

Qur'anic discussion among followers of various Islamic sects

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Dialogues and discussions are no doubt effective ways of getting informed about various thoughts, beliefs and viewpoints and finding the correct reasonable ones among them. Also, according to the Islamic Commands on unity and solidarity among Muslims, properly-guided dialogues and discussions should take place among them for bringing them closer together. The aim followed by all in this regard needs to be finding facts and if this aim is followed, we can hope for Allah's help and guidance, as the Holy Qur'an says: *"...who listen to the Statement and follow the best in it. Those are the ones whom God has guided; those are prudent persons."* Al-Zumar, 18

To fulfil the Qur'anic objective of creating and strengthening unity among world Muslims and defending their rights, the role of knowledgeable Muslim thinkers and their united effort is of the utmost significance, since they can present truly effective and useful ways as opposed to the reactionary Western models. Through such positive communication, we should strive towards presenting comprehensive plans and programs for making our societies truly religious-Qur'anic ones, as propounded and desired by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) of Islam. In this direction, it is necessary to push secularism as well as pseudo-religious thoughts towards isolation on one hand and strive towards fighting against the poverty faced by some Muslim countries due to capitalistic trends (imposed upon them), replacing the same with creativity, and progress in every respect, while guarding the Islamic principles on the other.

And only then we will be able to see the fruits of unity, understanding and cooperation; justice, the rule of Divine law and the realization of the

Qur'anic view of the model Ummah - the united Qur'anic Ummah. Regarding the significance of dialogue and communication out of pure, humane motives, let's read this Hadith from Imam Ali (AS): “ Let various thoughts face each other so the correct one will be brought out from among them.” Certainly, dialogues and discussions should be based upon motives of seeking the truth and presenting the truth and should not include any other motives, such as overcoming the other party for pride. In the Holy Qur'an, we read: “ *Say: ‘People of the Book, [let us] rally to a common formula to be binding on both us and you, that we shall worship only God [Alone] and associate nothing else with Him, nor shall any of us take on others as lords instead of God.’ If they should turn away, then say: ‘Bear witness that we are Muslims.’* ” Al-i ‘Imran, 64

Another significant manner to be observed by Muslims while talking together and discussing is to avoid any derogatory, ambiguous expressions and also to avoid anger and harsh manner of speaking as Imam Ali (AS) has stressed that severe anger prevents one from conveying in a logical way what he means to say and hinders understanding. Obviously, Muslims with the spirit of accepting the truth will gain much through discussions. In this connection, let's read parts of the words addressed by Imam Ali (AS) – during his Caliphate - to the people: “Never imagine that hearing the truth is hard for me, because the one for whom hearing the truth is hard, acting upon the truth and the administration of justice will be harder for him.....”

Accordingly, Islam approves of applying wise - manners in inviting the people to the way of Allah, “*Invite [people] to your Lord's way with discretion and kindly instruction, and discuss [things] with them in the politest manner. Your Lord is quite Aware as who has strayed from His*

path, just as He is quite Aware of those who have consented to be guided.” The Holy Qur’an; al-Nahl, 125

These Divine guidelines surely urge one to heed totally monotheistic viewpoints, to abide by pure religious values and to focus on the beliefs shared by all Muslims in their discussions. The fact that we Muslims all believe in the Holy Qur’an, pray in the same direction and feel duty-bound to obey Prophet Muhammad(PBUH) and the Ahlul-Bait (AS), to follow their manners and to observe Islamic brotherhood among ourselves undoubtedly lead to great success in truth-seeking talks: “*The ones who came after them say: ‘Our lord, forgive us and our brethren who have preceded us in faith, and do not place any rancor in our hearts concerning those who believe. Our Lord, You are Compassionate, Merciful!’*” The Holy Qur’an; al-Hashr, 10

The Hajj rituals believed in and attended by the world Muslims should certainly be regarded as a great occasion for promoting Islamic unity and brotherhood, and for removing differences. This is indeed a great duty and should be fulfilled by Muslims.

Also, according to the Holy Qur’an, we believe that human beings have been granted honour by Allah and likewise Allah desires them to live honourable lives and do honourable deeds, and that human beings need guidance, otherwise they will be losers as we read in chapter 103 of the Holy Qur’an, “*By ‘Asr, everyman [is indeed] at a loss except for those who believe, perform honourable deeds, encourage Truth, and recommend patience.*”

In all these sublime efforts, the principle of *Taqwa* (piety, guarding against evil, being careful about one’s duties to Allah and about Allah’s commands and prohibitions) should be constantly kept in mind and acted upon, so the desirable fruits of unity, brotherhood and Islamic

proximity will be attained and more significantly, so Allah's Pleasure be achieved. Certainly, sincerity of intention is a must for the achievement of these lofty ideals. According to the Holy Qur'an, *Taqwa* is commanded, desired and honoured by Allah and so greatly rewarding, as we read in chapter 20 verse 132, chapter 49 verse 13, and chapter 29 verse 69.

To observe Islamic manners and politeness while meeting and talking to the people has also been taught in the Holy Qur'an: *"Whenever those who believe in Our signs come to you, Say: 'Peace be upon you! Your Lord has prescribed mercy for Himself so He will be Forgiving, Merciful to any of you who commits evil out of ignorance, then repents later on and reforms.'" Al-An'am, 54*

And in the same vein, we are advised by the Holy Qur'an against making fun of the others, against insulting, finding fault with or slandering the others, as we read in chapter 49 verse 11, chapter 104 verse 1 and chapter 68 verse 11.

Certainly arrogance is below the dignity of a Muslim, since it is a vice and according to the Holy Qur'an arrogance has been the cause of the fall of *Iblis* (chapter 16, verse 29). Also, according to the Holy Qur'an, slander is a grave sin (45: 7).

So, we as Muslims should always remember and act upon the Qur'anic injunctions, including the following: *"Invite [people] to your Lord's way with discretion and kindly instruction, and discuss [things] with them in the politest manner. Your Lord is quite Aware as to who has strayed from His path, just as He is quite Aware of those who have consented to be guided."* The Holy Qur'an; al-Nahl, 125

Justice and benevolence have also been emphasized in the Holy Qur'an, *"God commands justice, kindness and giving [their due] to near*

relatives, while He forbids sexual misconduct, debauchery and insolence. He so instructs you (all) so that you may draw attention to it.”
al-Nahl, 90

And in chapter 42 verse 15 we read, *“Therefore appeal [to them] and keep a straight on just as you have been ordered to; do not follow their whims, and say [instead]: ‘I believe in whatever God has sent down [in the form of] a Book, and have been commanded to deal justly with you (all). God is our Lord as well as your Lord. We have our actions while you have your actions; no quarrel exists between us and you. God will bring us (all) together; towards Him lies the goal!’”*

For being a good speaker and being a good listener, reading these verses of the Holy Qur’an will surely be very beneficial 2: 83, 39: 18, 42: 38. And in chapter 33 verse 23 of the Holy Qur’an we read about those who stand by their word: *“Some believers are men who are sincere in what they pledge to God, while others have already fulfilled their duty, and still others are waiting [their chance]; they have not changed in the least....”* obviously Islam does not approve of aggressive behavior, (2: 190 and 299, 50: 2 and 87, 7: 55) and urges the believers to fight against aggressors and repel their evil, yet in the case of the undesirable words of the ignorant people, Muslims are advised by the Holy Qur’an to be tolerant: *“.... and the Mercy- giving’s servants walk modestly on Earth and peacefully say: ‘How do you do!’ whenever ignorant men address them;...”* al-Furqan, 63

And while Islam desires peaceful-coexistence among Muslims and also with the non-Muslims, Islam also prohibits Muslims from befriending the enemies of Islam; (4: 139, 3: 28 and 188, 5: 57 and 80 and 81, 9: 23, 58: 14 and 22, 60: 1 and 9 and 13).

To be forgiving towards each other is no doubt of the utmost significance in Islam, as we are taught by the Holy Qur'an: *“Since they broke their covenant, We have cursed them and planted a hard shell over their hearts. They lift words out of their context and have forgotten a portion of what they should have memorized. Except for a few of them, you will always catch some of them committing some act of treachery. Yet pardon them and overlook it; God loves those who act kindly.”* Al-M'aidah, 13

And as we know, Islam is for all human beings, of whatever race, colour, or nation, and as per Allah's Command, human beings should avoid racial, ethnic prejudices, and discriminations since the whole humanity is of the same origin; *“We created man from an extract of clay;”* The Holy Qur'an; al-Mu'minun, 12

“Among His signs are the creation of Heaven and Earth, as well as the diversity in your tongues and colors. In that are signs for those who know.” al-Rum, 22

“O mankind, We have created you from a male and female, and set you up as nations and tribes so you may recognize [and cooperate with] one another. The noblest among you with God is that one of you who best performs his duty; God is Aware, Informed.” The Holy Qur'an; al-Hujurat, 13

Needless to say, human history has witnessed numerous cases of prejudices against peoples of other colors, races and ethnic groups, whereas Allah has through His Messengers(AS) declared that to Him all human beings are equal and superiority to Him lies just in the degree of their piety. It has been narrated that during his last Hajj (*Hajjatul-Wid'ah*) Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “O people! Truly you have been created by the same God, you are the offsprings of the same

parents and there is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab, nor is there any superiority for a non-Arab over an Arab, nor for a black over a white, nor for a white over a black unless due to *Taqwa*(piety).” And then His Holiness has stated: “Truly Allah does not regard your family-tree, nor your bodies, nor your possessions, and rather He regards your hearts.... and to Allah the dearest of you is the most pious one.”

To convey, understand and practice Islam, learning the Arabic language is obviously significant, especially since the Holy Qur’an is in Arabic and also Islamic ritual prayers are in the Arabic language. Thus any effort in this regard is indeed not only necessary, but greatly rewarding since the Muslim Ummah, is according to the Holy Qur’an (9:110) the best Ummah, bidding the good and forbidding the evil and believing in Allah: *“Keep up prayer and pay the welfare tax; you will find any good you have sent on ahead for your own souls’ sake is already [stored up] with God. God is Observant of whatever you do.”* Al-Baqarah, 110

To conclude, the Islamic Ummah is duty-bound to follow Islamic teachings and convey the same to the others through the proper manners propounded in the Holy Qur’an and by Allah’s Messengers (AS) and the Infallible Imams (AS). This duty has today gained greater significance, since Muslims the world over are faced with various problems, attacks and dividing plots and so their unity is needed much more than ever before. Today Muslim thinkers should unite under the banner of Islam, remove disputes and present the best model of brotherhood and Islamic cooperation to the world.

We all need to guard our Islamic culture; Islamic identity and Islamic lands against the aggressors and no doubt Islamic dialogue, gatherings and brotherly communications are needed by us most in fulfilling this responsibility.