for man, slave for slave, woman for woman and not the whole lot of family members. In Islam the injunction of death penalty is very just, because unlike the Jewish law it does not entirely depend on retaliation, nor does it have recourse to only forgiveness or blood-money as it is with present day Christians, because insistence on death penalty sometimes creates complications. Hence, to make it obligatory is unwise. For instance if the murderer and the murdered ones happen to be the two brothers, then in that ease compulsion of the death penalty will lead to a still more gruesome tragedy for the family, because for the sake of one brother another brother would have to be sentenced to death by law. On the other side the condoning of the death penalty by means of the demand of the blood-money will give as a general rule an encouragement to murder. Therefore, in Islam the basic law provides death penalty but it has also a provision of pardon by means of paying the blood-money to the murdered man's relatives, who can choose between the two options.

The Law of Qisas (Retaliation) in the Holy Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an says%:%: In the Taurat We made obligatory for the Jews the code of retaliation Capital punishment for the murder of a person, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth and a wound for a wound. If the perpetrator is forgiven by the affected party this will be an expiation of his crime. Those who do not judge according to what Allah has revealed are unjust. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:45)

In certain narrations we find that there lived in Madina during the time of the Holy Prophet two famous tribes of the Jews — Bani Nuzayr and Bani Qurayzah. Bani Nuzayr were boastful people. If someone of their tribe happened to kill a man of the tribe of Bani Qurayzah he was not sentenced to death, but if the murderer belonged to Bani Qurayzah the death penalty was enforced upon him and he was instantly killed.

But when Islam came, it eliminated undue discriminations among various sections and classes of people. Bani Nuzayr who by then had embraced Islam requested the Holy Prophet to continue the practice of bragging as well one sided death penalty so as to give them their usual advantage. But the Holy Prophet rejected their request outright and said: "The justness underlying the rules of retaliation is not only characteristic of Islam but it is found in Taurat also. (Tafsir Namuna, Vide: Surah al-Ma'ida, 5:45)

If somebody deliberately murders someone without any just excuse the heirs of the murdered man can slay the murderer quite justifiably. If someone strikes somebody in the eye and blinds him, the victim can also do the same to the offender. Cutting the nose for nose and ear for ear of the offender is permissible. Similarly, if someone breaks somebody's tooth or inflicts a wound the latter can do the same to the former.

Thus the injunction of the rules of retaliation in Islam operates equitably in all cases without any consideration of racial, social, tribal and personality differences.

Moderation in Worship

It is necessary to throw some light on the subject of moderation in offering prayers. It has been stressed in our traditions that we should not force upon ourselves recommended prayers if we are not fully prepared for it, as we should perform such prayers with a free and willing heart.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq said. "Do not load yourself with prayers" (Usul Kafi, vol. II, p. 86)

In another tradition we read as follows: "Do not thrust prayers on the servants of Allah. It has particularly been insisted that children should be given more freedom and they should not be strictly asked to perform recommended prayers".

There are several other traditions on this subject.

Moderation in Appreciation and Criticism

As it has already been said adopting moderation and justice is the guiding principle of a Muslim's life. Among other things which should be given importance to are undue praise and undue criticism which leave a harmful effect on individuals and the society as a whole.

Imam Ali says: "If you exceed the limit in praising somebody you will be a sycophant and if you belittle the worth of a deserving person, you are narrow-minded or jealous as you cannot bear to praise others". (See: Sayings of Imam Ali, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)

Thus we should be just and moderate in praising others. In this respect Imam Ali says: "Being too much critical rebounds upon ourselves and stubbornness gives rise to bad feelings". (Tuhuful 'Uqul)

The parents should be advised to realize that over-indulgence spoils the child.

The Holy Prophet says: "In the latter times the undue love and over-indulgence of the children will make them self-conceited but it does not mean that they should be deprived of

their due love".

In the traditions we learn that parents should behave with their children like a child and should be one with them in their play, pastimes, and conversation, so as to satisfy their psychological demands.

Moderation in Expenditure and Charities

Though we are primarily concerned with social justice in our current discussion, yet from the Holy Qur'an and the traditions we find many other things which are not outside the purview of our discussion. Among them is the problem of general expenditure and charities.

Islam has also adopted a medium course in regard to these matters like other such things. In praise of the virtuous people the Holy Qur'an says: Who are neither prodigal nor miserly in their spending but maintain moderation. (Surah al-Furqan, 25:67)

Do not be niggardly, nor over-generous, lest you should become reprehensive and constrained. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:29)

In our traditions in matters of economics too, moderation has been greatly stressed.

Justice in Personal Life

The Holy Qur'an says: If you cannot maintain equality with more than one wife, marry only one or any slave-girls you may own. That will make easier for you to avoid injustice. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:3)

The Holy Prophet even when he was in his death-bed took care of doing justice to his wives, as he used to get his bed shifted to the chamber of the wife who had turn on that night.

Ayesha, one of the wives of the Holy Prophet said: "The Holy Prophet never gave preference to one wife over another; he treated them all alike. He used to visit everyone of his wives daily and inquired of their welfare, but everyone of them had her own turn. If he wanted to stay with someone of them when it was not her turn he first asked the permission of the concerned wife". Thereafter, she further said, "But I never gave my turn to any of the Holy Prophet's wife".

When Imam Ali had two wives and if he wanted to perform ablution, he would not do it in the house of the wife whose turn did not fall on that particular time. Of course, the spirit of justice should permeate through our social structure.

Moderation in Frugality

In Islam the system of frugality is also based on moderation and justice in the sense that exercising thrift should not be to the extent that no deserving person is deprived of his due share or rights, and every rightful claimant should be allowed to lead a comfortable life according to his needs.

Output of Work

Islam advises division of work for various purposes so that time may be allocated to different pieces of work including worship of Allah, picnics and lawful enjoyments. In this way all our material and spiritual needs can be fulfilled. (Sayings of Imam Ali, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)

If in the event one's work is so extended as to restrain the work of another person, the officer incharge can put a check on this practice. For instance, if some people developed a barren land by the sweat of their brow, they would become its owner according to law which says: "One who develops a barren land becomes its owner". If such a development of the land leads to deprivation of others and the social structure becomes unsound, the Islamic government can limit the extent of such a development so as to do justice to others also"(Iqtisaduna, by Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Sadr)

Justice in Distribution of Property

Imam Ali says: "The far-off tract of land should be equally treated like the nearby areas". (Letter—53, Peak of Eloquence)

The State's budget should be equally allocated among all sections of the society. It should not be such that people living near the capital city may get a greater share.

Like Prophet Shu'ayb many of the Prophets, after inviting the people to the belief in monotheism and prophethood, gave the first priority to the just distribution of wealth and honest use of weights and measures in business transactions. The Holy Qur'an says: Maintain just measure in your business and do not cheat. Weigh your goods with proper balance and do not defraud people in their property or spread evil in the land. (Surah Shu'ara, 26:181—183)

Woe to those who are fraudulent who demand a full measure from others but when they measure or weigh, give less. (Surah Mutaffifin, 83:1—3)

Justice in Sharing and Spending

In Islam justice is to be observed in spending also. The Holy Qur'an says: You may eat their fruits that they produce but pay Allah's share on the harvest day. (Surah al-An'am, 6:141)

Children of Adam, dress well when attending the masjid, eat and drink but do not be excessive for Allah does not love those who are excessive. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:31)

We allowed you to consume the pure sustenance which We had given you but not to become rebels, lest you should become subjected to My Torment. (Surah Ta Ha, 20:81)

Imam Ali tells us the signs and characteristics of virtuous people as follows: "They wear simple dress". (Usul Kafi, vol. II)

Imam Ja'far Sadiq says: "If people adopt moderation in matters of eating, their bodies will be strong and healthy". (Nizamut Tarbavi Fil Islam, p. 376)

In this connection the Holy Qur'an says: Use what you have acquired as your own good lawful property. Have fear of Allah. He is All-Forgiving and All-Merciful. (Surah al-Anfal, 8:69)

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That is, what we eat should be lawful, pure, and of our liking, and we should observe the rules of piety in obtaining it.

To Establish Justice Prophet's Instructions Should be Followed

In life man's interest clashes with that of another man and there arise disputes and confrontations. In such a circumstance everybody considers himself on the right or refuses to withdraw from the stand he has falsely taken. On such occasions Islam guides the people to refer to the Holy Prophet. The Holy Qur'an says: Believers, obey Allah, His Messenger and your (qualified) leaders. If you have faith in Allah and the Day of Judgement; refer to Allah and His Messenger concerning matters in which you differ. This would be a more virtuous and a better way of settling differences. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:59)

The following tradition of the Holy Prophet is of special consideration which says: "Religious scholars (ulema) are the successors to the Prophets".

Therefore whenever there is a dispute between you and there is a danger of deviation from the path of justice and violation of each other's rights you should approach the pious and just religious scholars so as to obtain their verdict in accordance with the commandments of Allah. (Vide: Wilayat-i Faqih, Imam Khumayni)

Anyone who does not go to a mujtahid (a leading religious jurist) and instead carries his personal disputes to the irreligious courts of law and seeks justice from those oppressors should give a second thought to his faith, because he is mistaken to think that he is a Muslim. The Holy Qur'an says.

O Muhammad! Have you seen those who think that they have faith in what is revealed to you and to others before you, yet they take their affairs to evil powers for judgement though they are commanded to ignore them. Satan only wants to deviate them from the right path. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:60)

Jurist is Responsible For the Supervision of Social Justice

Allah created us and showed us the ways of achieving our eternal prosperity by following the teachings of the Holy Prophet of Islam. The Prophet is responsible for the social uplift, preservation of the rights and the guidance of the people. After the Holy Prophet the responsibility falls on the Holy Imams who are like the Prophet in their merits, abilities and infallibility. They shoulder the responsibility of guiding the people to the right path. In the absence of the Imams, this responsibility falls on the shoulders of the religious scholars, and jurists, who besides possessing a keen sense of justice, thorough religious knowledge, political acumen and administrative abilities have the capacity to deduce the true meaning of the Qur'anic verses and the narrations of the infallible Imams. But in order that they may be called "faqih" (Jurist) they must possess a thorough knowledge of all branches of knowledge so that they may interpret correctly the Qur'anic verses.

In the message that has come down to us from our Last Holy Imam Mahdi, we are guided in these words: "Do not be self-willed and do not make haste while facing hardships and difficulties in arriving at a decision. Instead go to a right jurist whom you consider above all worldly and temporal desires so that he may give you a correct guidance to follow the right path of Allah". (Kitab al-Kamaluddin, narrated from Wilayat-i Faqih)

Guardianship of Jurist Ensures Social Justice

Imam Ali Riza says: "If Allah had not appointed an Imam who could take the reins of the government in his hand and administer justice, the entire social structure would have collapsed and everything would have gone topsy-tervy". ('Ilalush Sharaya', vol. I, p. 172)

Another tradition says: "The jurists are the trustees of the Prophets". (Walayat-i Faqih)

Therefore we should turn to the jurists for a just solution of their social problems. Abu

Khudayja who was a trusted companion of Imam Ja'far Sadiq was deputed on behalf of the Holy Imam to ask the people: "Turn to the just jurists for the settlement of your disputes. They will give their decision in accordance with the Divine laws. While choosing a jurist you should be sure that he is the one who strictly follows the instructions he receives from us in respect of lawful and unlawful things. I appoint only such jurists for you". (Walayat-i Faqih) Sometimes we come across a certain problem about which there appears to be no manifest orders in the Holy Qur'an or the traditions but their perfect signs, criteria, principles and rules are fully within the reach of a jurist, who can with the command of his knowledge, find out the solution to the problem in question.

A Story Regarding Rights

Among many kinds of freedom that man has been given by Islam one is about his right of privacy in his house. Nobody is allowed to enter another man's house without his permission. The Holy Qur'an says: Believers, do not enter others' houses until you have asked permission and have greeted the people therein. This is best for you, so that perhaps you may remember Allah's guidance. (Surah an-Nur, 24:27)

There was a man named Samurah. Though he was a companion of the Holy Prophet yet he was a trespasser who was selfwilled and self-conceited. He was in the habit of going into the garden of another companion without obtaining his permission, and there he used to feast his eyes on the latter's wife and children. For this evil action of his he put forward an excuse that at the corner of the garden he had a tree of his own, for the care of which he used to come over there.

The other companion told Samurah that he had no objection to his coming over there to look after his tree, but he should first inform him of his arrival before entering the garden so that his wife and children might keep themselves secluded. But the stubborn man did not agree and said: "It is not necessary for me to seek permission". After all the owner of the garden complained to the Holy Prophet against that trespasser. The Holy Prophet called Samurah and admonished him, but to no effect. The Holy Prophet asked him to exchange his tree with another one at a different place, but he did not agree to it. The Holy Prophet asked him to sell his tree to the owner of the garden. He still did not agree. Thereafter, the Holy Prophet asked him to enter the garden at least after taking the permission of the owner. He did not agree to that also. Finally, the Holy Prophet told him to leave his tree for good as he promised him a tree in Paradise. At that also he remained adamant. The Holy Prophet knew that his intention was to create mischief only and therefore, he ordered that man's tree to be pulled out from its roots and thrown away". (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. XVII, p. 340)

Hence, in Islam no one should harm anybody nor anybody should get himself harmed by anyone.

Reasons for Turning Away From Justice

There are two main reasons for turning away from justice. The Holy Qur'an has laid emphasis on both. One of the reasons of a man's deviation from justice is his personal interest, and his love for his relations and friends. The Holy Qur'an says: Believers, be the supporters of justice and the witnesses for Allah, even against yourselves, parents and relatives, regardless of their being rich or poor. Allah must be given preference over them. Let not your desires cause you to commit injustice. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:135)

The second reason why a man turns away from the path of justice is the troubles which he receives from an individual or a group of individuals. The Holy Qur'an says: Believers, be steadfast for the cause of Allah and just in bearing witness. Let not a group's hostility cause you to deviate from justice. Be just for it is closer to piety. Have fear of Allah. Allah is Well-Aware of what you do. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:8)

The third cause which makes man deviate from the path of justice is the giving and taking of bribes. The Holy Qur'an says: Do not use your property among yourselves in illegal ways and then deliberately bribe the rulers with your property so that you may sinfully acquire the property of others. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:188)

Suppose a judge gives a decision in your favour and you know that it was the result of the bribe that you gave him and the property that comes under your possession is unlawful, thus the apparent decision of the judge, in reality does not confer the right of ownership of the property on you.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq says. "Bribing a judge into a decision in one's favour is the great disobedience to Allah". (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. II)

There is also a well-known hadith of the Holy Prophet which says: "Those who give bribe or take bribe are deprived of Allah's Mercy".

It should be borne in mind that some people give this evil deed misleading names like, gift, present, tip, compensation and the reward of secrecy etc. Some people informed the Holy

Prophet that a certain man had accepted a bribe in the form a present. The Holy Prophet felt displeased and asked the man: "Why do you accept a thing for which you have no right?" The man replied: "What I have taken is only a present and not a bribe". The Holy Prophet said, "If you remain sitting in your house and are not an official appointed by me would the people in that case offer you present?"

Islam has taken so much care that it says that the judge should not go to the market to buy things for himself lest any concession in price given to him should influence him into becoming partial to the merchant in his decision.

The Verse Which Made the Holy Prophet Feel Old

The Holy Prophet said: "There is a verse in Surah "Hud" which has made me feel old". The relevant verse of the Holy Qur'an is as follows: Muhammad, be steadfast (in your faith) just as you have been commanded. (Surah Hud, 11:112)

If we look into the meaning of this verse we think that one's remaining steadfast and firm is not a big problem for in the Holy Qur'an there are also other verses which ask the Holy Prophet to remain steadfast and firm. But in this particular verse the stress on the words "as you have been commanded" is meaningful, because steadfastness is sometimes based on obstinacy as partiality and not on the command of Allah. Sometimes the people's taunts make a man steadfast lest they should say that he gave up his steadfastness because of fear. Sometimes a man wants to show off his forbearance; hence he becomes steadfast. In all such cases steadfastness loses its significance in the eyes of Allah as it was not motivated by sincerity. The Holy Qur'an says: And those who exercise patience to gain Allah's pleasure, who are steadfast in prayers, who spend for the cause of Allah privately and in public and who keep away evil with good will have blissful end. (Surah Ra'd, 13:22)

In short, to be just and to follow the path of Allah is a difficult task for which the Prophets seek the help of Allah and perhaps the "Bridge or the Path", which is thinner than a hair and sharper than the edge of a sword, and which all of us have to pass through, is the same Divine path of the world.

Social Justice is For Public Welfare

The vehicles pass along on the right side in our country in order to regulate the smooth flow of traffic. Hence, if any of the drivers violates the traffic rules other drivers start blowing horns so as to put a check on him. Besides, the police on duty also intervenes and fines him for violation of traffic rules. And in the absence of the police people themselves inform against the offender. Under these circumstances very few drivers can dare violate the traffic rules.

This was an example. Now if we want that we should not get out of the bounds of law and justice we should adhere to the following two fundamental principle of human conduct:

- (i) amr bil ma'ruf (enjoining the right) and
- (ii) nahi 'anil munkar (forbidding the wrong).

Thus we should not remain indifferent to anything which is wrong and unlawful and everyone of us should always try to do our job correctly so that we should set an example for others to follow and the transgressor may be forced to do good deeds.

We are looking forward to seeing the day when the cultural revolution of Islam will reach all the universities of the world. It will be the day when a physician who is not able to diagnose a malady, will honestly admit he could not know the nature of the disease. Not only that he will guide the patient to refer to a specialist so that the patient should receive proper attention at the hands of an expert. That will be the day when social justice will permeate our entire social order.