

In The Name of Allah, The Gracious, The Merciful

TAQWA: PATHWAY TO JUSTICE AND PEACE

BY

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Introduction

The contemporary world is bedeviled by crises of multiple dimensions. These crises have greatly impacted upon all spheres of social existence and have given birth to serious security issues which seem to increase everyday. Today, the world still grapples with the crises in Ukraine, Yemen, Syria, Sudan, and Palestine. Armed violence and political insecurity have devastated the social balance of most countries and negatively affected their development, economic growth and resulted in long-standing grievances among communities.

Violence, in whatever form, has a pervasive impact on societies ranging from children's health, socioeconomic development, general well-being, and their ability to thrive. It causes trauma and weakens social inclusion. The unfortunate aspect of the whole thing is that there seems to be no way out. This is because at the root of all of these crises lies social, economic and political injustice, and where there is any form of injustice, conflicts remain unresolved and people cannot obtain protection and redress. Impunity, arbitrariness and abuse of power will thrive and social institutions in affected countries become incapable of delivering public services to the people.

Since the search for peace and security is a global obsession, we must address the issue of justice which lies at the base. Many thinkers have postulated that justice and peace are two sides of a coin, and that peace cannot be achieved without the enthronement of justice. It is however strange that despite the huge volume of academic and administrative efforts put into the search for justice and peace, they have been evasive. This is perhaps because there is a missing link that has not been engaged. This missing link is Taqwa - God-consciousness or righteousness, and it is the true magnetic fillip that will invite peace and justice into the human social space. I thank the Jalsa Administrative Set-up for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts on this very important topic and pray that Allah will open our eyes to understand that without Taqwa, there can be no true justice and peace.

The Concept of Taqwa

Taqwa is an Arabic word which is explained as a shield against wrongdoing and further expounded as to be "conscious of Allah" or to have "fear of Allah" or to be "cautiously aware of Allah." It is

basically righteousness that can be only obtained by the obedience of Almighty Allah and refrain from His prohibitions. Taqwa is a unique concept encapsulating the believer's state of alertness, caution, seriousness and sense of duty. It acts as a channel through which Muslims relate with one another in society and also a medium to link their actions. Taqwa is a precious asset and spiritual treasure of the believer, hence, it is the way to eternal peace and endless bliss. Infact, it is the key to happiness and success in this life and the hereafter.

While given us the comprehensive meaning of Taqwa, Hazrat Imam Mahdi (as) says;

Righteousness means that one must be mindful even of the smallest details of the Divine trusts and covenants of one's fellow beings, as far as it may be possible. That is, one must try to fulfil, to the best of one's ability, all the requirements in their minutes details. (The Essence of Islam Vol 2 page 248)

Our Beloved Imam, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (atba) also stated in one of his Friday Sermon that;

Righteousness demands one to live life in accordance with the commandments of God and this includes looking at the consequence of everything one embarks upon and having firm belief that God is watching over everything one does. (Friday Sermon, March 6, 2015)

Therefore, the summarized meaning of Taqwa is, 'doing what Allah and His Messenger has commanded us to do and refrain from what we have been forbidden from doing.

To obey the Almighty Allah is not confined to only fulfilling religious obligations, but being morally conscious in every aspect of life, that is, to purge oneself of evil behaviour and to embellish oneself with good characters. Taqwa means a lot more than just piety: it is the combination of our beliefs, self-awareness, and attitudes. It is a reminder to stay on the path of uprightness, decency and knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is about having God-consciousness in terms of knowing and obeying all His orders including not only fearing Him but also acting upon all His injunctions.

Therefore, Taqwa is the consciousness of Allah that motives us to do good deeds and prevent us from doing evil. Taqwa is an inner state of mind, it is a paradigm on the way we look at the world. The concept of Taqwa is to protect ourselves from the displeasure of Allah, to place a barrier between ourselves and His punishment. No wonder that Allah commanded all the Prophet without exception to tell their people to fear Allah, Allah says;

وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنْ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَنِيًّا
حَمِيدًا

.....*And We have assuredly commanded those who were given the Book before you, and commanded you also, to fear Allah. But if you disbelieve, then remember that to Allah belongs*

whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy. (Quran, 4:132)

Again, in the Holy Qur'an, Allah says;

يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

O ye who believe! If you fear Allah, He will grant you a distinction and will remove your evils from you and will forgive you; and Allah is Lord of great bounty. (Quran 8:30)

Taqwa is not merely an abstract concept; it is reflected in the actions and behaviors of a believer. It encompasses a comprehensive approach to life, influencing one's thoughts, speech, and deeds'

Man has been given a lease of life on this planet for the purpose of cultivating within himself Divine attributes whereby he may become an embodiment of righteousness, shedding heavenly light whenever he treads. There is no worthier or higher goal in life than the acquisition of holiness and righteousness which Muslims have been exhorted to cultivate through obedience to the law of God. All kinds of blessings have been promised to those who earnestly strive forward on the path of Taqwa – righteousness. If every Muslim settled down in earnest to clothe himself with the heavenly mantle of righteousness, then very soon every nook and corner of the earth would be lit up with effulgent light of Islam. Taqwa - righteousness is the elixir of life because it is the only prescription which tranquillizes the mind, heart and soul.

The Holy Prophet was reported to have said, on the authority of Abdur Rahmon Mua'adh bin Jabal (ra) that;

“Fear Allah wherever you may be and follow up an evil deed with a good one which will wipe it out and treat people with good behaviour” (Tirmidhi)

The Promised Messiah says;

Wonderful is the jewel the name of which is Taqwa. Blessed is he who practices righteousness. So. O ye Muslim! Perfect your righteousness. (Malfuzat Vol. 5 p.402)

Taqwa acts as a barrier between the Muslims and the anger and displeasure of Allah, the Almighty. In another hadith, the Holy Prophet (saw) said:

“Fear Allah because it is the collection of all goodness.”

From the above hadith, we can conclude that if we want to be successful, and want to get Allah's blessings and pleasure then we should fear Allah and do the righteous deeds which are the source of pleasing Allah, the Almighty. Therefore, Taqwa is the core of our faith and it comes with

different blessings. Anyone who achieve Taqwa, achieve the love of Allah the Almighty. Allah says; *Qur'an 3:77*

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ وَاتَّقَىٰ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

Nay, but whoso fulfils his pledge and fears God-verity, Allah loves those who are righteous.

Taqwa also causes us to be enveloped in the mercy of Allah the Almighty. In the Holy Qur'an Allah says; (*Qur'an 7:157*)

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۚ فَسَأَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ

.....My mercy encompasses all things; so I will ordain it for those who act righteously..

Therefore, if we want the mercy of Allah, we need to achieve it through the mechanism of Taqwa. Taqwa will make us to be among those that Allah called his own, who will always deserve the help of Allah. Allah say;

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

...Surely, Allah is with those who are righteous. (Qur'an 9;123)

If Allah is with us, we don't care who is against us. Therefore, we need Allah, the Almighty and we will achieve it if we attain Taqwa. We are facing a great difficulties of economic challenges in our country today, and the only way out to all these challenges is through the Taqwa of Allah. The Promised Messiah mention this in one of his saying with reference to some verses of the Holy Qur'an. He says;

Human beings suffer from various difficulties and hardships, and have various needs. Again, it is righteousness that is the fundamental means by which one can see their difficulties resolved and their needs fulfilled. Righteousness alone is the path of deliverance from financial hardship and other difficulties as well. Allah the Exalted states;

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ۗ

*In every difficulty, he who fears Allah—He will make for him a way out, and provide for him the means of deliverance from the unseen; and grant him provision from where he expects not.
(Qur'an 65; 3)*

Now reflect and observe, what more does a human being want in this life? The greatest desire a person has in this world is to find peace and happiness, and for this purpose, Allah the Exalted has made only one path available—the path known as righteousness. This could be described in

other words as the path of the Holy Quran, which is synonymous with the straight path (sirat-e-mustaqeem). (Malfuzat Vol 2 p.134)

Therefore, with Taqwa all affairs are made easy. This is a special guarantee for those that choose to toll the path of righteousness. In the pursuit of attaining Taqwa, it is essential to manifest piety in our daily lives. Taqwa is not a mere theoretical concept but a practical way of life that encompasses all aspects of our existence. By adhering to the principles of Shariah, we can effectively implement Taqwa in action.

In his word, the Promised Messiah (as) said;

Strive hard if you are truthful and sincere; So that you attain righteousness, which is the prerequisite to communion with the Beloved. This is the mirror which reflects the Creator; This alone sharpens the sword of prayer. The root of every virtue is the fear of God; If this root is intact, everything will remain intact. This alone is the hallmark of the lofty status of saints; What more do they have, except righteousness? Fear Him O friends! He is the All-Seeing God; If you ponder over it, even this world is the place of reward and punishment. He granted me this reward because of righteousness, Glory be to Him.... What a wonderful gem is Taqwa, Blessed is he who practices Taqwa. Listen! The essence of Islam is Taqwa! Love of God is the wine and Taqwa is the goblet. O ye Muslims! Live Taqwa in full; Where is faith, if one is deficient in Taqwa? This wealth, O God, You have granted me; Glory be to Him..... They alone are alive who are close to God; being accepted, they are the darling and beloved of God. Those who are far from Taqwa are far from God; They are perpetual prisoners of their pride, haughtiness and arrogance. O ye Muslims! Taqwa means that you give up self-conceit; Give up the habit of pride, arrogance and miserliness. Renounce the love of this transient abode; for that Beloved, give up the ways of luxury... Or forget about (attaining closeness to) the Exalted God. Accept the life of hardship with utmost sincerity; So that angels of heaven may descend upon you. (Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 21, pp. 17-18. Essence of Islam Vol. 2 pg. 352-353)

Again, the Promised messiah says;

For in actuality, only such a person is truly righteous whose outer and inner state are one, and whose heart accords with his image. Such a person walks on earth like an angel. (Malfuzat Vol 2 p.33)

During the first Jalsa Salana held in 1891, the Promised Messiah (as) mentioned the objectives of the Jalsa Salana and one of the main objective is "To further the cause of righteousness, goodwill, purity, piety and moral excellence throughout the world."

Therefore, all these highlights the importance of pursuing righteousness in our lives, as it ultimately leads to a more fulfilling and everlasting existence.

The Concept of Justice

The concept of justice is one of the core values of the religion of Islam. Muslims are taught to uphold justice and to treat everyone fairly, regardless of their race, religion or social status. These core values form the basis of a peaceful and harmonious society. It is of the essential pillars in the maintenance of both the natural and social orders. God, the Almighty has said,

وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ

And the heaven He has raised high and set up a measure, That you may not transgress the measure. So weigh all things in justice and fall not short of the measure. (55:8-10)

Islam teaches that all human beings are created equal and that they should be treated with respect and dignity. Justice is one of the underpinnings of the order that has been established by God. This reality is also a foundation of a healthy social order. God says in that regard,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ ۚ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا ۗ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىَٰ أَن تَعْدِلُوا ۗ وَإِن تَلَوَا أَوْ نُسِرْتُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

O ye who believe! be strict in observing justice, and be witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or against parents and kindred. Whether he be rich or poor, Allah is more regardful of them both than you are. Therefore follow not low desires so that you may be able to act equitably. And if you conceal the truth or evade it, then remember that Allah is well aware of what you do. (Qur'an 4:136)

Justice is the basis of all human relations and a foundation of Islamic rule. This saying is illustrative of the meaning conveyed by the saying of Allah;

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ

Verily, We sent Our Messengers with manifest Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance that people may act with justice.... (Quran 57:26)

One of the things that reform worldly affairs is the principle of distributive justice. It facilitates amicable relations between people, engenders obedience to the Divine Law, and brings about the prosperity of countries. It is the basis of a thriving economy, strong families, and stable government.

In illuminating the world from darkness, Islam commands that justice is an individual and collective duty of the Muslim which they must exhibit in their socio-political interaction, domestic affairs and economics administration. This is contained in Suratul Nahl vs.91

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ ۗ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

Verily, Allah enjoins justice, and the doing of good to others; and giving like kindred; and forbids indecency, and manifest evil, and wrongful transgression. He admonishes you that you may take heed.

Therefore, strict justice implies that a person should treat others as he is treated by them. He should return to others the good or evil to the extent or measure to which he has received it from them. In relation to God justice, which is the first virtue mentioned, would mean that just as God has been good to man, man should render to God His due, and should not by his conduct render Him liable to criticism. He must not give to others what is due to God, for example, his love or devotion. The association of false gods with Him is also doing injustice to God. Similarly, it is contrary to the demands of justice that a man should arrogate to himself an attribute which belongs exclusively to God. The observance of justice in relation to God is calculated to abolish all kinds of shirk (idolatry), infidelity and disobedience to God, the Almighty. Moreso, the instructions contained in the above are enough to ensure peaceful coexistence of any society. An adherence to the order contains therein will definitely bring about tranquility to any society. It cuts across all forms of justice; be it economic justice, social justice, political justice and even international justice. The proscription of mankind from engaging in shameful deeds and rebellion constitutes criminal justice which, if strictly adhere to, will definitely get rid of all form of insecurity in the world. Allah went further in the verse to enjoin the fulfillment of promises, contracts and pacts without any form of violation or breach.

While expatiating the concept of justice in spiritual realm, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (ra) said:

“The principle of absolute justice, when applied to the realm of human beings, includes the new aspect of free will. If man misuses the free will granted to him by God and chooses the wrong path, he no longer continues to rise in his journey to higher achievements but turns volte-face and begins a descent back to the lowliest of the lowly state of his origin. This natural evolutionary process has been established in these verses of the Holy Quran:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ

Surely, We have created man in the best make; Then, if he works iniquity, We degrade him to the lowest of the low (Qur'an 95:5-6)

In these verses of the Holy Qur'an, God says we caused mankind to go through a long evolutionary course of gradual progress and we instilled justice in his nature in the most beautiful way... It pointedly speaks of the danger of man reverting to his earlier lowly states if he abandons the principle of justice. Elaborating the issue further, God declares that some sections of human society abandoned the principle and teaching of justice and fair play and were consequently caused to become wretches of the lowest order.

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ

Then, We degraded him to the lowest of the low. (Surah al-Tin; Ch.95 : 6) (Absolute Justice, Kindness and Kinship – The Three creative Principles Pg 17-21)

Justice In Socio-Political Relations

Social interactions of the Muslims with themselves and the non-Muslims is another direction from which Islam commands justice. This is to say, Islam enjoins that justice be the fulcrum of the interaction of Muslims and non-Muslims as a way of enhancing peace, tranquility and serenity in their society. Infact, the importance of social justice has been emphasized in the provision of Suratul Maidah verse 9 which says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاَنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۗ اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ
لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

O ye who believe! be steadfast in the cause of Allah, 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. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is aware of what you do.

The verse above has not been put into practice by various Muslim sects in the world today. We still see an adherent of a particular sect condemning the good deeds that emerge from the other because of the hatred of his Islamic ideology and vice-versa. The Faithful should bear practical witness to the truth of Islam by becoming good Muslims and leading good lives in order to become examples for others.

In another verse, Allah emphasizes that justice should be administered even where it does not favour an individual or his relatives. This is contained in Suratul Nisa verse 136:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ ۗ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا
فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا ۗ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَن تَعْدِلُوا ۗ وَإِن تَلَوُوا أَوْ تَعْرَضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

O ye who believe! be strict in observing justice, and be witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or against parents and kindred. Whether he be rich or poor, Allah is more regardful of them both than you are. Therefore follow not low desires so that you may be able to act equitably. And if you conceal the truth or evade it, then remember that Allah is well aware of what you do.

The concept of justice permeates through the domestic affairs of a Muslim, since family is the smaller unit of a nation. The Holy Prophet commands that parents administer justice among their

children, by not showing love and care to one over others. He said; “*Be pious and administer justice among your wards*”

Justice in Economics Related Matters

One of the major constituents of a peaceful society is its economic affairs. In other words, a nation cannot be peaceful, if its economic aspect is unjust and inequitable. Therefore, every nation must ensure that the economic situation of its people is handled with the principle of justice and equity in mind. In Islam, there are various textual authorities from the Holy Qur’an and prophetic traditions instructing the Muslim to ensure that the economic affairs of the people are justly administered. For instance, Allah said in Suratul Nisa verse 59

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

Verily, Allah commands you to make over the trusts to those entitled to them, and that, when you judge between men, you judge with justice. And surely excellent is what Allah admonishes you with! Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

The above Qur’anic verse proceeds to bid the entrust authority to such persons as possess the necessary qualifications to rule. Authority or power to rule has been here described as a "trust" of the people in order to point out that, truly speaking, it belongs to the people and is not the birth right of any particular individual or dynasty.

The words, that you judge with justice, apply both to the head of the Muslim State and to all those persons who are entrusted with the work of administration. They are all enjoined to use their authority equitably and well.

The lesson from the verse also affects the government. In democratic setting like Nigeria, all citizens of Nigeria have indirectly entrusted their economic affairs in the hands of their leaders, which they are obliged to efficiently handle the affairs in a just manner.

The prohibition of usury (Riba) is another way of understanding how Islam safeguards economics justice, especially by ensuring that the poor is not exploited unjustly by the rich. This economic practice has been greatly proscribed by Allah in several verses of the Holy Qur’an. Allah says

Those who devour interest do not rise except as rises one whom Satan has smitten with insanity. That is because they say: ‘Trade also is like interest;’ whereas Allah has made trade lawful and made interest unlawful. So he to whom an admonition comes from his Lord and he desists, then will that which he received in the past be his; and his affair is with Allah. And those who revert to it, they are the inmates of the Fire; therein shall they abide. (2 ; 276)

The rationale for the proscription of usury can be understood from a logical perspective. The essence of incurring debt is to mitigate a present hardship for future repayment. However, when the loan is usury in nature the debtor is simply borrowing from his future. Therefore, Islam finds it unjust economically to engage in usurious transaction as it does ensure benefit which is the main essence of Shariah.

Another instance of economic justice is timely payment of wages/salaries to the employees. Any nation that does not enforce timely payment of salaries, wages or fees to the employees, workers and contractors has breached the economic justice of its people. Such attitude will surely affect the poverty and unemployment rate of such nation. The Holy prophet emphasized this in one of the divine Hadiths (Al-Hadith Al-Qudsi) which says:

“Allah, the Exalted, says: I will contend on the Day of Resurrection against the three (types of) people: one who makes a covenant in my name and then breaks it; one who sells a free man as a slave and devours his price; one who hires a workman and having taken full work from him, does not pay him his wages.”(Riyadh as Saliheen 1587, Hadith 77)

Justice In International Relation

Islam enjoin Muslims to explore peace and tranquility in their interaction with the non-Muslims. They should co-live peacefully with them with all sense of justice. They should extend hands of friendship and neighborhood to them at all times. However, whenever they transgress against us, then Islam allows a defensive action that commensurate with the transgression. This is contained in the provision of Suratul Mumtahinah verse 9-10

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

Allah forbids you not, respecting those who have not fought against you on account of your religion, and who have not driven you forth from your homes, that you be kind to them and deal equitably with them; surely, Allah loves those who are equitable.

Beloved listeners, One of the perpetrations of injustice of the highest order is the ongoing war between Israel and Palestine. Since 1948 till now, there has been a systematic dehumanization of the Palestinian people. It must not be forgotten that the Israel state was born out of an unholy alliance between the leaders of Jewish community, British Government and many of its allies in the League of Nations, now United Nations. This was when they insisted on establishing a Jewish state on Palestinian territories in 1948. However, in the past few months, a lot of people have been killed; houses, hospitals and places of worship have been desecrated or destroyed.

The Hamas attack on Israelis, though condemnable, pales into insignificance when compared with what the Israelis have done to the Palestinians. This is because in the last three years,

violation of human rights has been perpetrated by the Israeli Armed Forces in Gaza against unharmed people in Palestine. People say Hamas shouldn't have done what it did, yes, it is true, but Hamas is ruling only Gaza, why are the Palestinians who are not under Hamas rule also being oppressed and attacked in West Bank, East Jerusalem and Ramallah. Although, a lot of religious and Islamophobia propaganda have thrived, and much misinformation has inflamed the social media.

What people don't seem to understand is that, there is an economic dimension to this. In fact, as far back as year 2000, reserves of natural gas and crude oil were discovered offshore the Gaza strip and since then, Israel has been interested in that place. In November 8, 1999, Palestinian authorities signed a memorandum of intent with British Gas and another company links to the Palestinian authority. They were to assist them in exploring the area, they discovered natural gas calculated to have 35 Billion Cubic Meter, larger than Israel Leviathan gas field, so what would you expect. This was massive wealth just in the occupied territories in the Gaza areas. So, Israel and the United State government have been interested in looking for an excuse to take over Gaza because they knew that, Palestine will become an economic power in the region as a result of these discoveries.

One thing so many people did not know is that – Hamas itself was established via the backyard politics of United State of America and Israel because it was actually established to tackle the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) led by Yasir Arafat then, but the people later got wiser and they developed true patriotism and decided not to listen to their masters again just like what happened in the case of Al-Qaeda. However, since the beginning of the war, everybody has been calling for ceasefire but they refused, why? It was because of the crude oil targeted in Gaza.

For the first time in the history of this crisis, more and more people are becoming enlightened and you see even Jewish communities rising to condemn the Zionist government. It is not just the Muslim or Arabs that are complaining, indeed, most of the people of the world, who understand the meaning of justice are complaining.

The action of major world powers make it apparent that they have effectively ignored the plight of the Palestinians as the war continues to grow wing day by day without any peaceful resolution reached by the United Nation

The Worldwide head of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) has urged his followers to convey to all those in their circles and to their local and national leaders, that injustices of any kind must be brought to an end.

For over two decades since being bestowed the mantle of the Khilafah, His Holiness (aba) has been warning against the destructive and self-centered ways which many of the major powers have adopted. His Holiness has been just and vocal in calling for justice and peace in the case of the

atrocities taking place against the Palestinian people. He has urged major powers to recognise their duty to establish fair dealings and justice afforded to all people without discrimination. Lastly His Holiness has directed us to fervently pray for the Palestinians, that Allah should end the war and protect the innocent oppressed Palestinians so that they are not subjected to further injustices.

Respected listeners, let it be known, that justice is the backbone of all societies, where there is justice that society flourishes and Allah will bless a just society even if they are not Muslims and Allah will remove the blessing of the land in which there is no justice even if they are Muslim. This is because justice is the soul of peace in any society.

Injustice is also taken place at the individual level, some people may ask, how can I be unjust? If you are taken the right of other people, if you are in a business transaction or deal and don't act fairly, this is a manifestation of injustice. Injustice is not only in tyrannical regime though that is the worst type of injustice no doubt about it but injustice take place at the individual level as well, between husband and wife, among children and taken advantage of people are all act of injustice. Therefore, the Holy Prophet advise us to make sure that we have a clean slate with regards to any injustice we might have perpetrated, check for who you might have wronged and make it up for them as soon as possible before the day of resurrection.

The Holy Prophet was reported to have said that;

“Fear the curse of the oppressed as there is no barrier between his invocation and Allah”

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (Rahmatallahi alayhi) mentioned in one of his books that;

If one desires to investigate with open mind the root cause of all evils, whether social, political, economic or moral, one will always find that the disregard for justice lies at the heart of all such evils. Hence, the world cannot become an abode of peace until man adheres to justice. Justice is central to the survival of humankind. (Absolute Justice, Kindness and Kinship, pp 99-100

Islam And The Concept Of Peace

In today's world's scenario, peace is needed more than any other time in the history of mankind. The need for peace is as old as human being. It emerged right from the existence of human being but it is a pity that, it has always been tampered and tarnished. Today, if a nation is calling herself military superpower, then other nation calls herself economic superpower but in the intoxication of power there is one thing which is missing and that is peace. Nowadays, peace is made to be generated through cruelty, injustice, antipathy, terrorism and deadly fear. Peace can never exist with these, rather peace can be achieved through justice, love, mutual respect, mutual understanding, learning one's right and discharging the duties through God fearing and righteousness.

For economic benefits, peace was made as a sacrificial lamb. In order to seek geographic advantages, peace had to pay an expensive price. Pages of history are filled with the blood of innocent mankind. Out of misconception, Islam is taken to be the religion of violence and

terrorism, which is far from the truth. It is essential to educate people about the true teachings of Islam and to dispel the myths surrounding the religion. Islam is a religion of peace, It is a religion that is based on the principles of peace, justice, and equality. The religion that promotes values such as compassion, forgiveness, and respect for human dignity, which are essential for creating a peaceful society.

Peace can prevail when people love each other, this in turn will end every kind of injustice and will play vital role in establishing a social order based upon peace and justice. Peace is not mere absence of violence and existence of calmness. But it exists when everybody in society gets his due and his grievances are redressed without any delay. In the same manner justice cannot be established until the atmosphere is conducive, calm and serene. Hence the administration of justice has always been a religious obligation in Islam which consists of the application of the principle of Shari'ah with the fear of Allah.

The truth is that, justice and peace are inseparable – you cannot have one without the other. Certainly, this principle is something that all wise and intelligent people understand. Leaving aside those people who are determined to create disorder in the world, no one can ever claim that in any society, country or even the entire world, that there can be disorder or lack of peace where justice and fair dealing exist.

Therefore, this lecture posits that justice and peace are comprehensive concepts with deep implications and we have to be committed to justice and peace. We must clearly illustrate to the world that our religion is indeed the religion of peace. However, our striving for peace must never allow us to be unjust, nor should it allow us to passively accept injustices.

Islam as a religion of peace has a solution for peaceful co-existence but today it has almost become a slogan, therefore, let it go beyond a slogan and move into the realm of positive action; action inspired by the Holy Qur'an, the words and deeds of our illustrious Prophet (saw), together with that of the Promised Messiah (as) and his Khulafaah.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rahmotallahi alayhi) mentioned in one of his address that;

Without returning to God, one cannot attain peace and without that peace, peace in society cannot be built. All human efforts to create peace from selfish ulterior motives are bound to fail and come to nothing. If there is no God, there is no peace. That is the ultimate wisdom. (Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues p. 269)

This is because Allah Himself is the source of peace and being the only source of peace, guides His bondsmen to the ways of peace and safety. Allah says;

يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

Thereby does Allah guide those who seek His pleasure on the paths of peace, and leads them out of every kind of darkness into light by His will, and guides them to the right path. (5:17)

Peace can be divided into two – Internal peace and external peace. An internal peace is of the mind, soul, body and heart. While the external peace is of the society, civilization and culture. An internal peace is within the body while the external peace is without the body. These two peaces put together form the ultimate peace on earth and there is no doubt that both of them are important for an healthy society. It is the ultimate goal of every single human being to achieve an inner peace within himself. It is this goal that drives and motivate us to do all that we do. The inner peace can only be attained by understanding the purpose of our creation, which is the worshipping of Allah. When we turn to Allah, when we make Allah our ultimate goal and destination, when we prefer the pleasure of Allah than our own pleasure that is what will give us internal peace and once we follow the Shariah that will guarantee the external peace.

Our beloved Huzur, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) once said that;

“If you have peace in you, it means that you are projecting peace. And if every one of us had peace, it means that we would be projecting peace to others.” (True Justice and Peace p.12)

Establishment Of Justice And Peace Through Taqwa

Righteousness and peace are interconnected, as seeking God’s blessings requires prioritizing righteousness and justice as the foundation of a thriving society. Deviating from these principles leads to chaos and the withdrawal of God’s blessings. Therefore, the effect of righteousness will be peace and establishment of a just society.

In one of his Friday sermon, Our Beloved Huzur, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (atba) said

Today, in order to restore the name of Islam, to create peace between the masses and the leadership, Taqwa is needed and no one is interested to pay attention to this. What is needed is that everyone turns to God and reflects as to what should be done when there is a situation of; ‘Corruption has appeared on land and see...’ (30:42). The Qur’an gives its solution as did the Holy Prophet (saw) (Friday Sermon February 25, 2011)

Therefore, Islam emphasizes that establishing of justice and peace should not be imprisoned in words an utterances. The international Organizations should not take it up for discussion sake, but they should do justice and establish peace in practice. So that justice should not only be seen. It should be seen to be done. If the efforts of peace will not be done with complete sense of sincerity, then it is a vain exercise.

Again, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (atba) mentioned and I quote;

If true Taqwa is not generated, if justice is not established, then one day or the other, destruction will engulf the world and it is not inconceivable that some Muslims countries will become the trigger factor. (Friday Sermon March 6, 2015)

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (atba) further says that;

If Muslim leaders had Taqwa, they would have looked after the rights of their people. The Organisation of Muslims countries would not have been an organisation in mere name, they would have helped each other. If real Taqwa was adhered to, the world of Islam would have had a standing. (Friday Sermon February 25, 2011)

One of the solution for the achievement of Taqwa and observance of justice for peace to rain in the world is the obedience to the instruction of Allah and following the advice of the Holy Prophet. Therefore, the Holy Prophet had made it known to us that, there will be need for the advent of Imam Mahdi to guide us towards God and righteousness.

One of the objectives of the advent of Imam Mahdi, was to give the world the message of peace. The last book he wrote, just a day before his demise, teaches how peace can be established in the world. Propagating his message of peace all over the world, all the Khulafat-ul-Ahmadiyya have been warning against a terrible catastrophe which would ensue from strife and wars on small scale.

While expounding the objective of the advent of the Promised Messiah, Hazrat Musleh Mao'ud (ra) said;

His mission was to preach the perfect Unity of God, to establish virtue and righteousness, to restore to the hearts of mankind the fear of God, to strengthen the relationship between man and his Maker, to lead men out of doubt and darkness into the certainty of faith, and to restore peace and calm to troubled hearts, to open the gates of spiritual knowledge... (Ahmadiyya or True Islam pg. 22-23)

Righteousness is therefore the only way out for the observance of justice that will lead to the peaceful society. By following this path and prioritizing moral standards in our lives, we will experience God's blessings and find peace in our society.

Conclusion

Man has indeed shut against himself the doors of justice and peace as he continues in his blind display of ignorance of what his goal in life is – which is worshipping of Allah and act righteously. Several attempts have been made by political pundits and leaders of government both at national and international levels of establish justice and peace in the world but it has been like scratching the issue on the surface. There had been peace initiatives, there had been conferences, there had been international seminars and global summits yet the doors to global peace have remained shut.

It is therefore pertinent to ask why? The truth of the matter is that man and the multiplicity of urges that assail him had never been the focus of all these efforts. Every initiative that does not address the nature of man is bound to fail. While it is true that several thinkers have rightly diagnosed the problem of the modern world and have opined that the establishment of justice and equity and diseases through global collective responsibility are necessary preludes' to the attainment of world peace, it is also true that, they have not proposed the correct methodology for the enthronement of these virtues. Without the correct approach, the doors will forever remain shut.

What is the correct approach one may ask? It is simple and clear but it demands solemn determination and sacrifice, the only key that can open the door to justice and peace is “Taqwa” – righteousness. However beautiful our plans are, if the standards of righteousness are compromised they can never be successful. The God-conscious disposition of a righteous man will make whatever initiative adopted wholesome. Without righteousness, there can't be true spirit of sacrifice and sense of responsibility. It will interest you to know that, after the Second World War, the United Nations was formed with its numerous agencies but it is obvious that this institution has failed and what is responsible for this failure is the absence of righteousness. The Holy Qur'an opens the doors to the world peace with only one key and this key is righteousness and universal brotherhood of man. Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female; and We have made you into tribes and sub-tribes that you may recognize one another. Verily, the most honourable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. (Ch. 49;14)

Justice and Peace in the world will always be evasive until people of all nations are able to see themselves as children of the same parents and that no nation is superior in any way to another – whites are not superior to blacks; Arabs are not superior to non-Arabs. Superiority is by Taqwa - righteousness alone and that is known to Allah. In the light of the above, let us treat one another as the member of the same family with the fear of Allah. We live in an inter-independent world and if some people live in penury while others live in affluence, the less privileged people may threaten the peace of their more affluence neighbours. These are the demands of Taqwa – righteousness and without it, the door of Justice and peace will remain shut.