



## Critical Analysis of Sunni Theological Schools' Views on Divine Justice from the Perspective of Shahid Motahhari

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### **Abstract**

One of the topics that "Ash'areh, Mu'tazila, and Imamiyyah" have put at the forefront of their discussions for specific religious and historical reasons is divine justice, which means that God acts righteously in the system of creation and legislation. In this article, by using the library method and data analysis, while expressing Shahid Motahhari's point of view on the semantics of the word justice, the point of view of Sunni theological schools in this regard has been analyzed, and the conclusion has been reached that Shahid Motahhari has given four meanings for this word: balance, equality, respect for rights, and respect for entitlements. He, after criticizing the views of the Ash'areh - which favors determinism and necessity and the incompatibility of justice with intrinsic monotheism - and the Mu'tazila - who favors justice and free will - puts forward the Imamiyyah view, which is the principle of justice without damage to verbal and intrinsic monotheism by affirming the free will of man, and considers it a superior view.

**Keywords:** *Divine justice; Imamiyyah; Ash'areh; Mu'tazila; Monotheism; Motahhari*

### **1. Introduction**

One of the important topics in theological science is divine justice, which is whether God is just or not. This issue became so important and had many branches that its scope was also extended to the issue of social justice. Regarding the importance of justice, it is enough that the Qur'an says, "Indeed Allah enjoins justice" (Al-Nahl/90). People who do not behave justly, firstly, have not obeyed God's order, which is one of the great sins, and secondly, they will be cruel and oppressive (Najafi, 1398 AH). Also, this issue is important because, in addition to the plan in the class of theologians and philosophers, it also takes place at the lower and popular level (Motahhari, 1384 SH). This issue became even more important than the topic of the accident or the antiquity of the word of God, so that by denying and proving the issue of justice, the speakers in this field were divided into two groups: justice and non-justice, justice as supporters of the principle of divine justice, including Shia and Mu'tazila, and non-justice who deny the principle of divine justice, called Ahl al-Hadith or Ash'areh. Since the majority of Shia scholars are from the judiciary, since ancient times, it has been common for Shia to say that the

principles of the Islamic religion are five: monotheism, justice, prophethood, imamate, and resurrection. One of the people who is especially important is Shahid Motahhari; therefore, this research, while explaining, finding the roots, and stating the background of the subject of divine justice, criticizes and examines the views of the Ash'areh and Mu'tazila regarding this matter and finally expresses the superior view of the look of Shahid Motahhari. But before that, the semantics of the word justice are necessary from his point of view.

## ***2. The Semantics of the Word Justice from the Perspective of Shahid Motahhari***

The word justice literally means moderation in actions (Mostafavi, 1360 SH), equality (Ragheb; Qorashi, 1371 SH), redemption or like (Toreihi, 1375 SH), and ruling on the truth it is mentioned (Farahidi, 1410 AH). In the meantime, the author of the dictionary considered the principle of justice to be equality and considered all the above meanings as examples of this meaning (Qorashi, 1371 SH). It should be mentioned that some have used justice in the meaning of wisdom and considered it synonymous (Kharrazi, 1418 AH).

According to Shahid Motahhari, there are four meanings or uses for this word.

### **2.1. Balance**

One of the meanings of justice from the point of view of Shahid Motahhari is to be balanced. This word means complying with the conditions in a set in terms of the necessary amount of each component and the quality of the relationship between the components in order to preserve that set, make the work desirable, and fulfill its role. In this sense, justice is one of God's All-knowing and All-wise affairs. Because God knows, according to His general knowledge and wisdom, how much is necessary and needful for the construction of anything, and He puts the same amount in it (Motahhari, *ibid.*). The Qur'an has also mentioned this issue in the system of creation of the sky: "He raised the heaven high and set up the balance" (Al-Rahman/7). As some commentators have said (Tabarsi, 1377 SH), the meaning is that in the construction of the world, balance has been observed and every material has been used as much as necessary. In the hadith of the Prophet, it is also mentioned in this sense: "With justice, the stature of the heavens and the earth" (Feiz Kashani, 1415 AH).

Shahid Motahhari (*ibid.*) states that the opposite of justice in this sense is disproportionality, not oppression. Therefore, this meaning is outside the category of divine justice, and people who want to answer the problems related to divine justice in terms of discrimination, differences, and evils, instead of designing the issue in terms of justice and oppression, have designed it in terms of proportionality and lack thereof. And they have satisfied themselves that all these things are necessary from the point of view of the general system of the world, but this matter does not answer the suspicion of oppression. Because the discussion of justice means proportionality, as opposed to disproportionality, in terms of the whole world system, the discussion of justice versus injustice is different from the point of view of each person, and each component is separate from other components.

### **2.2. Equality and Negation of Any Discrimination**

Another meaning of justice, from the point of view of Shahid Motahhari, is equality. According to him, justice here means observing equality in the field of equal entitlements, and justice requires such equality (*ibid.*). Therefore, what is meant by this meaning is not that justice requires that no entitlement be observed and that everyone and everything be treated equally, because this is injustice and is contrary to justice.

### **2.3. Respecting People's Rights and Giving Rights to Every Right Holder**

According to Shahid Motahhari's opinion, therefore, the true meaning of human social justice is justice that must be observed in human law and respected by people. This justice is based on two things: rights and priorities; that is, human beings find some kind of rights and priority in comparison with each other. And the other is the intrinsic characteristic of human beings, who are created in such a way that in their works, they necessarily use a kind of verb called credit thoughts, and by using it, they reach their natural goals and make dos and don'ts (ibid.). Shahid Motahhari (ibid.) states that this meaning of justice is one of human coordinates and does not have a way in a large field because God is the absolute owner, and no creature has priority over anything compared to Him, and whatever He takes possession of, He has taken possession of something that belongs to Him in all existence. Therefore, oppression in this sense, in the sense of encroaching on another's priority, usurping his rights, and trampling on his sanctity, is impossible for him.

### **2.4. Observance of the Rights in the Emanation of Existence and Not Refusing to Be Emanation and Merciful to What is Possible or Perfect**

From Shahid Motahhari's point of view, this means that beings in the system of existence are different from each other in terms of their abilities and the possibility of receiving grace from the origin of existence. According to this theory, divine justice in the system of creation means that every being, every degree of existence, and every perfection of existence receives what it deserves. According to the sages, the attribute of justice, as it is worthy of God's essence, has this meaning, and the attribute of injustice, which is a defect and is taken away from him, is also, in the same sense, the prohibition of the grace and blessings from a deserving being. The sages believe that no creature can find a right "over God" that giving that right is considered "doing one's duty" and "paying one's religion" and that God is just because He fulfills His duties towards others with care. God's justice is the essence of his grace, forgiveness and essence; that is, He does not withhold His grace from any being to any extent that it is possible to give grace to it (ibid.; also see Motahhari, 1380 SH). This meaning is in the words of Hazrat Amir (AS), where he says, "The right is not one-sided. Whoever finds a right over another, the other will also find a right over him. It is only the essence of unity that gives rights to beings. He has, and creatures find duty and responsibility towards him, but no creature finds a right over him" (Nahj al-Balagha, sermon 214).

### **3. The View of Ash'areh about Divine Justice**

The Ash'areh interpret justice in such a way that such an interpretation means denying justice from the Mu'tazila's point of view. And otherwise, the Ash'areh are never ready to be called justice deniers. They believe that justice is not a truth that can be described and set a standard for God's actions. Because setting a criterion for a divine act is a kind of assignment, determination, restriction, limitation, and free will for the essence of truth, and this is against God's absolute supremacy and omnipotence. The meaning of the instinct of justice being just is not that he follows previous laws called the laws of justice, but rather that he is the source of justice; what he does is justice, not that what is justice, he does it. Justice and oppression are far from and removed from God's actions. In other words, justice is not the measure of God's actions; God's actions are the measure of justice. They believe that no action is inherently justice and no action is inherently oppression. Whatever God does is the essence of justice. For example, if God punishes the obedient and rewards the disobedient, it is a sign of justice. Also, if God creates servants without any power and then sends sin into their hands and then punishes them, it is not injustice in itself. If we assume that God does this, then it is the object of justice (Mofid, 1414 AH).

### **4. Mu'tazila's View on Divine Justice**

According to the Mu'tazila, the meaning of justice is that it is not permissible for God to create human actions and to punish them through ugly actions, such a thing is not worthy of the position of

Lordship, and that, in principle, God has not assigned His providence to the creation of all creatures, nor does He have power over all of them. And He did not create the actions of humans, both good and bad, and He did not will anything other than what He commanded in the Sharia, and everything other than that is without God's providence. They believe that some actions are intrinsically justice and some are oppression. For example, rewarding the obedient and punishing the disobedient is justice in itself, and "God is just" means that he rewards the obedient and punishes the disobedient, and it is impossible for him to act against this. Therefore, punishing the obedient and rewarding the disobedient is injustice in itself, and it is impossible for God to commit it. Also, forcing a servant to commit a sin or creating him without power and then creating the sin by his hand and finally punishing him is injustice, and God never does injustice (ibid).

### ***5. Defects of Mu'tazilah and Ash'areh towards Each Other***

Ash'areh and Mu'tazila, each in the field of divine justice, in order to confirm their opinions, have rejected the view of the opposite school and have cited reasons in this regard. Martyr Motahari, after narrating the views of both groups, went on to express their objections to each other and said: The criticism that the Ash'areh had against the Mu'tazila, and the Mu'tazila did not have a correct answer to this, was that the principle of justice is incompatible with the verbal monotheism and rather with the intrinsic monotheism. Because the authority of Mu'tazila is a kind of "delegation" and it is against monotheism of verbs, which is proof and also visible throughout the Qur'an. Because this work is actually ascribing a partner in the activity to God, and the explicit text of the Qur'an rejects it: "and say, 'All praise belongs to Allah, who has neither taken any son, nor has He any partner in sovereignty, nor has He any wali out of weakness,' and magnify Him with a magnification [worthy of Him]" (Isra'/ 111). Just as the wisdom that the Mu'tazila assumes in God's actions is contrary to his intrinsic monotheism, because if a person does his actions for the sake of goals, he is in fact under the influence of those goals, and in fact, a determinism rules on her from the side of that goal, while God is free from any coercion. Also, the Ash'areh claimed that the issue of goodness and intrinsic ugliness is rational and the judgment that God's actions should be performed according to the criteria of these goodness and ugliness is a kind of assignment for God (Motahhari, 1384 SH). In short, according to the Ash'areh, what the Mu'tazila have proposed in the name of justice, wisdom, goodness, and intellectual ugliness is a type of analogy between the creator and the creature and contradicts the monotheism of God's intrinsic and verbal.

On the other hand, the Mu'tazila considered the beliefs of the Ash'areh to be against the principle of "Tanziyyah" which is stated in the Qur'an, and said: The necessity of Ash'areh beliefs is to attribute to God things that He is free from, while the Qur'an has specified that God is free from cruelty, vanity, and immorality. Mu'tazila says: If it is based on the fact that there is no justice and will, then we should consider God as a tyrant who created needy servants, made them responsible, and, as a result, punished them. And since God is the main doer of things, then it is God who commits prostitution, not the servant; and because according to the Ash'ari belief, God's action is devoid of any purpose, then God is a useless work. Therefore, the necessity of Ash'areh beliefs is to attribute to God such things as oppression, vanity, and immorality, while God is disowned by them according to the argument and the Quran (Motahhari, ibid)<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Although there are many issues in dispute between Ash'areh and Mu'tazila, the most important of them is the issue of justice and monotheism. There is no difference between Muslims in intrinsic monotheism and worship, but in the field of attribute monotheism, Ash'areh rejected monotheism and favored proliferation. This is while in verbal monotheism, Ash'areh tended to monotheism and the Mu'tazilah to pluralism (Motahhari, 1384 SH).

## ***6. Criticism of the Views of Ash'areh and Mu'tazila from the Perspective of Shahid Motahhari***

After expressing the views of the two schools, Shahid Motahhari mentions that each of the Ash'areh and Mu'tazila schools has a strong point and a weak point. The strength of each is in the objections they have taken from each other, and the weakness is where they try to defend their school as a comprehensive school by proving its invalidity without being aware of the problems they face. In the continuation of the discussion, Shahid Motahhari pointed out two examples of these cases (see Motahhari, *ibid.*) and further says: "Mu'tazila believe in the attribute monotheism, but the Ash'areh are in favor of superfluous attributes that are contrary to the essence, such as knowledge or power, unlike the Mu'tazila who do not believe in attributes that are contrary to the essence. Mu'tazila consider the belief of Ash'areh about God's attributes to be a form of polytheism and say: The necessity of Ash'areh's statement is that we should consider other ancient lineages along with God's instinct, and since being ancient is equal to negation of disability and creation, and it is associated with intrinsic richness, so according to the Ash'areh faith, there is "ancient" and "rich in essence" according to the number of attributes of the Almighty, so there is God according to the number of God's attributes. But since the Mu'tazila themselves believe in the absence of attributes that are contrary to the essence, naturally they do not believe in more than one ancient. But in the same way that they have brought some objections to the Ash'areh in the attribute monotheism, they have a weak and unfounded view in the attribute monotheism. Because they raised the issue of the substitution of instinct for attributes, which is a major weakness in the Mu'tazila school" (*ibid.*).

Shahid Motahhari considers the other weak point of the Ash'areh school to be that, apart from the fact that the Ash'areh school could not justify the issues of justice, reason, free will, and wisdom, it also failed in the issue of monotheism, which it showed great sensitivity towards. They were forced to deny the inherent system of cause and effect under the pretext of verbal monotheism and consider everything to be derived from God's will without the intervention of any intermediary. While such an opinion is against the simplicity, greatness, and splendor of God's nature (*ibid.*).

Finally, Shahid Motahhari makes a common criticism of both schools, which is as follows: "Both saw themselves as hesitant between justice and monotheism of verbs." The Mu'tazila, in their opinion, sacrificed verbal monotheism for justice, and the Ash'areh, in their opinion, sacrificed justice for verbal monotheism. But in reality, neither the Mu'tazila were able to justify justice in a correct way, nor did the Ash'areh reach the depths of verbal monotheism" (*ibid.*).

## ***7. Expressing the Superior Point of View about Divine Justice from the Perspective of Shahid Motahhari***

Shahid Motahhari, after criticizing the views of Ash'areh and Mu'tazila, considers the Shi'a view to be the superior view in this field and states that in the Shi'a theological and philosophical school, the most profound issues in the fields of justice and monotheism have been raised. In four famous issues, i.e., justice, reason, ability, and wisdom, the side of the Mu'tazila was supported, and for this reason, the Shi'a were considered part of the "Adliyyah". But in the Shiite school, there are differences in the concept of each of these four items with what the Mu'tazila believe in.

These differences are as follows: In the Shi'a school, free will has never been interpreted as "delegation", which is a type of deprivation of free will from God and a type of independence in activity and deification for man, which is naturally associated with polytheism, but the Imams (AS) have put forward the principle of "la jabr wa la tafwidh bal Amr Bayn al-Amrayn: no predestination and no delegation, but a matter between the matters". In this school, the principle of justice and the wise system of the world, without the slightest blow to verbal monotheism or intrinsic monotheism, is confirmed and established in its comprehensive sense, and justice is placed next to monotheism, and it is said: "Al-Adl and al-Tawhid of the Alawiyyan, and al-Jabr and al-Tashbih of the Umawiyyan" (Sobhani, 1409 AH). Man's free will was proved without his being a partner in the divine kingdom and the subjugation of God's will, and Qadha and Qadar, without leading to determinism for man. But in the field of

monotheism, Shi'a is in favor of attribute monotheism, in favor of Mu'tazila and against Ash'areh, with the difference that the work of Mu'tazila leads to the negation of attributes and substituting essence for attributes, but Shi'a believes in the union of attributes with essence and the objectivity of essence with attributes. And in the monotheism of verbs, he agrees with Ash'areh, with the difference that he did not negate the system of cause and effect (Motahhari, 1384 SH).

### **Conclusion**

Examining Shahid Motahhari's view on justice and his analysis of theological schools' beliefs led to the following results:

1. There are four meanings for justice; according to the sages, the attribute of justice, as it is worthy of God's essence, means "respecting the entitlements in the emanation of existence and not refusing mercy to what is possible to exist or existence perfection".
2. The views of the theologians are different in the field of divine justice; some of them are in favor of justice and free will; they form the religion of Mu'tazila; and those who are in favor of determinism are called Ash'areh. Ash'areh criticized the Mu'tazila by citing that the principle of justice is incompatible with intrinsic monotheism. The Mu'tazila, on the other hand, considered the opinions of the Ash'areh in this regard to be against the principle of Tanziyyah. But from the point of view of Shahid Motahhari, the view of Imamiyyah is the superior view because they put forward the principle of justice without damaging intrinsic monotheism and verbal monotheism by affirming the free will of man.

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