

Review

Language of Religion

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Abstract

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Religion is a set of beliefs of an individual or a set of people. Language of religion is as sacred as any religion is itself. Language of religion is distinctive as well as prior to everyday language. In spite of many distinctive features language of religion is also having some similar features to the other registers. Language of religion is dynamic and complex regarding its function, style and interrelation with other texts. In this article language of religion is stylistically analyzed. Stylistic features like grammatical level, graphological effects, phonological level and semantics discussed on the basis of stylistic analysis.

Keywords: Religion, graphological effects, grammatical level, semantic level, phonological level

INTRODUCTION

An organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems and world views that relate to an order of existence is called religion. It is the set of beliefs, values and social norms that gives people a proper code of life to live their lives according to that. Language is a medium by which the presence and activity of beings can be made pre-supposable. It is the medium of communication through which the norms, values, beliefs, ideas and codes of life are communicated among the people of particular societies or among the societies. Language represents the culture, religion and social norms of a particular society or even of a particular register.

Language of religion is a register that represents the variation of language, used in the setup of religion, from the everyday language and other setups. Language of religion is totally different from the everyday language. It is the language in which certain aspects of everyday language are altered or sometimes suspended. Language of religion is considered prior to everyday language. It is considered prior may be because of its relation to Devine Beings, Devine Beings or Super Beings are involved in the production of words in religious language. There are many holy books that are

directly related to God Almighty and are descended in the shape of revelation. So the language of these books is not produced by any human being. For example, sacred book of Muslims the Holy Quran is known as the only book in the same condition as it was descended on Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace is upon him). It is in its original form as it was revealed on Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Religious language becomes standard of the contemporary language. Origin language of The Holy Quran is Arabic and due to its unique style Holy Quran has been considered the standard of Arabic. Bible also consists of standard language and it is full of figurative language. Mean to say that religious language is also full of figures of speech and it is also full of literary devices like any good piece of literature. There are a lot of examples, to support this idea, in Holy Quran, Bible and even in Hadith and Sermons. There are many salient stylistic features of religious language that make distinction between language of religion and language of other registers. Stylistic features of religious language are further discussed below in this paper.

Stylistic features

Graphilological level

In religious language foregrounding of the style as well as of theme is frequently found. It is very common and usually used device that is very present in Holy Quran, Bible, and Books of Hadith and even in sermons etc.

In Holy Quran we find a lot of graphilological effects that make its style prominent. The first and the foremost graphilological effect is the name of Surah in Quran, it consists the gist of the happenings in that specific Surah or chapter. For example Surah Baqarah is title of the longest Surah in Holy Quran and the main theme and story discussed in this surah is related to the story of cow. In Surah (chapter) An-Naas we find the word NAAS fore grounded. There are six sentences (ayats) in it and at the end of every sentence we find the word "Naas". In hadith foregrounding is also found. For example often Haidth starts with a question in which the theme is fore grounded and it so in order to make the listener more attentive and curious. In sermons thematic words are fore grounded by speaking aloud than other words. Alliteration is also a feature that shows the graphilological effect in religious language. The words or sentences that are to be foregrounded are used repeatedly in the same order. For example in Surah e Rahmaan one sentence (ayat) "Which then, of the favors of your Lord will you deny?" is repeated thirty one times.

Grammatical effects

In religious language grammar is followed properly except some particular situations. If we take examples from Bible, we find that grammar is properly followed. As it is already stated that mostly the language of religion standardizes the contemporary language, so the idea of proper grammar should also be cleared that if a language is standard then how can it be grammatically poor?

Revelation 2.11: "He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death."

This is a sentence of Bible New Testament. This shows and represents the proper grammar of The Bible. In the same way we find that the most of the religious texts follow the rules of grammar.

Rules of punctuation are followed in religious language. In Quran there is a proper pattern of punctuation and same is in Bible. There is proper and unique use of sentence markers in Quran as well as in Bible. For example:

Surah Baqarah (ayat 2): "This is the Book in which there is no doubt, a guide for the righteous."

Surah Baqarah (ayat 12): "In fact, they are the troublemakers, but they are not aware"

Surah Baqarah (ayat 12): "Do you command people to virtuous conduct, and forget yourselves, even though you read the Scripture?"

These three sentences represent the unique style of Quran regarding the sentence markers and regular structure of the sentence. Same examples can be driven from Bible.

Sometimes for the sake of mentioning the importance or significance of anything, the rule of regular sentence structure is violated.

Phonological level

The sound of the word or phrase affects much in the style of a text. In religious language we find that text is found in both prose and poetic style. It is also having the great deal with phonetic level of stylistic analysis. Hymns that are sung or written in the praise of God are the example of poetic style. In religious language we find great effects of phonetics. The reason of this may be the purpose, to effect and soften the hearts, of the preaching of religion. Though the proper sound patterns affect the heart and mind more, this is why it is needed in language of religion. But purpose is not our concern in this paper.

In religious language we find both prose and poetic style. Even the sacred books are having poetic diction. If we stylistically analyze Holy Quran we find that it is also having poetic diction along with prose style. The best example is Surah e Kuasar. There are also many other Surahs in Holy Quran having poetic style. Poetic style is also found in Bible. For example: In Psalm (122.6-7) poetic style is shown.

"Entreat the peace of Jerusalem,
May they prosper who love you.
May peace is within your walls,
Security within your towers."

There are hymns in every religion sung or written for their God or the super human beings like Lord Buddha etc. Hindus are having proper songs for their gods.

As for as the punctuation is concerned we find proper punctuation in Holy books like Quran and Bible. The examples of punctuation already have been given in grammar section. Rhyming schemes are also found in language of religion. If we analyze Surah e Kausar in Holy Quran we find that it is having rhyme scheme of A, A, A. Above mentioned poetic stanza of Bible is having rhyme scheme of A, B, C, and D. So the proper and improper rhyme scheme is found in the poetic diction

of religious language.

Religious language is also having the examples of assonance and alliteration. In language of religion to make the style prominent assonance and alliteration is used. In Bible Prophetic and poetic writings, such as Micah, Psalms, etc., use alliteration, same consonants in the initial positions in a line, for narrative effect.

Repetition of the same words and even of same lines is also very present in religious language. Drawing an example from holy Quran in Surah An-Naas we find the word "Naas" at the end of every sentence (ayat). It is the repetition of same word. Repetition of same line can also be noted in Surah e Rehmaan of Holy Quran. The line "Which then, of the favors of your Lord will you deny?" is repeated thirty one times.

Semantic level

Semantics is the study of meanings of words that how they can be interpreted. Through the analysis of religious language at semantic level we come to know about the brevity and universality of religious language. The use of symbols, similes, metaphors, allusion, hyperbole, paradox etc. is found in language of religion. It means that language of religion is figurative language in which we notice the use of figures of speech.

Reasons behind the use of figurative language are:

- Presentation of descriptive truth.
- For the better comprehension of listeners or readers.
- Brief but comprehensive presentation of ideas.
- To make zealous and more engaging.
- Easy to remember.

The examples of the use of figures of speech in language of religion are as under:

The use of figurative language in Bible and Quran can be observed from the examples given below.

James 3.6: "The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body."

In this line tongue is used as a metaphor.

Prov. 10.26: "Like vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes, so are the lazy to their employers."

Smoke and vinegar are used as simile.

Revelation.13.1: "Then I saw a beast coming out of the sea"

Here the technique of symbolism is used through the symbol of beast.

Surah al-Ahzaab (The Confederates) 33: 10. "When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and

when the eyes grew wild and the hearts reached to the throats, and you were harbouring doubts about Allah."

Here the technique of hyperbole is used.

Surah Al- Baqrah 74: "Then your hearts hardened and became like rocks, or even harder."

Here simile as a figure of speech is used.

John 3.3: "...no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

In this line we find the example of paradox in Bible. So it can be said that religious language is full of figures of speech and it is very much aware of the use of figures of speech. We find figurative language even in Holy Books of different religions.

CONCLUSION

So it can be concluded that the language of religion is distinctive as well as prior to everyday language. In spite of many distinctive features language of religion is also having some similar features to the other registers. Language of religion is dynamic and complex regarding its function, style and interrelation with other texts.

Language of religion is considered prior or sometimes superior to everyday languages because of its standard and brevity. Examples in this respect are already given in the early part of the paper. Language of Holy books especially that of descended books is the standard language because of its affiliation with the God Almighty. It is in every respect, perfect regarding grammar and other initial aspects of any standard language. Religious speech situation often differs from that of everyday language. Everyday speech situation is a joint production of sharing words or phrases. In this register it is very necessary and important to know that what is being shared and by whom it is being shared. In the religious conversation because most of the religious conversation is the only sharing of the particular personality or power and sometimes this power is invisible and what is shared by Him all is of much importance like Quran is shared by God and even a single word of it is having great importance and is having universal brevity and meanings.

We find that language of religion is having different features that are to some extent similar to that of everyday language. Levels of stylistic analysis are very much present in the language of religion. There is the foregrounding of theme as well as foregrounding of style in it. Grammar is mostly followed properly and the sentence structure is frequently found to be regular. As for as the semantic level is concerned, the figures of speech are very much present in the language of religion. Language of religion deals with different literary devices

in order to foreground its theme, conciseness and preciseness, comprehensive and to make remember able its message.

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DEDICATION

This work, first of all, is dedicated to ALLAH ALMIGHTY who helped me in completing it.

And it is also dedicated to my dearest brother Naeem Ahmed Jan Shaheed PAK NAVY (TMGHA-E-BASALAT).

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