

Social Justice in the Words of Muhammad (S)

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“Say (O Muhammad): My Lord has commanded justice...” (The Holy Qur’an, 7:29).

The Almighty and All-Merciful Cherisher of the World deputed his prophets with “***clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance***” (57:25), so that “***mankind may keep up justice***” (57:25). This deputation culminated with the message of Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny), the Prophet of Mercy, who taught that “an hour of justice is better than seventy years of worship”¹.

His teachings on justice have perhaps never been more relevant than they are today, where we see gross injustices carried out all through the world, and the inequality between the privileged and the disadvantaged continues to grow.

We need to look to Prophet Muhammad (S), who fought far greater injustice, inequality and discrimination, for guidance. This guidance can be applied on all levels, and our responsibility is to apply it on a personal level at least, and then to look to apply it within our communities and societies.

Prophet Muhammad (S) states that “*the heavens and the earth stand upright by justice*”², and that when it comes to social justice: “*people are as equal as the teeth of a comb*”³. He also has specific teachings when it comes to certain types of discrimination and injustice.

In every community, there are people who are seen as lowly and abased. For a variety of reasons, they are discriminated against and down-trodden. In this regard, the Prophet of Mercy says: “*Shall I inform you of the best of Allah’s servants? It is the weak and the down-trodden (among you)*”⁴. The Prophet even states that we can share in his mission by seeking out the down-trodden and helping them: “Assist me in seeking out the down-trodden, for verily you are given sustenance and succour only because of the presence of the down-trodden among you”⁵.

One of the reasons for being down-trodden and abased is racial discrimination. The Prophet (S) was a pioneer in addressing this form of inequality too. The Arabs of his time looked down at their former

slaves of African descent. They also discriminated against other non-Arabs. To crush this terrible pride, the Prophet (S) gave special positions to freed slaves like Bilal. He also facilitated marriages between non-Arab men and Arab women. Bilal, Salman (an Iranian) and Sohaib (a Roman) all married Arab women with the help of the Prophet (S).⁶ The Prophet tackled this most sensitive component of racial discrimination, as a clear indicator and sign that inequality and discrimination based on race, ethnicity or skin colour is not tolerated in Islam.

Another group that suffers from discrimination are the poor, who are often stuck in a vicious cycle that only leads to more poverty and suffering. Prophet Muhammad (S) teaches that one who works in order to stave off the neediness of poverty from himself and his family is like one who risks his life in battle for the sake of God. Yet there will always remain those who are poor through no fault of their own, never given a chance to escape that vicious cycle.

In this regard, Muhammad (S) states so simply and so eloquently that “poverty is my honour”⁷ and that: “the poor are the friends of God”⁸. He declares himself to be amongst the community of the poor, and he relates them to God, so that we know that not only should the poor not be humiliated or ignored, but they should be honoured and helped.

One of Prophet Muhammad’s greatest achievements in social justice was the status he gave to women. He respected and honoured women, listening to them and responding to their concerns positively.⁹ He prohibited the senseless murder of infant girls and several other oppressive Arab customs, and he taught that women should be loved, not lusted after. Islam teaches that lust is a harmful thing when it is left to run loose.

However, this is not to be confused with love for a woman. Love for a mother, daughter, wife or sister includes respect, honour and consideration. Prophet Muhammad (S) taught that: “the more the faith of a (male) servant (of God) increases, the more his love for women increases”¹⁰. The Prophet declares innocent love for women a part of faith, so that it is clear that injustice and discrimination against a woman are not compatible with faith at all.

Through his actions and words, Prophet Muhammad (S) worked to establish a fair society, free of discrimination and inequality, in which ***“mankind may keep up justice” (57:25).***

¹. Mishkatul Anwar fi Ghuraril Akhhar (Mihskat), n. 1833.  

². Quoted by Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, Tasfir al-Amthal, commentary on 4:135.  

³. Mizanul Hikmah, n. 6273.  

- [4.](#) Mizanul Himah, n. 3743. 
- [5.](#) Mizanul Hikmah, n. 3744. 
- [6.](#) Al-Kafi, v.5, p. 320. 
- [7.](#) Mizanul Hikmah, n.5048. 
- [8.](#) Mizanul Hikmah, n. 5049. 
- [9.](#) See The Holy Qur'an, Surat al-Mujadila and Mizanul Hikmah, n. 5741. 
- [10.](#) Mizanul Hikmah, n. 5748. 

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