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WHAT ISLAM SAYS ABOUT (UN) TRUTHFULNESS: AN ETHNOPRAGMATIC EXPLORATION OF TRUTH AND LYING IN PAKISTANI CULTURE

Ms. Saima Mubashra

*Assistant Professor of English, Govt. Associate College for Women,
Mela Mandi, Sargodha, Pakistan.*

Dr. Ghazala Kausar

*Assistant Professor of English, National University of Modern Languages,
Islambad, Pakistan.*

Abstract Despite being a seemingly universal signifier, (un) truthfulness is a cultural concept. It runs the risk of being wrongly interpreted if corresponding cultural systems and moral values are ignored in the meaning-making process. This study explores the concept of (un)truthfulness in Pakistani culture with special reference to Islamic teachings. As the widely recognised and respected moral beliefs in Pakistani society are derived mainly from the religion Islam, it is imperative to explore the religious component of cultural thought surrounding the topics of Truth and lying. Adopting the Ethnoprismatic approach, the study tries to explore the cultural antecedents of some of the Urdu vocabulary items and traces their etymological connection with the Islamic perspective on Truth and Lying. The close correspondence between the lexical items used to denote Truth and lying and the Islamic tenets also reveals that the moral vocabulary in the Urdu language is deeply infused with the dominant religious ideology. The results show that Urdu vocabulary consistently reflects the superior value of Truth as a word of God and the absolute moral prohibition of lying found in Islam. Furthermore, Urdu lexical items also replicate the enduring and sustainable nature of Truth found in Islamic tradition. Contrarily, lying is always considered devoid of ascendancy, permanence and sustenance.

Keywords: Truthfulness, Lying, Ethnoprismatics.

Introduction

Despite being a seemingly universal signifier, (un) truthfulness is a cultural concept. It runs the risk of being wrongly interpreted if corresponding cultural systems and moral values are ignored in the meaning-making process. Judgment about what exactly constitutes Truthfulness and its breaches vary systematically across cultures¹. The possible points of interaction between culture and the nature of Truthfulness are too diverse and too numerous to list down. However, the cultural differences chiefly rest on the predominant ethical/moral considerations and the premium placed on the value of Truthfulness as compared to other moral values found in any culture. The degree of acceptance or condemnation that the act of lying receives is greatly reliant on the moral system followed in society. Some cultures use stricter criteria to judge the phenomena of deception, while others find it less abominable².

It is not only the degree of moral reprehensibility associated with untruthfulness that is culturally contingent. Ethical and moral ideologies prevalent in any culture also play a pivotal role in defining the concepts before associating any moral value with them³. For instance, American ideology equates Truthfulness with sincerity and directness⁴ while for some other cultures, indirectness is a regular part of everyday conversations and it is not seen as an instance of deception or untruthfulness⁵.

In light of the foregoing discussion, the study tries to explore the concept of Truthfulness in Pakistani culture with special reference to the dominant moral ideology. Although not all people practice Islam on a regular basis, the widely recognised and respected moral beliefs and tenets in Pakistani society are derived from the religion Islam⁶. Inglehart (2020) affirms that Pakistan (as one of those 18 Muslim countries included in the World Value Survey) is a strongly religious country preserving traditional norms and religious values⁷. In light of these observations, it is very imperative to explore the concept of lying and deception from the perspective of Islamic teachings.

A Note on Method

The greatest challenge in describing a cultural phenomenon is to establish the link between the ways of speaking and their cultural antecedents⁸. The study adopts Ethnopragmatic approach to study (un)truthfulness in Pakistani culture. Ethnopragmatics encourages assigning respective cultures a key explanatory role in studying any linguistic phenomenon⁹. It urges replacing universal explanations with cultural logic¹⁰. This approach maintains that labels used to denote the concepts have unmistakable cultural imprints which can be uncovered by using semantic and pragmatic explications¹¹. It highlights how various levels and units of language instantiate significant aspects of cultural schema. All cultural knowledge solidifies in the corresponding language system and the words and phrases become the

repository of cultural norms, expectations and beliefs¹².

In order to do Ethnopragmatics of deception and lying in Pakistani culture, the study uses linguistic evidence as its primary data. The linguistic evidence comes from two sources. First, the study uses religious texts to develop an overview of the concept of (un) truthfulness in Islam and then through purposive sampling, culls a list of Urdu lexical items that reflect these Islamic injunctions. The correspondence between the religious sanctioning of lying in Islam and the cultural thought reflected through Urdu lexical items is further supported with other cultural texts. Finally, the study uses this data to explicate the dominant cultural/religious attitudes towards (un)truthfulness.

Islamic Perspective on (un) Truthfulness

The moral attitude towards lying is mainly influenced by Islamic teachings and principles which sanction the spiritual elevation of truth and associate strict moral opprobrium with lying. The concept of truth and lying are very central to the Islamic Faith. Truthfulness is not only a paramount quality of believers but also the formative principle on which the edifice of Islam is erected.

The Urdu word *Haq* (God or Truth) is derived from the Arabic language which is the language of the Quran. One of the attributive names of God in Islam is Al-Haq which precisely means the Truth. Because of its semantic density, the word and its derivatives are used in the Holy Quran on innumerable occasions. God declares himself as (absolute) Truth, his religion as truth and his promise to help believers as true: Some examples include "For that is Allah your Lord, the Truth." (The Qur'an 10:32), "And who is truer to His covenants than Allah. (The Qur'an 9:111), "And who is more truthful than Allah in the statement? (The Qur'an 4:87). The word of Allah is the supreme example of truth because it would most certainly occur. He says, "He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in truth; and on the day He says "Be!" and it is, His Word is the Truth" (The Qur'an 6:73). It is imperative for Muslims to follow the path of truth and believe in the absolute truth revealed by God. Truthfulness is an indispensable quality of a believer: "O you who have believed! Fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice." (The Quran 33:70). The believers are the ones who are "The patient, the true, the obedient, those who spend [in the way of Allah], and those who seek forgiveness before dawn." (The Qur'an 3:17); "It is those who are truthful." (The Qur'an 49:15).

The Quranic injunctions about Truthfulness as the defining characteristic of a believer are reflected in the life and teaching of the Prophet Muhammad. The prophetic tradition is deemed an epitome of the truth to be religiously followed by all Muslim believers. The prophet Muhammad was given the title of *Sadiq* (truthful) and *Ameen* (Trustworthy). The titles are not generic or arbitrary titles to celebrate his exalted character. These titles encode the

attributes of someone ‘who has not told a single lie in his entire lifetime’ (*Sadiq*) and the one ‘who has NEVER breached anyone’s trust’ (*Ameen*). The prophet's life is believed to be the testimony to the strict adherence to truth under all conditions and circumstances.

Islamic theology strongly reinforces the urgency of truth. Islam makes it obligatory to speak the truth regardless of the consequences it may invite; “Believers! Be upholders of justice, and bearers of witness to truth for the sake of Allah, even though it may either be against yourselves or against your parents and kinsmen, or the rich or the poor.” (The Qur’an4:135). In one Hadith, Muhammad conveys the same message, “The awe (status) of people should not prevent a man from saying the truth when he knows it.” (Jam-e-Tirmidhi Book of Al-Fitan, Hadith 2191).

The opposite of *Haqis Batil* which translates as falsehood. Haq and Batil are complementary opposites and the absence of one automatically presupposes the presence of the other. A statement or an idea that is not *Haqis Batil* by default. The strong approval of truth is inevitably tied with the strong condemnation of lying in Islam¹³. Lying is strictly prohibited and Haram (impermissible or unlawful) in Islam¹⁴ and it is considered one of the greatest sins in Islam. The Lord says in the Qur’an, “Shun the abomination of idols, and shun the word that is false.” (The Qur’an 22:30). It is very significant to note that lying is placed next to polytheism or the greatest sin in Islam. The worst and most condemned form of lying is falsely attributing things to God and the Prophet. Allah warns in the Quran, “Do not invent a lie against Allah or He will exterminate you with a punishment. (The Qur’an 20:61). According to the Qur’an, “those who have believed in falsehood” are the ones who “disbelieved in Allah” (The Qur’an 29:52). Just as Truthfulness is the quality of a believer, lying is the hallmark of disbelievers: “That is because those who disbelieve follow falsehood and who believe follow the truth from their Lord” (The Qur’an 47:3).

Lying is regarded as *Umm-ur-Razail* (the mother of all sins) because it leads to other evils and moral vices¹⁵. The Prophet said, “Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. And a man keeps on telling the truth until he becomes a truthful person. Falsehood leads to Al-Fajur (i.e., wickedness, evil-doing), and Al-Fajur (wickedness) leads to the (Hell) Fire, and a man may keep on telling lies till he is written before Allah, a liar.” (Al-Bukhari78: 6094). The Prophet Muhammad detested lies to the extent of counting lying among the greatest sins a follower can commit. He apprised believers of the three great sins, including setting up equals to Allah, neglecting one’s duty towards one’s parents and lying (Al-Muslim 1:158). One story of Islam that has almost acquired the status of a cultural legend narrates the story of a man who suffered from all the major sins and came to the prophet Muhammad to seek his help in giving up all the bad habits. The

prophet advised him to quit telling lies first and always speak the truth. He promised the prophet to always remain truthful. Whenever he thought thereon of indulging in any sin, he abstained from it because lying was not an option for him and telling the truth about his indulgence would have invited public outrage or the wrath of the prophet. Avoidance of lies saved him from all other major sins¹⁶.

Lying can stain the reputation of a Muslim as a holy man or a true believer. Submission to the ways of God prohibits one from lying of all types. According to Islamic theology, Allah does not bestow His blessings on someone who transgresses from the right path and fails to speak the truth. The Quran has instructed against lying on innumerable occasions, some examples are "...Indeed, Allah does not guide he who is a liar and [confirmed] disbeliever." (The Qur'an 39:3), "...Indeed Allah does not guide one who is a transgressor and a liar." (The Qur'an 40:28). The one who lies invites the wrath of God and is doomed forever. Allah says "...The curse of Allah be upon him if he should be among the liars." (The Qur'an 24:7). There are numerous hadiths of the prophet which clearly state that one cannot be a believer and a liar at the same time. "The Messenger of Allah, was asked, 'Can a believer be a coward?' He said, 'Yes.' He was asked, 'Can a believer be a miser?' He said, 'Yes.' He was asked, 'Can a believer be a liar?' He said, NO!" (Maalik 56:3630).

Notwithstanding this non-flexible prohibition of lying, there are some exceptions in which lying is legitimized, for example, to save someone's life or to maintain love between spouses. Prophet Muhammad says, "Lying is not permitted except in three cases: a man's speaking to his wife to make her happy; lying at times of war and lying in order to reconcile between people." (Jami at Tirmidhi 28:1938). The prophet did not give license to anyone for saying something falsely except three in three matters "I do not count liar a man who puts things right between people, saying a word by which he intends only putting things right, and a man who says something in the war, and a man who says something to his wife and the wife says something to his husband." (Sunan Abu Dawood 43:4291). These hadiths, if seen in isolation, can be taken as legitimizing harmless prosocial lying; however, when placed in the context of other Islamic injunctions, these sayings of the Prophet Muhammad inform exceptional circumstances and not normative behaviour. The permission is an act of tolerance and not a command or license to necessarily tell lies under difficult circumstances. Furthermore, saying something good is explained as speaking euphemistically or and not necessarily lying about the facts. The Prophet clarifies the issue by stating the following in a hadith narrated by Imam Bayhaqi, "There is relief in ambiguous and allegorical expressions, making you get rid of lies"¹⁷. The permission is granted only in special circumstances. Lying for any practical

gains, for example, in the domain of buying and selling, is strongly disapproved.

Here it would be apt to briefly touch upon a contentious argument made against the honesty principle of Islam in the form of a Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. Since the catastrophic event of 9/11 in which the main architect and the perpetrators were found to be the radical Muslim extremists, a Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad 'War is deceit' surfaced again and again to legitimize the distrust and hatred directed towards the religion Islam. If wrongly interpreted, this saying can unsettle the force of evidence presented thus far. Apparently, the Hadith is similar to the Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu famous dictum, "All warfare is the way of deception"¹⁸. The saying of the Prophet Muhammad is used by Anti-Islamist polemicists to substantiate their belief that the Prophet Muhammad took the expedient view of lying and used deception to gain strategic advantages against his enemies. Furthermore, the critics of Islam stretch the meaning of the statement to suggest that Islam is always at war with the enemy and it is always rightful to bypass the principle of honesty when dealing with non-Muslims¹⁹.

The interpretive confusion mainly arises from the mistranslation of the Arabic word *khud'a* into deception. Hayward (2017), in his monograph, elucidates that it is beneficial to look at the genealogical evolution of the Arabic word *khud'a* and discover the various shades of the meaning associated with the various grammatical variants of the word. Apart from denoting the personal act of duplicity or moral dishonesty, the word is used to denote such things as a lizard concealing itself to escape predators or the sleight of hand used by magicians to captivate the audience. In this sense, the word is translated as ruse or stratagem or to gain an advantage. The prophet's war strategy was not based on deceiving the enemy or compromising personal integrity but to "make every effort not to be transparent or predictable to the enemy"²⁰. Moreover, all religions and cultures acknowledge that war is a quintessentially strategic context in which one cannot afford to reveal one's assets, moves and plans to the rivals²¹.

Here it would be apt to briefly review what evidence the Islamic concept of lying and deception brings to the semantics of lying and truth. The semantic polarity and the dichotomy of the concept of truth and lying are evident in Islamic ethics. Lying is bad without exception; One cannot simultaneously be a believer and a liar. However, if lying occurs in permissible or exceptional contexts, the person is not classed as a liar. The Prophet says, "A person who reconciles between two people and says good things, even if it is not true, *is not a liar* [emphasis added]." (Sahih Muslim 32:6303). Saying certain things that are untrue but beneficial for the sake of mutual harmony is not considered a legit or good form of lying but a case of non-lying. The utterer of well-meaning lies is not a liar with good intentions but a non-liar

altogether. Since speech acts assigned to lying are invariably bad and those assigned to truth are always good, if something good arises out of lying, it needs to be a non-case of lying.

The Islamic Imprint on Urdu Vocabulary

This section aims to trace the cultural antecedents of some of the Urdu vocabulary items related to lying and deception. As the religion Islam forms the spine of the cultural schemata and moral system of Pakistani culture²², many of the Urdu vocabulary items can be traced back to the ideology found in the dominant religion²³. If we look at the semantics of the Urdu vocabulary, the etymological correlation of these words with Islamic injunctions and the Arabic language seems to transpire automatically. In the Urdu language, the concept of truth as a soulful pursuit of faith is denoted by the Urdu word *Haq*. *Haq* on the one hand means ‘Objective truth’ or ‘higher truth’ denoting the absolute knowledge or enlightenment obtained through revelation. On the other hand, *Haqis* also one of the attributive names of God in Islam²⁴. The Urdu language echoes the idea “Truth is God, God is Truth”, which is found consistently in Eastern theological thought²⁵. *Haqis* the most commonly used alternative or the closest synonym for *Sach*; it can replace *Sach* in the majority of the context. Here it is important to note that *Haqis* a polysemous word that also means ‘rights’. In this sense, it can be subjective as well as objective in nature. The superiority of *Haq* is reflected in its collocation with the verbs like *talaashkarna*(seek) and *pehchankarna*(recognize). *Haq* is closer to the Russian concept “istina” (higher truth)²⁶ or the concept of “paramarthasatya” (ultimate truth) found in Buddhism²⁷ but has no English counterpart. *Haq* and *Sach*, as a part of a language system, contrast sharply with the English language system, which does not accord such a bipartite understanding of truth as two truths; one existing in speech and the other in superior knowledge. The superimposability of *Haq*(God) and *Sach*(truth) is reflected in a number of lexical and phrasal items. *HaqAashnais* literally used to refer to both someone who recognizes God and someone who identifies the truth. *Haqbajanab*(on the side of the truth) is used to denote someone right and true. *Bar haq* refers to something true and rightful. *Haq kay liaylarna* means both to fight for God or to fight for the truth. *HaqGoyi* is the habit of speaking the pure truth. The correspondence between God and truth is invariably stamped on Urdu vocabulary.

Another linguistic counterpart to this cultural preference for truth in Pakistani culture is also inscribed in the form of an extended metaphor based on more than one common grounds between *Eman*(Faith) and *Such* (truth). The thought that truth is virtuous and “Lying is the opposite of *Eman*”²⁸ makes *Eman* and *Sach* semantically related words. In Islamic thought, it is believed that lying cripples, hollows and undermines *Eman*(faith)²⁹. The result of this correspondence between these two concepts is that the words and idioms that

denote preserving/safeguarding *Eman* by default mean being truthful and honest. On the other hand, the lexical units that denote the absence of *Eman* idiomatically refer to the state/quality of being deceptive or dishonest. *Emandar* (lit. the one who protects their faith) is synonymous with *Saccha* (truthful) and *Bey eman* (lit. the one lacking faith) is semantically analogous to a liar or a dishonest person. The idiom *kisi per say emanuthna* (to lose trust in one's Truthfulness) denote the loss/absence of faith, which makes one less trustworthy. Idiomatic constructions like *emankeekahna* (to speak what is commensurate with faith/truth) and *emansay* (I swear by my faith) based on *Eman* are semantically equivalent to speaking truth. Equivalent to the English concept 'honesty' is an Urdu word *Emandari*, a derivative of *Eman* has the literal meaning of 'Protecting one's faith'. The Urdu concept of *Emandari* is closer to the English concept of honesty as avoidance of stealing, cheating and lying. Such correspondence of truth and faith is symptomatic of higher significance associated with the values of speaking the truth and avoiding lies.

The fact that *jhootis Haraam* (completely forbidden) in Islam is reflected in Urdu lexicon as well. The proverb *Jhootbarabarpaapnahi* (there is no sin greater than a lie) is a literal derivative of the denouncement of lying found in the Qur'an and the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad. Urdu idioms *khudakhudakero*, *Allah Allahkero* and *Allah ka naam lo* which literally mean 'Remember thy Lord', idiomatically mean 'Fear Allah and do not tell a lie'. These expressions are used to entreat someone to stop producing blatant lies. The idiom *Panchon Shara'iaibhona* (to have all the five imperfections prohibited by the religion) is used to refer to someone who is a stealer, a fornicator, a liar, a gambler and a tippler, all at once. Such a person is considered an utter social failure. The extreme disapproval for mendacious lies is reflected in Urdu proverbs that use much more harsh wording than any English counterparts. Proverbs that literally curse the liar (for example, *Jhootay pay laanat* meaning 'curse be upon the liar') and malign him with the worst reputation (for example, *Jhootay ka munh kala* meaning 'May the liar's face be sooty') are derived overtly from the translation of the Quranic verse "Invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie" (The Qur'an 3:61). In his poem '*Sachkaho*', famous Urdu Poet Ismail Meerthi expresses the similar belief. He tends a bit of advice to children to avoid lying in the following words:

Hai bura Jhootbolnaywala

Aapkartahaiapnamunh kala

Faida is ko kuchna day ga jhoot

Jaey ga aikrozbandaphoot

Jhoot ki bhoolkarnadaalokhu

Jhoot ki zillat ki baathai akh thu

[A Liar is always vile/ He makes his face black/ A lie will never benefit

him/It would uncover itself one day/Do not adopt the habit of lying/ Because lying is spitefulBah!]³⁰

The use of ‘*Akh thoo!* (lit. spit) an Urdu interjection reflects the extreme aversion to lying found in Pakistani culture. Similarly, the proverb *jhootay kay munh say boo aatihai*(The liar’s mouth stinks) not only refers to the detectability of the liar but also to the verbatim stench emitted from the mouth of a liar that keeps the angels away (Jam-e-Tirimdhi Book on Righteousness and Maintaining Good relations with Relatives :1972). It is a cultural belief that lying is a sign of inner filth which results in the foul smell coming from the mouth of the liar³¹.

The source of many proverbs on the subject of lying can be traced back to the prohibition of lying in Islam. The proverb *Munh main zuban halal hai*(The tongue in our mouth is very sacred) means that our tongue in our mouth is meant for telling the truth (which is permissible or halal) and not to tell lies which are haram (impermissible/strictly forbidden)³². The proverb resonates the Islamic thought that considers truth to be synonymous with virtue³³. Linked with this thought is the tradition of associating the virtuous nature of truth with sacredness because in Islam the virtuous is sacred³⁴. Contrarily, sinfulness is unholy and impure. The proverb *Jhootamaraynashahrpaak howay* (Neither the liar dies, nor the city gets cleansed) reverberates the same cultural meaning of lying being impure or haram. The presence of a liar defiles and desecrates the entire locality which he inhabits. The place can regain its purity only if the liar perishes.

In the (modern) Anglophonic belief system, such glorification of truth as commensurate with (religious) Faith or *Haqis* not visible. From the belief in the sacred text as a source of truth³⁵ to the proverbs like “Go to the Devil for truth and to a lawyer for a lie” the diachronic shift suggests that like other religious terms which have been secularized in modern Anglo-American society³⁶, the truth has also become a mundane affair and not a religious obligation.

Dysfunctionality of Lying

In Pakistani culture, truth is considered self-sustaining, self-evident, irrefutable and discoverable. The idea of the dysfunctionality of lying gets its expression in Urdu proverbs and idioms. The proverbs like *Jhoot kay paonnahihotay*(A lie has no limbs to stand upon), *darogh ko faroghnahi*(a lie cannot prosper), *jhootkeenaonahichalti*(A sham/false boat does not float) portray lie as a least efficient alternative. The proverb *aikjhoot ko chupanay kay liay so jhootbolnaypartay hain* (One lie draws hundred after it) is widely believed and quoted in Pakistani culture. It refers to the problematic nature of lying, which needs continuous maintenance and after-work support. In comparison, the expressions like *saanchko anchnahi*(truth is evergreen) and *such kehnaaorsukhirehna*(speak the truth and be at peace) reverberate the

self-sustainability of truth.

By looking at the counter-evidence for the dysfunctionality of lying, some proverbs can be found that contradict the view. Proverbs such as *Saanchkahay so mara jaey, jhootkahay so laddu khaey* (Speak the truth and suffer, tell a lie and be soothed) and *succhaja'ey rota aa'ye, jhootaja'eyhunstaaa'ye* (A truthful person comes clean and gets doomed; the liar goes around lying and returns triumphant) hint that lying is more fulfilling or rewarding than truth. However, it would be pertinent to note that the evaluative and expressive value these proverbs carry is essentially negative. The proverbs are not used approvingly or with a positive evaluation of the state of affairs they convey but as an expression of one's distress over the lying becoming increasingly functional. The expressions like *Such ka zamananahi* (This is not the time of truth anymore) are used to express remorse over decaying social values, which create permissibility for lying and deception and not as a pragmatic acceptance of the moral relativism concerning lying. The proverb *Jeet/Fatah hamaisha such keehotihai* (Truth always triumphs) reflects an unflinching cultural belief that truth will be out and establish itself. There is a collective optimism that "Truth will triumph/against the falsehood of the day"³⁷. It is believed that the crux of all social debate lies in the certainty of the assertion that truth cannot be forsaken or hidden by men³⁸.

The idea seems consistent with Islamic philosophy. Lying is prohibited in Islam because it is considered not only sinful but also dysfunctional, transient and unable to sustain itself. In Islamic tradition, the endurance and permanence of truth has always been abiding principle³⁹. The Qur'an explains the dysfunctionality of lying by using a parable of rainwater. He sends down rain from the sky, causing the valleys to flow, each according to its capacity. The currents then carry along rising foam, similar to the slag produced from metal that people melt in the fire for ornaments or tools. This is how Allah compares truth to falsehood. The 'worthless' residue is then cast away, but what benefits people remains on the earth. This is how Allah sets forth parables. (The Qur'an 13:17)

Lying is like the erosion of the rainwater that damages and corrodes while truth seeps in to survive for the benefit of commonweal. Lying is like the temporary froth that floats on the surface and disappears. Truth is like pure water that makes the land fertile and makes the fruits and vegetables grow. In the second set of comparisons, lying is compared with the frothy scum expelled by the smelting metal and truth with decontaminated pure metal that is left once impurities of falsehood are separated and removed. The dysfunctionality of lying is further revealed by this verse, "Falsehood can neither begin [anything] nor repeat [it]." (The Qur'an, 34:49). Lying is devoid of ascendancy, permanence and sustenance. Truth is enduring, self-sustaining

and functional. The Qur'an says, "Truth has come and falsehood has departed. Indeed is falsehood [by nature], ever bound to depart." (The Qur'an 17:81), "Rather We dash the truth upon falsehood, and it destroys it, and thereupon it departs." (The Qur'an 21:18). Truth has the power to prevail, ascend and surpass lying because the truth is powerful, permanent and sustainable. The distinction between lying and truth in Islam is more about being indispensable/indispensable, essential/inessential and functional/dysfunctional than merely being good/bad. Truth is indispensable for the world to sustain. The time when truth will cease to dominate, the end of the world will ensue. The era would mark the social disaster presaged by the Prophet Muhammad. When the world would be nearing its end, lying would prevail (Jam-e- Tirmidhi Book of Al-Fitan No. 2165).

Conclusion

The study explored the concept of (un)truthfulness in Pakistani culture with special reference to Islamic teachings. The data revealed that speaking truth is a non-negotiable moral imperative in Pakistani culture. There is a strong prohibition of lying in Islam. The prohibition not only rests on moral sanctioning but also on the inherently dysfunctional nature of lying. Lying is transient and non-sustainable in nature. The findings are the prediction of the general ethos shared in Pakistani society. They reflect only a pattern of cultural thought and are not a prescription of actual social behaviour. The effect of this cultural thought is not deterministic and individuals may suspend the dominant cultural norm to achieve certain social and personal goals. Nevertheless, everything happens within this broader cultural context, which remains a point of departure from which individuals may choose to deviate.

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