

The Concept of Social Justice and Integrity in Testimony according to Islam: A Thematic Study of Surah Al-Maidah Verse 8

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Abstract

This article discusses the principles of upholding social justice from the perspective of the Qur'an, focusing on the interpretation of Surah Al-Maidah, verse 8. This verse emphasizes the importance of fairness, both in personal and social matters, requiring Muslims to be objective and not influenced by hatred or animosity. In this context, justice is not only viewed in terms of fair punishment or decision-making, but also in how individuals treat others without discrimination. The interpretation of this verse contains universal values that are relevant in addressing contemporary challenges, such as the protection of human rights, equality, and the maintenance of peace. The research method employed in this study is the library research method, which is a type of research based on library resources. In this approach, the researcher utilizes sources of data that are relevant to the subject matter being investigated. Through both classical and contemporary interpretation, this study aims to explore the profound moral and ethical messages in upholding social justice as conveyed by Allah SWT. The findings show that the Qur'an stresses the importance of justice that prioritizes balance and avoids oppression, while offering guidance for believers to act responsibly in all aspects of life.

Keyword: *Qur'an, Social Justice, Surah Al-Maidah.*

Introduction

"The Qur'an is the speech or Word of Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, the recitation of which is an act of worship." (Al-Qattan, 2011) The Qur'an is the primary source of Islamic teachings and serves as a guide for the life of every Muslim. The Qur'an not only provides guidance on the relationship between humans and their Lord, but also governs the relationship between individuals and others, as well as the relationship between humans and the surrounding environment. One of the important values that humans have that is discussed in the Qur'an is justice.

The Justice is a fundamental principle in Islamic law that serves as the foundation for social, political, and legal structures. Justice is not only viewed as a moral obligation but also as a critical basis for communal life. Islam teaches that every individual has the right to be treated justly, whether in the social realm, distribution of resources, or legal protection. (Salman & Yusuf, 2024)

Islam is a religion that ensures the protection of the rights of society and the establishment of social justice, as seen in matters of judgment and trials. These principles and regulations are outlined in Islamic sources such as the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the judicial practices during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Based on the verses of the Qur'an, Allah SWT explains that the purpose of sending prophets is to bring truth and establish justice, which can only be achieved through the implementation of justice and equality. (Evedi, 2024)

The existence of multiple meanings of the word "justice" leads to differences in opinion regarding justice in the context of law, such as the concept of justice in Islamic inheritance law, for example. When justice is associated with the nature of God, it is understood that every legal provision originating from Him, specifically in the form of revelation known in legal terms as *al-nuṣūṣ*, must be implemented. This is because any regulation that comes from *al-naṣṣ* is inherently a just law. Furthermore, according to Said Nursi, the essence of divine justice can be seen in the aspects of reward and punishment for actions. Allah does this not because of what is visible to the eye, but due to the intent and purpose underlying a particular action. (Nursi, 2005)

Justice is one of the noble qualities required in Islam because it is not only related to *hablum minallah* (the relationship with Allah) but also pertains to human interactions in everyday life in all aspects. The importance of justice is evident in two ways. First, justice is part of the pillars of Islamic law, reflected in more than 40 verses in the Qur'an as well as various

hadiths that discuss matters of justice. Second, the demand for justice is a basic human right, and in its application, Islam does not differentiate based on a person's background, belief, or religion. (Firmanto, 2021)

Allah SWT says in Surah Al-Maidah, verse 8: "O believers! Stand firm for Allah and bear true testimony. Do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just! That is closer to righteousness. And be mindful of Allah. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do." This verse emphasizes the encouragement to uphold justice, which is deeply embedded in the principles of the Qur'an and remains highly relevant to be studied and implemented in the social sphere.

Ahmad Amin (1931) states that the essence of justice cannot be measured authentically, because true justice is only possessed by the absolutely just being, namely Allah SWT, which is reflected in His words that always emphasize the importance of justice. However, justice can be achieved by adhering firmly to the main principles of justice, namely: a) the absence of biased treatment; b) the legal basis should focus on the purpose of what is being done, not on the legal process itself; c) viewing an issue from various perspectives.

Said Nursi states that justice in Islam is not enough just to exist in writing. However, justice must be accompanied by its implementation. This practice can be reflected in decisions made by the judiciary, for example. Nursi gives an example that such a practice can be seen during the time of Caliph Ali bin Abi Talib, who collaborated with the judges at that time in the just enforcement of the law.

The discussion of justice principles in Islam is crucial as it provides insights into how Islamic teachings govern human behavior and societal norms. Justice in Islam is not just a theoretical concept but a practical guideline for interactions in society, including governance, legal decisions, and individual rights. The Qur'an and Hadith emphasize justice as both an ethical standard and a divine command.

The implementation of justice is essential for establishing a fair and harmonious society. Understanding how these principles are applied in various aspects of life highlights their importance in creating an equitable social order. Therefore, it is vital to explore the Islamic concept of justice, especially in terms of addressing inequality and protecting the rights of all individuals.

Based on the background above, researchers are interested in research further about the conduct a deeper study on the noble character of acting justly toward others, particularly when giving testimony as outlined in surah al-Maidah verse 8. The research method employed in this study is the library research method, which is a type of research based on library resources. In this approach, the researcher utilizes sources of data that are relevant to the subject matter being investigated. Library research is conducted by gathering data and information from various library materials. (Subagyo, 1991.)

Discussion

Classification of Surah Al-Maidah

Surah al-Ma'idah was revealed after the Prophet's migration to Medina. Its popular name, al-Ma'idah, literally means "the feast" or "the dish." It is named so because the surah contains a narrative about the feast requested by Prophet Isa (AS), which was asked to be sent down at the request of his followers (verses 112-115). (Shihab, 2010) Surah al-Ma'idah is the 5th surah in the Qur'an. It consists of 120 verses and is classified as a Medinan surah. Although some verses were revealed in Mecca, this surah was revealed after Prophet Muhammad migrated to Medina, during the time of his farewell pilgrimage (Hajj al-Wada). (Dahlan, dkk, 1991)

Surah al-Ma'idah is also known as Sûrah al-'Uqûd (The Contracts), because its first verse commands the believers to fulfill the terms of various covenants. It is also called Surah al-Akhyâr, meaning "the good people," because those who adhere to its guidance regarding various agreements are undoubtedly good people.

Asbabun Nuzul of Surah Al-Maidah Verse 8

The purpose of the study of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* is to uncover the historical context and specific events that served as the background for the revelation of particular Qur'anic verses. Through an analysis of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, one can identify verses that are linked to particular preceding causes, those that clarify such contexts, and those that constitute legal or theological responses to these causes.

Accordingly, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* plays a critical role in determining whether a verse should be interpreted in a general sense ('*ām*) or with reference to the specific circumstances (*khāṣ*) of its revelation. This field of study also investigates the authenticity of the verse in relation to the socio-historical context, including the incidents and individuals involved, thereby providing a comprehensive account of the factual background surrounding the verse's revelation. (Nurqomariah & Dahliana, 2024) This understanding aids in the accurate interpretation of the verses and in comprehending the messages they convey. Such is the case with the *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* of Surah al-Mā'idah, verse 8.

۸ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوِّمِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ ءَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ؕ ءَاعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
« O believers! Stand firm for Allah and bear true testimony. Do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just! That is closer to righteousness. And be mindful of Allah. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do. »

The *Asbabun Nuzul* (context of revelation) of Surah Al-Maidah, verse 8, originates from the story of the Jewish tribe Banu Nadir, who planned to expel the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Allah then revealed to the Prophet regarding this plot, allowing him to escape from their treachery. The Prophet subsequently commanded them to leave Madinah, but they rejected this order, deciding instead to remain and take refuge behind their fortress.

The Prophet Muhammad and his companions then proceeded to the area where the Banu Nadir were hiding, and the Prophet instructed his companions to blockade them for six nights. During this time, the Jewish tribe faced severe hardships, which eventually led them to surrender and request permission to leave, taking only what their camels could carry. At this point, some of the Muslim companions suggested that the Jews should be punished as a lesson to others.

However, Allah revealed Surah Al-Maidah, verse 8, as a reminder to the Muslims not to exceed the limits of retribution or seek excessive revenge, such as engaging in practices like *at-Tamtsil* (mutilating the bodies of the slain) or *at-Tasywiḥ* (disfiguring the dead). Ultimately, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) granted the request of the Jewish tribe and allowed them to leave, setting them free. (Wahbah, 2018)

Keyword of Surah Al-Maidah Verse 8

In surah Al-Maidah verse 8 above, the key word in the verse is *I'dilu*. The word *I'dilu* comes from the Arabic word '*adlum*', which etymologically means straight, honest, balanced and a middle attitude. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), fair is equal; not biased; impartial, side with the right; adhere to the truth, and properly; not arbitrary.

In the Tafsir Al-Misbah, the word (عدل) *al-'adl* is derived from the root word (عدل) '*adala*', which consists of the letters '*ain, dal, and lam*'. This combination of letters carries two opposing meanings, namely straight and equal, as well as crooked and different (Quraish, 2002). In al-Munir's Tafsir, the word *i'dilu* in this verse is to act fairly to anyone, both enemies and friends. (Az-Zuhaili, 2018)

The word "*adl*" in its various forms appears in Qur'an 28 times. The original form of the word "*adl*" is mentioned 13 times, namely in QS al-Baqarah: 48, 123, and 282 (twice), QS an-Nisa: 58, QS al-Maidah: 95 (twice) and 106, QS al-An'am: 70, QS an-Nahl: 76 and 90, QS al-Hujurat: 9, and QS at-Talaq: 2. (Al-Maraghi, 1992)

Ibn Manzur in Lisan al-'Arab defines the meaning of *adil* as:

ما قام في النفس أنه
مستقيم وهو ضد الجور

which means something that is established in the soul in a straight condition, and its opposite is deviation. Meanwhile, Ibnu Faris in *Mu'jam Maqayis al-Lughah* explains that this verb is rooted in the letters '*ain, dal, and lam*'; ل د ع, with the primary meaning being *istiwā'* استواء, which means a state of being straight, equal, and *i'wijāj* اعوجاج, which means a state of deviation. And the opposite of *adil* is *al-Jur* الجور, which means deviation.

Interpretation by Ulama'

To comprehend the meaning and concept of justice itself, an in-depth study of the Qur'an is necessary. The Qur'an functions as a comprehensive guide to life, meticulously arranged for human beings. However, there is often a lack of depth in interpreting the context of certain revealed verses. This limited understanding can lead readers to interpret the verses only in a literal sense, which may prevent the intended meanings and purposes from being properly conveyed. To uncover the deeper significance and message of the verses, further explanation is required—one of the primary methods for achieving this is through *tafsīr* (interpretation). (Auliya & Dahliana, 2023)

Before explaining the tafsir (interpretation) of verse 8 of Surah al-Ma'idah, it is important to first clarify the *munāsabah* (connection) of this verse with the previous verses. Verse 8 of Surah al-Ma'idah is a continuation of verses 1 to 7, which describe Allah's command to His servants to fulfill their promises in general, mentioning His blessings by allowing them to consume good and lawful foods while prohibiting the unlawful ones. Then, in Surah al-Ma'idah, verse 8, Allah explains how we should behave toward others, whether they are People of the Book, enemies, or friends and relatives. (Al-Maraghi, 1992)

Next, the *munāsabah* (connection) between Surah al-Ma'idah, verse 8, and verse 10 is explained. In verse 8, Allah outlines how we should behave toward others, whether they are People of the Book, enemies, or friends and relatives. Meanwhile, Surah al-Ma'idah, verse 10, explains that the Jews and Christians often break their promises. (Dasuki, 1995)

According to Professor Quraish Shihab in *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, this verse calls: "O you who have believed [يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا], be qawwamin [قَوَّامِينَ], meaning individuals who always carry out their duties wholeheartedly and sincerely, doing their best towards women and others, upholding the truth for the sake of Allah, and bearing witness with justice [شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ]. "Let not hatred for a people incite you to act unjustly [وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَا نُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا], whether against the family of a wife who is Ahl al-Kitab or against others." "Be just [اعْدِلُوا] to anyone, even if it means being just with yourself, for justice is closer to true piety [هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ] than injustice. And fear Allah, for indeed Allah is All-Knowing of what you do [وَاتَّقُوا]. [اللَّهُ لَمَّا لَللَّهِ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ]." (Shihab, 2021).

Meanwhile, according to the interpretation of Ibn Kathir: In His words, Allah says: "O you who have believed, be among those who consistently uphold (the truth) for the sake of Allah." This means be those who uphold the truth for the

sake of Allah, not for the sake of humans or personal pride. "...be witnesses in justice." This means upholding justice, not oppression.

It is mentioned in the *Sahihain* from An-Nu'man ibn Bashir, who recounts that his father had given him a valuable gift. His mother, Amrah bint Rawwahah, said, "I will not be content until you have this gift witnessed by the Messenger of Allah." His father went to the Messenger of Allah to request a testimony regarding the gift. The Prophet asked: "Did you give the same gift to all of your children?" His father replied, "No." The Prophet then said: "Fear Allah and be just with your children." The Prophet also said: "I will not bear witness to oppression." An-Nu'man ibn Bashir continued the story, stating that his father then returned and revoked the gift.

In the *Tafsir Ringkas* by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, it is explained that Surah Al-Maidah, verse 8 provides guidance for Muslims to act justly, not only towards fellow Muslims but also towards anyone, even those whom they dislike. "O you who have believed! Be upholders of justice, meaning those who always and sincerely uphold the truth for the sake of Allah. When you bear witness, do so justly. And let not your hatred for a people, such as non-believers or anyone else, cause you to act unjustly towards them. Be just toward anyone, for justice is closer to piety. And fear Allah by carrying out His commands and avoiding His prohibitions. Indeed, Allah is All-Watchful, All-Knowing of what you do, both openly and secretly. In this verse, Allah promises reward for those who believe and perform righteous deeds. Allah has promised forgiveness to those who speak in accordance with their hearts and prove it through righteous actions, granting them forgiveness for their sins and a great reward in the form of Paradise."

Contextualization of Justice in Surah Al-Maidah verse 8

Justice is the act of placing everything in its rightful place in a fair manner and granting equal rights according to an individual's capacity and ability to carry out a task. In Islam, justice encompasses all aspects of human life in a balanced and comprehensive manner. (Tim Akhlak, 2003) Justice in Islam is not confined to the implementation of law but extends to moral, social, economic, and political dimensions, all of which are addressed in various verses of the Qur'an. (Labiibah, 2024)

Justice is placing everything in its rightful place. If someone gives a right to someone who is not entitled to it, it means they have placed something in the wrong place. This is considered unjust, as it goes against the commands of Allah. In a social context, the Qur'an interprets justice as a form of equality, that is, equality in rights, regardless of who, from whom the decision will be given by the person who is handed over to uphold justice.

Justice in Islam is not only a crucial element in social life but also a tangible manifestation of piety towards Allah. Every Muslim is expected to uphold justice wholeheartedly, free from personal emotions or biases towards others. This reflects the depth of spiritual awareness and consciousness of Allah's surveillance over every human action. Thus, upholding social justice, even towards those one may not like, is both a social responsibility and a profound spiritual obligation, reflecting the integrity of faith and full obedience to Allah's will. (Idris, 2023)

The principles of justice in Islam also emphasize the importance of accountability, where individuals are responsible for their actions and must answer to Allah for any injustice they commit. This accountability fosters a sense of moral responsibility that contributes to the overall well-being of society, aligning both spiritual and social values. The ideal society envisioned in Islam is one where justice prevails, and every individual is treated with dignity and respect, irrespective of their status, wealth, or background.

Upholding Integrity in Giving Testimony as a Religious Obligation in Islam

Surah Al-Maidah, verse 8 clearly commands the believers to be *Qawwamin*, as indicated in the phrase "كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ" (Be steadfast in your commitment to Allah), meaning individuals who are dedicated and wholeheartedly committed to upholding justice and fulfilling their social duties to the best of their abilities. This verse emphasizes that in seeking truth for the sake of Allah, every believer must act as a just witness. Hatred toward any group must not lead to injustice, whether towards family members, a wife who is Ahl al-Kitab, or any other group. Allah affirms that justice is closer to true piety, and Allah is All-Knowing of the deeds of humankind. (Shihab, 2021).

This verse also addresses disputes, stating that when a conflict arises between Masyhud Lahu (the party benefiting from the testimony) and Masyhud Alaīh (the party harmed by the testimony), both parties must present fair and truthful witnesses. The objective is for the witnesses to clarify the matter for the judge, enabling the judge to render a verdict based on the witness's testimony. Additionally, the judge is prohibited from issuing an unjust decision that would result in unfairness in the ruling. (Az-Zuhaili, 2018)

A believer who is asked to testify in a case is required to be a fair witness. Justice, in this context, means being impartial, unaffected by love or hatred, friendship or animosity, wealth or poverty. When giving testimony, one must state only what they truly know, even if the testimony benefits someone they dislike or harms someone they favor.

This verse also serves as a reminder that hatred toward a group should not serve as a justification for providing false testimony. It illustrates that the essence of piety lies in offering justice to whomever it is due, regardless of their faith, in an objective, honest, and just manner, solely for the sake of Allah SWT, and not to gain praise from humans.

The justice taught in Surah Al-Maidah, verse 8 functions as a balancing force in society, ensuring that every individual receives equal treatment without discrimination. Furthermore, this principle of justice demands that every decision made, whether by an individual or a ruler, be based on the values of honesty and wisdom. In this context, Muslims are taught to be just not only in significant matters but also in daily life, including social, economic, and political interactions. Therefore, justice becomes the foundation for relationships between individuals, as well as the cornerstone for creating a harmonious and prosperous society that brings people closer to Allah.

The Application of Social Justice Values from Surah al-Maidah in Society

Surah al-Maidah verse 8 explains that justice is closely linked to piety. A person who acts justly is considered pious, whereas one who fails to uphold justice—manifested through unjust or oppressive actions—is not regarded as pious. Only those who are just (and therefore pious) are capable of bringing prosperity to their society. For a Muslim, justice entails addressing basic human needs such as hunger, thirst, and other essential conditions. In other words, justice within society necessitates the cultivation of empathy toward others. (Rangkuti, 2017)

Basically, the enforcement of social justice is not only a form of social contract but also a responsibility towards Allah. Even the Qur'an emphasizes that this universe is established on the basis of justice. Islam is a regulation and guidance for everyone, how to be worthy of being a member of a just and prosperous society, even the freedom of people in the household is guaranteed, and other people may not interfere with their freedom (Hamka, 1984)

The application of justice from Surah al-Maidah in daily life is essential for fostering a just and harmonious society. Muslims are encouraged to reflect justice in their interactions by treating others with respect, honesty, and empathy. This involves making decisions that prioritize the welfare of others, whether in personal relationships, business, or community life. For example, in business, Muslims are expected to engage in fair trade, ensuring everyone gets their rightful due without exploitation. In family life, justice means treating all members equally and resolving conflicts fairly.

The application of justice also involves handling disagreements and conflicts impartially. Surah al-Maidah encourages believers to resolve disputes without bias, ensuring all parties are treated equitably. In practice, this can mean addressing workplace grievances fairly, offering equal opportunities, and standing up for those who are oppressed. By applying these principles consistently, Muslims help create a society where dignity and rights are upheld, contributing to unity and a more balanced community.

Conclusion

Justice is an essential quality that must be upheld in the life of society, the nation, and the state. Without justice, the order within society, the nation, and the state will collapse, and prosperity will be unattainable. In a social context, the Qur'an interprets justice as a form of equality, that is, equality in rights, regardless of who, from whom the decision will be given by the person who is handed over to uphold justice.

A Muslim must uphold social justice in all circumstances, toward anyone, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, or position. Justice must be maintained both toward those who are loved and toward those who are despised. Islam commands that the truth be given to those who are entitled to it, even if this justice harms a friend and benefits an enemy. For example, when giving testimony, one must testify only to what they know, without adding, subtracting, altering, or changing any details. Islam forbids oppression, whether it is the oppression of the strong against the weak or the oppression of rulers against their people.

The context of social justice in Surah Al-Maidah verse 8 teaches Muslims to always uphold justice with the principle of equality, one of which is giving testimony, without being influenced by hatred or personal interests. Justice in Islam is not only about providing rights objectively, but is also closely related to devotion to Allah, which is the moral and spiritual basis for every act of justice. This verse emphasizes that justice is the essence of harmonious social life and true peace, which will ultimately bring a Muslim closer to Allah.

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