

Love and Justice in Islam

There is a shared commitment to love and justice among all great religions of the world. The virtue of these two valuable concepts is universally recognised. However it is sometimes observed and understood in different ways within different traditions. In Islam they are two of the most important concepts and play an important and significant role in the belief system and theology.

Concept of Love

In Islam Allah is described by various attributes which strongly characterise Him as someone who Loves, is Loving, is the Creator of love and grants the virtue of love to His creation, His beautiful names include:

- Al-Wadood – The loving (Quran, 11:90)
- Al-Wali – One who loves (Quran, 2:107)
- Al-Rauf – Full of love and kindness (Quran, 2:143)
- Al-Muhib – The Creator of love and one who loves and grants love (Hadith)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) through his lifestyle and teachings has demonstrated love as one of the cardinal articles of Islamic ideology. He is reported to have said; *“You will not enter paradise unless you believe and you will not believe unless you love each other”* (Muslim)

One of the favourite Dua (prayer) of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is; *“Oh Allah, I ask You for Your love, and for the love of those who love You, and for the love of everything that can bring me closer to Your love”*.

Imam Al-Baqir, one of the leading theologians and Sufi scholars who is greatly respected within both Sunni and Shia traditions has said; *“Deen (religion) is love and love is deen”*.

Love for Allah

Love for Allah is the foundation of faith. The Glorious Quran says; *“The believers are stronger in their love for Allah”* (Quran, 2:165). According to Islamic teaching Allah should have the first place in our hearts. No other love may override one’s love for Allah. Allah should be the foremost object of love. In one of the Hadith Qudsi (A divine statement revealed to the Prophet, but not a part of Quran) the Prophet has narrated as Allah Almighty saying; *“Neither the vastness of Earth nor that of heaven can contain Me. Indeed it is the heart of a man of faith which can contain Me”*.

Allah’s love for the believers

Anyone who desires Allah to love him will be interested in the following Quranic statements:

- Allah loves those who do good deeds (Quran, 2:195)
- Allah loves those who turn in repentance to Him (Quran, 2:222)
- Allah loves those who keep themselves clean and free from filth (Quran, 9:108)

- Allah loves those who are pious (Quran, 3:76)
- Allah loves those who observe patience (Quran, 3:146)
- Allah loves those who put their trust in Him (Quran, 3:159)
- Allah loves those who act justly (Quran, 5:42)
- One who loves Allah is loved by Him (Quran, 5:54)

When Allah loves someone it is reflected in a fascinating manner as described in one of the Hadith Qudsi; *“When I love someone then I shall be his ears with which he listens, his eyes with which he sees, his tongue with which he speaks and his hands with which he holds. If he calls Me I shall answer him and if he asks Me I shall give him”* (Bukhari)

It is important to remember that in Islam no one is allowed to neglect his or her religious obligations under the pretext of love for Allah as Quran says; *“If you love Allah then follow me (The Prophet) and Allah will love you and forgive your sins”* (Quran, 3:31). For example, in the Quran Allah commands kindness to parents to a level second only to the worship of Allah; *“Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him and that you be kind to parents”* (Quran, 17:23). Allah asks believers to be just at all levels, as the Quran puts it; *“Oh believers, stand out firmly for justice, as witness to Allah, even if it be against yourselves, your parents, and your relatives or whether it is against the rich or the poor”* (Quran, 4:135)

In this example one is not allowed to neglect justice in the name of being kind to his parents.

Justice in Islam

In Islamic theology justice means placing things in their rightful place. It also denotes giving others equal treatment. In Islam justice is also a moral virtue as in other faith traditions. Sometimes justice is achieved through positive discrimination like through unequal distribution of wealth to the poor and needy. The Quran distinctly narrates that justice has been the goal of all revelations and scriptures sent to humanity; *“We sent Our Messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Measure in order to establish justice among the people”* (Quran, 57:25) Here in the phrase ‘Our Messengers’, the Quran clearly indicates that the concept of justice is a universal value.

Allah is himself just as two of his beautiful names mentioned in the Quran are:

- Al-Muqsit – The Just (Quran, 3:18)
- Al-Adl – The Just (Quran, 6:92)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) observed justice throughout his life and told his followers to be just, he is reported to have said; *“Of all the people, the closest and dearest person to Allah on the day of judgement will be the just leader, and the worst of men in the eyes of Allah and who will be far removed from Him will be the unjust”*.

The importance of justice

The Quran considers justice to be a supreme virtue and a basic objective of morality. Allah declares in the Quran:

- Allah commands justice and fair dealing (Quran, 16:90)
- Oh believers be upright for Allah and be bearers of witness with justice. Be just for this is closest to righteousness (Quran, 5:8)
- If you judge, judge between them with justice (Quran, 5:42)
- Say, I believe in the scripture which Allah has sent down and I am commanded to judge justly between you (Quran, 42:15)
- When you judge between people, judge with justice (Quran, 4:58)
- When you speak, speak with justice even if it is against someone close to you (Quran, 6:152)

In Islamic theology it is not seen as a conflict for Allah being Just and Loving at the same time. Muslim scholars have described different attributes of Allah mentioned in the Quran as various divine virtues that co-exist in the personality of Allah without any contradiction. For example:

- He is 'The Giver of life' (Quran, 2:28) as well as 'The Giver of death' (Quran, 3:156)
- He is 'The Most Merciful' (Quran, 1:3) as well as 'Punishing His servants for their sins' (Quran, 32:22)

In Islam conflict or contradiction is identified as a weakness and deficiency, in Islamic faith Allah is absolutely free from all such disabilities and defects.