From Jahiliyyah to Justice: Islamic Social Reforms

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the social reforms introduced by Islam that transformed pre-Islamic Arabian society from a state of jahiliyyah (ignorance) to one of justice and equity. It analyzes key Islamic principles such as human equality, brotherhood, piety (taqwa), just governance, prohibition of oppression, circulation of wealth, and protection of minority rights. The study highlights how these principles, rooted in the Quran and exemplified by Prophet Muhammad, revolutionized tribal loyalties and arbitrary conventions prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia. The reforms addressed economic disparities, established a framework for systematic wealth distribution, and protected the rights of marginalized groups. The article argues that the shift from the era of Jahiliyyah to the establishment of Islamic justice wasn't just a historical event, but a transformative change in how society was organized. This change still offers valuable lessons for tackling modern social issues. By contrasting the social conditions before Islam with the ideals it introduced, the study shows how Islamic teachings the study shows how Islamic teachings created a system of social justice aimed at building a fair, compassionate, and morally grounded society.

Keywords: Islamic Social Reforms, Jahiliyyah, Justice, Equity, Human Equality, Wealth Distribution, Minority Rights.

Introduction

Islam envisions a prosperous society where the rights of every individual are protected. Islam does not favor a society in which the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. It is a natural phenomenon that there will be differences in people's sustenance, with some having more and others having less. In Islam, it is emphasized that if there are poor people, they should not be left in their difficult circumstances, but rather, they should be assisted.

Islamic teachings promote the idea of social justice. This means that since large

socioeconomic inequalities can cause discontent and dysfunction in society, societies should work to reduce differences among their people. Compassion, social justice, and collective responsibility are profoundly rooted in the idea of helping the poor and underprivileged. Muslims are instructed to respect others equally, regardless of their social or economic status. Throughout the Quran, Hadith, and Seerah, believers are urged to be courteous and compassionate to widows, orphans, and other marginalized and downtrodden people.

Economic Disparities and Social Injustices in Pre Islamic-Arabia

It is important to discuss the economic disparities of pre-Islamic Arabia in order to properly comprehend the accomplishments of Islam. This helps us recognize how Islam instituted social justice. This discussion sheds light on pre-Islamic Arabian conditions and highlights how the teachings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) transformed the region's social and economic imbalances.

In Arabia, society was organized into a tribal system. The principle of "might is right" was prevalent, meaning that power determined ownership and control. Authority within the tribe rested with the chieftain, whose decisions were final. While the chieftain took care of his people and fulfilled his responsibilities, there were instances of injustice often led to class conflicts. It was mandatory for everyone in the tribe to adhere to the chieftain's decisions.

The writer of "Sealed Nectar" writes: "Heads of tribes enjoyed dictatorial privileges similar to those of kings, and were rendered full obedience and subordination in both war and peace…The head of a tribe and its chief had special claims to spoils of war such as one-fourth of the spoils, whatever he chose for himself, or found on his way back or even the remaining undivided spoils."[1]

There was no formal political system or central government. Instead, the tribal structure dominated, resulting in a lack of peace and stability. In environments lacking peace and stability, prosperity was unattainable.

Muhammad As- Sallaabee writes:

> *"Overall, the world status of Arabs prior to Islam was nothing to boast about; at best, they deserved a mention only in the footnotes section of a historical study of the era. The political and legal structure of Arab societies was in chaos; the belief system was absurd."[2]*

In Book, The Cambridge History of Islam" the condition of poor is mentioned in these words "The poor in pre-Islamic Arabia had little recourse and were often neglected by the tribal system which favored the wealthy and the powerful."[3]

The tribal society of pre-Islamic Arabia was a society in whih wealth and lineage

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[1] Safiur-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar Biography of the Noble Prophet*, (Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 2011), 58.

[2] Dr. 'Ali Muhammad As-Sallaabee، *The Noble Life of the Prophet peace be upon him*, (Faisal Shafeeq, Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2006), 1:36

[3] P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis, *The Cambridge History of Islam*, (UK:Cambridge University Press, 1977), 35.

determined one's status, leaving the poor and marginalized with little hope for upward social mobility.

In pre-Islamic Arabian society, the poor had no rights and were neglected. The tribal system favored the wealthy, leaving little social mobility for the less privileged. Arabia lacked economic stability as well. The Quraysh were only one who gained status as custodians of the Kaaba. Whole other tribes outside this area faced insecurity and it resulted in economic instability. **"**It was primarily the city dwellers of the Arabian Peninsula who engaged in trade, and most successful among them were the people of the Quraish. The Quraish differed from other tribes in that they were the inhabitants of Makkah, which was considered to be holy by all Arabs; as such, they were able to travel in safety all over Arabia, for no tribe dared to attack the dwellers of the inviolable city of Makkah. Other tribes did not fare as well; their trading caravans were constantly being subjected to highway robbery by individuals and others tribes that made a living through attacking and robbing passing caravans."[4]

Slavery was widespread in Arab society, where slaves had no rights and were not regarded as human beings. The pre-Islamic era was marked by glaring social inequality. Slavery was pervasive, and slaves had few rights, while wealthy elites controlled resources and wielded significant power. Historical records indicate that upon converting to Islam, slaves were frequently mistreated, humiliated, and subjected to severe torture by the pagans of Mecca. For instance Hazrat Bilal (RA) was severely tortured, as noted in "Uyun al-Athar"

> *"Regarding the suffering of Bilal, 'Ammar, Al-Miqdad, Khabbab, Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas, and others who had no tribal protection, their torment is too lengthy to recount. It is narrated that Waraqah bin Nawfal passed by Bilal while he was being tortured, his back pressed against the hot ground, saying, "One, One." Waraqah said, "Be patient, Bilal. Why are they torturing you? By the One in whose hand is my soul, if they kill you, I will make your martyrdom a symbol."[5]*

The three Arab regions adjacent to foreigners suffered from great weakness and inferiority. The people there were either masters or slaves, rulers or subordinates. Their masters — especially the foreigners — had claim to every advantage; slaves had nothing but responsibilities to shoulder. In other words, absolute rulership brought about violation of the rights of subordinates, ignorance, oppression, iniquity, injustice and hardship, and turned them into people groping in darkness and ignorance.[6]

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[4] Dr. 'Ali Muhammad As-Sallaabee، *The Noble Life of the Prophet peace be upon him*, 1:41

[5] Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ya'mari,Fatḥ al-Dīn Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *Uyun al-Athar fi Funun al-Maghazi wa al-Shama'il wa al-Siyar*, (Beirut: Dar al-Qalam, 1993 CE), 1:1

[6] Safiur-Rahman Al-MubarakPuri, *The Sealed Nectar Biography of the Noble Prophet*, 59.

Women in pre-Islamic Arabian society were deprived of basic human rights and were not valued equal to men. They faced oppression and were subjected to practices that undermined their dignity and existence.

Women were oppressed in other ways as well; for example, women - as well as children - were not allowed to inherit wealth, for the entire estate of the deceased went only to those who could fight and help protect the tribe. It was not a written law that women couldn't inherit wealth, but it was a practice recognized through established custom, and custom often had more force than legislated law.[7]

This means that women were not given inheritance rights. They were treated unfairly and regarded as having a lower status in society. As a result, women were deprived of economic security and were often poor. The position of women varied among tribes; some from noble families held positions of power, while others faced harsh limitations and customs. Similarly, orphans and minors suffered as well, as they were not given inheritance rights either.

Collectively, these conditions characterized Arabs before Islam. While they did not lack virtues and possessed commendable qualities, they struggled to channel these qualities effectively.

The Makkans' social life was characterized by some traits as well as some bad habits that frequently go hand in hand with conditions of widespread economic abundance. Their good traits had become worthless and unproductive as they wasted their time and energy on trivialities, and they lacked high ideals and fundamental values of life due to the lack of appropriate and real guidance in religion and morals. [8]

These were the pervasive economic inequalities and social injustices that infested pre-Islamic Arabia. When Islam came, it not only expressed the voice of the downtrodden but also advocated for and protected their rights. Prophetic advocacy provided a revolutionary framework that uplifted and empowered neglected constituencies such as women, orphans, and the disadvantaged. The teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) directly addressed these inequalities, offering a new paradigm of social and economic justice.

Foundational Principles of Islamic Social Justice

Social justice is central to Islam and serves as the foundation for a system that promotes equity, fairness, and compassion in society. These principles are deeply established in the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). They highlight the rights of people and communities across diverse circumstances and backgrounds. Islam upholds equity, the dignity of humanity, and the protection of marginalized people in the truest sense. It offers a road map for promoting a just and peaceful society, guiding us towards more equality in the

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[7] Dr. 'Ali Muhammad As-Sallaabee، *The Noble Life of the Prophet peace be upon him*, 1:45

[8] Dr S. Moin ul Haq, *Muhammad Life and Times (a historical interpretation)*, (Pakistan: Bait Al Hiqmah,1997), 59

world. This road map is based on its principles of charity, economic ethics, moral responsibility, and prescriptive social standards.

1. Concept of Freedom In Islam

The concept of freedom was one of the most significant societal reforms introduced by Islam. The idea and practice of liberty underwent a profound transmission with the rise of Islamic civilization from the period of Jahiliyyah. Islam negated all form of so-called freedom that was often associated with tribal affiliations and adherence to ancestral rituals. The teachings of the Quran and Hadith, and then the practical example of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), introduced a true meaning of freedom, which is freedom from allegiance to anyone or anything other than Allah. This shift fundamentally challenged the foundations of pre-Islamic social structures.

Islam shattered all the idols of ignorance (Jahiliyyah). It liberated humanity from all forms of slavery and grant them true freedom. In Islamic society, beliefs and worship hold fundamental importance. Islam frees people from servitude to others, as Allah has stated in the Quran.

> *"Allah sets forth the parable of a slave owned by several quarrelsome masters, and a slave owned by only one master. Are they equal in condition?"*[9]

Qurtubi writes the explanation of this verse

> *"And a man who is at peace with one master" means a servant who is exclusively owned by a single master, and this is an example of one who worships Allah alone. "Are the two equal as an example?" The one who serves a group of quarrelling partners, whose morals and intentions are different, and who cannot please any of them fully due to the many demands placed upon him, will face great hardship, toil, and exhaustion. Conversely, the one who serves only one master, if he obeys him, is known and acknowledged by that master, and if he errs, his mistake is forgiven. So, which one is less burdened or more rightly guided?"*[10]

The Messengers' primary objective of gathering people under the banner of Tawheed was, in essence, a call for social reform. By freeing people from the fear of multiple, often conflicting societal expectations (as illustrated in the Quranic parable), Islam established a new social order based on accountability to one supreme authority.

Islam's provision of freedom from society's harmful customs and traditions directly addressed the unjust practices of *Jahiliyyah*. This liberation from harmful social norms was a key aspect of Islamic social reforms, allowing individuals to break free from oppressive cultural expectations. The Islamic emphasis on individual accountability to Allah introduced a new paradigm of social justice.

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[9] Quran 39:29

[10] Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Abī Bakr al-Anṣārī al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an*, (Al-Qahira : Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya,1384 AH), 15:253

Unlike the tribal systems of *Jahiliyyah*, where accountability often depended on social status, Islam established a universal standard of conduct applicable to all, regardless of their societal position. The collective concept of worship liberates a person from servitude to people, society, wealth, and their own desires, and brings them into the servitude of Allah alone.

Syed Qutub writes:

> *"And finally, human nature is liberated from the bondage of sanctity, fear of death, harm, poverty, and colors… It is freed from all external considerations and social values, relying only on its own inner desires and lusts, driven by its ambitions and aspirations. It only achieves true liberation from internal constraints when it adheres to the complete and perfect freedom that Islam desires for it, to realize the great human social justice."* [11]

The Islamic concept of freedom, therefore, was not merely a philosophical idea but a practical social reform. By liberating individuals from servitude to multiple masters, be they tribal customs, societal pressures, or personal desires and establishing servitude to Allah alone, Islam laid the foundation for a just society fundamentally different from that of *Jahiliyyah*.

2. Equality of Human Beings

Islam recognizes and upholds absolute equality among all people, regardless of color, race, or nationality, making it a fundamental principle and lived reality. This concept is rooted in the Quran, where Allah the Exalted says

> *"O men, fear your Lord who created you from a single soul, and from it created its match, and spread many men and women from the two"* [12]

Tafsir al-Munir, a renowned Quranic exegesis, elaborates on this verse:

> *"Humanity originates from a single source and a single origin; their father is Adam, and Adam was created from dust. Thus, they are the same soul, and their unity necessitates that the human family be compassionate, cooperative, and loving, not hostile, quarrelsome, or divided."* [13]

Another Quranic verse further emphasizes human equality in these words

> *"Human beings, we created you all from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another."* [14]

The context of this revelation is illuminating. Scholar Baghawi, a prominent 11th-century jurist and Quran commentator, narrates in his exegesis

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[11] Syed Qutub, *Al-'Adala al-Ijtima'iyya fi al-Islam*, (Al-Qahira: Dar al-Shuruq,1408AH), 33-41

[12] Al-Quran 4:1

[13] Wahbah Bin Mustafa Zuḥaylī, *Tafsīr al-munīr fī al-ʿaqīdah wa-al-sharīʿah wa-al-manhaj*, (Damascus: Dār Al- Fikr, 1418H), 4:225

[14] Al- Quran 49:13

> *"Muqatil said: "On the day of the conquest of Mecca, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) commanded Bilal to ascend the Kaaba and call the adhan (call to prayer). Attab bin Asid bin Abi Al-Eis said: 'Praise be to Allah who took my father until he did not witness this day.' Al-Harith bin Hisham said: 'Did Muhammad not find anyone other than this black crow to be a muezzin?' Suhail bin Amr said: 'If Allah wants something, He changes it.' Abu Sufyan said: 'I will not say anything for I fear that the Lord of the heavens will inform him.' Then Jibril (Gabriel) came and informed the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) of what they had said. He called them and asked them about what they had said, and they admitted it. Then Allah Almighty revealed this verse (58:11) and rebuked them for boasting about their ancestry, amassing wealth and belittling the poor."*[15]

This means that this verse was revealed not only for the poor and enslaved classes, like Bilal, who was a freed slave, but also to teach that, according to the Prophet Muhammad(peace be upon him), wealth and status are nothing in the eyes of Allah. The same point is emphasized by this ayah.

Maulana Maudodi, a 20th-century Islamic scholar and political philosopher, writes regarding this verse:

This means that the division of human beings into nations, races, groups and tribes is for the sake of distinction, so that people of one race or tribe may meet and be acquainted with the people belonging to another race or tribe and cooperate with one another. This division of the human race is neither meant for one nation to take pride in its superiority over others nor is it meant for one nation to treat another with contempt or disgrace, or regard them as a mean and degraded race and usurp their rights. "Indeed, the noblest among you before God are the most heedful of you" (49:13). Stated differently, a man's superiority over another is based solely on his awareness of God, his morality, and his purity of character; it is not based on his race, color, nationality, or language. Furthermore, even this superiority based on piety and pure conduct does not justify that such people should act as though they are better than other people or play the role of lord. No God-fearing, religious man could ever imagine of assuming an appearance of superiority; it is a vile vice in and of itself. Moreover, the rights of the virtuous are not greater than those of others because this would be against the verse's opening declaration of human. [16]

During Farewell Sermon, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

> *"O people, indeed your Lord is one, and your father is one. There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab, nor*

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[15] Muhyi al-Sunnah, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn ibn Masʿūd ibn Muḥammad al-Farrā' al-Baghawī, *Ma'alim al-Tanzil fi Tafsir al-Quran*, (Beirut: Dar Tayba, 1997 CE), 7:347

[16] Sayyed Abul A'la al-Maududi, *Human rights in Islam,* (Pakistan: Islamic Publication Limited, 1977), 19-20

of a red-skinned person over a black-skinned person, nor a black-skinned person over a red-skinned person, except by piety."[17]

These values translate into equal rights and safeguards for all people in an ideal Islamic society, regardless of their financial situation, gender, age, or social standing. Islamic teachings are incompatible with the idea of VIP treatment or special privileges based on external circumstances. The goal of this egalitarian vision was to eradicate the tribal haughtiness and social hierarchies that characterized pre-Islamic Arabian civilization. Islam has eliminated all social divisions and put an end to the arrogance of the Arabs.

Throughout Islamic history, these principles have molded social and legal structures to a great degree of enforcement in their implementation at different times and places. These teachings continue to inspire Muslims today to address issues of social justice and equality. They also encourage to raise a voice against persisting inequalities and discrimination within their respective communities and societies as a whole. By adopting this principle, everyone's rights will be upheld and their inherent dignity will be respected in society.

3. Piety:

Piety often translated as Taqwa or God-consciousness, is a fundamental concept in Islam that shapes both individual character and societal interactions. *Taqwa* is an Arabic term for piety. Piety refers to a state of constant awareness of Allah's presence and deep reverence for Him. The Quran emphasizes its significance:

"Surely the best provision is righteousness".[18]

Piety serves as the foundation for righteous living and is considered the best preparation for both this life and the Hereafter.

The concept of Piety, or God-consciousness, elevates a person's status in Allah's view. This idea is rooted in a teaching attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) as once he was asked

"Who is the most honorable amongst the people?" He said, "The most righteous (i.e. Allah-fearing) amongst you".[19]

In another narration, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) advised Abu Dhar

"Fear Allah wherever you are."[20]

Piety influences social interactions and communal ethics in addition to individual spirituality. People who practice piety are less prone to violate the rights of others

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[17] Abū ʿAbd Allāh Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal* , (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risālah, 2001 AD), Hadith No: 23849.

[18] Quran 2: 197

[19] Muhammad ibn Ismail Al-Bukhari, *Al-Jami' al-Sahih*, (Saudia Arabia: Dar Tuq al-Najat , 422 AH), Hadith No: 3490.

[20] Muhammad Ibn Eisa At Tirmidhi, *Jami At- Tirmidhi*, (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami , 1998 AD), Hadith No: 1987

and are more aware of such rights. When people prioritize virtue over tribal or personal allegiance, social harmony is fostered. People naturally become less corrupt and unfair when they fear facing accountability to Allah.

The Quran and Hadith consistently highlight the importance of Piety. Because of its honor and virtue, Allah the Exalted has commanded people to cooperate in maintaining it for a peaceful society. Allah the Exalted says:

"And cooperate in righteousness and piety"[21]

Syed Qutub's commentary on the Quranic verse about cooperation in righteousness illustrates how piety transformed Arab society. He writes: "There is a recognition that a human being may be angry and may harbour feelings of hatred. But human beings are not entitled, as a result of fury or hatred, to transgress and be unjust to others. Moreover, cooperation within the ranks of the community of believers must further righteousness and piety, not evil or aggression. The believers are commanded to have fear of God and are reminded that His punishment may be very severe. Such a reminder, together with the commandment to fear God, helps the Muslim community to control its hatred and to rise above the desire to exact revenge, because it is a community always seeking God's pleasure. How Islam works on people is best illustrated by the spectacular results it achieved in moulding the Arabs such that this noble behaviour became characteristic of them and, hence, they abided by its requirements. Prior to Islam they were far removed from such lofty standards. Their unchallenged motto was: "Support your brother, whether he is the victim or the perpetrator of injustice." Tribal loyalty was of paramount importance. To cooperate in furthering evil and aggression was more natural to them than cooperation in furthering piety and righteousness. They forged alliances, but their purpose was more to support evil than to support right. Rare were the pacts made in pre- Islamic days which supported what was and is right. This was only natural in an environment where traditions, customs and morals were not derived from God's constitution.

Thus, a new bond linking hearts to God was established. Values and morals were given a new Divine standard. The Arabs, and mankind as a whole, were led out of blind fanaticism and the control of personal and tribal feelings in determining who is a friend and who is a foe. Man was reborn in the Arabian Peninsula."[22]

In today's complex world, the principle of Taqwa remains crucial. It can guide ethical decision-making in various spheres. This is trait which can lead humanity to promote fair practices and avoid exploitation. It also encourages leaders to prioritize public welfare over personal gain by fostering mutual respect and understanding.

Piety, as the cornerstone of Islamic faith and practice, offers a comprehensive framework for personal growth and social harmony. Through the development of

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[21] Quran 5: 2

[22] Sayyid Qutub, *In the Shade of the Quran*, (UK: The Islamic Foundation, 2015 AD), 4:18-19

this God-consciousness, individuals and societies can strive towards a more moral and just world. Ignoring Allah Almighty's commands has led to rampant corruption in today's society. Piety is a key component of social justice that fosters harmony in society.

4. Brotherhood:

Islam's conception of brotherhood is a significant change from *Jahiliyyah's* tribal allegiances (pre-Islamic ignorance). It creates a new social structure that surpasses racial, national, and cultural barriers. This social structure is based on mutual care, faith, and communal responsibility. Islamic brotherhood, which is rooted in the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), emphasizes cooperation, empathy, and mutual respect among believers. This idea of fraternity is not merely a social or cultural connection; it is a moral and spiritual obligation that fosters a sense of community responsibility. Allah the Most High states in the Quran

> *"The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers.*
> *And fear Allah that you may receive mercy."[23]*

This verse lays the groundwork for a society built on mutual respect and conflict resolution. In Tafsir e Sadi Abdur Rehman Nasir As Sadi says:

> *"The believers have been commanded by Allah and His Messenger to respect each other's rights and to act in a way that promotes peace, love, and understanding between them. Everything there validates their rights over one other. Therefore, let the believers mediate a reconciliation amongst their brothers and work to do that which will remove grudges and ill feelings whenever fighting breaks out among them and causes division, hostility, and shunning of one another. This suggests that one of the biggest obstacles to divine mercy is not respecting the rights of other believers.[24]*

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) beautifully illustrated the concept about the unity and solidarity of Muslims

> *"The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion and sympathy are just like one body. When one of the limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever."[25]*

Ibn e Hajr writes in his book

> *"As for 'tawadud' (mutual affection), it means the communication that brings about love, such as visiting one another and exchanging gifts. 'Ta'atuf' (mutual compassion) means helping each other, like how one garment supports another to strengthen it…The believers are like a single person; if his head hurts, the whole body suffers with fever and*

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[23] Quran 49: 10

[24] Abdur Rehman bin Nasir As Saadi, *Tafseer e As Sadi*, (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 2018AD), 9:254-255

[25] Muhammad ibn Ismail Al-Bukhari, *Al-Jami' al-Sahih* , Hadith No: 6011

sleeplessness. In the narration of Khaythama: 'If the head suffers, the whole body suffers.' The statement 'like a body' means in relation to all its parts. The similarity lies in the concord of fatigue and comfort. The statement 'tada'a' means they invite each other to share in the pain, as they say 'the walls tada'at' meaning they fall or almost fall. The statement 'with sleeplessness and fever,' sleeplessness is because pain prevents sleep, and fever because lack of sleep induces it. Experts have defined fever as an innate heat that ignites in the heart and then spreads through the body, burning and harming natural functions."[26]

This hadith is one of the most beautiful sayings in describing brotherhood in Islam, highlighting its role as a cornerstone for social justice. This profound analogy describes just how believers are bound in deep relations of brotherhood and mutual responsibility toward one another. This brotherhood also means that, in an Islamic society, the welfare of every individual becomes the concern of all. If one member of the community suffers, others are obliged to extend help in alleviating his or her sufferings. This unity gives rise to a sense of sympathy and solidarity that is necessary for social justice. By living up to these principles, Muslims will succeed in building an order where each member's rights and welfare are protected and equally strive to root out all forms of injustice or harshness.

Various ahadith emphasize that genuine virtue and righteousness manifest in how we treat our fellow human beings. They reiterate the point that social justice in Islam is not merely a strict imperative of the law, but it serves many purposes, directly rooted in the very fabric of faith. The teachings of Islam guide us how to live in a society. A person should not become indifferent and remains engrossed in their own world. A Muslim is sympathetic and caring toward others. Muslims should live together harmoniously because the people of faith are like a single body.

Islam transformed the narrow tribal allegiances of *Jahiliyyah* into a broader, more inclusive concept of brotherhood. The migration of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions from Mecca to Madinah presented various challenges. A major obstacle was figuring out how the migrants would make ends meet in Madinah. The Prophet, who arrived in Madinah without any resources, established a brotherhood between the people of Madinah and the migrants of Makkah. This official declaration of brotherhood between two people became a pillar of early Islamic social justice. This served as an example of the Islamic concept of communal welfare, demonstrating that it is the responsibility of Muslims to look out for one another. This divinely inspired system encouraged wealth distribution and discouraged hoarding by establishing an organic support network within society. The Prophet not only resolved an immediate issue by

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[26] Aḥmad bin ʿAlī bin Ḥajar Abū al-Faḍl al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Beirut:Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1379 AH), 10:439

highlighting reciprocal care and shared responsibility, but he also established the groundwork for solid, long-lasting community ties. Muslims are still motivated to practice Islamic brotherhood by this early model.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) turned his attention to cementing the ties of brotherhood amongst the Muslims of Medina who were called Ansar and Muhajireen i.e. emigrants from Mecca. It was necessary step since the Refugees who had left their hearths and homes and had said goodbye to friends and relatives were feeling lonely. To raise the spirits of his homesick and suffering followers to cast off their feeling of loneliness and to attune them to the changed circumstances a new fraternity was established amongst the Muslims of mecca and those of medina. [27]

In today's globalized world, Islamic brotherhood offers a model for social cohesion that transcends national borders. It provides a framework for addressing issues like refugee crises, economic disparities, and social isolation

The Islamic concept of brotherhood, rooted in the Quran and exemplified by the Prophet, offers a comprehensive approach to social justice. It transformed the fragmented tribal society of Jahiliyyah into a unified community based on faith and mutual care. This principle continues to provide solutions for modern social challenges, emphasizing that true faith is reflected in how we treat our fellow human beings.

5. Justice and Equity in Governance:

The transition from Jahiliyyah to the Islamic era was a true revolution. In pre-Islamic Arabian society, justice systems were largely unstandardized, and tribalism was upheld. Islam introduced a comprehensive framework of just and equitable governance.

The teachings of Islam provide for the value system of human existence from the individual level to that of a community; it offers a complete and relevant solution to every human problem. Similarly, on the subject of good leadership, it lays down the fundamentals of effective governance. Trust is regarded as a sacred responsibility that reflects Allah Almighty's exclusive authority. Because man is representative of Allah Almighty, whatever a person might be endowed with, be it health, money, power, or status, all of it is to remain in parallel with the Almighty. Whoever struggles hard to fulfill one's commitment diligently and sincerely on a regular basis is indeed safeguarding their trust. Islam established governance as a sacred trust from Allah, emphasizing responsibility and fairness, in contrast to the arbitrary rule prevalent during *Jahiliyyah*. From tribal nepotism to a system where justice was important, regardless of social standing or kinship, this shift constitutes a significant social transformation.

Islam instructs us to act with justice, as emphasized in the verse.

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[27] Abdul Hameed Siddiqui, *The Life of Muhammad*, (Pakistan: Islamic Publications (PVT) limited), 138

"O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just."[28]

This verse from Surah Al-Nisa' commands all Muslims to defend justice and to be truthful when testifying. Furthermore, in a very elegant way, items that could obstruct the administration of justice or the availability of reliable evidence have been eliminated. Surah al-Ma'idah has a verse that addresses the same topic. Their words are almost common, in fact.

As Allah's messenger in this earth, Sayyidna Adam (AS) was followed in succession by other prophets who shared the same status and were tasked with ensuring that justice reigned and peace eventually followed. The idea was for each person to embrace justice as their signature within their sphere of influence, as a unique personality. The people who are persistently disobedient will need to be made to follow the law and receive the appropriate penalties and punishments if they refuse to follow the path of justice and fairness through sound advice, education, and communication."[29]

The injunctions of the Quran to stand for justice, even against oneself or close relatives, directly challenged the tribal loyalties of Jahiliyyah. This social reform of Islam became the hallmark for establishing a society based on fairness. These reforms were best manifested in the governance model established by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself, exemplified through his practices in Medina. Each member of the community was protected under law, which practice stood in stark contrast to the exclusivity of pre-Islamic tribal leadership.

This principle of justice is central to Islamic governance and directly ties into the theme of social justice, particularly the elevation of the marginalized. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) advocated tirelessly for the weak, emphasizing that a society's integrity is measured by how it treats its most vulnerable members. He stated:

"It has been narrated on the authority of 'Abdullah b. 'Umar that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: Behold! the Dispensers of justice will be seated on the pulpits of light beside God, on the right side of the Merciful, Exalted and Glorious. Either side of the Being is the right side both being equally meritorious. (The Dispensers of justice are) those who do justice in their rules, in matters relating to their families and in all that they undertake to do."[30]

This hadith highlights the immense reward for those who govern with justice and protect the rights of all segments of society. This principle is core to Islamic

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[28] Quran 4: 135

[29] Mufti Muhammad Shafi, *Maariful Quran*, (Pakistan: Maktaba e Dar ul uloom) , 2:305-306

[30] Muslim Ibn Al- Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim*, (Riyadh: Darruslam, 2007), Hadith: 4721.

governance, reflecting the theme of social justice, particularly the elevation of the marginalized. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explicitly advocated for the rights of the weak, emphasizing that the integrity of a people is directly measured by how that people treats its lowest members. Islamic governance involves the establishment of a society in which the rights of marginalized individuals are protected. Islam guarantees justice and trustworthiness, ensuring that everyone, whether poor or rich, is treated fairly. Once, a woman of elite class was accused of theft, and they tried to approach Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) through Usama. Prophet Muhammad became very angry, as narrated by Aisha

> "*Narrated `Aisha: Usama approached the Prophet (ﷺ) on behalf of a woman (who had committed theft). The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The people before you were destroyed because they used to inflict the legal punishments on the poor and forgive the rich. By Him in Whose Hand my soul is! If Fatima (the daughter of the Prophet (ﷺ)) did that (i.e. stole), I would cut off her hand."[31]*

Equity in the Islamic political system includes social equity, meaning that the legislature should collaborate to serve and satisfy the needs and desires of a substantial number of people, as they represent a significant portion of the state and the true citizens of the country. This includes the distribution of jobs, means of livelihood, and financial resources. Therefore, it is the obligation of the administration to provide food, safety, and clothing for all as a part of good governance. Financial justice aims to ensure a fair distribution of resources and prevent wealth from concentrating in a small number of hands.

A new social order was founded on the principles of fairness and equity in governance that Islam propagated. Islam initiated a transformation that extended far beyond the Arabian Peninsula, continuing to influence systems of governance and social structures across diverse cultures and throughout the centuries.

6. Prohibition of oppression:

A society cannot thrive when its members face oppression and are denied fundamental human rights. In the pre-Islamic period known as Jahiliyyah, Arab society was plagued by widespread injustice. Tribal loyalty often superseded principles of fairness, leading people to defend their kinsmen even in wrongdoing. As a result, vulnerable members of society were frequently denied their rights. Islam brought about a radical transformation in this social landscape by emphasizing justice and condemning oppression in all its forms.

The Quran and Hadith repeatedly prohibit oppression and injustice, as they violate the principles of justice and equity. The concept of oppression is not limited to injustice among people; it also encompasses the failure to fulfill one's duties to Allah and to others. This includes refusing to acknowledge Allah's rights and withholding what is justly owed to others. Islam emphasizes the importance of

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[31]Muhammad ibn Ismail Al-Bukhari, *Al-Jami' al-Sahih*, Hadith: 6787

avoiding these forms of oppression and establishing a just society based on the equitable treatment of all individuals.

The Holy Quran unequivocally states:

> *"Lo! Wrong-doers never prosper."[32]*

This verse serves as a powerful reminder that those who perpetrate injustice will ultimately fail to prosper. It underscores the Islamic principle that no society can truly flourish if its members are subjected to oppression and denied their fundamental human rights.

Scholar Muraghi, in his exegesis, provides a deeper understanding of the repercussions of oppression:

> *"The condition of those who wrong others is worse than those who wrong themselves. None of them will achieve success, neither in this world nor in the Hereafter. Success is for the people of truth and justice who fulfill the rights of Allah and the rights of themselves. Such completeness is only achieved by the messengers of Allah and their followers among the believers. Look how Allah supported His messenger against the wrongdoers among his people, like the chief criminals of Mecca who mocked him, then against the rest of the polytheists of Arabia. Then He supported his companions against the greatest and most powerful nations on earth, such as the Romans and the Persians. Then He supported those who followed them against their opponents from the people of the East and the West. But when they wronged themselves and wronged others, they lost the advantage that distinguished them, which enabled them to succeed and win. Success then became confined to material and spiritual causes such as patience, steadfastness, justice, and order"[33]*

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) enjoined every individual to protect the rights of the weak, oppressed, and marginalized. He advocated for the establishment of a society where the downtrodden receive relief and assistance. In a profound hadith, he conveyed Allah's words:

> *"Narrated Abu Dharr (RA) that the Prophet (PBUH) relayed from Allah Almighty that Allah said: "O My slaves, I have made oppression unlawful for Myself and I have made it unlawful among you, so do not oppress one another."[34]*

The following hadith not only forbids oppression but also elevates justice to the level of a divine attribute, making it obligatory on the believer to act justly toward others. The severity of oppression is highlighted in another prophetic warning:

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[32] Quran 6: 135

[33] Aḥmad bin Muṣṭafā Al-Murāghī, Tafsīr al-Murāghī , (Egypt: Sharikat Maktabat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥablī wa Awlādah, 1365 AH), 8:40-41

[34] Muslim Ibn Al- Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim* ،Hadith: 6572.

> *"Beware of the supplication of the oppressed, for there is no barrier between it and Allah."* [35]

These narrations highlight the severity of oppression. Previous nations were perished due to their wrongdoings. Historical examples, such as the punishment of Pharaoh for his injustices against the Children of Israel and the destruction of the people of Prophets Lut and Shu'ayb for their unjust practices, further emphasize the consequences of oppression. Oppression harms not only individuals but also destabilizes communities and erodes social trust. In contrast, by condemning oppression, Islam seeks to establish a just society that uplifts the marginalized, ensuring that the rights of the weak are respected and their voices heard. It is upon this spirit of social justice that the foundation for a balanced and equitable community rests.

Allah has promised that those who oppress and commit wrongdoing that they will ultimately fail and be losers.

7. Circulation of Wealth

The transition from Jahiliyyah ,pre-Islamic ignorance to the era of Islamic justice brought about significant social and economic reforms. One of the most impactful changes was the shift from wealth concentration to wealth circulation, addressing the stark economic disparities of pre-Islamic Arabia.

During the Jahiliyyah period, society was marked by extreme economic polarization, where the wealthy hoarded their riches while poor remained destitute. This unjust system perpetuated social inequality and suffering among the lower classes.

Islam introduced revolutionary economic principles to combat this injustice. Central to these reforms was the concept of wealth circulation, aimed at ensuring that financial resources flowed throughout all segments of society. This was primarily implemented through two key mechanisms. The first key component is Zakat, a mandatory form of almsgiving that is repeatedly emphasized in the Quran and Hadith. Zakat requires wealthy Muslims to distribute a portion of their wealth to those in need.

> *"Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said to Mu`adh when he sent him to Yemen, "You will go to the people of the Scripture. So, when you reach there, invite them to testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah, and that Muhammad is His Apostle. And if they obey you in that, tell them that Allah has enjoined on them five prayers in each day and night. And if they obey you in that tell them that Allah has made it obligatory on them to pay the Zakat which will be taken from the rich among them and given to the poor among them. If they obey you in that, then avoid taking the best of their possessions, and be afraid of the curse of an oppressed person because there is no screen between his invocation and Allah."* [36]

The second important component is voluntary charity, which is strongly

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[35] Muhammad ibn Ismail Al-Bukhari, *Al-Jami' al-Sahih*, Hadith No: 2448.

[36] Muhammad ibn Ismail Al-Bukhari, *Al-Jami' al-Sahih* Al-Bukhari, Hadith No: 1496

encouraged by Islamic teachings and further promotes the spirit of generosity and social responsibility. Allah, Most Great and Glorious, said:

> *"O you who believe! Spend from what we have given to you before a day comes when there will be no trading, no friendship and no intercession"* [37]

Pre-Islamic Arabian society was not devoid of generosity; indeed, many individuals practiced charity. However, what was lacking was a structured economic system to ensure consistent and equitable wealth circulation. Islam introduced comprehensive social reforms that established a framework for systematic wealth distribution. This marked a significant shift from the economic practices of Jahiliyyah to a more just and balanced society.

The transition embodies the article's central theme: the progression from unsystematic practices to one of enlightened and organized social equity under Islamic guidance. To maintain social justice, Islam prohibited practices that hindered wealth circulation, such as usury and hoarding. These reforms ensured that wealth flowed more freely throughout all segments of society, creating a more equitable economic landscape.

8. Protection of Rights of Minorities

Islam introduced a significant shift in the treatment of minorities, revolutionizing the concept of social justice and ensuring the protection of rights for all, including non-Muslims. In pre-Islamic Arab society, minorities were often mistreated and deprived of their basic rights.

One of the obligations of a Muslim state is to ensure that a decent standard of living is available to all its citizens, including non-Muslims and those who are unable to sustain themselves. In the Islamic state, non-Muslims are granted economic privileges and social security. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) urged Muslims to treat non-Muslims with justice and fairness. The protection of minorities, as exemplified in the teachings of Islam and the actions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), established a new paradigm for inter-community relations. For example, he says

> *"Afwan bin Sulaim quoted the authority of a number of the sons of the Companions of God's Messenger who told on the authority of their fathers that God's Messenger said, "If anyone wrongs a man with whom a covenant has been made, or curtails any right of his, or imposes on him more than he can bear, or takes anything from him without his ready agreement, I shall be his adversary on the day of resurrection."* **[38]**

It is reported by Abu Ubaid from Said Bin Al-Musayyab; "The messenger of Allah (PBUH) gave charity to the families of Jews since it is permitted for them. Imam

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[37] Quran 2:254

[38] Muhammad Bin Abdullah Al khatib At Tabrizi, *Mishksat Al Masabin*, (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islam, 1985AD), Hadith: 4047

Muhammad, the pupil of Imam Abu Hanifa, had reported that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH.) sent some property to the people of Mecca to be distributed among the poor people during the period of famine. They were idolaters and were engaged in fighting against Muslims. The Dhimmies were far better than them.[39] Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) set an example by treating non-Muslims who opposed him, his ideology, and even fought against him with fairness and kindness. This means that minorities living in a Muslim state enjoy the best treatment in a Muslim society. They receive all the privileges of Islam, often more than Muslims themselves.

This Islamic perspective on minority rights serves as an example of how Islamic social reforms have altered socio-ethics. Islam established a more equitable and inclusive society than that which existed during the Jahiliyyah period by granting social protection and economic advantages to non-Muslims. In addition to shielding them from discrimination, this reform offered minorities a sense of belonging and mutual respect that was generally lacking in pre-Islamic Arabia.

Conclusion:

The foundational principles of Islamic social justice, which include human equality, brotherhood, piety, and just governance, provide a framework for a balanced society. Islam brought about societal equality through several means. It curbed oppression, introduced concepts of wealth redistribution and liberty, and safeguarded the rights of non-Muslims. The teachings of Islam effectively eradicated the injustice, inequality, and tyranny that were rampant in the pre-Islamic era of ignorance.

The impact of Islam went beyond mere theoretical teachings. Islamic principles were implemented in society through the practical example of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), creating an environment of social harmony. This implementation developed a greater awareness among people of their interconnectedness, emphasizing that they could not exist in isolation from one another.

This transition from Jahiliyyah to Islamic justice was more than a historical event; it represented a paradigm shift in human social organization. Islamic societal reforms provide valuable insights to address contemporary social challenges. These reforms remind us that true faith is manifested in our dealings with fellow human beings and in our commitment to establishing an equitable society. Thus, Islamic principles transformed an ignorant society into one of enlightenment and shifted tribal loyalties toward universal brotherhood.

Therefore, studying the socio-economic factors of pre-Islamic Arabia illustrates the transformational impact of Islamic principles of justice. A vast number of Arabs lived in poor conditions before the adoption of Islam due to prevalent social prejudice and exclusion. Islam introduced a comprehensive system of social justice

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[39] Dr Eshrat Hussain Basri , *Economic Facilities for Non-Muslims in a Muslim Country In the Light of Quran and Sunnah*, (Al-Idah, Vol 32, Issue 1), 57

that prioritized income redistribution, defended the disadvantaged, and promoted the well-being of the community through principles like brotherhood, equality, outlawing oppression, and moral values. These values aimed to abolish unfairness, preserve justice, and create a society that is tolerant and compassionate, embracing everyone's fundamental needs and worth.

The comprehensive social reforms introduced by Islam significantly transformed pre-Islamic Arabian Jahiliyyah society into a just society. The teachings of the Quran and Hadith revolutionized tribal loyalties and arbitrary conventions. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized freedom, equality, justice, the circulation of wealth, a sense of responsibility, and accountability. He provided a divine system of ethics and governance for the protection of everyone's rights.

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