

DAILY QUR'ANIC REFLECTIONS

From Juz' 24: The Greater Injustice

فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَبَ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَذَّبَ بِالصِّدْقِ إِذْ جَاءَهُ ۗ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ ۗ وَالَّذِي جَاءَ
بِالصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهِ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

So who is more unjust (and does greater wrong) than him who attributes a falsehood to Allah, and denies the truth when it reaches him? Is not the [final] abode of the faithless in hell? He who brings the truth and he who confirms it—it is they who are the Godway. (Zumar 39:32-33)

Reflections:

When many of us think of an instance of *zulm* (wrongdoing or injustice), the current genocide naturally comes to mind. And there is no doubt that the unrestraint killing of innocent men, women, and children, and the targeting of schools, hospitals, and entire neighbourhoods is a clear example of *zulm*. But there are degrees to *zulm*—or rather, there are certain types of *zulm* that beget other types—and the Qur'ān attempts to highlight those cardinal instances in the form of a question: “Who is more unjust than ...” This phrase appears in the Qur'ān a total of fifteen times,¹ the above being one of them.

Among the category of “the more unjust,” that which is repeated the most often in the Qur'ān is the person who fabricates a lie against Allah (*swt*). One of the biggest lies is the lie of *shirk*—i.e., it is to say that God is merely (*na'udhu billah*) one of many competing limited entities. This then becomes a great instance of injustice. The link between *shirk* and injustice is testified by the wise Luqmān (a): “O my son! Do not ascribe any partners to Allah. Truly *shirk* is indeed a great injustice.”²

What makes an act “more unjust” than another? (1) Sometimes, it has to do with what or who is being targeted: striking a mosque or an Imam is more unjust than striking a house. (2) Sometimes, it has to do with the type of act: starving people by depriving them of food is more unjust than economic sanctions. (3) And sometimes, it has to do with sheer time or quantity: continually oppressing a people for almost a century is more unjust than momentarily harming a person.

What makes *shirk* one of the highest forms of injustice? Three things: (1) it is directed against God Himself; (2) it is a paradigm about the world that naturally begets vices in man including pride, envy, animosity ... which leads to acts such as genocide; and (3) it not only affects a person's temporary well-being in this world, but also his eternal condition in the Ākhirah.

According to the verse above, denying truth when it passes by is also another instance of “greater injustice.” Interestingly, one of the things which makes people deny the truth, is their own knowledge: “When their apostles brought them manifest proofs, they delighted in the knowledge they possessed...”³ It is actually the limitation of their knowledge which is the real culprit: “They know just an outward aspect of the life of the world, but they are oblivious of the Hereafter.”⁴ This is where the above verse becomes relevant to our situation today. Is this not a reflection of much of the modern educational and professional edifice that we relish today? Have we not taken our own fields of study or opinions or careers as ‘gods’ such that when we are presented with a Qur'ānic-based truth, we deny it? It is a question worth pondering over because it is what makes the Qur'ān relevant for us and illustrates modern mutations of *shirk* in our times.

To ponder: What does it mean to confirm the truth? Is it just a mental act of approval or must it manifest itself in our lives?

References: Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Tafsīr Tasnīm*

¹ 2:114, 6:21, 6:157, 11:18, 18:57 ...

³ 40:83

² 31:13

⁴ 30:7