

Islam Encourages Reconciliation

Introduction:

In Islam, it is important to distinguish the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation, as they are both not the same state. As prerequisite, Islam rules that there cannot be reconciliation, without first reaching forgiveness between aggrieved parties. The application of reconciliation is not limited to wars and conflicts between countries as parties, but also applies to resolving non-warring tense situations within communities and within the household administrations.

Discussion on Islam Encourages Reconciliation:

- 1) Without forgiveness, reconciliation is doomed to fail. Inasmuch as certain medicines are cure for certain illnesses, forgiveness is the cure for existence of conflict between two parties¹. Utterance of forgiveness, whether or not the person uttering so is aware, is effectively holding Almighty God as Witness² that the person is forgiving the other person. A point often overlooked is that forgiveness is solo as an internal discipline of the forgiver, whereas reconciliation must be an outward demonstration, so that the other party or person is able to see, follow and understand. Hence reconciliation becomes mutually joint between the parties to be involved.
- 2) Forgiveness is unconditional and does not require the other party to respond equally or at all. Whereas reconciliation is conditional on both parties reaching an acceptable position, on which an agreement can be reached and hence is a compromise or a process in peace-making. Some people are sometimes rather hesitant to forgive and reach assumptions that reconciliation would come about naturally. This is a common mistake and both forgiveness and reconciliation are separate processes. One person can forgive but it takes two or all parties to commonly reconcile.
- 3) One of the most common cause of disputes and conflicts is both direct and indirect aggression. Islam forbids originating aggression by Muslims but allows certain conditional defensive response to aggression by other parties, only insofar as the aggressor aggresses and Muslims are required

¹ Two parties may be taken to mean countries, communities, districts or groups of people and within family.

² This fact must never be denied by all Muslims. The Holy Qur'an states at HQ9:78 "Do they not know that Allah knows their hidden thoughts and their secret counsels, and that Allah is the great Knower of the unseen things?"

to defend³. If Muslims did not defend throughout history, there would not be Muslims left in the world. This aspect is most magnificently stated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ2:190** *“And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you but do not be aggressive. Surely Allah does not love the aggressors.”*

- 4) In a nutshell therefore, Muslims are only allowed to fight back in self-defence, but once the aggressor stops the aggression, then the Muslims must also stop fighting back, negotiate reaching forgiveness with both sides of the conflict and then enter into a reconciliation.
- 5) Ideally, reconciliation prompts the involvement of an independent third party as the negotiator. Islam requires and invites people to forgive faults. This requirement is for all people of all ages and both genders. The Islamic philosophy of asking people to forgive was also practised by the previous prophets, prior to Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*). The case study of Prophet Abraham forgiving his sire⁴ was going to happen as promised; but when Prophet Abraham found out with proof that his sire was against Almighty God, he then decided to disassociate himself from his sire. Prophet Abraham was tender-hearted and forbearing.
- 6) Reconciliation also applies to family circles. The Holy Qur'an makes a declaration that whoever involves in matters of charity and reconciliation, then that person is promised rewards from Almighty God. The Holy Qur'an recommends reconciliation between spouses, following serious disagreements and reconciliation is better than allowing issues to worsen into deeper seriousness. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an has several quotations on advantages of reconciliation. The common denominator of Islam and Muslim is peace.
- 7) It is reiterated that involvement of a third party is best recommended for both sides to be able to identify misunderstanding, seek forgiveness and then enter into reconciliation. One of the most common areas of disagreements is family matters. The Holy Qur'an provides the following example as guidelines at **HQ4:128** *“And if a woman fears ill-usage from*

³ A common occurrence during the early stages in the life Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) was rejection of his preaching about One God as the Almighty God. Most of the communities within and surrounding Mecca comprised a mix of various idolaters, various polytheists and the followers of Mithraism. None of these had any direct links to the 124,000 past prophets, who were ordained by revelation. These communities of idolaters, polytheists and Mithraism were so deeply entrenched in their practices, that they were ready to kill Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) and consequently many wars flared between the Muslims and their oppositions. Most notable of these wars were the Battle of Badr (624AD), the Battle of Uhud (625AD) and the Battle of Trench (627AD).

⁴ The “sire” refers to an ancestor of Prophet Abraham, whose name was Azar but not necessarily his father. Prophet Abraham had disassociated with this “sire” (paternal relative) after it became clear to Prophet Abraham that this “sire” will not change and eventually the “sire” died as an idolater.

her husband or desertion, there is no blame on the two of them if they effect a reconciliation between them. And reconciliation is better. And greed is met with in (people's) minds. And if you do good (to others) and keep your duty, surely Allah is ever Aware of what you do."

- 8) Sometimes matters of family disputes, such as matrimonial matters, can become most difficult to resolve and takes final recourse to divorce. The divorced wife must remain not remarried for at least three months as safe margin waiting period. On the contrary, after the divorce has been invoked and the wife has been found to be pregnant, within the prescribed waiting time of three months⁵, this may soften the tenseness of the divorce and if the husband wants to take his divorced wife back because of his unborn child, then the opportunity for reconciliation is permitted by the Holy Qur'an. This is stipulated at **HQ2:228** *"Divorced women should keep themselves in waiting for three courses. And it is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they believe in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands have a better right to take them back in the meanwhile if they wish for reconciliation. And women have rights similar to those against them in a just manner, and men are a degree above them. And Allah is Mighty, Wise."*
- 9) As stressed in the previous article on "Islam Encourages Forgiveness" it is reiterated that there is no prescribed forgiveness for practices of hypocrisy. Whereas the Holy Qur'an has made succinctly clear that hypocrites, who alternate their allegiances between worshipping Almighty God and worshipping of idolatry, worshipping of polytheism and belief and practicing of astrology, will not be forgiven: even if the requests were made seventy times. This is stated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ9:79-80** *"Those who taunt the free givers of charity among the believers as well as those who cannot find anything (to give) but with their hard labour — they scoff at them. Allah will pay them back their mockery; and for them is a painful punishment. Ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them. Even if you ask forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah will not forgive them. This is because they disbelieve in Allah and His Messenger. And Allah does not guide the transgressing people."*

⁵ HQ2:231 "And when you divorce women and they reach their prescribed time, then retain them with kindness or let them go with kindness and do not retain them for injury so that you exceed the limits. And whoever does this, he indeed wrongs his own soul. And do not take Allah's messages for a mockery, and remember Allah's favour to you, and what He has revealed to you of the Book and the Wisdom, instructing you by it. And keep your duty to Allah, and know that Allah is the Knower of all things."

- 10) The fundamental point remains that there is no merit in reconciliation with hypocrites, because there is no forgiveness for hypocrites.
- 11) On the contrary, people who secretly enjoin charitable affairs and help in reconciliation between disagreement parties, they will have their rewards as promised in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ4:114** *"There is no good in most of their secret counsels except (in) him who enjoins charity or goodness or reconciliation between people. And whoever does this, seeking Allah's pleasure, We shall give him a mighty reward."*

Conclusions on Encouraging Reconciliation:

- a) The application of reconciliation is not limited to wars and conflicts between countries and communities as parties, but also applies to resolving tense situations within the household administrations.
- b) Reconciliation without first entering into phases of forgiveness is doomed to fail.
- c) A third party is recommended to foster firstly forgiveness between parties and subsequently successful reconciliation.

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