

## EXPLORING THE LANGUAGE AND REPRESENTATION OF ISLAMIC ETHICS IN THE SONGS OF SAMI YUSUF'S ALBUM SALAAM

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### ABSTRACT

This research explores the use of language and the representation of Islamic ethics in Sami Yusuf's songs contained in the album *Salaam*. Through a qualitative analytical approach, to provide an in-depth understanding of the use of language used in the lyrics of these songs, as well as the representation of Islamic ethics contained therein, such as love, patience, peace, contentment, and others, delivered through simple and powerful language. An analysis of the lyrics of songs such as "Happiness", "Salaam", "Forgotten Promises", "Hear You Call", "Smile", "To Guide You Home", "Dryer Land", "All I Need", "I'm Your Hope", and "It's A Game" shows that Sami Yusuf uses simple, powerful yet universal language to convey moral and spiritual messages that can be accepted by a global audience. This research shows that the music in the album *Salaam* serves as a modern medium of da'wah, combining elements of popular culture with Islamic ethical values, thus allowing these messages to reach listeners from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

**Keywords:** *Salaam Album, Sami Yusuf, Music, Language Use, Representation, Islamic Ethics.*

### INTRODUCTION

Language is a medium that serves to convey information, ideas and knowledge of any kind. According to Jakobson & Halle (2020), language plays a very important role in human life because it is used to express their feelings, thoughts and ideas. Language is important in the life of every human being. In every human life, be it in fields such as art, business, technology, education, and so on, it requires language.

The development of language that continues to this day has produced various forms of language. Language is grouped into two forms, namely written and spoken forms. Every language speaker has their own language style, which determines the characteristics of their language. Language style relates to how language is used in certain situations, by certain people, and for certain purposes. Quoting from Chapman's work (1973, p. 11) every language style is used for communication, whether it is in groups, large or small, wrong and right, and has distinctive characteristics that are considered as communication by group members.

Thus, one example of the use of language that is included in the field of art or literary works is lyrics in music/songs. Lyrics to songs are included in the type of poetry. According to Billadina (2014:1), music is related to literature and affects human life. Songs have a significant role in conveying anything in everyday life and as one of the literary works that are much loved by the public. Songs can be referred to as language because songs have meaning in them through lyrics and have a charm of beauty in terms of themes and sentence structure and musical sequences. In addition, songs also represent different styles and characters.

However, song lyrics are not only creating a series of beautiful words, but also a representation of the reality or events seen or felt by a songwriter. According to a quote from Rahmasari & Adiyanto (2023) vocal play, language style, and variations in word meaning reinforced by melodies and musical notations that match the song lyrics can draw listeners into the world of the songwriter. According to the Encyclopedia Americana, a song is a short piece of music assembled into a lyrical text that is as important as music and words (1977, p. 220).

In the Islamic context, many artists use music as a medium to convey Islamic spiritual and ethical messages. One musician who is well known for combining elements of Islamic language and ethics is Sami Yusuf, a British singer who is widely recognized in the Muslim world. Sami Yusuf's songs not only aim to entertain, but also contain deep moral and spiritual messages in their lyrics.

Lyrics in songs can provide moral messages. Morals can be interpreted as aspects that regulate human life to always do good in their lives that have been regulated in religion and culture. Moral is closely related to commendable actions and is also better known as rules that are considered high by the most believed society. Barcalow (1994) says that something moral can be declared good. Likewise, Bartein Kees (2004) also argues that morality is a comprehensive term that includes concepts such as righteousness, good character, and moral qualities and virtues in Islamic teachings.

Songs also function to feel amazing spiritual experiences that are very memorable and strengthen the beliefs of every human being. According to a quote from Chaniago (2020) in the dictionary of psychology, spirituality is the assumption of transcendental values. Spirituality is belief and faith in relation to the Almighty and the Creator.

Ethics as a standard of behavior that guides individuals, ethics is the study of legitimate and right and moral actions that a person performs. Aristotle said that ethics is a collection of rules that humans must abide by. Islamic ethical teachings are in accordance with the nature of reason and right thinking. Ethics in Islam is very broad with two main characteristics. First, Islamic ethics does not oppose human nature. Second, Islamic ethics is highly rationalistic.

Ethics in Islam not only regulates man's relationship with God, but also with fellow human beings, the environment, and himself. This ethics is sourced from the Qur'an, the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad, as well as the teachings of scholars, and serves as a guideline to create a just, peaceful and harmonious society. These values are not only spiritual but also moral, directing Muslims to be fair, caring, patient and responsible individuals in society. By practicing Islamic ethics, a Muslim is expected to contribute to the creation of a peaceful, harmonious and just society.

In this study, the author specifically chose the object of song lyrics on Sami Yusuf's fourth album entitled *Salaam* which was released on December 22, 2012, namely "Happiness", "Salaam", "Forgotten Promises", "Hear You Call", "Smile", "To Guide You Home", "Dryer Land", "All I Need", "I'm Your Hope", and "It's A Game". The physical version was released on December 22, 2012, while the digital version was released on December 24, 2012. This research focuses on the use of language and the representation of Islamic Ethics in

the lyrics of her songs. This research aims to explore the language and representation of Islamic Ethics contained in the lyrics of Sami Yusuf's songs.

## **METHOD**

In this study, the researcher used a descriptive qualitative method because this study analyzed the song lyrics on Sami Yusuf's Salaam album to explore the use of language and the representation of Islamic ethics in it. The purpose of this research is to explain the results of data analysis by providing a comprehensive picture. This analysis process is done by listening and reading carefully the lyrics of the songs in Sami Yusuf's Salaam album.

This method explores the use of language and the representation of Islamic ethics in the lyrics of these songs, making it possible to be analyzed further. The author uses this descriptive qualitative approach method to provide a deep understanding of the use of language used in the lyrics of these songs, as well as the representation of Islamic ethics contained therein.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Sami Yusuf, a Muslim singer and songwriter from England. He is also a composer, producer, and multi-instrumentalist. At birth, Yusuf had the real name Siamak Radnamish, he was born on July 19, 1980, in Tehran-Iran and was born into a Muslim family. When he was three years old, he lived in London. His father passed on his artistic and musical abilities to Sami Yusuf. Since childhood, Yusuf has learned to play musical instruments and sing and his abilities have developed in the fields of art and music thanks to the support of his family and friends.

In this study, the author analyzed 10 lyrics of songs on Sami Yusuf's album Salaam, namely "Happiness", "Salaam", "Forgotten Promises", "Hear You Call", "Smile", "To Guide You Home", "Dryer Land", "All I Need", "I'm Your Hope", and "It's A Game". In general, the main themes highlighted are love for God, peace, brotherhood, and devotion. The following is an analysis of the use of language and the representation of Islamic ethics in each song:

### **A. Happiness**

The lyrics in this song combine two languages, Arabic and English. The repetition of the phrase "رحمان يا هلا يا" (O Allah, O merciful) and "منان يا هلا يا" (O Allah, O bestower) which means prayer to Allah to be given success and blessings in every human endeavor. This is in accordance with the teachings of Islam which reminds that humans must always rely on Allah in all aspects of their lives.

The song also repeatedly emphasizes gratitude to Allah for all His blessings, including the diversity of cultures, beliefs, and different human characteristics. The lyrics "Let's celebrate and give thanks for difference and change" show that difference is something to be grateful for as it is emphasized in Islamic teachings.

In addition, the lyrics "One world united, undivided by our different ways" and "For all cultures and faiths, 'Cause you made it this way" encourage tolerance, respect for differences, and promote unity in diversity. There are also phrases such as "Shower us with good feelings" and "Brighten us, my friend and I, with the light of showing respect to one another" that

emphasize the importance of compassion, concern for others, and respect for others, which are basic principles in Islamic ethics.

#### B. Salaam

Just like the previous song, the lyrics in this song also combine Arabic and English. The use of the word “سالم” (salaam) which means (peace) is very important in these lyrics, as the concept of peace (salam) is central to the message. In addition, the English lyrics reinforce the message of hope for peace and unity that can be accepted by everyone, regardless of religious or cultural background.

The repetition of the phrase “عليك م سال” meaning (peace be upon you) serves as a consistent prayer and wish. This reflects the repetitive nature of prayer or remembrance in the Islamic tradition, where repetition is a way to deepen the spiritual sense and invoke protection or blessings from Allah.

In the lyrics “I pray for a day when there’ll be justice and unity” and “Where we put aside our differences,” there is hope for justice and unity in the world, in line with Islamic teachings that emphasize the importance of living in harmony and peace, regardless of differences. In addition, the lyrics “We’re here for a day or two” remind us of the Islamic concept that life in this world is temporary, and humans must make the best use of it such as doing good, spreading peace, and carrying out their duties as caliphs on this earth.

#### C. Forgotten Promises

The lyrics in this song use various languages, such as Arabic, English, and Swahili, reflecting diversity and passion. The use of Arabic is seen in prayers such as “هلا يا سامحنا” (Forgive us, O Allah) and “رباه يا وارحمنا” (Have mercy on us, O Lord), which express a plea to Allah for forgiveness and mercy. In addition, the use of Swahili in lyrical sections such as “Sisi binadamu” (We are human beings) emphasizes solidarity and the desire to address the world’s problems collectively.

The repetition of the phrases “We are one humankind” and “Sisters side by side, Brothers side by side” shows an emphasis on unity and cooperation in the face of challenges, such as hunger. This repetition reinforces the message that humanity must unite regardless of differences.

The lyrics “Hunger will not wait for promises we made” serve as a reminder that immediate action is needed to address hunger, not just unfulfilled promises. It is a reminder that in Islam, action must be accompanied by deeds, not just empty words.

#### D. Hear Your Call

The lyrics in this song use English as the main language with Urdu inserts in certain parts, such as “Ummedon Ko Na Todo” (Do not lose hope). This shows the inclusivity and the message to be conveyed to various levels of society. The use of Urdu adds emotional closeness, especially for those who speak the language.

The use of phrases such as "Give me your hand my brother, I will not let you fall" shows solidarity and support in brotherhood, which characterizes ethical values in Islam. The meaning of the lyrics "Don't you know we're One, When you hurt I hurt" illustrates a deep sense of empathy and the concept of human unity in Islam. The lyrics encourage action to help each other, not just passive empathy.

#### E. Smile

The lyrics in this song use emotional and personal language. Words like "I know that I don't deserve you and my life has meaning 'cause of you" reflect a deep sense of gratitude. Everything good in life comes from God's Grace and we should always be grateful for the Grace that God gives. This attitude of humility reflects Islamic ethics which teaches that humans must always be grateful and not be arrogant for the blessings that God has given. In addition, the lyrics "Give everything, do anything, whatever it'll take, to see your smile" reflect the high value of sacrifice and sincerity, which is included in the teachings of Islam. The language used is simple yet powerful, reflecting true love and the desire to sacrifice for the happiness of others.

#### F. To Guide You Home

The lyrics in this song use metaphorical language. For example, the phrases "Thirsty as a desert's pain" and "Dizzy as the tea I brew" evoke strong sensory and emotional experiences. The use of these metaphors is to create a vivid and emotional narrative. The shifting between English and Azeri adds an interesting dimension that emphasizes the cultural depth and duality of the song.

The Azeri part of the lyrics "Let her come, let her go, but let there not be words between us" illustrates the importance of sincerity in love with no arguments or disputes getting in the way of a relationship. This shows how love in Islam is based on peace and understanding, and is not filled with conflict.

#### G. Dryer Land

The lyrics in this song are in English and Arabic. The lyrics describe the spiritual journey poetically by using the metaphor of driftwood longing for the shore, which symbolizes the soul begging and depending on God to find its way home. The lyrics "Pull me from the sea" depict a cry for divine help and redemption. The language conveys weariness from the trials of tides and storms and repentance, reflecting a deep personal struggle and hope for forgiveness and grace. The lyrics "Forgive my wrongs" show a plea to God for forgiveness for sins and wrongs that have been committed.

#### H. All I Need

The lyrics in this song use very poetic language to describe divine love. As in the lyrics "Your love is all I need to be all I can be" shows how God's love provides motivation to be the best version of oneself.

The lyrics also use several languages, such as English, Urdu, Persian and Turkish. In Urdu: “Aye sanam noori” (Oh my effulgent beloved) and “Tujse kaisee dooree” (Why should there be a distance?), which depict the closeness between the creator and his creation. In Persian: “Didar kam kam” (To slowly meet), indicating a slow and gradual spiritual journey towards God. Whereas, in Turkish: “Asla vazgecmem” (I would never give up loving you) expresses complete commitment to Divine love.

#### I. I’m Your Hope

The lyrics in this song use English and Arabic. The combination of the two languages in this song gives a deeper feel and enriches the message of the song. The Arabic part of the lyrics, “الَلَّم يُدْفَع الْقَلَم، وَعِلْم بِال” (Through knowledge and the might of the pen, the pain will be pushed aside), emphasizes one of the main cornerstones in Islamic teachings - the importance of knowledge and writing. The lyrics of “Don’t Give Up Nor Despair” reflect this teaching and encourage listeners to keep fighting, even in difficult situations.

#### J. It’s A Game

The lyrics in this song use profound expressions, such as: “جهلوه لما شتموه” (They insulted him when they didn’t know him) and “هداه عرفوا لما تبعوه” (They became his followers when they truly knew him) which suggests that ignorance often leads to misunderstanding and contempt, but when the truth is revealed, people will eventually follow it. This message implies that we should not be prejudiced against something we do not know.

The lyrics “Let Them Say What They Want To Say, It’s The Same Game” gives the message that one must have patience and fortitude in the face of insults or incomprehension. In Islamic teachings, people are taught to be patient when facing ridicule or insults, and also not to retaliate with hatred.

### CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that Sami Yusuf's Salaam album presents a beautiful blend of language, music, and messages in Islamic ethics. Through meaningful lyrics and the use of simple yet powerful language, Sami Yusuf manages to convey Islamic values. The messages in this album are in line with the basic principles of Islamic ethics, such as compassion, patience, peace, contentment, and others. Thus, the songs in Sami Yusuf's Salaam album not only function as artistic expression but can also be said to be an effective medium of da'wah. The album's songs “Happiness”, “Salaam”, “Forgotten Promises”, “Hear You Call”, “Smile”, “To Guide You Home”, “Dryer Land”, “All I Need”, “I'm Your Hope”, and “It's A Game” show how art can be a powerful tool to spread the message of peace and spirituality in Islam, which is relevant to listeners from different backgrounds and religions. The combination of inspiring lyrics, the use of simple language, and evocative music makes the Salaam album a work of art that not only entertains but also serves as an inspiring da'wah.

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