

# Education in the Language of the Holy Qur'an

By Muhammad Ihsani

The Holy Qur'an is the Divine Book of guidance, revealed to educate human beings. Thus, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) of Islam to whom the Holy Qur'an was revealed, has been chiefly tasked with education and guidance of human beings.

Indeed, the language of the Holy Qur'an is that of illumination, education and leading towards salvation and the Holy Qur'an aims at human perfection and spiritual elevation. Let's now narrate a Hadith from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) - the receiver and the great teacher of the Holy Qur'an about this last and most perfect Book of Divine guidance - the Holy Qur'an: "The Holy Qur'an has both an appearance (*Zahir*) and an inward (*Batin*). It's appearance is wisdom and it's inward is knowledge. It's appearance is splendid and it's inward is profound."

The arguments presented in the Holy Qur'an are totally based upon wisdom and understandable facts. As an example, here, we can cite verse 22 of chapter 21 (*Anbia'*) of the Holy Qur'an in which the unity of the Creator has been argued in a quite clear, rational way: "*If there were other gods in either [Heaven and Earth] besides God [Alone], they would both dissolve in chaos. Glory be to God, Lord of the Throne, beyond what they describe!*" Al-Anbiya, 22.

As we see, this verse of the Holy Qur'an (as all other verses) invites the audience to use their minds and their faculty of

reason to understand that certainly there is just one Creator - Allah – the One and Only God, since had there been other gods, disruption and ruin would result in the world of creation.

To make facts quite clear and easy to realize for human beings, the Holy Qur'an has also used comparison and metaphor in a number of cases. As an instance, we can cite verse 5 of chapter 62 of the Holy Qur'an in which those who do not act upon the knowledge (they have been granted by Allah) are compared to a donkey who is carrying scriptures.

And the beautiful language of the Holy Qur'an is of course equipped with the power of influencing sentiments and emotions greatly. According to numerous accounts, many distinguished theologians including Allamah Tabataba'i (ra) the author of Al-Mizan Qur'anic commentary, would shed tears when reading and commenting on those verses of the Holy Qur'an which deal with Allah's mercy, and/or with Allah's wrath and/or repentance. Obviously, such men of knowledge and indeed every other human being whose heart is pure and open to Divine guidance have sentiments sound enough to be influenced by Allah's words. According to the above account, the late Allamah Tabataba'i would even cry in a loud voice when talking about Qur'anic verses regarding repentance and Allah's Mercy. Stories and setting parables are other aspects to the Qur'anic language found repeatedly in this perfect Book of enlightening. Allah the Omnipotent has addressed his last Messenger – Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in chapter al-A'raf verse 176, thus: *"If*

*We had so wished, We might have raised him up by means of them, but he clung to the earth and followed his own whim. He might be compared to a dog: no matter how you drive him off, he just pants away. Or if you leave him alone, he still pants on. That is what folk who reject Our signs are like; tell such stories so they may think things over.”*

As we see, Allah tells His Messenger (PBUH) to tell the people certain stories so they may be reminded, and awakened. As for setting parables, we read in the Holy Qur’an, for example verse 27 of chapter 39 (al-Zumar)

*“We have made up every sort of parable for mankind in this Qur’an so that they may be reminded by....”*

Likewise the Holy Qur’an presents best modes of arguments for proving the truth in the face of falsehood as, for instance, in the story of Prophet Ibrahim/Abraham (AS) and his arguing with pagans, *“So then as he saw the moon rising, he said: “Will this be my lord?; and when it set, he said: “If my Lord did not guide me, I would be a member of the lost folk.”* The Holy Qur’an; al-An’am, 77.

No doubt, this way of argument is an example of the best way of arguing which the Holy Qur’an orders; *“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.*” Al-Nahl, 125

We can infer from the above-mentioned Qur’anic directions that one of the Qur’anic ways of discussion is doing so through using what the opponents believe for overcoming and/or convincing them.

And of course in all cases, the language of the Holy Qur’an is directed towards the goal of teaching and presenting Divine rules and concepts. In verse 31 of chapter 2 of the Holy Qur’an, we read that Adam(AS) was taught the names of everything:

*“He taught Adam all the names of everything; then presented them to the angels, and said: ‘Tell me the names of these if you are so truthful.’ ”* Al-Baqarah, 31.

The fact that the derivatives of the word ‘*Ilm* (knowledge) has been used in the Holy Qur’an many times can be regarded as a proof of the claim that the most significant aspect of the language of the Holy Qur’an is to educate, teach and give knowledge. And as inferred from verse 2 of chapter 62(Jum’ah), the most outstanding duty of the holy Prophet(PBUH) of Islam has been to recite Allah’s Ayat to the people, to purify them and to teach them the Book and Wisdom, and of course, people too, are duty-bound to listen, learn and act upon what they are told as per Allah’s command, *“He is the One Who has despatched a messenger from the Unlettered [people] among themselves, to recite His verses to them and purify them and teach them the*

*Book and wisdom, even though previously they were in obvious error; ....”* The Holy Qur’an; al- Jumuah, 2.

Therefore, the Holy Qur’an aims at making human beings think and act in humane ways, i.e., in ways shown them by their Creator - Allah - the One and Only God.

Now, let's briefly survey certain views of the great Muslim theologian and philosopher martyr Mutahhari regarding the Holy Qur’an: In the first volume of his book ‘Introduction to the Holy Qur’an’, martyr Mutahhari has dealt with a subject themed “knowing the language of the Holy Qur’an”. According to martyr Mutahhari , in reality the Holy Qur’an speaks through various languages (through various methods of conveying the facts), because the Holy Qur’an addresses human being who has various dimensions to his or her being and so, to educate human beings, him/her special characteristics have been taken into regard by the Holy Qur’an.

Martyr Mutahhari has held that in certain cases, the Holy Qur’an addresses human intellect and talks with the language of reason and rational argument to them. This is the case with many Qur’anic verses in which human beings have been called upon to think, meditate and use their sense of reason. This group of verses of the Holy Qur’an targets the growth of human intellect and thought. The Qur’anic verses in which human beings have been called to think about the creation of the earth and the sky can be interpreted in this very context: *“In the creation of Heaven and Earth, and the alternation between night*

*and daylight, there are signs for prudent persons....”* The Holy Qur’an; Al-i ‘Imran, 190

Also, the Holy Qur’an calling the human beings to think about the wise words and soundness of the Holy Qur’an can be regarded as a cause of the growth of human intellect, paving the ground for faith and attachment of to Islam. *“Have they not meditated on the Reading? If it had come from some other source than God, they would have found a great deal of contradiction in it.”* The Holy Qur’an; Al-Nisa, 82

And in fact, it is through using their mind and sense of reason that one can best understand the fact that there is no contradiction in the Holy Qur’an, that this Divine Book is totally sound and true and has been revealed by Allah - the One and Only God.

Martyr Mutahhari has also held that in certain cases, the Holy Qur’an addresses human heart, aiming to transform it to the best condition and in fact, besides the language of reasoning, the Holy Qur’an has another language which is the language of heart or emotions. By the ‘heart’ here, we mean a very profound feeling existing in human heart, connecting human heart with the Absolute Being - The Creator, and the language of the heart is the same as the language of human nature(*Fitrah*). No doubt, one of the loftiest feelings of human beings is their sense of religion and God-seeking nature. The Holy Qur’an targets this very honourable feeling and aims at dominating it wholly. Certainly, if one's heart is dominated by Allah’s Word, not only

his/her mind, but also his/her whole being will come under the influence of Divine light and Divine guidance.

So, according to Martyr Mutahhari, regarding the language employed by the Holy Qur'an, the discussion cannot be limited to just one language. Rather, the language of the Holy Qur'an should be dealt with as possessed of a combination of various ways of communication suited to the talents of the addresses - human beings, so all of them, with any level of intelligence, will be benefited by this perfect Divine Book.

Likewise, according to Martyr Mutahhari, the Holy Qur'an should be read and studied, with the aim of learning and receiving education and religious obligations demand making the efforts for learning the life-giving teachings of the Holy Qur'an. In fact, the first verses revealed to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) of Islam were those in which His Holiness - Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) ordered by Allah to read and also in which the word '*Qalam*' (the pen) which symbolizes literacy, and writing has been used. (96: 1-5) As a matter of fact, the Holy Qur'an has dealt with education through various ways sometimes through pointing to the value of knowledge and wisdom, as in the following verses, *“Take care of the poor who, being totally absorbed in working for God's cause, cannot manage to travel [freely] around the earth seeking their livelihood. An ignorant person might assume they are rich because of their modesty; yet you will recognize them from their*

*features: they do not make insistent demands on people. Yet God is Aware of any money you may so spend.” Al-Baqarah, 273*

And sometimes through the expression of the superior position of the possessors of knowledge, as: *“You who believe, whenever someone tells you to make room at (any) sessions, then make room; God will make room for you [elsewhere]. When it is said: “Move on ahead!”, then move on up. God will raise those of you who believe, in rank, as well as the ones who are given knowledge. God is Informed about anything you do.”* The Holy Qur’an; Al-Mujadilah, 11

To guide the people has been greatly emphasized and aimed at by the Holy Qur’an. In fact there is no verse in the Holy Qur’an which has not aimed at guiding human beings towards the straight path – the path of salvation. All Qur’anic verses dealing with religious decrees, human origin, the Resurrection, family, society and the stories and fate of certain preceding peoples contain guiding aspects and point to various dimensions to human salvation. Hence, we observe that the Holy Qur’an has been referred to “Hudan Lennas” (Guidance for mankind) by Allah, *“The month of Ramadhan is when the Qur’an was sent down as guidance for mankind and with explanations for guidance, and as a Standard. Let any of you who is at home during the month, fast in it; while anyone who is ill or on a journey should [set an equal] number of other days. God wants things to be easy for you and does not want any hardship for you, so complete the number and magnify God because He has*

*guided you, so that you may act grateful.*” The Holy Qur’an; Al-Baqarah, 185.

There is no denying of the fact that the Holy Qur’an plays the chief role in Islamic education and this reality is testified by all Muslim sects. Careful study of the verses and chapters of the Holy Qur’an brings every fair-minded individual to the conclusion that the language of the Holy Qur’an is the language of guiding and educating mankind. That is why the Holy Qur’an attaches great significance to learning, as well as to purification of one’s soul, piety, worship, prayer and supplication to Allah. So, Islamic education consists of the teaching and clarification of Qur’anic decrees and precepts and presentation of proper approaches for the fulfillment of Islamic values in the framework of Qur’anic teachings. In verse 24 of chapter 14 of the Holy Qur’an, we read very thought-provoking points regarding the Holy Qur’an: *“Do you not consider how God makes up a parable? A good word may be compared to a good tree whose root is firm and whose branches soar up into the sky.”* Ibrahim, 24.

And we can infer from the above verse that, based on the teachings presented in the Holy Qur’an as the root of the blessed tree of knowledge and guidance, we can and should make great researches and studies for the promotion of Islamic knowledge.

**“Excerpts from Education in the Language of the Holy Qur’an”**