

## ARABIC AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN NATION BUILDING

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### **Abstract**

*Arabic language is the pathway to the proper comprehension of the injunction contained in the holy Qur'an and the traditions of the holy Prophet (SAW). This implies that proficiency in the language can make the current effort being made by the government and the people of this great nation easier in bringing back the moral training of our people especially the young to this seemingly lost glory. Relegating the Arabic and Islamic Studies school curricular has adverse effect on our people's quest for the knowledge of the Islamic sharia. The paper intends to highlight the inseparability of Arabic language and Islamic studies in order to ensure the building of a morally upright society. This is because the aim of Islam is to produce a global community which is morally and spiritually upright so as to live a meaningful life in this world and the hereafter.*

### **Introduction**

Islam has provided some universal fundamental rights for humanity as a whole. These rights are to be honoured and observed. To achieve the respect and observance of these fundamental rights, Islam has laid down legal support and effective ethical system. In Islam, whatever is normally good and will lead to the welfare of individuals in particular and the society in general is equally morally good. Islam attaches great importance to the social interactions between the members of the community. Each and every member of the community is obliged to behave well so as to contribute his quota to the formation of a just and balanced society devoid of oppression, tyranny, laxity, corruption, theft, armed-robbery, house-breaking, bribery, tribalism, nepotism and other social and economic vices. All the divine injunctions which warn the community members against indulgence in these kinds of social and economic vices are contained in the holy Qur'an and the traditions of the holy Prophet (SAW).

As earlier mentioned, two sources of Islamic sharia are written in Arabic language. This signifies that the two subjects are closely associated with each other for proper understanding of the injunctions contained in them. Hashimiy (1994:47) reports a tradition of the holy Prophet in which he (the Prophet) emphasizes the intimacy of Arabic and Qur'an and the traditions of the holy Prophet (SAW).

The holy Prophet says and I quote: "I love Arabic language for three reasons: i. because I am an Arab, ii. The holy Qur'an is in Arabic, iii. Arabic language will be the medium of communication in paradise by the people of paradise" (Related by Tabarani and others).

This clearly means that since the holy Prophet is an Arab, his sayings are in Arabic language. It also implies that, since the holy Qur'an is said to be written in Arabic in the above quoted hadith, it cannot be separated from the language. This implies that, any importance to be attached to the teaching of the holy Qur'an must be extended to Arabic language.

In another tradition, the holy Qur'an also emphasizes the close association between Arabic language and the holy Qur'an which is the primary and the most vital source of the Islamic sharia. Baihaqi in Zamiji (1948), quoted the Hadith of the holy Prophet in which he (the holy Prophet) says and I quote; "learn Arabic language until you know how to analyse the book of Allah". This implies that, the learning and teaching of Arabic language is an act of worship and should be studied with all seriousness and in an advanced form not in the form of what obtains in our schools today where the language is not given any priority attention at all levels of our education system. The situation of teaching and learning of Arabic language has deteriorated in schools to the extent that you find some students at tertiary level of their educational career ignorant of Arabic consonants. How can this type of people understand the injunctions contained in the holy Qur'an; talkless of analyzing them. This is because one cannot analyse what he does not properly understand. Whali (1989:145) explains that Muhammad (SAW) is quoted as saying: "I have only been sent to perfect virtues and morals". This means that the main purpose of sending the Prophet to humanity is to teach and train humanity to be of good conduct so that life on earth can be truthful and honest in their dealings with other people. Hence, the Islamic scholars have great role to play in this context to represent the holy Prophet (SAW) in enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong through enhancing the teaching of Arabic language for a better understanding of Islamic sharia. In this connection, Usman (1963:5) reports a Khatib as transmitting that he said: "The scholars are the heirs of the Prophet".

Similarly, Almighty Allah states in the holy Qur'an that, those who fear Allah are the scholars as it is stated in the following verse:

"Those truly fear God, among His servants, who have knowledge" (Q35:28). The acquisition of Islamic knowledge which is tied up with Arabic language should be the top priority of our government. This is because, the teaching of Islamic studies in our institutions of learning is currently secularized in the sense that it is diverted from Arabic language and its literature as well as being limited to the teaching of Ibadat mainly conducted in English language to the detriment of the original medium used by the holy Prophet to teach Islam, i.e. Arabic language. Therefore, the adoption of Islamic sharia by some states in northern Nigeria can only succeed if the syllabi of both Arabic and Islamic studies are reviewed to reflect the original medium of teaching them by the holy Prophet (SAW) i.e. Arabic language and to cover all facets of human life. Islamic sharia, encompasses all aspects of human life. This can be seen from the following examples from the holy Qur'an which is the primary sources of Islamic sharia. Qur'an has outlined a typical righteous and virtuous personality where it is said and I quote:

It is not righteousness that you turn your face towards east or west; but it is righteousness to believe in God and the last day and the Angels, and the Book and the Messengers; to spend of substance out of love for Him, for your kind, for orphans, for the needy, for the way, favor for those who ask; and for the ransom of slaves, to be steadfast in prayers, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which you made, and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering) and adversity and throughout all periods of panic such as the people of truth, the God fearing.

Swoynti (1964) outlines the qualities of a good Muslim as contained in the above verse as follows:

- i) His faith should be true and sincere, free from show off and hypocrisy

- ii) He must be prepared to justify it in deeds of charity to his fellow human beings.
- iii) He must be a good citizen who supports social organizations and all that is beneficial to humanity.
- iv) He must be a person whose soul is firm and unshaken in all circumstances.

### **The Ethical Teachings of Islam on Various Facets of a Muslim Life**

Taqw-lah: The highest quality of a Muslim according to the Qur'an function is Taqa (The God consciousness). This is made clear in (49:13) where Allah, the most exalted in might says and I quote: "The most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you". The significance of Taqwa in man exists in a heart the conviction that his dealings are with God who sees him all times and in all places. And that he cannot hide himself from Him nor deceive Him or flee from Him. It is this conviction that enable man to be sincere with all the devotion of heart and soul without any external pressure. This implies that true belief in Allah is the only answer to the current decay of our people morally. If there is true belief in God, the need for law enforcement agent and the setting up of anti-corruption and other related offences agencies will not even arise.

### **Kindness and Humility to Parents**

Respect and magnanimity to parents are vital aspects of a Muslims' expression of faith (Q.17:23-24) says and I quote:

The Lord has decreed that yee worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in the life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour. And out of kindness, lower

to them the wing, of humility, and say my Lord, bestow on them thy mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.

In commenting on the in-function contained in the above verse: Al-Hashim (1999:49) says; "Islam has raised the position of the parents to a level that is unknown to any other religion, in that it has placed kindness and respect towards them on a level that is just one degree below belief in Allah and true worship of Him".

### **Kindness to Neighbours**

A good Muslim is expected to be kind and generous to his neighbor either Muslim or non-Muslim. Neighbours are categorized into three groups namely:

- i) A Muslim relative neighbor
- ii) A Muslim neighbor
- iii) A non-Muslim neighbor

A Muslim relative neighbor has rights which are due to relatives, Muslims and neighbourhood. A Muslim neighbor has the rights which are due to Muslims from fellow Muslims and the rights of neighbourhood. A non-Muslim neighbor is entitled to the rights of neighbourhood (Al-Dhahabin, 1986:228).

### **Unity of Mankind**

Islam calls on people to live and cooperate with one another carefully and respectively, irrespective of their social or geographical background. The holy Qur'an emphasizes that all people descended from a pair of parents. Therefore, all people are equal before God. The blessed among people in the sight of Allah is the best in conduct or the most morally upright. It is the degree of morality therefore, that raises one above others and not material possession. The essence of dividing people into nations and tribes therefore lies in actual understanding and not inferiority complex of one group

against another. The Qur'an (49:13) has this to say:

Oh mankind, we created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you know each other (not that you may despise each other); verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted with all things.

The holy Prophet (SAW) is also reported to have said: "All of you are from Adam, and Adam was (created) from dust (Nasif, 1999:60). The injunction contained in the above verse clearly warns Muslims against despising others in terms of racial or ethnic discrimination.

### **Tolerance and Forgiveness**

One of the Islamic morals which create love and tranquility in the society is forgiveness and tolerance. And on one can attain these sublime attitudes except those whose hearts are receptive to the guidance of Islam and its noble teachings. The holy Qur'an has described the inmates of paradise as those who restrain their anger and forgive people. It reads; "... who restrain anger, and pardon (all) for God loves those who do good (3:134)". (Al-Hashim, 1999:182-3) sheds lighter on the possessors of these attitudes by saying:

Such people have restrained their anger and retrained from hurting judges. They have freed themselves from the burden and cared a new world of tolerance and forgiveness. They have gained dirty of heart and peace of mind and more importantly they have won and pleasure of God.

### **Compassion and Mercy**

Islam enjoins Muslims to always show mercy and compassion on their fellow human beings, animal and trees. This compassion should be extended to all people. It should not be restricted to one's family. The holy Prophet (SAW) is reported to have said: "Have compassion on those who are on earth so that the one who is in heaven would have mercy on you". He is also reported have said: "Whoever does not show compassion on people, Allah will have no mercy on him (Reported by Tabarani in Nasif, 1999:6).

### **Pride**

Arrogance has a destructive effect on the soul of mankind. Those who are arrogant and boastful deserve severe punishment. According to the Prophet (SAW), God says: "Night is may cloak and pride is may garment. Whoever, competes with me on either of them, I will punish him" (Muslim in Nasif, 1999:32).

### **Oppression**

Oppression is another destructive evil that leads the society into chaos and anarchy. Muslims are strictly warned against this evil. The Prophet (SAW) declared that: "Keep away from oppression, for oppression is darkness on the day of resurrection" (Bukhari and Muslim in Nasif, 1999:20).

### **Envy**

Envy is an evil characteristic which does not benefit any true Muslim. An envious person is devoid of faith (Iman) and heart. The Prophet (SAW) declared that: "Faith and envy do not go together in the heart of the servant" (Ibn Habbab in Nasif, 1999).

### **Suspicion**

Suspicion and speculation that has no foundation on reality is prohibited in Islam. The holy Qur'an (49:12) says: "Oh you who

believe, avoid suspicion as much as possible; for suspicion in some regard is a sin...”.

### Illegal Acquisition of Wealth

Acquisition of wealth through legal means is considered as an act of devotion in Islam. Property which is acquired through unlawful means is unclean and unlawful; and anyone who makes use of it does himself a great harm. The Prophet (SAW) is reported to have said, whosoever gathered unlawful riches and then gave out in charity all have no reward and on the contrary, he will have to bear the burden on his evil deed.

### Conclusion

From what we have discussed so far, it can be understood that Arabic language is closely related with Islamic studies because the former leads to the understanding of the latter. It is also understood that Islam stipulates for a man a system of life which is based on all virtues and free from evil. A Muslim is not only encouraged to practice virtue but also to establish it and eradicate vices by commanding what is good and forbidding the evil. It was also indicated that development can be achieved through eradication of social and economic vices some of which were discussed in the paper.

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