

Influence of Holy Quran on Arabic Language

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Abstract

The Holy Quran has played an important role in promoting Arabic literature. Many scholars from different Islamic cities have studied and explained the contents of Quranic literature and these studies and interpretations have generated many new words. These works have obviously contributed to the development of Arabic language. As such, Arabic language and literature has been influenced to its utmost extent in the formation of words, their derivations and acquisition of excellence and eloquence due to the superiority of the language of Quran. It is evident that the study of the Holy Quran gave rise to the major disciplines of Islamic learning and led to the proliferation of literature. It is observed that the science of the Arabic language, from lexicography to grammar to rhetoric, has been developed with a view to arriving at a precise and accurate understanding of the Quranic text.

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Most of the Muslim scholars believe that the Holy Quran was revealed in the spoken language of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and in the dialect of the Quraysh which was known as classical Arabic and it is notable that the dialect of the Quraysh has been used in poetry since earlier than the era of Prophet Muhammad PBUH. The aforementioned statement is endorsed by the verse of Quran as it says:

وما أرسلناك من رسول إلا بلسان قومه.

Translation: We do not send any messenger except in the language of his own people.¹

The general perception is that language which was used in the ancient poetry of the heathen poets set the standard of the Classical Arabic and was considered as the correct speech of that time. The revelation of the Quran and all other literary components in the beginning of Islam helped it perfect.

Moreover it is understood that the tribe Quraysh and classical poets kept the pure language of the Bedouins. It is notable that the poetry of the Pre Islamic era was the record book of the Arabs since it showed the true habits, religious beliefs, philosophies of the heathen Arabs and characters and it became an encyclopedia to know the diffident Arabic language words and understand their meanings and implication of the difficult terminologies. It has been advised by Abdullah bin Abbas R.A who is a prominent companion of the Holy Prophet PBUH that when anyone finds any difficulty in understanding any word of Holy Quran, he then should search that word in the ancient Arabic poetry because poetry was an official record book of the Arabs.

It is worth mentioning that the text of the Holy Quran has comprised the highest form of rhetorical achievements in the Classical Arabic language which became the symbol of a literary language. It has been noticed that verses of the Holy Quran were in clear Arabic speech as narrated by Quran itself:

إنا أنزلنا قرآنا عربيا مبین

Translation:

It is undoubtedly cleared that language of the Holy Quran is pure classical Arabic.²

The abovementioned discussion tells us that there is a large source in the Arabic language of the classical poetry of the heathen Arabs in order to understand the Holy Quran. The classical poetry reveals the innumerable Arabic words which were produced in the era of Islam to include definite meanings but their concept was common in the poetry of pagans. In this connection, Dr Ahmad Amin, a very famous Islamic scholar

stated that some specific words in the verses of the Holy Quran have carried meanings for example: salāt (prayer), zakat (poor tax), hajj (pilgrimage), bay (sale), muzar' a (temporary share contact) etc.

Moreover, Ibn Al-Arabi has mentioned in such a way that the terminology fāsiq (wanton) was never used or heard in the words of pagans and even not in their classical poetry. So it is evident that the expressions and meanings that appear in the Quran were not entirely represented by the dialect of the pagans. While the usage of Quranic words had a proper structure to it, its figure of speech and metaphor were distinguished from the usage of the pagan circle.

It is undoubtedly evident that the Holy Quran has a fascinating style that could never have been carried out by the pagans.

In this context some linguists argued that the Quran contains some muarrab words which are arabicized from foreign languages for example: al-sirdi, al-firdous, al-qistās, al-zanjabīl, al-kafur etc, however other scholars disagreed that these vocabularies must not be regarded as foreign words and the reason behind it is the Quran itself says:

إن جعلناه قرآناً عربياً

Translation: we have made it a Quran in Arabic.³

And another verse of Quran which says:

بلسان عربي مبين.

Translation: (This Quran) is in the perspicuous Arabic tongue.⁴

However, a Quranic verse does mention the impact of foreign languages:

ولأنك لهم جنات عدن تجري من تحتهم الأنهار يحلون فيها من أساور من ذهب ويلبسون ثياباً خضراً من سندس واستبرق متكئين فيها على الأرائك.

Translation: For them there will be gardens of eternity, beneath them rivers, will flow: they will be adorned therein with bracelets of Gold, and they will wear green garments of fine silk and heavy brocade; they will recline therein on raised thrones.⁵

Here the terminology (سندس) brocade is related to Indian words, and the word (استبرق) silk brocade is originally a Persian word and (أرائك) sofas is from the Ethiopian language.⁶

It is very essential to say that despite the Qurayshite dialect, there are many words included in the Quran from other dialects of Arab for example:

لا يلتكم من أعمالكم

Translation: He will not belittle aught of your deeds.⁷

It has been noticed that this terminology yalitikum is from Baniabas dialect.

In this context it is found that the foreign elements in the Quranic vocabulary come in three types: first, those words which are entirely non Arabic and cannot possible be traced to Arabic roots like istarak silk brocade, zinjābīl ginger, firdous paradise. Second are semiotic words that do have trilateral roots in Arabic like: fatir creator, sawami cloisters. Thirdly those words that are genuinely Arabic and commonly used but used in the Quran with technical or theological meanings influenced by other languages for example: light which is used in the sense of religion, rūh used for spirit and rūh al quds the spirit of holiness.⁸

It is a notable factor that the Arabs adopted many foreign words and formed them familiar with the Arabic language expressions, which resulted in the appearance of foreign loan words in the Arabic language.⁹

However, the words and the language which is used in Quran are entirely different and their implications are not the same. Needless to say that the Holy Quran which was revealed on Holy Prophet PBUH is the first and biggest and foremost evidence of his prophecy, since it was revealed on him and those who tried their best and strived for its counterpart production, became powerless to the declaration of the Allah Almighty which says:

لا يأتون بمثله.

Translation: they could not produce like (Quran).¹⁰

A very famous scholar Qadi Abu Bakr Al Baqilani (D, 403 A.H) in his book named Ijaz ul Quran which is considered a voluminous work and he decorated it with

all proofs, wrote about contents of the Quran which made it a miracle. His views related to Quranic miracles are being highlighted here:

- The Quran speaks about much secrecy related to the breadth of future and invisible incidents which are impossible to know and devoid of the power of mankind.
- The Quran is having many information of the past incidents of which any media of knowledge and information can be pondered without (revelation).
- The Quran reached to its highest position regarding its dictation and style and no similar production is possible in the whole world to achieve the said credit of the Quran by virtue of its rhetoric and prosody.

In fact the rhetoric of Quran lies in the secret meanings of the Quran and it prominently carries two points of views, first the diction of the Quran and the second is its secret information about the absence.¹¹

There is no doubt that the Holy Quran being the word of Allah is a sacred book of Islam and carries various miraculous features. It is understood undoubtedly that the Quran is itself a miracle and proved to be a unique Divine production, whereas nobody could produce a scripture similar to it or any chapter of it which was in response to the challenge of the words of Allah (Al-Quran sura 2-23; 10-38; 17-88; 11-13). It is dispensable to say that contents of the Holy Quran and its guidance from the start to end are not less than a miracle because hearts and minds of the mankind are deemed to have been influenced by the contents and guidance of the Holy Quran.

It is imperative to mention that the Quran carries two other unique characteristics and that are the wealth of knowledge and beauty of style which have raised the Holy Quran to an eminence that no other book has ever aspired and made its imitation impossible. Thus the Quranic diction and style have been admitted internationally and universally as inimitable to human being. A book about Quran named “Introduction to the study of the Holy Quran” says about this aspect:

“The Koran is universally allowed to be written with the utmost elegance and purity of language in the dialect of the Koreish, the most noble and polite of all the Arabians, but with some mixture, though vary rare, of other dialects. It is confessedly the standard of the Arabic Tongue”¹².

Therefore, it is clear that the Holy Quran is full of miracles on various aspects for example eloquence and expression, purity of the language and literature, ordinance and admonition, diction and style rhetoric and prosody, science and culture, loft philosophy and mundane affair etc. It is complete in itself in all respects with fully literary excellence.

As a matter of fact, the Holy Quran as a book of law and main source of Islam was obligatory and necessary to learn by the new converted Muslims who belonged to foreign extraction or were Non Arabs. The desire was to learn and study the Quran and use it when holding governmental position, conversing with the conquerors as well as overcoming the long gap between the Classical language of the Quran and other prominent languages like Syrian, Persian and other tongues. In this regard, Professor Huart says that the “the interpretation of the Koran and the necessity for explaining the difficulties of its text resulted in the final organization of the lexicography of the language and the restoration of its ancient literary monuments.”¹³

It is clear that the study of the Holy Quran and necessity of expounding it gave rise to the major disciplines of Islamic learning and led to the proliferation of literature in each. Moreover it is observed that the science of the Arabic language from the field of lexicography to grammar to rhetoric has been developed with a view to arriving at a precise and accurate understanding of the Quranic contents.

It is evident that in the matters of Arabic language, the outcomes of Holy Quran have been designated to individually discuss each of the branches of Arabic language.

Morphology (Ilm ul Sarf):

The Morphology (Ilm ul Sarf) relates to the part of Arabic grammar that concerns with the study of the forms of Arabic words and their all types of structure.

Literally this terminology means divergence and averting whereas technically it has been broken down to better understanding with a synonym with *tasrif* تصريف. It is evident that in the early stages of the Arabic grammar, this terminology was used completely in two different senses.

The first book written in this regard was “Kitāb” by the Sibawayeh which relates typically morphological problems, in which the test of the proper names is used as a device to find out what the status of a word is and to which category it belongs. These problems have nothing to do with the relations of Syntax within the sentence, since diptotic words even though they have only two endings are syntactically used in all three cases. This may explain why later grammar *sarf* was used as a synonym for *tasrif* and became one of the normal terms for Morphology.

The meaning of *Sarafa* lexically is to divert or avert as used in early grammar in particular by Al-Farra. Here it means the divergence or non-identity between two constituents of the sentence. For instance لا تأكل السمك ولا تشرب اللبن

in this sentence the verb of tashrab تَشْرَب is very well explained by Al-Farra in the perspective of divergence between two verbs. According to Carter, 1973 this is theory of Sibwayhi but it became associated with Kufan grammar rules under the name of sarf, which continued to be used in this sense in later explanations of the construction.¹⁴

The Syntax (Ilm ul Nahw):

This terminology Nah w نحو means (way), (path) in the literal sense and fashion, manner in the figurative sense. It has been used as a technical terminology to denote a distinguished part of Arabic grammar. Especially it acquaints with the state of the final letter of words in accordance with the arrangement of sentences and also comprehends the matter of declension or in declension of words.

Moreover, before the advent of Islam, the Arabs were customarily familiar with their language, for which they did not need to follow grammatical rules for case ending marks اعراب in sentences. But after the spread of Islam when different nationals came in contact with the Arabs, there arose grammatical mistakes in their speaking of Arabic language. In such a condition, Ali bin Abi Talib R.A, the fourth caliph of Islam invited Abdu Aswad Duwali to formulate grammatical rules for the Arabic language. Further, the Caliph submitted a collection of grammatical rules to him and said:

انحو هذا النحو

Translation: follow this path.

As a result of which, the subject has been entitled as عمل النحو Ilm ul Nah in the realm of Arabic language.¹⁵

It is clear that both the Basran and Kufan grammarians schools of thought took part extensively in the development of Arabic Syntax and it is acknowledged that the Basran scholars invented this science as well as spread it in the neighboring countries with their valuable compilations. On the other band, the Kufan scholars learnt this science from Basran grammarians and followed them with adequate discussion, compilation and explanation. Later on they became a competent authority in Syntax to the Basran scholars. Even then, the superiority remains with the Basran grammarians because of their initiatives towards the development of Arabic grammar. Under such circumstances, two schools of thought have been created for the subject of Nahw. It has been further observed that the Kufan method of grammatical system

overwhelmed in Baghdad, since Kufa was under the rule of the Abbasid administration as well as its people were the defenders of Hashemite clan. When this science penetrated into Spain, another syntactical method was created by the Spaniard grammarians. It is mentionable that grammar writers later in the day kept away from the syntactical contradictions as well as preferred abridgement to the earlier elaborated works, of which testimony appears in the Kitab Tashil Al-Fawdd of Ibn Malik and Mufassal of Al Zamakhshari.

Orthography Ilm ul Imla:

Orthography is one of the most essential components of the Arabic language, especially in the formation of vocabularies and their comprehensive pronunciation.

Orthography (Ilm ul Imla) is a study which acquaints with the correct spelling of vocabularies and to write them with the proper letters. The orthography of Arabic language belongs to the distinguished type of scripts or alphabet. As the Arabic alphabet is concerned, it is cursive and common to printing writing. It is known that the Arabic alphabet consists of twenty eight letters, which are all consonants and only three of them namely alif, waw and ya are also used as long vowels or diphthongs. They are written and read from right to left and most of them bear strokes and dots. They are used in various forms as regards to their connection with a preceding or following letter as well as their place at the beginning, medial or end of a word. In this context especially four forms of letters have come in usage as initial, medial, final and independent.¹⁶

Moreover it is indicated that the Arabic alphabet has numerical value and all the letters are represented by the mnemonic words I the following sequence of order:

أ ب ج د هـ و ز ح ط ي ك ل م ن س ف ش ق ر ش ت ث خ ذ ض ظ ع

¹⁷This mnemonic device has achieved immense credit and pride for the Arabic language, which is an unparallel feature in the linguistic scenario of the present day world. It also serves a significant role in the mathematical works and the record of historical occurrences.

Orthoephy علم اللفظ

It is a science that leads to the study of correct pronunciation for alphabets along with their appropriate articulations. In this connection, the Arab grammarians gave rise to the subject of phonetics for the Arabic language. Although the alphabets consist of twenty eight letters, they considered the letter alif as to give two services:

one for the hamza and the other for alif. From this point of view, altogether 29 twenty nine articulations have been brought into the consistency of Arabic Phonetics.

It is worth mentioning that the Arabic alphabet can be properly acquired from the lips of the Arabic speaking people whereas the non-Arabs need to practice the correct pronunciation of the Arabic alphabet with Ilm ul Tajweed everywhere in the world.

The subject of Phonetics صوتية has been created in the modern period, but Ilm ul Tajweed has come down to us from the period of the revelation of Holy Quran, of which testimony appears in its contents as follows:

ورتل القرآن ترتيلا.

Translation: and recite the Quran with measure.¹⁸

Another verse of Quran says:

ورتلناه ترتيلا.

Translation:

And with measure have we revealed it.¹⁹

It has been observed from the investigation into Ilm ul tajweed (Quranic Phonetic)that the terminology ترتيل lexically means to recite with pausing and technically to accomplish Quranic recital with the appropriate articulations of Arabic alphabet and accurate pronunciation be made from the actual place of makhraj (places when from the sound of Arabic letter originates).

It is evident that Orthography and Orthoepy are the essential elements for Arabic writing and pronunciation. Along with them vowels and other orthographical signs also have made auxiliary contributions to the development of the Arabic language literature.

Rhetoric and Prosody (Ilm Ul Balagha wa Ilm Ul Arud):

The terminology balagha (بلاغة) an abstract noun, implies that an eloquent presentation of language is very much necessary to draw the attention of the audience and to attract their hearts and minds with the excellent oration of the speaker. In this connection, a verse of the Holy Quran also supports this view as Allah says:

قل لهم في أنفسهم قولاً بليغاً.

Translation: O Muhammad speak to them a word to reach their very souls.²⁰

Investigation shows the various dimensions of *Ilm ul balagha* (علم البلاغة) that it has three parts, namely (1) *Ilm ul Maani* (علم المعاني) (2) *Ilm ul bayaan* (علم البيان) (3) *Ilm ul Badi* (علم البديع). All these three divisions of *balagha* have been discussed separately as follows:

Ilm ul Maani:

This terminology lexically means “circumstance, object, idea and sense”. Technically this term means acquaintance with the circumstances of Arabic words in agreement with required condition.

Ilm ul Bayaan:

The lexical meaning of the terminology *bayaan* بيان is manifestation or statement. Technically *Ilm ul bayaan* has been defined as such a part of rhetorical science that expresses the thought of mind with correct and lucid statements. In other words it acquaints with the sense of one meaning by different ways in view of making clear the indication of purpose in such way that some of the indications become more obvious than others.

Apart from the lexical and technical meaning of *bayaan*, it has been observed that it gives an especial mode of expression, which increases beauty and elegance for word and meaning in the Arabic language. Needless to say that this branch of rhetoric beautifies human expression cum writing diction to a great extent, similar to what herbal care does to the human body. In fact Allah has endowed the human being with the power of *bayaan* the testimony of which appears in the verse of the Holy Quran as Allah says:

الرحمان، علم القرآن، خلق الإنسان، علمه البيان.

Translation: the Most Gracious It is He who has taught the Quran. He has created man. He has taught him an intelligent speech.²¹

Ilm ul badi:

In the rhetoric science, Ilm ul Badi studies the figure of speech of the Arabic language. The terminology badi (بديع) means wonderful or new created thing as indicated in the verse of the Holy Quran:

بديع السموات والأرض.

Translation: wonderful originator of the heavens and the earth.²²

Here in this verse بديع I one of the excellent attributory names of Allah who has created the heavens and the earth. As far as technical definition is concerned, it acquaints with beautification of speeches, because it consists of suitable language as per requirement of circumstantial expressions as well as clear indications.

The main purpose of this branch of Ilm ul balagha is to beautify speeches adequately with agreement of suitable language for the expression of idea of mind in an embellished manner. The figure of speech that follows such type of lucidity and elucidation, is called Ilm ul badi.

Prosody (Ilm ul Arod علم العروض):

The technical terminology of the ancient Arabic metrics is known as Ilm ul Arod. It implies the science of versification and rhyme. The Arab linguists technically define it a follows:

العروض صناعة يعرف بها صحيح أوزان الشعر وفاسدها.

Translation: Arod is an art by means of which one distinguishes correct metres from faulty ones in the ancient Arabic poetry.²³

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