

JUSTICE IN ISLAM AS A PIVOTAL ETHIC FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Islam is a practical religion that not only ensures the aspect of spirituality or relationship with Allah alone but also deals with how one relates with himself, other fellow human beings and even animals. It emphasizes good governance to make the society habitable. The religion itself is built on justice in such a way that ethical behaviour and justice must always be ensured in all ramifications. The society today, particularly in Nigeria, people have taken justice to be secondary instead of being the watchword for everyone to gain this world and the hereafter. This is the commandment of the Creator and it must not be joked with as its aberration attracts punishment in the sight of Allah. It is against this background, that this paper looks at “Justice” as a pivotal ethics for national development. The methods adopted is an Analytical method based on the analysis of the relevant verses of the Glorious Qur'an, and traditions of the Prophet (pbuh) relating it to contemporary society. Thus, the work adopted primary and secondary sources for data collection and analysis. The result shows that when justice is prioritized in a society, it leads to increased social cohesion, trust, and stability. Fair and transparent legal systems ensure that individuals are held accountable for their actions, regardless of their status or background.



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This helps to promote a sense of safety and security among the population, as they can trust that justice will be served in cases of wrongdoing. Being just should be the responsibility of all in the society including the leaders and their subjects at one time or the other. The work therefore recommends that everyone at different levels should ensure justice to himself, his fellow human beings and any responsibility, he is saddled with.

Keywords: Justice, Islam, Pivotal, Ethics, National Development

Introduction

Ethics refers to the value system by which a person determines what is right or wrong, fair or unfair, just or unjust. It is expressed through moral behaviour in specific situations. An individual's conduct is measured not only against his or her conscience but also against some norms of acceptability that have been societally, or organizationally determined' (Parsons, 2004). The Arabic word for "ethics" is (أخلاق) pronounced akhlāq), which is the plural of khuluq). The singular form is the one used in the Holy Qur'an as a descriptor of the Prophet (PBUH): "And indeed, you are of a great moral character" (68:4). In this verse, the phrase "moral character" is used to translate the singular. The word (قُحُولٌ) *khuluq*) seems to be derived. Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (d. AH 505) defines moral character as follows: "A person can be described as having good *khalq* "appearance" and good *khuluq* "moral character" if he is pleasant on the inside and outside. Moral character is a set of well-established personality traits that lead to actions without thinking or planning. If a person has a good moral character, he behaves in ways that are lauded both by common sense and religion. Conversely, if a person has a bad moral character, he behaves in ways that are condemned by common sense and religion (al Qaradawi, 18). In the Qur'an, we find many terms to



describe the concepts of ethics such as *khayr* (goodness), *maslaha* (public interest), *birr* (righteousness), *qist* (equity), *'adl* (equilibrium and justice), *haqq* (truth and right), *ma'ruf* (known, approved), *Nahi anil munkar* (avoidance of bad and harmful things), and *tagwa* (piety). Ethics in Islamic philosophy is a surprisingly uncontroversial area since most thinkers agree on the general principles of ethics (Oxford Companion to Philosophy). (Abdallah, 2010). Islam also emphasized justice, which is an ethics in its right.

According to Bart Neck ethics can be defined as the analysis of human actions from the perspective of “good” and “evil,” or of “morally correct” and “morally wrong.” If ethics categorizes actions and norms as morally correct or wrong, one then speaks of normative or prescriptive ethics (19).

The terms “ethics” and “morality” are often taken as synonyms. Sometimes they are distinguished, however, in the sense that morality refers to a complex set of rules, values and norms that determine or are supposed to determine people's actions, whereas ethics refers to the theory of morality. It could also be said that ethics is concerned more with principles, general judgements and norms than with subjective or personal judgements and values (Bartneck 17). In Islam, ethics can be defined as the good principles and values based on Islamic sources (Mohammed 2011). These ethics are consistent with the abilities of human beings (Al-Ghazali 2001). It also covers all aspects of life (Al-Qaradawi). Part of basic ethics in Islam could include kindness (to people and animals), charity, forgiveness, honesty, patience, justice, respecting parents and elders, keeping promises, an controlling one's anger, love of God and those God loves, love of his messenger (Muhammad 15).

The term 'justice' is equal to *'adl'* which Allah ordered to be



maintained and declared that it is near to fearing Him. The concept of justice In Islam is rooted in the belief that all individuals are equal in the eyes of Allah and are entitled to fair and equal treatment under the law. This principle is enshrined in the Qur'an, which emphasizes the importance of justice and fairness in all dealings with others. Muslims are taught to be just and equitable in their actions and to stand up for the rights of the oppressed and marginalized in society. Before Islam, the concept of justice in Arabia was purely patriarchal inside the family and the tribe, and between different tribes a rough and ready balancing up through a succession of tribal feuds and vendettas. The administration of justice on the basis of law, rights, duties, and penalties through the machinery of courts and judges was something unfamiliar to the Arabs. However, Islam not only introduced this concept but made the settlement of disputes through judicial determination obligatory upon Muslims (Khan 5).

Where justice is entrenched as a cardinal principle, which must not be in aberration. Justice is fundamental and absolute in Islam, which Allah Himself reported not to have tampered with and it would be to the destruction of anyone to tamper with it. Abu Dharr reported: The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W):

Allah Almighty said: O My servants, I have forbidden injustice for Myself and I have forbidden it among you, so do not oppress one another ... (Muslim 2577).

The value of upholding to justices as enshrine by Islam and its ethic had been declining with time and little or no importance is given to reiterating its benefits to the national development. It is on this note that this paper explores the significance of justice in Islam as a pivotal for national development.



Concept of Justice and Justice as an Ethics of Public Life in Islam

Different people at different times have defined justice in different ways and forms all in most cases corroborating one another. According to Collins English Dictionary, justice is defined as 'the quality or fact of being just; the principle of fairness that like cases should be treated alike; distribution of benefits and burdens fairly in accordance with a particular conception of what are to count as like cases; the principle that punishment should be proportionate to the offence; the administration of law according to prescribed and accepted principles (Sinclair).

According to Aristotle, justice is principally used to describe a conduct in agreement with law. He classified justice into two categories: distributive justice and corrective justice. Aristotle powerfully argues that all lawful and fair acts are just; all unlawful and unjust acts are unfair. Justice consists in what is lawful and fair, with fairness involving equitable distributions and the correction of what is inequitable (Adeyinka 156). While Plato contended that justice is the quality of soul, in virtue of which men set aside the irrational desire to taste every pleasure and to get a selfish satisfaction out of every object and accommodated themselves to the discharge of a single function for the general benefit (*Bhandari 3*). Both Plato and Aristotle defined justice as kindness as well as a desire to follow the law. It alluded to the connection between rights and duties. In human interactions, justice was the pinnacle of excellence and the attitude that animates folks in the right fulfillment of their responsibilities.

According to Khan, the concept of justice literally could mean to render to everyone his due. However, from Islamic point of view it goes beyond this, but it lays down that to maintain a proper standard of justice it is necessary that recompense of good should in no case be less than what a person has earned, and that, on the other hand, the penalty for a



wrong should not exceed the wrong or transgression committed. A contravention of either of these principles would amount to injustice. Islam does not solely accept this limitation. It proceeds upon the principle that good multiplies itself and has the quality of prevailing against, or of driving away, evil and that, therefore, the beneficence put in motion by good has no limit (Khan 3) this could be seen where Almighty Allah categorically stated that (3). There are universal standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do as taught by the Quran, and demonstrated in the exemplary life (actions and words) of the Prophet Muhammad. Justice means giving each person what he or she deserves or, in more traditional terms, giving each person his or her due. Justice and fairness are closely related terms that are often today used interchangeably.

Importance of Justice as an Ethics in Islam

Justice is a fundamental moral ideal that serves as the cornerstone of Islamic ethics. In fact, a shared sense of justice is what keeps the peace within society and regulates everyday life (Al Qaradawi).

Numerous verses in the Holy Qur'an call on people to achieve justice, such as:

“Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives” (Holy Qur'an, 16:90).

All the above verse emphasizes how Ethics plays an important role in Islam as it protects the pure beliefs of Muslims. Islam as both a religion and a perfect way of life encompasses all facets of life of all creatures, living or non-living. Strictly adhere to the laws, regulations and laid



down rule on all this aforementioned among others amount to justice in Islam and ignoring or tampering in an unacceptable way to same could also be seen as injustice in Islam. A Muslim is expected to treat both his fellow human beings and other creatures fairly. Just like Prophet (pbuh) reported to have said Allah has prescribed goodness on everything. On no condition should one place burden or oppress another unjustifiably. Shaddad ibn Aws reported: The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W) said:

Verily, Allah has prescribed excellence in everything. If you have to kill, kill in the best manner. If you have to slaughter, slaughter in the best manner. Let one of you sharpen his knife, so his animal is pained of suffering (Muslim 1955).

Allah wants us to live in peace and tranquility and to live in harmonious relationships irrespective of religion, tribe, or political affiliation. We should not oppress and never allowed to be oppressed. The life of live and let live is commanded by Allah. He encouraged fair play and level playing ground for individuals in the society.

Position of Justice as an Ethics in Islam

Administration of Justice is an obligation and mandatory in Islam. The obligation to do justice is absolute and it is not subject to any limitation or modification with reference to the parties to a dispute, or with reference to their being Muslims or non-Muslims, or their being in conflict with the Muslims or in alliance with them. It is strict commandment of Almighty Allah, which is sacrosanct and not optional. Allah says:

Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good, (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion; he admonishes you that you may be mindful (Q16:90).



Even if it is against you or your relatives, it is a must to maintain justice and refrain from any act of injustice. Allah says: And when you testify, be just, even if (it concerns) a near relative. And the covenant of Allah fulfill. This has He instructed you that you may remember (Qur'an 6:152). Prophet is also reported to have said: Do not commit injustice, because injustice is darkness in the Day of Judgment. (Muslim)

Justice and its Ethical Injunctions

Justice in Islam plays a crucial role in shaping national development, as it is a foundational ethical principle that guides the social, political, and economic systems within a society. In Islam, justice is viewed as a fundamental value that must be upheld in all aspects of life, including governance, law enforcement, and social interactions.

Islam presents a complete code of life highlighting ethical values. The guidelines for personal life, family, society, politics, economics, judiciary, and all other aspects of modern life are full of moral teachings. 'The Qur'an commands to do well and forbids evil. Honesty, trust, fair dealing, justice, and loyalty to promise are obligatory and lying, unfaithfulness, and breaking of contracts are forbidden. Islam provides an equitable balance between the good of the community and the good of the people' (Abdallah 291).

The Qur'an mentions several good acts of ethics repeatedly, for example; dealing with your parents in the best manner, being nice to your relatives and neighbors, taking care of orphans and the poor, telling the truth and being honest, being sincere in all of your intentions, fulfilling your promises, treating all, etc. The administration of justice is inseparable in the both the primary and secondary sources of Islamic law. So many verses and traditions of the Prophet (pbuh) emphasized justice in all affairs of our daily life. Among numerous injunctions relating to the



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maintenance of justice are as follows:

Verily, God commands you to make over the trusts to those entitled to them, and that, when you judge between men, you judge with justice... (Qur'an 4. 58)

Oh, ye who believe! Be steadfast in the cause of God bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness... (Qur'an 4:8)

And approach not the property of the orphan, except in a way which is best, till he attains his maturity. And give full measure and weight with equity. We task not any soul save according to its capacity. And when you speak, observe justice,... (Quran 6: 152)

Allah commands the execution of justice among you, and the doing of good to others, and the giving of charity to close relatives. Moreover, He forbids all obscenity shameful deeds, and aggression. He admonishes you with this, so that you may become mindful of His commandments” (Q 16: 90),

Say to them: Indeed, my Lord has only prohibited obscenities, whatever of it is manifest and whatever of it is hidden, and all sin, and especially the offense of oppression without any right...(Qur'an 7: 33).

“Let a scribe record [debts] between you in justice” (Qur'an, 2:282).



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“Bring to witness two just men from among you and establish the testimony for [the acceptance of] Allah” (Qur'an, 65:2).

“Oh you who have believed, persistently stand firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or your parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. Do not follow your [personal] inclination, lest you be unjust” (Qur'an, 4:135).

“Oh you who have believed, persistently stand firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is acquainted with what you do” (Qur'an, 5:8)

These verses, and many others, emphasize the moral value of justice, which Muslims should observe in all their interactions, such as documenting loans, giving testimony, and governing. We also see justice as a foundation of family life, both among the husband and wife and also among children. The Prophet (PBUH) orders the faithful not to have favorites among their children: “Fear Allah and be just between your children.”(Al-Bukhari, 2587) and Muslim, 1687).

Moreover, Muslims are required to observe justice with family, strangers, non-Muslims, and even enemies. At the same time, they are forbidden from unfairly favoring some people over others or from being unfair to those they dislike.

Just as Islam commands people to observe justice, it forbids them from committing injustice. Allah says: Allah does not like those who are unjust” (Holy Qur'an, 3:57).



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Allah does not guide those who are unjust” (Holy Qur'an, 2:258).

These are their houses, deserted because of the injustice they have done. Indeed, this is a sign for people who know” (Holy Qur'an, 27:52).

Those towns, We destroyed them when they became unjust, and We made for their destruction an appointed time” (Qur'an, 18:59).

Do not incline toward those who do injustice, lest you be touched by the Fire” (Qur'an, 11:113). “Those who have done injustice will find out to what [kind of] end they will be returned” (Holy Qur'an, 26:227).

...and Allah loves not the wrongdoers” (Qur'an 3: 57 and 140).

Allah is never unjust to (His) servants.” (Qur'an 3: 182).

These verses, and many others, offer stern warnings to anyone who engages in unjust activities. Allah does not love those who commit injustice, which is the greatest punishment that leads to the destruction of communities. Even taking the side of those who do injustice is forbidden.

Ethical Responsibility of Justice in Islam

Justice as an ethics of public life is the responsibility of every human



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being. Although so many people conceive this to be solely rest on the leaders. However, prophet categorically stated that all of you are shepherds, and every one of you is responsible for his herd. A leader is a shepherd, a man is a shepherd over his family and a woman is the shepherd over her husband's house and his children. So, all of you are shepherds, and every one of you is responsible for his herd (Bukhari). Beekun and Badawi (15) explain that the two primary roles of a leader are those of servant-leader and guardian-leader. Morally, leaders are both servants of their followers and guardians of the community – promoting justice, protecting against tyranny and oppression, and encouraging community members to increase their sense of duty toward Allah. Within the Islamic model of leadership, “leaders pursue a vision of creating a society that is just, welfare-oriented, egalitarian, and free from discrimination, exploitation, and oppression” (Mir 69).

Islam allows an individual the freedom to believe and act as (s) he desires, but not at the expense of accountability and justice for those beliefs and actions (Cam 33)

The Islamic faith clearly emphasizes the importance of fairness, justice, and equality as foundation moral principles. Practices attributed to the Islamic faith are often accompanying characteristics of regional or national cultures, rather than defining characteristics of Islam. Those who practice the Islamic faith as true believers seek to obey the laws of God – whom they call Allah, but who they acknowledge is called other names by other religions. Muslims seek to honor Allah and to submit themselves completely to His well in their lives – and that honoring Allah requires that they work for the welfare of society, their communities, their families, and their own self-development. Understanding the principles of the Islamic faith can enable others not of that faith to appreciate the commitment of Muslims to doing what is right, to treating



others fairly in business dealings, and to creating a world devoted to the pursuit of peace and justice. (Cam 34)

Different decrees urge the members of the ummah to actively oppose an aggressor among them, even if a member of their kin. Thereby it portrays an active ummah assuming the responsibility of maintaining and implementing justice between its members and not confining the responsibility to the central power (David 192).

Nobody is exempted from portraying justice and denouncing injustice in all its ramifications. Allah said He made injustice forbidden upon himself, the Prophet (pbuh) said it is darkness and destructive and even the four rightly guided caliphs preached against it.

Similarly, Abubakar (R.A) when elected as the first caliph of the Prophet was reported to have said:

“O people, I have been elected leader, but I am no better than you. If I do good then help me with that, but if I do bad then strengthen me. Sincerity is trust while lying is betrayal. Obey me as long as I obey God and His Messenger, but if I do not obey God and His Messenger, then it is not a duty upon you to obey me” each human being has a moral obligation or responsibility to seek out and recognize *al-sirat al-mustaqim* (the righteous path) or objective ethical precepts, which are inseparable from divinity itself (Abdulmajeed 13).

Justice and its Ethical Reward in Islam

It is universally believed that one is rewarded equal to the amount of good deed while also punished is expected to be based on the amount of evil committed. That is, to maintain a proper standard of justice, it is necessary that recompense of good should in no case be less than what a person has earned, and that, on the other hand, the penalty for a wrong



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should not exceed the wrong or transgression committed. A contravention of either of these principles would amount to injustice. However, Islam does not wholly accept this limitation. It proceeds upon the principle that good multiplies itself and has the quality of prevailing against, or of driving away, evil and that, therefore, the beneficence put in motion by good has no limit (Khan 3).

This could be seen where Almighty Allah categorically stated that:

Whoever comes with a good deed will have ten times the like thereof and whoever comes with an evil deed will not be recompensed except the like thereof, and they will not be wronged (Qur'an 6:161).

Who so does evil will be requited only with the like of it; but whosoever does good, whether male or female and is a believer-those will enter the Garden; they will be provided therein without measure. (Qur'an 40:40)

In Islamic law, there are certain limits prescribed by Allah (*hududllah*) which are imposed on humans to prevent him/her from following their wishes and desires which could be detrimental to them and society at large. Allah has mentioned lawful (*halal*) and unlawful (haram), virtues and vices. These are limits (*hudud*) which every Muslim must respect and obey, and if he transgressed any of these limits, he is doing wrong or committing a crime. These limits (*hudud*) are to be sanctions of Islamic law or *shariah*, and that is why it is called law. Apart from giving man a sense of responsibility to Allah as well as to the entire mankind, these limits (hudud) will safeguard the rights of man in all aspects of life. Therefore, Islamic law or shari'ah will ensure and safeguard the wellbeing of people (*masalih al-ibad*) (El-Awa 98). It is no doubt that



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adultery is a great sin, and if allowed it to happen, it may disrupt the social fabric of the ummah (Abdulmajeed 13).

For example, to safeguard the lineage of people, Islamic law clearly provides the punishment for adultery (*zina*) as mentioned in the Qur'an: Do not come nearer to adultery or *zina* for it is a shameful deed and an evil, opening the road to other evils (Qur'an 17: 32).

Among other rewards and punishments entrenched in the Qur'an are:

And then We will save those who feared Allah and leave the wrongdoers within it, on their knees (Qur'an 19:72)

So those are their houses, desolate because of the wrong they had done. Indeed, in that is a sign for people who know (Qur'an 27:52).

And those cities –We destroyed them when they wronged, and We made for their destruction an appointed time (Qur'an 18: 59).

Such is the punishment of your Lord when He seizes the towns while they are doing wrong Verily, His punishment is painful, and severe (Qur'an 11: 102)

And do not incline toward those who do wrong, lest you be touched by the fire... (Qur'an 11: 113)

For those who do good deeds, there shall be the best reward and yet more blessings. And neither darkness nor ignominy shall cover their faces. (Qur'an 10: 26)



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And as for those who do evil deeds, the punishment of an evil shall be the like thereof, and ignominy shall cover them. They will have from Allah no protector. It will be as if their faces are covered with pieces of the night so dark (are they). Those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally. (Qur'an 10:27)

...Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoers (Qur'an 5:51).

From the above, it simply means justice is mandatory and injustice is forbidden and punishable because it leads to destruction of nation and people, desolation and even hellfire.

It should be noted that whether in the midst of Muslims or people of other religions, Islam does not make segregation when it comes to administration of justice. One is expected to be just to anyone you come across including animals.

Conclusion

Allah has guided us to all the good ethics we need to practice in every sphere of our life. He mentioned the ethical guidelines for public relations in the Quran. He taught the Prophets to practice proper public relations for *da'wah* activities. It is a divine command ethics revealed by Allah (Shahidul 711) It is worth remembering that all this was laid down and was scrupulously observed and acted upon more than fourteen hundred years ago as demonstrated by the Prophet (S.A.W). However, it is greatly to be regretted that some of the high standards set up in Islam have not been uniformly observed during later periods but the eagerness with which Muslims are anxious to re-establish Islamic values is a reassuring augury about the future.



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Those who do good have the aforementioned excellent reward reserved for them by Almighty Allah such protection from Allah, being veiled from anonymity and protected from darkness and more importantly unquantifiable reward far better than the number of their good deeds while the unjust people would not also be unjustly dealt with by Almighty Allah but surely getting punishment for their misdeed. Allah is all-forgiving; He can as well forgive but the unjust would be punished by almighty Allah to serve as a deterrent to others. They will dwell in darkness and anonymity will surely cover their faces and such people will not receive the guidance of Almighty Allah. However, despite all this from Almighty Allah, Allah is still just to them for not multiplying their punishment as He does to those who maintain justice and do good deeds. This is to ensure a sanitized society that would be free of rancor, maltreatment, radicalism among many others.

Recommendations

The following are recommended for the stakeholders, such as leaders, political appointees, Heads of schools, Ministries, Departments and Agencies and even the masses.

1. Individuals should ensure that no injury is done to others as you would not want it to be done to you.
2. The government should ensure equitable distribution of resources among the populace.
3. Religious leaders should make sure that they are not only preaching good behaviour but should also exemplified in their deeds
4. As Nigeria is experiencing hardship and difficulties due to government policies, the government should always ensure proper consultation before any policy is made or decision is taken.



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5. No matter how highly placed one is, one should not take it as an advantage or opportunity to oppress others as Allah Himself stated that He makes injustice haram to himself and He is not unjust to anyone no matter how little: Indeed, Allah does not do injustice, (even) as much as an atom's weight; while if there is a good deed, He multiplies it and gives from Himself a great reward (Qur'an 4: 41)

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