

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Here we must caution against some people who use the word المساواة (equality) as a synonym for العدل; however, this is an error. We should not use the term المساواة because the term implies equality between two things, when conventional wisdom requires a distinction. As a result of this unjust call to equality, people have begun to challenge the difference between the male and the female and wish to synthesise between the both. This call to equality is so extreme that the communist rhetorically asks, "What is the difference between the ruler and the people he rules over? No person should have any authority over another person, not even a father over his son!"

When we use the term العدل (justice), which means to give everything its due, this hazardous concept is removed and the term is preserved on its valid meaning.

For this reason, you will never find in the Qur'aan any verse that states Allah enjoins equality (التسوية); however, what you will find is verses such as

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ ﴾

90. Verily, Allâh enjoins Al-Adl (i.e. justice).

And,

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ ﴾

58. Verily! Allâh commands that You should render back the trusts to those, to whom they are due; and that when You judge between men, You judge with justice.

It is an error to attribute to Islaam the statement that says, "The religion of Islaam is a religion of equality!" Rather, the religion of Islaam is a religion of justice. And therefore, it synthesises between things that should be equal and distinguishes between things that should be separated. If, however, he uses the term 'equality' with the meaning of 'justice', then he is correct in concept but wrong in his choice of word.

If ever the term equality is mentioned in the Qur'aan, it comes in a negative context:

﴿ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾

9. Say: "Are those who know equal to those who know not?"

And

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ أَمْ هَلْ تَسْتَوِي الظُّلُمَاتُ وَالنُّورُ ﴿١٦﴾

16. say: "Is the blind equal to the one who sees? or darkness equal to light?"

And

لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولِي الضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ
وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ ﴿٩٥﴾

95. Not equal are those of the believers who sit (at home), except those who are disabled (by injury or are blind or lame, etc.), and those who strive hard and fight In the Cause of Allâh with their wealth and their lives.

Nowhere in the Qur'an is there an edict for equality; on the contrary, what it does is command is justice.