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RELIGIOUS AND PHYSIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES OF HUMAN SPEECH UNIQUENESS

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Research Article

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Abstract:

This study aims at surveying some verses of the Holly Qur'an and equating them with some aspects of the scientific physiological makeup of the human body. The previous research projects have concentrated on the physiological aspects of human speech uniqueness neglecting the religious aspects that make human speech and language a divine privilege that distinguishes human beings from other creatures. We believe that a review and analysis of the verses of creation in the Holly Qur'an will support the hypothesis that human speech and language is unique in terms of this upright creation which is needed to fulfill the religious obligations and to comprehend these religious teachings. Furthermore, the review of the scientific physiological makeup of the human organs of speech in particular will support the religious aspects of the study.

To process this study first an intensive survey over the concerned Qur'an verses of creation and language endowment then some correlation between these reviewed verses and the studies in the physiological makeup of the organs of speech will be made. The qualitative content analysis approach will be followed for data collection, analysis, interpretation and discussion.

Key words: Language Uniqueness, Supremacy, Upright Creation, Animal Communication, Honor, Vicegerent, Soul Blowing.

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Introduction:

Human language is a miraculous endowment given to human beings as a distinctive property to give human beings privileges over the other creatures. It is also the central device by which humans are able to perform a variety of religious and living requirements. Therefore, human beings are generally known by this amazing faculty of language usage, i.e. human beings are speaking or articulating creatures.

Human language uniqueness can be traced by means of the physiological structure of the organs of speech or the articulators which are responsible of speech production. This uniqueness can also be supported by some religious verses mentioned in many Holly Books. This aspect of human language uniqueness will be the focal point in this study.

the other creatures have been deprived; due to the fact that no other living creatures have the access to use human languages with the same fluency and creativity. That is to say all the other creature are capable of producing cries and notes for a successful communication among themselves, but it is not as creative as that of human languages.

Other creature's means of communication are creative in terms of their power of transmitting messages as accurate and precise as possible without any violation or alteration across time and place. However, human beings' language creativity is perceived as an on going process that is not limited by time and space to the extent that the same message can be interpreted differently at different times and places in spite of the superficial similarity of the message or code by which it is conveyed. This phenomenon is known as human language creativity out of which several features of language can be perceived in terms of the interpretation of the relationship between the surface and deep structures mainly in terms of grammatical ambiguity and synonymous sentences. However, we always have doubts about whether or not we get the intended actual message in a given communicative act. Human beings' power can be classified as mental rather than muscular or physiological in comparison with the majority of the other creatures which possess the physical power and strength.

Review of Some Related studies:

The related studies in this present research will be a correlation between the religious sources that emphasize the honor and the greatness that is given to mankind over the other creatures, as it has been mentioned in the Holly Books, and a survey over the related research projects that concern themselves with the unique physiological structure of human articulators or organs of speech.

With regard to the religious aspects of this study, some related verses, mainly from the Holly Qur'an, will be outlined followed with their interpretations and meanings.

On the part of the research projects, some of the related studies will be reviewed followed with discussion and correlation between the obtained results and the verses that we believe bear a strong connection among each other.

On the part of the verses that will be outlined in this study four domains will be the focal core of discussion as follows: first the perfect upright creation of human beings; second the blowing of Allah's soul in human beings, Allah's declaration of placing man as his vicegerent on earth, and finally the honor and greatness that is endowed to human beings over the other creatures including the angels.

The related research projects will be outlined with their discussions, comments and results in order to establish the essence of the correlation that can be established between the religious and the nonreligious aspects of this present study.

The Importance of the Study:

This present study is extremely important as a result of a need to fill a gap in previous research projects studying human languages properties and origins. This present study is an attempt to study the quality of human languages uniqueness in comparison with the other creatures' means of communication. The central issue of this study is to tackle human languages uniqueness in terms of the physiological structure of articulators and the verses in some Holly Books that emphasize this sense of language uniqueness.

The study is also important as it is a qualitative holistic approach that tackles both religious and pure scientific views to establish some understanding of how human languages are unique. Moreover, this study is important because it is an attempt to reflect the value of Islam as the religion of human intermediacy that rejects extremist, terrorist and fanatic ideologies in today's world which in many consequences hold negative hostile attitudes toward Islam and Muslims, from which we as Muslims suffer a lot. The study is an attempt to make a linkage between the Holly Qur'an and the other Holly Books on one hand and the scientific physiological aspects of language physiological structure on the other.

Methodology:

This study is qualitative in nature; and to that end some of the essential related verses a long with their interpretations will be analyzed and studied to confirm the hypotheses raised in this study. The areas that will be of importance in this discussion will be: creation of human beings, and the

privileges and distinctions given to human beings over the other creatures. The verses that bear witness to language evolution and endowments will also be studied. The religious side of language will be correlated and emphasized by the physiological structure of the organs of speech.

Procedure:

As it has been stated within the related studies this present research paper seeks to establish a correlation between the religious aspects of human uniqueness, and language uniqueness over the other creatures, and that of research findings on the same area. At the beginning of the discussion some of the selected related verses in the Holy Qur'an will be discussed supported by the interpretations of two famous interpreters of the Holy Qur'an, Ibn Kathier and Altabarie. These verses will cover four central domains: the perfect upright creation of human beings, the blowing of Allah's soul on human beings, human beings as representatives of Allah's Authority as placed vicegerents on earth, and the honor and greatness that is given to human beings over all the other creatures.

After the discussion of the verses, the related studies will be discussed and correlated with the findings of the verses discussion in order to set up the discussion, findings, conclusions and recommendations for further future studies.

Discussion, Results, Conclusion and Recommendations

In this part of the study the selected verses will be discussed followed with their English translation and the famous interpretations given to these verses, mainly as stated before by Ibn Kathier and Altabarie.

The first domain will be allotted to the perfect up right creation of human beings, that we believe to be the essence of human beings supremacy over the other creatures, and then the basis of human beings and their language unique system of communication.

At the beginning of the discussion, we begin with the central point of human beings perfect and upright creation, the thing that endows human beings with privileges that grant human beings somewhat a supreme status over all the other creatures.

The following verses from Surat al – Rahman will be taken as starting point because they bear a strong connection with our study; and it is logical to start with them as they clearly mention the creation of human beings that is also followed with the teaching or the endowing of language faculty. We also believe that similar verses can be found in the other Holy books namely the Bible and the Old Testament.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

(4) الرَّحْمَنُ (1) عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ (2) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ (3) عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ

Ar – Rahmaan:
 The Most Beneficent (Allah).
 Has Taught (you mankind) the Quran (by His Mercy).
 He created man.
 He taught him eloquent speech.
 And in (Surat Al – Balad Verses 8 -10)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ (8) وَلِسَانًا وَشَفَتَيْنِ (9) وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ (10)
 لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ (التين) - 3 -

Indeed, We have created man in the best constitution (equipoised in the finest proportion). (Altin – 3 -)

The interpretations of these verses indicate that human beings have been created in the best order of creation in terms of human's posture, and a perfect upright creation on the overall aspects of human body including, of course, the access to language in order to complete the picture in all aspects of the best creation that grant human beings privileges over the other creatures. The main endowed human access would definitely be the brain that controls all human beings' activities. This perfect upright creation is also followed with the perfect use of the pillars of communication in terms of sight and hearing that lead to human communication through human languages which are also central properties in human brain control.

In Surat Al – Insan the following verse will confirm the power of hearing and seeing that is given to human beings, and which will support the perfect creation of human beings:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

(إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَّبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا) (2)

Surely, We created man from a fertilized ovum that We keep turning and examining (from one stage to the next till birth). So We have made him (in the order of) hearing (then) seeing. (2)

The central points in this verse according to the interpreters are the process of creation, the endowed faculties of seeing and hearing, and that human beings are tested by Allah to be grateful to the blessing given to them. Moreover, the test needs special preparations to enable human beings worship and respond to that test with instinct and sound brain that enables them to be thankful to Allah for the great endowments given to them.

If we link these two verses from the Holy Qur'an, we can say that human beings perfect creation is intended to help human beings respond to their central message and aim which is worship and gratefulness to their creator "Allah".

The second point in our discussion is the domain of blowing Allah's soul into human beings as it has been mentioned in some verses in the Holy Qur'an and definitely in the other Holy Books.

In Surat Al – Hijr:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

So when I accomplish the perfection of his (physical) constitution into his real being, and breathe My (divine) spirit into (the inner self of) this (human physical) organism, then fall down prostrate before him.'

In Surat Ghafir:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

(رَفِيعُ الدَّرَجَاتِ ذُو الْعَرْشِ، يُلْقِي الرُّوحَ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ لِيُنذِرَ يَوْمَ التَّلَاقِ) 15

The Exalter of Ranks and the Owner of the Mighty Throne, He sends His Spirit (i.e., Revelation) upon whomever of His servants He wills by His command, so that He warns them (people) of the Day of Assembly," (15)

And in Surat Al – Shura:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا. مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ وَلَكِن جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ نَّشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا. وَإِنَّكَ لَنَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٥٢﴾

So thus We revealed to you Our Spirit (of hearts and souls) by Our command (that is the Qur'an). And (before the Revelation) you did not know what the Book was, nor did you know (through your own endeavour and insight the details of the injunctions of) faith (which were sent down and determined later).* But We made it a Light. By means of this Light, We give guidance to those of Our servants whom We intend. (52)

From the interpretations of these selected verses it seems that Allah has created human beings in the best upright creation, and that human beings are honored by Allah by the divine soul that is blown into them; therefore, the angels were asked to respect human being by falling down in front of them in a form of prostration. The verses confirm the supremacy of human beings over the other creatures. This supremacy comes, of course, from the specialized, upright and perfect creation of human beings. This creation is intended to let human beings perform appropriately their requested message of Allah's

worship and obedience, or in order to be thankful for all the endowments given to them by Allah.

In the third domain, human beings as representatives of Allah's Authority as placed vicegerents on earth. In Surat Al – Baqarah:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

"وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ۖ قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ ۚ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۗ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾"

"And (recall) when your Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to place My vicegerent on the earth.' They submitted: 'Will You put Your (vicegerent) on the earth such as will do mischief in it and shed blood, whilst we are engaged in glorifying You with celebrating Your Praise and extolling Your Holiness (all the time)?' (Allah) said: 'I know that which you do not know.'" (30)

In this verse the general underline message is that human beings have been created to represent Allah's authority on earth as vicegerents. According to the interpretation of the verse; human beings have been created to dwell on earth and to be vicegerents a generation after a generation. Their prime aim is worship which is a general term that embraces under its umbrella any good deed that helps in the welfare of humanity. Human beings will definitely behave differently; some of them will do good deeds, and others will misbehave. Human beings' behavior will definitely need tools to aid them; and definitely communication and interaction among them is expected to be a central issue that is overall governed by the prime endowment given to them by Allah, and that is the human brain that controls everything on human beings, and which at the same time distinguishes them from the other creatures.

In the fourth domain, the selected verses tackle the issue of the honor and greatness that is given to human beings over the other creatures. In Surat **Al – Isra:**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

"وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْوَجْرِ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا (70)"

And We have indeed honoured the children of Adam and provided them with (means of transport) over the land and in the sea (i.e., in the cities, deserts, rivers and oceans) and bestowed upon them sustenance out of clean and pure things. And We have exalted them above most of Our creation by conferring on them superiority.

According to the interpretation of this verse, human beings are honored by the various blessings and endowments given to them by Allah. These

endowments include the upright creation given to them, and all the merits given to them such as the brain and the language by which they can communicate. All these advantages give human beings the superiority over the other creatures including the angels. We can say that this verse sums up all the privileges that distinguish and give honor and greatness to human beings over all the other creatures. Therefore, every aspect of human beings is a matter of distinction including language as a pure unique endowment given to people, and by which people are identified as speaking or articulating creatures which is the central point in this present study.

All the verses outlined and discussed in this section confirm that human beings and their given divine endowments qualify them with privileges and superiority over all the other creatures. One of the central endowments given to the people are the brain and the language by which human beings are identified. The brain and the language are entities related to each other as the brain is the central human control that is responsible of nearly all human activities of which the language is a prime unit under this brain control within the hemispheres of the brain. Human language is a unique astonishing human entity that enables human beings to perform their living and religious requirements and needs. Within the coming section some of the related studies that tackle human language uniqueness, will be discussed in order to be correlated with the verses taken from the Holy Quran.

Some Related Theoretical Studies:

In this section a review of some related studies will be presented to confirm or to complete the picture of human beings' superiority that is connected with human language uniqueness. It is believed that the present linguistic map of the worlds' languages is the product of a series of divergence across history (Barber: 1993: 50). This sequence of divergence is an indicator of human language distinction over the other creatures. The majority of the studies concluded that the distinction of human language above all the other creatures means of communication is due to the special make up of human articulators in terms of their flexibility and the control that is mentally processed through the human brain. According to Lieberman (1994: 87) "the evolution of modern Homo sapiens involves animalsthe elaboration of the anatomy and neural mechanisms that yield rapid vocal communication." Lieberman (ibid) links this unique structure of articulators with thought and the brain functioning.

Esling (2012: 123) agrees with Lieberman (1994) in considering human speech articulators as a unique 'anatomical' articulatory system. The same idea is also supported by Hedeager (2018: 1) who went on saying that the central difference between 'human' communication and other animals' communication is that human speech is not a mere instinctive predictable system; however, it is under what he calls "human behavior is under the voluntary control, and human language is creative. For Smith (1993: 9) 'The

dignity of man' in terms of human speech is an 'endowment that will never be compared with the other creatures' ways of uttering sounds and communicating with each other. Creativity of human speech is mental voluntary behavior in terms of the fact that a certain communicative message by a human being is expected to be interpreted differently at different times and places. On the other hand, animals communication is creative in terms of the system of communication itself as it conveys exactly the intended message with great accuracy and clarity, but the message will remain the same across time and place. i.e. there is no possibility of alternative interpretations of the same message. Animals' communication is instinctive in nature. Smith (ibid) believes that 'the tongue is the glory of man' as it helps to produce the speech that embodies all human activities and knowledge.

In another similar study Bouchard et al (2013: 1) considers speech as a distinct human behavior, they went on saying that: "The complexity comes from the fact that spoken words require the coordinated efforts of numerous "articulators" in the vocal tract -- the lips, tongue, jaw and larynx -- but scientists have not understood how the movements of these distinct articulators are precisely coordinated in the brain." Then he concludes by saying that language is only human. Hurford (2008: 264) states that the uniqueness of human language is the consequences of its 'complexity and expressive power.

According to Steinberg and Sciarini (2006: 5) when infants get into the stage of uttering meaningful speech they tend to produce speech intentionally not haphazardly in order to cope up with the words that they hear in their acquisition social environment. The child will start to explore his/her articulators to produce the sound that is required for the production of an appropriate word in a given communicative act. Definitely this is a matter of processing human mental capacity. Therefore, this is the kind of behavior that children will develop to acquire a native language.

In another study Kohler (2018: 2) explains that 'speech' is 'an adaptation' of the already physiological parts of speech to guarantee more survival chances for human beings. Articulation facilitates human speech by freeing other body limbs such as hands for more successful communication in terms of the mimes that aid speech clarity and providing people with human limbs for defense. This is of course the virtue of Allah's creation of human beings in the upright posture that gives mankind this privilege which gives human beings superiority over the other creatures. According to Masterson (2010) speech is a unique human characteristic that is developed due to the physiological makeup of the organs of speech that single out human beings over the other creatures.

According to Bouchard et al (2013) human speech is the most complex motor activity done by human beings through the coordination of several articulators that are controlled by neurological activities within the brain. Each articulator has its own route within the brain by which it is controlled for the production of speech sounds. This mechanism has been discovered

recently by scientists working on brain surgeries by using certain specialized apparatuses to detect the functions of the brain in helping producing speech sounds.

Steinberg and Sciarini (2006: 118) concludes a survey on attempts to teach different kinds of animals such as apes, dogs and dolphins, by concluding that there are two major sections of scientists those who believe that animals lack a certain kind of intelligence needed for language acquisition or learning in spite of the fact that they have more advanced hearing and seeing abilities that could surpass human beings' abilities and capabilities. The other group of scientists headed by Chomsky (1972 and 2002) believe that animals lack the innate capacity given to people to develop at least one native language at a time. The same idea of teaching, other creatures, human language has also been stated by Preuss (2012: 10710) who confirms that apes could develop some kind of human like speech which will never be equated with that creative distinctive human speech, but all in all they are unable to use human language expressively with its formal characteristics of structure and creativity. In other words, this developed speech like instances of animals will only be mechanical expressions that lack human creativity and power of expression.

We believe that human language is a central endowment of human beings uniqueness and superiority over the other creatures. Human language is a reflection of humanity distinction over the other creatures. Crystal (1965: 11 – 12) states that language is a flexible human way of conveying successful messages that surpasses all other means of communication. Crystal's (ibid) point indicates clearly the uniqueness of human language over the other ways of other creatures' means of communication. Moreover, the speed by which human beings acquire at least one native language proves this unique quality that characterizes human beings. As Muslims we believe that the Holly Qur'an and the Prophet's (PBUH) Sunnah bear much evidence and even corrections to the current beliefs among scholars. Saadat (2009: 103) confirms this idea by saying that ideas from the Holly Qur'an and Hadith helped to put in order and to correct a lot of the misconceptions about human origins, evolution and development. Yule (1996: 2) mentions this reliance on religious sources to correct misconceptions about origins and evolution of human beings by using the term 'rediscovery'. This is one of the central concepts in this present study, i.e. a correlation between religious sources and modern scientific research concerning human speech in particular.

From the reviewed selected verses from the Holly Qur'an, and the review of the related literature, the following results will bring the discussion to a logical end to indicate that human language is a unique human property that gives human being privileges over the other creatures. Moreover, every quality in human beings is a matter of uniqueness compared with all the other creatures. These results can be summed up as follows:

1. Human language is a reflection of a specialized, perfect upright creation of human beings.

2. Human speech is a unique mere human property that gives mankind supremacy over the other creatures.
3. There is a strong relationship between the reviewed verses from the Holly Qur'an and the literature outlined in this study in confirming people's communicative abilities.
4. People have a flexible well equipped articulation device that is the essence of human language uniqueness.

Recommendations and Conclusion:

In this content based analysis survey some related verses from the Holly Qur'an has been presented, explained and discussed in four central domains namely: the perfect upright creation of human beings, the blowing of Allah's soul on human beings, human beings as representatives of Allah's Authority as placed vicegerents on earth, and the honor and greatness that is given to human beings over all the other creatures. We believe that these four domains represent the distinctive components that give human beings privileges over the other creatures. These four religious domains have been correlated with the studies that give unique distinction of human speech and that human speech is an intellectual activity that is controlled by the human mental faculty 'the brain'.

It is not surprising to find a great correlation between the religious sources and the scientific survey that has been done by a variety of scholars and linguists because the two approaches lead to a logical conclusion that human beings have qualities and distinctions that surpass all the other creatures. Due to these qualities human beings manage to survive a long history despite the dangers encounter them across time and place.

The methodology and procedures in this present study have been built around the joint incorporation of religious sources and scientific surveys and research done by linguists and scholars; and in the light of these obtained results the following recommendations will bring the topic to further discussions and future studies:

1. A religious perspective of human language and other creatures' ways of communication.
2. A comparative study about people's creation and language in the Holly Qur'an and the other Holly books.
3. Continuity of intelligence, creativity and human language.
4. Evolutionary Theories in the Light of the Holly Qur'an.

Sources

The Holly Qur'an

The Glorious Qur'an

Altabarie Interpretation of the Holly Qur'an

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