Dealing with People in Light of the Quranic Chapter of Al-Hujurat (The Chambers): A Social Perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to present in what ways people are to deal with one another in light of the Quranic chapter of Al Hujurat, not intended to present evidence to prove or disprove theories. The researchers described four major issues associated with numerous social activities related to justice, peace and reconciliation, entertaining good intentions toward others, and rejecting all kinds of segregations. The results indicated that all four social activities extracted from this chapter are observed as VALUES. Such values could be converted into conducts and actions, which in turn, would be 'a way of life'; a diffused norm that is well respected by community members. Clues, meanings, suggestions, and signs through using Quranic terms and words could reflect social actions. Based on the study results, the researchers recommend conducting similar studies to present comparable social activities in light of further Quranic chapters in addition to theological scriptural verses reflected by other spiritual traditions.

Keywords: Quranic Chapter, AL-Hujurat, the Chambers, and Dealing with People.

1. Introduction

A thematic presentation of this Chapter represents a collection of commandments and instructions revealed on different incidents composed of one chapter due to their relevancy and connectedness to the topic of concern. According to (Maududi, 1977), the theme of this Chapter is clarifying to Muslim people real believers' manners. The purpose of this research study is to present in what ways people are to deal with one another in light of the Quranic chapter of Al Hujurat (The Chambers).

As Muslims, the researchers sought to present a description about several social issues largely depending on the Holy Quran as well as Quranic interpretations as the main sources for this topic of concern. The researchers attempted to present a discussion of Muslim identity campaigning the code of conduct essential to monitor Muslims' lives extracted from four Quranic verses. Muslim researchers, according to Al Kandari (2001), have certain spiritual responsibilities to attain as a major part of their study. Whenever possible, researchers must refer to evidences from the Holy Quran since their work is researched directly from the Quran. Therefore, this research study contains a great deal of references from the interpretations of and the Holy Quran. This study is intended to present a fundamental description of some key issues related to a number of social activities. Yet, its purpose is not to provide evidence to prove or disprove theories. Rather, it is to present a discussion, as has already been mentioned, concerning the topic of concern in relation to the study problem and question. Through a casual observations, own field experience of the researchers in addition to the limitedness of precise research studies relevant to their topic of concern, the study problem has been recognized.

1.1 Study Problem and Question

By reflecting upon some of their common concerns, the researchers have settled to provide a piece of literature on how to win friends and deal with people according to the teachings of the Holy Quran. The problem of this study stems from the researchers' observations; that is there is no research study which discourses the Muslim identity campaigning the code of conduct to monitor Muslims in their lives in light of the Quranic chapter of Al Hujurat. A great deal of literature is written about the interpretations of all Quranic versus, but specific research studies relevant to the topic of concern are very limited. This research problem is more clarified by responding to the study question.

- How must people deal with one another in light of Quranic teachings concluded by the chapter of Al Hujurat?

This study is unique in reporting an authentic discussion regarding this exclusive topic of concern. The exclusivity of this topic will be clarified in more details through the study significance.

1.2 Study Significance

The effort to overcome racism does in fact seem to have become an imperative which is broadly anchored in human consciences. The 1965 U.N. Convention expressed this conviction forcefully: "Any doctrine of superiority based on the difference between races is scientifically false, morally condemnable and socially unjust and dangerous." (The 1965 U.N. Convention, 77). Presenting a reliable discussion as to how people must deal with one another in light of Quranic teachings concluded by four verses of Al Hujurat chapter contributes to the exclusivity and uniqueness of this study. It is worthy to presenting a decent discussion that may be of use to those who would be interested. Recognizing this, the researchers were interested in offering several social activities revealed from Al Hujurat chapter. The results of this study may benefit learning communities, particularly educators, taking into account that spirituality plays a key role the lives of people. For the researchers, the study could help them uncover critical educational issues and practices which many other researchers had not done so. Due to the fact that the study instrument guided by an approach to documentary research the researchers rely a great deal on reviewing literature, which the next section presents.

2. Literature Review

In general, Religion and/or faith could be defined as a 'Divine System' that includes, but not limited to, beliefs, principles, deeds, worship practices, and 'Rules of Conduct'. Islam provides a comprehensive way of life in terms of the teachings that describe how to practically manage human abilities and needs provided by the Divine Legislator to all mankind. The ultimate goal of Islam is to bring every person back to his/her Creator as well as to value relationships among one another (Hadi, 2008). Valuing and respecting one another according to the Islamic faith could be found in Al-Hujurat chapter. According to Maududi, (1970), the theme of Al-Hujurat Chapter is clarifying to mankind real believers' manners. An emphasis on what kind of attitude Muslims must have towards their prophet is stressed throughout this measure (Tafsir Qurtubi, 9). "Letting go of blame and negative feelings after a hurtful incident is a practice that is reflected by a number of spiritual traditions…" (Lucchetti, Lucchetti, Koenig, 2011, 234).

Islam preserves social modesty as a major instruction by ordering people to follow the rules of etiquette. Rules of Conduct, social, and moral values that clarify the one's duties towards others may lead to enhance and enrich dealings with one another (Hadi, 2008). Some of these social actions are mentioned in four verses of the forty ninth Chapter of the Holy Quran. This section is divided into four subsections representing the four social issues; Justice, Peace and Reconciliation, Entertaining Good Intentions toward others, and rejecting all kinds of Segregations demonstrating the study topic. Consequently, reviewing related literature would support leading to the study results.

2.1 Justice

Historically, the topic of *justice* had been examined by Aristotle (384 – 322 BC) who reasoned that there has to be a mutual form of justice that all people share. Aristotle believed that justice entails in providing all human beings what they deserve (Sandel, 2009). Aristotle (384 – 322 BC) also believed that a just society is one that enables human beings to realize their highest nature and to live the good life (Sandel, 2009). Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) stated that "a man is said to be just because he respects the rights of others" (Aquinas, 2.2.58). According to Kulikovsky "a person is just if he or she is moral, compassionate and obeys the law. In other words, a just person acts virtuously toward other people" (Kulikovsky, 2007, 1).

The idea of justice, according to Plato (427—347 B.C.) entails fulfilling the individuals' appropriate responsibilities. Implications must include 'Just State' in which social classes along with individuals have defined duties, obligations towards their society. An ideal state would be established provided that each person accomplishes his/her duty (Wright, 2012). The Holy Quran Says: "If two factions (groups) among the believers should fight, then …make settlement between them in *justice* and act justly. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly" (AL-Hujurat, 9). This Verse presents the first primary social action *'Justice'*. In addition to how the Holy Quran regards 'Justice', another spiritual Holy book regards justice as a primary social action as the Bible states: "Learn to do good; *seek justice*, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause" (Isaiah 1:17). Concerning concentrating, cleansing and purifying oneself, the Bible adds: "… Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, … or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart" (Zechariah 7:9-10). Correspondingly, the Bible's teachings instruct and direct Mankind to judge honestly, to protect the privileges of the unfortunate and deprived individuals by stating: "… judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy"

(Proverbs 31:9).   Again, the Bible demonstrates an ideal lesson to all humanity regarding justice implementation towards all inhabitants 'in this place': "… Do *justice* and righteousness …And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place" (Jeremiah 22:3). Provided that justice, as a substantial and major social action is realized, appreciated, and valued in societies refined civilizations could be established. To bestow justice in societies, one must bear in mind another social activity which is peace and reconciliation'.

2.2 Peace and Reconciliation

Peace and Reconciliation connect with Justice. Justice and reconciliation are essential to peace-building, and Legislative lawmakers should aim at Peace and Reconciliation (Pankhurst, 1999; Porter, 2015). Porter states: "Personal accounts of experiences of peace, justice, and reconciliation show the extent to which these concepts and practices are connected" (Porter, 2015, 27). Traditionally, the theme of *Peace and Reconciliation* had been observed by ancient thinkers. Plato said: "It may be said with equal justice, that…, a good man cannot be altogether cheerful with old age and poverty combined…, no wealth can ever make a bad man at peace with himself"(The Republic, 427—347 B.C., 19). According to Islam, a successful and true believer is he/she who is at peace with himself/herself and with others (Younos, 2011). This social action has been demanded by Devine Legislation.

Devine Legislation calls for Peace and Reconciliation and 'Virtue', a 'Divine benefit', is to be valued mainly since such benefit promotes peace and security (Stalley, 1983).   In contemporary legislative beliefs, "…justice plays a psychological and, overall, an immensely therapeutic role in reconciliation and, therefore, the peace process" (Manwelo, 2016, 4). As a Divine law, the establishment of peace and reconciliation amongst individuals in society is mentioned in the Holy Quran through the holy following Verse: "The believers are nothing else than brethren. So make reconciliation amongst your brethren, and fear Allah that you may receive Mercy" (AL-Hujurat, 10). According to (Maududi, 1976), the verse is calling on true believers to reconcile, make settlement, and make peace seriously and decisively amongst believers since they all are brethren should they engage in conflicts. Settlement and reconciliation may play an important role in formulating brotherhood amongst true believers.

According to Younos, (2011), the above verse dealt with the issue of brotherhood amongst believers and discussed peace and reconciliation in case disputes and clashes between them occur. Muslims in social environments are brothers and sisters with one another in a community whose members ought to be part of societal dealings in order to bring peace to groups if they quarrel or fight. This social principle links all society members together for peace and justice leading to "harmonious social environments based on care and cooperation rather than isolation and maltreatment" (Younos, 2011, 36). Once peace and reconciliation along with Justice as social actions are valued and put into practice in societies, another action may be appreciated and realized as well; that is entertaining good intentions toward others.

2.3 Entertaining Good Intentions toward Others

Recommencing the argument raised in the previous verse that deals with factors disturbing the peace and reconciliation amongst true believers, 'Entertaining Good Intentions toward others' as a social activity is presented in this subsection. The Holy Qur'an endorses, according to Imani (2015), believers are to 'entertain good intentions toward others' and stop being suspicious or apprehensive about other individuals who must be considered as sisters and brothers. Negative feelings as well as letting go of criticism or blame upon a cruel case is asocial action reflected by several spiritual/divine religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam (Dubey, 2014). Again, as a Divine law, the institution of 'Entertaining Good Intentions toward others' as a social activity is presented through the Quranic verse that states: "O you who have believed, avoid much assumption since some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. … Allah is accepting of repentance and most Merciful" (AL-Hujurat, 12).

Suspicion (acting upon bad opinions) is observed as a sin and immoral. Some purposeful suspicion is a sin and if it is intentionally it requires a punishment. Such feeling is parallel to corrupt judgment. Some people regard those who may be honest with good personality. The verse declares that this is a sinful disposition, which must be eluded and evaded by true believers, who also do not spy on others. This indicates that a true believer ought not to detect mistakes or faults in his/her brother's disposition. Backbiting, as an evil act, is to mention others while they are absent in a way they detest and despise. Accordingly, people could reflect upon different social issues and thus withdraw from creating evil and sinful estimations concerning other individuals (Al-Ghudyaan, 2008).

Consequently, people should reflect upon true substitutes and potentials relating to the same social issues, which in turn could help them overcome creating evil and sinful attitudes or opinions. Traditionally, forming bad opinions has never been secluded from generations' interests to take into account for investigation.

According to traditions, one must create the finest potential attitude about such deeds performed by his/her brethren unless authenticated otherwise (Maududi, 1982). As it will be mentioned hereunder, forming bad opinions about others, backbiting or backstabbing in addition to creating evil and sinful attitudes toward others, other sins are on a par with them as such is a refusal of rejecting all kinds of segregations.

2.4 Rejecting all kinds of Segregations

A par with other spiritual traditions, Islam rejects all kinds of segregations including racial, political, ethnological, tribal, geographical, financial, intellectual, academic, cultural, social, national, and martial discriminations. A primary right according to the Islamic faith calls on the right of every person to be treated with justice and fairness. The Qur'an puts great emphasis on justice that embraces the concept of equality and recognition of the deprived individuals. However, justice may not be complete equality of conduct because people are different in terms of their capabilities. Although all people are commanded to respect one another, the Qur'an launches the right to recognition based on own merit, which is determined by the righteousness of individuals (Imani, 2015; Maududi, 1977; Younos, 2011; Dubey, 2014). All racist theories are contrary to Christian faith according to the Church's doctrine affirming that there is no tolerance when it comes to segregation or discrimination. Nevertheless, in contrast to the rising realization of human dignity and pride, discrimination still occurs and repetitively reemerges in different practices. It is a pity and a shame that it keeps reoccurring in humanity. Thus, everybody must do his/her best to reconcile for settlement with determination and patience (Foley, 1999).

According to Islamic sociology segregation, discrimination and ageism have "no place in a society …Sociologically, the social strata of Islam are not based on class, income, race, gender, nationality, wealth, political power, etc." (Younos, 2011, 46-51). The Quran affirms: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another…"(AL-Hujurat,13). Therefore, any individual must be recognized by his/her good deeds represented by generosity as well as piety as the same verse proceeds: "…Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted" (AL-Hujurat, 13). Carrying out righteous deeds or good actions is attested to be on a par with fear of God and justice as well (Al-Ghudyaan, 2008). Dominance beliefs if built on race differences are socially immoral, unfair, unjust, biased, and unsafe (U. N. Convention, 1965), "every form of discrimination based on race...is absolutely unacceptable" (Allocution of John Paul II to the U.N. Special Committee against Apartheid, July 7, 1984).

Accordingly, human beings spring as they all are the descendants of Adam and Eve, from the same origin so that tribal or ethnic arrogance and pride would be of no significance (McCullough, Hoyt, Larson, Koenig, &Thoresen, 2000). God created different tribal features to maintain social order as these inconsistencies could lead to chaos, conflicts, clashes, and struggles, hence, preservation of social order in societies among their members might be challenging to institute (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010). Following such invalidation of being proud of descendants (Nasir, 2016), the Quran teaches people the real values: "…Indeed, the most honorable of you with Allah is that [one] who fears Allah" (AL-Hujurat, 13). Therefore, everything material, taking pride in ancestors, families or tribes is rejected because the true standards of values are obtainable by piety, which refers to virtue, justice, and righteousness. Those values are spiritual and inner qualities, which must precede all other qualities, whose permanence is placed in the hearts and souls of true believers (Nasir, 2016). Spiritual qualities may lead to resulting in discovering appropriate fundamental values for peace.

The circumstances of discovery suitable fundamental values for peace of the religious traditions is through highlighting that the notion of making-peace that is indeed very essential due to its focus on attitudes, thoughts, sensations, and moral responsibilities. Creating peace signifies social human activities because peace is rather human, specifically since violence and aggressiveness disappear as a result (Chaiwat, 2015). The related literature employed in this section, which helps leading to the study results, presented the four social issues through different legislative faiths and perspectives as well. This current study is presenting these social issues in light of Quranic interpretations, clarifications, and explanations by eminent scholars focusing on four verses from AL-Hujurat chapter. To do so, the researchers have employed Hermeneutic phenomenology as a qualitative research methodology guided by an approach to documentary research as the study methodology.

3. Methodology

For the purpose of this study, the researchers described four major issues associated with numerous social activities related to Justice, Peace and Reconciliation, Entertaining good intentions toward others, and Rejecting all kinds of segregations. Hermeneutic phenomenology as a qualitative research methodology guided by an approach to documentary research is employed.

Laverty (2003) described methodology as an imaginative or creative method to understanding, using appropriate approaches receptive to specific questions and research topics, yet there is no accurate method to use. Hermeneutic phenomenology could be defined as the study and interpretation of human behavior and social institutions or the science of interpretation, especially of the Scriptures. It includes theory and practice, reflection connecting thoughtful explanations of human beings' lived experience along with insightful understandings of life meanings. This method is popular among academics not only in education, but other professions in addition to providing support to daily structures of educational preparation, mainly emotional and sociable times (Friesen, Henriksson & Saevi, 2012).

Methodologically speaking, a purpose of Hermeneutic phenomenology would be to generate meanings in addition to value understanding. This method is concerned with the lived experience of human beings. Its focuses on revealing specific information within experiences, not appreciated in the lives of people (Laverty, 2003; Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). Particular methods are employed to ensure the absence of the researchers'' effect or preference, which may threatens the legitimate validity of results/findings. Therefore, objectivity, reliability and internal/external validity are established to simplify such a procedure (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).Concerns related to the quality of reliability and validity in research has been confirmed by an examination of consistency, honesty, integrity, and genuineness (Beck, 1993; Denzin & Lincoln; Hall & Stevens, 1991). Hermeneutic phenomenology has been used in this study because the researchers were interested in deliberating a discussion of the Muslim identity campaigning the code of conduct essential to monitor Muslims' lives. This qualitative method is concerned with the lives of human beings and their lived experience so that people can create meanings in addition to attaining a sense of understanding (Laverty, 2003) of their existence. Hermeneutic phenomenology facilitated the researchers approach in leading to the study results.

4. The Study Results

This section describes the qualitative analyses and results for the research question of how must people deal with one another in light of Quranic teachings concluded by the chapter of Al Hujurat? First, the study results indicated that Holy Quran revels and celebrates many Divine instructions related to social domains and actions throughout several chapters.

Particularly, AL-Hujurat chapter celebrates some social activities educationally instructed. The four Quranic verses mentioned in the literature review section designate human society members by expressing the most significant principles guaranteeing discipline and stability in addition to true standard of human values. Therefore, how to win friends and deal with people is a primary consideration of this study. Second, justice, peace & reconciliation, entertaining good intentions toward others, and rejecting all kinds of segregations extracted from these verses are observed as values, principles, moral standards and ethical criteria. The most important result of this study confirms that such values, principles, moral standards and ethical criteria could be converted into social activities, a way of life, and a diffused norm that is well respected by community members. Another important result confirms a call on Mankind demanding true believers to be aware of their conducts that may lead to consideration by people in their societies of such issue as the awareness of justice. The awareness of justice in societies, the researchers documented and recognized as a result, requires endurance and patience through rules and regulations as opposed to discrimination. However, one may ask and search as to whose law to abide with or accept. To simply respond to such search, the 'Divine law' is the best, which institutes justice, avoidance of discrimination and peace in human communities, and is able to easily avoid deficiencies and faults. Furthermore, to easily avoid deficiencies and faults, the Divine Legislation in terms of social actions can simply overcome any other law legislated by people that could be subject to adjustments oftentimes. Thus, the Divine laws legislated and established by the CREATOR of Mankind are based upon endless Grace, Mercy, Compassion and Wisdom. In particular and based on literature employed in this research study, the results showed:

- Provided that justice, as a substantial and major social action is realized, appreciated, and valued in societies refined civilizations could be established.

- Muslims in social environments are brothers and sisters with one another in a community whose members ought to be part of societal dealings in order to bring peace to groups if they quarrel or fight. This social principle link all society members together for peace and justice leading to harmony in social environments grounded on support and cooperation not hindrance or segregation. Fifth, since some assumptions, spying and snooping in addition to backbiting are sinful actions according to AL-Hujurat (12), declaring that true believers must stop to pinpoint mistakes or faults in their brothers' natural personalities. As a result, individuals are to be committed to different social issues that may rid them from assuming wrongly about others. Consequently, they are asked to reflect upon real doings relating to the same social issues, which will lead to replace creating evil and sinful opinions.

An additional result of this study indicates that since Islam social strata are not based on social class, gender, income, ethnic group, poverty/wealth, administrative positions or political control according to AL-Hujurat (13), true believers must recognize others based on good deeds represented by generosity and piety. Carrying out righteous deeds or good actions is attested to be on a par with fear of God and justice. Dominance beliefs remain socially immoral, unfair, unjust, and biased when built on race differences. All Human beings spring as they are the descendants of, the same origin (Adam and Eve) so that tribal or ethnic arrogance would be of no significance as a result.

A further and final study result shows that to maintain social order and avoid chaos, conflicts, and struggles, the Creator created diverse tribal structures. For that reason, sustaining social order among social groups might be challenging to institute. Therefore, social strata that are not based on social differences could resolve all social chaotic issues provided that such organization is structured by the Divine Legislation. In conclusion, a call upon all human beings, not only the followers of Islamic faith, to be unhappy with devastating wrong deeds and fights amongst specific groups of communities. Rather their competition must be honorable and serve as a lead to peace and justice. Such Holy and Sacred laws respect honesty and trustworthiness in addition to bring justice and security to societies. The study concluded that there are common valuable and ethical principles among all Monotheistic Religions in addition to other faiths demanding that wrong doers must be disciplined in order for justice to be served and valued through peace, reconciliation and settlement. Future research into such ethical social issues could be conducted to further present them as this study some limitations.

5. Study Limitations

The study has partial limitations. First, the analyses and presentation address only four social issues derived from the Al- Hujurat chapter. Even though the Holy Quran includes four major components; Monotheism, Legislation, Narrative stories, and Morals, this study is limited to only one domain related to morals, specifically, focusing on such moral issues as justice, peace and reconciliation, entertaining good intentions toward others, and rejecting all kinds of segregations.

Second, in spite of reviewing all four social issues based on the Quran and Quranic interpretations, the researchers referred to other scholarly work to support their study, particularly some Biblical works. Therefore, the available validated data were supportive to only answer the study questions. Data availability precluded describing or answering any other probing questions, nor mentioning any secondary questions and/or independent variables. The researchers were aware of the fact that might have been very challenging to address since they both are merely researchers, but yet not specialists or experts in such studies. Comprehensive Islamic educational and teaching principles relate to not only an individual's life, but to a person's dealings with others. The current study presented all four social issues which are observed as Values demonstrating the results. The following section concludes the study and then the researchers provide some recommendations for future research. Subsequently, the next section presents this research study conclusion and recommendations.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research study presented four major issues associated with social activities of justice, peace and reconciliation, entertaining good intentions toward others, and rejecting all kinds of segregations. Hermeneutic phenomenology is used in this study as the researchers were interested in deliberating a discussion of the Muslim identity campaigning the code of conduct essential to monitor Muslims' lives. This study instrument could be defined as the interpretations of human behavior and social institutions, especially of the Scriptures of Holy books. The results indicated that all four social activities extracted from this chapter are observed as values that could be converted to actions, and then be a cultural moral belief and a way of living. It has been argued that, through Islamic and/or divine values and teachings; security, peace, and generally the well-being of living for the society will most likely be experienced. According to the Islamic faith, the basic values for humanity include but not limited to achieve moral obligations, life security, securing food and shelter, and education. Living in this world must be shared with others.

A brief analysis of other faiths has also supported the study results revealing similar social issues. In other words, mutual moral principles among all Monotheistic Religions in addition to other faiths demanding that wrong doers must be punished in order for justice to be appreciated through peace and reconciliation. As a result of realizing justice, peace, and moral behaviors, individuals could exploit an understanding as to how to win friends and deal with others, which is a primary consideration of this study. Finally and based on this research study results, the researchers present some recommendations. Using the same Hermeneutic phenomenology approach leading to documentary research in order to present:

- Comparable social issues/activities in light of further Quranic chapters.
- Extract other social issues/activities from Theological Scriptural Verses reflected by other Spiritual Traditions. And finally:
- Educate children the importance of justice, peace, and moral behaviors throughout all educational institutions to all learners starting in the home.

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