

Illustration in the Koran and Its Persuasive Impact

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ABSTRACT: Humans are social beings and in their social life they need to communicate with others. Establishing such a communication might be accomplished through oral or written messages. With human's scientific advances and intellectual development, they invented various ways to communicate with others. One important and effective way to establish contacts with other human beings has been the illustration within the messages which is accomplished with the aid of the structure and intonation of words and sentences. In literal discussions, illustration is referred to as "a set of expressive and allegorical impressions illustrated by the speaker or the writer through the words, creating an image in the readers' or the listeners' minds. Image is a painting made of words. Elements and components of such an image might be analogies, metaphors, allegories, tropes or any other literal or rhetorical figures of speech. Illustration is a common advertising practice in human life. We face thousands of messages on a daily basis which provide us with images of a state, government, people, etc., and from which an image is made in our minds. The Holy Koran was offered by the Holy Prophet on God's behalf to humans in the form of a message. The Koran, in addition to use of various methods of messaging, has benefitted this very effective method, too; and using various formats of "single and compound images, parables, anecdotes..." has presented illustrations from divine messages to the humans to persuade them to accept those messages. This paper investigates the matter, hoping that it will draw attention.

Keywords: Koran, illustration, anecdote, compound image, literary elements, persuasion

INTRODUCTION

Humans are social beings and grow and develop in the matrix of societies, establishing various connections to their kind. Verbal communication is one category of such communications. This connection is established with the aim of influencing the others. Humans want to convey messages to their addressees in verbal or written formats and influence them. Humans use various sciences and techniques to influence others and invent various methods to serve this purpose. One method is illustration.

God Almighty, being the humans, first teacher, and is aware of how to convey His messages, has well exploited this method. This paper examines this method more closely.

Illustration

In the last century, communications professionals used a method to make effective their persuasive messages which is known as illustration. The reason to employ this method is the persuasive effect of the words used within a message. Every message can create an image in the addressees' minds. Such created images are "like ideas directing their thoughts and actions to a specific direction. Such images have the role of primary and crude theories which provide the addressee with the 'truths' of issues and specify the most necessary subjects and our thinking manner about social and individual world (Pratikas, 2005).

We face such illustrations every day. News, films and reports broadcast by the media, are types of illustration of a person, culture, society, government and group. We face various definitions of individuals, governments, cultures and groups on a daily basis. These definitions may differ one from another or even be contrary or inconsistent. Therefore, which of the presented definition and image should be accepted? Does comparison and attention to similarities and differences in such circumstances do good?

Persuaders "reporters, marketers, politicians,..." illustrate in order to persuade their audience for example, powerful and aggressive countries, trying to persuade their nations to spend on their wars with other nations, or to

develop atomic bombs as inhibitory tools, make a specific image of the other nation which enables them to evade it. Or present some group as terrorists to be able to begin war with them.

Illustration, in today's world, is an important and accepted principle for advertising activities which overshadow all areas of human life and has applications in all of them. Some part of humans' time is spent over watching or reading and listening to such verbal or written illustrations.

Meaning and Concept of Illustration

The term, illustration, means making shape to something or drawing something. (Dehkhoda, 1987, Moein, 2003)

Various definitions have been presented from the past to present for the terms "image" and "illustration" every one of which has paid attention to this interesting issue from a specific angle. "Image is an expression that gives life to the mental images produced by the writer's intuitions. In other words, it makes the readers feel that they are seeing, touching, smelling, or hearing something differently (Robin, 1989). That is, the writer has a specific intuition which makes us see the everyday objects in another light. Another definition of image is "a rich speech which is mostly formed of tangible elements and encompasses a thought or feeling and implies more than the apparent meaning (Fazilat, 2007). Also "(literary) image consists of any verbal adornment in the forms such as analogy, metaphor, allegory, trope and alike, used to create mental images and to evoke the emotions (Anvari, 2008). Some others have referred to image in literary discussions as "a set of expressive and allegoric ideas illustrated by the speaker through words and creates an impression in the minds of the reader or listeners" (Shafii Kadkani, 2007). Therefore, image is a painting made of words. Analogy or metaphor can create an image but at the same time, some descriptive interpretations could be pointed out that possess the power to create glorious and spectacular images even without such elements. "Literary image, in the sense of use of words in a specific manner in which meanings and concepts are visualized in new and initiative ways and even appear in visible forms; and in fact, in such cases, the speech exits its strait frame and set foot in a living and vital world (Chamankhah, 2006). In short and simple words, image consists of unveiling of meanings with living and evoking interpretations.

From the foregoing it is clear that the illustration tools in the literature are the words and phrases, not brush, paint or photos. Now we proceed to examine this issue in the Koran.

Illustration in the Koran

Simultaneously with human creation, God granted them the power of reasoning and inspired them the speech to enable them to use it quickly and using the best communication methods for conveying the concepts. With the advancement of human knowledge, they found other ways than speaking to transmit the concepts. One of these ways is illustration, which could be said to be the same as non-verbal situational implication in logics.

There are many non-verbal situational implications which are related to the context of the Koran. This context is a prone and mature space for employment of various adornments, such as figures of speech. Use of literal adornments is an art. But what we process in this section relates to the Koran's illustrations in various issues. "The end of art is to awake any sleeping feelings, desires and passion in humans, give life to them, and make everything sensible for grown and non-grown humans. The art of illustration may experience and develop what human affection hides in its innermost and most hidden angles; put into motion and motivate what exists in the depth and various aspects of human self and make profitable what the soul has reserved in the mind and its thoughts and is intrinsic and transcendental such as glory, nobility, eternity and truth, for feeling and observation (Chamankhah, 2006). All these amazing artistic functions are aided by the images it makes and it is in the shelter of images that others could be frightened, motivated, promised or made repent, or encouraged to the truth path, or be directed towards good. Soyooti believed that "one aim of the Koran's parables is to illustrate the intent in a tangible format (Soyooti, 2006). Some examples of such images, in brief, include:

(7:54)¹: Indeed your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in Six Days, and then He Istawa (rose over) the Throne (really in a manner that suits His Majesty). He brings the night as a cover over the day, seeking it rapidly, and (He created) the sun, the moon, the stars subjected to His Command. Surely, His is the Creation and Commandment. Blessed be Allah, the Lord of the 'Alamin (mankind, jinns and all that exists)!

In this verse a metaphor is used which by hearing it, the listener builds a king in his/her mind who has finished administration of his territory, even though God has no throne nor enthronement (Tabatabaii, 2001).

(16:26): Those before them indeed plotted, but Allah struck at the foundation of their building, and then the roof fell down upon them, from above them, and the torment overtook them from directions they did not perceive.

¹Sura 7, verse 54

This verse reminds a point which is related to the Koran's illustration. With the word 'roof' there was no need for the adverb 'above them' because it is obvious that roof is above head but this composition which seems unnecessary, helps the listener better imagine a terrible and horrific situation some are suffering (Darvish, 1988).

(7:149):And when they regretted and saw that they had gone astray, they (repented and) said: "If our Lord have not mercy upon us and forgive us, we shall certainly be of the losers."

Clapping the hands is an allegory of intense regret and repenting. God provides a brief description of their psychological state to express how regretful they are and contents Himself to a brief image of clapping hands.

(16:112):And Allah puts forward the example of a township (Makkah), that dwelt secure and well content; its provision coming to it in abundance from every place, but it (its people) denied the Favours of Allah (with ungratefulness). So Allah made it taste the extreme of hunger (famine) and fear, because of that (evil, i.e. denying Prophet Muhammad) which they (its people) used to do.

In this verse, in addition to the strange feelings expressed, a clear and self-expressing description of the pagans' conditions has been included. The image built in the mind of listeners is outfits of hunger and illness dressed up to the pagans. This image is far more expressive than a direct and explicit oration on the fear and hunger of the Judgment day for the unfaithful.

The Koran's art of illustration is far beyond the above examples. "the Koran's language, for the adept people, is alive and expressive, motivating, imaginary, illustrative and visualizing. It is strange that the Koran has set foot above them without the aid of paint and colors and lines and shapes. "The range of interpretation in the Koran, with its colorful images of its stories and paintings and slides, fully reflex alive external realities with all its events just like that history's heroes have not left the field of life and are still alive (Fooladvann, 1977 and Sobhi Saleh, 1985).

The Koran is the book of humans' guidance and upbringing. It has employed many ways to educate the humans in order to have the highest influence on them. One way used to educate the humans, is the offering of images from a message which would evoke the audience's emotions and affections and call them to thinking. This method has its specific composition and structure. "The structure of Koranic messages is literary. In such a structure, the four elements of thought, affection, imagination and interpretation style are present" (Parvini, 2001). Thought, affection and imagination are the spiritual elements of a text and interpretation style, its material element.

The thought may be studied in two titles of the writer's or the speaker's attitude to the universe, human and life as well as how far the reader is motivated to think about the concept presented by the image.

Affection refers to the same thing that is opposite to thinking and reasoning because human perception is based on both affection and reasoning powers. Each of these two powers have their specific demands. Thinking power pursues the appreciation of right and good to follow it; and the power of affection and conscience wants to register its feelings against objects and scenes it sees. Therefore a speech could be considered as strong and complete that meets these two human needs. If we say that the affection element is present in the Koran's messages, our view of such a presence lies in two points. First, it refers to evocation of affections which is performed through expression style, illustration, words' music and the Koran's unique artistic structure in order to attract him and bring about necessary changes in his cognition, affection and behavior. Second, affections and feelings of personages and heroes in various situations, sense and events are illustrated in a novel and unprecedented manner in the Koran's images which has a substantial role in evoking the audience's affections.

The imagination is the most apparent feature of an artistic and literary language distinguishing it from a pure scientific one. The element of imagination or artistic creation is an instrument for relating the objects and presenting a new image of them to evoke the audience's affections, feelings and imaginations. Therefore, this new image requires a specific structure, composition and process. The imagination element in the Koran's verses relates to the addressee who builds an image in his mind from reading and hearing its message and then understands their abstract meaning.

The interpretation style element is the external apparition of the three elements of thought, affection and imagination. Thus we call it the literal element. Any text, either literary or non-literary, has a specific expression method referred to as style or interpretation element. In short, the style points to the expression manner through which the thoughts, affections and imaginations are presented in the form of words, sentences and compositions. Therefore, measures such as word selection, grammatical structure, allegorical language, words consistency, tone and other vocal patterns are involved in the creation of a style. "Perhaps one could say boldly that the greatest and the most constructive thing the literary characters have performed in the history has been adaptation and clarification of rational facts by analogy, visualization and allegory to the tangibles" (Jaffari, 1982).

The Holy Koran, being a divine miracle and the book of guidance, holds literary elements abundantly. All of the Koran's messages have the element of "thought and literary style". The two elements of "imagination and affection", too, are there abundantly but these two elements in the Koran have an essential and inherent difference

with classic literary works. The Koran has not presented unreal things in the form of images. What the Koran has presented through its images is real. One feature of Koranic expressions is “presentation of tangible and alive from intellectual and abstract conceptions, ego states, incidents and perspectives, adventures, characters, stories and human nature” (Abbasnejad, 2007).

Image is a specific and suitable instrument in the Koran’s expression style thereby presenting its various guidance and religious objectives in an artistic setting. Such a messaging through illustration is aimed at influencing the audience and persuading them to accept the impact of the message. Through illustration, the Koran addresses and influences humans’ thought, feeling, imagination and ultimately, their whole existence.

It seems that the issue of artistic creation has been first addressed by Zamakhshari. In his commentary on 59:21 (Had We sent down this Qur’an on a mountain, you would surely have seen it humbling itself and rending asunder by the fear of Allah. Such are the parables which We put forward to mankind that they may reflect.) he points out that “this expression of God’s is some sort of allegory and message emphasis (Zamakhshari, 1987). But Seyyed Ghot’b, with a new look at the Koran’s literary issues, opened a new way in the Koran’s rhetoric which was more consistent with the taste of contemporary humans. He proposed the idea of “technical image” in rhetoric. This term was unknown to old schools of rhetoric which presented the illustration in the form of imaginary figures known as analogy, allegory, trope, and other figures of speech by pretty, novel and imaginary images. “Illustration in the Koran is not limited to the figures of speech mentioned in the science of expression, but also accurate and delicate selection of the words, coordination of words and vowels, presence of extensions and intensifications, and coordinated composition of phrases and sentences, use of expression styles, altogether form a tangible, living, dynamic and fantastic image in the addressees’ eyes (Abbasnejad, 2007).

As mentioned before, illustration is the Koran’s suitable and particular instrument and the objective is not that of adorning the expressions by the figures of speech, but there is a general and inclusive principle in the Koran that it takes both meaning and dynamism into account. An example is (7:40): “Verily, those who belie Our Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) and treat them with arrogance, for them the gates of heaven will not be opened, and they will not enter Paradise until the camel goes through the eye of the needle (which is impossible). Thus do We recompense the Mujrimun (criminals, polytheists, sinners, etc.)”

In this verse, the Koran presents an abstract meaning to its audience through an image. The Koran declares that Believers and the Arrogant are impossible to enter the Paradise; which is illustrated in the form of “opening of the gates of Heaven and the camel going through the eye of a needle”. This is a living, dynamic and motive image which in the reader’s mind would illustrate the concept of inhibited entry to the Heavens.

Illustration Varieties

Illustration can be categorized in different ways, some of which will be briefly discussed below.

Materials and Content of an Image

One mode of categorization is based on materials and content of an image. Materials refer to material elements present in the image such as “nature, animals, humans...” and content refers to the message being conveyed through the image.

Many verses in the Koran employ some materials to illustrate a message in order to prepare the ground for its embracement by the reader; for example in (12: 43) one reads: “And the king (of Egypt) said: Verily, I saw (in a dream) seven fat cows, whom seven lean ones were devouring - and of seven green ears of corn, and (seven) others dry. O notables! Explain to me my dream, if it be that you can interpret dreams.” in which, the “seven fat cows, seven lean cows, seven green and seven dry ears of corn” are the ‘ingredients’ of such an image. And in (18:31): “These! For them will be ‘Adn (Eden) Paradise (everlasting Gardens); wherein rivers flow underneath them, therein they will be adorned with bracelets of gold, and they will wear green garments of fine and thick silk. They will recline therein on raised thrones. How good is the reward, and what an excellent Murtafaqa (dwelling, resting place, etc.)!” the “bracelets of gold, green fine garments of silk, thrones” are used as the constituents of such an image.

The four elements of a literary text are present in the above two verses. Thinking about how lean cows and dry ears of corn devour fat cows and green ears of corn. Animating the ears of corn is some sort of imagination and evokes human affection to find a solution or interpretation for that dream. The arrangement of words together and the music which exists in these verses illustrate a scene which evokes both affections and thoughts of the audience.

Number of Images

Illustration may also be categorized into single or simple and compound or complex. The single image in its turn is divided into summarized and detailed ones.

Summarized simple image

This category is made up of two simple phenomena through which addition, a third one known as result is created. In the verse 25:44, "Or do you think that most of them hear or understand? They are only like cattle; nay, they are even farther astray from the Path. (i.e., even worse than cattle)." the phrase "they are like cattle" is a single image, analogizing the unfaithful with the animals. The two single images "unfaithful and cattle" are followed by the third one, the result which consists of the faithless people's incomprehension and lack of understanding which is the common concept between the first and the second image.

Detailed simple image

This image is made of two simple phenomena with a number of common features. In the verse 54:7 "They will come forth, with humbled eyes from (their) graves as if they were locusts spread abroad," there are two single images: "humans' coming out of their graves and their locus-like dispersion". These two images have some features in common. First, rising: humans and locusts rise from somewhere; second, dispersion: both groups are dispersed around; third, confusion; fourth, density; fifth, hubbub and tumult. These common features of the two images indicate that different features should take shape within a single image to illustrate a concept such as human' rise from the graves.

The Koran, whenever trying to draw the reader's attention to a transient phenomenon among others, employs the single image. For instance, in the verse 47:24 "Do they not then think deeply in the Qur'an, or are their hearts locked up (from understanding it)?" the hearts being locked up is a simple image which implies a transient and fast-moving situation that is, reading the Koran with due concentration.

Compound image

A compound image is a set of inclusive images formed of several interrelated images and possesses various layers and dimensions. For instance, in the verse 24:35 "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is as (if there were) a niche and within it a lamp, the lamp is in glass, the glass as it were a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east (i.e. neither it gets sun-rays only in the morning) nor of the west (i.e. nor it gets sun-rays only in the afternoon, but it is exposed to the sun all day long), whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself), though no fire touched it. Light upon Light! Allah guides to His Light whom He wills. And Allah sets forth parables for mankind, and Allah is All-Knower of everything." the light and the niche, the lamp and the glass, the glass and the brilliant star, are single and transient images which altogether make up a comprehensive image.

Compound images are useful when we want to call our listener's attention towards a general and inclusive phenomenon such as belief and disbelief and their respective consequences which require in-depth consideration. In the above-mentioned verse, all the single images are aligned in order to convey a compound image of God's light to the reader's mind and heart. This light, in its abstract sense, has been compared with faith, Heaven, guidance, and Imams, by the commentators. Another instance of a compound image could be seen in the verse 24:40 "Or [the state of a disbeliever] is like the darkness in a vast deep sea, overwhelmed with a great wave topped by a great wave, topped by dark clouds, darkness, one above another, if a man stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it! And he for whom Allah has not appointed light, for him there is no light.", in which several single images such as depth of a sea, turbulent waves, dark cloud come one after another to form an overall one which is compatible with the existence of a disbeliever who lives in a misguided and intellectually petrified state. The compound image of the verse is its latter part, "And he for whom Allah has not appointed light, for him there is no light." illustrating the disbelievers' state in the form of sinking through various obscurities with no way out. Another example of compound images in the Koran is the verse 2:264, "O you who believe! Do not render in vain your Sadaqah (charity) by reminders of your generosity or by injury, like him who spends his wealth to be seen of men, and he does not believe in Allah, nor in the Last Day. His likeness is the likeness of a smooth rock on which is a little dust; on it falls heavy rain which leaves it bare. They are not able to do anything with what they have earned. And Allah does not guide the disbelieving people." with its significant and salient effectiveness and surprising concept. This relies upon another image with a similar structure so that the image has a dual structure. The image presented by this verse has two sides in the first glance: rendering in vain the charities by reminders of generosity or injury. The second side of the image has a double composition. In the composition of any image of this kind, it is usual that the object being analogized, be the subject of another analogy itself. This embodies a particular artistic

wonder observed in a complex image. This verse provides a number of conjunct images. Compound images are usually presented in the form of compound analogy or anecdotes. The above verse has the format of a compound analogy. The Koran employs the compound image to explain the routine issues which require accurate treatment in order for the reader/listener to understand it better because comparisons with tangible and comprehensible situations within the audience's experience are used. An example is 57:20, "Know that the life of this world is only play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting among you, and rivalry in respect of wealth and children, as the likeness of vegetation after rain, thereof the growth is pleasing to the tiller; then it flourishes, afterwards it dries up and you see it turning yellow; then it becomes straw. But in the Hereafter (there is) a severe torment (for the disbelievers, evil-doers), and (there is) Forgiveness from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure (for the believers, good-doers), whereas the life of this world is only a deceiving enjoyment.", which has divided the human life into five stages comparing them with raining and vegetation growth as follows]:

First stage

Play, which is the childish games compared with rain and growth of plants. The words 'play' and 'rain' point to this, together making up one single image.

Second stage

Amusement or idle pleasures of adolescence, compared with the strangeness of plants and flowers and from which the disbelievers are surprised.

Third stage

Adornment and glamour of youth, analogized with the peak flourishing and beauty of flowers and plants, described as flourishing stage.

Fourth stage

Mutual boasting in middle age for mundane status and possessions is compared with turning yellow of the vegetation.

Fifth stage

Rivalry in respect of wealth and children or avarice for increasing one's possessions and children in the end of life, is compared with drying up of vegetation, described as straw.

The Koran has presented a beautiful and attractive image through its description of the stages of human life in order to draw the audience's attention. It has employed human's sense of sight to produce the two compound images which form the core of this verse. The two final images are the states the believers and the disbelievers have in their other life in which the latter are tortured and the former enjoy God's forgiveness and the abundant bliss of heavens. All these images are presented to serve one purpose and to convey the message that the worldly life is going to perish and those who depend on it will face eternal torture.

Anecdotes or parable analogy

Is a type of compound images in which the image is built upon an actual or assumed parable provided that it does not exceed one hero or a transient and single event. An example is 2:266, "Would any of you wish to have a garden with date-palms and vines, with rivers flowing underneath, and all kinds of fruits for him therein, while he is stricken with old age, and his children are weak (not able to look after themselves), then it is struck with a fiery whirlwind, so that it is burnt? Thus does Allah make clear His Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses) to you that you may give thought.", in which the issue of alimony giving is treated. In the above image, instead of building the other side of the image by one of analogy particles, a parable forms the other side and makes the reader wonder about the protagonist's psychological state after incurring the loss of his garden by the fire. This parable-like image, has a protagonist, a natural event and an environment as well as the element of surprise. Also there is a comparison in which a parable has been used instead of analogy particles.

Illustration Using Opposing Images

Another technique used in the Koran is the presentation of opposing images. The Koran abundantly uses comparisons to persuade its listeners and readers. Opposing images are understood more easily and more quickly and the addressee becomes familiar with the truth of any image and this is the best way to make people think and to provide them with the truth. In the verse 11:24 "The likeness of the two parties is as the blind and the deaf and the seer and the hearer. Are they equal when compared? Will you not then take heed?" two groups are compared;

the disbelievers, described as blind and deaf, and believers, described as seers and hearers. In spiritual affairs, blindness and deafness will lead to misguidance; and seeing and hearing, to guidance and growth. Another verse which presenting opposing images tries to illustrate the two attitudes towards faith and disbelief, one being righteous and the other, wrongful; and at the same time, comparing the believers and the unfaithful, is 18:29-31, stating:

29. And say: "The truth is from your Lord." Then whosoever wills, let him believe, and whosoever wills, let him disbelieve. Verily, We have prepared for the Zalimun (polytheists and wrong-doers, etc.), a Fire whose walls will be surrounding them (disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah). And if they ask for help (relief, water, etc.) they will be granted water like boiling oil, that will scald their faces. Terrible the drink, and an evil Murtafaqa (dwelling, resting place, etc.)!

30. Verily! As for those who believe and do righteous deeds, certainly! We shall not suffer to be lost the reward of anyone who does his (righteous) deeds in the most perfect manner.

31. These! For them will be 'Adn (Eden) Paradise (everlasting Gardens); wherein rivers flow underneath them, therein they will be adorned with bracelets of gold, and they will wear green garments of fine and thick silk. They will recline therein on raised thrones. How good is the reward, and what an excellent Murtafaqa (dwelling, resting place, etc.)!

In these verses, an image of the human's choice, an image of faith and disbelief, an image of the believers' state, and an image of the disbeliever's state are presented through words and sentences. This comparison has an objective which is to convince the listener/reader to accept the faith and perform good deed and benefit from its spiritual outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The Koran's Illustration Aim

Any writer, speaker or persuader, politician, marketer, artist, actor and teacher, tries to convince his/her audience to pay attention to his/ her message and embrace its influence. The impact of any oral or written message is the same influence made within the audience and makes them accept that message.

God, who wants to make humans arrive the final destination of humanity and closeness to the divine by sending prophets, seeks to draw the humans' attention to His messages expressed through inspiration. The last of the divine inspirations has been presented to the humans in the format of the Holy Koran through the Prophet Mohammad. This divine message, formatted as a literary text possessing its relevant literary elements, is aimed at drawing the audience's attention toward the impacts of this message. Therefore it employs many impressive ways. One of them is illustration. Many verses of the Koran, through illustration, try to call the audience to thinking and evoke their human affections to study the message and take influence from it.

The issues treated in the Koran are related to the cosmos, God's uniqueness, humans' worldly lives, transient nature of the life, the other world and the torture-some or blissful life, faith and disbelief, faithful and unfaithful and hypocritical behaviors.

The goal of the Koran's illustration is to persuade the humans to accept the divine messages presented as images. The main goal of the Koran's illustration is the acceptance of God's uniqueness and observance of divine commandments and performing God's preferred deeds which make thee humans honored and victorious in this and the other world.

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