

## RELIGION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

"The insolent fool crows at justice, 'I've done many wicked deeds, unbeknownst to justice.'  
And justice softly replies to the unstable tyrant,  
'Many times I've chastised you, though your blind conscience never realized it.'"

Mor Elio of Anbar (10th Century)

"Our differences were divinely designed so that we might rely on one another. Differences should encourage social justice and elevate human dignity. Respect for people demands seeing another person as another of yourself and respecting the basic rights rooted in the dignity that is part of that person's soul.

Justice in its general sense means upholding everyone's rights and nobody hurting anyone else. Just as in all areas, there are relative attitudes towards justice, meaning the insurance of social life. The most widely accepted description of these relative attitudes belongs to the Roman Jurist Ulpian who lived during the 3rd century. He says; "**Justice is to live with honor, not hurt anyone, and give everyone their due.**"

Justice, which is the greatest virtue, is the holiest of moral values. It is a strong bond comprised of the intellect and conscience, binding humans to life and restricting them with life's rules. **In Syriac culture**, this bond which looks after the powerless and protects the weak is woven from the meanings of "**don't do anything to others that you wouldn't want to be done to you.**" These meanings find their strength in the logic that says "**Love your neighbor as yourself**" (Matthew 19:18) and "**Do unto others as you would have them do unto you**" (Luke 6:31). Moreover, Syriac thinkers/writers who predicate on the logic of "**He who serves humanity is closest to God**", have racked their brains on the subject of "**justice**", and in various works have formulated different ideas/expositions that complement one another.

According to these ideas, anything that completes, helps, and contributes to a human belongs among the complementary components of justice. Mercy is the moral foundation of justice which refuses to hurt life/people. So, justice is further established in merciful awareness and gains more liveliness. This is because justice is central to the universe/life. Evil and its offshoots have no place within said justice. Prejudice, exploitation, abuse, and such harmful things are not to be found here.

This is why justice can be likened to a very sensitive scale. Its settings should never be tampered with. When altered, it weighs everyone incorrectly.

According to Syriac culture, there is a strong and profound link between religion and social justice. This link is a function of moral needs and conscientious values. Since this link is derived from humans/humanity, the enhancement of justice depends on the intellectual and spiritual internalization of "**humanity and morality**".

Religion acknowledges moral values as the principal foundation of life in a safe and stable society. It commands the establishment of moral values in life and the encouraging of those who toil for this cause on the behalf of future generations. On the other hand, because social justice grounds itself on creating and sustaining, it exacts being interested not only in people's survival, but also in their growth and development.

As religion enables peace, safety, and equality, social justice finds sound footing. Successful social justice enhances the integrity of religious and moral customs. Social sharing is essential in the attitude of Syriac culture, which sanctifies serving people. This sharing forms the basic denominator of social justice. According to this understanding, governments and institutions, like the various organs of a single organism, exist to serve the people and for their solidarity. Humanity is also like a large family. The many organs of this organism and the diverse members of this family ought to continually honor each other with a mutual understanding of dependency and fulfil the requirements of justice. Though there are different views, different impressions, and different lifestyles, if the factors that actuate social justice are in line with the Lord's truth, it uplifts humans and society to a level that befits them. Because there's more to justice than thinking, speaking, and doing what's right. Justice necessitates that human actions be compatible in their entirety with spiritual truths and the Lord's will.

When viewed from this angle, social justice arranges the relationships between society and social dynamics. It builds a framework of what needs to be done, based on tangible manifestations of inequality between members of society. It administers the rights and obligations of all as parts and members of a whole. Therefore, social justice is acknowledged to be the basis and the driving force of pluralist democracy.

Since life takes shape in proportion to the needs of the material and spiritual world, social justice advances when the bare necessities of these two worlds are met. It is further dispensed and

delivered when balance is brought between these two worlds. Justice calls for the discovery/creation of truths/virtues that strengthen the spiritual and social foundations of human advancement.

Values, whose absence within the flow of life is keenly felt, are further conceptualized. They're talked about more. Justice is one of these values. All fields hunger for justice. Continuous struggles have been and are being undertaken so that it might fill life. Even though it motivates one's thoughts and association of ideas, people experience difficulties in social life because justice does not gain enough operability in practical life. The existing deficiencies display the need to work harder in religious, social, educational, and political areas.

The way of justice is the less taken way of love. It is the way of responsibility, freedom, solidarity, and support. It is the way of accepting and understanding people as they are. It is the way of keeping the balance between production ability and production. The way of justice may be narrow and uneven, but it is like a stream of living water with its fountainhead that springs with spiritual awakening from one's inner world and runs through the personal, social, and political planes. For this reason, Syriac culture asserts that justice must first take form in one's inner world and then spread to all areas of life. Justice is too deep to be squeezed into daily conversation and prayers. It is an understanding which requires intimacy with the Lord's truths and should be experienced in all walks of life. It is a process that demands constant intellectual and spiritual renewal.

As long as the aforementioned ways inside people are not made even, it will not be easy to ensure justice in the external world and in social life. Therefore, we must walk in ways that will raise awareness about social justice. As spirits and thoughts mature, the way will widen and become more comfortable.

The social, economic, and political unrest of our day points to a need to discover a path that leads from the material world to the soul and to strive towards meeting the spirit anew. Because as humanity discovers itself and draws near its soul, the foundations of social justice will be reinforced. Our most incredible God-given power for instating social justice and peace is the power to change and develop our ideas. In stationary thought, social justice is developed by changing one's impressions and becoming, rather than doing, something new.

Every service, every good deed, every kind of help and solidarity done for the sake of empowering social justice is the price and rent of life in this fleeting world. It reinforces the concept of social justice. Social justice or social love is more readily apparent in the distribution of kindness and

remuneration. For the reinforcement of the social manifestations of the meanings peculiar to social justice, people of all attitudes/beliefs should strive to convene more under the **'love for God and Humanity'**. This love is the greatest social commandment. It oversees that others and their rights are respected. It encourages giving from the heart.

Social justice is tied to the oversight of public welfare and the creation and application of the conditions that will enable people to obtain their due. And this only happens when human dignity is respected within the measures of justice. Respect for humanity entails the rights that stem from the honor of being a higher creature. These rights exist before society and ought to be embraced by it. These rights form the basis of the moral legitimacy of every authority. A society that spurns these rights or does not recognize them in its positive legislation cannot administer social justice within its own borders.

Social justice becomes more feasible when the following principle is adhered to: Everyone should disregard any differences and see their fellow creatures as another of themselves. They should take into account all opportunities necessary for living with honor. To see another as oneself, to feel affinity toward them, to serve them actively gains even more importance if this other happens to be in any kind of distress. **"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me"** (Matthew 25:40). This is because people aren't born with all the opportunities necessary for the development of life. People are always dependant on others. This need, this difference which is essential to life shows up in response to age, physical fitness, mental or moral capacity, sharing commonly owned blessings, and distributing interrelated riches. Because **"talents, abilities, and skills"** have been unequally distributed (Matthew 25:14). The needs that exist in life, the striking dissimilarities are by God's design, who wants everyone to seek others' help for their own needs and for the specially gifted to dispense their boons to those who might need them. Differences and dissimilarities are meant to hearten/honor people. It is meant to compel sharing, kindness, and forgiveness. It is meant to encourage the enrichment of cultures and beliefs.

**"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant"** (Matthew 20:26). An understanding of justice inspired by this profound verse will promote an attitude toward the people it employs and serves as organs that extend the lifespan of the organism rather than tools which are necessary to make up the workforce.

Proximity and understanding are crucial for the enhancement of justice. Politicians, clerics, educators, thinkers, and audiovisual media must always fulfil the responsibility of speaking out

against apparent unconcern and deficiency so that social justice may be more active in thought and application. It is not possible to allay the tensions caused by political, sociological, geographical, and cultural factors in one fell swoop. If humans are able to discard all restrictive and exclusionist attitudes and replace them with the inclusive mindset blessed by the Lord, the negative experiences suffered during the interactions of social justice will greatly decrease. Social perceptions will be transformed. As the different organs of the same organism, the spirit of consummation will be all the more evident in life's totality.

Arrogant attitudes that act selfishly, airs of superiority, fears, and prejudices are impediments in the development of society built on fraternity. No legislation can single-handedly eliminate such behavior. This is only possible through an attitude that views people, no matter their belief, culture, or ethnic background, as oneself. Political authority will stymie social unrest by adhering to this principle and serving public interest with the moral strength that stems from the spirit of freedom and responsibility.

Actually, the development and dispensation of social justice is, in a sense, contingent on the improvement of ideas. And this is only possible by developing a keen point of view that can see universally. Those who realize their value, their limits and those capable of self-development are those who wish for the reinforcement of social justice. They do not stop at accepting others as themselves, but also act responsibly, look out for, value, share spiritual blessings, help one another, and show solidarity, conscious that the way to reach God leads through here. They take it upon themselves to appeal to people's moral and spiritual gifts, in order to bring about the social changes that will truly serve humanity.

They know very well that equality between people is dependant on the preservation of human dignity and the rights that arise from this dignity, as well as the development of a meaningful whole that is accordingly consistent. They also know that in a society/world patrolled by justice, people can find home and shelter in each other. Because a just person will lend a hand to all of creation.

As someone once said, "**Everlasting good is not that which is in our favor, but that which is just.**"

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