

**COMMUNICATION ETHICS FROM THE
QUR'ĀNIC PERSPECTIVE
AN ANALYSIS OF SELECED CONTEMPORARY EXEGESES**

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This research studies the ethics of dialogue and communication with others as embodied in the Qur'ān based on exegesis written by contemporary exegetes. It concentrates on verses which highlight the most appropriate manner to deal with others. The ethics of dialogue and communication comprises the whole aspect of sociological context which could be actualized in the form of concept of knowledge for human benefits. In view of the lack of proficiency in Arabic, the most appropriate and convenient way of understanding the Qur'ān is to look into the views of contemporary exegetes. Ethical guidelines in the Qur'ān surveyed in this study may help the readers to be sensitized on handling relationship problems, religious and communal tension which have plagued our world today.

Keywords: Dialogue, Qur'ān, Contemporary Exegetes, Manner and Ethical Guidelines.

Introduction

The Qur'ān which represents the main source of guidance within the domain of the *Shari'ah* delineates different aspects of ethics for communication and relation in order to maintain peace and justice. God created humanity with different tribes, races and nation to make collaborative effort to secure progress and goodness. Due to cultural and religious influence, people may possess different styles of communication

in the society. The Qur'ān lays down the ethical principles of communication with the sole attempt of creating a harmonious life and common understanding. The message greatly emphasizes significance of human relations and communication through observance of ethics especially in a society which includes multi-cultural and religious beliefs. The *objective* of this study is to present the ethics of communication in the Qur'ān at various levels starting from individual, family, inter-religious as well as the communication with a superior in the community (i.e. governmental leader). It also analyzes the importance of applying the Qur'ānic guidance on communication ethic in human interaction. The *problem* is that the occurrence of tension and conflict in the society is mostly due to harshness of words uttered by an individual while dealing with others. Since the Qur'ān is the book of guidance for entire humanity, then, it will be much advantageous to analyze the verses related to the ethic of dialogue and communication as an alternative of giving solution on the problems that human beings may face during interaction with others. In addition, there is scarcity of work on the ethic of communication specially of contemporary exegesis.

In this study, we employ *the method of deductive analysis* from the views of contemporary Muslim scholars in the field of Qur'ānic exegesis which emerged in the twentieth century as it mostly elucidates the verses with the use of sociological approaches instead of focusing on literal understanding toward the words of the Qur'ān. While *scope of the study* is limited in analyzing interpretation of verses related to the ethics of communication in individual, family, inter-religious discussion and communication with governmental leaders or rulers, the *significance of the study* lies on how humanity should take benefit from the Qur'ānic guidance related to the ethics of communication to maintain peace in the family, inter-religious community as well as dealing with different levels of superiors.

Etymological Meaning

There are different terms in the Qur'ān which convey the meaning what a dialogue and communication is about. Noted among them are: *al-ḥiwār*, and *al-mujādalah* and *al-mahājah*. In fact a dialogue or an argumentation may take place to clarify the blurring issue which may

cause confusion and misunderstanding. The example can be referred to the following verse:

Allah has indeed heard (and accepted) the statement of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband and carries her complaint (in prayer) to Allah: and Allah (always) hears the arguments between both sides among you: for Allah hears and sees (all things).¹

The quotation below is another example of a dialogue mentioned in the Qur'ān:

(Abundant) was the produce this man had he said to his companion, in the course of a mutual argument: “more wealth have I than you, and more honour and power in (my following of) men.”²

The verse deals with the attitude of an ungrateful person whom God granted abundant of bounties. He felt superior to look down upon his colleague who got less fortunate in terms of social and economic status although he possessed strong faith and humbleness of character. The rich man proudly communicated to him with regard to his beautiful garden with water flowing underneath by saying, ‘I have got more wealth than you’. Even he claimed that no one could compete with him in terms of dignity and power. The communication between the two reflect the level of belief of the less fortunate person and superiority of the rich who thought his wealth will never perish and even his residence excelled the garden of Paradise.³

After listening to the speech from the rich man in the above verse, the listener who is committed to truth and justice responded by saying:

“Do you deny Him Who created you out of dust, then out of a sperm-drop, then fashioned you into a man”?⁴

In fact the one who had been granted with bounties should offer gratefulness to God Who created humanity with good physical appearance and no one should deny the truth of the message rather to devote the whole activities to worship Him.⁵

The dialogue and communication that took place between the two individuals in the above evidences can be interpreted as applicable for

resolving inter-personal and inter-group issues. In most cases, a dialogue serves as a medium for narrowing gap between people of different background, religion, culture, status quo, ideology, etc. Moreover, a dialogue can be used as a means to arrive at a mutual consensus among disputing parties in a society. Based on ethical conduct, during the dialogue or communication each individual must have the sense of tolerance and readiness to accept the truth especially when the other party convinces him with the use of cogent argument.⁶ Sha'rawī maintains that the ethics of dialogue and communication need to be worked out in an intellectual and scientific manner for the use of presenting and conveying ideas.⁷ Another term for dialogue in the Qur'ān is the word *al-jidāl* (lit. disputation). It means argumentation between two parties who endeavour to convince the other on a certain thing.⁸ Mostly, *al-jidāl* (argumentation) occurs due to the existing misunderstanding and enmity between the parties involved. A person who is involved in arguing with others is characterized with recalcitrance and stubbornness.⁹ The example can be referred to following verse which says:

Allah has indeed heard (and accepted) the statement of the woman who pleads with thee concerning her husband and carries her complaint (in prayer) to Allah: and Allah (always) hears the arguments between both sides among you: for Allah hears and sees (all things).¹⁰

The above verse discusses the disagreement between husband and wife due to the existence of a misunderstanding. The ethics of argumentation is also visible in that verse whereby a husband approached the Prophet (ﷺ) regarding the matter which was conducted flamboyantly with the use of Arabic expression (*taḥāwurakumā*) (your dialogue) as if there was no enmity. Another usual term is *al-jidāl* which aims at defending the truth or negating the skepticism.¹¹ That word is also used in the Qur'ān pertaining to the dialogue and relation which the Muslims had with people of the book (Jews and Christians) as the verse says,

And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, "We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to

you; Our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)”.¹²

Apparently the use of the word *al-jidāl* is also used to confirm the truth of the message given to the Prophet (ﷺ).¹³ At many times, followers of religion can be subjected to some forms of dialogues with others from other religion.

Those who believe (in the Qur’ān), those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Sabians, Christians, Magians, and Polytheists, Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgment: for Allah is witness of all things.¹⁴

The above verse indicates the use of ethics of dialogue even when interacting with the people of the book, the Jews and Christians. Apart from that there are also Sabians who worship stars and Magians who worship the fire. Polytheists basically believe in God as the Creator of the universe but they associate Him with others.¹⁵ Religious dialogue (*hiwār al-dīnī*), is a mechanism to seek an understanding between people of different faiths. It is quite interesting to note the importance of a dialogue and relation across faithful boundaries as defined by Hans Kung in which he said, ‘There can be no peace among the nations when there is no peace among the religions. There can be no peace among religions without dialogue between the religions.’¹⁶ Then, one of the purposes of the dialogue is to achieve a peaceful and harmonious life among adherents of all religions.

Dialogue and Communication Across Faithful Boundaries

The ethics and principles of dialogue and communication with other religious adherents should observe the following rules: First, we should agree on the diversity of religious tradition,¹⁷ which is initially to conduct a dialogue to bridge the differences in religious doctrines. This is in line with the purpose of creation within the diversity of race and nations as stated in the following verse:

Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed; but the

People of the Book, after the clear Signs came to them, did not differ among themselves, except through selfish contumacy. Allah by His Grace guided the believers to the Truth, concerning that wherein they differed. For Allah guides whom He wills to the straight path.¹⁸

The verse ensures that humanity consists of different ethnical backgrounds and nationhoods. They also represent a single family of Adam and Eve (عليهما السلام) and the purpose behind the creation of diversity of races and faithful affiliation is to come out with common understanding and cooperation. There should not be any claim of superiority and undermining position of others whatever the origin as the judgment on status of dignity is based on God's consciousness.¹⁹

Secondly, it should be conducted sincerely for introducing the uniqueness of the message. Thirdly, we should believe that the truth must prevail and we should not compromise in matters related to belief. Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) was given clear guidance on how to deal with people. The message given to him emphasizes on the aspects of fairness and justice:

O you who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do.²⁰

God requires all believers to stand firmly in the defense of justice regardless of religious, racial and ideological beliefs. A person who does injustice in matter of judgment will not be reckoned as a believer although he may perform daily ritual services. Close relations to others such as family and friends should not become a hindrance for the establishment of justice.²¹ Fourth, dialogue and communication must be conducted in a good manner. One of the ways is that during a dialogue no one should undermine the doctrine of a particular religion. This guiding principle can be seen clearly in the verse below:

And dispute you not with the people of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of

them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, "We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our God and your God is One; and it is to Him we have submitted."²²

The purpose of dialogue and communication explained in the Qur'ān is to collaborate on certain important matters. This can be seen in the verse taken from the *Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān*:

Say: O People of the Book come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than Allah. Then if they turn away, say: Bear witness that we are Muslims.²³

Sha'rāwī holds that whenever someone involves in a dialogue, he should avoid using harsh words which could annoy the feelings of others. The purpose of a dialogue, he holds, is to urge people on the things which are positive. It can be effective whenever a person resorts to the use of wisdom. God laid down ethics of dialogue and communication with the sole aim of taking out a person from disbelief into belief and from the opposing truth to conviction. This could be only achieved through kindness and mercy. Such manner can also be referred to in the verse which says:

Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair preaching; and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His path, and He is the Best Aware of those who are guided.²⁴

He clarifies further that the dialogue and communication should be conducted based on the educational level and belief of a person. It could also be done even with the atheists (*al-mulḥidūn*) and those who believe in God but, yet, they associate Him with others (*mushriks*). However, the dialogue and communication with people of the book must be handled with utmost care as they believe in God as the Creator of the universe and also believe in the messages given to the previous

prophets and messengers (ﷺ) whom they were sent to teach monotheism and morality. In view of this, God gives direction to deal with them with the utmost level of goodness. Sha'rāwī maintains that the meaning *illabillatī hiya aḥsan* (except with means better than mere disputation), the Qur'ān has given the guidance that it must be conducted with kindness.²⁵

The fifth condition is that the dialogue and communication must be conducted with the use of wisdom (*al-ḥikmah*), best selection of the expression (*al-maw'izah al-ḥasanah*) and make the argument with the best manner. Sometimes the issue of religious doctrine may cause sensitivity. Hence, the Qur'ān gives the direction to argue with utmost care through the use of good words as referred to in the following verse:

And dispute you not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, "We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we have submitted."²⁶

The verse mainly relates to the principle of communication and argumentation with people of different faiths by showing distinctive aspects of goodness on the concept of the revelation. Dealing through fairness of communication, it will attract the sympathy from others. Muslims should demonstrate moral conduct in the midst of society when they deal with people who subscribe to other religious belief. The harshness of communication toward them could become the main factor of having negative impression toward Islam.²⁷

Even with those who worship idols, for the sake of maintaining a harmonious relationship and co-existence, Islam prohibits the acts of vilifying and humiliating them. This ethical manner and mannerism have been clearly explained in the following verse which says:

Reville not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings. In the end will they return to their Lord and We shall then tell them the truth of all that they did.²⁸

It reflects the stand point of those who worship other than God in which whatever they go into the wrong direction, they will regard their religions superb and will defend it even at the expense of their lives. God admonishes all Muslims to deal with them by observing the ethic to gain the sympathy.²⁹ Although we may disagree with their spiritual practices, yet, we should demonstrate good behaviour instead of giving them mockery and humiliation. In a more vivid way, looking down toward theological system and deities of other religious adherents will be only potential in making them antagonist and recalcitrant.

Dialogue and Communication Requirements

There must be certain principles for those who participate in a dialogue in search of a common ground in which all religious adherents involved in it could agree upon. An individual should equip himself with sufficient religious knowledge that can convince others on the undeniable fact that the issues of religion and human nature are inseparable. One cannot talk on the subject of man without relating to God and religion. This includes knowing religious affiliation and even ideological thought of other groups.³⁰ The Qur'ān condemns those who involve themselves in a dialogue or communication without proper understanding and adequate preparation on the issues he/she would like to discuss. The following verse of the Qur'ān cautions that any human disputes and arguments should be based on prior knowledge:

Yet there is among men such a one as disputes about Allah, without Knowledge, without Guidance, and without a Book of Enlightenment.³¹

Muslim must possess the proper knowledge of the religion to prove the validity theological legal concept. They must also have the competency to convince the audience that there is no contradiction between revelation and scientific findings.³²

The Prophet (ﷺ) advised that the one who preaches Islam should take into account the subjects to whom he is addressing to. He is required not to speak to all believers beyond the mental capacity of the listeners. The preacher not only has to be knowledgeable but should

be able to apply some basic psychology in getting his message across to the other party. In this sense, not only knowledge is important but ethical principles and common courtesy and a little bit of psychology are also equally important in conveying the message of Islam.³³ In explaining the proper behaviour in calling others to Islam this is what the Qur'ān says:

Say: "This is my way: I do invite unto Allah, on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes, I and whoever follows me. Glory to Allah! And never will I join gods with Allah!"³⁴

Imām Fakhr al-Rāzī asserts the exposition on the word *al-baṣīrah* that relates to the use of clear evidence instead of following the fanciful desires. The use of clarity and strong argument, he holds, could easily convince others to accept it.³⁵

To participate in a dialogue one should be ready to be governed with ethical conducts as it becomes the effective way of gaining the respect and sympathy of others. Another aspect that should be given due attention is the way in which one expresses himself. Alongside with this aspect, his body language should go in tandem. His disposition and body language should reflect the truth and of his willingness in accepting the opinions of others.³⁶ Moreover, anyone who is involved in the dialogue or communication must accept the fact that religious plurality is a part of the Divine will with the sole aim of educating others.

Objectives of Dialogue and Communication

The goal of dialogue and communication with other religious followers is directed to reduce religious tension and eradicate all evil deeds within the community. Dialogue can be used as an effective tool to overcome the existing misconception and prejudice with a people of diverse religious background. It is expected that a goodwill dialogue among people of different religions can lead to a tolerant and harmonious society. Mohammad Natsir (1908-1993), the former Prime Minister of Indonesia, believed that people have the right to defend their religious beliefs and principles.³⁷ He argued that at times issues related to religion become sensitive due to the elements of blind faith and fanaticism. He further

stressed that one of the reasons as to why God sent heavenly books is to guide mankind in averting conflicts and maintaining peace. The Prophet (ﷺ) during his time in managing the state of Madinah observed high level of tolerance in dealing with the People of the Book (Jews and Christians). He used the Divine guidance and wisdom of the Qur'ān in dealing with them. He showed no bias toward any one group living in Madinah. The verse below depicts clearly the manner in which one has to deal with the people in a society:

“... and I am commanded to judge justly between you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord: for us (is the responsibility for) our deeds, and for you for your deeds, there is no contention between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and to Him is (our) final goal”.³⁸

In the practical aspect, institutions of higher learning can initiate dialogue and communication on certain issues at different levels. At the community level, religious leaders can also apply the same wisdom and guidance as used by the Prophet (ﷺ) in handling problems brought to their attention. They have to be fair and just in dealing matters related to corruption, drug offences, communal disputes, etc. By being fair and just they would be able to change the perception of the people which has been influenced by the print and social media.

Underlining the above, most modern advocates of dialogue see many advantages in it to help maintain a peaceful co-existence and to combat hatred and religious fanaticism. The dialogue and communication should gear towards achieving the shared values and virtues as mentioned in the message of each religion, such as love (*maḥabbah*), peace (*al-salām*), justice (*al-'adl*) and tolerance. Muḥammad Imārah, a well-known Muslim scholar from Egypt is of the view that from its inception dialogue can galvanize goodness on the basis of cooperation among all nations. This is pretty much needed at present as the world faces multi-dimensional crises, from terrorism to radicalism.³⁹ Another aim of a dialogue is to seek common understanding between religious groups. Muslims should be aware on the existence of religious plurality which is a part of God's will and each group must realize that until there is no fanaticism displayed by any one party among the dialogue parties, the compromise and negotiation will remain as an illusion.⁴⁰ To justify his

claims on the urgency of the dialogue and communication he refers to the verse below:

Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loves those who are just.⁴¹

The above evidence also serves as a methodological theory of sociological relation in which, a Muslim should not discriminate the communication with the rest of the community as long as they have no intention to ruin religious belief. In addition, they should not discriminate against others in term of offering kindness and even for having friendship with them on the condition that they be saved from negative intentions. Even when they are not courteous toward us (Muslims), we have to treat them in a good way and to educate them about good manners and ethics.⁴²

Maḥmūd Ashūr, the vice chancellor of al-Azhar University, lays emphasis on the significance of a dialogue and communication to solve the problems which occur in this 'modern life' which is mostly influenced by secular ideas. According to him, a dialogue and communication is an attempt to seek a common ground of collaboration to promote virtues and give respect to each other. He elaborates further that the dialogue and communication is also aimed at encountering the negative cultural invasion which contradicts religious values and justice. In today's world, the culture of hedonism and promiscuity are very alarming to the extent of contaminating the minds of the youth to be heedless towards the religious precepts on ethics. This condition has become the major obstacle in many religions. It has also compelled all religious leaders to work earnestly to overcome this situation. To remedy the condition, a dialogue and communication would be the best and meaningful option. As such, religious leaders should by all means give dialogue and communication the preference in solving problems within the followers of their religion and also with their counterparts in other religions.

Inter-Individual Dialogue and Communication

The revelation given to Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) primarily aims at maintaining peace and harmony with all mankind. It is inevitable that

misunderstandings, disputes and even conflict mainly stem from inappropriate dealing with others. In view of this, the message is very much concerned with the ethics of dialogue to be observed by all individuals in a community. Kindness, common courtesy and saying good words through dialogue and communication become the main ingredients of achieving the level of God's consciousness known in the religious term as *taqwā* (lit. piety and fear of God). Whenever a person wishes to reach the level of piousness he must observe the ethics of dialogue and communication by selecting good words, and kindness in dealing with others. There are several terms in the Qur'ān which denote the ethics of dialogue and communication to be observed during an interaction with others. The first is the word *sadīdan* which somehow elucidates the good word in communication with others. This word can be referred to in the following verse of the Qur'ān:

O ye who believe! fear Allah and (always) say a word directed to the Right.⁴³

A believer whenever he speaks in all circumstances, should observe the truth. The word *sadīdan* comprises several dimensions of meaning that relates to say the truth while communicating to others, conducting the task of enjoining the truth and forbidding the evil practice in society. Moreover, it also deals with the discussion related to academic matters. Nevertheless, saying the truth needs the use of ethics and courteous expression. From the theological aspect, observance of the ethic in communicating the truth to others would lead to virtuous deeds and God's forgiveness.⁴⁴

A husband and wife should be very cautious in their communication between themselves so as to maintain a harmonious life and relationship within the household. Muslim preachers normally recite that verse to admonish the newly married couple on the importance of maintaining peace and harmony in their married life. Hence, they need to be enlightened with the ethics of dialogue for a lasting happiness in their marriage.

The word *ma'rūf* which literally means goodness is also essential in maintaining good relationship with others. A good word used during a dialogue and communication with others most likely will produce

constructive resolutions. The word *ma'rūf* is used to explain the position of one giving help/charity to the one who is needy. A kind word from the giver of charity is better than help or donation followed by words of insult and disgrace towards the recipient. The full translation of that verse from the *Sūrah Al-Baqarah* is as stated below:

Kind words and the covering of faults are better than charity followed by injury. Allah is free of all wants, and He is Most-Forbearing.⁴⁵

In fact the word *ma'rūf* signifies the whole aspect of the teachings of Islam which emphasizes goodness and justice. One of the central themes of all the heavenly books is to promote *ma'rūf* in all aspects of human life. Since *ma'rūf* can be related to all areas of human life, it is not surprising to know that it has an important role in the human communication and dialogue. In the human communication, the role of *ma'rūf* is to maintain peace and justice and at the same it prevents conflicts between two or more parties involved in a discussion. The reference below from the Qur'ān can further enlighten us on the role of *ma'rūf*:

You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah.⁴⁶

Muslim *Ummah* would not achieve the level of perfection whenever its members do not have the keenness of promoting goodness (*ma'rūf*) and eradicating evil practices in a community. It is a strong reminder for all individuals to undertake the task of promoting goodness which includes saying the truth, kindness as well as using polite and ethical words while communicating with others.

The Prophet's (ﷺ) emphasis on the use of good and kind words in human communication can be referred to the following *Ḥadīth* (*Tradition*) which says:

Whoever claims to believe in God and the Day of Judgement, then, he should say the good word or just keep quiet.⁴⁷

Extra care should be taken when Muslims are engaged in a

discussion with people of other faith. At all times provocation, insult and mockery should be avoided when they are engaged in a dialogue and communication with others. It is believed by many experts in the area of communication that provocation, insult, mockery, etc. can ruin harmonious life. The Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) has warned the Muslims to control their tongue when he said:

Guard your tongue, stay in your homes and weep over the sins.⁴⁸

The word *al-ihsān* (lit. goodness or fairness and kindness) is another term which signifies the ethics of dialogue which should be maintained throughout the interaction with people of diverse cultural background. God created this world with different cultural diversities which stems from religious affiliations and even ideological beliefs. Culture and ideology could be regarded as determinant of emerging human behaviour with different outlooks and characters. In dealing with others, especially with those who are at the lower level in terms of socio-economic status such as orphans and needy human beings are required to observe kindness to avoid annoying their feelings. Good deeds without being followed by politeness in one's actions are not good enough for one to qualify to be a good Muslim. All good deeds such as charity, prayers, feeding of the poor and needy will be mere actions in vain if they are not paired with kind words and respect for those who are in need of help and assistance to overcome their difficulties. The following verse of the Qur'ān justifies good deeds and kind words are inseparable when providing help to others:

Worship none but Allah; treat with kindness your parents and kindred, and orphans and those in need; speak good to the people.⁴⁹

Human interaction from theological angle should be conducted on the basis of following principles. First, to believe and worship oneness of deity is a prerequisite for the acceptance of human activities in the sight of God. It is a great sin for one to associate God with others, as it can annul all his activities and may even become the main cause of his disgrace. Secondly, giving hands (help to) one's parents with politeness

and taking good care of them. Third, to communicate with the rest of the communities across faithful and cultural boundaries with the sole aim of maintaining harmonious relations.⁵⁰

Dialogue and Communication within the Family

The purpose of marriage in Islam is to maintain the continuity of generation. However, children sometime become great burden for the parents when they become rude, harsh and fail to show love and care that should be shown towards their parents. The Qur'ān specifically highlights the ethical and moral significance of this relationship in the *Sūrah al-Isrā'*:

And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be dutiful to your parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour.⁵¹

Muslim theology asserts that the position of parents comes next to God. Children should observe kindness towards them who have endured much suffering and hardship in raising them when they were infants. In their old age they must follow the ethics during communication with them to avoid being harsh to them. Those who use rude words can hurt the feelings of their parents. The children should communicate with them with full respect and appreciation for their sacrifices to educate and raise them up to maturity. They are required to be more gentle and kind towards them especially when they become old and incapacitated.⁵²

God warns all the believers to be cautious in communication with parents as it could be the major cause of ruining the family structure. Hence, each individual should maintain commitment toward the truth and observe the ethical conduct to maintain continuous prosperity and peace of life.⁵³ It is inevitably true that good communication and integrity would become the source of blessing and wellness of humanity.⁵⁴ Another aspect of good communication is to maintain harmonious relation. The Qur'ān lays stress on urgency of good communication and decency of conduct in the family.⁵⁵

Children who use harsh and rude words can hurt the feelings of their parents. Their daily communication must be conducted in full appreciation for their many sacrifices in educating and raising them to maturity. Children are required to be more gentle and kind towards their parents when they become old and incapacitated. However, children may possess different behavioural patterns of character. Naturally, parents pray and expect that they will be granted by God with children as ‘comfort of their eyes and with good physical appearance without any birth defects, with good intelligence and even ethical conduct. The Qur’ān records such expectation of parents in the verse saying:

And those who pray, “Our Lord! Grant unto us wives and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes, and give us (the grace) to lead the righteous”.⁵⁶

In some cases, the expectations of parents become mere illusion. Instead of having children of fine character, parents may have to face children who are wayward and having attitudinal problems. They will be in great shock to see the children they have raised from childhood through great difficulties and challenges, toward the end, become their foes and adversaries. God has cautioned those parents who have to face such a situation:

Your riches and your children may be but a trial: but in the Presence of Allah, is the highest Reward.⁵⁷

It will be a much more difficult situation than the above for parents who have to face children who may become their enemies. In the Qur’ān, Allah has cautioned those parents who have to face such a situation to forgive and overlook the mistakes of their children:

O you who believe! Truly, among your wives and your children are (some that are) enemies to yourselves: so beware of them! But if ye forgive and overlook, and cover up (their faults), verily Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.⁵⁸

It might happen that wives and children behave against proper

respect to follow the Divine guidance and such kind of condition in fact represents a big trial and test for a husband. Whatever the negative trait or attitudes, the husband should be consistent instead of turning toward a compliance of their desires. The thing he should remember is that he should not treat them harshly rather he must possess the spirit of forgiveness not to expose them to the shame or ridicule.⁵⁹

In fact, parents in Islam have a privileged position and children as their ward should later in life have to repay the kindness shown to them by their parents. It is an obligation for children to demonstrate noble character to them. In the Islamic theology, the Mercy of God depends on the level of kindness and treatment of a person toward his or her parents. Whenever children apply politeness and feel responsible toward their parents especially in the midst of hardship, then, God will open the source of blessing and mercy toward them as highlighted in the following Prophetic *Tradition*, which says:

The Lord's pleasure is in the parent's pleasure, and the Lord's anger is in the parent's anger."⁶⁰

Besides highlighting the position and the plight of parents, the Qur'ān has also informed children on the ethical manners and duties they have to observe towards their parents. Not only that, the Qur'ān also calls on the children to pray for the well-being of their parents. The following verse from *Sūrah al-Aḥqāf* highlights some of the obligations of the children towards their parents:

We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents: In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months. At length, when he reaches the age of full strength and attains forty years, he says, "O my Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for Your Favour which You has bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents, and that I may do righteous good deeds such as please You; make my offspring good. Truly have I turned to You and truly, I am one of the Muslims".⁶¹

Parents struggled to bring them up as children with hardship and

the mother weaned them within the period of thirty months full of caring and attention. Hence, they should repay the parents by invoking for the goodness of their life. The ultimate strength of a person is ranging between age of 18 and 30 or 32. Some scholars regard that the real or the best of manhood is between 30 and 40.* Perhaps his spiritual faculties gain the upper hand after reaching the age 40.⁶²

Many researches in areas of psychology, sociology and family management have highlighted that poor communication skill or a total breakdown in communication seems to be the major cause of family problems; between the spouses or between parents and children. Cheerful communication and proper dialogue that rests on ethical principles can contribute towards a harmonious and happy family. Hence, all members of a family regardless of their status should observe common courtesy and mutual respect in their communication with all the members of his or her family.

Speak justly even if a near relative is concerned and fulfil the Covenant of Allah.⁶³

In general, the well-being of the family is a crucial factor in bringing up a good society. When all the members of a society are good, then this will lead to the rise of a good nation. In a nutshell, a family that has and lives with good moral values and communication among its members can in a way contribute to the development of a good nation, that is morally and ethically strong. The ideal relationship between parents and children has been mentioned in many parts of the Qur'ān.

The communication from the Qur'ānic perspective gives an indication that family relations (among father, mother and children) carried out in the most Islamic manner in a way forms an act of *'ibādah* (worship) done for the sake of Allah. All family members are rewarded for their good manners. All relationships which do not comply with the ethical behaviour approved by the Islamic *Shari'ah* are not deemed as *'ibādah*. This view is also being shared by Mālik b. Nābi, a Muslim scholar from Algeria. According to him, all family relationships in Islam are spiritually linked between one member of the family with the other.⁶⁴

*It may be recalled that the holy Prophet (ﷺ) received the call for Prophethood in his 40th year – *Ed.*

Dialogue and Communication of Luqmān with his Son

Sūrah Luqmān is one of the chapters in which one can gain many valuable lessons on how children should deal and communicate with their parents. The advice given by Luqmān to his son is also closely linked with the sociological establishment. He gave several advices which can also be considered as a will or *waṣiyyah*.

Behold, Luqmān said to his son by way of instruction: “O my son! Join not in worship (others) with Allah: for false worship is indeed the highest wrong-doing.” And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command), “Show gratitude to Me and thy parents: to Me is (thy final) Goal.”⁶⁵

Luqmān was very much concerned toward educating his son on monotheism. Misconception on underlying this concept will, inevitably, lead him into the great sin of polytheism. He was also keen about moral education to avoid hardship of life when the parents suffer from physical weaknesses. God requires children to demonstrate ethical behaviour as a way of repaying kindness toward them for they faced a lot of hardship and difficulties to bring them from infancy up to the age of maturity. However, it might happen that some parents force their children to subscribe to other people’s belief. In such a situation, children should maintain commitment to Islam and communicate with them in a good way to refute their request.⁶⁶

Luqmān was concerned with the future of his son. So he advised his son to dedicate his life to the activities that may please Allah, and to worship Him without associating any partner to Him. This is, in fact, related to the theological concept. Muslims should avoid committing *shirk*, the big sin which is unpardonable. It is inevitably true that the will of Luqmān can be regarded as the first priority before he gave other important lesson to his beloved son. The concept of *shirk* which can lead a person out of Islam has been mentioned in many places in the Qur’ān:

Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgives except that anything else, to whom He wills; to set up partners with Allah in worship, he has indeed invented a tremendous sin.⁶⁷

Associating others with Allah can bring dangerous consequences in the life of a Muslim. In view of this, it was very wise of Luqmān to give advice to his son in order not to be trapped in this big sin. Allah will not grant paradise when a person commits *shirk*. It has been clearly explained in the following verse of the Qur'ān:

Whoever joins other gods with Allah, Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrongdoers be no one to help.⁶⁸

Shirk (associating Allah with others) is considered as a form of *zulm* (transgression and injustice). Those who could not save themselves from the involvement of *shirk* will not get security and guidance as hinted in the following verse:

It is those who believe and confuse not their beliefs with wrong – that are (truly) in security, for they are on (right) guidance.⁶⁹

The second part of the advice given by Luqmān can be referred to in the verse which says:

“O my son!” (said Luqmān), “If there be (but) the weight of a mustard-seed and it were (hidden) in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, Allah will bring it forth: for Allah understands the finest mysteries, (and) is well-acquainted (with them).⁷⁰”

It focuses toward God's surveillance on human activities in the world that will be taken into account on the Day of Judgement. Whatever the level of virtuous deeds and the negative activity a person may involve, it will be subject to accountability. That is the reason Luqmān highly emphasized in educating his son to be extra cautious in doing activities which should be solely aimed at gaining God's pleasure.

In fact, Luqmān gave such advice in response to the question raised by his son in which he said, ‘If I commit a mistake in which no one could see it, how Allah will see it?’, he asked. Then Luqmān responded as appeared in the above verse. The word *khardala* (a mustard-seed), it means the thing which is unknown in its weight and

cannot be measured with the scale). That indicates the accuracy of accountability to Allah for one's deeds as reflected in the word '*in taku mithqāla ḥabbatin min kharḍalin*' (If there be (but) the weight of a mustard-seed). Sayyid Quṭb regards that it is the Greatness of Allah to know the thing which human beings regard as something invaluable.⁷¹

Luqmān wanted to explain the vastness of Allah's knowledge which is beyond comparison. It can be visualized from the verse which is related to the command and prohibition of God to govern mankind. Once they believe in the Divine message, then, it is expected that they can achieve happiness in this world and in the hereafter. The third part of Luqmān's advice is the command to perform daily prayer by saying, 'O my son! Establish regular prayer'. So, after the advice of his father not to associate others with Allah, is followed with the advice to observe regular prayer to dedicate one's life in seeking Allah's pleasure. The father (Luqmān) asked his son to observe regular prayer with patience to dedicate one's life in seeking His pleasure. There must be a reason why Luqmān laid emphasis on the significance of prayer. It is due to the fact, that prayer has an important role in the life of an individual and the society at large. One of the positive impacts of prayer is to maintain equilibrium between (material and spiritual elements). It also makes an individual admit the greatness of God to Whom he or she should offer obedience. Once a person performed it properly, he would feel safe and experience tranquillity within his heart. Besides that, he would realize that all worldly matters that have been burdening him lifted from his chest. Under such circumstances, one would enjoy peace of mind and a release from anxiety and stress.⁷²

Moreover, it also serves as a shield that protects one from all sinful acts in daily life. On a larger perspective, it trains a person on punctuality, discipline and trustworthiness. It also demands an individual to complete the task given to him or her in the most excellent manner. Other than that, congregational prayers in a way can strengthen Muslim unity. The role of prayer in bringing up a person on high moral values and one with integrity can be well understood in the following verse which says,

And establish regular Prayer: for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds.⁷³

There are three fundamental aspects of the prayer in which the first starts with glorifying God followed with praises, invocation and seeking forgiveness. During the prayer, a person must read *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* (the opening chapter) which highly emphasizes the importance of seeking Divine assistance and guidance to avoid indecent behaviour. At the same time, it reminds him to be aloof from evil elements and thus saving him from the curse of God. Secondly, the prayer is the reflection of humbleness through prostration and bowing down. This reminds one about the purpose of life to seek the grace and pleasure of God and keeping away from indulging in the evil practices. Third, the prayer relates with purification of the heart to prepare a person come close to the Creator and to maintain integrity and avoiding activities that could lead to evil practices. In short it, serves as a constant reminder to protect a person from crises.⁷⁴

The other part of the *waṣiyyah* given by Luqmān is the advice to undertake responsibility of enjoining goodness and eradicating evil. This is mainly related to certain things to which Luqmān gave his utmost preference. After he gave direction on the principles of education based on *Ṭawḥīd* and actualizing of worship to be dedicated only to Allah and to keep on remembering His surveillance toward activities of human beings, it was followed by enjoining the prayers as a way of purifying an individual from all sinful deeds. He also wanted his son to play a leading role in the community to undertake two things, enjoining the good and eradicating sinful and evil practices. However, it could only be done after one has changed himself or herself, before calling on others do the same. Imām al-Qurṭubī regard that *al-ṣalāh* (the prayer) and *al-amr bi al-ma'rūf* (enjoining goodness) *al-nahī 'an al-munkar* (forbidding the evil practices) represent the highest level of obedience (*al-tā'ah*) towards Allah. The goal of *al-amr bi al-ma'rūf* is to induce people to perform everything which has been commanded by Allah, within the parameters set by the legal principles of Islam. While *al-nahī 'an al-munkar* is to (admonish others to) abstain from all kinds of prohibition as stipulated in the Islamic *Sharī'ah*.⁷⁵ Luqmān's command to his son to undertake the responsibility of enjoining goodness and preventing evil practices is due to the fact that they represent the main duty of all the

prophets and messengers of Allah (ﷺ). Without fail all of the messengers and prophets (ﷺ) sent by Allah, called for the eradication of evil and promotion of good deeds. At the same time, they became the good role-models that the believers could follow in terms of good behaviour, consistency in their prayer and in giving charity to the poor and needy. The Qur'ānic verse below is an evident proof that true believers should prevent evil, promote good deeds, be constant in prayer and provide help to the destitute:

The Believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah will have His Mercy on them.⁷⁶

According to Mawdūdī, true believers must incline to righteousness and abhor the evil practices. In addition, remembrance of God should become breath of their life. Believers should also dedicate the whole activities to comply with the Divine will to bring about special character that excels the rest of humanity,⁷⁷

Luqmān's advice to his son to undertake responsibility of establishing peace and justice in the community should be taken seriously. The demand for establishing peace and justice on the part of a Muslim is a legacy left behind by all the prophets and messengers of Allah (ﷺ), very particularly by Muḥammad (ﷺ) who was the Last among all of prophets of Allah. Besides that, prevention of evil and promotion of good deeds within a society are greatly encouraged in the Qur'ān. Below is one of the references found in the Qur'ān which calls on the eradication of evil and promotion of good deeds:

Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah. If only the People of the Book believed, it would be better for them: among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors.⁷⁸

The duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil is a noble duty as people involved in this effort will become the determinant factor in the

well-being of the society. They will be deemed as the saviors of the *Ummah*. In view of this, again, the call of Luqmān is also a call for the fulfillment of the Divine call. It has been mentioned in one of the *Traditions* of the holy Prophet (ﷺ) that the one who does the duty of the prophets (ﷺ) will be placed among the prophets on the Day of Judgment. The following will be another reference from the Qur'ān on the subject of Islamic *Da'wah* related to prevention of evil and promotion of good deeds:

Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong. And they are the ones to attain felicity.⁷⁹

Luqmān also asked his son to exercise patience on whatever happens to him as phrased in the Qur'ān by the words '(bear with patient constancy whatever betides you)'. A thorough investigation into the advice given by Luqmān to his son will reveal the fact that great effort and patience are the prerequisites in upholding the truth and propagating it to others in the community. Contrary to the efforts done by good Muslims, there will be a segment of people who want to promote evil deeds, injustice and exploitation. Thus, the advice given by Luqmān to his son is very relevant to all those who are out there to promote good deeds and prevent evils in the society. In carrying out the work of *Da'wah* (*al-amr bi al-ma'rūf*), patience, perseverance and persistence are good qualities that should be maintained at all times by a social worker of Islam. There is a great reward waiting in the sight of Allah for those who endure all trials and tribulations in their effort to eradicate evil in the society.⁸⁰

Then we come to the other two advices given by Luqmān which are related to humbleness and simplicity of man during his interaction with his fellow human beings, as one of the advices given by Luqmān to his son:

And swell not your cheek (for pride) at men nor walk in insolence through the earth. Verily, Allah loves not any arrogant boaster.⁸¹

That the Divine message should be taken as the main reference of human activities to comply with the purpose of the creation to undertake

the mission of the human vicegerency. On the first part, we have to believe that all human beings are slaves of God and all of them are equal. Whatever status a person may possess it is just a formality. The dignity would only be judged through the level of *taqwā* (God's). Hence, it is worthless for a person to behave arrogantly and rather he or she should acknowledge that superiority is the right of Allah and he should regard himself as a slave and powerless.⁸²

A very important point to note at this juncture on the advice given by Luqmān to his son is that he asked his son to enjoin goodness and prevent evil in the society. He was aware that such noble work can only be achieved when one is humble and kind to the people of the society. A person should avoid being arrogant and not regard himself as a perfectionist. The person who undertakes the task of enjoining goodness and prohibiting evil deeds is regarded as a *dā'ī* (lit. preacher) in Islam. Hence, the call toward others will not be effective unless his behaviour reflects genuine kindness. He should not regard himself as superior as it could spoil what he has uttered in front of the people. Being a commander of goodness and the one who strives to eradicate evil practices in the community, he may feel superb due to the respect he receives from others. At the moment one may lose the respect he or she has earned from others. In the sight of Allah, an individual who is proud of himself or herself will be deprived from getting any reward for his/her good deeds. In an ideal situation one only has to perform his or her duties in the best possible way and leave all other things to be decided by Allah. This way of dealing with others will be surely liked by Allah as that person tends to be humble in His sight. The advice given by Luqmān to his son to be humble and patient can be complemented with what Allah has said in the following verse from *Sūrah al-Furqān*:

And the faithful slaves of the Most Gracious (Allah) are those who walk on the earth in humility and sedateness, and when the ignorant address them, they say, "peace!"⁸³

The character of walking with humbleness does not mean to be like a weak or sick person with an attempt of giving impression of piety toward others. The Prophet (ﷺ) walked fast with full of confidence and his *Companions* could not keep pace with him. Whenever he came across an ignorant person who uttered absurd things, he left him

with politeness. This kind of attitude indicates the keenness of the Prophet (ﷺ) to undertake the task of serving the *ummah* to achieve the balance of life between physical and spiritual things instead of wasting of times.⁸⁴

The tendency for man to be arrogant has also been mentioned in many different parts of the Qur'ān. One of which is in *Sūrah al-Isrā*. which speaks on human arrogance:

Nor walk on the earth with insolence: for thou canst not rend the earth asunder nor reach the mountains in height.⁸⁵

After he prohibited his son not to indulge in arrogance, then, the *naṣīḥah* (lit. advice) was followed by another aspect of Islam that is how to maintain the ethics in a dialogue and communication. The verse stated below calls the Muslims to be gentle with people:

And be moderate in your walking, and lower thy voice. Verily, the harshest of all voices is the braying of the asses.⁸⁶

He wanted to educate his son on moderation which is highly encouraged and indicates the perfection of the teaching of religion on the basis of *al-waṣaṭiyyah* (moderation). In communication, a person should not use excessive intonation as this may annoy the feelings of others. In addition to the use of the voice, the above verse also calls for humbleness in human behaviours, especially when one walks. The verse also calls for one to walk in humility. In modern times, driving or riding too fast, being arrogant, puffed up with pride, etc. are all behaviours that can be metaphorically associated to walking insolently.

Dialogue and Communication with a Superior

Dialogue with a superior represents a sociological relation with a group leader such as a manager, head of department of certain agency as well as a person in authority. In this aspect, we deal with certain ethical principles as contained in the Qur'ānic texts which could be used as a system of sociological communication with a leader to maintain a harmonious relationship, peace and justice. As pointed out

earlier on that the core of the teaching of the Qur'ān and behaviour of the Prophet (ﷺ) is to maintain peace and eradicate evil in the community which could be achieved through observance of ethical values. In fact, the ethics of dialogue or communication represent the major part of the belief. Thus, the *Tradition* of the Prophet (ﷺ) discusses the status of a Muslim who loves peace and harmony:

A Muslim is the one whose tongue and hand are secured (from evil deeds) and a Muhājir (Emigrant) who refrains from what Allah has forbidden.⁸⁷

In the sociological context mankind are known as social beings that interact with each other. They need a leader who is in charge to manage their affairs. A society which comprises various individuals needs an authority and leadership. In certain cases the relationship between a leader and individuals could be fruitless due to an inappropriate dialogue and communication between them. The Divine guidance given to the Prophet (ﷺ) necessitates obedience of each community member toward his leader in term of goodness as illustrated in the following verse:

O you who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you. If you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you do believe in Allah and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable for final determination.⁸⁸

Humanity cannot be separated from dealing with leadership and authority. Whatever the policies made by a leader which may contradict justice, yet it should maintain loyalty toward truth and justice. In certain situation a leader may take the decision or policy which is against the public interests. All individuals should have the concern to remind him by observing the ethics of communication to bring him to the right track. One of the ethics in dealing with an authority who might be characterized with coerciveness and opposed to the standard of an justice, the duty of an individual is to remind him with mild words and offering of good

advice which may convince him about the wrong policy. The following verse can also be regarded as an injunction in reminding a ruler to follow the right conduct and behaviour and to avoid cruelty and injustice,

Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious. Truly, your Lord knows best, who has gone astray from His Path, and He is the Best Aware of those who receive guidance.⁸⁹

The above verse shows three things related to the change of negative attitude which may contradict the concept of justice in the community. First, is the use of wisdom to bring a person to follow the truth. Secondly, it should be conducted with the use of the word *al-maw'izah al-ḥasanah* (lit. good advice or exhortation). Third, it should be conducted with the use of ethical argumentation (*wajādilhum bi al-llatī hiya aḥsan*).

Guidance is needed and can also be applied at the state level in dealing between different political rivalries. Each political group must have the agenda of governing people to maintain the right of equilibrium as well as the right of ownership and getting an equal opportunity through the work of peace and justice. In fact, the main purpose is to evaluate whether their policies suit the demand of the public in term of securing equal rights and justice. Once, they observe the shortcoming they must have the courage to criticize through the dialogue and communication in a good manner and ethic to avoid a crisis and enmity. In fact the concept of dialogue could be conducted in the form of criticism. The purpose of criticism should be within the spirit of making improvement to those things that are lacking in terms of leadership. In view of this, criticism in this particular context could be used with the use of communication by observing the ethical conduct. Criticism raised through the use of dialogue must be constructive and not destructive. Worse if it is done with mockery.

The practical example of ethical behaviour in term of the dialogue with the superior can be referred to the story of prophet Mūsā (عليه السلام) who was delegated to see Pharaoh who was characterized with authoritarianism and absolutism. God commanded prophet Mūsā (عليه السلام) to convey the message to Pharaoh to promote truth and justice and to avoid being an

oligarch up to the level of claiming himself as ‘the Supreme Lord’. This story is recorded in the Qur’ān. The Pharaoh was arrogant when he said the following:

Saying, “I am your Lord, Most High”.⁹⁰

The Qur’ān records the level of coerciveness of Pharaoh by saying:

Go to Pharaoh for he has indeed transgressed all bounds.⁹¹

Mūsā (ﷺ) and his brother Hārūn (ﷺ) were in a state of fear when they were given the task to such an authoritarian ruler like the Pharaoh. Even they were thinking to ask for some appropriate weapon to encounter the attack which might come from Pharaoh. Instead of giving them the expected weapon, God just required them to have a dialogue with him using mild words to convince him,

“But speak to him mildly; perhaps he may take heed or fear (Allah).”⁹²

The above evidence depicts the example of communication with a superior. Although Pharaoh who governed his people with an iron fist and dictatorship, yet, God required Mūsā (ﷺ) to communicate with him gently. Kind words instead of harshness might reduce the level of anger and even could soften the heart of a person. It could also evoke awareness and even inspire a person noted for his high temper and stubbornness; a hard hearted person can be won over with the use of gentle communication. That was the only equipment that God granted to Mūsā (ﷺ) prior to see Pharaoh to communicate the Divine message.⁹³

In fact, that could be regarded as an introductory part prior informing the purpose of his visit to the Pharaoh’s place. God required him to tell the truth about the task which had been granted to him from His Lord, Creator of the whole universe and Pharaoh’s at the same time. He appointed as messengers Mūsā and Hārūn (ﷺ) as messengers to promote justice and annul all kinds of enslavement. Thus, through the goodness of communication, Mūsā and Hārūn (ﷺ) requested Pharaoh to liberate Israelites without torturing them.

They were required to meet Pharaoh and to convey the message from their Lord with the use of ethical conduct as stated in the verse below:

“So go you both to him, and say, ‘Verily we are messengers sent by the Lord, so let the Children of Israel go with us, and afflict them not; with a sign indeed, we have come from your Lord! And peace will be upon him who follows the guidance!’⁹⁴

The above verse contains some important characteristics of an ideal dialogue and communication that should take place. On the first part, both of them (Mūsā and Hārūn [عليهما السلام]) when they met Pharaoh, introduced themselves as the messengers of God. They simply said the truth about the task that was given to them by their Lord as messengers of God (*Inna Rasūlā Rabbik*). They did not accuse Pharaoh as the one who has committed a grave sin when he claimed that he was the ‘Supreme Lord’. What they merely said were ‘we are simply messengers of your God! They did not say to him that “you are not the Lord (*mā anta bi-rab*). They informed him about the purpose of their meeting with him that they were there to make an appeal on behalf of the Israelites to be released from their bondage. They did not threaten Pharaoh initially of any wrath of God. In all modesty they only said ‘Send forth, therefore, the Children of Israel with us, and afflict them not’. Even in their reply to the arrogance of the Pharaoh, they just said “with a Sign, indeed, we have come from thy Lord!” As a last word in their dialogue and communication with the Pharaoh, they ended their appeal by saying: ‘peace to all who follow guidance.’

Conclusion

The Qur’ān was revealed to mankind as a source of mercy and guidance. Mankind despite living in diversity of cultures, lifestyles and religious beliefs, needs to work hard and cooperate for world peace and stability. More than ever before, mankind needs to learn and acquire the true ethics of dialogue and relation to sustain peace and harmony all around the globe. The need for good communication and dialogue among the seven billion people of the world will be the decisive factors in

overcoming the major problems faced by the world, like conflicts among nations in the East and West, racism, extremism, terrorism, sectarian violence, bigotry, war, etc.

Wrong and unethical communication either in face-to-face dialogue or through the social media among people of different cultures and religions most likely can trigger a confrontational situation among the various groups that can destroy peace and harmony enjoyed by the citizens of this planet.

In this regard, the Qur'ānic teachings call Muslims to respect and cooperate with others regardless of their religious beliefs, customs, cultures and origins. The Qur'ān has laid down the basic guidelines for a peaceful coexistence at many different levels. The ethics of dialogue and relation is essentially for all frameworks of communication may they be between husband and wife, between parents and children or between an individual with other segments of the society. Thus, the Qur'ānic ethics represent clear and discerning guidelines on the basis of fraternity. It has presented a good model for a peaceful coexistence and cooperation among mankind. In fact, it embodies the principles of ethics of dialogue and relation which guarantee a better life for everyone.

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