

Islam and Peace: A Linguistic Representative

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Abstract

The present study addresses the importance of employing the language of etiquette and politeness as a means of consolidating peaceful coexistence in human society from Islamic perspective. Since communication is one of the most important components that constitute human relations in society, any attempt to disallow language to fulfill its social function will definitely affect human relations because language is perhaps the most pertinent tool of human communication. Language is a double edged weapon; a sound expression consolidates human interactions and creates atmosphere for peaceful co-existence. In contrast, violent and destructive words according to Islamic teachings may lead to misunderstanding, conflict and indeed war. Hence, there will be no room for peaceful co-existence. The negative effects of those aggressive words and expressions on human relations and society at large are addressed. Some communicative approaches which may help in managing or preventing conflicts and creating room for co-existence based on Islamic teaching presented.

Introduction

In the current era many people regard Islam as a religion that promotes violence and terrorism; the misconception which is in contrast to the teachings of Islam. Indeed, Peace as Islamic philosophy can be explicitly inferred from the meaning of the word "Islam itself". Islam is in fact a religion that promotes peace and understanding among people of all faiths in all fields of human relationship. Islam is aware that human society is formed of some cohesive and integrated components among which language stands as fundamental. Therefore, it strongly prohibits all forms of violence and language of aggression against all people regardless of their faith or race for the purpose of peaceful coexistence and the stability of human society. The individual who will recognize his true nature on which every person is created will be able to live together in society with peace and affection to each other. This implies that peaceful and harmonious relationship is essential for biological survival since human beings are interdependent.

At the global level, the norm of aggressive language is obvious in both political and religious platforms; no society is exclusive. The exploitation of words such as *terrorists*, *Islamists*, and indeed Islamic militants while referring to *Boko-Haram as prevails in Nigeria* has become machinery among the elites to win the hearts of the public against their oppositions, and to provide rationale and justification for people to continue supporting their parties. The misleading language has become widely spread and constantly employed in media. Language, the most important means, and the essential foundation of communication is underpinning factor of mutual relations. In fact, it is a prerequisite for the formation and continuation of social relations.

Language and Human Relations

Islam recognizes that both language and society are interdependent. Language creates society; no human society without language as a means of interaction and there is nothing worthy to be identified as a means of human interaction without the existence of human society. Language is obviously a vital tool. Not only is it a means of communicating thoughts and ideas, but it forges friendships, cultural ties, and economic relationships. Throughout history, many have reflected on the importance of language. Language shapes thoughts and emotions, determining one's perception of reality; it is also the light of the mind.

Of many ways in which Islam promotes peace, harmony and peaceful co-existence, language is fundamental. In This regard, Muslims are governed by the rules that the relationship among human beings should be based on mutual respect for others, cooperation, and polite communication. The Quran is very explicit about the position of language in human society as a means of consolidating peaceful coexistence and human relations when God stated:

"See you not how Allah sets forth a parable? A goodly word is a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the sky (i.e. very high). Giving its fruit at all times, by the Leave of its Lord, and Allah sets forth parables for mankind in order that they may remember. And the parable of an evil word is that of an evil tree uprooted from the surface of earth, having no stability". (Qur'an 14:24-26).¹

Society as a body of individuals outlined by the bounds of functional interdependence cannot be established until the necessary linguistic signs for authority are created and society cannot be created until a group of people has some values in common, the values that require a language to embed them and articulate them. Indeed, it is language that brings people together and keeps them together. Obviously, the Qur'an, has declared the main purpose for which Allah has created human beings regardless of their ethnic, racial, social and religious

differences. Qur'an says:

"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another" (Qur'an 49:13)

According to the above verse, human beings despite their differences in terms of nations, color, or race belong to the same root; the basic idea and main objective of this is that they get to know each other, live and interact with one another. This implies that peaceful and harmonious relationship is inevitable for biological survival since human beings are all interdependent. However in the absence of respect and politeness in interpersonal communication all human relations will be destabilized.ⁱⁱ Supporting the notion, Abu Bakr al-Razi in his own contributions emphasizes on the need for cooperation and coexistence among members of the community. He considers that peaceful interaction is the reason that led us to live interdependently and to maintain cooperation for the betterment of the individuals.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Qur'an does not turn a blind eye to the human weakness of quarrel, dispute and even war. Accordingly, it exhorts Muslims to make peace and harmony among hostile individual or group.^{iv} Of special note in this content is the Qur'anic injunction on the use of polite words and condemnation of aggressive language. Allah says:

"God (Allah) does not like the utterance of bad language, unless one is treated with gross injustice. God is all hearing and all Knowing"(Qur'an 4:148)^v

Allah being man's Creator knows best what might damage cordial relations as a result of weakness in human nature, Allah through the teachings of Islam warns against the use of aggressive language such as derision, mockery, and ridiculous expressions when addressing others, Allah warns:

"Believers, no one group of men should jeer at another, who may after all be better than them; no one group of women should jeer at another, who may after all be better than them; do not speak ill of one another; do not use offensive nicknames for one another. How bad it is to be called a mischief-maker after accepting faith! Those who do not repent of this behavior are evildoers." (Qur'an 49:11)^{vi}

In the Qur'anic verse mentioned above, Islam has provided the ethical concepts that describe the various aspects of the fundamental attitude of man towards his environments. In other words, the ethical concepts, those refer to the principles and rule of conduct regulating the ethical relations among individuals who belong to, and live within the community regardless of religious or racial differences. It is language communication that brings people together and keeps them together. Meanwhile, to be very selective while communicating with another is highly required because an aggressive word is sharply destructive; it hinders human relations and societal integration at large.

Islam explicitly forbids destructive norms like mocking, offensive nicknaming, and slandering others since they amount to attacking their honor and prestige, it is bound to strain social relations. The victim too might even resort to revenge. As a result, the social fabric is damaged, giving rise to many more evils. Islam then strikes at the root of the common human failing of interpersonal communication etiquettes.

Indeed, an ideal society, according to the Qur'an is Dar as-Salam, *"the house of peace"* of which it intones. And Allah invites to the 'abode of peace' and guides whom He pleases into the right path. (Qur'an 10:25)^{vii}. Therefore, the establishment of abode of peace on earth means the establish peace in everyday lives, at all levels. This includes but not restricted to personal, social, state and international levels. Language, a multifaceted endowment sometimes transcends its realm and affects the external world; words are powerful and indeed words create reality.^{viii}

Our words mirror our lives. "Tell me what words you use and I will tell you who you are"^{ix}. It is not really that simple, but there is a lot of truth in this statement. As soon as we open our mouth, we reveal many things about ourselves, such as where and how we grew up, and which values we cherish. Indeed, the language we use becomes an important part of us; criticism of this language can easily be taken as criticism of the person as well as his or her social background.

Conclusion

Islam is a religion of peace; it promotes peace and peaceful existence in all human relations. Islam is aware of the destructive impacts of aggressive use of language to human relations and therefore strongly warns against this. Peacemakers are agents of good and those who breach it are elements of violence; It is observed that peace and peacemaking are seen in Islamic tradition as part and parcel of human development. Therefore, Islamic encourages that one should be very selective when communicating with others because an aggressive word is destructive; it hinders both human relations and societal integration at large and consequently tends to produce destructive results. Islam promotes climate for caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of individuals. Every individual is required to practice etiquettes of communication in order to consolidate human relations in societies

ⁱ See: Qur'an 14:24-26.

ⁱⁱ Hasan, Vazeer, *The Study of the Qur'an by Non-Muslim Indian Scholars*, New Delhi, Adam Publishers & Distributors, 2005, p.119.

ⁱⁱⁱ Arrazi, Abubakar Muhammad bin Zakariyah, *Al-tiib al-Rawhaani*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahdah al-Misriyah, 1978, pp.17-18.

^{iv} Abdul-Raheem Kidwa, *The Qur'an: Essential Teachings*, Markfield: Islamic Foundation, 2011, Pp.167-168.

^v See: Qur'an 4:148.

^{vi} See: Qur'an 49:11.

^{vii} See: Qur'an 10:25

^{viii} Julne, Diamond, *Status and power in verbal interaction*, Amstadam, John Benjamin Publishing Co,1996, p.139.

^{ix} Andersson, Lars-Gunnar.(1990) *Bad language*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990, p.194.

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