

Dishonouring Others

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Retaliation in connection with dishonouring others is also lawful. If a man curses another man or invokes Allah to maltreat him in some way, the other man may retaliate (return same for it); similarly, when one abuses some other one by mentioning certain demerits of his. Forgiveness (in all these cases), however, is better. Allah, be He exalted, has said: **"And the recompense of evil is punishment like it; but whoever forgives and amends, his reward is with Allah. Surely He loves not the wrongdoers. And whoever defends himself after being oppressed, these it is against whom there is no way (of blame)." (42:40-41).** The Prophet, peace be upon him, has said: "The two who abuse each other - whatever they may say - he who has begun is to blame, unless the oppressed (abused preliminarily) has retaliated in excess: has exceeded (lawful) reparation (satisfaction for wrong).

An insult which does not constitute a lie is one which tells of the shameful behavior of a man, or one in which such a man is called son of a bitch or an ass or the like. (In this case retaliation in the same terms is permitted). But if a man ascribed to another man demerits which are not known of the other man, the other man is not permitted to retaliate in the same manner. Even if the former has accused the latter - unjustly, however - of disbelief and debauchery, the latter has no right to return the same accusation to the former. And if the former has cursed the father or the tribe of the latter, the latter has no right to curse the father or the tribe of the former, since the father and the tribe of the former were not those who cursed him. In this respect, Allah, be He exalted, has said: **"O you who believe, be upright for Allah, bearer of witness with justice; and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably. Be just, that is nearer to observance of duty. And keep your duty to Allah. Surely, Allah is aware of what you do." (5:8)** Allah has (in this verse) enjoined the Muslims that their hatred, (even) to the infidels, should not cause them to be unjust, as He has said: **"Be just; that is nearer to the observance of duty."**

If the dishonouring insult was forbidden because it would inflict some personal injury on the man cursed, a retaliation with similar terms is permitted: if a man invokes Allah that an evil should befall another man, the other man may invoke Allah that the same evil befall the first man. But if the dishonouring insult, on the other hand - was forbidden because it violates a commandment of Allah - such as telling a lie - no retaliation whatever is permitted. Very many of the jurists agree to this. (They say: If a man) has killed another man by burning or submerging in water or by strangling, the guilty may be treated in the same way. But if the offence was a forbidden act, such as (if a man) has forced another to swallow some wine or has violated him (sexually), no retaliation is allowed. Certain jurists have said that the penalty to be executed on the killer mentioned may only be effected with the sword. The foregoing opinion (retaliation in the same way) conforms better, however, with the Book, the Sunna and with justice.