

Ethics of Dialogue and Relating with Others from the Qur'anic Perspective: An Analytical Study of Modern Exegesis

Abstract

This research studies the ethics of dialogue and relating with others as embodied in the Qur'an 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 relation comprises the whole aspect of sociological context which could be actualized in the form of concept of knowledge for human benefits. In view of lack of proficiency in Arabic, the most appropriate and convenient way of understanding the Qur'an is to look into the views of contemporary exegetes. Ethical guidelines in the Qur'an 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'an, Contemporary Exegetes, Manner and Ethical Guidelines

Introduction

The Qur'an which represents the main source of guidance within the domain of the *Shariah* delineates different aspects of ethics for dialogue and relation in order to maintain peace and justice. The occurrence of tension and conflict is mostly due to harshness of words uttered by an individual while dealing with others. The diversity of race, cultural and religious backgrounds may cause different ways for expressing oneself during interaction with others. Hence, the ethics of dialogue and relation are the most important element which determines the peaceful co-existence within a community. The message (Al-Qur'an) given to the Prophet (pbuh) emphasizes the importance of human relation. The ethics of dialogue should be actualized especially in the midst of the society which is characterized by multi-religious communities. The Qur'an lays down the principles of ethics for interaction among people with the goal of creating common understanding.¹ The present study attempts to highlight the views of exegetes on the verses of the Qur'an pertaining to ethics of dialogue and relating with others.

¹ Qur'an, 49 : 13

Etymological Meaning

There are different terms in the Qur'an which convey the meaning what a dialogue is. Noted among them are: *al-hiwar*, and *al-mujadalah* and *al-mahajah*.² 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).³

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

(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."⁴

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?"⁵

The dialogue that took place between two individuals in the above quotes from Surah Al-Kahf can be interpreted and 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, 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 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 Sheikh Mutawwali Sha'rawi maintains that the ethics of dialogue and relation need to be worked out in an intellectual and scientific manner for the use of presenting and

² Abd al-Rahim bin Samayil al-Sulami, *al-Hiwar bayn al-Adyan*, Maktabah al-Shamilah. See also Ahmad Sayfuddin Turkistani, *al-Hiwar ma'a Ashab al-Adyan: Mashru'iyatuhu wa Shurutuhu wa Adabuhu*, <http://www.al-islam.com>.

³ Qur'an, 58: 1

⁴ Qur'an, 18: 34.

⁵ Qur'an, 18: 37.

⁶ Basam Dawud Ajk, *al-Hiwar al-Islami al-Masihi: al-Mabadi, al-Tarikh, al-Mawduat wa al-Ahdaf*, (Damascus: Dar al-Qutaybah li al-Tiba'ah, 2008), p. 20.

conveying ideas.⁷ Another term for dialogue in the Qur'an is the word *al-jidal* (lit. disputation). It gives meaning of argumentation between two parties who endeavour to convince the other on certain thing.⁸ In many cases, *al-jidal* (argumentation) occurs due to the existing misunderstanding and enmity between the parties involved. A person who involves 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 misunderstanding. The ethics of argumentation is also visible in that verse whereby a husband approached the Prophet (pbuh) regarding the matter which was conducted flamboyantly with the use of Arabic expression *tahawurakuma* (your dialogue) as if there was no enmity. Another term is *al-jidal* which aims at defending the truth or negating the skepticism.¹¹ That word is also used in the Qur'an pertaining to dialogue and relation which the Muslims had with people of the book (Jews and Christians).¹² Apparently the use of the word *al-jidalis* also attempts to confirm the truth of the message given to the Prophet (pbuh).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'an), 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

⁷Abdal Rahman Hasan Jankah al-Midani, *Dawabit al-Ma'rifah wa Usul al-Istidlal wa al-Munazarah*, (Damascus: Dar al-Qalam, 1414H/1993M), p.371.

⁸Muhammad Mutawalli Sha'rawi, *Tafsir Sheikh Mutawalli Sha'rawi*, (Cairo: MaṭābiAkhbar al-Yawm, n.d.), Vol. 1, p. 7022.

⁹Ali Jirishah, *Adab al-Hiwar wa al-Munazarah*, (Mansurah: Dar al-Wafa li al-Tibaahwa al-Nashrwa al-Tawzi, 1412H/1992M), p.19.

¹⁰Qur'an, 58: 1.

¹¹Muhammad Mutawalli Sha'rawi, *Tafsir Sheikh Mutawalli Sha'rawi*, vol. 4, p. 150.

¹²The Qur'an, 29: 46.

¹³Muhammad Kamal al-Mawil, *al-Hiwar fi al-Qur'an al-Karim*, (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi li al-Ma'arif, 1420H/2000M), p.31.

¹⁴Qur'an, 22: 17.

The above verse indicates the use of ethics of dialogue even when interacting with 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 (*hiwar al-dini*), is a mechanism to seek an understanding between people of different faith. 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 Relation across Faithful Boundaries

The ethics and principles of dialogue and relation follow certain rules: First, we should agree on the diversity of religious tradition,¹⁷ which is initially to conduct the dialogue to lessen the differences in religious doctrine. This is in line with the purpose of creation within the diversity of race and nation 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

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.

¹⁵ Abu al-Fath Muhammad b. Abd al-Karim Ahmad al-Shahrastani, *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, (Beirut: Dar al-Ma‘rifah li al-Tiba‘ah wa al-Nashr, 1410H/1998M), vol.1, p.247.

¹⁶ Anis Malik Toha, *Hiwar al-Adyan bayn Jusur al-Tafahum wa Hifz al-Huwiyyah*, (Kuala Lumpur: Journal of Tajdid, Vol.14, No.27, 1431H/2010M), p. 133

¹⁷ Ruqayyah Taha Jabir al-‘Alwani, *Fiqh al-Hiwar ma‘a al-Mukhalif fi Daw al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, (Riyadh: Jaizah Naif bin Abd al-Aziz Ali Su‘ud al-‘Alamiyyah li al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah wa al-Dirasah al-Mu‘asirah, 1426H/2005M), vol.1, pp.52-53.

¹⁸ Qur’an, 2: 213.

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.¹⁹

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was given clear guidance on how to deal with people. The message given to him emphasized 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

Fourth, dialogue and relation must be conducted in a good manner. One of the ways is that during the dialogue no one undermines the doctrine of a particular religion.²¹ This guiding principle can be seen clearly in 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 explained in the Qur'an is to collaborate on certain important matters. This can be seen in the verse taken from Surah Ali Imran:

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

Sheikh Sha'rawi 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 admonish 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 relation with the sole aim

¹⁹Qur'an, 2: 213

²⁰Qur'an, 5: 8.

²¹See Ahmad bin Sayf al-Din Turkistani, *al-Hiwar ma'a Ashab al-Adyan: Mashru'iyatuhu wa Shurutuhu wa Adabuhu*, from <http://www.al-islam.com>.

²²Qur'an, 29: 46.

²³Qur'an, 3: 64.

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 can be made into different categories. It could be conducted based on the educational level and belief of a person. It could also be done even with atheists (*al-mulhidun*) and those who believe in Allah but, yet, they associate Him with others (*shirk*). The dialogue 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. All of them were sent to teach monotheism and morality. Because of this, Allah gives direction to deal with them with the utmost level of goodness. They believe in God, previous messengers, and on the heavenly books sent to them. Sheikh Sha'rawi maintains that the meaning *illabillati hiya ahsan* (except with means better than mere disputation), the Qur'an has given the guidance that it must be conducted with kindness.

The fifth condition says, dialogue must be conducted with the use of wisdom (*al-hikmah*), best selection of the expression (*al-mawizah al-hasanah*) and make the argument with the best manner. Sometimes the issue of religious doctrine may cause sensitivity. Hence, the Qur'an 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."²⁵

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 of the Qur'an:

²⁴Qur'an, 16: 125.

²⁵Qur'an, 29: 46.

And insult not those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they insult Allah wrongly without knowledge. Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings; then to the Lord is the return and He shall then inform them of all that they used to do.²⁶

Dialogue and Relation Requirements

There must be certain rules 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 topics on 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.²⁷ The Qur'an condemns those who involve themselves in a dialogue without proper understanding and adequate preparation on the issues he/she would like to discuss. The following verse of the Qur'an 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.²⁸

The Prophet of Islam has advised that the one who preach Islam should take into account of the subjects to whom he is addressing to. He has asked his followers (the Muslims) not to speak 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.²⁹ In explaining the proper behavior in calling others to Islam this is what the Qur'an says:

²⁶Qur'an, 6: 108

²⁷Khalid b. 'Abdullah al-Qasim, *al-Hiwar ma'a Ahl al-Kitab: Ususuhi wa Manahijuhu fi al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah*, (Riyadh: Dar al-Muslim, 1414H), pp.148-153.

²⁸The Qur'an, 22: 8. Similar verse can also be referred to Qur'an, 3: 66.

²⁹The Prophet (pbuh) gave the statement in his tradition in which he asked all his followers to convey the message on the basis of level of intellectualism of people. This prophetic statement can also be considered as source of ethical guidance during the conduct of the dialogue with others. For details see 'Ala al-Din bin Husam al-Din al-Mutaqi al-Hindi al-Burhan Fawri, *Kanz al-'Ummal fi Sunan al-Aqwalwa al-Af'al*, (Kuwait: Muasasah al-Risalah, 1401/1981M), vol.10, p.242.

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!"³⁰

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.³¹ Moreover, anyone who involves in the dialogue 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 Relation

The goal of dialogue and relation with other religious followers is directed to reduce religious tension and eradicate all evil deeds within the community. The dialogue can be used as an effective tool to bridge or overcome the existing misconception and prejudice within 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.³² 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 reasons as to why God sent heavenly books is to guide mankind in averting conflicts and maintaining peace. The Prophet (pbuh) during his time in managing the state of Madinah showed 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'an in dealing with them. He showed no biasness toward to any one group living in Madinah. The verse below depicts clearly the manner in which one has to deal with the people with the society:

³⁰Qur'an, 12: 108.

³¹Sa'id Ismail 'Ali, *al-Hiwar Manhajan wa Thaqafatan*, (Cairo: Dar al-Salam li al-Tiba'ahwa al-Nashrwa al-Tawzi'wa al-Tarjamah, 2007), p.36. See also Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Khitabuna al-Islami fi Asr al-'Awlamah*, (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1424H/2004), p.29.

³²Natsir supports his argument with the verse of the Qur'an which says, 'Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure. Allah will certainly aid those who aid His (cause); for verily Allah is Full of Strength, Exalted in Might, (able to enforce His Will (Qur'an, 22:40). For detail see M. Natsir, *Fiqh Da'wah*, (Jakarta: Media Da'wah, 2004), p. 57

“...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.”³³

In the practical aspect, institutions of higher learning can initiate dialogue on certain issues at different levels. At the community level, religious leaders can also apply the same wisdom and guidance used by the Prophet (pbuh) in dealing with problems brought to their attention. They have to be fair and just in dealing matter 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 advantageous in it to help maintain for a peaceful co-existence and to combat hatred and religious fanaticism. The dialogue should gear towards achieving the shared values and virtues as mentioned in the message of each religion, such as love (*mahabah*), peace (*al-salam*), hygienic (*al-taharah*), justice (*al-‘adl*) and tolerance. Muhammad Imarah, 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 need at present as the world faces multi-dimensional crisis, from terrorism to radicalism.³⁴ Another scholar by the name of Muhammad Abd al-Rahim also regard that the aim of a dialogue is to seek for meeting point in which Muslims could collaborate, and at the same time the emergence of religious plurality should be viewed as 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.³⁵ By putting the concern parties poles apart, no amicable solution could be found. To justify his claims on the urgency of the dialogue 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.³⁶

³³Qur’an, 42:15

³⁴Muhammad Imarah, *al-Hiwar al-Adyan bayn al-Nazariyah wa al-Tatbiq*, (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1999), p. 167.

³⁵Muhammad Abd al-Rahim, *al-Taawun bayn Atba al-Dinayah al-Mukhtalifah*, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 1987), p. 67.

³⁶Qur’an, 60: 8.

Sheikh Mahmud Ashur, the vice chancellor of al-Azhar University emphasizes on the significance of a dialogue to solve the problems which occur in this ‘modern life’ which is mostly influenced by Western secular ideas. According to him, a dialogue is to seek a common ground of collaboration to promote virtues and give respect to each other.³⁷ He elaborates further that the dialogue is to encounter 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 in all religions to work earnestly to overcome the situation. To remedy the condition, a dialogue would be the best and meaning option. As such, religious leaders should by all means give dialogue the preference in solving problems within the followers of their religion and also with their counterparts in other religions³⁸

Inter-Individual Dialogue and Relation

The revelation given to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) primarily aims at maintaining peace and harmony with all mankind. It is inevitable that misunderstanding, dispute and even conflict mainly stemmed from inappropriate dealing with others, should be corrected through dialogues. 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 become the main ingredients of achieving the level of God’s consciousness known in the religious term as *taqwa* (lit. God’s consciousness). Hence, whenever a person wishes to reach the level of piousness he must observe the ethics of dialogue by selecting good words, and kindness in dealing with others. There are several terms in the Qur’an which denotes the meaning of ethics of dialogue and relation to be observed during interaction with others in the community. The first is the word *sadidan* which somehow elucidates the good word during a dialogue with others. This word can be referred to in the following verse of the Qur’an:

³⁷Sheikh Mahmud Ashur, 11th Doha Conference on Inter-Faith Dialogue, 24-25/10/2011 from http://diciid.org/news_website_details.php?id=139

³⁸Muhammad Khalifah Hasan, *al-Hiwar al-Dini wa Dawrihi fi Muwajahah al-Tataruf al-Diniwa al-Irhab*, <http://www.al-islam.com>

O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allah and fear Him, and speak always the truth³⁹

A husband and wife should be very cautious in their communication between them as to maintain a harmonious life and relationship within the household. The above verse is normally recited by Muslim preachers to admonish the newly married couple as a reminder 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'ruf* which literally means goodness is also essential in maintaining good relationship with others. A good word used during a dialogue with others most likely will produce constructive resolutions. In Surah Al-Baqarah the word *ma'ruf* is used to explain the position of one giving help/charity to the one who is needy. We are told in verse 263 of Al-Baqarah that 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 Surah 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.⁴⁰

In fact the word *ma'ruf* signifies the whole aspect of the teachings of Islam which emphasizes goodness and justice in the community. One of the central themes of all heavenly books is to promote *ma'ruf* in all aspects of human life. Since *ma'ruf* can be related to all areas of human life, it is not surprising to know that it has an important role in the human interaction and dialogue. In the human communication, the role of *ma'ruf* 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'an can further enlighten on the role of *ma'ruf*:

You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind,
enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and
believing in Allah.⁴¹

Muslim *Ummah* would not achieve the level of perfection whenever its members do not have the keenness of promoting goodness (*ma'ruf*) and eradicating evil practice in the community. It is a strong reminder for all individuals to undertake the task of promoting goodness which

³⁹Qur'an, 33: 70

⁴⁰Qur'an, 2: 263

⁴¹Qur'an, 3: 110

includes saying the truth, kindness as well as using polite and ethical words while communicating with others.

The Prophet's (pbuh) emphasis on the use of good and kind words in human communication can be referred to the following *Hadith* (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.⁴²

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 Muslims are engaged in a dialogue with others. It is believed by many experts in the area of communication that provocation, insult, mockery, etc. can ruin human communication. The Prophet of Islam (pbuh) has warned the Muslims to control their tongue when he said:

Guard your tongue, stay in your homes and weep over the sins.⁴³

The word *al-ihsan* (lit. goodness or fairness and kindness) is another term which signifies the ethics of dialogue which could be maintained throughout the interaction with people of diverse cultural background. God created this world with different cultural diversity which stems from religious affiliation and even ideological beliefs. Culture and ideology could be regarded as determinant of emerging human behavior with different outlooks and characters. In dealing with others, especially with those who are at the lower level in term of socio-economic status such as orphans and needy, human beings are required to observe kindness to avoid annoying their feelings. Good deeds without 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'an 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.⁴⁴

Dialogue and Relation within the Family

⁴²Muslim b. al-Hajjaj Abu al-Hasan al-Qusyairi al-Nisabuti, *al-Musnad al-Sahih al-Mukhtasar bi Naqli al-Adl an al-Adl Ila Rasulillah SAW*, (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, n.d.), Vol.1, p.68.

⁴³Al-Tirmidhi, *Jami' al-Kabir*, (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1998), Vol.4, p.183

⁴⁴Qur'an, 2; 83

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 the love and care that should be shown towards their parents. The Qur'an specifically highlights the ethical and moral significance of this relationship in Surah Al-Isra:

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 disrespect, nor shout at them, but address them in terms of honour.⁴⁵

In Islam, the position of parents comes next to Allah. The Qur'an emphasizes that children should show kindness towards their parents who have endured much suffering and hardship to raise them when were children. All children must observe the ethics of dialogue with their parents and avoid being harsh to them. Children who use harsh and rude words can hurt the feelings of their parents. Their daily communication with their parents must be conducted in full appreciation for the many sacrifices done by their parents to educate and raise them to maturity. Children are required to be more gentle and kind towards their parents when they become old and incapacitated.

Children may possess different behavioral patterns of character. Universally, parents pray and expect that they will be granted by God with children of good physical appearance without any birth defects, with good intelligence and even ethical conduct. The Qur'an 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."⁴⁶

In some cases, the expectations of parents are not granted. Instead of having children of fine character, parents will have to face children who are wayward and having attitudinal problems. Under such a circumstance, such children can be a test and trial from God Almighty. The Qur'an has highlighted this problem in the verse below:

Your riches and your children may be but a trial: but in the Presence of Allah, is the highest Reward.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Qur'an, 17: 23

⁴⁶Qur'an, 25: 74

It will be a much more difficult situation than the above for parents who have to face children who become their enemies. It will be very sad for parents who have gone through great difficulties and challenges when the children they have raised from childhood become their enemies. In the Qur'an, 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.⁴⁸

As it has been pointed out that parents in Islam have a privileged position and children as their ward should later in life has to repay the kindness shown to them by their parents. It is obligatory on children to demonstrate noble character towards their parents. 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 demonstrate 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:

Allah will be pleased whenever parent is in state of pleasure. On the contrary, Allah will engrave whenever a parent is disheartened due to the rudeness of parent.⁴⁹

Besides highlighting the position and the plight of parents, the Qur'an has also informed children on the ethical manners and duties they have to observe towards their parents. Not only that, the Qur'an also calls on the children to pray for the well-being of their parents. The following verse from Surah Al-Ahqaf highlights some of the obligation 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

⁴⁷Qur'an, 64: 15

⁴⁸Qur'an, 64: 14

⁴⁹Al-Tirmidhi, *Jami' al-Kabir*, (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1998), Vol. 3, p. 374.

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."⁵⁰

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 abides the ethical principles can contribute towards a harmonious and happy family. All members of the family regardless of their status should observe common courtesy and mutual respect in their communication with all the members of his or her family.

Say the truth even if a near relative is concerned and fulfilled the Covenant of Allah.⁵¹

In general, the well-being of the family is a crucial factor in bringing up a good society. When all members of a society are good, then this will give rise to a good nation. In a nutshell, a family that abides good moral values and communication among its members can in a way contribute to a good nation; morally and ethically strong. The ideal relationship between parents and children has been mentioned in many parts of the Qur'an. Among the many chapters of the Qur'an, Surah Luqman is one of the chapters in which one can gain many valuable lessons on how children should deal with their parents, in terms of communication and care they should have for their parents. Below here is a verse from Surah Luqman:

Behold, Luqman 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 wrongdoing." And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and good to the parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his waning is in two years – give thanks to Me and to your parents. Unto Me is the final destination.⁵²

The dialogue from the Qur'anic perspective gives an indication that family relation (father, mother and children) carryout in the most Islamic manner in way forms as an *Ibadah*

⁵⁰Qur'an, 46: 15

⁵¹Qur'an, 6: 152

⁵²Qur'an, 31: 13-14

(worship) done in for the sake of Allah. All family members are rewarded for their good manners. All family relationships which do not comply with the ethical behavior approved by Islamic *Shariah* are not deemed as *Ibadah*. This view is also being shared by the Muslim scholar from Algeria, by the name of Malik ben Nabi. According to him, all family relationships in Islam are spiritually linked between one member of the family with the other.

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Dialogue and Relation with Superior

The dialogue with superior represents a sociological relation with group leader such as manager, head of department of certain agency as well as the authority. In this particular segment, we deal with certain ethical principles as contained in the Qur'anic texts which could be used as a system of sociological context with the leader to maintain a harmonious relationship, peace and justice. As pointed out earlier on that the core of the teaching of the Qur'an and behavior of the Prophet (pbuh) is to maintain peace, harmony, good cooperation to establish and demonstrate ethical values and to eradicate evil in the community. In fact, the ethics of dialogue represents the major part of the belief. Thus, the tradition of the Prophet (pbuh) discusses the status of a Muslim who love peace and harmony:

A Muslim is the one whose tongue and hand are secured (from evil deeds) and
a Muhajir (Emigrant) who refrains from what Allah has forbidden⁵⁴

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 affair. A society which comprises from individuals needs an authority and leadership. In certain cases the relationship between leader and individuals could be fruitless due to inappropriate dialogue between them. The divine guidance given to the Prophet (pbuh) necessitates obedience of each community member toward his leader in term of goodness as illustrated in the following verse, saying:

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

⁵³Malik Ben Nabi, *Milad al-Mujtama': Shabakah al-Alaqah al-Ijtima'iyah*, (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1986), p.122.

⁵⁴Muslim b. al-Hajjaj Abu al-Hasan al-Qusyairi al-Nisaburi, *al-Musnad al-Sahih al-Mukhtasar bi Naqli al-Adl an al-Adl Ila Rasulillah SAW*, (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, n.d.), Vol.1, p. 65.

to Allah and His Messenger, if you do believe in Allah and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable for final destination.⁵⁵

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 the 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 dialogue to bring him to the right track. One of the ethics in dealing with an authority who might be characterized with coerciveness and oppose the standard of justice, the duty of individual is to remind him with mild word and offering good advice which may convince him about the wrong policy. The following verse can also be regarded as an injunction in reminding the ruler to follow the right conduct and behavior and to avoid cruelty and injustice,

Invite (all) to the way of the 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.⁵⁶

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-mawizah al-hasanah* (lit. good advice or exhortation). Third, it should be conducted with the use of ethical argumentation (*wajadilhum bi al-lati hiya ahsan*).

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 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 right and justice. Once, they observe the shortcoming they must have the courage to criticize through the dialogue in good manner and ethic to avoid the 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,

⁵⁵Qur'an, 4: 59

⁵⁶Qur'an, 16: 125

criticism in this particular context could be used with dialogue by observing the ethical conduct. Criticism raised through the uses of dialogue must be constructive and not destructive. Worse if it is done with mockery.

The practical example of ethical behavior in term of the dialogue with the superior can be referred to the story of Prophet Musa who was delegated to see Pharaoh who was characterized with authoritarianism and absolutism. God commanded Prophet Musa to convey the message to the 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'an. The Pharaoh was arrogant when he said when he said the following:

Saying, "I am your Lord, Most High".⁵⁷

The Qur'an records the level of coerciveness in the hand of Pharaoh by saying:

Go to Pharaoh for he has indeed transgressed all bounds.⁵⁸

Prophet Musa and Harun were in a state of fear when they were given the task to see such an authoritarian ruler like the Pharaoh. Even they were thinking to ask the appropriate weapon to encounter the attack which might come from Pharaoh. Instead of giving Musa and Harun the expected weapon to defeat him, God just required them to make a dialogue with the use of mild word to convince him by saying,

"But speak to him mildly; perhaps he may accept admonition or fear (Allah)."⁵⁹

Prophet Musa and Harun were asked to meet the Pharaoh and to convey the message from their Lord. The manner in which God wants Prophet Musa and brother to speak is 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 torment them not; indeed, we have come from the Lord! And peace will be upon him who follows the guidance!'"⁶⁰

The above verse contains some important characteristics of an ideal dialogue that should take place. On the first part, both of them (Prophet Musa and Harun) when they met Pharaoh, they

⁵⁷Qur'an, 79: 24

⁵⁸Qur'an, 79: 7

⁵⁹Qur'an, 20: 44

⁶⁰Qur'an, 20: 47

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 Rasulaa Rabik*). They did not accuse Pharaoh as the one who has committed a grave sin when he said he is the ‘Supreme Lord’. What they merely said were ‘we are simply Messengers of your God! He did not say such as “you are not the Lord (*ma anta bi rab*). They informed the purpose of their meeting with him and they are there to make an appeal on behalf of the Israelites to be released from their bondage. Both Musa and Harun did not threatened the Pharaoh of any wrath of God will come upon him. 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, have we come from thy Lord! As a last word in their dialogue with the Pharaoh, Prophet Musa and Harun ended their appeal by saying: ‘peace to all who follow guidance.’

Dialogue and Relation of Luqman with his Son

The advice given by Luqman to his son is also closely linked with the sociological establishment. He gave several advices which can also be considered as will or *wasiyyah*. The first is related to the most fundamental aspect of belief in the message given to the Prophet (pbuh). This can be referred to following verse of the Qur’an:

O my son! Join not in worship (others) with Allah: for false worship is indeed the highest wrong-doing.⁶¹

Luqman 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 with theological concept which Muslims should avoid from committing the big sin which is unpardonable. It is inevitably true that the will of Luqman could be regarded as the first priority before he gave other important lesson to his beloved son. The concept of *shirk* which could lead a person out of Islam has been mentioned in many places of the Qur’an:

Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him;
but He forgives except that anything else, to whom He

⁶¹Qur’an, 31: 13

wills; to set up partners with Allah in worship, he has indeed invented a tremendous sin.⁶²

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

Whoever joins other gods with Allah, Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong-doers be no one to help.⁶³

Shirk (associating Allah with others) is considered as a form of *zulm* (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.⁶⁴

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

"O my son!" (said Luqman), "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).⁶⁵

In fact, Luqman gave such advice in response to the question raised by his son in which he said, 'If I commit mistake in which no one could see it, how Allah will see?', he asked. Then Luqman responded as appeared in the above verse. The word *khardalah* (a mustard-seed), it

⁶²Qur'an, 4: 48

⁶³Qur'an, 5: 72

⁶⁴Qur'an, 6: 82

⁶⁵Qur'an, 31: 17

means the thing which is unknown in its weight and cannot be measured with the scale).⁶⁶ That indicates the accuracy of accountability to Allah for one's deeds as reflected in the word '*in takun mitqala habbatin min kharzalin*' (If there be (but) the weight of a mustard-seed). Sayyid Qutb regards that it is the Greatness of Allah to know the thing which human beings regard as something invaluable.⁶⁷

Luqman wanted to explain the vastness of Allah's knowledge which is beyond comparison. It can be analyzed 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 could achieve the happiness in this world and in the hereafter. The third part of Luqman's advice is the request to perform daily prayer by saying, 'On my son! Establish regular prayer'. So, after the request of the father not to associate Allah with others, then, it is followed with actualization to observe regular prayer to dedicate one's life in seeking Allah's pleasure.

There must be a reason why Luqman greatly emphasized on the steadfastness of payer to his son. Prayer has an important role in the life of an individual as well as on the society at large. One of the positive results of *al-salah* (the prayer) is to maintain equilibrium between (material and spiritual element). At the time of prostration on ground for instance, a person touches the ground this humbles him or her in the sight of Allah. It also makes an individual to admit the greatness of Allah to Whom he or she should offer his or her obedience. When the prayer is performed correctly, a person would feel safe and taste tranquillity within his heart (*Qalb*). Besides that, the one who perform his prayer would feel that all worldly matters that have been burdening him have been lifted from his chest. Under such a condition one would enjoy peace of mind and a release from anxiety and stress.⁶⁸

Another positive impact that prayers can create in the individuals who performs it is the feeling of simplicity, humbleness, good character, acceptable moral standard and good character when the action is done with all consciousness and full concentration (*khusu*). Moreover, prayer forms as a shield that protects one from all sinful and corrupt practices in his or her 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 a

⁶⁶Abu Abdillah Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Abi Bakr b. Farah al-Ansari al-Khazraji Shams al-Din al-Qurtubi, *al-Jami li Ahkam al-Qur'an*, (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah, 1967), p. 66.

⁶⁷Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1982), p. 2789

⁶⁸Mursifi, Muhammad Muhammad, *Fi al-Tarbiyyah al-Islamiyyah*, (Cairo: Buhuthwa al-Dirasah, (Cairo: Maktabah Wabbah, 1987), p. 133.

most excellent manner. Congregational prayers in a way can strengthen Muslim unity. The role of prayer in bringing up a person of high moral values and one with integrity can be well understood in the following verse from Surah Al-Ankaboot:

And establish regular Prayer: for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds.⁶⁹

The other part of the *wasiyyah* given by Luqman is the request to undertake responsibility of enjoining goodness and eradicating evil. This is mainly related to certain things which Luqman gave his utmost preference. After he gave direction on the principles of education based on *tawhid* and actualizing of worship to be dedicated only to Allah and to keep on remembering His surveillance toward the work of human beings, it was followed by enjoining the prayer is a way of purifying an individual from all sinful deeds. He also wanted his son to play the 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. Imam al-Qurtubi regard that *al-salah* (the prayer) and *al-amr bi al-ma'ruf* (enjoining goodness) *al-nahy'an al-munkar* (eradicating the evil practices) represent the highest level of obedience (*al-ta'ah*) towards Allah. The goal of *al-amr bi al-ma'ruf* is to induce people to perform everything which have been commanded by Allah, within the parameters set by the legal principles of Islam. While *al-nahy'an al-munkar* is to abstain from all kinds of prohibition as stipulated in Islamic *shari'ah*.⁷⁰ Luqman's request to his son to undertake the responsibility of enjoining goodness and eradicating evil practices is due to the fact that they represent the main duty of all the Prophets and Messengers of Allah. Without fail all of the messengers and prophets 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 can follow in term of good behaviour, consistency in their prayer and in giving charity to the poor and needy. The Qur'anic verse below is an evident that true believers of Allah should prevent evil, promote good deeds, constant in prayer and provided help for 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

⁶⁹Qur'an, 29: 45

⁷⁰Awdah, 'Abd al-Qadir, *Al-Islam bayn Jahli Abaihi wa'Ajzi 'Ulamaihi*. Beirut: Muasasah al-Risalah, 1982), p.54.

regular charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah will have His Mercy on them.⁷¹

Luqman's request 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 prophets and messengers of Allah, very particularly by Muhammad (pbuh) who was the last among all of prophets of Allah. Besides that, prevention of evil and promotion of good deeds within a society are pretty much encouraged in the Qur'an. The quote below is one of the references found in the Qur'an 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.⁷²

The duty of enjoining good and eradicating 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 Luqman is also a call for the fulfillment of the divine call. It has been mentioned in one of the traditions of the Prophet (pbuh) that the one who does the duty of the prophets will be placed among the prophets on the Day of Judgment. The following will be another reference from the Qur'an 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 it is they who are successful.⁷³

Luqman also asked his son to exercise patience on whatever happens to him as phrased in the Qur'an by the words '(bear with patient constancy whatever betides you)'. A thorough investigation into the advice given by Luqman to his son will reveal the fact that great effort

⁷¹Qur'an, 9:71

⁷²Qur'an, 3: 110

⁷³Qur'an, 3:104.

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 Luqman 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'ruf*), 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 and in the society.⁷⁴

Then we come to the other two advices given by Luqman which are related to humbleness and simplicity of man during his interaction with his fellow human beings. Below here is the advice given by Luqman to his son:

And turn not your face away from men with pride, nor walk in insolence through the earth. Verily, Allah loves not any arrogant boaster.⁷⁵

Very important point to note at this juncture on the advice given by Luqman to his son is that he asked his son to enjoin goodness and eradicate 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 shun himself away from being arrogant and do not regard himself as a perfectionist. The person who undertakes the task of enjoining goodness and prohibiting evil deeds is regarded as a *dai* (lit. preacher) in Islam. Hence, the call toward others will not be effective unless his behavior 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 keeps on making efforts to stop evil 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 good deeds. In an ideal situation one only has to perform his or her duties in the best possible ways 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 (*wasiyyah*) given by Luqman to his son to be

⁷⁴Muhammad al-Tamimi, *al-Adab al-Islami*, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 2006), p. 27.

⁷⁵Qur'an, 31: 18

humble and patient can be complemented with what Allah has said in the following verse from Surah Al-Furqan:

And the faithful slaves of the Most Gracious (Allah) are those who walk on the earth in humility and sedateness, and when the foolish address them, they reply back with mild words of gentleness.⁷⁶

The tendency for man to be arrogant has also been mentioned in many different parts of the Qur'an. One of which is in Surah Al-Isra. Provided below is the translation of the verse taken from Surah Al-Isra which speaks on the human arrogance:

And walk not on the earth with conceit and arrogance. Verily, you can neither rend nor penetrate the earth nor can you attain a stature like the mountains in height.⁷⁷

After he prohibited his son not to indulge in arrogance, then, the *nasihah* (lit. advice) was followed by another aspect of Islam that is how to maintain the ethics in a dialogue and relationship. 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.⁷⁸

He wanted to educate his son on moderation which is highly encouraged and indicates the perfection of the teaching of the religion on the basis of *al-wasatiyyah*. 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 behaviors, 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.

⁷⁶Qur'an, 25: 63

⁷⁷Qur'an, 17: 37

⁷⁸Qur'an, 31: 19

Conclusion

The Quran was revealed to mankind as a source of mercy and guidance. Mankind despite living in diversity of culture, lifestyle 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 culture and religion 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'anic teachings call Muslims to respect and cooperate with others regardless of their religious belief, custom, culture and origin. The Qur'an 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 Quranic ethics represents 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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