

THE CONCEPT OF RECONCILIATION IN THE HOLY QUR'AN

By Safdar Hasan Siddiqi

The benediction of human life, and the environment, the resources, the means of forming societies based on brotherhood and the human intellect, that are available to the human being, are all on account of the existence of the Order of Nature. The Being that has caused this Order of the physical universe and the world that we live in, we remember as Allah, God and by other names. He made arrangements for the guidance of man in the form of His Books and Prophets. He has, however, conferred to man the discretion to accept or reject this vital fact of life at will.

The Holy Qur'an is a continuation as well as culmination of the Holy Books and messengers (Prophets) of God, in human history. The Qur'an is an abiding message of God for all human beings, present and future, and is the same as given to the Prophets before Muhammad (Peace be upon him). The Qur'an is a counsel for all human beings and guidance and blessing for those who come to believe in God, and in the unseen facts of life. The source of all Holy books as well as the Qur'an is the eternal book of God. The Qur'an, as the other books were, is God's Word.

Before we dilate upon the reconciliation aspect of the Qur'an, it would be proper to understand fully the phenomenon of God's entity. The solid material world in which we live, and the universe around it, deeply influence us in all aspects of our lives. The creator of such a universe could only be an all-pervading force that is All-knowing, Sustainer and Inventor of the human being and other creatures, the Creator of flora and fauna and the oceans and mountains, of water, air, minerals and other basic requirements of existence. Above all, the Almighty and Merciful God has endowed man with a creative intellect and intelligence for utilization of these resources by him to his benefit and advantage.

There must be a purpose behind this enormous scientific creation of the universe and its chief beneficiary the human being. Yes! It is to create societies of human beings in the various parts of the world that would be instrumental in building a humane and

cooperative world in which the inherent capabilities of the human beings come to full play for the creation of a peaceful and flourishing world, through collective endeavour, wherein people could be free from want and could greet and wish each other well, and make this world a blissful place to live in. This would, of course, seem to be a dream today but tomorrow it could be a reality.

But to achieve this end the relationship between man and God has to be determined clearly, and consummated. How to do it is the real question? The sub-conscious connection of man, which inherently exists with his Creator, will have to be made into a conscious affinity. The way to do so is that one should consider himself / herself as His dutiful servant, ready at all times and occasions, to follow His directives which, of course, are for the benefit of man. The acceptance of God as one's master has to be a frank one on the basis of satisfying arguments and articulation on one's part.

The fact is that God is nearest to man. One can address Him directly whenever and wherever one wants, without the help of any intermediary, so much so that He hears the supplications one makes to Him in one's heart. Therefore, if one is obedient to God, He will transform one's weaknesses into strength, cowardliness into courage and fear into tranquility. When a person succeeds in controlling one's emotional self by coming out of personal motives and interests, and accepts the other's right to live in a good way i.e. endears the collective interest, the truth starts dawning on the person. Thus one is able to conceive the Truth clearly and it becomes a part of one's being, enabling one to offer all kinds of sacrifices in the way of supplanting this Truth in real life. Such a state of acceptance of Truth is called gaining nearness to God. This nearness can only be achieved through service to other human beings and creation of relationship of love and fraternity with them. In other words, to solve the problems of one's nation, and to offer willful cooperation in enabling the individuals to tread the path of peace, advancement and prosperity, is the ladder by which one can come near to God.

Having thus determined the relationship between man and God, we now proceed to bring to the fore the basic premises of faith laid down by God that "Certainly man is at a loss excepting those who believe and do good deeds, convey to each other the truth and

show perseverance against all odds while treading His path" (surah 103). Again, He says in the Qur'an "I have created the human being in the best form, and then changed his condition into its worst, except for those who believed and continued performing good deeds, and for them there is an immense recompense" (Surah 95). These two verses lay down the basic premise of faith i.e. "believing in God, and doing good deeds". 'Belief in God' means that one should accept Him as the sole Being who is Almighty, All-Knowing, All-Pervading and Sustainer of all the creation. 'Doing good deeds' means one should contribute to the building of a good society, by being helpful to the people and exerting to establish a system of life based on peace and justice. These two principles have been laid down as the basic essentials of *iman* (Faith). They lead us to the essential principle that whosoever comes to believe in God, after full consideration and personal satisfaction, and performs in the interest of humanity, belongs to "the community of the faithful", no matter to which denomination one may belong to by birth, and that those who do not believe in this manner, belong to the category of the "non-believers". Thus the human beings are divided on the universal plane into these two main categories on the macro level. The third category is that of the hypocrites, polytheists and the seditious. The Qur'an addresses all these categories. The various categories of human beings that exist in the world under various religious groups and sects are, in fact, the creation of the vested interests. This true concept of faith enables one to become a 'good human being', not just a 'good Christian' or a 'good Muslim' as postulated in the religious sense. It also becomes an intrinsic part of the political process and the propelling force behind all state policies and government decisions.

Having come to understand this phenomenon, we now turn to the issue of reconciliation in the Holy Qur'an. The Qur'an says in sura 3 verse 64 "Oh people of the Book come forward to the thing that is common between us that we do not worship any one other than God and will not associate anybody with Him, nor will anyone of us make any other entity as *Rabb* (Lord, Benefactor, Sustainer). In sura 65 verse 68 He says "Oh people of the Book you are without any content unless you adhere to Torah and Bible and to that which has been revealed to you (the Qur'an)." It must, therefore, be

remembered that Torah and Bible contain the same call of unity of God as that of the Qur'an. Then again in Surah 3 verse 84 God directs the people to declare " we believe in God and the Book (Qur'an) that has been revealed to us, and those Books that descended upon Ibrahim, Ismail, Ishaq and Yaqoob and their progeny, and those that were received by Moosa, Isa and other Prophets from God. We do not differentiate between any of these Prophets and we are faithful to the one God" (Surah 3 verse 84). This verse applies to all humanity. Thus God belongs to the whole humanity, not separately to the Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus and others. The real teaching of all the revealed Holy books is the same as that of the Qur'an i.e. 'believing in God and doing good deeds'. All the divine revelations that have occurred in different countries, ages and languages were mutually corroborative and supportive. Their intention was the same viz. to adorn the morals and build the character and conduct of human beings, and create their close relationship with God. Then, all the Prophets lived a modest and simple life, and had an exemplary form of sympathy with God's creation. Each Holy revelation heralded the arrival of the future Prophet. Especially all the Prophets predicted the arrival of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).

The Qur'an offers a conciliatory bearing to all human beings without any differentiation. It gives the concept of 'One Lord, One People, and One Faith'. It considers those who believe in God and serve humanity as one people (*Ummat-e-Wa'hida*). It shows a straight path of benevolent and corporate living to them. It offers them to build upon a concept of 'faith' that joins people and not the concept of 'religion' that separates and alienates them. The words faith and religion, however, need explanation. Faith (*Deen*), meaning "way of life" according to God's will, and is the common course given by God to mankind through the Prophets to be followed in life for achieving better results. This sure way to success in life was diverted by the vested interests of those times that had been hit hard by this direct and fruitful approach towards life. They created inroads into faith in the form of religions, and reshaped the whole human order, given by God, to make the people compliant to their desires, and to prevent them from being organized against any oppression and injustice resorted to by them, and from standing up for attainment of

their rights. The religious approach gives more importance to non-issues rather than the real issues of life and creates a trance in their minds, away from reality. For that reason, all ways of life except those based on faith should be rejected.

The above analysis goes to form a certain frame of mind for the human beings on the basis of solid reasoning. It creates an atmosphere of peace and amity free from intolerance, bigotry, sectarianism and religious prejudice, which is essential for securing maximum benefit from this conciliation package. Let us, therefore, build a humane civilization based on these parameters. Let us, as faithful servants of God, enjoin good and prohibit evil. Let us prohibit people from committing injustice and oppression, and order good behaviour towards other human beings, and thus set up a just world order that will enable us to liberate ourselves of the concept of "super powers" and of the need for nuclear weapons, which are the root cause of ignorance, poverty, intolerance and oppression in our societies. For that purpose let us formulate our political, economic and social policies in the light of the principles laid down by the Holy Qur'an.

Having considered, in quite some detail, the negative approaches to life, let us now dilate upon the positive aspects so as to enable ourselves to be true to ourselves and to God – our Creator and Sustainer – and express our gratitude towards Him. Firstly, we should organize ourselves politically. We should articulate our rights and obligations and our duties towards society. We should study the problems faced by the people of lesser resources and by the country, and design the solution to these problems collectively. We should arrange good governance by making sound rules of governance and by observing them strictly, and for this purpose organize political parties on democratic and scientific lines by creating a strong and dedicated cadre of political activists. We should improve the electoral system so as to guarantee fair and free elections in order to secure true representation of the people in the assemblies. The masses should be educated and made politically aware about their sovereign right to rule.

Secondly, the economic affairs of the country should be effectively controlled, and benefits of its development should go to the masses directly and not through a 'trickle down' effect. Non-

development expenditure on state running should be reduced substantially, and made transparent and publically accountable. The economies of all the countries should be made self-sustained. Direct taxation should be preferred to indirect taxation so in order to lessen the burden on low-income groups. The income ratio between the rich and the poor should be reduced substantially. Monopolies over natural resources should be done away with by especially ending the feudal system and absentee-landlordism wherever it prevails, and giving land to the landless for tilling. Above all, the economies of all countries should be fully planned.

Thirdly, the social sector should be carefully planned. The civil society should be improved and strengthened. Basic human rights should be guaranteed to all human beings irrespective of caste creed or religion. Every citizen should be made aware of their rights and obligations towards the society, Education and health should be given top priority. The rightful place of women as equal partners with men should be fully established. The term "religious minority" should be rejected, and all persons living in a country should be given equal status as citizens and addressed as human being and not by any other denomination. The distinctions on the base of race, nationality, language, colour etc. should be considered only for recognition and discernment and not for discrimination. Toleration of differences of opinion and ways of life, and development of culture on those bases, should become norms of societies. Establishment of justice, peace, progress and prosperity, should be the prime objective of states.

The above forms the total package of reconciliation offered by the Qur'an to human beings. An atmosphere of peace and amity free from intolerance, bigotry, sectarianism and religious prejudice is essential for securing maximum benefit from this conciliation package. Let us build a civilization on the basis of the parameters laid therein. Let us, as faithful servants of God, enjoin good and prohibit evil. Let us prohibit people from committing injustice and oppression, and order good behaviour towards other human beings, and thus set up a just world order that will rid our societies of ignorance, poverty and intolerance. Let us prepare a code of human conduct for our practical guidance and construct a state of mind on that foundation for individuals that would enable them to scale the heights of

physical and spiritual development, and make this beautiful world of ours into 'a heaven on earth'.

E-mail: roshni47@hotmail.com