Chapter 4 – Social healing: The Missing Component

“The moment you directly question the cause of war, you are questioning your relationship with another, which means that you are questioning your whole existence, your whole way of living.” – Krishnamurti

I have been mulling over the shortcomings of the reconciliation processes in Afghanistan and in the past three years, I have made an effort to understand the concept of reconciliation by studying peace and conflict transformation. I have looked deeper into the NRP in the context of Afghan politics and history since the demise of my father and recently, having the opportunity to study peacebuilding with a special focus on reconciliation, I have tried to analyze the Afghan reconciliations, both the NRP and APRP through the lens of existing peacebuilding concepts.

I must admit that up until the start of my MA in peace studies, I viewed reconciliation as a political process, in which the country’s leadership has the responsibility to find a solution to the conflict and establish a framework for reconciliation such as the truth commission. Indeed, my viewpoints were formed on the basis of reconciliation and peacebuilding processes that kicked off during my father’s regime in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, I saw the process of healing my personal wounds and traumas of the conflict and violence as a personal journey separate from my experiences that I had endured in realm of politics because of the position my father had as a politician. In other words, I had compartmentalized reconciliation such that I separated my own feelings of pain and traumas endured in the Afghan conflict from my study of reconciliation that Afghanistan is still searching. However, the elicitive approach of conflict transformation in Dietrich as well as Lederach’s literature, Interpretation of Peace in History and Culture, Elicitive Conflict Transformation and the Transrational Shift in Peace Politics, The Moral Imagination and When Blood and Bones Cry

407 Dietrich, Interpretations of Peace in History and Culture
408 Dietrich, Elicitive Conflict Transformation and the Transrational Shift in Peace Politics
Out$^{410}$ allowed me to understand reconciliation in a holistic manner. I understood that my own reconciliation was possible when I started acknowledging my own traumas and pain. I allowed myself to be as hurt and wounded as the rest of the Afghans, which enabled me to see the connection between my own reconciliation and the missing components in the reconciliation processes of Afghanistan.

It is this holistic approach of reconciliation that I shall explore in this chapter, applying some of the elicitive conflict transformation tools in the case of Afghan reconciliation.

4.1 What is social healing?

I came across the word social healing in Lederach and Lederach’s *When Blood and Bones Cry Out*.\textsuperscript{411} I found the use of terminology very simple, however to grasp the concept behind the two words in the context of peacebuilding required much retrospection. Having read both Lederach and Barry Hart\textsuperscript{412} as well as going through the on-site experiences in Innsbruck, it took me a while to absorb that reconciliation is possible when one allows social healing to take place.

Lederach and Lederach explain the concept of social healing “as an intermediary phenomenon located between micro individuals healing and wider collective reconciliation.”\textsuperscript{413} They further expand that social healing “deals with wounds created by conflict, collective trauma and large-scale oppression.”\textsuperscript{414} The authors quote many scholars who have dealt with the subject of social healing. For example, they say that Thompson describes social healing as justice making, which is not punitive. In addition, they quote the definition of social healing given by Paula Green as reconstruction of communal relations after mass violence. According to her, social healing comes before reconciliation after open warfare. She emphasizes the importance of restoring relationship, coexistence and rebuilding\textsuperscript{415}.

\textsuperscript{410} Lederach, and Lederach, *When Blood and Bones Cry Out*
\textsuperscript{411} Ibid., 6-7
\textsuperscript{412} Barry Hart, ed., *Peacebuilding in Traumatized Societies*
\textsuperscript{413} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{414} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{415} Ibid., 7